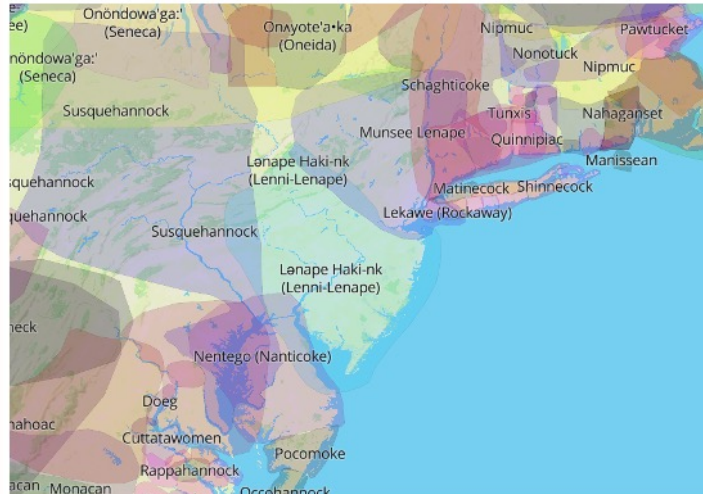




*Preserving Judaica:*  
FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

Margalit Schindler (*they/them*)  
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## Land Acknowledgement



Map showing traditional indigenous territories on what is now called Delaware.  
<https://www.native-land.ca/>



Ruth and David Levine, September, 1958

**I'd like to start by acknowledging the land I have the privilege to live and work on. I believe a land acknowledgement is about understanding our personal relationship with the land we are on, and how we got here. For me, both sides of my family originate in Eastern Europe and came to this land as Holocaust survivors and refugees, who were given sanctuary from violent persecution and complete displacement. And on both sides, I am the second generation to be born on this territory which itself came from the violent persecution of indigenous people.**

**By acknowledging the Lenni Lenape and Wingohocking communities, I can begin to embody the Jewish value of tikkun olam – healing the world through reparative social justice.**

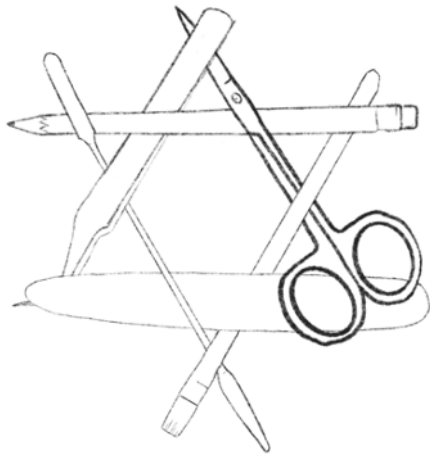
**So with that, I acknowledge that I currently reside on the unceded ancestral Indigenous territory of the Lenni Lenape and Wingohocking people of the Delaware watershed who stewarded these lands for centuries and continue to do so.**

## Mezzuzah



Several years ago, a friend sent me a text saying “I’m at a dinner party and there’s a small Jewish thing on the door. What is it?”. I excitedly spiraled into an explanation of a mezzuzah, a traditional piece of Judaica that is affixed to the doorposts of Jewish homes. These decorative cases hold a miniscule scroll of parchment, which contains a handwritten holy prayer for wellness and security. There are many mezuzot traditions around moving, illness, and, annual housekeeping. And while there are many historic examples in museum collections, these objects are actively used in Jewish households today. This moment sparked for me a realization that Jewish history, religion, ritual, and learning all had strong material culture components.

## From Generation to Generation



לְדוֹר וָדוֹר  
*L'dor v'dor*

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.”

As an engaged member of the Jewish community and a trained preventive conservator, I am uniquely positioned to discuss both the tangible and intangible aspects of preserving Jewish heritage. I am using this presentation as an opportunity to share with you the process of how this unique work came to be.

## Jewish Life and Ritual



Photo and art from Margalit's first day of first grade, September 1999



Margalit and family at Ilan's Bar Mitzvah, October 2012

I grew up in a Conservative Jewish home in West Orange, NJ. I am the grandchild of 4 Holocaust survivors, immigrants who came to this country as refugees. We kept a kosher kitchen, went to synagogue regularly and celebrated all the holidays. I went to Solomon Schechter Day school in North Jersey from Preschool through 8th grade. It was an egalitarian learning environment and we spent half of each day learning Hebrew and Religious topics. I grew up immersed in Jewish culture, tradition, and community.

