Notes on Operations
When One Plus One Remains One

The Challenges and Triumphs of Merging Two University Libraries

Elaine Mael

Following the trend for library mergers of various configurations, the recent union of a state university with a private specialized university, each with its own library, provides insight into this ongoing phenomenon. The issues involved in such a vision occur on many fronts, including administrative decisions, technological implementation, physical plant management, and staff commitment. All of these require considerable strategic planning, sometimes in the shadow of time constraints. The author addresses the challenges, the benefits, and the potential problems resulting from the merger of two university libraries and the implications for other libraries considering a similar amalgamation.

Imagine this scenario: two universities, one a sprawling urban campus with multiple colleges and departments, hundreds of faculty members, and more than 20,000 students, and the other a private institution located in a single building, with a faculty of less than twenty and a small student body. Both universities possess magnificent libraries, the former containing over half a million books and periodicals plus online access to a multitude of electronic databases covering a vast array of disciplines, the latter a highly specialized collection of monographs, periodicals, audiovisual materials, rare books, and electronic resources and numbering more than 70,000 items. Energize the scene with the merger of the two institutions, a move that integrates both academic programs and faculty. Overlay the process with instructions to consolidate both libraries, physically and electronically, resolving the complexities of two very different library systems. This must be accomplished in approximately four months.

This, in essence, was the mandate faced by the Albert S. Cook Library in June 2009, when the planned merger of Towson University (TU) and the Baltimore Hebrew University (BHU) became a reality. As a staff member in the library of each of these institutions, formerly at one and currently at the other, the author enjoys a unique perspective on this process, and the focus of this paper is specifically on technical services aspects of the library merger.

Historically, a recurring trend in institutions of higher education is the merger of two or more separate institutions into one single new entity.[1] A literature review reveals that such mergers have occurred throughout the world. In the United States, mergers were relatively common among private and public higher education institutions beginning in the 1960s, and became more frequent in the 1980s and 1990s.[2] While some research regarding these mergers analyzes the reasons behind the mergers, other studies concentrate on the variables affecting their success. Only a few papers focus on the contemporaneous merger of the libraries along with their institutions, and still fewer address the technical aspects.

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In his overview of mergers in higher education, Skodvin traces the various reasons behind amalgamations and differentiates between forced and voluntary mergers.[3] Forced mergers are initiated by external sources, such as educational authorities intending to restructure the higher education system. Voluntary mergers are initiated by the institutions involved. These can be motivated by political aims, to expand educational capability, or by economic needs such as a financial crisis. Skodvin emphasizes that although the impetus for mergers can range from the desire to resolve financial constraints to strategic planning goals, the common thread in every merger is the conviction that there is some assumed gain for the institutions involved.

Harman and Harman review the history of mergers and follow the development of types of amalgamations over the decades.[4] Earlier mergers were used to combine academic departments or faculties to form institutions with a greater range of programming, and more recent mergers were more likely to be driven by the quest for cost savings, the threat of declining enrollment, and/or concerns about institutional closures. More recently, the primary reason for mergers is the attempt to enhance the competitive advantage in the academic marketplace. While their paper concentrates on mergers between two strong institutions, they note that a merger between a large institution and a smaller specialized one can boost the attractiveness of the blended institution among potential students and staff, and increase access to research funds.

Martin and Samels document the increase in mergers.[5] In a later paper, Martin and Samels analyze the more recent escalation of "strategic alliances" in institutions of higher education.[6] There is consensus in the literature that whether the primary reason is to improve a market position in higher education or to avoid closure

or bankruptcy, the ultimate goal is to achieve administrative, economic, and academic benefits by merging smaller entities into a larger whole.

Most mergers among public and private institutions are between similar types of organizations, although they may vary in size. This would imply that public institutions will typically merge with other public ones, and private ones with private ones, but that is not always the case. A recent policy brief by McBain indicates that mergers in American higher education are becoming increasingly complex.[7] It cites examples of proposed or actual mergers that included a state institution and a private not-for-profit college, a community college with a vocational school, and a church-affiliated university with a state university system. This complexity is true in the recent merger of two Baltimore institutions of higher education involving a state university and a private not-for-profit university of Jewish studies.

One significant part of such mergers is the impact on each institution's libraries. The consolidation of libraries should be as advantageous as a merger of the institutions, and the potential for better resources, new funding, and higher visibility are some of the desirable outcomes. Moll points out that in mergers among institutions of higher education, the library is rarely the initiator, and must conform to the facts of such a merger.[8] The type of merger is less important to the library than the steps taken to insure the success of the amalgamation.

Several studies address the issues of lessons learned from successful mergers. Skodvin stresses the benefits of a bottom-up strategy, focusing on openness among all affected participants and strategic planning for all aspects of the merger.[9] Equally important is strong management, good communication, and ongoing access to resources such as library databases. Swanepoel focuses specifically on library mergers in institutions of

higher education, and emphasizes the benefits of involving independent consultants, administrative acknowledgement of the complexity of the merger, and maintaining a positive outcomes goal among stakeholders.[10]

Saarti and Juntunen analyze the merger of two universities and their libraries, and note the benefits of including the libraries in the process from the beginning.[11] By addressing human resources management, customer service production, and documentation practices, mergers can be facilitated more easily. Kathman chronicled the process by which two institutions of higher education merged their libraries.[12] The libraries had an exisitng cooperative relationship, and the merger was intended to reduce costs for both. He highlights staff involvement in premerger decision-making, hiring a consultant, and top administrators committed to the merger as positive factors affecting its success.

In their case study of a merger between two academic libraries, Rozum and Brassow address the strategic and practical aspects of the process.[13] Their study includes a close examination of catalog system migration, reconciling policies and procedures, collection development, acquisitions, staff responsibilities, e-resource management, public service, and research and instruction. The mandate for this merger was to combine the libraries to reduce overall costs and still maintain the identities of two distinct institutions. This differs widely from the merger of TU and BHU, in which the libraries merged in all respects except for location within one building; the operations affected are the same. Rozum and Brassow highlight the importance of communication, staff flexibility to assume different or additional duties, clear direction from library management, and acknowledgement of intense time allocation as key elements in a successful merger.

