

Jewish Librarians Task Force

Newsletter

HEADQUARTERS

Volume 11, Number 1 May 1987 6 1987

Newsletter

LIBRARY

A Task Force of the Ethnic Materials Information Exchange Round Table of the American Library Association

TASK FORCE EVENTS IN SAN FRANCISCO

PROGRAM: Holocaust Literature.
Sunday, June 28, 2:00.
Location to be announced in the Conference program.

BUSINESS MEETING. Tuesday, June 30, 2:00.
Ramada Renaissance Hotel, Barcelona Room II.

PROGRAM IN SAN FRANCISCO

For the upcoming ALA Conference in San Francisco, the Task Force is planning a program on new Holocaust materials available from American publishers for children and adults. The program is designed to heighten librarians' understanding of the Holocaust and provide guidance and useful information about selection and use of Holocaust materials in special, academic, and public libraries. The program will be held on Sunday, June 28, 2:00 to 4:00 PM. The location will be announced in the Conference program.

The objectives of the program are:

- 1) to identify new, high-quality books and other resources on the Holocaust available from American publishers for children and adults.
- 2) to explore and discuss trends and issues in the publishing of Holocaust materials.
- 3) to describe how these materials are being used in American libraries today in programming for children and adults.

The program will take the form of a series of short presentations by a panel of publishers and librarians, with

audience participations and questions encouraged.

There will be related exhibits of materials and literature.

A separate business meeting is planned for Tuesday, June 30, at 2:00, in the Ramada Renaissance Hotel, Barcelona Room II.

REPORT ON MIDWINTER MEETING

The Task Force held its semi-annual business meeting in January, 1987, at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Chicago. Though the meeting was not as well attended as hoped, the participants were able to address the following concerns:

Relations with ALA: There has been some confusion between the Task Force and ALA in three areas: 1) how ALA tallies Task Force members (for budgeting and mailing lists), 2) how the Task Force is listed in ALA literature, especially its directory, and 3) how Task Force meetings are listed in conference programs. Communication with ALA has recently been improved on these problems, and progress will be reported in future issues of this Newsletter.

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REPORT ON MIDWINTER MEETING

(continued from page 1)

Publicity: Ideas for improved publicity and increased membership drives were considered. One idea (now being carried out) was to create a flyer for distribution at the meetings and conferences of organizations other than ALA.

Newsletter: The editorial policies and publishing procedures for the Newsletter were reviewed. For the time being, the Newsletter will continue to come out twice a year. In addition, the participants agreed that the Newsletter need not shy away from controversial subjects, as long as they are "relevant to librarians."

CENSORSHIP OF JEWISH BOOKS?

This is not a paranoid article full of scare tactics and sensationalism. In fact, it has some rather good news: "There has not been enough of an attack on Jewish materials to warrant any raising of the alarm," reports Judith Krug, Director of ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom, though she adds, "You'll probably hear from someone on this."

Busy with hundreds of court and legislative battles, Krug is not concerned with antisemitism as a motivation for censorship because it just does not seem to be a problem. A review of hundreds of news-worthy censorship efforts past and present in the U.S. seems to confirm this.

One of the "Jewish" books best known to non-Jews is also one of the most censored books in the U.S. Why anyone would want to censor the Diary of Anne Frank is a mystery to many, including Judith Krug. She reports, nevertheless, that censors complain of supposed sexual references in the book, and an apparent reference to free religious thinking when Anne tells another character that he "must believe in something"--that's "something", as opposed to the true faith.

Krug warns, however, that the specific complaints in any consorship case may be a smokescreen for unstated prejudices concerning the author personally, or moral or political agendas with which the message of a book may conflict indirectly. Such hidden objections may be hard to determine, and even the censors may not be clearly aware of them.

BOOK REVIEW

Yassif, Eli. Jewish Folklore: An Annotated Bibliography. New York: Garland, 1986. (Garland Folklore Bibliographies, Vol. 10; Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, Vol. 450). \$65.00

This work aims to provide a critical summary of one hundred years of the study of Jewish folklore, spanning the period 1872 to 1980. It is a bibliography of folkloristics--studies of folklore--rather than of the folklore texts or artifacts themselves. There is a clearly written introduction noting the scope and limitations of the work. The approach is clearly selective, providing "detailed description and evaluation of the important and representative studies." The annotations are both descriptive and evaluative. The scope is international, including many non-English language books and journal articles. The annotations serve to summarize key publications in Hebrew and other languages. There is a single general index which includes themes, motifs, names, and approaches. Arranged alphabetically, the bibliography includes 1,356 numbered entries. The compiler is Professor of Hebrew literature at Ben-Gurion University in Israel, and a recognized scholar in the field. Even though the price is high, the bibliography is a valuable resource, and an important and unique contribution to this field.