## Art and Materials



Margalit making art, 1996



Margalit making art, 2008

I was always an art kid. I always made art on my own, but in high school I went to a summer art camp, called Snow Farm, that had several studios designated to different media. And so that's where I got into metalsmithing. That experience was so foundational for me (in so many ways) but particularly in terms of exposure to different materials, studios and tools.

## Jewish Life and Ritual – The College Years



Reading Torah for a B'nai Mitzvah at the Western Wall, 2013



Metalsmithing artwork made using family artifacts, 2012

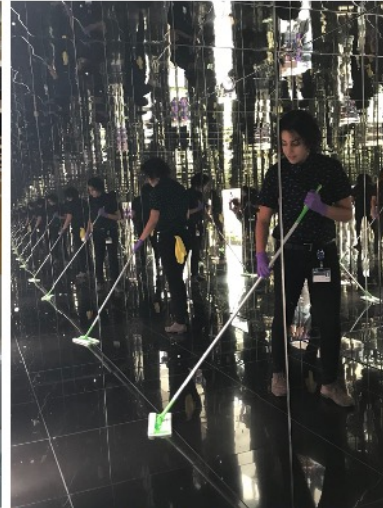
So I knew I liked art and making stuff. I knew I liked school and science and also animals?. So I applied to college and went to Kent State as a double major in metalsmithing and pre-veterinary science.

I moved to Kent Ohio, which was also a big culture shock. I was the first Jewish person that many people had met. I became very involved with the Hillel – Jewish student group on campus and continued to develop my own relationship with Judaism as an adult.

## Pre-Program Apprenticeships



Inpainting a loss in 19<sup>th</sup> Century *pochoir* print



Maintenance for Yayoi Kusama: *Infinity Mirrors*



Reattaching lost ear of Japanese paper mache tiger

My freshman year, I found out about art conservation – and I realized that that’s what I was trying to do with the art and the veterinary science – was put them together into something. Turns out - There’s a whole field that does that and it’s called material science and you can use it to work in museums. I switched my academics around to major in art history and metalworking.

In order to apply to graduate school there’s a laundry list of requirements including art history, two years of college chemistry, several hundred hours of internship experience and a portfolio of conservation treatment and studio art. In recent times, there have been more conversations about what types of barriers these requirements are putting on the system, but in my time that was not the case! Finding out about the requirements as a freshman was great because I kind of planned the next several years so I could cross off things the list. I graduated and lived in Cleveland for several years and did what we call “pre-program” conservation work: which includes working in conservation labs as “not-yet-a- conservator”, almost like an apprenticeship.

During that time, I worked at the Cleveland Museum of Art, a regional conservation



lab called ICA, and several private practice labs. And was able to apprentice across all sorts of materials and museum needs – exhibition, storage, transport, outreach, and, maintenance.

After 4 years of applying, I finally got into grad school.

## Jewish Material Culture



**Mezuzah**, Plastic, paint, parchment, ink



**Seder Plate**, Stamped metal with surface patina



**Shofar**, Horn  
**Siddur**, Bound volume of printed paper



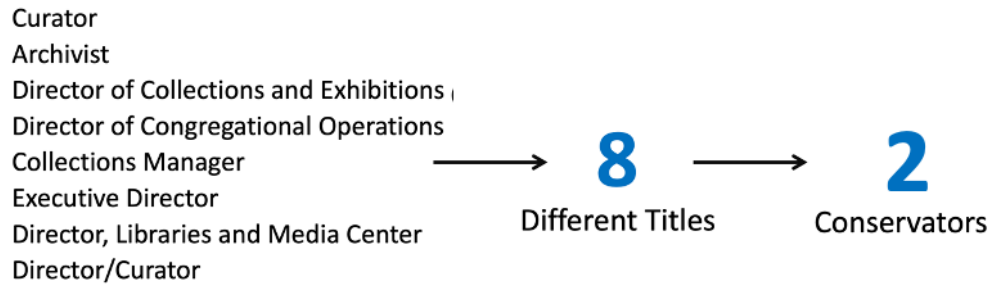
**Mahzor**, Illuminated manuscript on parchment

Circle back to the mezuzah. I knew I wanted to work with Judaica, and Jewish material culture, because I loved it, I grew up surrounded by it, and it's so cool and I could talk about it forever.

