

INSIDE



Rare Books Launch Online

A collection released last month includes some of the first illustrated books ever printed for children in Hebrew and Yiddish.

PAGE 3

Palabra Recordings Released

In honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, 50 new audio recordings of poets and prose writers joined the online Palabra archive.

PAGE 4

Obituary: Lloyd Rasmussen

As a blind employee of the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS), Lloyd Rasmussen brought a special perspective that improved NLS' offerings.

PAGE 4



Q&A: Catherine Nyambura

The head of monograph cataloging in the Library's Nairobi office discusses how she made her way to the Library and her service of more than two decades.

PAGE 5



Acquisitions librarian Abdus Salam (right) selects titles from a local bookshop in Peshawar, Pakistan.

Acquisitions Fiscal, Overseas and Support Division

Collecting the Globe

Library offices abroad acquire and catalog hard-to-find material from around the world.

BY MARK HARTSELL

Collecting at the Library of Congress literally never stops.

The massive collections of the world's largest library are the product, in part, of a staff that acquires material around the world, around the clock.

To facilitate its acquisitions work, the Library operates six field offices abroad, stationed across 11 time zones from South America to Southeast Asia.

At any given moment somewhere on the globe – perhaps in Rio de Janeiro, maybe in New Delhi – employees are acquiring an item to add to the more

than 171 million others already in the Library's collections.

They do so in the face of all manner of challenges: everyday hassles like bureaucratic red tape and unreliable transportation and extraordinary events such as violent social unrest, coups or natural disasters.

The hard-to-find material these offices acquire helps provide Congress, analysts and scholars critical information they need to do their work, today and in the decades ahead. Their mission is unique: The Library of Congress is the only library in the world that operates such a network abroad.

COLLECTING, CONTINUED ON 6

NOTICES

DONATED TIME

The following employees have satisfied eligibility requirements to receive leave donations from other staff members. Contact Gloria Dixon at gdixon@loc.gov.

Lynette Brown
Tiffany Corley Harkins
Stephanie Jefferson

Linda Malone
Kenneth Mitchell

HELP SPREAD THE WORD: OF THE PEOPLE GRANTS

Help spread the word about three new grant opportunities with the Connecting Communities Digital Initiative (CCDI), part of the Of the People program. Individuals and educational and cultural institutions are invited to help amplify the stories of communities of color at the Library.

The grants will fund a minority-serving higher education institution; a library, archive or museum; and an artist or scholar in residence. The CCDI team will host a series of public webinars to provide information and answer questions about the grants.

For more information, visit the Of the People [blog](#).

COVID-19 AND THE ONE HEALTH APPROACH

Oct. 19, noon

[Online](#)

Join the Health Services Division (HSD) and the Science, Technology and Business Division for a webinar highlighting the One Health approach to addressing pandemics. One Health is a transdisciplinary framework that calls for collaboration between human and veterinary medicine and other fields, including behavioral science and economics, to manage pandemics.

Speakers are Sharon Deem of the Saint Louis Zoo Institute for Conservation Medicine; Bernadette Dunham of the Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Washington University; and Tracey McNamara of the Western University of Health Sciences College of Veterinary Medicine.

[Register here](#).

Questions? Contact HSD at hso@loc.gov.

Request ADA accommodations five business days in advance at (202) 7076362 or ADA@loc.gov.

GAZETTE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

loc.gov/staff/gazette

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MISSION OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Library's central mission is to engage, inspire and inform Congress and the American people with a universal and enduring source of knowledge and creativity.

ABOUT THE GAZETTE

An official publication of the Library of Congress, The Gazette encourages Library managers and staff to submit articles and photographs of general interest. Submissions will be edited to convey the most necessary information.

Back issues of The Gazette in print are available in the Communications Office, LM 143. Electronic archived issues and a color PDF file of the current issue are available online at loc.gov/staff/gazette.

GAZETTE WELCOMES LETTERS FROM STAFF

Staff members are invited to use the Gazette for lively and thoughtful debate relevant to Library issues. Letters must be signed by the author, whose place of work and telephone extension should be included so we can verify authorship. If a letter calls for management response, an explanation of a policy or actions or clarification of fact, we will ask for management response.—Ed.

Library of Congress Gazette

Washington, DC 20540-1620

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ISSN 1049-8184

Printed by the Printing Management Section

GAZETTE DEADLINES

The deadline for editorial copy for the Oct. 29 Gazette is Wednesday, Oct. 20.