Historical Perspective

TU was founded in 1866 as the Maryland State Normal School (MSNS), the first teacher training institution in the state. MSNS initially addressed the need for educating qualified teachers, but in response to the developing academic needs of the community it served, it expanded the curriculum to include the arts and sciences and later added graduate programs. Reflecting its continued growth through its various name changes, from Maryland State Teachers College at Towson to Towson State College, Towson State University, and finally Towson University, the institution has evolved in response to educational and societal changes. Now offering programs in the health professions, business, and technology, Towson University became part of the newly established University System of Maryland in 1988.

BHU was established in 1919 as the Baltimore Hebrew College Teachers Training School (BHCTTS). It was founded in response to a pressing need from Baltimore's growing Jewish community for teachers trained in both the Jewish tradition and contemporary pedagogic methods. Joined at one time with the Board of Jewish Education, BHCTTS later separated from the Board to focus on changing community needs to become the Baltimore Hebrew College (BHC), and developed an undergraduate division, supported teacher continuing education, and established relationships with colleges offering Jewish studies courses. BHC eventually became one of a handful of independent schools of Jewish studies in the US, offering dual graduate programs with several local colleges and universities. In 1987, the school changed its name to Baltimore Hebrew University (BHU), reflecting the expansion of its curriculum and subsequent granting of advance degrees.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, changes in the larger academic community began to affect this nearly 100-year-old institution. Jewish studies were already a part of larger universities in the United States, but these were generally small, adjunct programs of larger departments. As universities embraced multicultural diversity in their academic programming, Jewish studies programs began to grow. A consequence of this change meant that students interested in Jewish studies no longer needed to attend an independent institution to earn an undergraduate degree, and such schools began to lose enrollment. By the mid-2000s, BHU was offering upper-level courses only, with an emphasis on its masters and doctoral programs. The major sponsoring body of BHU reevaluated its investment in the university, and notified the school in 2007 that it would gradually withdraw its support over a five-year period. The immediate result of this decision was the necessity for BHU to develop a new strategy to guarantee its survival.

BHU approached the challenges of this new status on several fronts. It immediately began trimming its budget and staff wherever possible, including its administrative offices and the staff of its library. Beyond this, the first priority was to propose alternative possibilities for the university's continued existence. Proposed scenarios included a self-funded university; a joint high school/university institution with like-minded organizations; and a merger with another institution of higher education.[14] This last scenario had precedents in the world of higher academia, and BHU ultimately pursued it to retain and rejuvenate the university's academic integrity.

Discussions between BHU and TU began in the spring of 2008.[15] The proposed integration of the institutions seemed to be a natural alliance from the beginning. Both institutions were initially founded as teachers' training schools, designed to meet the educational needs of their developing populations. Each expanded and developed in response to the region's growth and educational requirements. While BHU added increasingly higher levels of degrees plus high school and adult-education programs to its offerings, TU expanded to state university status and emerged as an outstanding institution of higher learning, granting degrees from the undergraduate through doctoral levels. BHU was an independent school concentrating on higher Jewish education, and TU's programs covered a vast range of disciplines, offering more than 100 bachelors, masters, and doctoral degree programs in the liberal arts and sciences and applied professional fields. Similar to other universities in the United States, TU offered an undergraduate minor in Jewish studies. This last point is significant, as the interest in programming for studies in this area was already well established. One of the inherent strengths in the continued growth of TU was its capacity to identify and nurture new programs in the fields that interested the academic community.[16] Viewing itself as a service organization, TU developed interdisciplinary partnerships with other institutions in the region, and cultivated programs and departments that reflected emerging disciplines and addressed economic needs. The basis for an expanded Jewish studies program at TU was already in place. The time seemed ripe to cultivate this need into a full-blown program.

Of great interest to TU was the fact that BHU had long been offering master's degrees in Jewish studies, Jewish education, and Jewish communal services. Some of these were, in fact, dual degrees granted with other area institutions, among them, TU. For TU, one of the attractions of the proposed merger was the existence of these programs as well as BHU's doctoral program in Philosophy and Jewish studies. The goal was for TU to offer all of these programs. TU announced its intention to integrate

BHU's academic programs into its own offerings on September 22, 2008. The two institutions approved a Memo of Intent, signifying a commitment to negotiate exclusively with each other, with details to be completed within sixty days. The goal was to merge the programs and to employ as many of BHU's current faculty as possible. This included incorporating BHU's library into TU's Albert S. Cook Library. Integrating BHU's library proved to be a massive undertaking as the library consisted of more than 70,000 volumes, several hundred periodical titles, many discrete audiovisual collections, a 1000+ volume rare book collection, and artifacts relating to Jewish history or religious practices (menorahs, spice boxes, textile art, and a miniature sculpture collection by sculptor Louis Rosenthal).

The Plan

The objective was to begin the newly integrated program at TU as early as the 2009–10 academic year. This goal was extremely important to BHU's stability, not only to the students currently matriculated at BHU, but to present the university as a viable institution with a future. Expediting the merger would ensure a smooth transition for the BHU students, with immediate attention given to the logistics of admission and placement of the students. As part of this expedited merger, the entire BHU library needed to be absorbed into the Cook Library at TU in a very short timeframe. To appreciate the magnitude of the factors involved in the consolidation, it must be viewed in light of the larger picture of the merger of the two universities. Following is a summary of the timeline encompassing the merger.

In October 2008, news of the impending merger was announced to the TU Senate. The university provost articulated the long-term benefits of such a partnership, highlighting the

potential for joint research, library resources, and awarding of degrees. BHU programs and courses would be vetted to ensure compliance with TU's academic standards, and BHU faculty would be reviewed to facilitate their integration into TU.[17] Negotiations concerning the academic programs, finances, faculty review, and library absorption continued into the spring of 2009.[18] Hoping to expedite the merger to minimize academic disruption to BHU students, plans moved forward as quickly as bureaucratic steps permitted. By the beginning of May 2009, procedures for the merger were solidified. BHU and TU signed a Memo of Understanding (MOU), and received approval from the University System of Maryland Board of Regents and the Maryland Higher Education Commission on June 20, 2009.[19] The MOU stated that BHU would integrate its academic programs into TU beginning July 1, 2009, and that BHU students would be affiliated with the newly established Baltimore Hebrew Institute at Towson University (BHI).[20]

While the terms of the merger were being worked out, the general consensus was that the merger would move ahead. With the unofficial understanding that BHU would be functional at TU by the 2009 fall semester, there was much to be accomplished in terms of library functionality. To address this issue, the university librarian at Cook Library began to move forward on merger plans to accommodate the physical and technical requirements of a library merger. This initial planning began less than a year before the proposed integration of both libraries.