In the same kind of planning way, I wanted to figure out how to use my graduate education to learn what I needed to learn to best support these specific collections. So, part of what that meant for me was putting together a survey that asked Jewish collections "hey who are you?!" "Who is working in this field? What kind of stuff do you have? What materials are represented? Do you have any holy objects? DO they have special requirements?" And so on

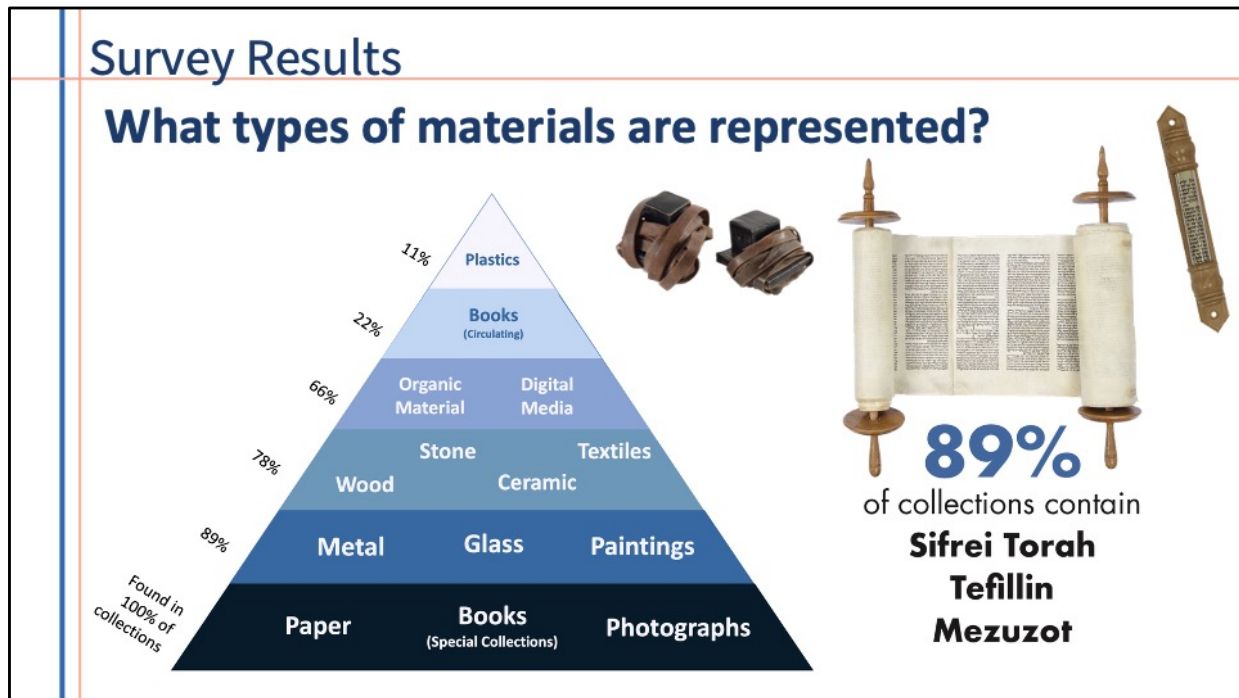
## Survey Results

### Who is responsible for collections care?



the results of that survey were so interesting –

My first takeaway was – that of the 72 member organizations of the council of American Jewish museums, only 2 have full-time, trained conservators on staff. Many folks are doing collection care work, perhaps without formal training. To me, this indicated a void – a space where someone with this training could support the people already doing the work.



Next - I learned that these collections are basically everything. What is a Jewish collection and where does it live? The answer was everything and everywhere - it is all of the materials in all sorts of institutions – ranging for designated Jewish art museums to local historical societies, Jewish community centers and synagogues. With all sorts of employees and funding sources and involvement with the community or congregation – all of it.

The biggest takeaway is that, like this mezuzah, Jewish collections are composite – in terms of materials, perspectives, and uses.

