

1.4 The Dispersion of Jewish Ceremonial Objects in the West after 1945: Jewish Cultural Reconstruction



Figure 3: JCR bookplate on inside cover of book ; <http://tombson.libguides.com/c.php?g=442107&p=303189> &

The formation of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR), Inc., the focus of this chapter, was not only a historical milestone but also a political one. For the first time in Jewish history was the emphasis not on the creation of Jewish cultural and ritual objects, or of centers for doing so – as the name would imply – but instead on the redistribution of Jewish cultural objects. The Jewish world faced a new geopolitical reality after World War II ended. The centers of Jewish learning and their scholars and students had disappeared. Jewish life was no longer at that point in time - as understood by the JCR – a realistic scenario in Western and Eastern Europe. Rather world Jewry had moved to the United States and to the new state of Israel, and these should be the main destinations of heirless Jewish cultural and religious objects distributed by the JCR.

While this chapter focuses on the activities of the JCR carried out by scholars such as Salo W. Baron, Judah Magnes, Gershom Scholem, Max Weinreich and Hannah Arendt, to name a few, its establishment, mandate and the implementation of its mission can only be properly explained and understood by briefly outlining what preceded the JCR. Weight will also be given to the historical and political framework surrounding the organization, all of which ultimately determined its success.

Even prior to the end of World War II, in 1943 and in anticipation of the huge amount of Nazi war loot, the United States appointed the Roberts Commission, which established the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFA&A) program. The MFA&A, also known as the *Monuments Men*, was subsequently charged with protecting cultural treasures in Europe,²⁰⁸ dealing with the handling of

²⁰⁸ The Roberts Commission, named after its chairman, Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts, was charged with promoting the preservation of cultural properties in war areas. Its headquarters were located in the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. For more information on the Roberts Commission and the MFA&A see: “The Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas Report of the American Commission. United States Government. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016 (originally published in 1946). The records of the Roberts Commission can also be found online at:

https://www.fold3.com/title_759/roberts_commission_protection_of_historical_monuments#overview [M 1944 - Records of the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historical Monuments in War Areas (The Roberts Commission), 1943-1946]

See also: Lynn Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa*, New York 1994; Kathy Preiss, “Cultural Policy in a Time of War: The American Response to Endangered Books in World War II,” *Library Trends* 55.3 (2007), p. 372; and Michael Kurtz, *America and the Return of Nazi Contraband*, Cambridge 2006.

incoming claims from individuals, and with managing so-called lost-and-found warehouses of stolen European cultural property. These temporary collecting points in Munich, Wiesbaden, Marburg and Offenbach soon became known as the Allied collecting points or depots.²⁰⁹

The Wiesbaden²¹⁰ and Munich collecting points have been researched in more detail, mostly due to the fact that they were the largest collecting points in the American zone and because they held valuable looted art. But it is the Offenbach Archival Depot that is of most interest to this historical overview in regard to Judaica and the activities of the JCR.

The Offenbach Archival Depot (OAD), located in a five-story building that had formerly housed the I.G. Farben factory, “served a unique role in postwar American efforts of book and archival restitution, not just with regard to Jewish property, but to important state and institutional libraries that were successfully returned to the European countries from which they came.”²¹¹ Officially established on 2 March 1946 under an order by the director of the office of military government for greater Hessen (OMGGH),²¹² it ceased to exist about three years later when it was closed in April of 1949.

Because of the sheer number of objects held at the OAD, identifiable or not, with more than 3,000,000 looted cultural items²¹³, among them books, it was commonly called “the biggest book restitution operation in library history.”²¹⁴

Colonel Seymour J. Pomrenze served as the OAD’s first director (March-May 1946), followed by Captain Isaac Bencowitz (May-November, 1946); Theodore Heinrich (November 1946-January 1947); Joseph Horne (1947-48); and James Kimball (February-April 1949).²¹⁵ By 1947, members of the Offenbach archival depot had distributed 1,300,000 books of which 650,000 were of Jewish origin,²¹⁶ most commonly to the country from which they had been taken. Yet 628,259 items remained at Offenbach; again mostly books. Of these, 328,903 were classified as identifiable and 299,356 were unidentifiable. Of the identifiable books, 123,641 were non-Jewish and needed to be returned to their countries of origin. 126,137 were Jewish books identified as belonging to YIVO and other owners. 51,414 were Jewish books once owned by German Jewish communities now

²⁰⁹ Anne Rothfeld, “Returning Looted European Library Collections: An Historical Analysis of the Offenbach Archival Depot, 1945-1948,” *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Spring 2005, p. 17; see also: Iris Lauterbach, *Der Central Collecting Point in München*, Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Vol. 34, Munich 2015. Please note that collecting points also existed in the British as well as in the French occupation zones, for example in Celle.