TU is a member of the University System of Maryland and Affiliated Institutions (USMAI) consortium sixteen libraries of the public universities and colleges in the state of Maryland. All management and administrative work related to the consortium's technology aspects is coordinated by the Information Technology Division

(ITD) at the University of Maryland College Park (UMCP). Any major project involving the library and the shared catalog is in their purview. In December 2008, the university librarian contacted the director of ITD to establish a timeline for reviewing BHU's bibliographic records to determine what preparations were required to integrate BHU's holdings into Aleph, TU's library system. The director of ITD outlined the probable steps needed to merge BHU's bibliographic records, including evaluating their compatibility with OCLC records and the possible methods to extract and map local data. The goal was to extract the data file from BHU's catalog and load it into Aleph. The ease of this task was dependent on the quality of BHU's records. Of prime importance were the holding codes, the four-character sets that identify a location or collection within an institution. These codes are embedded in the bibliographic records, and the accuracy of this information is of particular importance in managing a large library collection. Significant to the impending database merge was the compatibility of the system of origin with Aleph.

The records required review by USMAI's Cataloging Policy Committee (CPC), which advises on records scheduled for batchloading into the catalog. TU's cataloging staff needed to develop specifications for this record load. Extracting BHU's bibliographic records also required working with the BHU integrated library system (ILS) vendor, The Library Corporation (TLC), to map the local data into specific fields. Aside from the general intent to process the files through the OCLC database (USMAI's usual manner of uploading records), there were additional goals. One was to flip BHU's OCLC holdings to reflect their new status as a TU collection. The specifications from ITD to OCLC for the batchload project included the request to delete all holdings marked "BHD"

(for BHU) and to replace them with "TSC" (for TU). To address the duplication of OCLC accounts, TU notified Lyrasis, the library network for both universities, to consolidate their memberships and to confirm that BHU's records would assume the TSC symbol.

The multi-lingual nature of the collection was another consideration. Since the BHU catalog contained a large percentage of Hebrew and Yiddish titles, and because their ILS was not Unicode compliant, the records for those titles were Romanized. Aleph can handle records that contain parallel fields for the Romanized and vernacular entries or parallel records in the language of origin. Matching BHU's records against the OCLC database would enable record enhancement. The specifications of the batchload order were intended to identify the newest form of the record and, if possible, to select a record that included the vernacular in paired fields. This did not always result in the latest form of the record, but it harvested many instances of vernacularly enriched versions.

Strategizing

The amount of programming required for the merger would determine the need for a new bibliographic loader at ITD; if the records were "clean" enough, they could be uploaded with the regular ongoing OCLC loader routine. With this in mind, ITD estimated a preliminary timeline for integrating the database into Aleph at approximately four months.

At this point, the author was brought into the process. She had been a librarian at BHU for many years and had joined the TU library six months previously. The author had served as BHU's cataloger and was familiar with the original implementation of BHU's ILS; she had worked with the vendor when the collection was converted to electronic form. The author had unique insight into the library's s subcollections, holding codes, local

bibliographic customizations, and the origin and significance of existing bibliographic decisions. Her institutional memory became very useful in the ensuing months. Another benefit of her presence was her relationship with her former BHU colleagues. The sharing of information pertinent to the merger of two databases flowed easily, a fact which would prove invaluable as the process progressed. Some of the files and documents that provided crucial information for the cataloging process had been written by the author. In addition, as a specialized Judaic collection, the BHU library contained a large number of materials published in foreign languages, primarily Hebrew and Yiddish. As the only Hebrew language specialist on the TU library staff, the author's language skill was invaluable for identifying, testing, verifying, and planning for the future addition of these items.

In January 2009, the TU university librarian convened a preliminary committee meeting to discuss the details of the library merger. In light of the expected integration of BHU before the 2009 fall semester, the committee began to gather estimates from outside vendors to address the logistics of the merger. These included companies that handled the physical aspects of the move, such as dismantling and rebuilding shelving, and those that moved entire library collections. It also included those that offered multiple processing services, such as cataloging, authority control, and digitization. BHU was investigating possibilities for funding the renovation of facilities at TU and for the cost of the move. Another outcome of this initial meeting was the selection of a BHU task group at TU, comprised of staff members from content management, public services, circulation, periodicals, technical services, and facilities management. Before the first meeting, the task group began work to prepare the strategic plan for implementing the move.

The practical implications of moving a 70,000-volume collection into the existing space of another library was daunting. The first challenge was the allocation of physical space to hold the collection. The pending agreement specified that the BHU collection would be housed separately from the general TU collection, so a large defined area was required. Fortuitously, a back-burner project that would become essential to the proposed move was already in progress. One entire floor of Cook Library was currently designated for periodicals, with more than 100,000 bound journal volumes shelved on long open stacks. These volumes occupied the majority of the space on the floor, filling the central area with scores of metal shelves. A glassed-in area which housed the periodicals reading room, the periodicals service desk, microform machines, and storage cabinets for library microforms was on one side of this space. The floor also held study tables and carrels, and a small lobby with group study tables (see figure 1). This floor was cleared of the bound periodicals to make space for the BHU collection.

The pending periodicals project addressed a growing trend in academic libraries to interfile bound periodical material by call number with the monographs in the general stacks. This brought together all printed material on one topic and enhanced user accessibility to resources. On a technical level, classifying and interfiling the bound journals required several steps, including reviewing the bibliographic records for all journal titles in the print collection; verifying title changes and production cessations; assigning class numbers to records to be retained in the collection; printing spine labels with the new call numbers; and affixing the labels to 100,000 volumes. Most important in terms of time was be the massive shift in the general stacks to create space and accommodate these bound journal volumes.

