

Discovery and Recovery: Uncovering Nazi Looted Books in the UCLA Library and Repatriation Efforts

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This is the story of six books looted by Nazis from the Jewish Religious Community Library in Prague (JRCLP) that were discovered recently in the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Library. No scholarly literature describing similar experiences of North American academic libraries was found, nor were any professional guidelines for repatriating library materials. We describe our repatriation process, explore the historical contexts of the Nazi confiscation of millions of books and describe the Allies' post-war restitution efforts. As the digitization of academic library holdings worldwide progresses, the probability of uncovering more material of questionable provenance increases. This case study can open a dialog on the issue.

Introduction

German poet Heinrich Heine's famous observation that "Where books are burned, in the end people will be burned too" is a chillingly accurate prophecy of the Nazis' methodical destruction of libraries and cultural institutions, murder, and genocide from the 1930s through the end of World War II. Their systematic looting of libraries all through Europe, described as "libricide," the regime-sponsored destruction of books and libraries,¹ resulted in the destruction and dispersion of an estimated 100 million books,² and their celebratory bonfires of "un-German" books are well documented. While the overwhelming emphasis was on the destruction of Jewish books, the Nazis also targeted other literature they believed antithetical to their ideology. Early on in the regime, however, they implemented a parallel strategy of building a core collection of Jewish works for their own scholars to study. They planned to build institutes where party scholars would interpret these texts and, using Nazi ideological perspectives, provide "scientific proof" of their racial superiority and justify their campaigns to demonize Judaism and annihilate the Jewish race. Amassing Jewish books for institute libraries was the first step in this plan. Even though these institutes and museums for "extinct people" were never built, Nazi agents stormed across Europe plundering millions of books and artifacts. They sent crates of loot to various centers for sorting and selection: preservation or destruction.

Among the thousands of libraries looted by Nazis was the Jewish Religious Community Library in Prague (JRCLP), a collection of nearly 30,000 volumes and manuscripts. Some of the collection was recovered after the war when JRCLP was folded into the revised Jewish Museum

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in Prague (JMP). Today, curators at JMP are attempting to locate and rebuild the original community collection based on their 1939 catalog. Using HathiTrust, a database with digitized full-text images from several academic libraries, they identified books with the community's original ownership stamp and accession numbers in the UCLA Library.

How did these precious items begin in Prague, move through Nazi confiscation in the 1940s, and end up in Los Angeles in the 2020s? How many more books of questionable provenance are in academic libraries worldwide? What steps should academic and other institutional libraries take to uncover and repatriate looted property? How are the curators in Prague discovering and rebuilding their stolen collection?

This paper tells the story of one particular case of discovery, and the UCLA Library's small contributions towards rectifying one of the most horrific crimes in human history. It also serves as a case study within the general issue of restitution of materials stolen through war and imperialism, and contemporary libraries' moral obligations towards ascertaining the provenance of materials in all their collections.

Review of the Literature

Reports of academic libraries discovering Nazi looted material in their collections and returning them to their original owners were not found in any English language scholarly publication. French libraries have publicized their continuing efforts to recover and return stolen material for years,³ as have libraries in Germany and other European countries.⁴ Restitution of plundered artwork, cultural artifacts, and other relics because of war, imperialism, and colonialism has been a major topic among museum curators, archivists, governmental and non-governmental bodies, and legal specialists for decades. Their processes have been ponderous and laden with bureaucratic and legal complications, but breakthroughs do occur.⁵ There are many books and articles that document the Nazis' looting process and the recovery efforts immediately following the war, a selection of which are discussed below for historical context. In Europe today there are collaborative efforts among public, academic, and institutional libraries to return plundered books. However, the topic of discovery, restitution (return to owner or compensation), and/or repatriation (return to country of origin) of Nazi looted items in North American academic collections does not appear in the scholarly literature and needs to be addressed.