## Preventive Conservation



Analyzing environmental data



Taking readings of light levels

Okay so what does that mean for conservation – conservators specialize by material – so what material am I going to focus on that makes the most sense for this data. Okay well paper is a lot by volume, the “objects category” is maybe the most diverse in terms of number of materials you can hit - but there’s a new field that is emerging in earnest called Preventive Conservation. I like to describe it as being a primary care physician as opposed to a heart surgeon. Being able to be a materials generalist – have the materials science background for a little bit of everything with an understanding of different sorts of institutions and systems, I hoped to situate myself where I could be a consultant to a diverse audience of Jewish institutions and materials. And so, the past few years in grad school years has been figuring out what that means because I’m kind of inventing it.



So, I applied to the DELPHI program with all of this in mind – I wanted to better understand how to communicate all of this lofty thinking outward to a wide variety of audiences, diverse in both their Jewish backgrounds and their material culture and collection care backgrounds.

My biggest takeaway from DELPHI was not so much about creating a single deliverable – these could take many formats and could change throughout your career. What became apparent to me was the importance of situating myself as THE person to have this conversation – at the intersection of Jewish culture and collection care. CLICK As an engaged member of the Jewish community, a Jewish Day School graduate, and the grandchild of Holocaust survivors, I grew up immersed in Jewish culture and surrounded by Judaica. As a trained art conservator, I am uniquely positioned to discuss the materiality of these objects and support their ongoing use and preservation. CLICK As an engaged member of each of these communities, I am able to share information outward and across fields.

## Jewish Life and Ritual



Which is why I began this conversation with my Holocaust survivor grandparents and Day School education because – I came to realize the importance of these factors in the story I was telling, even though they weren't "academic" qualifications. They do however, make me an expert in being my own kind of Jewish and the ability to code switch and converse with members of the Jewish community in a way makes me a trusted resource.

## Reading and Connecting



Reading about Jewish material culture, Jewish museums, Holocaust education, and the history of American Judaism



**Rabbi Lex Rofeberg (he/him)**  
serves as Senior Jewish Educator  
for Judaism Unbound



**Rabbi Vanessa Ochs, Ph.D.,**  
Professor in the Department  
of Religious Studies,  
University of Virginia



**Rachel B. Gross,**  
Assistant Professor, John and  
Marcia Goldman Chair in  
American Jewish Studies, San  
Francisco State University

After this realization I started doing two things: reading and networking.

I started by reaching out to the host of one of my personal favorite podcasts – Judaism Unbound. Rabbi Lex Rofeberg was happy to chat with me about my work and I left the conversation with a reading list. I read Vanessa Ochs “New Jewish Ritual” and reached out to her to discuss the book. She introduced me to one of her students, Rachel Gross, who had recently published “Jewish Nostalgia as Religious Practice” --- and on and on. This has been a rich and meaningful experience, as connecting with like-minded, passionate individuals is inspiring and energizing.



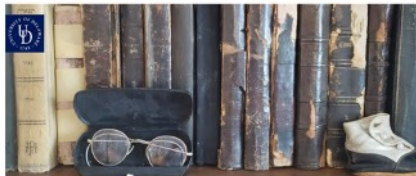
## Council of American Jewish Museums



Lighting Hannukah Candles with CAJM Talking Circles, 2021

It eventually led me to an invitation to participate in the Council for American Jewish Museums biweekly Talking Circles – which are informal spaces for Jewish museum leaders to discuss specific topics, issues, or case studies. Attending these meetings opened huge doors for me and I began to connect individually with these leaders with whom I was having these group conversations. And now have a network of more than 150 Jewish Museum professionals and growing.

# Speaking and Writing



## Art Conservation and a sense of obligation

Growing up with grandparents who were Holocaust survivors and is an engaged and practicing Jewish family, Rhonda at University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (RTSDRC) Felicia Margalit Schober has developed a passion for Judaism and considers its preservation a sacred obligation. They have used that passion to guide their graduate education in art conservation. Margalit took an important step at the end of their first year in locating its preservative conservation, which focuses on the most sensitive items, including the conservation, care management and emergency preparedness, involved in the protection and preservation of an art, cultural heritage. To understand more fully what that might mean in relation to Judaism, she first identified projects and distributed a survey to members of the Council of American Jewish Women. The survey included questions on staffing, the types of items in the collection, concerns, how the pieces in the collection were acquired and used, and the historic context of these pieces.

