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**“A Goodly Tent of Jacob, and the Canadian Home
Beautiful”: The Jewish Public Library in the Civic
Sphere during the 1950s**

The one hundredth anniversary of the Jewish Public Library (JPL) of Montreal offers cause for celebration and reflection. A library that was founded a century ago to serve the reading needs of a struggling population of Yiddish-speaking newcomers has evolved into a robust community institution offering a range of collections and services, including circulating and reference collections, a children's library, public programs, a "Jewish People's University" (*Yidishe folks-universitet*), and a rich historical archive. Like any library, the JPL also serves as a meeting place for individual readers and a locus of public assembly and civic engagement. It is these latter functions that are the main focus of this article.

Jews' de facto status as Montreal's "third solitude"² nurtured that community's distinctive cultural, linguistic, and institutional profile, which was reinforced by the successive, large-scale waves of immigration of Yiddish-speakers, continuing into the 1950s.³ The historically weak status of public libraries in Quebec, moreover, added impetus to the establishment of a library serving the Jewish community of Montreal. The JPL thus formed a key element of the ramified network of institutions serving Montreal's Jewish community.

During the past century, the JPL has weathered population shifts, demographic transformations, political upheavals, and multiple moves (including stints in rented facilities, with much of its collection kept in storage for extended periods). All along, the "small band of dedicated leaders" (to quote Samuel Bronfman⁴) that devoted their energies to this unique institution has amply demonstrated a strong sense of commitment to the ideals of its co-founders, Reuben Brainin and Yehuda Kaufmann.⁵ The challenges that the JPL has faced over the decades have been profound, and it is something of a marvel that it has all the while sustained both its primary function as neighbourhood library and an institutional awareness of its core function as custodian and transmitter of Jewish – and Yiddish – cultural values.

Four discrete events during the first half of the 1950s reveal the Jewish Public Library in formal interaction with various spheres of the Jewish community and the Canadian polity. They also shed fascinating light on the linguistic interplay of Yiddish, English, and occasionally French in the JPL's public programs during the first half of the 1950s. The first of these events was the sod-turning ceremony for the new building at the corner of Esplanade and Mont-Royal, on 11 February 1951; the second was the cornerstone laying ceremony on 19 October 1952; and the third was the building's dedication one year later, on 4 October 1953. Finally, there was the inauguration of the Bronfman Collection of Jewish Canadiana, which took place on 13 June 1954, during the first year of occupancy.

The four public events themselves and the coverage they received in the local press evince the subtle tensions that prevailed between English and French Canada. They testify to fleeting moments when the JPL was caught in the spotlight of money, poli-

tics, ideas, and power in Canada. The ceremonies briefly positioned the Library as an actor on the civic stage of Montreal, Quebec, and Canada. Indeed, they enabled the JPL to serve as a platform for the articulation of shifting official attitudes toward immigration, bilingualism, multiculturalism, and even Canadian cultural nationalism during the first postwar decade.⁶

The JPL captured each of the dedicatory ceremonies on tape and it safeguarded these recordings, along with those made of hundreds of other public programs, for close to three generations. Had the programs not been taped, most of the words that were spoken on those occasions would have been forever lost to posterity. In that sense, the audio record of the four dedication events constitutes valuable archival documentation *per se*. Most recently, the tape collection has been transformed into a freely accessible, online resource. The fact that the tapes are now accessible online in their entirety offers today's researchers the opportunity to place the dedicatory ceremonies into broader historical context. (Background on the JPL's taped programs is found in Appendix A.)

Beyond that, though, the audio medium itself lends to our comprehension of these events in ways that written transcripts (even if they existed) would not. Languages, accents, registers, inflections, nuances, pauses, hesitations, ad-lib remarks by the speakers – all of these are conveyed by the recordings. The physical presence of the original audiences and their reactions to the words uttered on those occasions are also palpable. And for those ceremonies that took place out of doors, the honking of automobile horns in the distance and the hum of airliners flying overhead transport today's listener through time *and* space by means of an auditory time capsule. "The medium is the message," the noted Canadian cultural critic Marshall McLuhan wrote in 1964.⁷ This frequently quoted aphorism can be readily applied to an analysis of these four public events. The soundscape relayed to us by the medium of audiotape thus forms the backdrop to our overview of these public ceremonies.

The JPL in the Civic Sphere

The civic sphere is a space (both literal and metaphorical) where "men and women are not private or public consumers," writes the American philosopher and essayist Mark Lilla, "[t]hey are citizens. They share places and purposes."⁸ Public libraries occupy a significant position in the civic sphere. Lilla draws a close parallel between the position of the museum and the library:

The museum is not at the center of American civic life, as are our most important government buildings or our commemorative statues and places. But like our major public libraries (many of which were also founded through private philanthropic efforts), museums were built with the understanding that they were to stand for something we have, or should aspire

to have, in common. Not devoted to private or shared public consumption, the museum was to be a *symbol* of the importance a city's citizens placed on art. And perhaps more important, it was to serve as a symbol of the importance of having the highest achievements of Western high culture available to all. The library was meant to represent the same civic commitment to learning, at a time when few could expect to own books.⁹

A library can be an imposing architectural landmark in the built environment and, as such, an object of civic pride. But its quintessential role as a hub of literacy and education (both informal and formal) is what positions the library as an actor in the civic sphere. Like the museum, the public library "is a profoundly democratic institution considered from the civic, as opposed to simply public, point of view."¹⁰

Until recent decades, public libraries – that is, municipal libraries whose operations are underwritten by the city's ratepayers – had a rather marginal presence in Montreal. Compared to the temples of reading on New York City's Fifth Avenue or Boston's Copley Square, the central library of Montreal – notwithstanding its neoclassical façade – was a more modest building on Rue Sherbrooke Est, facing Lafontaine Park. In addition, the city lacked the network of branch libraries that typified other North American cityscapes, in large part due to the fact that Montreal declined to accept funding from the Carnegie Foundation for the construction of public library branches.¹¹ Moreover, Quebec was the last province to pass legislation – in 1941 – "calling for tax-supported municipally operated libraries open to all residents."¹² This helps to explain the emergence and durability of privately supported subscription libraries (such as the Atwater Library and the Fraser-Hickson Institute) that served some of the city's predominantly Anglophone neighbourhoods.

Although the Jewish Public Library was, at its inception, the creation of its European-born, Yiddish-speaking constituency, it also filled a lacuna in the educational infrastructure that, in another city, would have been filled by a municipal branch library. The civic and educational missions of the publicly funded library would have differed in certain key respects from those of a *Yidische folks-bibliotek* (Jewish People's Library).¹³ Nevertheless, as Lilla observes:

It is an interesting complication of modern political life that not all projects undertaken with government funds are civic in nature, and that some privately funded ventures can rise to the level of civic acts ... A *privately initiated project* becomes civic when it satisfies at least two conditions: it speaks to the shared purposes and experiences of its citizens by what it does or commemorates, and it is open to all citizens.¹⁴

In that sense, the privately funded JPL, in its highly distinctive manner, was indeed a "civic" institution, albeit one that during its first several decades was largely alien to

the surrounding institutional environment of city, province, and country. The emergence of a more self-confident, prosperous, and politically connected Jewish community after World War II made it possible for the JPL to serve as an arena for the articulation of views on Canadian identity, culture, and citizenship – and the ways in which Jews might influence and help to reshape Canadian civic consciousness.

The JPL Building Campaign

In addition to exposing listeners to cultural events in Yiddish and English, the recordings offer a valuable window onto the history of the Jewish Public Library itself. As such, they supplement the paper documentation that is available in the JPL's Archives. A tape reel that is displayed on the JPL website is accompanied by a paper label which reads in part: "*Hanukat ha-bayit* Dedicative ceremony opening new Bldg Esplanade & M[ount Royal]."¹⁵ The date is cut off on the image, but because the event is well documented we know that the ceremony took place on 4 October 1953. After a protracted fundraising campaign, the Library had finally opened its very own, purpose-built, modern structure at 4499 Esplanade, at the intersection of Mont-Royal. The tape caption also includes the following words: "afternoon outside Bld[g]" (emphasis in the original) – suggesting that part of this ceremony might also have been held indoors, which was in fact the case.

Background on the decade-long building campaign is provided in *Bibliotek bukh / Our Library*, which was published in 1957 (four years after the completion of the new library). The JPL's quarters at 4099 Esplanade had become too cramped to accommodate the Library's collections and activities, including its educational arm, the *Folks-universitet* (People's University). The decision to launch the campaign was made in 1943, in the midst of a world war, and the search for a suitable property began. "Even then, in 1944," wrote Gitl Gershonowitch, "it was evident that the Jewish population was beginning to move into new neighbourhoods of the city and the question arose: 'Where should the new library be built?'"¹⁶ Accordingly, an unsuccessful attempt was made to secure a lot at the intersection of Fairmount and Durocher, just inside the Outremont municipal boundaries. Eventually, however, a lot at the corner of Esplanade and Mont-Royal – only two-and-one-half blocks from the JPL's facility at the time – was purchased. This location was in close proximity to other Jewish institutions, including the YM-YWHA on Mont-Royal, and also to the manufacturing and commercial establishments where so many of the Library's Yiddish-speaking clientele earned their livings.

Fundraising proceeded in fits and starts; by October 1945, \$45,000 in cash and pledges had already been raised, but it took another five years before sufficient funds were on hand to make it possible for the Library to sign a contract with a construction firm. Ultimately, construction and furnishing costs amounted to approximately \$300,000, with fundraising continuing for two years past the building's completion.

The partners Al Bernstein and Harry Mayerovitch were engaged as architects in August 1950, and Joseph Gilletz and Brothers as general contractors in January 1951. Construction commenced soon thereafter and continued, with minor interruptions, over the course of the next two years. The first three public events that are described here – the sod-turning, the laying of the cornerstone, and the official opening of the building – took place at critical junctures during the building project. The final event discussed here – the dedication of the Bronfman Collection, in June 1954 – was a direct follow-on to the building's grand opening, the previous October. Each event marked a progression in the JPL's rising profile on the civic landscape – as evidenced by the increasingly impressive roster of speakers and by the themes that they enunciated during the ensuing three years.