Historical Context: From Ideology to Action, 1933–1945

Immediately upon Hitler's consolidation of power in March 1933, his Nazi Party enacted a series of laws to actualize their ideological principles of the Master Race, one component of which was the purging of "non-German" cultural pollution from their society. "Non-German" books included all works about Judaism or by Jewish authors as well as the occult, Freemasonry, communism, Bolshevism and works promoting racial equality. Erasmus, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Thomas Jefferson, Helen Keller, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Mark Twain, and H.G. Wells are just a few among the scores of non-Jewish authors whom the Nazis banned.⁶ Party members, particularly Nazi youths and student groups, enthusiastically confiscated books and archives from private collections, bookstores, and public and academic libraries. Orchestrated bonfires of books, "spectacular autos-da-fe,"⁷ occurred throughout Germany in May 1933. At the book burning in Berlin, Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels declared to the crowd "...the era of exaggerated Jewish intellectualism is now at an end...you will do

well at this late hour to entrust to the flames the intellectual garbage of the past.”⁸ Today, a memorial with Heine’s prophetic quote marks the site of the bonfire.

The Nazis wished to project an image of a highly cultured civilization, but the world condemned the book burnings as thuggish and boorish.⁹ An idea emerged to save “a small number of rare and precious volumes for commercial and scholarly purposes.”¹⁰ “[A] few ‘intellectuals’ among the Nazi leaders realized that the captured Jewish book treasures might serve a useful purpose for founding specialized research libraries on the ‘Jewish Question.’”¹¹ They thus began confiscations for dual purposes: classic and important works shipped to Germany or held for commercial benefit, and the vast majority designated to paper mills and destruction.

Seizures and eradication of Jewish books and institutions filled another purpose besides “purifying” German society. Throughout their history, Jews had identified as the “People of the Book,” which traditionally referred to the Torah (Bible) and its commentaries but was later adopted as a metaphor for the Jewish people’s general love of learning and scholarship. By destroying their books, the Nazis simultaneously sought to destroy the core of Jewish identity, their cultural memory, and their unique story as a people.¹²

Destroying Jewish Books/Collecting Jewish Books

Nazi theoretician Alfred Rosenberg was assigned by Hitler to wage “ideological and spiritual war against Jews and Judaism,” and to document “an overview of Jewish influence on the world for the last two hundred years.”¹³ To fulfill this charge, he envisioned the *Institute for Research on the Jewish Question* in Frankfurt am Main, just one component of a *Hohe Schule* (Advanced Training Institute) to study the “ideological enemies of Nazism,” particularly the Jews.¹⁴ He formed the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR), whose agents followed the Wehrmacht throughout occupied Europe plundering libraries in their wake. “At its height in 1943, the [Institute] library comprised at least 550,000 volumes.”¹⁵

Other Nazi organizations ravaged Jewish libraries as well, particularly the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) in Berlin, which amassed millions of books for their own Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question, later renamed *Antijüdische Aktion*. Hannah Arendt noted that because of the Nazis’ “‘strange craze’ to establish museums commemorating their enemies, several services competed bitterly for the honor of establishing anti-Jewish museums and libraries.”¹⁶ They could not sort and catalog their hordes of books fast enough, which meant that millions were never unpacked from their crates.¹⁷

The Nazi cultural war was particularly brutal in Eastern Europe where the Slavic people were to serve as slaves. Hitler’s advisor Martin Borman declared that “The Slavs are to work for us. In so far as we don’t need them, they may die.”¹⁸ Nazis targeted and annihilated the local intelligentsia and other potential leaders. In Poland, some 40 percent of their university professors were killed, almost all public libraries were destroyed, and the entire publishing industry halted.^{19,20} Policies in Western Europe were less brutal because of perceived racial and cultural similarities. Jewish and other ‘un-German’ works were confiscated and plundered, but the Nazis did not seek total cultural eradication as they did in the East.