Determination that there was sufficient space in the stacks was crucial to the success of this endeavor. Technical services staff managed the projections and measurements to ascertain the possibility of absorbing an influx of materials. Using a formulaic approach to estimate the space required for the periodicals, a detail-oriented library technician determined that the periodical collection could be accommodated on the upper floors by increasing the number of shelves in each range. By removing unneeded shelves from the second floor and rebuilding them on the fourth and fifth floors, the initial shifting could begin. Along with confirmation of space, another issue arose. The layout of the general stacks on the upper floors of the library was not intuitive. The head of circulation, who also managed the re-shelving and shifting, speculated that while the collection was being shifted to make room for the journals, it might be time to shift and re-route the entire collection to correct this directional flow problem. The task group also addressed the facilities aspect of the move, as the spaces on both floors needed reconfiguration. The second floor shelves consisted of two sets of ranges, each many stacks deep, stretching across the room. The new configuration that would hold the BHU collection required removal of one of these sets; the remaining one would be extended by two sections to accommodate the BHU volumes. Additional sections of shelving were required on the upper floors to receive the newly integrated journals. The floor designated to house the BHU collection needed considerable reconfiguration; the number of books shelved there would be reduced by thirty percent. While one half of the floor space would be devoted to the incoming monograph collection, the other half was redesigned as study space (see figure 2).

The library administration investigated the possibility of outsourcing all or some steps of the project. The costs
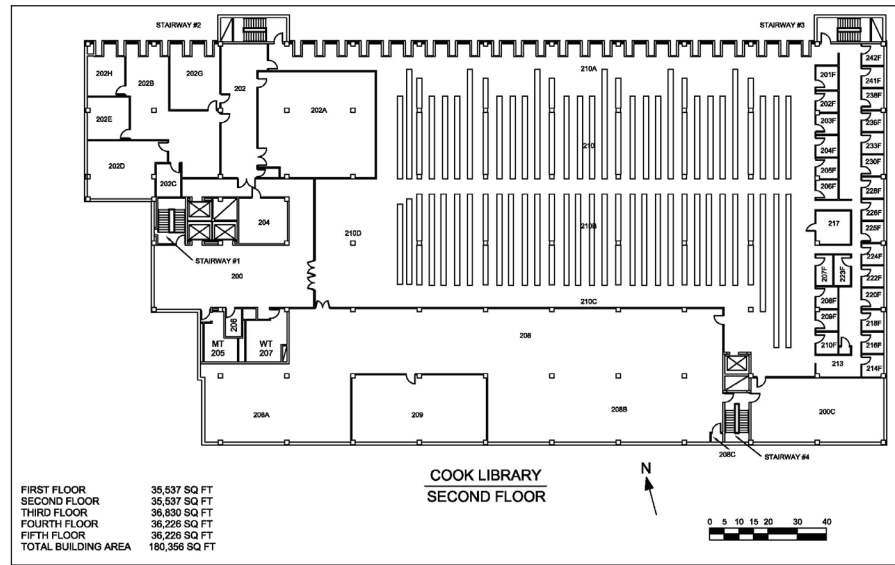

Figure 1. Cook Library 2nd Floor before BHI collection arrival

were deemed too steep to accommodate all of the plans, and the eventual outsourced pieces included the moving of the shelves, the shift of the collection, and the re-shelving of the bound journals. In retrospect, there were some serious flaws with the work provided by the company chosen to perform the work. The original conceptual map called for the move of approximately one-half of LC-arranged volumes to the uppermost fifth floor and the rest to the floor below. The contractor, lacking solid knowledge of the collection, encouraged moving more of the collection to the fifth floor. The library had chosen not to hire a project manager for the move and relied on estimations and configurations generated by its own staff. Because the titles could not all be processed for moving in order of their location on the shelves, it became apparent midway through the move that the upper floor would run out of shelf space. This necessitated building additional shelving, some serious reshifting in the middle of the project (involving all members of the library staff), and many overtime hours by the contractor's workers as they raced against the deadline.

Once the journals were removed

from the second floor, renovations began. The stacks area of the floor received new carpeting and paint. While the journal project and the second floor overhaul were proceeding, two other developments were occurring simultaneously. Although unrelated to the merger, the timing of another Cook Library project proved to be fortuitous for the transition from two libraries to one. In 1970, the TU library established the Department of College Archives, which collected historical archives and artifacts from the university, and included the Towson Room, designated for special collections and school archives. The library began plans to renovate and expand the existing special collections space and the Towson Room in 2007. The plans included the creation of a state-of-the-art climate-controlled closed stacks area, space for processing items, reading space for researchers, and a conference room.

This project was scheduled for completion in July 2009, one month before the BHU collection, together with its collection of rare books and artifacts, was scheduled to arrive. The Archives and Special Collections area was completed on time, and the
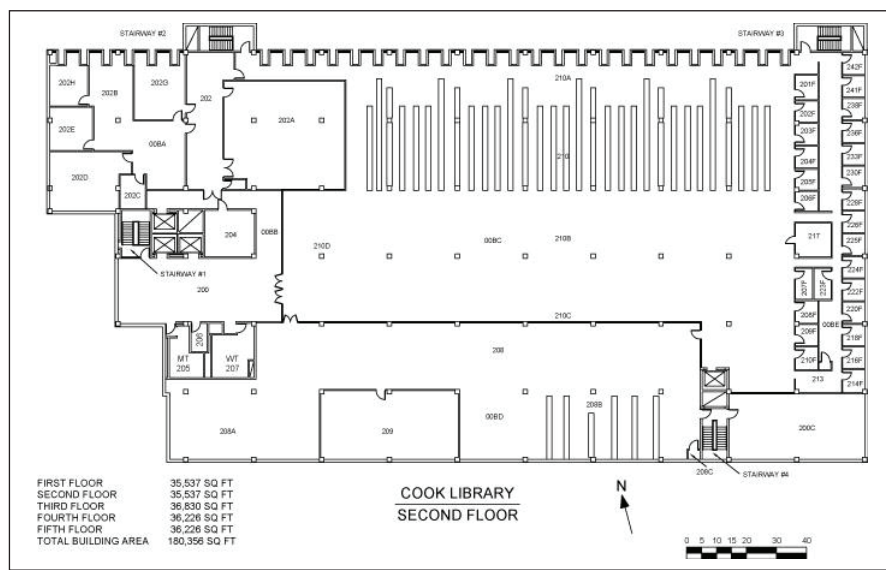
Figure 2. Cook Library 2nd floor after BH collection arrival

first items from BHU to arrive were the contents of its Rare Book Room. Because of the delicate nature of these items, they were moved directly into the special collections location to unpack and process them there.