²¹⁰ The Wiesbaden collecting point was located in the *Landesmuseum* Wiesbaden. By 1948 it took over the tasks originally carried out in the OAD. See: Katharina Rauschenberger, “The Restitution of Jewish Cultural Objects and the Activities of Jewish Cultural Objects and the Activities of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc.,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 53, 2008, p. 205.

²¹¹ Dana Herman, *Hashavat Avedab: A History of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc.* PhD thesis, Department of History, McGill University, Montreal, October 2008, p. 153.

²¹² Colonel S.J. Pomrenze, *The Restitution of Jewish Cultural Treasures after the Holocaust: The Offenbach Archival Depot’s Role in the Fulfillment of U.S. International and Moral Obligations* (A First Hand Account). Proceedings of the 37th Annual Convention of the Association of Jewish libraries (Denver, CO – June 23-26, 2002), p. 2. For more information on Offenbach, see: Fritz J. Hoogewould, “The Nazi Looting of Books and its American ‘Antithesis,’” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 26, 1992, pp. 158-192.

²¹³ Herman, pp. 4-5.

²¹⁴ Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, “The Postwar Fate of Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg Archival and Library Plunder, and the Dispersal of ERR Records,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 20.2, 2006, p. 279.

²¹⁵ Herman, pp. 152-3.

²¹⁶ Either Hebrew or Yiddish books, or their content was Jewish.

extinct, and 27,711 were Jewish books identified as coming from the Baltic States, Poland, and former Czechoslovakia. Of the unidentifiable books 222,768 were Jewish and 76,588 were non-Jewish.²¹⁷

While a large number of objects held at the OAD were books, it also served as a repository for manuscripts, ceremonial and ritual silver²¹⁸, as well as 600 Torah scrolls in addition to Torah pointers and, for example, Torah curtains.²¹⁹ Captain Isaac Bencowitz called the OAD the antithesis to the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg,²²⁰ and between April and December 1946 created an album entitled *The Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR) of which the Offenbach Archival Depot has Become the Antithesis*.²²¹

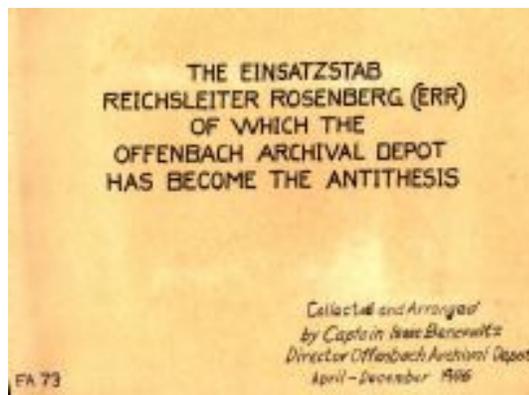


Figure 4: Isaac Bencowitz, “An album that documents the confiscation of cultural property by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR)”. *Yad Vashem: Album: Nr. FA1 73/0, Archival Signature: 368, Item Nr.: 75060; online available at: <http://collections1.yadvashem.org/>*

In addition to the Offenbach Archival Depot, the Wiesbaden Collecting Point also served as a depository for Jewish cultural and religious property, including books and ceremonial objects as well as artworks. However, compared to Offenbach, most objects stored at Wiesbaden proved to be identifiable, such as artworks and Judaica that had belonged to German-Jewish institutions (i.e. the Hermann Cohen Collection or the so-called “Baltic collection”). Nonetheless, about 1,000 rare volumes whose Jewish ownership was questionable and a handful of reference books were stored in Wiesbaden, in addition to some ceremonial objects that were originally placed in Offenbach but later transferred to the Wiesbaden depot.²²² It is also within the Wiesbaden archival records held at the National Archives and Records Administration, online available

at Fold3, that the activities of the JCR are recorded.²²³

²¹⁷ Jerome Michael to Salo Baron, 15 February 1947, P3/2058, CAHJP, Jerusalem, p. 153-4; information taken from Herman, p. 154; see also: Robert Waite, “Returning Jewish Cultural Property: The Handling of Books Looted by the Nazis in the American Zone of Occupation, 1945 to 1952,” *Libraries and Culture* Vol. 37, No. 3, Summer 2002, p. 215.

²¹⁸ Grimsted, p. 279.

²¹⁹ About 1,000 Torah scrolls and 17,000 ceremonial objects are mentioned in *Plunder and Restitution: The U.S. and Holocaust Victims’ Assets: Findings and Recommendations of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the U.S. and Staff Report*. “Chapter VI. Heirless Assets and the Role of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc.” Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000. Online available at: <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/pcha/PlunderRestitution.html/html/StaffChapter5.html>. For all of these objects, no claims had been received, and “no identification of prior ownership (could) be reasonably established.” See also: Rauschenberger, p. 198.

²²⁰ Gabriele Hauschke-Wicklaus, Angelika Amborn-Morgenstern, and Erika Jacobs, *Fast vergessen: Das amerikanische Bücherdepot in Offenbach am Main von 1945 bis 1949*, Offenbach am Main 2011, p. 23.