As the war progressed and allied bombings intensified, the Nazis relocated the books further away from the fronts. “[M]any of the [RSHA] books were transported to castles in [northern Bohemia]; some 60,000 Hebrew and Yiddish books were sent to Theresienstadt.”²¹ Here, they forced a group of Jewish ghetto inmates called “Talmudcommando,” led by librar-

ian Otto Muneles, to catalog the collection for selection purposes. Jewish librarians in other ghettos were also forced to catalog looted material for the Nazis. Many risked their lives to smuggle out as many precious works as they could, hoping they could be saved for a more humane post-war world. Very few librarians survived the ghettos and death camps.²²

As the Allies advanced, they commissioned agents to seek out and recover stolen cultural artifacts. The U.S. army established the Offenbach Archival Depository (OAD) for the collection and restitution of Jewish books, archives, and relics recovered in allied controlled territories. Characterized as the “American antithesis to the ERR” and “the biggest book restitution operation in library history,”²³ the operation was ironically located in the confiscated building of I.G. Farben, the chemicals conglomerate that had manufactured the gas used for mass murder in the death camps. The task was enormous—over three million books were shipped to the OAD. Some contained bookplates and other ownership details, but most did not or they had been removed, making it impossible to locate all the previous owners or their heirs. This raised a myriad of ethical questions: what should be done with collections whose owners, whether individuals or institutions, were annihilated or could not be determined? There was no precedent for such an undertaking. OAD’s official policy was to return items to their country of origin, but dissenting opinions were voiced from all directions. Why should valuable collections of Jewish scholarship and civilization be returned to the cities and towns where Jews were methodically murdered, where no Jews remained, and where many of the people now living in these same towns were active participants in the persecutions? What should become of books, for example, belonging to a yeshiva (rabbinical school) in a town where all the Jews and their institutions were destroyed? Many of the Jews who did survive the war opted to immigrate, especially to Israel or the U.S., rather than face the post-war anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, or the ghosts and horrid memories in their native lands. Leaders in Israel strongly believed that, as the new center of Jewish life where thousands of survivors found refuge, the orphaned books and relics belonged to the Jewish people in their natural homeland. Sending them to libraries in Israel seemed the most logical solution. But other factions were also interested in acquiring material for their libraries and commercial interests. Some individuals acted independently by sending thousands of documents and books to archives and libraries outside of Europe in a quasi-legal manner.²⁴ Other institutions sent their own agents to acquire material for their collections. Common thievery also occurred. After much negotiation, millions of books were distributed among academic libraries, Jewish organizations, governmental institutions, museums, archives, and book dealers in the United States, Israel, and elsewhere.^{25,26}

Unfortunately, different attitudes towards repatriation still exist between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union/Russia. Whereas the allies saw it as their moral obligation to return recovered property to the greatest extent possible, hundreds of railroad cars filled with books, art, furniture, and other property recovered by the Soviet army were seen as trophies they earned through their crucial role in defeating the Nazis. Negotiations with the Soviets, and now the Russians, for repatriation have been slow and arduous, although a bit more open since the fall of the Iron Curtain.²⁷

Cooperation and collaboration on repatriation continue today. At the *Holocaust Era Assets Conference* held in the Czech Republic in June 2009, forty-seven countries signed the non-binding Terezin Declaration agreeing on the obligation to rectify economic damages incurred by Holocaust victims and their heirs.²⁸ Attendees at follow-up conferences report

on progress and challenges encountered.²⁹ Investigators have established databases such as *Looted Cultural Assets*³⁰ and *The Rare Books of the Shimon Brisman Collection in Jewish Studies*³¹ that contain records of property, book collections, and illustrations of ownership stamps to assist researchers in their work. The public hears about instances of repatriated artwork in the general press regularly, but the process of establishing provenance of individual books and returning them to their proper owners or heirs does not garner many headlines.