I. Sod-Turning Ceremony, February 1951

The outdoor portion of the sod-turning ceremony that took place on a frigid February 1951 morning was mercifully brief; the head of the Combined Jewish Appeal, J. A. (Jack) Klein, O.B.E., broke the ground, and Rabbi Chaim N. Denburg read the benediction. Immediately thereafter, those in attendance adjourned indoors to the Jewish Y down the street, where they heard a succession of speakers extol the building program, with a number of them emphasizing the continuing need to raise funds in order to see the project through to a successful conclusion.¹⁷

The first speaker was Moses Brainin, president of the JPL and son of the Library's co-founder, the Hebrew and Yiddish author Reuben Brainin. Next, the long-time JPL supporter, Louis Zuker, gave a speech in Yiddish, in which he praised the Combined Jewish Appeal, which in recent years had assumed responsibility for underwriting the Library's day-to-day operations. Like other speakers, he also praised the contributions of large and small donors to the ongoing campaign (while lamenting the absence of the president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Samuel Bronfman). Both Brainin and Zuker reflected on the distance the JPL had come since its early years. After Zuker, Councillor Roy Wagar, of the Nôtre-Dame-de-Grace district, spoke on behalf of Montreal's mayor, Camilien Houde, and the Protestant School Board. He availed himself of the opportunity to express the hope that the JPL's construction project would "shame the city of Montreal into establishing a system of branch libraries."¹⁸

Hugh Barnett of the YM-YWHA (Y) praised the progress that the JPL had made in recent years and drew attention to its reference collections and its children's library. Barnett took note of the fact that the Y itself supported two libraries, one in its facility on Mont-Royal and the other in its new building on Westbury Avenue, in Montreal's Snowdon district.¹⁹ Other speakers included S. Abramson, on behalf of the Yiddish Writers' Association of Montreal, and Shloime Wiseman, principal of the *Folks shule* (Jewish People's School). In addition, messages and telegrams from

notable individuals who were unable to be present at the ceremony were read. These proceedings – and some of the others that are discussed here – concluded with the singing of "God Save the King" (or, in programs that took place after the death of King George VI and the accession of Queen Elizabeth II, "God Save the Queen") and "Hatikvah."²⁰ (The Library's leadership and supporters were, for the most part and in equal measure, devoted subjects of the Crown and passionate adherents of Zionism – especially Labour Zionism.)

2. Cornerstone Ceremony, October 1952

The cornerstone laying ceremony, in October 1952, was a more imposing occasion than the sod-turning event – on a grander scale and featuring several relative high-profile speakers. By then the construction of the new building was largely complete, though it remained yet to be furnished. As was the case with the sod-turning event, this was an outdoors-indoors affair, with over 2,000 in attendance during the outdoor segment of the ceremonies. A platform was erected for the occasion and upon it sat representatives of the Quebec provincial government, the Montreal City Council, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Combined Jewish Appeal, the local rabbinate, the Montreal municipal library, the JPL Board of Directors, and assorted friends of the Library.²¹

Michael Garber addressed the crowd, in Ashkenazi-accented Hebrew and in Yiddish, on behalf of the Canadian Jewish Congress. The main speaker, Allan Bronfman, came next. Israel Rabinovitch, editor of the *Keneder Adler* (*The Jewish Eagle*) newspaper, then followed, offering reminiscences of the Library's early days and its leading personalities, and exhorting members of the audience to contribute toward completion of the Library's construction and installations.²²

As President of the Jewish General Hospital and the Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University, Allan Bronfman was substituting for his brother Samuel, who had been expected to speak on this occasion but (as with the sod-turning) "was unavoidably detained elsewhere." "Here, today, at this ceremony," Allan Bronfman declared, "the People of the Book sets up once again a Temple of the Book."²³ The metaphor of the Library as Temple was one that his brother would repeat the following year, when the new building was officially opened to the public.

Allan Bronfman continued: "A library, moreover, is never narrowly sectarian; all knowledge is its province; thus is this Library to continue to be, as it has always been, a goodly tent of Jacob, and the Canadian home beautiful."²⁴ This was an elegant way of stating that the JPL would continue to roll out the welcome mat to its devoted constituents and also offer them a gateway (through the books that it provided and through its People's University's courses) to the wider world. In addition, its resources would be available to the wider Montreal populace. The varied services offered

and responsibilities borne by the Jewish Public Library – with its face pointed both inward to the community and outward to the city and country – were enunciated by many of the speakers at the public ceremonies discussed here.

The tropes of Holocaust and rebirth (though this phraseology was not invoked) also recur during the speeches given at the events surrounding the building's construction and dedication. Gitl Gershonowitch later wrote:

In building the Library, it was considered as necessary that a cultural edifice such as this, which would stand for generations, ought to be a memorial shrine for European Jewry ... and also a symbol that would represent the present-day State of Israel. Requests were sent to the Jewish community organization in Warsaw and to Israel; from Israel we were sent a stone from Mount Zion and from Poland, part of a pillar from the Tłomackie Synagogue in Warsaw, a sacred reminder of the largest ghetto of the Third Destruction. Both symbols are situated in the Library's current building.²⁵

As Allan Bronfman put it, the pillar from Warsaw would be a “grim memorial of the past” and the Jerusalem stone, a “bright augury of the future.”²⁶ In addition, a time capsule containing historical documents from the JPL's history was placed in the wall behind the cornerstone. The new building was thus intended to be more than a new home where the Library's books would be housed and its patrons served; it was also meant to be a *lieu de mémoire*, as formulated by the French historian Pierre Nora²⁷ – a destination for visitors seeking tangible remains of the Holocaust and symbolic representation of the state of Israel. As Nora has written: “Museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments, sanctuaries, fraternal orders – these are the boundary stones of another age, *illusions of eternity*.”²⁸ At one and the same time, the Library literally *contained* “boundary stones of another age” (the ones from Poland and Israel) and its new structure was metaphorically intended to *serve* as a boundary stone “for the generations.” In each of these manifestations the impact that the building had on its environment and its readers turned out to be transitory indeed.

Later that day, a luncheon reception attended by 400 guests was held inside the almost completed structure. This event, too, was captured on tape and is online. Presiding over these proceedings – and speaking in a lightly accented English – was the attorney M. H. Myerson, an ardent supporter of the Library. He took time to name the individuals who had made major contributions to the construction project during the previous two years, as well as “workers, simple men earning fifty dollars a week who have come to the Library and they have said, ‘We give three, four, five, six, seven weeks’ wages to the building of this structure.’” He added, “There is still work to be done,”²⁹ both toward completion of the building and its financing. Among greetings that he read out loud to the audience were remarks by Leon Crestohl, M.P., and the Consul General of Israel.

Louis Zuker then spoke in Yiddish, sharing his impressions of the great strides made during the previous thirty-eight years. He offered praise, as well, to the Canadian Jewish Congress and its president, Samuel Bronfman, whose name was etched into the cornerstone.

Among the most eloquent remarks made at any of these public events were those that the architect and artist Harry Mayerovitch³⁰ delivered at the luncheon. Instead of dwelling on the practical challenges of the building's design and construction he spoke instead about its "special significance" as a cultural entity.³¹ Of the various Jewish representatives who spoke at these public ceremonies, Mayerovitch was the only one to speak in the modulated inflections and precise diction of what might best be characterized as "CBC English" (as the audio evidence reveals). In deliberate cadences and speaking with quiet passion, he informed the audience that he was a member of the executive of the Canadian Arts Council, a cultural advocacy organization representing practitioners in all of the official branches of the arts in Canada (architecture among them).³² Mayerovitch's involvement as a member of this pan-Canadian arts organization's governing body symbolized the emergence of a self-confident tier of academically trained Jewish professionals into the Anglo-Canadian cultural mainstream. "The problems of Canadian culture are very vast and very complicated," he said, "faced as we are with the competition of a very powerful culture to the south of us, which makes it sometimes difficult for us to develop our own expressions of our way of life."³³ This remark, made in passing, reflected an ongoing national campaign to provide publicly funded support for Canadian culture – an effort that bore fruit through the establishment of the Canada Council (which was founded in 1957) and, in subsequent years, the promulgation of regulations governing Canadian content over the airwaves.

Mayerovitch recounted that at a recent general meeting of the Canadian Arts Council, he had told attendees "that I would like to speak to them as a member of a Jewish community – that I felt that if any part of the Canadian population knew what culture meant, it was the community of which I considered myself a part."³⁴ He spoke to that audience about the loss of

six million of our people – people driven from their homes, deprived of their families, their very food taken out of their mouths and the clothing taken off their backs, and when everything was gone they were yet able to face the enemy. And it seemed to me that only when everything is gone do you really know whether you have a culture or not, and it is that knowledge which makes it possible for you to survive.³⁵

He maintained that, in light of Jews' recent and accumulated historical experiences, the Jewish Public Library performed an indispensable cultural function by embodying "a complete philosophy of life."³⁶ It was the library – *this* library – that "must be considered as a central point from which emanate those strengthening rays which

will make it possible for Jewish life to continue.”³⁷ For that reason, Mayerovitch stated, if the Jewish community of Montreal were somehow presented with the seemingly impossible option of choosing to perpetuate just one of the many institutions within its orbit, “it would have to be that we keep the Library.”³⁸ This assertion offered a striking parallel to Mayerovitch’s more general comments concerning Canadian cultural survival in the shadow of American hegemony. In his view, the enticements of postwar material prosperity ultimately must take second place to a community’s (and a country’s) cultural essentials.

3. Dedication Ceremonies, October 1953: “Canada’s History in the Making”

The dedication ceremonies of October 1953 drew the Jewish Public Library out of the relatively narrow confines of community, language, and neighbourhood into the broader realms of Quebec and Canadian society. This time, the proceedings were presided over by the well-connected attorney (and future Senator), H. Carl Goldenberg, Q.C., O.B.E., who addressed the audience in English, Yiddish, and French. As with the two earlier events discussed here, the dedication took place both outdoors and indoors. Unlike the previous events, however, the official opening of the new Library was amply covered in the local press, at least in part due to the presence on the dais of several relatively prominent representatives of government bodies – not to mention Samuel Bronfman himself (whose absence from the two related events of 1951 and 1952 had been noticed and remarked upon).³⁹ Indeed, one might speculate that it was the very participation of “Mr. Sam” that helped to leverage the dedication of a new structure serving the cultural needs of an ethno-linguistic minority, into a civic event *par excellence*.