HOLOCAUST REVISIONISM

Here is more on Holocaust Revisionism as a subject heading from one of its more outspoken proponents, Sanford Berman, Head Cataloger at the Hennepin County, Minnesota, Public Library:

"The trouble with the 'Errors, inventions, etc.' approach to Revisionist literature is two-fold: 1) It is not sufficiently specific to exclusively denote Revisionist works (i.e., the same descriptor could also be assigned to other, non-Revisionist material dealing with Holocaust-related 'errors, inventions, etc.');

2) that subheading, unfortunately, can just as easily be interpreted by catalog users to mean that works assigned the heading themselves examine and reveal 'errors, inventions, etc.' related to the Holocaust: in short, precisely what the Holocaust Revisionists claim they do. Still a third objection to using the subdivided heading is that current usage or 'literary warrant'--as evidenced in both pro- and anti-Revisionist sources--overwhelmingly favors the term 'Holocaust Revisionism.' Both critics and proponents use it.

"To fully clarify what the term signifies and to connect it with related topics, we introduced the following 'public note' (which appears in the catalog) and cross-references:

Holocaust Revisionism.

pn Here are entered materials on the contention that the Jewish Holocaust did not actually take place.

x Holocaust denial literature

Revisionism, Holocaust

xx Antisemitism

Holocaust, Jewish (1933-1945)--Historiography"

Berman is dissatisfied with the Library of Congress' response to his campaign for this heading,

and has enlisted the aid of the Holocaust Memorial Council. More on that in an upcoming issue of this Newsletter.

EDITORIAL

HOLOCAUST REVISIONISM-- WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The problem with using Holocaust Revisionism as a subject heading lies in the fact that Revisionism is a respected school of historical thinking that attempts to give established historical fact a new, less "establishment" interpretation. Though many traditional historians object to specific revisionist ideas and methods, and use "revisionism" as an accusation, the term is gaining respectability, as is the revisionist school of thought.

Do we want Holocaust Revisionism to gain similar respectability with the general public that does not already use the term derisively? The Holocaust Revisionists chose this term carefully, to feed on the respectability that Historical Revisionism has already gained. The term is a disguise. By using it, opponents are hampering their own efforts to expose that disguise.

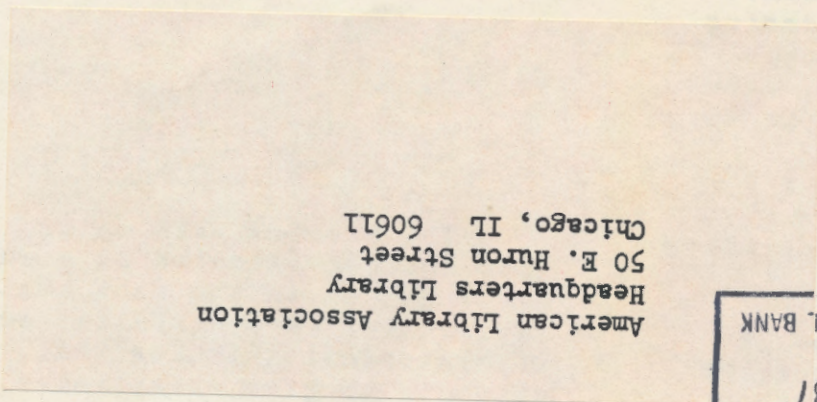
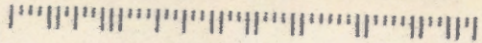
Descriptive names are signals with great impact. This is why interested parties (including this Task Force) have objected to subject headings such as Negroe, Eskimo, Gypsy, and Falasha, in spite of literary warrant and common usage. In this small way, some catalogers have tried to mold our language.

In light of this, a heading like the following would be neutral enough, yet helpful:

Holocaust--denial literature.

pn Here are entered works that claim the Holocaust did not actually take place, and works that refute this claim.

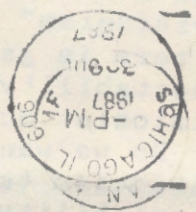
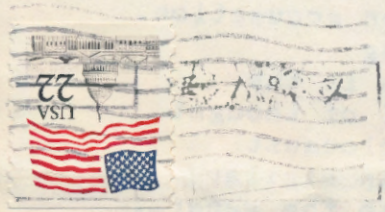
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