From the organizations that responded to their survey, Margalit found that many Jewish collections are relatively small and less likely to have paper, photographs, and books, though they include all types of material. Authors can find out why no members of all sizes but also no synagogues, Jewish Day Schools, and other facilities are associated with any facilities at all. Those respondents possessed one or more holy objects, which may have special handling considerations. Margalit was surprised to find that no respondents had a formal conservation or staff or anyone with technical conservation training coming to their sites, and almost half of the respondents had no preservation policies in place to guide them. Margalit also found that the highest priority for respondents was digitalizing their collections, and that the most frequent concern was how best to find space to house them.

In response to these findings, Margalit has proposed several next steps. Right on the list is archiving additional insight to those in related roles, which other initiatives include regarding respondents while making generalization policies, seeking resources to help with digital preservation and increasing open access status. Margalit has been helped by the survey results, which have given them much to consider as they look ahead to a three-year anniversary and completion of the program. Meanwhile, these projects for Judaism and commitment to its preservative preservation are required skills in their career as an conservator.



ARTS Magazine - May 2021  
The University of Delaware's Art Conservation Department advances and fosters professional conservation and care of art objects in the historic, academic, institutional, and private conservation of individual art objects and the collection. The department offers our students and staff opportunities to learn and work with art objects in the field.

For a single 1000-word feature, Margalit Schober is challenged here, drawing her own personal history and personal efforts. Along David Lerner's (University of Delaware) October 2019 article, Right: How can we respond together and best practices have or have not played with several key items, and their collection are shared in terms of historical photos. An illustration at Albany.

- ✂ **Preservation as Jewish Religious Practice**  
Essay in *The Ethics of Conservation*, upcoming
- ✂ **Jewish Value Considerations for Judaica in Collections**  
Poster presentation, American Institute for Conservation 50th Annual Conference, upcoming
- ✂ **Preserving Jewish Collections: From Generation to Generation**  
Guest lecturer for *Objects as Cultural Artifacts* Course, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, April 2022
- ✂ **Preservation 101**  
Instructor for Documentary Heritage and Preservation Services of New York's 3-week online course, April 2022
- ✂ **Memorial Books As Objects**  
Part of Memorial Books: Comparative and Global Perspective, one-day international workshop, University of Delaware Jewish Studies Program, Feb 2022
- ✂ **Pronouns at WUDPAC: Stakeholder Roles in the Process of Effecting Change**  
Webinar as part of CCAHA's Let's Talk About That series, Jan 2022
- ✂ **Staff Reflects on 20 Years of the Philadelphia Stewardship Program**  
Blog post in support of the CCAHA Stewardship Program Relaunch, Jan 2022
- ✂ **Housing and the Museum Environment**  
Webinar as part of CCAHA's Select, Save and Stack Workshop, Nov 2021
- ✂ **The Objects That Remain: The Ethics of Tending to Sacred Objects**  
Panel Discussion Hosted by University of Delaware Jewish Studies Program, Oct 2021
- ✂ **What's the Point, Dude? A Conversation about Dew Point**  
Guest lecture for Preventive Block WUDPAC 2024, Sept 2021
- ✂ **Residential Environments: Examining a Microclimate to Inform Household Exhibitions**  
Conservation During Covid: Student Talks, Philadelphia Area Conservation Association (PACA), June 2021
- ✂ **Judaica Preservation Survey: A Portrait of Jewish Collections**  
Lightning Round presentation, ANAGPIC, April 2021
- ✂ **Answering the Questions We Wish You Would Ask: A Panel Presentation on Conservation and Disability**  
Panelist for CCAHA's Diversity in Collections Care Colloquium, March 2021
- ✂ **Seeds of Change Speaker Series: From Ask to Action**  
Panelist for University of Delaware Student Activist Speaker Series, March 2021
- ✂ **Building Diagnostics at the Wharton Esherick Museum: A Case Study**  
Guest lecture for Wood Block WUDPAC 2023, Dec 2020
- ✂ **Tabletop Exercise: Understanding Context**  
Workshop for ARTC301, an undergraduate art conservation course, Dec 2020
- ✂ **Systems Thinking, Scatterplots, Social Justice and Shabbat: A Summer of Growing Soft Skills**  
WUDPAC Summer Work Project Talk, Sept 2020

Over the past two years or so I have been presenting about all of this - about preservation, Jewish material culture - and sometimes both. This had led to invitations to speak, attend museum exhibition openings, opportunities to work with contemporary artists and small synagogue collections.