William Hamilton, M.P., and a member of the Montreal City Council, was delegated by Mayor Houde to convey greetings on behalf of “all Montreal.”⁴⁰ Next on the roster was the historian Jean Bruchési, Under-Secretary of State of the Quebec provincial government and Secretary of the Royal Society of Canada.⁴¹ Although Goldenberg introduced Bruchési in French, the speaker delivered his remarks mostly in English. He stressed that he was speaking in a personal capacity and not on behalf of the government of Premier Maurice Duplessis or the Royal Society. Bruchési (like Mayerovitch a year earlier) spoke at some length about challenges to Canadian – specifically, French Canadian – cultural development, and about national identity. “We hear much about the natural resources of Canada, much about the progress of our country in the fields of commerce, industry, and finance,” he said. “But what about culture? The situation is not so brilliant in that field, when we think about the development of arts, letters, and sciences.”⁴²

Bruchési addressed the contributions of “those who make Canada what it is – the French, the English ... and in the last seventy-five years ... those whom we call ‘New

Canadians, and who very quickly become – or should try to become – real and complete Canadians." Quebec in particular, he claimed, had been particularly fair to its immigrants and Jews found it a hospitable environment in which to preserve "the best of [their] culture."⁴³ Bruchési then touched upon the "national question,"⁴⁴ as articulated in Quebec and the rest of Canada of 1953, and as it applied to Montreal's Jews – and, by extension, other ethnic communities:

Jewish people... must not forget that Canada is officially a bilingual country – that in this country we have more than four million French-speaking Canadians, and more than three million in the province of Quebec. From the point of view of culture, knowledge of the French language means something, but also I think it means something from the practical point of view... To know both and speak both languages is to help improving relations between Canadians.⁴⁵

He continued with a brief discourse in "ma langue maternelle,"⁴⁶ in which he underscored the importance of Quebec's contributions in the realm of culture, citing as examples the province's support for literary and artistic prizes, and for the only free music conservatory in Canada, the Conservatoire de musique et d'art dramatique du Québec.⁴⁷ Pursuing an apposite metaphor, he expressed the hope that Jews and members of other groups would add their voices to "this great symphony that is going to be the cultural nation of Canada of the future."⁴⁸

The reporter Conrad Langlois echoed Bruchési's reflections in a two-page spread that ran a couple of weeks later in the French-language daily *La Patrie*.⁴⁹ This was probably the most extensive press coverage of the JPL's new building in either the French or English press. Langlois explained that not only was the Library a place where anyone, "sans distinction de langue ou de religion," might visit to consult its books, but it was also a centre of "éducation populaire" (an allusion to the *Folks-universitet*).⁵⁰ Langlois wrote that French was among the several languages represented in the JPL's collections (though the circulation of French books was still relatively low). He also noted that David Rome, the new director of the Library, was one of the founders of the Cercle juif de langue française, a group of Jewish intellectuals that sought rapprochement with their francophone counterparts.⁵¹

Langlois then provided a brief survey of the Library's collections and educational activities, underscoring the institution's rootedness in the Yiddish-speaking, working-class milieu of its immediate surroundings. Jews' millennial adherence to their religious and cultural heritage, he concluded, offered an instructive parallel to French Canadians' efforts to maintain their own collective identity in the face of Anglicization and Americanization. "Pour être véritablement canadiens, nous devons rester nous-mêmes," he concluded.⁵²

Aldéric Deschamps, Liaison Officer of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, represented the Federal government at the JPL's opening festivities on behalf of Minister Walter Harris. "Canada is what it is today – and owes what it is today – to its population, to the various ethnic groups who have come to its shores and who in every field have contributed something,"⁵³ he stated. Jews were one of the groups whose contributions could not be ignored, going back "to the very first days of the colony."⁵⁴ The longevity, depth, and continuity of Jews' attachment to Canada was a theme that would be amplified the following June, at the inauguration of the Bronfman Collection.

"Today," Deschamps continued, "we are having a page of history – a page of Canadian history, not only of the local Jewish Canadian history but truly and sincerely this is Canada's history in the making."⁵⁵ Specifically, he said, future historians would take note of the weeklong Festival of Jewish Culture that was about to commence (the first one on this scale to be held in Canada, he asserted). Apart from that, Deschamps did not elaborate upon this remark, which on one level might be dismissed as platitudinous flattery of his predominantly Jewish audience. Nevertheless, Samuel Bronfman (among other speakers) accepted this observation and elaborated upon the event's historical significance. For many of those present, Bronfman (who followed Deschamps in the roster of speakers) was probably the event's featured attraction. He was one of the wealthiest – and most visible – Jews in Canada, having leveraged his position in the Seagram liquor distilling enterprise into a leadership role in the Jewish community as an eminent philanthropist and (from 1939 to 1962) president of the Canadian Jewish Congress.

If Aldéric Deschamps offered a rather limited perspective on the historical significance of the building's dedication (by linking it to the weeklong cultural festival that was to follow that event), Bronfman grandiloquently compared the Jewish Public Library to the Ark of the Covenant, which the Israelites had carried with them in the desert for forty years – coincidentally, the approximate number of years since the Library's founding. And now the JPL had built "a temple that is open to all."⁵⁶ Again and again, in rather orotund tones,⁵⁷ he underscored the Library's thoroughly Canadian character: "One knows that though the destination on the door is that of but one of the groups of the Canadian entity, the contents of this building, its lore and literature are accessible to all." The institution, moreover, was *sui generis*: "It is a source of special pride to us – both as Canadians and as Jews – to realize that this library is unique on the American continent, attached to no university or special institution, generalized in its interest though individual in its character. It is a People's Library, builded [sic] by the people and designed to satisfy a people's thirst for knowledge."⁵⁸ As his brother Allan had done the previous year, Bronfman then reflected upon the significance of incorporating into the new edifice "a block of stone from the hills of Judea and a block of stone from the synagogue in Warsaw": "It is the heritage of the ages that we behold here, and we – all Canadians – are its heirs."⁵⁹ In effect, he

was saying that the completion of the JPL's new home represented an achievement of pan-Canadian importance on the part of its local supporters in Montreal, even as it embodied the millennial span of Jewish history writ large.

Bronfman also spoke about the Library's early days and praised its present-day leadership, both lay and professional.⁶⁰ He concluded that there was yet a bit of fundraising to be done. "Bay undz yidn zogt men, 'Got vet helfn' [We Jews say, 'God will help']; Mr. [Solomon] Winkler and his band say, 'Got vet helfn, vet optsoln dos "building" [God will help; this building will be paid for]."⁶¹

The final speaker in the first half of the dedication ceremonies was the historian Jacob Shatzky, who would deliver a longer lecture later in the week (during the Festival of Jewish Culture⁶²) on Jewish libraries and the People of the Book. Shatzky likened the JPL to a phoenix rising from the ashes, in the wake of the recent loss of "631 libraries, three-and-one-quarter million books, and millions of readers" in Poland alone. He was adamant that the new library must not become a repository of "*heylike bikher*" (holy books), "because one never touches anything that is holy." Rather, the Library should become a "modern *besmedresh*," a study house where "every day of the year is Shabbos [the Sabbath]."⁶³

Contrasting somewhat with the outdoor event, the hour-long indoor ceremony that followed had a distinctly *heykish* (comfortably homespun) flavour. Most of the speakers delivered their remarks in Yiddish, leading the event's chair, M. H. Myerson, to thank the government representatives for their forbearance. Even Julius Bloch, Chairman of the Combined Jewish Appeal, felt constrained to give a substantial portion of his speech in Yiddish. Bloch suggested that the Library could serve as a bridge between the established Jewish community and the "*nay-gekumene fun di leiste yorn*," (newcomers of the most recent years)⁶⁴ acting in effect as an agency for their Canadianization.

City Councillor Max Seigler spoke with some pride about the district that he served, taking note of the fact that "in no place in the entire Dominion of Canada have you got in a small section of the city more Jewish people than live in this vicinity."⁶⁵ This community of "very close to a hundred thousand citizens" sustained a range of "[fine] institutions, amongst them our own Library, the YMHA, the Talmud Torah, the Jewish People's School, the Jewish Peretz Shule, the Old People's Home, [and] the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society..."⁶⁶ In addition, he observed that the community supported several Jewish-sponsored medical establishments and stressed, for example, that two-thirds of the patients at Mount Sinai Hospital "are people not of our faith."⁶⁷ By analogy, though deeply rooted in its religious and ethnic community, the Library's public service mission was broad in scope. This was a point that one of the succeeding speakers, Melech Ravitch, made explicit in commenting that the JPL's collections included not only works from the compan-

ion Hebrew and Yiddish literatures, but from world literature as well.

Apart from Bloch's and Seigler's appearances, the second half of the day's program quite fittingly bore a distinctly literary cast. In addition to Ravitch (a poet and leader of the *Folks-universitet*), there were speeches by Jacob Zipper (principal of the Peretz-Shule [Peretz School]), the Yiddish poet J. I. Segal, and the editor Israel Rabinovitch. The principal of the Talmud Torah, M. Maggid, read a particularly pertinent section of a poem by the Hebrew and Yiddish writer Zalman Shneour, devoted to the fabled Strashun Library of Vilna (destroyed during the Nazi occupation), which Maggid referred to as the beacon of Jewish libraries in Eastern Europe. The famous Yiddish poet H. Leivick, who paid his first visit to the JPL in 1930, was unable to travel from New York City due to illness, but Library activist S. Abramson read the substantial remarks that Leivick had intended to deliver himself.

4. Dedication of the Bronfman Collection of Jewish Canadiana, June 1954: "Our Common Canadian History"

Eight months later, on 13 June 1954, over 500 guests assembled in the auditorium of the Jewish Public Library to celebrate the inauguration of the Bronfman Collection of Jewish Canadiana. This event reunited some of the participants in the Library's dedication ceremonies – most notably, of course, Samuel Bronfman – with one of the leading figures in the cabinet of Prime Minister Louis St-Laurent as the guest of honour, the Honourable J. W. Pickersgill, M.P. and Secretary of State.⁶⁸

The JPL Board of Directors agreed to establish the Jewish Canadiana collection on 15 October 1953, eleven days after Bronfman spoke at the Library's dedication ceremonies. The Library promised to "include all available books, pamphlets, articles and other printed materials related to Canadian Jews ... It will be a major collection of materials on the Jews of Canada and will reflect their interests and achievements and social forms from the day they first came to this country over 200 years ago to the present day." These materials encompassed: "The writings of Canadian Jews" in several languages.