Historical Overview of the JRCLP Collection

The Jewish Religious Community Library in Prague (JRCLP) was established in 1857 to accommodate donations of private collections from Jews as they became less interested in maintaining personal Judaica collections. It was opened to the public in 1874, becoming one of the first Jewish community libraries in Europe and among the richest. Its 1939 catalog, still in existence, records nearly 30,000 books, manuscripts and periodicals. Like Jewish libraries everywhere under the Nazis, the collection was confiscated and dispersed.

Much of the collection was recovered after the war, but approximately ten thousand books listed in the pre-war catalog were still missing. As part of the post-war clean up, the reestablished Jewish Museum received thousands of homeless books from Theresienstadt, local castles, and other book depots, many of which were duplicates. They distributed some duplicates to various entities, including 1,050 books to the second-hand bookshop *Bamberger and Wahrman* in Jerusalem in exchange for Judaica and Hebraica material otherwise impossible to acquire.³²

However, trying to rebuild the Community Library immediately after the war and throughout the forty years of communist rule proved futile. The surviving Jewish community did reestablish the Museum into which they incorporated the Community Library remnants, but staff had to fight for space and qualified workers. It cannot be determined if any of the missing volumes were recovered during this time, certainly not a significant amount. Because the original JRCLP collection was the historical basis of the Jewish Museum, as well as its most valuable collection, it was important to locate and recover as many of its volumes as possible.³³

JMP Work Today

The Jewish Museum in Prague intensified its research for lost items about six years ago when the digitization of collections and other tools made searching more manageable. JRCLP had always used labels and ownership stamps to mark their books, usually on the title page and elsewhere in the text. Museum researchers therefore seek these stamps, signatures, and accession numbers to identify their lost books from the pre-war period. Results from title or ownership searches in various databases often include digital scans on which the JRCLP stamps and accession numbers may appear. When researchers find a lost item, they contact the current owner and request repatriation. Curators also search online library catalogs because some libraries list provenance in their bibliographic records. If a possible lost book appears in a catalog, they request a scan of the item and check it for stamps and signatures.

Auction catalogs are another tool. They usually feature title pages of items on which identifying stamps and signatures may appear. When curators identify an item from the JRCLP, they ask the auction house to halt the auction and a restitution claim ensues. In their negotiations with owners, they explain that the Jewish Community Library is now part of the Jewish Museum in Prague and serves researchers, students, and the public. Negotiations can

be complex and lengthy, and sometimes they take years. Every country has a different legal system, which adds to the complexity.

Finding the oldest and most important prints from the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries is the top priority. Unfortunately, these books are often held in private collections and basically untraceable. So far, only about ten older prints have been recovered, and dozens more are still missing. JMP therefore focuses on finding newer books from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in their quest to restore the original collection as completely as possible.³⁴

UCLA - JMP Project

In June 2021, Ivan Kohout, a curator at JMP, contacted the UCLA Librarian for Jewish Studies explaining that by using HathiTrust he discovered three items in our collection with the JRCLP's pre-WWII ownership stamp and accession numbers, and gently inquired about repatriation. As a leading academic library, UCLA was an early member and contributor to HathiTrust, a collaborative of academic and research libraries preserving over seventeen million digitized volumes since its founding in 2008 (35). UCLA holds the physical copies, but the digitized volumes are part of the library's contribution to HathiTrust. The three books, works of Judaica in Hebrew, are

- *Sefer Yesod More ve-Sod Torah* (Fundamentals of Awe and the Secret of the Torah), published in Prague, 1833.
- *Sefer ha-Shorashim ha-Mekhuneh Sefat Emet* (The Book of Roots; a Hebrew-German Lexicon), Prague, 1803.
- *Sefer Teshuvat ha-Geonim* (Responses of the Great Sages), Ungvar, Ukraine, 1865.

