

האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

FROM
ALEPH
TO
TAV

The New Bloomfield Library on Mount Scopus

A L E P H
 AUTOMATED LIBRARY EXPANDABLE PROGRAM
 HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN YOU AND
 THE COMPUTER CAN BE CONDUCTED IN
 HEBREW OR IN ENGLISH.

TYPE 'H' IF YOU WANT A HEBREW
 CONVERSATION.
 TYPE 'L' IF YOU WANT AN ENGLISH
 CONVERSATION.

AFTER TYPING PRESS THE 'RETURN'
 KEY.

FROM ALEPH TO TAV

א ל פ ח
 אוטומט ליבררי עקסאנדבל פרוגראם
 אוניברסיטת ירושלים

התקשורת ביניך ובין המחשב יכולה להיערך
 בעברית או באנגלית.

הקלד 'ה' אם אתה רוצה שיחה בעברית.
 הקלד 'ל' אם אתה רוצה שיחה באנגלית.

אחרי הקלדת הקלד 'ה' או 'ל' יש לחצות על
 מקש 'החזרה'.

The New Bloomfield Library on Mount Scopus



By David Jablinowitz

Imagine walking into a library, going over to a computer terminal, and finding the book you need in a matter of seconds even if it's only available in a library at the other end of the country. "Within five years, students at the Hebrew University and other institutions in Israel will be able to take advantage of such a setup." So says Dr. Elisheva Yaron, Director of the University's new Bloomfield Library for the Humanities and Social Sciences on Mount Scopus,

speaking of a planned computer link-up among all of Israel's universities. Hebrew University students at Givat Ram and Mount Scopus are already benefiting from such a link-up. Called ALEPH — Automatic Library Expandable Program, Hebrew University — the system was decided upon after American and British consultants concluded, some 13 years ago, that moving the libraries of the Social Sciences and Humanities to Mount Scopus, away from Givat Ram and the Jewish National and University Library — announced a year ear-

lier — would create serious problems for both students and faculty, as each of the specialized libraries did not stock many books that could be found in the National Library. The suggested solution to the difficulties that were foreseen was to unify the three sections of the Social Sciences Library, the eighteen Humanities sections, and the Jewish National and University Central Library into "one system, one catalogue," so that users on one campus could at least find out about the availability of a book immediately, even if the book itself was elsewhere. (Books

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acquired before 1980 are listed on microfiche copies of the JNUL catalogue.) The Social Sciences and Humanities sections would themselves be unified into one large university library on Mount Scopus. Before the move, not only were the different libraries catalogued separately, they were also classified according to different systems.

Confronting the Challenge

To confront this challenge, a Hebrew University team of five

— a librarian, two systems analysts, and two programmers — got to work in 1977. At the same time an academic committee decided to classify all the books within the library system using the Library of Congress classification for shelving and Library of Congress Subject Headings for subject access. The only way to undertake such a combined venture was to turn to the computer. Otherwise, according to Yehudith Levi, Assistant for Planning and Development, she and her colleagues would have been faced with “a gargantuan task that

would have never been done.” The numbers spoke for themselves. There were some 200,000 publications, and “an average of 3.7 (index) cards per book.”

When the team began its work in anticipation of the move to Mount Scopus, Mrs. Levi says they “didn’t exactly have in mind what it would end up like.” The first decision was whether to put the computer on an off-line or an on-line system. Off-line is a setup in which information is prepared and then filed in the computer without provision for human response, whereas on-line is an in-

teraction between human and computer. The latter is more expensive but much preferred for reasons of quick access. The planning committee wanted to use an on-line system at least for registration and returning of books, where immediate retrieval is essential. And, in fact, to keep costs down, the initial plan called for a combination off-line/on-line arrangement. Eventually, however, because an off-line operation results in a waste of time and money in bringing information up to date, University officials realized that an entire on-line library would be more cost-effective, and the plans were changed accordingly.

This decision greatly simplified the task at hand. One card was made up for each book and University students typed up the cards on an IBM Diskette. The information was then put into the computer using a simple coding system, so as to allow the computer to divide the information (author/title/topic) simply and uniformly. Next, the computer printed out the catalogued information on work sheets. The students, who continued to play an important role throughout the process, searched the *National Union Catalogue*, which includes information on Library of Congress classifications, and copied any information that might have been missing in each book's cataloguing. Later, the revised information was put back into the computer "complete classification."

The process went relatively smoothly, except for the 25% of the Latin-lettered books (including publications in various European languages), and the Russian, Arabic, and Hebrew language publications all of which needed a more complicated classification. For these problematic cases, the librarians recatalogued and classified the books individually.



Time-consuming manual searches....