- "Works dealing with the history, sociology, economics, legal status, military record, biographies, etc., of Canadian Jews ...
- "Books printed in Canada, which are of Jewish interest or were written by Jewish authors.
- "The publications of Jewish organizations and institutions ...
- "Materials on Jewish education in Canada ..."⁶⁹

Already at its founding, the bibliography "of all known materials in the field, whether they are found in the Collection or not ... extend[ed] to some 2,000 entries under a score of headings."⁷⁰ And by the time *Bibliotek bukh* was published, four years later, the bibliography had grown to 4,000 entries.⁷¹

The *La Patrie* reporter Conrad Langlois, in a preview article about the dedication, teased out the import of the Bronfman Collection for French-speaking Montrealers. He started with the collection's documentation of connections to France during colonial times – especially the merchant Abraham Gradis of Bordeaux and his relatives, who had helped to finance the colonization and provisioning of New France.⁷² Another highlight of Jewish Canadiana for Langlois was its inclusion of a biography of Aaron Hart (1724–1800) by Raymond Douville, a journalist from Trois-Rivières.⁷³ Readers of *La Patrie* would be gratified to learn that the recently published novel *Aaron*, by the French Canadian author Yves Thériault,⁷⁴ was also to be found in the Bronfman Collection. In addition, publications reflecting Catholic–Jewish dialogue – and missionary literature – were included there as well.

There is a pronounced – and almost certainly deliberate – parallel between the creation of a library collection that was established for the express purpose of documenting and celebrating Canadian Jewish achievements with the high-profile Tercentenary celebrations that were taking place in the United States at precisely the same historical moment. The Tercentenary project was launched in January 1952 under the aegis of the American Jewish Committee and at the initiative of the American Jewish Historical Society. It commemorated the landing in New Amsterdam, in 1654, of twenty-three Jewish refugees from Brazil – the point at which an uninterrupted Jewish presence in North America was considered to have begun. The American Jewish historian Arthur Aryeh Goren places the Tercentenary celebration in the context of the "history-mindedness [that] anteceded the tercentenary 'revival'" in the years immediately following World War II.⁷⁵ To the Tercentenary's prime movers "the conviction that American Jews were at last 'making history' required recovering a 'useable past' showing that Jews had indeed been 'making history' for some time."⁷⁶

The Tercentenary events took place during a "Golden Decade"⁷⁷ of unprecedented social and geographical mobility in both the United States and Canada. Reflecting the Cold War atmosphere of that era, the official motto of the Tercentenary was "Man's Opportunities and Responsibilities under Freedom."⁷⁸ Goren comments that this conflation of Judaism with American democracy actually "reflect[ed] a strand of insecurity" at the dawn of "The American Jewish Century."⁷⁹ "The tercentenary committee defined the principal goal of the observance as a celebration of America's democratic ideals," he observes.⁸⁰ A series of "forums, exhibitions, pageants, musical festivals and public dinners" across the country culminated in the National Tercentenary Dinner, held on 20 October 1954 at the Hotel Astor in New York City, with President Eisenhower as the guest of honour and keynote speaker.⁸¹

The sheer scale of public events south of the border in 1954 reveals the comparative modesty of the inauguration of the Bronfman Collection in Montreal. Though the organizers of the Bronfman Collection event could not include a person of standing to match Eisenhower (U.S. President, former Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe, and keynote speaker at the National Tercentenary Dinner), they nevertheless succeeded in persuading a most eloquent M.P. Jack Pickersgill to deliver a substantial address at the JPL, on Canadian culture and Canadian unity. Samuel Bronfman, whom Israel Rabinovitch referred to in his own remarks as “the leader of Canadian Jewry,”⁸² immediately preceded Pickersgill in this program.

By 1954, the federal Liberal Party had been in power continuously for nearly two decades. Canadian Jews, by and large, were devoted supporters of Canada’s “natural governing party.”⁸³ Although, the inauguration of the Bronfman Collection was “not a political meeting,” as M.P. Leon Crestohl put it in his closing remarks, distinctly political messages were telegraphed to the audience throughout the evening’s proceedings. These ranged from the subtle to the overt, and the participation of two prominent Members of Parliament – both of them Liberals – naturally lent an implicitly political aura to the event.

Bronfman offered the most blatantly partisan remark of the evening (an aside, seemingly), in his reflections concerning the nature of leadership. “Whether it be an institution such as this, who have [sic] many followers ... yet it is a small group of staunch men who have been sworn to the idealism of developing this beautiful public library, that brought it about,” he said. As it was with the Library, so it was in government: “Whether it is the government of any nation, who have many electors, it is the Cabinet who sits as the Board of Directors and guides the Party, guides the electors, and guides the nation to success or non-success.” He paused and then added, “We always hope the Liberal Party will lead it to success.”⁸⁴ (This remark was greeted with scattered applause.)

In that connection, Michael Marrus observes, “Sam donated generously to the Liberals and cultivated his image as a faithful party supporter.” What made Bronfman such a staunch Liberal? On the one hand, to be sure, he was unselfconsciously aligning himself with the loyalties of most Montreal (and Canadian) Jews. To this, Marrus adds, “From the early 1940s Sam had his eye on the Senate and it seems likely that his leadership of the Jewish community... only whetted his appetite.”⁸⁵ Bronfman would, however, be thwarted in his ambition to become the first Jewish senator when, in 1955, David Croll, the former mayor of Windsor and Ontario Minister of Labour, was named to the Senate. (“There are things that even God can’t do; Michael Garber is supposed to have commented,” writes Marrus.⁸⁶)

Bronfman devoted the bulk of his remarks to the role of libraries and archives as transmitters of cultural and national heritage. Much of what he had to say was based

more on his firsthand familiarity with the archives of the Canadian Jewish Congress than on his knowledge of the holdings of the Jewish Public Library.⁸⁷ The Jewish Canadiana collection, he said, represented "the spiritual inventory of our community, the cement that binds it together, the quality that enriches it."⁸⁸ Through this collection it would be possible to refract broader understandings of Canadian identity:

For this is another definition of what is Canada and what is Canadianism, and contributions to the consciousness of the Canadian nation in the making. It is a small section of the Canadian people that is examined in this collection – their roots in the Old World are traced, the story of their adoption [sic, adaptation] to the New World is told, of their contributions to this New World, their duties toward society, their visions of the moral and their efforts to achieve their visions.

There are many lessons in the assembly of books and materials in this collection. One of them is the plurality of cultures in Canada. We all glory in the heritage of the Anglo-Saxon culture. We all consider most precious the heritage that originally came from France and has since developed here. We also draw attention to the Jewish tradition brought here and developed here. Out of this Canadian tradition of mutual respect another Canadian virtue develops as the unity of the people of Canada.⁸⁹

While Bronfman's use of the phrase "their duties toward society" echoes the theme of the American Jewish Tercentenary ("Man's Opportunities and Responsibilities under Freedom"), his formulation also reflected traditional Canadian concepts of citizenship that harmonized moreover with his own views on the obligations and privileges of Jews as citizens of the Dominion and Empire. More than once, in speeches to gatherings of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Bronfman had underscored his position in this regard. In January 1939, for example, he stated:

We as Jews, have a chance to build up a full position of citizenship and equality which is a privilege belonging to the citizens of the British Empire. It is the responsibility of Congress to see that the Jews are good citizens in their respective communities across Canada, and so to conduct themselves that they will gain the respect of their fellow citizens – the non-Jewish citizens.⁹⁰

What comes through in Bronfman's October 1954 speech at the JPL is the perception that Canadian national identity remained very much a work in progress – and that national unity was by no means a given. Jews in particular, and other ethnic and religious groups apart from the Founding Peoples – the English and the French (in that order, by Bronfman's reckoning) – had a contribution to make toward shaping the Canadian polity. "For this unity we are all dedicated in our lives, in our institutions,

in our thoughts,” Bronfman proclaimed, “And ... the collection of which the Board of the Library chose to append the Bronfman name will serve this high Canadian purpose.”⁹¹

Following Bronfman’s speech, H. Carl Goldenberg introduced “a very old friend of mine,” the Hon. J. W. Pickersgill. He stated, “Of the many persons in Canadian public life, there are few who are as passionately Canadian as Mr. Pickersgill is.”⁹² Goldenberg summarized the trajectory of Pickersgill’s career as a leading Ottawa mandarin and, lately, as a prominent member of the St-Laurent cabinet. He hinted at a glorious future lying in store for the Secretary of State: “I’m not going to make any predictions, but I will say this: Nothing that Jack Pickersgill accomplishes surprises me!”⁹³

Before launching into his prepared speech (which was published a few weeks later in *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*⁹⁴), Pickersgill offered a few impromptu remarks. “This library is of course primarily the possession of the Jewish community of Montreal,” he said, “But the ceremony in which we are taking part today is a formal recognition of the fact that this library has become a national institution. In fact, one might almost say that it is because of this event tonight that it does formally become such an institution.”⁹⁵ In other words, its concerted efforts to document Canadian Jewish history had transformed the JPL’s mission from a local one to one with national ramifications.