The other project that was taking place was the preparation of the BHU collection for its move to its new quarters at TU. This part of the move was under the supervision and sponsorship of BHU, and to avoid storage fees in the face of a deadline for removal from its current location, the timing was coordinated with TU and scheduled for the first week in August. All work was scheduled for completion by July 31, 2009.

Work in Progress

The first meeting of the task group in mid-February reflected the work already in progress. Technical Services staff began to review the bound journals to determine which to classify in preparation for integration into the stacks. They analyzed the serial titles for ceased or standing orders and verified holdings of individual titles. They consulted with the reference staff about weeding the stacks in the

latter's liaison areas. With the major goal of collection integration in mind, any items no longer essential to the collection would be removed. Technical Services also worked with the Archives staff to identify bound periodical volumes that should be relocated to Archives due to age, condition, or value. Cataloging staff reviewed each title, taking note of any changes in title or production, importing new records as necessary to conform to upgraded cataloging policies, and assigning call numbers. To accommodate the need for spine labels for 100,000 volumes, the library ordered a new thermal transfer printer.

While plans were developing for the catalog merger, the TU staff member responsible for ordering and maintaining periodical subscriptions began to address this matter. BHU subscribed to approximately 250 current journal or annual titles and owned an additional 150 titles that were no longer active. The initial task was to identify any duplication with TU titles and determine the acquisition details of the subscriptions. Working from a detailed spreadsheet provided by BHU, the staff member compared current titles with those of TU. This

step proved problematic for two reasons. First, the process began even before the bibliographic records migrated to Aleph; comparing records within the system would have been far easier than working with the BHU database, which was then under scrutiny for migration preparation and thereby inaccessible. Second, many of the periodical titles were in foreign languages, most notably Hebrew and Yiddish. Because these languages are written in a different script, the titles require transliteration into Roman alphabet script. Although there are standardized rules for such transliteration, the spreadsheet titles did not conform to those rules, and ambiguous spelling was not uncommon. This resulted in frequent consultation with the author and much trial and error regarding the accurate spellings for the titles. Once the titles were identified, the staff member attempted to ascertain the acquisition source for each one. TU's primary vendor for electronic resources is EBSCO; the plan was to move as many titles as possible to this service, and if possible, to switch print titles to online subscriptions. For those titles not available through EBSCO, the staff member contacted the publisher directly. This was also initially true for the print annual subscriptions. Approximately one year after the arrival of the BHU collection, TU switched from its previous distributor for print and digital books to Yankee Book Peddler (YBP) and moved its annuals subscriptions to this vendor. If possible, titles were moved to online subscriptions. Because BHU was scheduled for closure by the end of June, it was essential to move quickly with regard to the periodicals. Staff needed to know the terms of the current subscription, including financial agreements and renewal dates. Equally important was the request to each vendor to change the address for all current titles to TU's library to avoid the loss of issues. Some of these steps were hampered

by the lack of documentation other than the spreadsheet. Because the database had not yet arrived, arranging for the renewal of some subscriptions became more complex. For example, EBSCO required an order number to process such a request, and the staff member manually input a temporary bibliographic record as a placeholder for the order; she then suppressed the record so that it would not display in the OPAC until it was replaced by an updated record. Once the collection arrived from BHU in August, staff could consult current invoices for more information about the status of the subscriptions.

Some problems still remained. There were manually updated check-in records for the periodicals, but these were not always accurate. Also, because some of the most recent issues of current titles never arrived at TU with the rest of the collection, there was lack of clarity regarding missing issues. Another ongoing problem in the attempt to reconcile subscriptions concerned overseas vendors. Communications from them sometimes arrived in foreign languages only, and time differences complicated contacting them; however, email proved useful for some of these issues. There were also some fulfillment problems because of the numbering system used by some publishers of Hebrew language materials. These differed from the familiar January-December cycle, as these publishers followed the Jewish calendar, which begins in the fall; it was not always easy for the periodicals staff to determine which issues had arrived. Transliterated titles remained a challenge for the staff to decipher. Although labeled a "summer project," the merging of the periodicals collection took approximately two years to complete.

Database Merger

To prepare for the technical aspects of the database merge, ITD began its work early in February 2009. Specific data was requested: the number of bibliographic records slated for absorption, local customization information, and whether or not to expect the addition of vernacular characters. Hebrew/Yiddish characters are supported in Aleph, and replacing existing monolingual records with multi-lingual ones would enhance the discoverability of items in the database. ITD wanted to identify the bibliographic sources of the BHU records. While most of the records were OCLC records, approximately twenty-five percent of them came from other sources, such as TLC's Bibliofile (an early CD-based bibliographic database), BHU's originally cataloged records, and on-the-fly records that were created for reserve materials and not intended to become permanent. TU staff designated new sub-library/collection codes for use in Aleph to accommodate the BHU items and determined which BHU holding codes could be mapped to those new sublibrary collection codes. They also identified which codes to use for special collections items. Information that would be overlaid on loading and the mapping destination for all local information were also considerations. The technical services cataloging subcommittee consisted of three staff members, including the author: two catalog librarians and one library technician. Record analysis proceeded by working with comprehensive lists of the BHU collection provided by its ILS vendor, TLC. The subcommittee determined both the BHU holding codes and the record sources, along with the number of titles/items per holding code, and identified the MARC tags for which local notes fields should be retained. They discussed each part of the collection and its future electronic and physical location at TU. The subcommittee decided which sub-library/collection codes were needed, and the actual shelf placement for the items assigned to each of these collections. Some of these decisions could not

be made until after an onsite visit to BHU, during which the TU staff could get a cursory look at the materials.

The retention of local, copy-specific bibliographic information was a consideration, and the unique implementation of local notes in the USMAI database requires a footnote in this narrative. Because the database represents the holdings of sixteen separate campuses, with a single bibliographic record shared by all campuses that own copies of the title represented by that record, it was necessary to indicate ownership of local bibliographic information by an individual campus. USMAI's solution is to provide copy-specific information in a "superholding"—records attached to the shared bibliographic record (see figures 3, 4, 5).

The information from this superholding displays only in the local catalog of the campus that owns that particular item (see figure 6).