Email editorial copy and letters to the editor to mhartsell@loc.gov and wmal@loc.gov.

To promote events through the Library's online calendar (www.loc.gov/loc/events) and the Gazette Calendar, email event and contact information to calendar@loc.gov by 9 a.m. Monday of the week of publication.

Boxed announcements should be submitted electronically (text files) by 9 a.m. Monday the week of publication to mhartsell@loc.gov and wmal@loc.gov.

ARE YOU IN TOUCH WITH YOUR FORMER INTERNS?

Questions or ideas? Contact alumni@loc.gov



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
ALUMNI NETWORK

Invite them to join the Library of Congress Alumni Network to stay connected

www.loc.gov/alumni

Rare Illustrated Children's Books Launch Online

They're among the earliest picture books in Hebrew and Yiddish.

BY SHARON HOROWITZ

Last month, a new digital collection joined the Library's website. Bursting with color and energy, rich with imprints from cities across three continents – Moscow, Odessa, Warsaw, Berlin, New York – [Rare Illustrated Children's Books in Hebrew and Yiddish, 1900-1929](#) is a veritable treasure trove of the first illustrated books ever printed for children in Hebrew and Yiddish. The 60 titles in the collection are all rare, and some are unique to the Library.

The story behind the collection is also a little out of the ordinary. One day in 2012 or 2013, Ann Brener of the Hebraic Section of the African and Middle Eastern Division was poking around volumes of Talmud and rabbinic commentaries, peering into brown old envelopes, when she found herself gazing at an illustration from a Hebrew picture book for children. "I was stunned by its avant-garde beauty and its whiff of the early 1900s," she said.

Today, Hebrew children's books "get churned out by the bushel" in Israel, Brener said. "But this one was clearly old, and it was printed in Russia."

The only information included on the book was its title, "La-Sevivo" ("To the Dreidel"), and its place of publication, Moscow-Odessa. No date or author appeared. Through research, Brener soon discovered that it is one of the first picture books published for children in Hebrew.

It was printed around 1919, following the Russian Revolution, when the press was on the run from the Bolsheviks. The only other copies – quite rare themselves, Brener said – come from a later printing in Frankfurt-am-Main.

Historically, the Hebraic Section



African and Middle Eastern Division

A colorful image from "La-Sevivo" features a goat, his Hebrew Bible and a dreidel.

has collected a representative selection of children's books as opposed to a comprehensive one. Thanks, however, to the good judgment of previous curators and the donation of a few rare Yiddish titles, the section's holdings turn out to feature dozens of rare inclusions, now organized in the new collection.

It came together after Brener uncovered the details about "La-Sevivo." Hooked, she began to identify more and more hidden treasures for children: periodicals in the best of avant-garde style from Moscow, New York and Kiev; fairy tales with whimsical illustrations from Berlin; story books with richly colored stencil cuts from Odessa and Jerusalem.

Before long, what seemed like the odd gem here and there emerged into a major collection of rare children's books in Hebrew and Yiddish. It makes sense to Brener that so many of the Library's titles are unique.

"After all," she said, "the same countries that gave birth to so many of these beautiful books were also the countries in which the Jews experienced pogroms,

forced deportations and, eventually, the Holocaust. It's not surprising if they survive only here."

Collections like this one, she added, are a testament to the role of the Library in preserving cultural treasures from all over the world.

Most of the books in the collection remain under copyright protection and are available only on-site through the Stacks system. However, five of the books are accessible through the new digital presentation.

The image shared with this article is from "La-Sevivo" and is an example of the exquisite illustrations found in the collection. A studious goat pores over his Humash, his Hebrew Bible, only to peer up and see a dreidel spinning its way through the hills. He takes off his glasses to get a better look.

"Just what people do when they want to see something more closely," Brener said. "It makes the picture fun as well as beautiful, and uniquely Jewish in character."

To learn more about these enchanting books, myopic goats and all, read the historical introduction to the collection. ■

Palabra Archive Releases New Recordings

Fifty previously unpublished audio recordings from the [Palabra archive](#) have been made available in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, the Hispanic Reading Room announced.

The archive features audio recordings of prominent writers from Latin America, the Iberian Peninsula, the Caribbean and other regions with Luso-Hispanic heritage populations reading from their works. Every year, unreleased items are published for online streaming.

The collection now contains about 800 recordings of poets and prose writers participating in sessions at the Library's Recording Laboratory and at other locations around Spain and Latin America.