Pickersgill devoted the first portion of his speech to a summary of Canadian Jewry’s achievements and the Jewish Public Library’s collections. Much of this section was evidently cribbed from information that he had been given by unnamed sources. He praised the Canadian Jewish Congress for “sponsoring the publication of two volumes recording the history of the participation of Canadian Jews in the Second World War; itself a fine chapter in our common Canadian history.”⁹⁶ Then he remarked upon the coincidence that the National Librarian, W. Kaye Lamb (who reported to the Secretary of State), and the JPL director, David Rome, were both British Columbians – “happy evidence of the developing sense of unity in our country.” Pickersgill also reflected upon “the Biblical and Hebraic influence on the literature of seventeenth century France and, consequently, upon French Canada,” and especially the impact of the King James translation of the Hebrew Bible “in every English-speaking country.” This perspective rendered it impossible “for any literate Canadian, whatever his origin... to regard a Jewish Public Library as just another cultural institution.”⁹⁷

As to the significance of the Bronfman Collection, Pickersgill declared:

It is ... appropriate that the Jewish Public Library should now become a shrine of Jewish-Canadian literature. Montreal has both the first and the largest Jewish community in Canada; this city is the natural capital city of

Canadian Jewry; and it is looked upon, by Jews all over Canada, as the centre of Jewish learning and culture in our country.⁹⁸

In this connection, he conceded, "We Canadians were not always so ready to cherish, or even to tolerate, the distinctive linguistic and religious and cultural heritages of the various elements that make up our population."⁹⁹ However, he expressed his

hope that what you have accomplished in this institution for the Jewish community in Montreal and in Canada will be an inspiration to other elements in our population to preserve their own distinctive literary and cultural heritage as part of the common national patrimony of our Canadian homeland.¹⁰⁰

These thoughts, as well as Pickersgill's remarks on frictions between "Canadians of Anglo-Saxon origin" and "our French speaking fellow-citizens,"¹⁰¹ drew his audience's attentions to the changing ethnic composition of the Canadian population and presaged the national discussions and debates concerning multiculturalism in Canada that unfolded in the 1960s and thereafter. In Pickersgill's words:

Every year more and more Canadians come to realize that what is true of English and French, is true also of the other communities like yours which are making a distinctive contribution of their own to the new kind of nation we Canadians of all races are jointly engaged in building in the northern half of this continent.¹⁰²

Earlier that evening, Israel Rabinovitch, editor of the *Keneder Adler*, had spoken of

the special, tender spot that naturalized Canadians like myself have deep in their hearts for [J. W. Pickersgill] and for what he represents ... It is the Secretary of State who signs that most generous declaration on every certificate of naturalization, which states that from the time of signing to the end of time ... Mr., Mrs., Miss Stranger shall be a stranger no more to the Canadian people and nation ...¹⁰³

Pickersgill responded that Rabinovitch's remarks aligned well with those made by Sir Wilfrid Laurier in August 1900, when he addressed members of the francophone Acadian minority in Nova Scotia. "I want the granite to remain the granite; I want the marble to remain the marble; I want the oak to remain the sturdy oak," Laurier had said – explaining that the metaphors applied to "the sturdy Scotchman," "the brainy Englishman," and "the warm-hearted Irishman." "I want to take all these elements and build a nation that will be foremost amongst the great powers of the world," Prime Minister Laurier proclaimed.¹⁰⁴ In the evolving Canadian mosaic the distinctive contributions of each and every ethnic group would be welcome.

The evening concluded with something of an anticlimax when, following Pickersgill's stirring address, Leon Crestohl, M.P., rose to thank the Secretary of State "for having honoured us."¹⁰⁵ He then went on at some length in his flattery of "Mr. [Samuel] Bronfman, who constantly preaches to us and talks to us in every city in this country about our duty as Canadians, about our devotion as Canadians."¹⁰⁶ Crestohl represented the Jewish Canadiana collection as, in essence, one of the pet projects of "the leader of Canadian Jewry": "It is proper that he should want to record permanently that history of this magnificent community that he is so largely responsible for building up."¹⁰⁷ In lauding the contributions to Canadianism of this important figure in the Jewish community, the Member of Parliament for Montreal's Cartier riding was evidently seeking to draw a parallel with the points concerning culture and citizenship that had just been so eloquently articulated by the Secretary of State. (And not to belabor the obvious, he was also attempting to score points with Bronfman and Pickersgill alike.)

In his study of Canadian Jewry during the 1960s Harold Troper discusses a series of related celebrations that took place five years after the inauguration of the Bronfman Collection, in conjunction with the yearlong National Bicentenary of Canadian Jewry. (At that point, memories of the American Jewish Tercentenary would still have been reasonably fresh.) On 13 October 1959 "a delegation of prominent Canadian Jews," headed by Samuel Bronfman and including other representatives of the Canadian Jewish Congress, traveled to Ottawa and presented Governor-General Georges Vanier with a ceremonial "Proclamation of Faith and Thanksgiving" in the form of a scroll commemorating the two-hundredth anniversary of Jewish settlement in Canada.¹⁰⁸ The 1959 Proclamation praised "the blessings of a free country [that] have made possible a flourishing Jewish Community living in harmony with its fellow citizens" and it enumerated Jewish contributions to "the promotion of the economic, political, religious, social, and cultural life of our country." Canadian Jews had looked after their own community's needs and, when called upon, made the "supreme sacrifice" on behalf of their country. "In this mosaic of Canada," affirmed the Proclamation, "we have held fast to our prophetic ideals."¹⁰⁹ The evident intention of occasions such as the dedication of the Bronfman Collection and the National Bicentenary was to accentuate Canadian Jews' sense of belonging and their adherence to democratic norms that they shared with all Canadians.

Conclusion: "A Cultural Edifice Which Would Stand for Generations"

The spirit of uplift and optimism that characterized the JPL's postwar building campaign, its dedication ceremonies, and the inauguration of the Bronfman Collection was of relatively short duration. Forces beyond the institution's control caused its occupancy of the new building to be rather brief. Expectations that it would be "a cultural edifice which would stand for generations" (to quote longtime JPL activist

Gitl Gershonowitch¹¹⁰) proved to be mistaken. By the 1960s, most of Montreal's Jews had moved away from the city's central corridor, as newer Canadians from Greece, Portugal, and other countries took up residence in the greystone houses of the Plateau and Mile End.¹¹¹ The Library remained in its new home for just over a dozen years. On 18 June 1966, the Quebec government took possession of the property at 4499 Esplanade, on behalf of the nascent Bibliothèque nationale du Québec (formally established the following year), and the JPL moved to rented space on Décarie Boulevard, where it remained until Cummings House – the home of the Allied Jewish Community Services (now, Federation CJA) – opened in 1972.¹¹² No longer would the JPL be housed in a building of its own.

The Library has remained in its present premises almost continuously for over forty years¹¹³ – longer than the time span that elapsed between its founding and the opening of the building at 4499 Esplanade. In hindsight, it is somewhat ironic that Cummings House, at the intersection of Westbury and Côte Ste-Catherine Road, stands opposite the Snowdon Y (now the YM-YWHA Ben Weider JCC¹¹⁴), whose building was opened in 1950 – in other words, the year before sod was turned for the JPL's new building in the old neighbourhood. Rather than buy a lot down the street from the old Y, on Mont-Royal, should not the JPL's leadership likewise have had the foresight to make the leap to Côte-des-Neiges or Snowdon? Perhaps; but as the recordings demonstrate, the Library remained intimately connected to the Yiddish-speaking milieu that – at least as of the early 1950s – seemed so securely anchored in the streets adjoining Mount Royal Park.

The thoughts, rhetoric, even the diction of the public figures that spoke at the ceremonies described here sound unavoidably dated to today's listener. The primacy of the English language – and, by extension, "Anglo-Saxon culture" – was still a given in Montreal of the early 1950s. Due homage was rendered to "the heritage that originally came from France,"¹¹⁵ but the significance of that heritage to the new Canadians assembled outdoors at the corner of Avenues Esplanade and Mont-Royal was somewhat abstract in nature, as even the Quebec civil servant Jean Bruchési seemed to acknowledge.¹¹⁶ The tacit assumptions about Anglo hegemony in Montreal – and of Montreal as "the natural capital city of Canadian Jewry"¹¹⁷ – would fall by the wayside in the succeeding decades, under the impact of the Quiet Revolution and Québécois nationalism.

The launch of the Bronfman Collection of Jewish Canadiana, while ostensibly a celebration of Canadian Jewish achievements, bore an unmistakably apologetic stamp. Its prime movers sought, in effect, to validate Jewish contributions to the larger polity, as it was gravitating toward official bilingualism and support for multiculturalism. The October 1954 ceremony momentarily placed the Jewish Public Library at the centre of a conversation concerning the nature of Canadian citizenship. The hope was that, through the documentation provided by a 2,000-item bibliography (and

its attendant artifacts), Jews would assume a legitimate and honoured position in the Canada that was still in a state of becoming.

In later years, although the Joseph Berman Auditorium of the Jewish Public Library, in Cummings House, would periodically serve as the site of appearances by notable political figures, these would not be Library events, *per se*. Neither the JPL's collections nor its role in shaping concepts of citizenship were at play. Rather, these were community-wide meetings, open to any and all. The role of the Library as neutral host on such occasions represented the normalization of the Jewish presence in the diverse civic sphere of Montreal. Indeed, this diversity had been presaged by the very first public event to be held in the Library auditorium at 4499 Esplanade, following that building's dedication in October 1953: "a dance recital by the Hindu temple dancer [Ananda] Shivaram [1916–2001], in his first appearance on the American continent."¹¹⁸

By enshrining in their new building a relic from a destroyed Warsaw synagogue, a stone from Mount Zion in Jerusalem, and a time capsule celebrating the Library's own accomplishments, the builders imagined a permanency that would soon prove elusive. The Jewish Public Library owes its longevity not to the buildings in which it has been housed, but to the successive communities that have supported it – and the collections that the Library has built up – over the past one hundred years. As the twenty-first century advances, the true *lieu de mémoire* resides not in a mid-century, greystone structure situated in the former immigrant neighbourhood, but in the recorded voices from those times that have been so carefully preserved over six decades and are now available for one and all to hear.

Appendix A

Background on the JPL's Taped Programs

On the JPL website¹¹⁹ there is banner showing a photograph of a reel-to-reel magnetic tape. This tape belongs to a collection of over 1,000 recordings of public events sponsored by the Library over a period spanning close to six decades. The JPL was a fairly early adopter of this new recording technology, which was introduced to the commercial marketplace in the late 1940s¹²⁰. William Ostreger, a member of the JPL's Board of Directors, initiated the Library's taping program in 1951, acquiring a reel-to-reel recorder and ultimately taping approximately 500 events held there over the next two decades. Others subsequently followed in his footsteps.¹²¹

The roster of personalities whose voices were captured on tape reads like a who's-who of Yiddish culture in North America and Israel from the 1950s to the 1990s: poets H. Leivick, Kadia Molodowsky, Melech Ravitch, Abraham Sutzkever, and Rachel Korn; novelists Chaim Grade, Chava Rosenfarb, and Isaac Bashevis Singer; actors and recital artists Hertz Grosbard and Chayele Grober; historian Jacob Shatzky; literary

scholar Dov Sadan, to give just a few examples. The tape collection also includes recordings of English-language programs featuring the notable Canadian writers (and Montrealers) Irving Layton and Mordecai Richler, and the preeminent Jewish historian Salo Wittmayer Baron.