Subsequently Kohout discovered two more JRCLP volumes in the UCLA Library, both in French: *Index Raisonné des Livres de Correspondance de feu Samuel David Luzzatto*, Padua 1878; and *Histoire des Médecins Juifs: Anciens et Modernes*, Brussels, 1844. This author found a sixth item among a backlog of unprocessed UCLA books: *Teshuvot Ketav Sofer - Yoreh De'ah*, (Responses on the work Yoreh De'ah), from Bratislava (Pressburg), 1878/9.

This was not the first request for the UCLA Library to return a book stolen by Nazis. In 2019, Virginia Steel, the Norman and Armena Powell University Librarian, received an inquiry from the Cultural Center of the Jewish Community in Munich asking for the return of a treatise on the topic of circumcision, published in Ansbach, Germany, 1844. It had been part of Munich's Jewish Community Library, which was looted by the Gestapo in 1938. Steel stated that it was unclear how the UCLA Library acquired it, but that it was sometime prior to 1986 when we cataloged it.

The repatriation request was unprecedented. There were no procedures, protocols, or workflows in place, and administrators were not aware of any professional literature that could provide guidance. They therefore identified steps in consultation with the leaders of the various units that had responsibility for any aspect of the book's life at UCLA: acquisitions and metadata services, preservation, and the Southern Regional Library Facility (SRLF - the storage facility on campus that provides space for materials from across the UC Library system).³⁶

After receiving the request from Prague in 2021, we physically checked and verified all items in question. The JRCLP stamps and the accession numbers on the title pages matched the corresponding entries in their pre-WWII catalog. Figure 1 shows an identifying stamp from the JRCLP collection. Figure 2 shows the title page of *Sefer Yesod More* with the stamp and accession number (2020) clearly visible at the bottom. Figure 3 shows the title page of

Index Raisonne with two different JRCLP stamps and the JRCLP accession number. Appendixes A and B list all the names used by Prague's Jewish Community Library and various ownership stamps.

After the print verifications, we compared every page of the HathiTrust copies to their physical originals to ensure completeness and legibility. Thus, all scholars will have access to the truest digital versions possible. We decided to rescan one volume in order to improve its legibility. *Teshuvot Ketav Sofer* was scanned and entered in HathiTrust and our catalog system before its return to JMP. The UCLA Library catalog was amended to note why we withdrew the physical copies and to provide links to the digital versions. Using WorldCat, a comprehensive catalog of libraries worldwide, we found that at least one other institution held a copy of each book as well; therefore, our volumes were not unique. Our Conservation and Preservation Department checked and treated each volume as needed for insects, mold, and any damage that we could repair. The Prague curators requested us not to remove signs of UCLA ownership (e.g., a new binding, ownership stamps, etc.). Inadvertent damage can occur during erasure processes, and the UCLA insignias add another "chapter" to each book's history. The books were packaged, insured, and shipped to Prague following the protocols for shipping rare books.

How Did They Get from Prague to UCLA?

At this time, we cannot determine precisely how the looted books ended up in the UCLA Library, but we can make some well-founded assumptions.

As discussed above, after the war, millions of confiscated books were discovered throughout Europe. The massive challenge of finding individual owners or their descendants, and the uncertainty of what to do with the property of the hundreds of communities and institutions that were annihilated, created moral and

FIGURE 1
A Pre-WWII Ownership Stamp of the Jewish Community Library in Prague



FIGURE 2
Title page of *Sefer Yesod More* with ownership stamp and accession number (2020) at the bottom



FIGURE 3
Title Page of *Index Raisonné* with Two
Different JRCLP Stamps and the Accession
Number

