

Judaica Preservation Survey: A Portrait of Jewish Collections



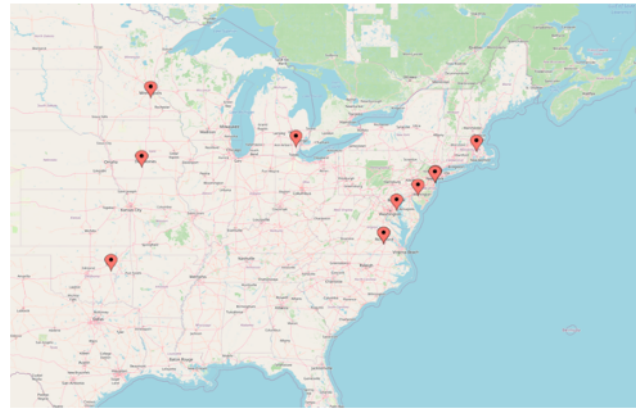
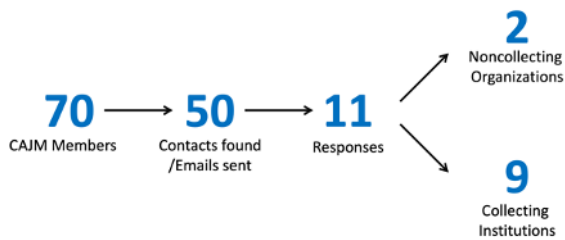
לְדוֹר וְדוֹר
L'dor v'dor

Margalit Schindler (they/them)
Preventive Conservation Graduate Fellow, Class of 2022
Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation
ANAGPIC Lightning Round Presentation
April 14, 2021
mschind3@kent.edu

The preservation of Judaica and Jewish history, in its material, intellectual and spiritual forms can be considered a sacred obligation. One of the daily Jewish prayers includes the Hebrew phrase - *L'Dor v'Dor* - from generation to generation -- an appeal to pass things on. This parallels the American Institute for Conservation Code of Ethics, which states that material heritage has “an invaluable and irreplaceable legacy that must be preserved for future generations.”

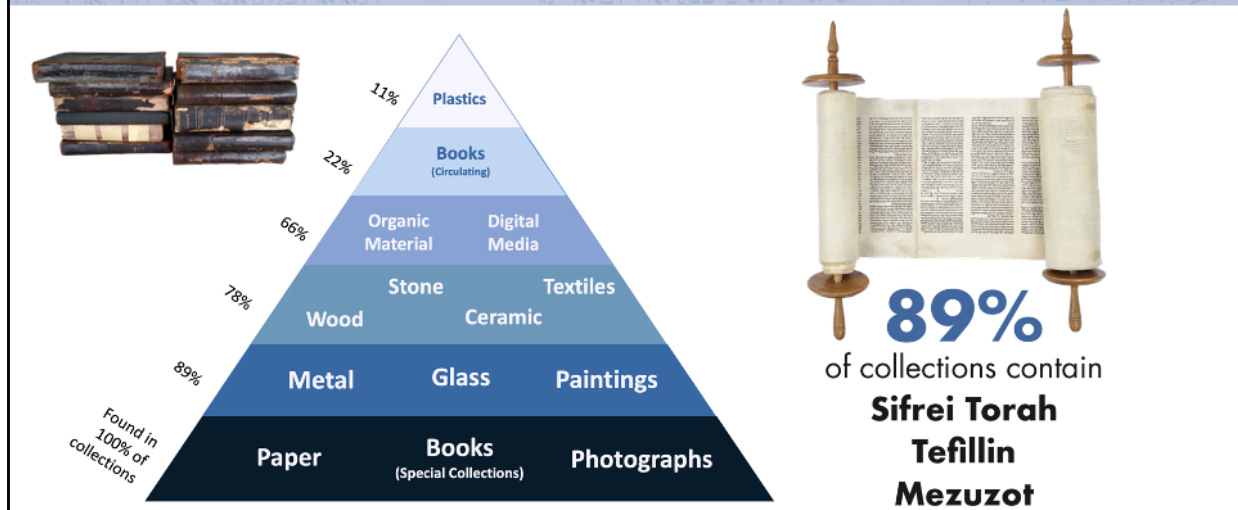
When I started graduate school, I knew I wanted to work with Judaica. I, therefore, implemented this research with the goal of better understanding collection management and preventive conservation efforts for Judaica and Jewish Collections in the United States. By examining the types of materials, institutions and policies that exist , preservation efforts and needs for Jewish ritual and historic objects may be better recognized. Understanding the context and contents of these collections and the institutions that care for them will help better inform ways that preventive conservation can be brought to the forefront of Jewish collections.