In addition to the public events that it recorded, the JPL initiated a Yiddish Talking Books program in the 1980s. Native Yiddish speakers from Montreal – including JPL Board members, volunteers, and staff members – were recruited to read classics of Yiddish literature for the benefit of sight-impaired members of the now-aging community of Yiddish speakers. The Talking Books program was established at the suggestion of Shmuel (Shmilke) Rosenberg, a library supporter whose wife Rose (Royza) had lost her eyesight.¹²² Recordings were made in a studio in the basement of Cummings House, where the JPL was – and still is – located.

All told, the JPL holds one of the most extensive collections of recorded lectures, public programs, and readings under Jewish auspices, and is perhaps the largest single repository of spoken-word Yiddish literary recordings. The JPL was not the only North American Jewish cultural establishment to launch a taping program during the 1950s; the famed 92nd Street YM-YWHA, in New York City, also recorded many of the public events held in its auditorium.¹²³ The 92nd Street Y's cultural programming helped to cement that institution's reputation as an essential address on New York's mainstream literary and cultural scene.¹²⁴ By contrast, the primary audience for the JPL's public programs consisted of Yiddish-speaking members of Montreal's Jewish community, with the lectures and recitations situating the Library in the forefront of an increasingly beleaguered global Yiddish culture during the postwar decades. The Library's leadership demonstrated extraordinary foresight by recording so many of these events for posterity, and by maintaining the tape collection in good order.

During the early 1980s, the JPL transferred many of its taped programs to cassettes, which were catalogued for circulation among its patrons. Catalogue cards were photocopied and compiled (with an index) into a handy reference tool, *On Tape: Catalogue of the William Ostreger Audiotape Collection*. This circulating collection included tapes of the library's public programs as well as others acquired from external sources such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and Kol Yisra'el (the Israel Broadcasting Authority). *On Tape* contains 770 entries for programs, lectures, and interviews in English, French, Yiddish, and Hebrew. Cassettes continued to be added to the JPL's circulating collection after the publication of that catalogue in 1983.

Compact discs soon superseded the analogue technology of the audiotape, and more recently online streaming and downloading have supplanted the CD. The JPL's first foray into the digitization of its audio collections occurred midway through the first decade of the new century, in collaboration with the National Yiddish Book Center

in Amherst, Massachusetts and the Jewish Book Council in New York City. The initial release on CD of the Sami Rohr Library of Recorded Yiddish Books¹²⁵ made over thirty major works of Yiddish literature and nonfiction available for purchase by individuals and libraries. Among the authors represented in the Sami Rohr Library are Sholem Aleichem, Rachel Auerbach, David Bergelson, Bella Chagall, Moyshe Kulbak, Joseph Opatoshu, I. L. Peretz, Mendele Moykher Sforim, and Isaac Bashevis Singer .

The original target audience of the Talking Books was European-born Yiddish readers, many of them visually impaired. The release of a large segment of this collection on CD had new audiences in mind, among them second-generation North American-born Jews with at least a passive knowledge of Yiddish and students of Yiddish everywhere. Indeed, for students the Sami Rohr Library represents an almost unprecedented opportunity to hear Yiddish literature read by native speakers in a variety of accents. (Many of the readers for the Talking Books program are now deceased.)

A few years after the Sami Rohr Library came out on CD, the Yiddish Book Center launched an appeal for funds to support the digitization of the entire corpus of taped programs from the Jewish Public Library – including Yiddish Talking Books that had not yet been digitized. Separate pages on the Yiddish Book Center's website have been established for the Sami Rohr Library¹²⁶ and the Frances Brandt Library¹²⁷; the latter is the online portal to the JPL's public programs. Both of these audio collections are hosted by the Internet Archive and can be downloaded and streamed through its own website.¹²⁸

By October 2013, 1,200 tracks from the Sami Rohr and Frances Brandt Libraries had been digitized and made accessible over the web, with new tracks being added continually to the online collection. Many of the JPL's programs occupy two or more tracks; consequently, of the 1,100 taped programs in the JPL collection possibly fewer than half were represented by the 1,200 tracks available online.¹²⁹ (The expectation is that most of the remaining taped programs will make their way to the Internet Archive as well.) Among these are the recordings of the Library's four dedication ceremonies from the first half of the 1950s.

Appendix B

Excerpts from Remarks Made by Harry Mayerovitch at the Cornerstone Laying Ceremony of the Jewish Public Library, 19 October 1952:

I told [the Canadian Arts Council general meeting attendees] that I would like to speak to them as a member of a Jewish community – that I felt that if any part of the Canadian population knew what culture meant, it was the community of which I

considered myself a part. I explained that I belonged to a people that had come close to extinction many times in its history, that nevertheless we are still alive. The last time, I pointed out, when our very existence was threatened, we lost six million of our people – people driven from their homes, deprived of their families, their very food taken out of their mouths and the clothing taken off their backs, and when everything was gone they were yet able to face the enemy. And it seemed to me that only when everything is gone do you really know whether you have a culture or not, and it is that knowledge which makes it possible for you to survive.

Now, why do I tell you these things? You know all that. It has been part of our lives throughout the centuries. And yet, sometimes we tend to forget. And in connection with the Library we have tended to forget, I think in great part. I think there are many people in this community who may have questioned the desirability of having this new library building erected. The Jewish people are called upon to make great sacrifices with respect to all the other important buildings which we have erected – the hospitals, the schools, the synagogues, and so on. And for a small population we have certainly done more than our share in those connections. And when it comes to the Library it somehow doesn't always seem quite as necessary as some of the other organizations. And the point that I would like to make is that while all these other buildings are important the Library has a very special character.

All these other buildings represent, each in itself a portion of the Jewish attitude toward life, the great concern we have, in the case of our hospitals, for the physical welfare of our people; the schools and synagogues, for the educational and spiritual betterment and advancement of our young people; the YMHAs, for their great concern for the advancement of the physical ideals in our community. But I sometimes wonder what might happen should all our buildings be, by some great misfortune, destroyed, and we perhaps miraculously were given a choice of keeping one building only. And I firmly believe that if we had to make that difficult choice, that it would have to be that we keep the Library.

And I say this advisedly; I say this because our whole way of life has been determined and established on the basis of the great conflict of ideas which have formed Jewish life, the great discussions that have resulted in our vast literature – all these things have resulted in a complete philosophy of life which is housed and embodied in this present building. And therefore the Library, I feel, must be considered as a central point from which emanate those strengthening rays which will make it possible for Jewish life to continue. And it is because of that great significance that my partner and I feel so grateful for the opportunity to have been associated with such a great work.

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I wish to express my gratitude to Shannon Hodge, Director of Archives at the JPL, for facilitating a fruitful collaboration with Daniela Ansovini, Kate Brothers, and Caroline Goulding, members of the JPL archival staff, who provided me with copies of articles and other documents relating to the public events described in this article. Thanks as well to JPL librarian Eddie Paul, who provided documentation on the Library's tape collection.

2

This familiar phrase appears, for example, as the title of an article by Gerald Tulchinsky, "The Third Solitude: A. M. Klein's Jewish Montreal, 1910-1950," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 19:2 (1984): 96-112 and as a chapter heading "A Third Solitude", in the recent study by Harold Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 39-79.

3

There is an extensive and growing literature about Yiddish Montreal. For example, see Ira Robinson, Pierre Anctil, and Mervin Butovsky, eds., *An Everyday Miracle: Yiddish Culture In Montreal* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1990) and Rebecca Margolis, *Jewish Roots, Canadian Soil: Yiddish Culture In Montreal, 1905-1945* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).

4

"Dedication Ceremony for the Jewish Public Library of Montreal (October 4th, 1953)," *Internet Archive*, accessed October 22, 2013, <https://archive.org/details/4AJPLDedication-CeremonyForTheJewishPublicLibraryOfMontrealOctober4th1953Part1Wit>, and <https://archive.org/details/4BJPLDedicationCeremonyForTheJewishPublicLibraryOfMontrealOctober4th1953Part2Wit>.

5

Kaufmann lived in Montreal for a relatively brief period (1913-1916) and later immigrated to Palestine, where he pursued a scholarly career – and changed his surname to Even-Shmuel. See Ira Robinson, "The Canadian Years of Yehuda Kaufman (Even Shmuel): Educator, Journalist, and Intellectual," *Canadian Jewish Studies* 15 (2007): 129-142. ("Kaufmann" is the spelling that is used in the JPL's publications.)

6

As an example, more than one speaker remarked upon the impact of the arrival of tens of thousands of New Canadians after World War II and, implicitly, on the changing ethnic composition of Canadian society. For treatments of Jews and multiculturalism in Canada, see inter alia: Troper, *The Defining Decade*, 68-76; Richard Menkis, "Jewish Communal Identity at the Crossroads: Early Jewish Responses to Canadian Multiculturalism, 1963-1965," *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses* 40 (2011): 283-292; and Rebecca Margolis, Rebecca, "Yiddish and Multiculturalism: A Marriage Made in Heaven?" *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 43-/44 (2011-/2012): 213-225. Troper offers an overview of Jewish reactions in Quebec to the national discussions concerning bilingualism and multiculturalism during the 1960s. Menkis explores the "tentative ... encounter" of the Canadian Jewish Congress with the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism during the early 1960s, in identifying Jews as an ethnic group. Margolis focuses primarily on the evolution of Yiddish as a heritage language within the framework of multiculturalism since the 1960s.

7

Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 9.

8

Mark Lilla, "The Great Museum Muddle," *The New Republic*, 8 Apr. 1985, 28.

9

Lilla, "The Great Museum Muddle," 28-29 (emphasis in the original).