[This year's batch](#) includes recordings with renowned Mexican writer Elena Poniatowska; Cuban-American author, poet and anthropologist Ruth Behar; Spanish poet José Manuel Caballero Bonald; and Portuguese author Dulce María Cardoso. ■

CERTIFICATION OF COVID-19 VACCINATION STATUS

The Library announced this week that employees must update their certification of vaccination status within one week of any changes using the [Human Capital Services Portal](#).

In addition, the Library now requires vaccination status certification for all employees. Employees who have so far declined to state their vaccination status must go into the system and certify their status by Oct. 22.

For more information, see the recently updated [Special Announcement 21-11 – COVID-19 Vaccination Certification](#).

Questions? Submit them to [AskHCD](#) selecting the "COVID-19 Certification of Vaccination" category from the drop-down menu.



Lloyd Rasmussen

Lloyd Rasmussen, 74, died on Sept. 13, just weeks before his planned retirement from the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS).

In his 46 years at NLS, Rasmussen worked on technical aspects of the program, from records to cassettes to digital talking books. And as a blind person himself, he brought a perspective to his work that was essential as NLS developed new products and improved its services.

"For many staff members, Lloyd was not just a co-worker or valued employee," said NLS' deputy director, Jason Yasner. "Lloyd was family, and we will sorely miss him."

Rasmussen came to NLS from the Iowa Commission for the Blind in 1975, early in the program's transition from records to cassettes. His first encounter with the NLS cassette player came just as he was being hired.

"I'd better get to know these," he recalled thinking in an interview for the NLS newsletter not long before his death. He was right: He would spend the next several years working to improve the performance of both the new cassette players and the older disc players.

Rasmussen had a key role in the development of every piece of technology NLS has released since then, including digital talking book machines; mobile apps for BARD, the Braille and Audio Reading Download online service; and the two models of an electronic braille display, or eReader, that NLS is currently field testing.

For many years, Rasmussen also served on the industry committee that developed standards for digital talking books. "It was the only international travel I've ever done," he said. "Sometimes I enjoyed the food, sometimes not, but I always enjoyed the meetings."

Yasner also cited Rasmussen's tireless advocacy for NLS. "He relished every opportunity available to him to speak on behalf of the program. ... No matter the setting or audience, he was always ready and willing to speak about the tremendous work of NLS."

Rasmussen had a lifelong passion for amateur radio; he was first licensed in Iowa at age 8. "There was a very limited supply of accessible reading materials when I was a kid," he said, "so I used to read amateur radio materials that had been brailled in the 1930s and '40s. It felt like one of the only hobbies where a sighted and a blind person could participate on a completely equal level."

Rasmussen is survived by his wife, Judy. Plans for a memorial service have not yet been announced. ■

HAVING TECHNICAL ISSUES?

The Office of the Chief Information Officer's service desk is staffed around the clock with technicians ready to help. Contact ocioservicedesk@loc.gov or (202) 707-7727.



Catherine Nyambura

Catherine Nyambura

Catherine Nyambura is head of monograph cataloging in the Library's Nairobi office.

Tell us about your background.

I'm from Kenya. I was born in Nairobi, the capital city. However, I grew up in the town of Nakuru, where I did my primary schooling. I then went to the lush tea plantations and cool climate of Tigoni town to attend the Limuru Girls School, popularly called Chox.

While there, I heard about the newly established Faculty of Information Sciences in Moi University in Eldoret town. Information sciences sounded quite interesting, and I successfully applied to study the course. I started in 1992, studying information sciences with a specialization in librarianship. Before joining the university, I took a short course in BASIC programming.

I graduated in 1996 and, for a short while, worked at a computer college as a tutor for students taking BASIC programming in Nakuru.

What brought you to the Library, and what do you do?

In 1997, I moved from Nakuru to Nairobi to look for a job. Nairobi, being the capital city, offered more opportunities. I compiled a list of institutions to approach, and the Library of Congress was one of them.

I remember walking to the Library's Nairobi office near closing time. Ruth Thomas, who was then the field director, was struck by how smartly dressed I was, and she offered me a short contract job to collate newspapers. I must have impressed her, because she kept me on.

Then, in 1998, the office was given four additional countries to cover from West Africa on a trial basis: Cameroon, Senegal, Gabon and Ghana. Since I had trained in cataloging and had some basic French, I was given a year's contract to catalog materials from the four countries.