# Speaking and Writing and More



**Objects That Remain** panel discussion with Dr. Laura Levitt, Temple University and Jane Klingler, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. University of Delaware Jewish Studies Department

## Fielding Questions:

**Salty Torahs** - Kat, meet Margalit - Margalit knows allllll about stuff like salt. Let's talk about salt!

"Yes, as a dedicated museum nerd, I did find your paper interesting and had to pull myself away from looking up all the references you listed. Thank you so much for sharing with me. I now feel more confident in caring for the synagogue's silver!"

Thank you so much for sending these materials - your annotated bibliography is incredibly helpful. Laura Levitt's book looks both difficult and insightful - I've included it in the current draft of my syllabus.

## Upcoming Publications:

### Preservation as Jewish Religious Practice

Essay in *The Ethics of Conservation*

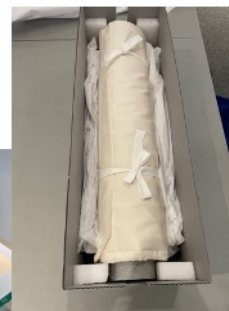
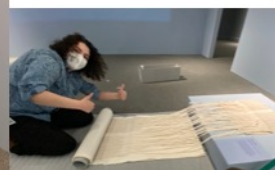
### Jewish Value Considerations for Judaica in Collections

Poster Presentation, American Institute for Conservation 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

### Judaica Preservation: From Generation to Generation

ShavuotLive, : a 30-Hour Festival of Digital Jewish Learning

## Contemporary Art Exhibition:



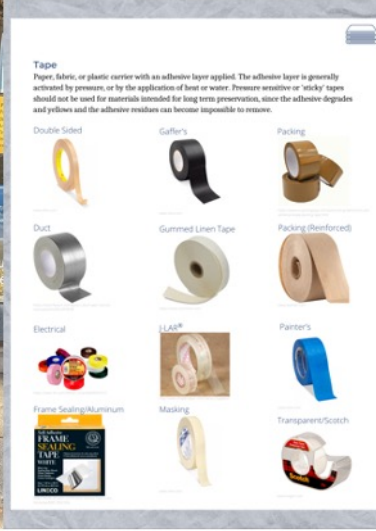
Working with The Jewish Museum Maryland to build custom housing and transport for extra-long artwork by contemporary artist Arielle Tonkin, which was exhibited in *A Fence Around the Torah*

I was invited to be on a panel discussion by the University of Delaware Jewish Studies Department to discuss caring for sacred objects. I have upcoming publications including an essay in a book and a spot giving a talk similar to this one at ShavuotLive, a Festival of Digital Jewish Learning. After connecting at an exhibition, I built a custom rolled storage solution for Arielle Tonkin's Hybrid Ritual Object. And i've been connecting with many folks via email and zoom to chat about Judaica preservation and share this work.

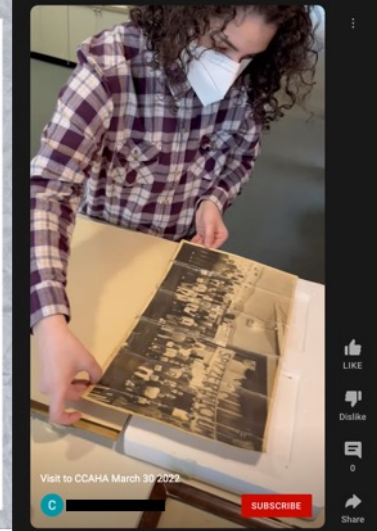
## Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts



Margalit at CCAHA



Tape, from Damage and Materials Glossary



Margalit rehousing silver gelatin photograph for Community Stewardship Program

All the while, I have been a Preventive Conservation Fellow at the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia. I have spent the year partnering with small institutions in need of formal Preservation Assessments, presenting preservation education in a variety of formats and engaging local community collections with preservation support for their archives and historic artifacts. I have been producing collection care educational content, holding agenda-free office hours, and offering tangible preservation support for specific objects and sites. I am producing a Preservation Glossary that meets new learners where they are, while introducing useful preservation terms and images.