10

Lilla, "The Great Museum Muddle," 30.

11

Peter F. McNally, "Canada," *Encyclopedia of Library History*, ed. Wayne A. Wiegand, Donald G. Davis, Jr. (New York: Garland, 1994), 103. McNally observes: "Andrew Carnegie and his foundation spent \$2.5 million between 1901 and 1923 building 125 public libraries [in Canada], of which 111 were in Ontario. The only one east of Ontario is in St. John, New Brunswick; Montreal refused one for political, linguistic, and religious reasons."

12

Ibid. According to McNally, Ontario (i.e., Upper Canada) had enacted a comparable law over a century earlier, in 1822.

13

For one thing, in contrast to the JPL, a municipal library in Montreal's central corridor would not have privileged the Yiddish language any more than did the publicly funded schools (under the auspices of the Protestant School Board) attended by the district's Jewish children.

14

Lilla, "The Great Museum Muddle," 28 (emphasis added).

15

"About Us," *Jewish Public Library*, accessed June 10, 2014, <http://www.jewishpubliclibrary.org/en/aboutus/>.

16

Gitl Gershonovitch (Gershonowitch), "Dos boyen fun nayem binyen: a khronik fun 10 yor," *Bibliotek bukh 1914-1957 [Our Library 1914-1957]*, 89, Yiddish section.

17

"Jewish Public Library of Montreal: Sod-Turning Ceremony (February 11th, 1951)," *Internet Archive*, accessed October 22, 2013, <https://archive.org/details/1JPLSodTurningCeremonyP1February11th1951>, and <https://archive.org/details/1BJPLSodTurningCeremonyP2February11th1951>.

18

"Jewish Public Library of Montreal: Sod-Turning Ceremony (February 11th, 1951)." The future Wagar High School – which opened in the heavily Jewish suburb of Côte-St-Luc in 1963 – would be named in honour of Roy Wagar.

19

The Faerman Library in the Snowdon Y (on Westbury Avenue, across the street from Cummings House) was eventually absorbed by the JPL.

20

But not "O Canada".

21

"Jewish Public Library of Montreal Cornerstone Ceremony (October 19th, 1952)," *Internet Archive*, accessed October 22, 2013, <https://>

archive.org/details/3AJewishPublicLibrary-OfMontrealCornerstoneCeremonyOctober19th1952Part1WithL.Wink, and <https://archive.org/details/3BJewishPublicLibrary-OfMontrealCornerstoneCeremonyOctober19th1952Part2WithL.Wink>.

22

Rabinovitch's oration was in Yiddish, Bronfman's in English.

23

Speech by Mr. Allan Bronfman at the Ceremony of Laying the Cornerstone in the New Building at 4499 Esplanade Ave. (Montreal: Jewish Public Library, 1952) (flyer). Bronfman's speech is also accessible via the *Internet Archive*: "Jewish Public Library of Montreal Cornerstone Ceremony (October 19th, 1952)."

24

Speech by Mr. Allan Bronfman at the Ceremony of Laying the Cornerstone in the New Building at 4499 Esplanade Ave.

25

Gershonovitch, "Dos boyen," *Bibliotek bukh [Our Library]*, 91, Yiddish section.

26

Speech by Mr. Allan Bronfman at the Ceremony of Laying the Cornerstone in the New Building at 4499 Esplanade Ave.

27

Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire* ([Paris]: Gallimard, 1984-1992).

28

Pierre Nora [translated by Marc Roudebush], "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989): 12 (emphasis added).

29

"Jewish Public Library of Montreal Cornerstone Ceremony (October 19th, 1952)."

30

Autobiographical information on Mayerovitch (1910-2004) – "architect, artist, author, Adjunct Professor, McGill University, and member of the School of Architecture for 75 years" – can be found at: <http://www.mcgill.ca/architecture/aluminterviews/mayerovitch>, accessed March 1, 2014. See also memorial comments published on the McGill School of Architecture's website: <http://www.mcgill>.

ca/architecture/memoriam/mayerovitch, accessed March 1, 2014.

31

Ibid.

32

The Amicus catalogue of Library and Archives Canada (<http://amicus.collectionscanada.gc.ca>, accessed December 29, 2013) lists several publications issued by the Canadian Arts Council (C.A.C.), including a newsletter published irregularly between 1946 and 1956, a *Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences* (Toronto: 1949) – also known as the Massey–Lévesque Commission – and a *Brief to the Royal Commission on Broadcasting* (Toronto: 1956). Probably the best known and most widely disseminated of C.A.C.-sponsored publications was the survey by the prominent literary critic and cultural luminary Malcolm Mackenzie Ross, *The Arts in Canada: A Stock-Taking at Mid-Century* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1958). Ross was to serve on the federally funded Canada Council (now the Canada Council for the Arts).

33

“Jewish Public Library of Montreal Cornerstone Ceremony (October 19th, 1952).”

34

Ibid.

35

Ibid.

36

Ibid.

37

Ibid.

38

Ibid.

39

Outdoor session: “Dedication Ceremony,” *Internet Archive*, accessed October 22, 2013, <https://archive.org/details/4AJPLDedication-CeremonyForTheJewishPublicLibraryOfMontrealOctober4th1953Part1Wit>, and <https://archive.org/details/4BJPLDedicationCeremonyForTheJewishPublicLibraryOfMontrealOctober4th1953Part2Wit>. Indoor session: “Dedication Ceremony,” <https://archive.org/details/5JPLDedicationCeremonyForThe->

[JewishPublicLibraryOfMontrealOctober4th-1953Part3With](https://archive.org/details/6JPLDedicationCeremonyForTheJewishPublicLibraryOfMontrealOctober4th1953Part4Wit), and [https://archive.org/details/6JPLDedicationCeremonyForTheJewishPublicLibraryOfMontrealOctober4th-1953Part4With](https://archive.org/details/6JPLDedicationCeremonyForTheJewishPublicLibraryOfMontrealOctober4th1953Part4Wit).

40

Outdoor session: “Dedication Ceremony.”

41

Bruchési was no stranger to the Jewish Public Library, having first visited it in 1943 when he “presented the library with a collection of volumes on French Canada.” See “Adult Education,” *Bibliotek bukh [Our Library]*, 71, English section.

42

Outdoor session: “Dedication Ceremony.”

43

Ibid.

44

Ibid.

45

Ibid.

46

Ibid.

47

A few minutes later, JPL director David Rome assured the audience: “Nous sommes... très sensibles et très appréciatifs... que nous vivons dans un milieu de langue française.” See: Outdoor session: “Dedication Ceremony.” On the Conservatoire, see the “Historique” page on its website: <http://www.conservatoire.gouv.qc.ca/le-conservatoire/a-propos-du-conservatoire/historique-359/>, accessed December 1, 2013.

48

Outdoor session: “Dedication Ceremony.”

49

Conrad Langlois, “La nouvelle bibliothèque juive, une oeuvre d’éducation populaire,” *La Patrie* 1 nov. 1953: 66-67.

50

Langlois, “La nouvelle bibliothèque juive,” 66-67. A brief report in *Montréal Matin* informed its readers, “Notons que des cours de français seront donnés à la nouvelle institution par le professeur H. Morgentaler, diplômé de

l'Université de Montréal." See "Une nouvelle bibliothèque a été inaugurée à Montréal," *Montréal Matin* 5 oct. 1953. Dr. Henry Morgentaler would subsequently achieve international renown as an advocate of abortion rights.

51

For background on the Cercle, see Jack Jedwab, "The Politics of Dialogue: Rapprochement Efforts between Jews and French Canadians, 1939-1960," in *Renewing Our Days: Montreal Jews in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Ira Robinson and Mervin Butovsky (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1995), 58-60, and Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 412.

52

Langlois, "La nouvelle bibliothèque juive," 66-67.

53

Outdoor session: "Dedication Ceremony."

54

Ibid.

55

Ibid. Deschamps closed his speech with a friendly greeting: "Allow a French-speaking Canadian co-citizen to leave you with a word known not only in Israel but in the whole world: Shalom!" This salutation, which was warmly greeted by the audience, was re-marked upon in the *Keneder Adler's* reportage of the dedication. See "Ayndruksfuler kha-nukes-habayis durkhgefihrt gevoren nekhten fun der idisher folks-bibliotek," *Keneder Adler* 5 Oct. 1953.

56

Outdoor session: "Dedication Ceremony."

57

One speculates that the poet, editor, and lawyer Abraham Moses Klein, who also served as Bronfman's speechwriter, penned at least some of the baroque turns of phrase in this address. On Klein's relationship with Bronfman see Michael Marrus, *Mr Sam: The Life and Times of Samuel Bronfman* ([New York]: Viking, 1991), 274-278; and Usher Caplan, *Like One that Dreamed: A Portrait of A. M. Klein* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1982), 83-86, 125-127, 189-193.

58

Outdoor session: "Dedication Ceremony."

59

Ibid.

60

Its director, David Rome, had come to the JPL from the Canadian Jewish Congress, where he had been first hired by H. M. Caiserman eleven years earlier.

61

Outdoor session: "Dedication Ceremony." In his biography of Samuel Bronfman, Michael Marrus mentions the "real affection" that this often-forbidding figure displayed toward "the Yiddishists" of Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg. See Marrus, *Mr Sam*, 295.

62

Shatzky's lecture during the Festival of Jewish Culture is accessible online: "Dedication Ceremonies for the Jewish Public Library ... Dr. Jacob Shatzky on 'The People of the Book,'" *Internet Archive*, accessed October 22, 2013, <https://archive.org/details/8ADedicationCeremoniesForTheJewishPublicLibraryOfMontrealOctober4th1953Part6With>, and <https://archive.org/details/8BDedicationCeremoniesForTheJewishPublicLibraryOfMontrealOctober14th1953Part7Wit>.

63

Outdoor session: "Dedication Ceremony."

64

Indoor session: "Dedication Ceremony." Several years earlier, a newspaper report on the fundraising campaign had noted, "Newly-arrived immigrants are readers, students in the [Jewish People's University] courses, and active co-workers." See "Montreal Meetings," *The Canadian Jewish Review*, 3 Dec. 1948, p. 4; "Canadian Jewish Review, December 2, 1948" *Multicultural Canada*, accessed December 25, 2013, <http://multiculturalcanada.ca/node/39656>.