USMAI uses an ongoing bibliographic record loader, which processes OCLC export transactions on a daily basis. It loads into Aleph any records produced or updated in OCLC by any of the USMAI campuses. Specifications for the loader include a local tags list, but the BHU records required a tag to indicate TU ownership, and additional local fields needed to be mapped to the superholdings. This affected between four to seven codes.

BHU possessed a significant number of rare, valuable, or fragile items, which were housed in various locations other than the stacks. The bibliographic records for these items contained specific information that did not apply to the rest of the collections. Among these were local notes referring to provenance, donor source, physical condition, or physical attributes of the items. For these items, the subcommittee wanted to retain a larger number of fields (between thirteen to seventeen). Additionally, the total number of titles (more than 51,000) and volumes (more than 71,000) were ascertained, and the subcommittee provided the statistics

Figure 3. Aleph Marc record

Figure 4. Aleph holding record

necessary for ITD to predict costs for matching the records in OCLC and uploading them to Aleph.

Collection overlap was raised early in the merger discussions. One other USMAI campus has a large Jewish studies collection, and concern was raised whether duplicate records would result from the integration of the two catalogs. The search of a random sample of titles revealed some overlap in the general collection, but very little duplication of special or rare items. The plan had been to match duplicates upon batchload through OCLC and to compare the USMAI OCLC control numbers with the BHU control numbers, which provided the

OCLC information. After examining the BHU files, ITD staff discovered that the OCLC information recorded was not straightforward. For example, several hundred records had been added to the BHU database from TLC's BiblioFile Service. Data from this service comes from publishers, vendors, and OCLC, and the records contained fields with an identifying prefix (tlc). These would not match with OCLC records according to the specifications applied by ITD. ITD broadened the criteria for determining a match so that the incoming records would contain enough match points to reduce the number of duplicates to a minimum.

As previously mentioned, an important issue relevant to the BHU records was the prevalence of the local information they contained, such as local notes, gift sources, provenance, or the presence of signatures or inscriptions. Retention of this information was a critical public relations issue for TU, as it often identified people or places significant to BHU, and its importance would have a considerable impact on the choices available for uploading the records.

One option was to load the records directly from TLC into Aleph. There were two main problems with this approach: (1) TLC could not provide protection for any special or local notes, and these fields would be lost in the migration, and (2) uploading the records without first searching them in OCLC would leave them in the transliterated Romanized versions, even when an upgraded or better record with vernacular language existed. Any preprocessing would be prohibitively expensive and time-consuming. A variation of this option was to separate the "Special Collection" records and upload those through OCLC, allowing the bulk of the collection to remain transliterated and bereft of local information. The third option was to send all of the records to OCLC through a batchload and then upload them to Aleph. The latter choice allowed for the exchange of the value-added vernacular records and the preservation of local information, which was dependent on an initial "grooming" of the records by TLC to prepare them for extraction. The TU staff preferred the straightforward OCLC option, as it would maintain the integrity of the records.

In late March, ITD received an estimate for OCLC costs for the BHU load, which included flipping BHU's OCLC institution symbol to reflect new ownership by TU, uploading the records to Aleph, and upgrading the transliterated records to vernacular when possible. The estimate included

the retention of some local notes, but because some of the notes were not recorded in standardized form, those would be lost. Technical services staff decided to edit the records manually and to replace any information that the upload process would remove. This was dependent on either harvesting the information before the BHU database was frozen or having a copy of the BHU records for reference after the load. The information was preserved in both ways. Staff assigned a TU student worker to access various sets of BHU bibliographic records and to cut and paste them into spreadsheets in MARC format. The sets were selected based on the likelihood of a significant number of local notes in the records, such as those for the rare book collection. The spreadsheets were labelled to identify the sets and saved for later reference. Manual searching using a "find" search was necessary to access the information. The staff requested that TLC send a copy of the BHU database in its final form before migration. These records could later be accessed using MarcEdit to locate specific records.

Aleph preparations for the incoming records were underway. With the conceptual plan of integration in mind, TU submitted to ITD a detailed spreadsheet, mapping all BHU holding codes to corresponding Aleph sub-library/collection codes and clarifying which MARC fields should be retained. ITD began loading sets of sample records into the USMAI test database, and by early May, the cataloging staff began testing retrieval and display of these records. The subcommittee wanted to review the search results, location limiters, and display features before the records were loaded into the live database. The cataloging team met with ITD to discuss the details of the data extraction and the load of the BHU records, which was scheduled for later that month. The plan was to establish a timeline and specifications regarding how TLC and OCLC should handle the data.
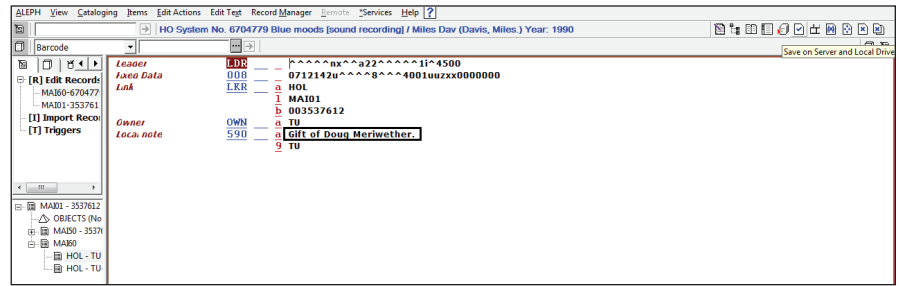

Figure 5. Aleph superholding record

The team established a freeze date for the BHU catalog and a tentative date for the final extract from TLC. Discussions with TLC included a clarification of data specifications and the retention of a copy of the complete TLC file by ITD. TU initiated steps with OCLC, and together with ITD, requested a batchload order early in June 2009. This included not only the matching and upload of the BHU records, but the symbol flip from BHD to TSC. Based on ITD's record analysis, some cleanup of records was necessary before the extract. Additional mapping was required for lost, missing, replaced, or out for repair items. ITD completed their discussions with TLC for options/estimates on the data processing and extraction by the middle of July. Given a choice between cleaner data with a later date of completion and potentially inaccurate data with an earlier date, TU chose to delay the completion date by a few weeks. The data was ready for extraction by the end of August, one month after the library collection was scheduled to arrive at TU. TU staff selected BHU records that were representative of various scenarios to review when the programming was completed.