The Stretch Run

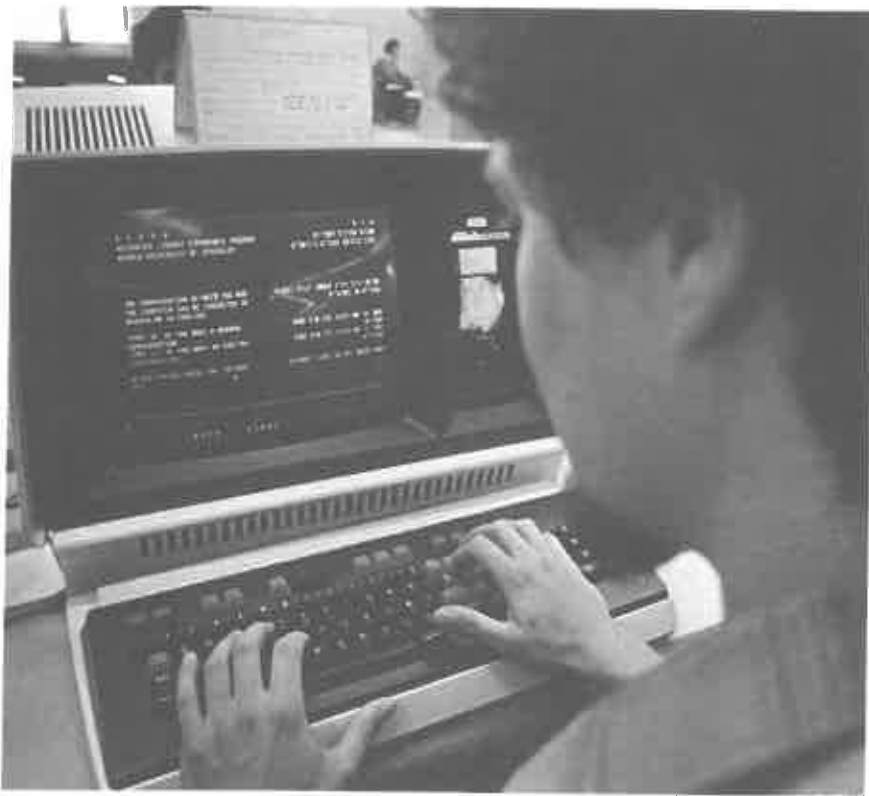
The information was thus "captured." As time closed in on the dedication of the Mount Scopus campus, high school and college students were employed to paste computer-printed labels on all the publications. The labels included section and shelf markings, and a bar-coded label for the circulation system. A special coding for "stack section" was also added through which all the shelves were numbered, but this was only a temporary device to make the changeover easier for the library workers.

But before this last stage of the work was completed, the planning group decided to test the new system in action. In 1980, a pilot project was set up in the Kaplan School Library for Social Sciences, which was the first to be computer catalogued. Karen Sitton, the Head of the Kaplan Library and now Head Librarian of the Bloomfield Library, explains: "Because the computer was also fed with the old Social

Sciences classification, users were not thrown into confusion." Library officials were able to learn from their mistakes, and as a result took various remedial steps, such as providing clearer instructions for operating the computers. But they were on the whole pleased by the general positive student reaction. Feeding the computer a subject word and being immediately presented with a list of all the publications in the library dealing with that subject is fun and exciting, and users responded enthusiastically.

Learning the System

Since the dedication of the Mount Scopus campus in the Fall of 1981, Hebrew University students have been making friends with the new computer terminals. There are currently thirty-four terminals in the Bloomfield Library for the Humanities and Social Sciences and fourteen in the Central Jewish National and Uni-



have been replaced by the computer's immediate access to the Library's entire catalogue

versity Library on Givat Ram. The operation is a relatively smooth one but there are still some problems to be solved. One disadvantage to the new system is the potential for congestion. Whereas the drawer/index card system rarely brought two users to the same drawer at the same time, there are often long lines to the terminals. "At first, the students acted as though the library was only open for three or four hours a day," said Yehudith Levi, and this caused tremendous back-ups. "After awhile, however, they began to realize that the libraries kept long hours and that they could take advantage of nonpeak periods and be finished in just a couple of minutes."

Future plans call for cataloging other Hebrew University libraries into the system, and providing them with terminals. Four terminals are planned for the Education and Social Work Library and one for the Truman Institute on

Mount Scopus, as well as six in the Science Library on Givat Ram. The Faculty of Agriculture in Rehovot will also be hooked up soon, while the University's Medical School Berman Library



Dr. Elisheva Yaron

at Ein Karem will continue to use its own automated system.

A monthly printed catalogue updates information relating to new books in all the libraries in the system. A special class letter "o" is used for books which have not yet been fully catalogued, directing users to this special section if they cannot find the book they need anywhere else.

Yochanan Spruch is credited with being the "mastermind" behind the ALEPH system. Mr. Spruch, who works in Hebrew University's Data Processing Department, set up a database management system for ALEPH that allowed the programming team to get the system written and running in just over a year.

A winner of Israel's prestigious Kaplan Prize for new ideas in the workplace, the Mount Scopus University Library has already gained international recognition as a prototype for the best and newest in Library Science, and hosts professional librarians and interested visitors from all over Israel and abroad, who come to see one of the world's most modern library systems in action.

Catching on Nationwide

Meanwhile, the Technion — the Israel Institute of Technology — is working on a pilot project that is scheduled to be operational sometime this winter. Yehudith Levi explains that her colleagues in Haifa intend to select part of their collection to put through a network of data transmission especially set up by the Communications Ministry. Committees are also meeting at Tel Aviv University and at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev to discuss the possibility of connecting those institutions to the system. The talks in Tel Aviv, said Ms. Levi, have reached the "serious discussion" stage — and a nationwide automated library system has become a real possibility. ■