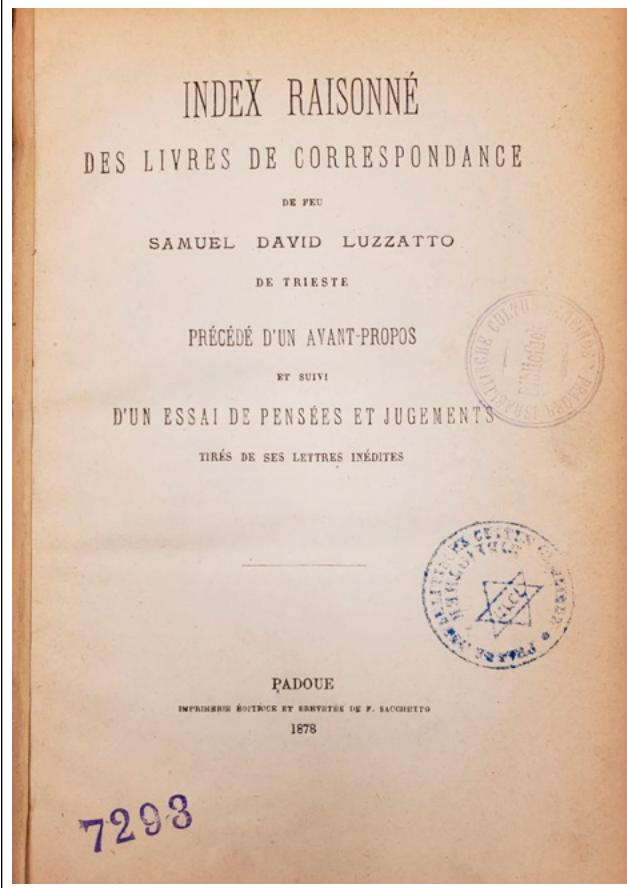
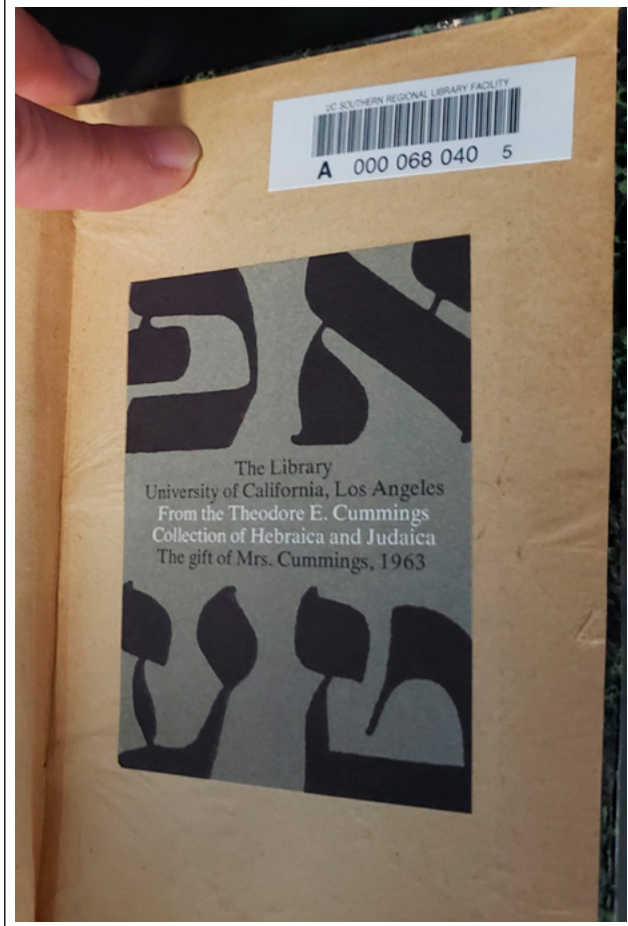


FIGURE 4
The Cummings Collection Bookplate in
Sefer ha-Geonim



emotion-laden dilemmas. “Jewish scholars and intellectual leaders were anxious to build up Jewish library reserves in Israel or to “save” abandoned Jewish books...and redistribute them to Jewish institutions” outside of Europe.³⁷ Book dealers also purchased items for their inventories. Some books may have been purchased by collectors or dealers from Nazis during the war, or taken as ‘souvenirs’ by Allied soldiers and others and then sold to dealers or donated to collections. We believe that UCLA acquired the JRCLP items during a major purchasing campaign in the 1960s.

