Digitization in Archives

...As Experienced by the Central Zionist Archives
Please meet…

The CZA is the historical archives of:

- The World Zionist Organization
- The Jewish Agency
- The Jewish National Fund (KKL)
- Keren Hayesod
- World Jewish Congress

In addition, the CZA also holds the personal papers of over 1500 people active in the Zionist Movement or the early years of the State of Israel in its early years.
CZA holdings

All in all, about 10 km. of shelf space containing:
Record Groups and Personal Papers
Genealogical Collections
Photograph Collection
Maps and Settlement Plans Collection
Posters and Handbills Collection
Library
Newspaper Collection
Audio Collection
Artifacts Collection
Microfilm Collection
Brief overview of digitization at the CZA

Various digitization projects over the course of 15 years.

Funding and assistance from a number of bodies, to whom we extend our thanks:

Harvard Division/Judaica Library
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Claims Conference
Jewish National Fund (KKL)
George Blumenthal
etc…..

These cross-functional collaborations have helped to make the material accessible to the public.
Material that has been digitized

Correspondence files: 11,650,000 pages; about 120,000 files

Genealogical cards and lists: 1,200,000

Photographs: 1,000,000

Posters and Announcements: 27,600

Maps and Plans: 127,460

Audio material: 1960 items
In-house system/website
Digitization of files in record groups and personal papers

Strict observance of hierarchical order:

• record group
  • file
  • document
Digitization of files in the record groups and personal papers
Digitization of files in record groups and personal papers
Metadata

Rescue and refugees Correspondence by and regarding Eva Reading’s suggestions related to post-war Jewish problems

1942

1942

1946 1940 Maurice Orbach; member of Parliament and general secretary of the Trades Advisory Council

1948 1946 Various in-coming letters of Maurice Orbach of the Trades Advisory Council

1959 Correspondence; reports and petitions concerning the status of the Jews in Ethiopia
Digitization of files in record groups and personal papers
Search results - files > documents

Search query: “Sweden”:
Search results - files > documents

Search query: “Sweden”
Digitization of Genealogical Collections
Digitization of Genealogical Collections
Digitization of Genealogical Collections
Digitization of Genealogical Collections

Metadata creation is the main task!
Digitization of the Photograph Collection

Jpeg, digital files, mostly 300 dpi; some of the collections, 600 dpi.
Digitization of the Photograph Collection

Search query: בצלאל
Digitization of the Photograph Collection

Thumbnail images
Digitization of the Photograph Collection

Watermarks
Digitization of the Photograph Collection

Watermarks
Digitization of the Posters and Announcements Collection

Jpeg, mostly at 300 dpi. About KB 500 in size.
Digitization of the Posters and Announcements Collection - Results

Search query: ספורט
Digitization of the Maps and Settlement Plans Collection

Jpeg, mostly at 300 dpi. About MB 25 in size.
Digitization of the Maps and Settlement Plans Collection - Results

Search query: צרעה
Digitization of the Audio Collection
What we have not digitized

Artifacts
Newspapers
Books
CZA Participation in Judaica Europeana

The CZA plans to make some of its digitized material available on the EJ website.

We are happy to make some of this material available on the Judaica Europeana portal.

Pilot project: material of the World Jewish Congress, registered in English.
Material relevant to Judaica
Europeana
Material relevant to Judaica Europeana

The CZA holds vast amounts of material on the situation of Jewry and Zionism in Europe in the period from 1880 to 1960.
Why Digitize?

Digitization often raises expectations of benefits, cost reductions, and efficiencies that can be illusory. So why digitize?

• Preservation, by decreasing handling
• Access
• Marketing of the assets of archives
Project management

Funding

Selection of materials. (Material that is not for general consumption may simply not be scanned or the scans not shown in the system; archives should digitize records most requested by researchers.)

Copyright and other legal issues

Metadata creation and/or transferring

Microfilming and Digitization

Combining with computerized system

Preservation of digital copies
Archival scanning process

- Description
- Microfilming
  - (16mm or 35mm)
- Digitizing

Still to be attempted: scanning and thereafter, describing.
Digitization is not Preservation!

• Microfilm should last several centuries when made on silver halide film and kept in a stable environment.

• The retrieval of information encoded in an obsolete file format and stored on an obsolete medium is extremely expensive and labor-intensive, if at all possible.

• The data needs to be kept fresh and encoded in readable file formats.

• Of course the originals should not be destroyed!!
Our intention never was to generate “master files”, that is, archival-quality digital images for long-term preservation. We produced “access” and “thumbnail” files for present-day web and in-house delivery.
OCR

- OCR is not appropriate for correspondence files.
- OCR is appropriate for material with consistent content forms, such as minutes and lists.
Influence of digitization on description and cataloging

• Archives are increasingly required to upgrade their cataloging, in order to make the items understandable in the context of the Internet.

• Because they are used to having a reference archivist available to help them in their searches when they are at an archives, researchers often want an archives site to provide comparable reference and searching functions, if not a higher level of service.
Changes

The migration from analogue to digital information has transformed the way we learn, the way we communicate and the way we think.

Digitization cannot be separated from other advances in computerization. All together, the result has been a radical change in how archives function.
And what do the historians and researchers think?
They want access to the original, paper documents!
Please visit...