²²¹ The album can be accessed at Yad Vashem’s online photo archive: <http://collections.yadvashem.org/photosarchive/en-us/75060-container.html>

²²² Herman, p 195. See also Michael Kurtz, *America and the Return of Nazi-Contraband. The Recovery of Europe’s Cultural Treasures*, Cambridge 2006, p. 162.

²²³ M 1947 – Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”): Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point, 1945-1952: Wiesbaden Administrative Records; Series: Cultural Objects Movement and Control Records; Series: Receipt for Jewish Cultural Properties: 1949. [Jewish Cultural Reconstruction: 1-11, 1-18]; Receipt For Jewish Cultural Properties: 1950 [Jewish Cultural Reconstruction: 19-62]; Receipt For Jewish Cultural Properties: 1951 [Jewish Cultural Reconstruction: 1-4];

Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (JRSO) and the Commission on European Jewish Reconstruction

The foundations for what later was to become the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (JRSO) emerged in the summer of 1945, when five American-based Jewish groups formed a committee to represent Jewish interests in reparations and restitution negotiations. The JRSO was originally called the Jewish Restitution Commission, but it changed its name to the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization at the request of the Military Government.²²⁴ Another impetus for the creation of the JRSO was the founding of the Commission on European Jewish Reconstruction, also in 1945. And similarly to the JRSO, the Commission on European Jewish Reconstruction was incorporated two years later, in 1947.²²⁵ The driving force behind the Commission were American Jewish religious leaders, scholars, and teachers,²²⁶ headed by Professor Salo Baron of Columbia University.



Figure 5: Group portrait of members of the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (JRSO) at a staff conference in Nuremberg, Germany, ca. 1949. [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Photograph #41624]

One of the Commission's most important publications was entitled, "Tentative List of Jewish Cultural Treasures in Axis-Occupied Countries".²²⁷ The Tentative List provides information on institutions, books, and documents looted by the Nazis. It was originally prepared by the staff of the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem (JNUL), under the directorship of Hannah Arendt. The List covered fifteen Nazi institutions, most of which had absorbed parts of what had been taken by the Nazi looting; 430 Jewish institutions, among them libraries, archives, and museums located in 20 countries, in addition to 264 non-Jewish institutions; and 474 Jewish publishers: 3.5 million books are noted, as well as 5,000 manuscripts.²²⁸ The tremendous amount of research that went into this list came largely from archival material within the Institute of Jewish Affairs, records that surfaced through the Nuremberg trial, in addition to the evaluation of hundreds of questionnaires that had been addressed to Jewish scholars in exile, journalists, rabbis, social workers, artists and members of American-Jewish organizations.²²⁹

²²⁴ Ayaka Takei, "The Gemeinde Problem?: The Jewish Restitution Successor Organization and the Postwar Jewish Communities in Germany, 1947-1954," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 16, Nr. 2, Fall 2002, p. 271.

²²⁵ Plunder and Restitution: The U.S. and Holocaust Victims' Assets: Findings and Recommendations of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the U.S. and Staff Report. "Chapter V. Restitution of Victims' Assets." Inc. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000. Online available at: http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/pcha/PlunderRestitution.html/html/Home_Content.html

²²⁶ Idem.

²²⁷ The list was originally published in 1946 as a supplement to *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1; See also: "Addenda and Corrigenda to Tentative List of Jewish Cultural Treasures in Axis-Occupied Countries", Vol. 10, Nr. 1, 1948. [The list appears as an Appendix to the *Descriptive Catalogue of Looted Judaica*, online available at: <http://art.claimscon.org/our-work/judaica/descriptive-catalogue-of-looted-judaica/>]

²²⁸ Natan Sznajder, "Die Rettung der Bücher, Hannah Arendt in München (1949/1950)," *Mittelweg* 36, Nr. 2, 2009, p. 71.

²²⁹ Elisabeth Gallas, "Kulturelles Erbe und rechtliche Anerkennung. Die Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc. nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg," *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung*, 22, 2013, p. 39.

The list functioned as a roadmap for Jewish culture and reflected the wide geographical dispersal of Jewish cultural assets and the often strong involvement of Jews in their communal life.²³⁰ But the list was also witness to the loss of Jewish cultural and communal assets as a result of the Holocaust. Moreover, the list had served, and to some extent still serves, as the basis for the submission of claims for damage and for restitution.²³¹ The first initial list “Tentative List of Jewish Cultural Treasures in Axis-Occupied Countries” was followed by two more: “Tentative List of Jewish Periodicals in Axis-Occupied Countries” again published in *Jewish Social Studies* (1947) and “Addenda and Corrigenda to Tentative List of Jewish Cultural Treasures in Axis-Occupied Countries” in *Jewish Social Studies* (1948).