65

Indoor session: "Dedication Ceremony."

66

Ibid.

67

Ibid.

68

"Canadian Dedication of the Jewish Public Library of Montreal," *Internet Archive*, accessed October 22, 2013, https://archive.org/details/CanadianDedicationOfTheJewishPublicLibraryOfMontrealPart1february_343, and <https://archive.org/details/CanadianDedicationOfTheJewishPublicLibraryOfMontrealPart2february>.

69

"The Bronfman Collection of Jewish Canadiana" (Montreal: Jewish Public Library, [1953]) [flyer].

70

"The Bronfman Collection of Jewish Canadiana" [flyer].

71

"The Bronfman Collection of Jewish Canadiana," *Bibliotek bukh [Our Library]*, 51, English section.

72

Conrad Langlois, "Source de documentation unique dans son genre," in *La Patrie*, 13 June 13, 1954.

73

Raymond Douville, *Aaron Hart: récit historique* (Trois-Rivières: Éditions du Bien public, 1938). Langlois erroneously asserted that Aaron Hart was elected to (but not seated in) the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada, an honour that the electors bestowed upon his son Ezekiel in 1807.

74

Yves Thériault, *Aaron: roman* (Québec: Institut littéraire du Québec, 1954).

75

Arthur Aryeh Goren, "The 'Golden Decade': 1945-1955," in his *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 197.

76

Ibid., 198.

77

Ibid.

78

Ibid., 204.

79

Ibid., 204.

80

Ibid., 199.

81

Ibid., 196.

82

"Canadian Dedication of the Jewish Public Library of Montreal."

83

The election of Fred Rose as Labour-Progressive M.P. in 1943 and 1945 interrupted the string of Liberal M.P.s representing Montreal's heavily Jewish Cartier riding. See Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey*, 268-270.

84

"Canadian Dedication of the Jewish Public Library of Montreal."

85

Marrus, *Mr Sam*, 407-408.

86

Ibid., 410. Bronfman's hopes of being appointed to the Senate were never realized.

87

Bronfman on the JPL: "We come here to look at art, to listen to music, to fill in the gaps of our knowledge, to take part in forums, to meet kindred persons, to see with our own eyes the handwritten documents of Sholem Aleichem and Bialik." See: "Canadian Dedication of the Jewish Public Library of Montreal."

88

"Canadian Dedication of the Jewish Public Library of Montreal."

89

"Canadian Dedication of the Jewish Public Library of Montreal."

90

Quoted in Marrus, *Mr Sam*, 264.

91

"Canadian Dedication of the Jewish Public Library of Montreal."

92

Ibid.

93

For background on John W. (Jack) Pickersgill, see Jack Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins, 1935-1957* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982), 207-225.

Contrary to Goldenberg's prognostications, Pickersgill did not, however, go on to bigger and better things. In the mid-1960s, he did serve again in the Pearson Cabinet, as Minister of Transport, and following that he was named president of the Canadian Transport Commission.

94

J. W. Pickersgill, "Bronfman Collection of Canadiana," *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 25 June 1954, 2, 15.

95

"Canadian Dedication of the Jewish Public Library of Montreal."

96

Pickersgill, "Bronfman Collection of Canadiana." See David Rome, *Canadian Jews In World War II* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1947).

97

Ibid.

98

Ibid.

99

Ibid.

100

Ibid.

101

Ibid.

102

Ibid.

103

"Canadian Dedication of the Jewish Public Library of Montreal."

104

Pickersgill, "Bronfman Collection of Canadiana." Pickersgill was quoting from a speech that Laurier delivered on 15 August 1900 at Arichat, N.S. See, inter alia, Sir John Willison, *Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal Party: A Political History* (Toronto: George N. Morang, 1903), vol. 2, 391-392.

105

"Canadian Dedication of the Jewish Public Library of Montreal."

106

Ibid.

107

Ibid.

108

Troper, *The Defining Decade*, 4-14. The text of the "Proclamation of Faith and Thanksgiving" is reproduced on the front page of a special issue of *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle* (30 Oct. 1959) that was issued on the occasion of the National Bicentenary of Canadian Jewry. Among the manifold accomplishments of Canadian Jewry that are recited in that issue is the observation "that Montreal should be one of the largest centres of Jewish library reading outside Israel" – an obvious allusion to the Jewish Public Library. See Ten Taube, "Two Hundred Years of Canadian Jewry," *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 30 Oct. 1959, 6.

109

"A Proclamation of Faith and Thanksgiving, on the Occasion of the National Bicentenary of Canadian Jewry," *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 30 Oct. 1959, [1].

110

Gershonovitch, "Dos boyen," *Bibliotek bukh [Our Library]*, 91, Yiddish section.

111

Paul André Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération*, 2ième éd. augm. (Montréal: Boréal, 2000), 467-469.

112

The Bibliothèque nationale's own imposing structure, La Grande Bibliothèque [<http://www.banq.qc.ca/>, accessed October 22, 2013], opened on de Maisonneuve Est in 2005. As of October 2013, a dance company, Compagnie Marie Chouinard, occupied the JPL's former building on Esplanade [<http://www.mariechouinard.com/>], accessed October 22, 2013].

113

The Library's occupancy of its space in Cummings House was interrupted for about a year, when that building was thoroughly renovated at the end of the 1990s.

114

YM-YWHA, accessed October 22, 2013, <http://www.ymywha.com/>.

115

Samuel Bronfman's formulation in the speech that he delivered at the dedication of the Bronfman Collection of Jewish Canadiana, accessible online: "Canadian Dedication of the Jewish Public Library of Montreal."

116

To be sure, H. Carl Goldenberg and M. H. Myerson, both of them members of the Quebec bar, spoke an eminently passable French in their public remarks. Myerson served as president of the Cercle juif de langue française from 1954 to 1957.

117

Pickersgill, "Bronfman Collection of Canadiana."

118

"The New Building," *Bibliotek bukh [Our Library]*, 85, English section.

119

"About Us," *Jewish Public Library*, accessed October 22, 2013, <http://www.jewishpubliclibrary.org/en/aboutus/>.

120

On the introduction and spread of tape recording technology, see *inter alia* the following online resources: Friedrich Engel and Peter Hammar (additional editing by Richard L. Hess), *A Selected History of Magnetic Recording* (PDF), 2006, accessed January 1, 2014, http://www.richardhess.com/tape/history/Engel_Hammar--Magnetic_Tape_History.pdf; *The History of Recording Technology: Tape Recording Technology*, [ca. 2002], *Internet Archive: Wayback Machine*, accessed January 1, 2014, http://web.archive.org/web/20040603152849/http://www.tvhandbook.com/History/History_recording.htm; Don Rushin, *The History of Magnetic Tape: Magic of Magnetic Tape*, [ca. 2002], *Internet Archive: Wayback Machine*, accessed January 1, 2014 http://web.archive.org/web/20040603153341/www.tvhandbook.com/History/History_tape.htm.

121

Ronald Finegold, comp., *On Tape: Catalogue of the William Ostreger Audiotape Collection* (Montreal: Jewish Public Library, 1983).

Ostreger's role in setting up and supervising the taping program is also mentioned by Janice Arnold, in "JPL's Yiddish Audio Collection to Go Digital," *The Canadian Jewish News*, 2 Feb. 2012, accessed December 25, 2013, <http://www.cjnews.com/canada/jpl%E2%80%99s-yiddish-audio-collection-go-digital>. In his capacity as Board member, Ostreger co-chaired (with M. Halperin) the Metropolitan Division of the JPL's building campaign during the first half of the 1950s. See "Montreal Meetings," in *The Canadian Jewish Review*, 27 July 1951, 9, accessed December 25, 2013, <http://multiculturalcanada.ca/node/275402>. (The Metropolitan Division was responsible for soliciting contributions from donors of modest means.)

122

This is based on personal recollection from the years when I worked at the Jewish Public Library (1981-1987) and was confirmed by Shmuel Rosenfeld's daughter-in-law, Jacki Langsner, in an e-mail to the author, dated 5 Aug. 2013.

123

Like the JPL, the archives of the 92nd Street Y also maintain a large collection of its recorded lectures, many of them accessible online [<http://92yondemand.org/>, accessed October 22, 2013]. However, almost none of this content is in Yiddish.

124

Interestingly, the figure who is most prominently identified with the 92nd Street Y's cultural programming – especially its concerts – was Omus Hirshbein, himself the son of two Yiddish writers, Peretz Hirshbein and Esther Shumiatcher. See *inter alia* Allan Kozinn, "Omus Hirshbein, Classical Music Impresario, Dies at 77," *The New York Times*, 7 Jan. 2012, accessed December 25, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/07/arts/music/omus-hirshbein-classical-music-administrator-dies-at-77.html?_r=0.

125

"Sami Rohr Library of Recorded Yiddish Books," *Jewish Book Council*, accessed October 22, 2013, <http://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/programs/rohrlibrarybooks>.

126

"Yiddish Book Center's Sami Rohr Library of Recorded Yiddish Books," *National Yiddish Book Center*, accessed October 12, 2013, <http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/podcast/sami-rohr-library-recorded-yiddish-books>

127

"Yiddish Book Center's Frances Brandt Online Yiddish Audio Library," *National Yiddish Book Center*, accessed October 2013, <http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/podcast/frances-brandt-library>.,

128

Internet Archive, accessed October 22, 2013, archive.org.

129

As is explained on the Yiddish Book Center's website: "The original recordings were made on reel-to-reel tapes. After a certain period of time during a program, the tape would have run out – sometimes in the middle of a sentence. Operators would then turn the tape over and start recording on the other side, often resulting in a short break where the programs were not recorded (usually between 5 and 7 seconds). When this happens, the program will continue on a second recording listed with the same title ending with 'part 2.' Each digitized track corresponds exactly with the material on one side of the reel-to-reel tapes." "Yiddish Book Center's Frances Brandt Online Yiddish Audio Library," *National Yiddish Book Center*, accessed October 22, 2013, <http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/podcast/frances-brandt-library>.

The cumbersome and clunky search interface of the Internet Archive makes it difficult to come up with the precise count of the number of programs represented online.