UCLA was established in 1919 and therefore is a relatively young research university. As interest in Jewish Studies grew and more courses were offered during the 1950s, the Library needed to expand its resources to support scholarship and coursework.³⁸ It was in a fortunate financial position to purchase significant amounts of material in the 1960s. A major boost to the collection was the acquisition of the entire inventory of 33,520 volumes from the *Bamberger and Wahrman* bookstore in Jerusalem in 1963. This was the same bookstore that acquired over 1,000 duplicate books from JMP in an exchange after the war.³⁹ The purchase was initiated by Professor Arnold Band, and was enabled by a generous gift from the Cummings Family of Beverly Hills.^{40, 41} Items from that purchase are now distinguished as the *Cummings Collection* with an identifying bookplate. One of the JRCLP books contains the bookplate, as shown in figure 4, indicating that it was acquired by *Bamberger and Wahrman* at some point after the war

and included in this transaction. At that time, UCLA assigned sequential accession numbers to each book as it was processed. All six JRCLP items discovered so far have similar UCLA accession numbers: 2079240, 2089113, 2098041, 2099796, 2100243, and 2114257. This indicates they were acquired around the same time when library holdings were only around two million volumes, suggesting they were all obtained and processed in the early to mid-1960s.* It thus appears that the JRCLP volumes were purchased from various booksellers and dealers after the war. Further investigation is needed to ascertain more precise information.

Repatriation Actions

The UCLA Library believes that the repatriation of Nazi looted books from academic library collections is a vital ethical issue. We therefore decided to publicize this case as widely as possible and expand on the topic in a series of events. With the current rise of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial worldwide, and because of continued book censorship in the United States and elsewhere, it is imperative to remind our public of the crimes that were committed. Teaching about the ongoing process of restitution efforts in libraries and museums and demonstrating a commitment to this process is crucial. As of this writing, the UCLA Library has engaged in several events and is planning more:

- We held a “hand-over” reception with members of the Library, campus community, and representatives of the Czech and Israeli Consulates in Los Angeles. The University Librarian symbolically handed the books over to the Czech Consul General with brief remarks to commemorate the occasion.⁴²
- We publicized this event through social media and other Library and campus communication channels.
- Librarians and staff mounted a detailed online exhibit telling the story of the books and our repatriation efforts.⁴³
- The Library and the Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies held an online four-part symposium series discussing this case and the broader questions of Colonial histories and cultural sovereignty.⁴⁴
- Librarians are preparing academic and general articles and conference presentations that discuss this particular case and related topics.
- The Library is developing plans for a long-term project to review our early Judaica holdings for ownership stamps and other signs of questionable provenance, whether from Prague or other institutions, and to plan repatriations as relevant.
- We are also planning a campaign to raise staff awareness throughout the Library of signs of questionable provenance and their significance.

On a Judaica librarians’ listserv, only one colleague reported that their institution had repatriated volumes to their pre-WWII owners. Another stated that it was an important topic, and she would encourage her staff to be aware of the possibility. It thus becomes apparent that staff throughout the library system should be vigilant for signs of questionable provenance. Subject specialists, catalogers, members of digitization teams, special collections staff, acquisitions, interlibrary loan staff, preservation specialists, student workers reshelving books and others may all come across such material at some time. Staff may see an ownership stamp

* As of 2022, the UCLA Library holds over 12 million print and electronic volumes, of which more than 350,000 are Hebraica and Judaica

in a volume but not realize its potential meaning, or they may overlook it entirely. One idea to raise staff awareness is to create and distribute a graphic or poster on which we would illustrate various ownership stamps from looted collections, and remind staff to contact the relevant subject specialist for further clarification if found.