Though initially not intended as such, the lists led to a fundamental new understanding on behalf of its creators: While the emphasis had previously been on “reconstruction” – as in the Commission on European Jewish Reconstruction – the lists made it abundantly clear that reconstruction, given the magnitude of destruction, was simply impossible. Rather, according to Salo Baron, the Commission’s aim would be to distribute the remainder of Jewish cultural treasures and therefore act in accordance with the new geographical and political situation Jews faced around the world.²³²

In the fall of 1946, General Clay met with representatives of the JRSO and the Commission on European Jewish Reconstruction and agreed to support their idea of creating an organization that had as its aim the claiming of heirless Jewish property and assets.²³³ Consequently, in May 1947, “The Jewish Restitution Commission” – serving as an umbrella for seven organizations – was incorporated as a charitable organization in New York.²³⁴ The group of seven organizations was soon expanded by including the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in Germany and the Agudat Israel World Organization, in an attempt to broaden its representation.²³⁵

After plans for a quadripartite restitution law and later a British-American bi-zonal law both failed, the Jewish Restitution Commission’s operations were confined to the U.S. Zone. Following many consultations and negotiations among the Jewish leaders, the U.S. Military Government, and the State Department, the U.S. restitution law was enacted on November 10, 1947, as Military Government Law 59.²³⁶ Law 59 provided for property restitution of identifiable property confiscated

²³⁰ Dov Schidorsky, “Hannah Arendt’s Dedication to Salvaging Jewish Culture,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, Vol. 59, 2014, p. 181.

²³¹ Schidorsky, p. 190.

²³² “In view of the wholesale destruction of Jewish life and property by the Nazis reconstruction of Jewish cultural institutions cannot possibly mean mechanical restoration in their original form or, in all cases, to their previous location. The Commission intends, in collaboration with other agencies of good will, to devise if necessary some new forms better accommodated to the emergent patterns of postwar Europe. Ultimately it may also seek to help redistribute the Jewish cultural treasures in accordance with the new needs created by the new situation of world Jewry.” Salo W. Baron, “Introductory Statement. Tentative List of Jewish Cultural Treasures in Axis-Occupied Countries. Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction,” *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 8, Nr. 1, p. 6.

²³³ Constantin Goschler, *Wiedergutmachung: Westdeutschland und die Verfolgten der Nationalsozialismus 1945 – 1954*, Munich 1992, p. 111.

²³⁴ These seven organizations were the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the American Jewish Conference, the American Jewish Committee, the World Jewish Congress, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, and the Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction. For more information see: *Plunder and Restitution: The U.S. and Holocaust Victims’ Assets: Findings and Recommendations of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the U.S. and Staff Report*. “Chapter V. Restitution of Victims’ Assets.”

²³⁵ Goschler, p. 172.

²³⁶ A copy of the Military Government Law Nr.59 can be found online at the Clinton Presidential Library & Museum, see: <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/30179>

by the Nazis within Germany between 1933 and 1945²³⁷, with articles 8, 9, 10 and 11 outlining the creation of a Jewish successor organization.²³⁸

Due to the objection of Major General Daniel Noce, the Chief of Civil Administration of the War Department, to accepting the JRSO request for appointment in 1947, its official recognition only followed on June 23, 1948, when OMGUS appointed the JRSO.²³⁹

“THE TASK of locating heirless properties left by Jews who died in Germany under Nazi oppression, and of turning the proceeds from these properties into charity use has been delegated by OMGUS directive AG 010.6 (PD) of Aug. 18 and attached Authorization No. 1 to the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization, (JRSO), a New York corporation.”²⁴⁰

Two months after the June directive, in August 1948, the JRSO commenced its work from its German headquarters in Nuremberg under the directorship of Benjamin Ferencz, who had previously been the chief prosecutor of the Einsatzgruppen case at the Nuremberg Military Tribunal.²⁴¹

One major difficulty for the JRSO was the fact that it only had three months to discover more than a hundred thousand unclaimed properties and to comb through land registers, notaries' files, tax rolls, patent rosters and several other types of records due to the fact that the law of indemnity had made December 31, 1948 the deadline to register all property. In order to meet the deadline, the JRSO increased its staff to about 300 people who worked in eight-hour shifts. That way, about 2,000 applications a day could be filed. In doing so, the JRSO operated out of the belief that heirless Jewish property should not be restituted to those countries that had lost their Jewish communities due to state terror but should be made available to world Jewry. Consequently the decision was made to transfer these heirless cultural and religious Jewish objects to private organizations by applying Law No. 59 rather than leave them in the respective European country.

Part III of Law No. 59 addressed the issue of heirless property by stating that:

“A successor organization to be appointed by Military Government shall, instead of the State, be entitled to the entire estate of any persecuted person in the case provided... Neither the state nor any of its subdivisions nor a political self-governing body will be appointed as successor organization.”²⁴²

As a practical matter, this law meant that the JRSO would represent the victims and act on their behalf.