When they were assigned permanently to the Library's Nairobi office in 1999, a vacancy opened up for a cataloger. I applied and got the job. I must say that sometimes I pinch myself (22 years later) that I'm an employee of the Library of Congress. In university, we'd hear a lot about the Library. In my mind, it was a place where the crème de la crème worked. I never imagined I'd join such an esteemed institution.

At the Nairobi office, which opened in 1966, we acquire and catalog publications in all subjects (except clinical medicine and technical agriculture) from 30 African countries and jurisdictions: Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo (Democratic Republic), Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mayotte, Mozambique, Namibia, Reunion, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

I'm responsible for cataloging publications from Burundi, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo (Democratic Republic), Djibouti, Gabon,

Ghana, Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion, Rwanda and Senegal. The publications come in all formats and languages.

From 2008 to 2019, I served as the acting head of the cataloging section. In 2019, the supervisory duties were officially added to my position description, and I became the head of monograph cataloging.

I thoroughly enjoy my work. I find it quite intriguing. Some publications turn me into a detective as I try to understand and put together their history. The language of other publications can be strange to me, requiring me to use my networking and people skills to get translations done. Every time I take a new book into my hands, I know I'm on to another adventure. I honestly wouldn't want to do anything else.

What are some of your standout projects?

In my regular cataloging work, there aren't many opportunities for unique or special projects. However, I remember that between 2003 and 2005, I was assigned a special project to index about 500 loose-leaf conference papers that had been acquired. The conference papers were sent to New Delhi for microfiching.

What do you enjoy doing outside work?

In my free time, I am a Toastmaster and a member of Diplo-speak Toastmasters Club. Diplo-speak is a corporate club for the staff of the U.S. Embassy, the U.S. Agency for International Development and associated U.S. government agencies in Kenya. I serve as the vice president for education for our club.

I always tell people that if golfing is not for you, try Toastmasters. It provides you great networking opportunities while sharpening your communication and leadership skills.

What is something your co-workers may not know about you?

I find washing dishes while listening to a podcast very relaxing. I could wash dishes all day. ■

COLLECTING, CONTINUED FROM 1

“We are at the forefront of preserving today’s scholarly and cultural output for future access in one shape or form for the generations to come,” said William Kopycki, who for 12 years has served as field director for the Cairo office and currently also oversees the Nairobi office. “There is no other institution operating on the scale that the Library does, and that is what makes it the world’s greatest library and a name familiar to all people.”

In the early 1960s, the Library established nearly two dozen field offices around the world – a recognition of the importance that developing regions would play in post-World War II affairs and of the need to better understand these places.

Six of those offices still exist today, set in cities across South America, Africa and Central and Southeast Asia: Rio, Cairo, Nairobi, Islamabad, New Delhi and Jakarta. The New Delhi office also operates suboffices in Colombo, Dhaka and Kathmandu, and the Jakarta office does the same in Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Manila and Yangon.

These offices confront significant challenges in carrying out their mission.

They cover vast geographic areas, deal with an enormous variety of languages, rely on underdeveloped infrastructure, negotiate bureaucratic processes across dozens of countries and even persevere through natural disasters – in 2015, the Kathmandu suboffice survived a magnitude 7.8 earthquake.

The employees in these offices, at times, face conditions that make just getting to work dangerous.

Massive, violent protests in 2011 and 2013 forced the closure of the Cairo office (located in the U.S. Embassy) for short periods and the evacuation of its director from Egypt. In 2012, protestors targeted the embassy and actually came over its walls; the Library’s staff was sent home just an hour beforehand. Pakistan is so risky for

Americans that the field director of the Islamabad office oversees its operations from neighboring India.

Governments also can pose challenges.

Library staffers have been questioned by authorities. In the past year, the Kuala Lumpur sub-office went to great lengths to get books the government had banned. In some places, suppliers may face difficulties if it’s known that they are acquiring for a “foreign entity”; suppliers sometimes risk their livelihoods for performing work for the Library.

But the offices persevere, no matter the circumstances – even through coups.

“Coups, whether in Myanmar or another country at a different time, do not stop our staff from seeking to find library resources that make our collections the best in the world,” said Carol Mitchell, who serves as the field director of the Jakarta office and previ-

ously held the same position at the Islamabad office. “When there is a regime change – whether Suharto or the next regime change – our staff with their incredible intellectual curiosity and contacts developed over decades will help the Library document those changes.”

Despite the challenges, the overseas offices manage to collect a huge range and volume of material – in fiscal 2020, over 179,000 newspapers, magazines, government documents, academic journals, maps, books and other items that represented about 120 languages and 76 countries and jurisdictions.