# Website as Business Card

www.margalitschindler.com

**Margalit (they/them) Schindler**

- Photographic & Written Documentation
- Webinars & Workshops
- Environmental Monitoring
- Handling Guidelines
- Light Management
- Integrated Pest Management
- Data Management & Analysis
- Custom Housing & Mounts
- Sustainable Collection Care
- Emergency Preparedness & Response
- Surveys & Assessments
- Policy Writing & Review
- Jewish Museums & Judaica Collections
- Art Storage, Exhibition, & Transport

Labels for specific materials and objects: Paper, Photographs, Books, Objects, Furniture, Textiles, Paintings, Frames.

- Links to recorded talks and available writing
- Annotated Bibliography of Judaica Preservation
- Preservation Bibliography Library
- Portfolio of Conservation Projects and Studio Artwork

**Living Preservation Bibliography**

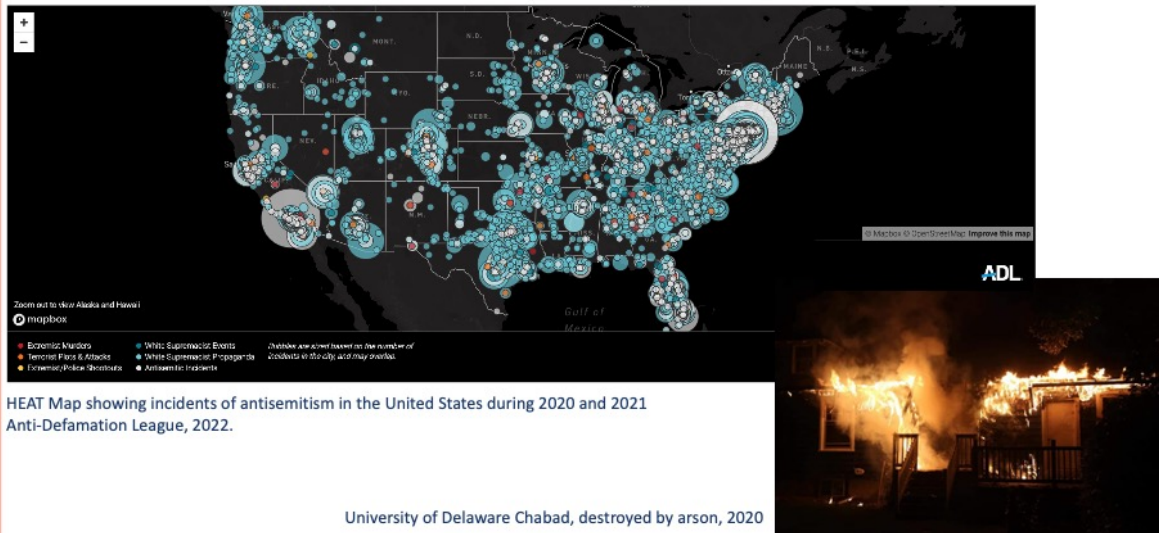
Annotations: [Annotated Bibliography](#)  
[Judaica Preservation and Jewish Museums and Collections](#)

Year	Title	Author	Source	Notes
2018	...	...	...	...
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All of this lives on my website, which links to an ongoing annotated bibliography about Jewish material culture and collections, an interactive resource with links to helpful preservation resources, and my portfolio of conservation projects

## Relevance

In 2020 and 2021, there were **12,336** incidents of extremism or antisemitism in the United States.



This work is especially relevant as the last remaining of the Survivor Generation pass away, and our collective Jewish memory shifts from one of experience and stories to the objects and archives that are left behind. Additionally, as antisemitic language and violence continue to rise at an alarming rate, again threatening the existence of the Jewish people, I argue that preserving Jewish material culture is part of Jewish continuity and the need is growing more urgent. Large, destructive, anti-Jew violence is even here at UD's Chabad, which was destroyed by arson in 2020. Going forward, I hope to become a resource for organizations and private collections and to work towards the preservation of the Jewish people.

THANK YOU



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