²³⁷ As Michael Kurtz has noted, “The law was designed to provide for restitution of identifiable property confiscated by the Nazis within Germany between 1933 and 1945.” (Michael Kurtz, *America and the Return of Nazi Contraband. The Recovery of Europe's Cultural Treasures*, Cambridge 2006, p 149.)

²³⁸ Takei, p. 270.

²³⁹ Michael Brenner, *After the Holocaust: Rebuilding Jewish Lives in Postwar Germany*, Princeton 1997, p 62; see also: *Plunder and Restitution: The U.S. and Holocaust Victims' Assets: Findings and Recommendations of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the U.S. and Staff Report*.“ Chapter V. Restitution of Victims' Assets.”

²⁴⁰ “OMGUS gives JRSO the go-ahead,” *Information Bulletin*, Nr. 144, September 1948, p 26. Online available at: <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/History/History-idx?type=div&did=HISTORY.OMG1948N144.I0015&isize=text>.

²⁴¹ Takei, p. 271.

²⁴² Military Government – Germany United States Area of Control, Law No. 59, Restitution of Identifiable Property. Here cited after: Rena Lipman, “Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Reconsidered,” Ulf Bischof (ed.), *Kunst und Recht. Journal für Kunstrecht, Urheberrecht und Kulturpolitik*, No. 4, 2006, p. 90.

A few years later, in 1950, the British Occupation Authorities followed suit and founded the Jewish Trust Cooperation (JTC) under the chairmanship of Mr. Barnett Janner,²⁴³ and the French established the *Branche Française*, which likewise functioned as the legal heir to heirless and public Jewish property. In December 1951, the JTC took over the French zone.²⁴⁴

In sharp contrast to the archival depots managed by the American Occupation Authorities, the number of cultural and religious objects discovered in the British zone of Germany was small. This was largely due to the fact that the bulk of such objects were stored in the U.S. zone.²⁴⁵

Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR):

Until Jewish Cultural Reconstruction was formally established on 25 April 1947, with its headquarters in New York, there were competing Jewish organizations working to salvage heirless Jewish cultural property in Europe. They were not succeeding, in large part due to the fact that they could not agree on a best way how to proceed. At the same time, the American military forces insisted that they would only deal with unified organizations and only those that would also include Jewish groups from Austria and Germany.²⁴⁶

Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, or JCR for short, grew out of the Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, which had been founded in order to serve as a central research and coordinating body for all American activities concerning European Jewish cultural reconstruction. For a while the Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, the JRSO and the JCR all operated at the same time, despite pursuing very similar agendas. But with the creation of the JCR the JRSO was able to slowly wind down until the JCR was firmly in place.²⁴⁷

As a matter of distinction between the JRSO and the JCR, it should be noted that while the JRSO served as a trustee for recovering property of economic value – and was in fact only established three weeks after the JCR itself, on 15 May 1947²⁴⁸ – the JCR set its sights on recovering property of cultural value. The JCR was in short the cultural arm of the JRSO. However, this distinction was not always obvious given that not only their work overlapped, but also their members. In August 1947, in an attempt to clarify matters, the relationship between the JRSO and the JCR was defined by signing an agreement in which the JCR agreed to act as an agent of the JRSO in tracing, restituting and allocating Jewish books, Jewish ceremonial objects, and other Jewish cultural property found in the U.S. Zone in Germany.²⁴⁹

²⁴³ Charles I. Kapralik, *Reclaiming the Nazi Loot: The History of the Work of the Jewish Trust Corporation for Germany*, London 1962, p. 10.

²⁴⁴ For more information, see, for example, Michael Kurtz, “Resolving a Dilemma: The Inheritance of Jewish Property,” *Cardozo Law Review*, Vol. 20, Nr. 2, 1998/99, p. 64.

The French implemented their own restitution law, ordinance 120, but according to experts, it proved to be rather useless. One particular problem was that the law did not provide for heirless property to go to the surviving Jewish victims. The British military authority did not pass a restitution law. However, compared to the French, the British at least completed the first draft of a restitution law in 1949. Herman, p. 151.

²⁴⁵ Kapralik, p. 88.

²⁴⁶ Herman, p. 32.

²⁴⁷ Idem, p. 130.

²⁴⁸ Mark Glickman, *Stolen Words. The Nazi Plunder of Jewish Books*, Nebraska 2016, p. 254.

²⁴⁹ *Plunder and Restitution: The U.S. and Holocaust Victims’ Assets: Findings and Recommendations of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the U.S. and Staff Report*. “Chapter V. Restitution of Victims’ Assets.”