As one might imagine, such work gets complicated.

Each office is responsible for a group of countries in its region – the Nairobi office alone covers 30 countries and jurisdictions in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Jakarta office, which covers Southeast Asia, processed material

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH



October is Disability Employment Awareness Month. To mark the occasion, the Library’s website is featuring [a selection of rights-free photographs](#) highlighting people with disabilities from different eras of U.S. history. [This photo by Carol M. Highsmith](#) shows Franklin D. Roosevelt’s wheelchair in a house in Warm Springs, Georgia, where he was treated for polio before becoming U.S. president.

Carol M. Highsmith Archive/Prints and Photographs Division

in 43 languages in fiscal 2020: English, Malay, Chinese, Tamil, Tetum, Portuguese, Indonesian, Filipino, Thai, Burmese, Khmer, Vietnamese and Lao in addition to many subnational or minority languages. The two dozen staffers in Islamabad collect in three countries that speak a combined 19 different languages.

Such an effort requires knowledgeable people at the source, wherever that may be.

Each office is led by an American field director and staffed by Library employees recruited from the local populations – 212 locally engaged staff across the six offices.

They serve as librarians, linguists, accountants, administrators, IT specialists, preservationists and shipping experts and use many of the same tools as their Capitol Hill counterparts – they perform, for example, real-time cataloging work in the Integrated Library System. In fiscal 2020, the offices created or upgraded nearly 31,000 bibliographic records.

Their knowledge is the key to accomplishing work that requires negotiating so many different languages and cultures. They know what material to get and where to get it, how to navigate cultural nuances and often-tricky political terrain.

To gather material, field office staffs establish relationships with commercial vendors, who regularly acquire material on their behalf. They also work with individuals to find hard-to-get items – such as academic journals and government publications – not readily available in the marketplace.

They also make acquisition trips into the field: a literary festival in Singapore, say, or a local market six hours south of Yangon to get books in the Mon language.

For the offices, these trips are among the most rewarding and challenging work they do.

“Such acquisition trips are important so we can see for ourselves what the state of publishing in a given country is, make connec-

tions and contacts with government and other persons who can help facilitate our work, meet with our vendor or representative and otherwise get a frontline view of things,” Kopycki said. “The book publishing industry and distribution in most of our countries is still in dire need of development and modernization, and even if there is good distribution of books within one country, it does not mean that that distribution extends outside its borders.”

The offices select material in collaboration with collections divisions on Capitol Hill, choosing works for the importance of the subject matter, the quality of scholarship and the extent to which they add to the knowledge of a topic.

All that collecting requires a lot of something else: shipping, which sounds simple but often is anything but. Shipping out of country may require navigating a gantlet of bureaucracy: export permits, reviews by censors, payment of taxes.

Then there are the sheer logistics of moving large quantities of items from one far-away place to another.

Books printed in Jeddah, Saudi

Arabia, must be moved to the Library’s representative in Riyadh, where they are combined with other material and shipped to Cairo. At the Cairo airport, they must be cleared and moved to the Library’s offices at the U.S. Embassy. From there, staffers process the materials and then, after a sufficient quantity is ready, send them off to Washington.

The work of these offices benefits more than just the patrons of the Library of Congress; employees there, in effect, serve as the eyes and ears for other libraries via the Cooperative Acquisitions Program.

Through the program, the overseas offices provide material to 80 institutions in the U.S. and 26 in other countries. Those resources allow analysts and scholars everywhere to gain new perspectives on the world – and will allow future generations of scholars to do the same.

“It is not just the Library’s collections that make what we do unique,” Mitchell said. “It is the concept behind those collections that is equally important. That concept remains. It is important that we as global citizens have the capacity to learn and understand.” ■

THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN WEBCAST

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board are co-sponsoring a webcast, “Your TSP Account – What to Think About When Nearing Retirement or Considering Leaving the Government.”

The webcast is open to all federal employees and members of the uniformed services. Program topics include Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) distribution options, withdrawals, investment risks and fees, assessment of financial professionals and issues to consider when moving funds from TSP.

There is no need to register for the webcast. To attend, simply click this [link](#).

For questions about your TSP retirement, go to www.tsp.gov or call (877) 968-3778. For technical webcast problems, send an email to Webmaster@sec.gov.

Staff can also direct questions to the Human Capital Directorate (HCD) at (202) 707-5627 or [AskHCD](#).

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www.nfc.usda.gov/epps/**