Conclusion

In the last three years, two European institutions have uncovered volumes from their pre-WWII collections in the UCLA Library using the HathiTrust database. Library administrators did not know of any official guides or protocols to process repatriation and therefore developed the following steps:

1. Physical verification. Check the ownership stamps, accession numbers, and any other identifying marks to match those presented by the claimant.
2. Compare physical texts to digitized versions for completeness and legibility. Rescan if necessary.
3. Scan items that have not yet been scanned before repatriation to ensure that scholars have access to digital versions.
4. Search for each item in worldwide catalogs for other owners to determine scarcity.
5. Remove the physical volume from the collection. Update the catalog to note the removal and the reason why. Include a link to the electronic version. Notify partners in any cooperative or collaborative catalog system.
6. Check the items' conditions for damages and treat or repair as needed. Ask the original owners whether to remove newer book ownership insignias or not—encourage leaving them in place to prevent inadvertent damage during the erasure process.
7. Insure and ship books to the original owner using guidelines for shipping rare material.

This author believes it is highly likely that we will find more looted books and other material of questionable provenance in our collection, whether from Prague, Germany, or elsewhere. As the digitization of academic library holdings worldwide progresses and a broader public gains access to these collections, the chances for discovering more looted material increases. This goes beyond Nazi loot but includes, for example, photographs or diaries of Indigenous, colonized, or enslaved people. Librarians must raise the awareness among our colleagues of the possibility of finding material in library stacks from any area in the world where war and violence have ravaged libraries, archives, and communities. Individuals who collected pieces on the site may have acted in good faith, believing that they were saving precious and irreplaceable works for posterity. But when and to whom should they be returned? By making them accessible to the world through digitization, are academic libraries fulfilling their ethical and legal duties? What *are* our legal and ethical duties in this realm?

Governmental and non-governmental organizations have been working with museums, archives, and legal experts for years to create protocols and laws for the restitution of artwork and cultural relics. Libraries can look to them for ideas and guidelines, but they must be prepared when questions of provenance occur among their own holdings. The *International Forum on Judaica Provenance* is a recent initiative of the National Library of Israel and the Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL). The forum consists of thirteen curators and scholars from the arts, law, history, and Judaica in seven countries whose goal is to develop a White Paper of recommendations. At the AJL conference in June 2023, members realized that a handful of institutions are currently working on issues related to Nazi-looted books in their collections. A task force

was formed to promote the sharing of various activities and to support one another. Some of the goals include creating an ownership stamp database, and a curriculum for provenance research training. This White Paper could serve as a model for other communities as well.⁴⁵

The return of items from the UCLA Library to their original home in Prague and assisting the curators rebuild their pre-WWII community library is just one small step towards rectifying a past injustice. As small as our contribution may be within the greater picture, the process has been immensely satisfying on a personal and professional level. By publicizing our efforts as broadly as possible we hope we can remind other academic librarians and scholars of the need to continue to redress cultural and ethnic crimes, whether historical or contemporary.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to Mr. Ivan Kohout, Curator at the Jewish Museum in Prague, whose work began this project; Ms. Alena Aissing, UCLA Library, for translating an article from Czech to English; and Dr. Elaine Goodfriend, California State University Northridge, for reviewing and providing helpful suggestions for this manuscript.

Appendix A.

Various Names of Prague's Jewish Community Library

- Prager israelitische Cultus-Gemeinde Bibliothek
- Bibliothek Der Jüd. Kultusgemeinde in Prag
- Knihovna Náboženské obce židovské v Praze

Appendix B.

Ownership Stamps Used by the Jewish Religious Community Library in Prague



Notes

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12. Ovenden, *Burning the Books*.
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14. Friedman.
15. Lisa Moses Leff, *The Archive Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018).
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17. Glickman, *Stolen Words*.
18. Knuth, *Libricide*.
19. Knuth.
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21. Friedman.
22. Anders Rydell, *The Book Thieves*.
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