A certificate of incorporation, filed on 30 April 1947, not only marked the official start of the JCR but also laid out its five main principles:

- “1. To locate, identify, salvage, acquire by gift or purchase or any other lawful means, hold, preserve, repair, protect, catalogue and determine the disposition of, Jewish books and manuscripts and, generally, Jewish religious and cultural objects and property of every sort whatsoever anywhere in the world.
2. As successor organization, to institute and prosecute claims for the recovery of, or compensation for, Jewish religious and cultural objects and property of every sort.
3. To distribute the property in such a way as to best serve and promote the spiritual and cultural needs and interests of the Jewish people in particular and of mankind in general, and especially the spiritual and cultural needs of the victims of Nazi or Fascist persecution.
4. To abide by the law in accomplishing such functions.
5. The Corporation shall operate in accordance with those policies established by the United States.”²⁵⁰

The JCR was comprised of nine organizations: the World Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Conference, the Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, the Council for the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Jews from Germany, the Hebrew University, the Synagogue Council of America, the American Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency for Palestine. The latter two provided its operating funds.²⁵¹

In May 1947, at its first meeting, Professor Salo Baron became President. Members of the JCR also included Joshua Starr, who served as Executive Secretary from January 1948 until his death in 1949. He was followed by Bernhard Heller, the Field Director at Wiesbaden and a distinguished rabbi, educator, and author²⁵², as well as Hannah Arendt who worked as the Executive Secretary of the JCR until 1952. Rabbi Leo Baeck and Professor Gershon Scholem both served as Vice Presidents.²⁵³ It was due to Ms. Arendt’s efforts that the JCR was able to secure and recover some 440,000 books and countless ritual objects.²⁵⁴

After some initial hurdles, the JCR was eventually recognized as the trustee of heirless cultural property, both within the Jewish communities and organizations as well as within the United States government and occupation authorities.²⁵⁵ Consequently, by April 1947, it started to work out of the Offenbach and Wiesbaden collecting points,²⁵⁶ and began requesting Judaica from German museums.

²⁵⁰ Idem.

²⁵¹ Idem.

²⁵² Idem.

²⁵³ Idem.

²⁵⁴ Schidorsky, p.195.

²⁵⁵ *Plunder and Restitution: The U.S. and Holocaust Victims’ Assets: Findings and Recommendations of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the U.S. and Staff Report.* “ Chapter V. Restitution of Victims’ Assets.”

²⁵⁶ Pomrenze, p. 7.

On 15 February 1949, Orren McJunkins, in his capacity as head of the U.S. Allied restitution branch, and Benjamin Ferencz as well as Joshua Starr signed the so-called Frankfurt Agreement in the former I.G. Farben headquarters that stipulated the JCR's legal right to act as the guardian of heirless Jewish property.²⁵⁷ And although the historical and political significance of the Frankfurt Agreement is often not stressed enough, it should be noted that it marked a milestone in Jewish geopolitics: with its implementation the JCR, as a union of various Jewish interest groups, ensured that the interests of world Jews were met, in the Diaspora as well as in Israel.

On 8 March 1949, the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives section of the U.S. Military government for Germany, (Reparations and Restitutions Branch, Property Division) handed over its first batch of Judaica in the form of 22 cases containing 4,743 prayer books.²⁵⁸ This official transfer contract referred to the Frankfurt agreement between the Office of Military Government (U.S.) for Germany and the JCR by pointing out that the JCR would herewith act as the trustee for the Jewish people in the distribution of these items when heirs could no longer be located. The objects would be used "for the maintenance of the cultural heritage of the Jewish people (...)". Furthermore it stated that under Law 59 the following categories were to be transferred:

- a. Jewish books, archives and miscellaneous documents in various languages.
- b. Torah scrolls and miscellaneous synagogue vestments, prayer shawls, etc.
- c. Jewish ritual objects or precious metal and including precious stones.
- d. Paintings and furnishings of previous but specifically unidentifiable Jewish ownership.
- e. Other Jewish cultural properties which the Military Government agreed to transfer to JCR, and which would be transferred in accordance with special conditions.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ Gallas, p. 35.

²⁵⁸ M 1947: Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points ("Ardelia Hall Collection"): Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point, 1945-1952: Wiesbaden Administrative Records; Series: Cultural Objects Movement and Control Records; Category: Receipt for Jewish Cultural Properties: 1949 [Jewish Cultural Reconstruction: 1-11, 1-18; online available at: <https://www.fold3.com/image/114/232018747>

²⁵⁹ Idem; Online available at: <https://www.fold3.com/image/114/232018747>

JCR 1

RECEIPT FOR JEWISH CULTURAL PROPERTIES
OFFICE OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT (U.S.) FOR GERMANY
MONUMENTS, FINE ARTS AND ARCHIVES SECTION
REPARATIONS AND RESTITUTIONS BRANCH, PROPERTY DIVISION

PLACE: .Offenbach a.M.,.....

DATE: .8 March 1949.....