TU catalogers and the ITD project manager tested sample records from TLC and compared results. The first results were promising, as the records loaded properly, but several adjustments regarding holding and item information were required. To ensure proper mapping of data from TLC, the testers reviewed the sublibrary, collection code, item status, and material type that had been assigned in Aleph, and they analyzed the presence or absence of various local fields. One problem detected early in the process was that local notes were not being created as superholdings, and were being lost. Another issue was the inaccurate display of enumeration levels for serial and other multiple volume titles, which would later result in one of many clean-up projects. Because this problem was possibly due to inconsistency in the recording of the information rather than inaccurate display, clean-up was deferred until after the migration.

In early September, after fine-tuning the data, TU gave the final go-ahead to ITD to send the files to OCLC. The request was for a single institution batchload, with a file of the matching records returned to USMAI. The requested fields would be retained, non-matching records would be added to WorldCat as new records, and BHU holdings would be flipped to display as TU holdings (see figure 7).

The files were ready for uploading from OCLC in early October. ITD began loading small samples of records into the Aleph test module for TU staff to review for accuracy of content and OPAC display. The full load of the records into the test system occurred in late October, and the entire staff was encouraged to check access to the records and report any problems. On November 20, 2009, ITD completed the live load of the BHU records.

Figure 6. Aleph OPAC local note dispay

File cleanup began almost immediately. As previously noted, this was deferred until after migration because of possible inaccuracies in the serials item information. Another reason for delaying clean-up was pressure to complete the migration as quickly as possible. The serials records were of the most concern, as it was imperative to track arrived and expected issues. TU began receiving some periodicals, re-routed from BHU in May. This created a new layer of acquisition, and also impacted the accuracy of the catalog records. Another concern regarding the entire database was that some local holdings did not display properly, and the catalog contained duplicate records. By early December, the local holdings were adjusted, and duplicate records were resolved.

A Retrospective Look

Looking at the library three years after the merger highlights some interesting points. Because the BHU collection primarily supported academic programming at the institution, collection development centered on reinforcing the Jewish studies curriculum. Nurtured by the faculty and library staff, this specialized collection developed into a world-class academic library. Mindful of the library's role in the Jewish community at large, the collection also contained popular Jewish literature, Jewish cultural materials, and notable juvenile titles.

The library also housed a sizable collection of special and rare items; although there was not a collection development policy for the acquisition of rare books, many unique items were added to the collection by other means. This included gifts, bequests, and the designation of the BHC as one of the institutions to receive Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR) materials following World War II. These heirless items, confiscated by Nazi Germany during the war, were distributed to centers of Judaism and Jewish learning throughout the world, and BHU housed them in its Rare Book Room.

Development of the BHI collection at TU follows a similar path, designed to support the academic courses that utilize the collection the most. All former BHI faculty members, although scattered throughout several departments (Family Studies and Community Development, Philosophy and Religious Studies, Educational Technology and Literacy, Biblical and Archaeological Studies, Department of History), are encouraged to submit requests through their designated library liaisons. Furthermore, the Jewish studies liaison (the author) contributes to the collection by selecting suitable titles in various formats or by recommending titles to the faculty for review and selection.

There are no circulation or usage statistics from BHU for comparison purposes. Current statistics for circulation, interlibrary loan (ILL), and database usage indicate increasing use of the collection. Three years after the arrival of the BHI collection at TU, staff members collected statistics on circulation, and reports indicate that 11,734 of its items have circulated. This figure represents 6,322 unique items; close to one-half of them were circulated

multiple times. ILL reports show that since the BHI collection arrived, nineteen of the top 151 monograph titles requested were BHI titles. The most requested title was a BHI title. Of the 563 requests for most-loaned monographs (only those titles requested three or more times were selected), seventy-six were for BHI items.

TU tracks electronic resource use by database and by journal title. Statistics for the BHI collection show a steady increase in database searching for the first few years; a similar increase is noted for online journal titles (see table 1).

Managing the BHI collection involves some particular issues. With the exception of the special and rare items, which were directed immediately to the TU Archives and Special Collections Department, BHI items were maintained as a separate collection for the first three years after merger. To enable this situation, processing staff placed an adhesive blue strip at the bottom of the spine of every print item in the collection. Every new print acquisition also received this strip. Circulation staff could thereby easily identify these items and place them on separate carts for shelving.

After the three years ended, the administration decided to combine the two print reference collections. This move would place all reference materials on the same floor as the reference desk. Although any research and instruction librarian would accompany a student or patron to the BHI floor for assistance, there was no service desk on the same floor as the collection. Staff accomplished the technical part of this project by changing the holdings information in the bibliographic record for each item, and removing or covering the blue strip on the spine. It is unclear at this point whether the two general collections will be combined, and the possibility is under discussion.

Because the two collections are shelved separately, there are questions regarding the appropriate location for new acquisitions. The choice is based on how and by whom the resource is likely to be used. Most items that could be shelved in either the BHI or TU collection are usually placed on the BHI floor where most patrons would expect to find them

The merger agreement between TU and BHU mandated that the latter would fund the collection for three years. The funding was used for subscription maintenance and binding for active subscriptions, binding for older, non-current titles that had local significance, and print materials acquisitions. Planning for future funding requires adjustment and is yet to be determined by the library stakeholders.

Several cataloging projects have resulted from the merger. Because several of them involve the Hebrew-language periodicals, the library hired temporary staff with the skills to work on them. Some of these projects involved changes or enhancement to the bibliographic records; for example, current periodicals required updating the issue-specific holdings information in the records. For each title, staff consulted the bibliographic record, BHU's check-in card, and the volumes on the shelves to check for accuracy, and they then improved the record as necessary. They did the same for the noncurrent periodicals titles, many of which had incomplete holdings data.

Some of the projects involved the uncataloged materials from BHU's "cage," the locked area where loose materials were held. For periodicals, staff who read Hebrew first searched the titles against the Aleph database. If the title was found, they added TU's holdings data to the record. If not, they searched the title in WorldCat, imported the most appropriate record to Aleph, and entered the holdings there. If no records were found, the items were brought to the author for original cataloging.