Who was surveyed?



In order to obtain an overall picture of the preservation practices of Jewish institutions, a digital survey was sent to 50 institutional members of the Council for American Jewish Museums. The respondents shared their preservation initiatives and priorities, their missions, materials and challenges.

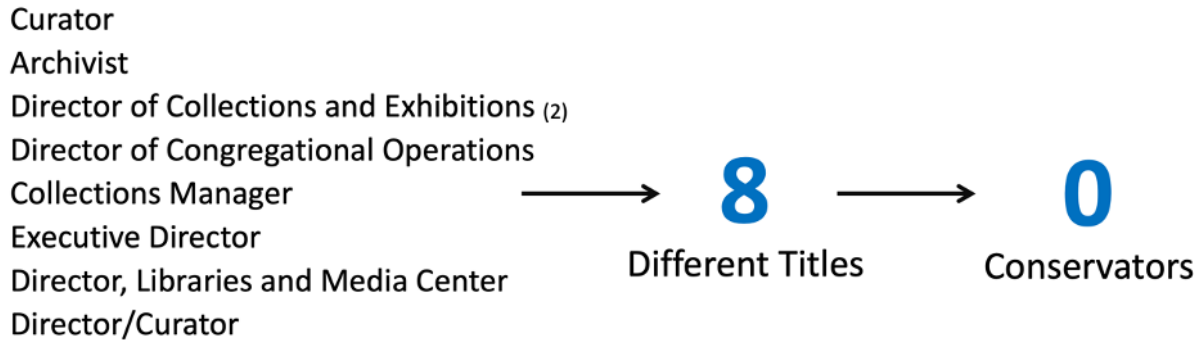
What types of materials are represented?




When asked about the size, material, and ritual composition of their collections, respondents indicated that collections are relatively small, but diverse in terms of material. Contents include every type of material, but lean heavily towards paper, photographs and books. **This data shows the need for a materials generalist who is comfortable caring for a diverse array of media and materials.**

Types of Judaica and Jewish art and historic artefacts present in collections range from secular to holy, mundane to ritual. 89% of respondent collections contain holy objects with elevated ritual status. **When possible, rabbinical and community insight should be brought in to consult on the formalities and ethics surrounding holy artefacts.**

Who is responsible for collection care?



Most respondents do not have full-time employees designated to preservation. However, there are many people and positions who end up with some sort of collection care responsibilities. Of the collections surveyed, there were 8 different positions responsible for collection care, none of whom were titled “conservator.” **This indicates a significant need for trained conservators to share preservation information to those without formal training, as they are often the ones in charge of small, community-based collections.**

 The picture can't be displayed.

Thank You

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
Tru Vue. Inc.
Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library
University of Delaware
Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC)
Dr. Joelle Wickens, Assistant Professor of Preventive Conservation & Associate Director
Debra Hess Norris, Chair of Photograph Conservation, Department of Art Conservation & Director
WUDPAC Class of 2022
Friends and Family
All those in attendance

This work is dedicated to Ruth and David Levine, the author's maternal grandparents, who were both Holocaust survivors, military veterans, and active members in their local Jewish community. May their memory be a blessing.



Ruth and David Levine z"l, 1958.
Photo courtesy of Sandy Levine.

There is space here to empower small institutions to care for their own collections, in ways that fit their needs and abilities. Going forward, I hope to become a resource for such organizations and work towards the preservation of the Jewish people. Thank You.