1. The undersigned ... Mr. Joshua S T A R R, authorized representative of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Inc., hereby acknowledges on behalf of JCR Inc. from the U.S. Commander in Chief in Germany receipt for the items described in Schedule A, attached hereto, which have this day been delivered to JCR from the Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point / Offenbach Archival Depot.
2. The scheduled Jewish cultural properties transferred herewith to JCR Inc., in accordance with the Frankfurt agreement of 15 February 1949 between the Office of Military Government (U.S.) for Germany and Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Inc., were wrongfully separated from owning individuals and organizations in Europe during the period of Nazi rule and were subsequently taken into protective custody by Military Government.
3. JCR. Inc., in accepting custody therefor, certifies that individual ownership of subject items cannot be determined and undertakes to act as trustee for the Jewish people in the distribution of said property to such public or quasi-public religious, cultural or educational institutions as it sees fit, to be used in the interest of perpetuating Jewish art and culture, or to utilize them for the maintenance of the cultural heritage of the Jewish people, and to this end further undertakes to maintain the physical integrity of all such properties which had not been so damaged as to prevent normal use.
4. Properties transferred in the present receipt, unidentifiable and hence not the proper subjects of claims under Law 59, fall under one or more of the categories checked below:
 - a. Jewish books, archives and miscellaneous documents in various languages.
 - b. Torah scrolls and miscellaneous synagogue vestments, prayer shawls, etc.
 - c. Jewish ritual objects of precious metals and including precious stones.
 - d. Paintings and furnishings of previous but specifically unidentifiable Jewish ownership.
 - e. Such other Jewish cultural properties as Military Government shall agree to transfer to JCR, and which shall be transferred in accordance with special conditions.
5. The receiving agency undertakes to restore to Military Government for proper disposition any object which has been delivered to it by mistake and is not covered by the special provisions.
6. The receiving agency agrees that the occupying power and all its agents and representatives shall be saved harmless from any claim for loss,

P.T.O.

Figures 6, 7, 8: M 1947 – Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”): Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point, 1945-1952: Wiesbaden Administrative Records; Series: Cultural Objects Movement and Control Records; Category: Receipt for Jewish Cultural Properties: 1949 [Jewish Cultural Reconstruction: 1-11, 1-18]; Online available at: <https://www.fold3.com/image/114/232018747>; <https://www.fold3.com/image/114/232018756>; <https://www.fold3.com/image/114/232018762>;

damage or deterioration suffered by any item from the time of its removal from the original owner to its transfer into custody of JCR Inc.

James Kimball
Witness
Joshua Starr
Signature

James Kimball
Joshua Starr
Signature typed

Administrative Superintendent OAD
Signature & Office typed
OFFENBACH ARCHIVAL DÉPOT
OFFICE OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT
FOR HESSE Authorized Representative JCR
Place PROPERTY DIVISION Title or Capacity of Signer
APO 757 US Army

6 April 1949
Date

Distribution:
Original and one copy - OMGUS (Prop Div)
2 - OMGH
2 - JCR Inc

Figure 7

SCHEDULE A	
ITEM	DESCRIPTION (Including Statement of Condition of Object)
22 cases	containing 4743 Prayer-Books in fair condition ///// LAST ITEM //

Figure 8

By the end of May 1949, only three months after the JCR distribution process had begun, the Offenbach Archival Depot was basically empty of its books. There was still more material at the collecting points in Wiesbaden²⁶⁰ and Munich, as well as at numerous German libraries and museums throughout the country, but the JCR had nevertheless reached an important milestone.²⁶¹



Figure 9: Torah Shield (19th century), Yeshiva University Museum, JCR Collection, Call Nr: 1977.113

<http://access.gjib.org/query.php?term=jewisb+cultural+reconstruction&qtype=basic&stype=contains&paging=25&dtype=any&repo=all&go=#1>

With the JCR’s distribution process in full swing, it not only had to face up to the newly emerged Jewish geopolitical reality but it had to start discussing what should be done with heirless property, such as the thousands of ceremonial or ritual objects or the thousands of unidentified books. It was agreed upon – consistent with its agreement with OMGUS – that heirless property should be used to “benefit the Jewish people,” and therefore to distribute objects to existing Jewish communities and to institutions that could best use and care for them. Particular Jewish institutions, such as the Bezalel Museum and Hebrew University in Israel, were given first selection rights.²⁶² Within the United States, the Jewish Museum in New York and the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati were given first priority in choosing cultural and ceremonial objects, followed by Yeshiva University and, after 1950, other colleges and institutions. Most objects distributed were spice boxes, Torah shields, Hanukkah lamps, and pointers.²⁶³

Because Torah scrolls require a different kind of treatment than other cultural and religious objects, in that according to Jewish law destroyed scrolls have to be buried, the JCR’s initial task was to carefully examine them. The preliminary sorting was carried out by the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC). Of the 1,151 Torah scrolls distributed by 1952, the overwhelming majority went to Israel (931), followed by the United States (110), Western Europe (98) and Great Britain (12). 127 Torah scrolls were sent to Israel to be buried.²⁶⁴

