



News from the Norman E. Alexander Jewish Studies Library at Columbia University Libraries

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Virtual Resources for Jewish Studies:

- Columbia Hebrew manuscripts at the Internet Archive:
<https://archive.org/details/culhebrewmss>
- Guide to Resources in Jewish Studies:
<https://guides.library.columbia.edu/jewishstudies>
- Thanks to the Libraries' membership in the [HathiTrust](#) initiative, Columbia Libraries' users are now able to access about 40% of our collections in a digital format
- National Library of Israel's KTIV Database of Global Hebrew manuscripts:
<https://web.nli.org.il/sites/nlis/en/manuscript>

News

I write this newsletter from my home office, during unprecedented times for our library, the university, and recent history. The Spring semester started as usual, but like so many institutions, by mid-March we found ourselves shifting to work in a digital environment. However, that didn't mean that the work of the Library ceased; on the contrary, we have been working harder than ever to support our users during these difficult times.



Norman E. Alexander Virtual Library

Before the university moved to remote learning, we were privileged to host multiple events and classes in the library: In February, the [Footprints](#) project hosted a workshop led by Dr. Edward Fram on the science of reading early modern Ashkenazic hands. Using materials from Columbia's rare Judaica collection, [participants spent three days](#) learning to read annotations in printed books as well as manuscript sources from Central and Northern Europe. Two Columbia classes were able to visit our physical collections: "Jews in Early Modern Europe" and "Introduction and Methods in Jewish Studies."

Once the Libraries transitioned to digital, we continued providing resources to readers. There were virtual library sessions for classes on Jewish immigration, Jews and the City, Jews, Magic and Science in the Early Modern Period, and Introduction to Hebrew Bible. Thanks to a plethora of [digitized material](#) available, students were able to participate in virtual sessions with rare books and manuscripts, and reference sessions for students moved seamlessly into a virtual environment.

We were also able to collaborate with two virtual public programs: We partnered with The University of Pennsylvania to showcase a project called [Scribes of the Cairo Geniza](#), which invites users to transcribe the hundreds of thousands of documents from the Cairo Geniza, including Columbia manuscripts. The Alexander Library participated in a webinar to train users of the project, which drew participants from around the world. In another program, LCAAJ superuser Lea Schäfer led a session on digitally mapping the data from the [Language and Culture Atlas for Ashkenazic Jewry](#).

Two Columbia manuscripts dealing with the plague in Padua in the 17th century were featured on the [RBML blog](#) and the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies' [Magazine](#) in an essay by Dr. Joshua Teplitsky of Stony Brook University.

Wishing good health to all of our readers – we hope to be able to see many of you in person once circumstances improve.



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Norman E. Alexander Library for Jewish Studies