Other projects originated in Archives and Special Collections. For

Retainthefollowingfieldsiftheycontain$5 MdBT:

510

590

599

710

Retainthefollowingfields:

852

853

863

866

876

FlipBHDholdingstoTSC

Evaluateallnon-matchingrecordsforpossible additiontoWorldCat.

Figure7. Special Instructions for TU-OCLC Batchload Project

example, the library archivist ran a report to identify books published before 1850, and found that many of them, although fragile, were still on the open shelves. She also visually examined the collection and removed those items that needed preservation. The author continued the project by evaluating each item for its rarity, fragility, and provenance; determining its status as "special" or "rare;" changing the holdings information in the bibliographic record; and enriching the record with additional information. Another cataloging project addressed the provenance of the JCR materials. All of these items were identified in the collection and moved into Archives and Special Collections; many of them were categorized as rare. The catalogers discussed the appropriate wording for this part of the collection, and extensive provenance information was added to each record.

It may be helpful for other libraries facing merger to know that the cataloging aspect of such an event is a lengthy affair. Numerous clean-up projects will result from even the best planned mergers. At TU, there are many cataloging tasks that remain to be addressed. Among these are the rare books which have been researched, but not cataloged; uncataloged monographs

Table 1. Sample from online journal usage statistics

Database	Sessions	Searches
Index to Hebrew Periodicals		
FY10	10	n/a
FY11	42	n/a
FY12	2	n/a
FY13	5	n/a
Index to Jewish Periodicals (EBSCO)		
FY10	9,532	51,297
FY11	10,985	63,375
FY12	14,548	84,216
FY13	16,051	89,813
ATLA Religion Index		
FY10	9,918	53,791
FY11	12,018	66,406
FY12	14,995	86,504
FY13	16,817	93,360

from the cage; and the selection of older periodical titles appropriate for digitization. These remain as planned future projects.

Lessons Learned

Many of the goals of the library merger have been met. To highlight some of the positive outcomes, one can point to the enhanced research capacity of the unified library institution, its attractiveness to potential student markets, and better facilities and exposure for the BHU collection. To share information with other libraries facing mergers, it is helpful to convey some of the lessons learned from the TU/BHU experience.

On the positive side, an important part of the process was the inclusion of all library departments in the early planning stages of the merger. Staff members from every area of the library attended an initial meeting to discuss all aspects of the merger. Follow-up meetings within some departments occurred regularly, especially in technical services, where the many phases of bibliographic work transpired.

From the very beginning, the head librarian demonstrated her commitment to the success of the merger and freely shared this optimism with the entire staff. She laid out the framework for the libraries integration as early as December 2008, six months before the merger of the universities was formalized, and her determination to complete the job on time motivated the staff to produce results. Another example of the head librarian's positive approach was her assurance that the library would outsource as much work as possible to lessen the load on in-house staff. She began by gathering estimates from vendors for various stages of the project. These included the reclassification, editing holdings information, spine labels, and reshelving of TU journals; the removal and reassembly of shelving and end panels; and shifting the general collection. While only some of this work was outsourced, the effort to consider all possibilities was helpful to staff morale.

The good working relationship between the two libraries was an exceptionally helpful part of the merger. Although the remaining library staff at BHU was quite small, and most of the merger-related work fell to one person, regular communication and clear requests for information from TU made the process easier. BHU shared all pertinent documentation and facilitated interaction with TLC, and following the database migration, the staff member continued to be available for follow-up questions.

The fact that the merger took place during the summer months was an advantage. There were none of the common semester distractions, such as urgent requests from faculty to fill and process materials. Additionally, the fiscal year was just beginning, and there was no pressure to place orders for the yearly budget fulfillment. Timing is one factor to consider when planning a library merger.

Conversely, despite the fact that the merger was successful, there

are things that would have made it smoother. From the beginning, there was not a systematic merger strategy, and preparations and implementation were driven by the need for speedy results. Although the TU staff met to discuss merger requirements, there was no step-by-step plan that would have provided structure for each department. Each department was left to determine the priority of necessary actions.

Although a plan for the database merger process existed, there was no similar plan for other parts of the merger. For example, periodicals management initially had no overall plan other than to remove duplicate subscriptions and to renew the remaining BHU titles. This lack of preparation for the complexity of managing the voluminous work was stressful; a more detailed plan of action would have benefitted the staff.

While the administration was very supportive of its staff, direction from a source experienced in mergers was lacking. Most of the integration was coordinated by technical services staff, none of whom had previously managed a project of this size or scope. It would have been more efficient to hire a consultant to help strategize the project from its inception, and a designated project manager would have been a welcome addition. This would have alleviated the stress placed on inexperienced staff, and it might have anticipated problems before they appeared. For example, it might have obviated the need for all library staff to participate in the physical move of books when the reshelving vendor miscalculated the placement of parts of the collection; a consultant familiar with space-related reshelving projects would have the knowledge to prevent this type of problem. Even though the vendor worked overtime to correct the issue, the library staff helped to meet the looming deadline for completion.

One of the lessons learned highlighted by Swanepoel is that "library

mergers at institutions of higher education should not be underestimated in terms of complexity and the volume of work involved."[21] Although the staff were involved from the beginning, it was not acknowledged by the administration that the amount and intensity of some of the work may have been overwhelming. The short timeframe mandated by the merger affected technical services' regular workflow for the entire technical staff, and routine work slowed or ceased. Management could have informed the staff to anticipate duties reassignment and daily workflow interruption. Hiring additional personnel to augment the technical services staff would have been a prudent decision, given the amount of work required.

Another area with room for improvement was the ongoing communication to all library staff as the project progressed. Communication seems to have worked best among the cataloging staff. They held frequent meetings and had a clear plan to follow for merging the databases. Acquisitions staff had less direction, and pertinent information from the administration was spotty and slow to arrive. Although intradepartment meetings in technical services occurred informally every day, staff members did not always have current information about possible services from outside vendors. More communication with the library archivist regarding special collection items would have been helpful; the same is true regarding the research and instruction librarians, relating to the impact of the incoming collection on public services. Despite the less-than-perfect conditions for the integration of the two libraries, there is much to appreciate about the results.[22] The research capabilities of Cook Library are now expanded, public services for both collections are operating smoothly, the collections are fully merged, with the ILS accommodating all aspects of both

collections, and the BHI collection is housed commodiously and attractively.

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