In addition to Torah scrolls, the Offenbach Archival Depot also held about 17,000 other religious objects in its “Torah Room.” The JCR and JRSO in addition to OMGUS agreed for these objects to be utilized, as they all originated from synagogues and homes ransacked during the Holocaust. While the majority of objects were sent to synagogues, some objects, if considered suitable, were sent to

²⁶⁰ The National Archives and Records Administration holds documents detailing the transfer of objects from the Offenbach archival depot to the Wiesbaden depot. These were presumably objects that were still awaiting restitution but could not have been handled in Offenbach. See: “List of Various Objects of Jewish Interest sent from Offenbach Archival Depot to Wiesbaden Center Collecting Point.” M 1947 – Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”): Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point, 1945-1952: Wiesbaden Administrative Records; Series: Cultural Objects Movement and Control Records; Category: Receipt for Jewish Cultural Properties: 1949 [Jewish Cultural Reconstruction: 1-11, 1-18]; Online available at: <https://www.fold3.com/image/114/232019085>

²⁶¹ Glickman, p. 261.

²⁶² *Plunder and Restitution: The U.S. and Holocaust Victims’ Assets: Findings and Recommendations of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the U.S. and Staff Report.* “Chapter V. Restitution of Victims’ Assets.”

²⁶³ *Idem.*

²⁶⁴ *Idem*; see also: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, “JCR” (online edition, accessed through the New York Public Library);

museums. Between 1949 and 1952, 7,867 ceremonial objects were distributed, with most of these objects going to Israel and the United States.²⁶⁵

This distribution scheme followed a decision by the JCR Board of Directors, which agreed in October 1949 to a 40:40:20 split of Jewish cultural and religious objects, whereby 40 percent would go to Israel, 40 percent to the Western Hemisphere, which included the United States, and 20 percent would go to all other countries.²⁶⁶

In Israel, the JCR decided to give priority to the Bezalel Museum in Jerusalem. All told, 61 cases worth of museum material were sent to Israel. The Bezalel Museum, like all other museums that received objects, was asked to clearly label these items and to furnish itemized receipts.²⁶⁷ In addition, all institutions were asked to return any objects at the request of the JCR.²⁶⁸ Responsible for the distribution in Israel was the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in the Americas the JCR, and everywhere else the JDC. However, the Synagogue Council of America soon took over the JCR's responsibilities in the Americas.²⁶⁹

According to a JCR document labeled "World Distribution of Ceremonial Objects and Torah Scrolls" dated July 1949, the following countries were recipients²⁷⁰:

²⁶⁵ Idem.

²⁶⁶ Idem. This agreement was preceded by various discussions at which the United States was first envisioned to receive the vast majority of objects, together with Israel. In March 1949, the allocations would be 40 percent to Israel, 40 percent to other countries, and 20 percent to the United States. In June yet another instruction was issued that would allocate the ceremonial objects according to yet another formula (Israel, 40 percent; Western Europe, 25 percent; Western Hemisphere, 25 percent; Great Britain, 5 percent; South Africa and other countries, 5 percent). However, by October 1949, an agreement was reached at which the decision was to adhere to the following ratio: 40:40:20 (40 percent of all items should go to Israel, 40 percent to the Western Hemisphere, including the United States, and 20 percent to other countries).

²⁶⁷ Objects that the Bezalel museum refused to take were split between other established Jewish Museums such as the museums in Tel Aviv, Prague, Budapest, London, New York and Cincinnati. see: Dana Herman, "A Brand Plucked Out of Fire: The Distribution of Heirless Jewish Cultural Property by Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc., 1947-1952," Cohen, Heimann-Jelinek (eds.), *Neglected Witnesses*, p. 36.

²⁶⁸ Idem; See also: Lipman, p. 91.

²⁶⁹ Herman, *Hashavat Avedab*, p. 252.

²⁷⁰ JCR, Inc., World Distribution of Ceremonial Objects and Torah Scrolls, July 1, 1949 to January 31, 1952, S35/88, CZA, Jerusalem; quoted after: Herman, *Hashavat Avedab*, p. 226.

World Distribution of Ceremonial Objects and Torah Scrolls:

Country	Museum Pieces	Synagogue Pieces	Scrolls
Israel	2,285	976	804 (including 87 fragments and 127 buried scrolls)
United States	1,326	1,824	110 (including an unknown number of scrolls that had to be buried)
Great Britain	245	66	12
France	125	219	
Germany	31	89	
Western Europe (excluding France and Germany)	129		
Western Europe (including France and Germany)	98		
South Africa	150	66	
Canada	151 (Museum and Synagogue pieces)		
Argentina	150 (Museum and Synagogue pieces)		
Peru	35 (Museum and Synagogue pieces)		

The restitution of books, similar to the restitution of ceremonial objects, was more difficult than the restitution of looted paintings and sculptures. Only in very rare cases did a looted book or a collection of specific books carry significant markings that indicated by which Nazi agency they had been initially spoliated.²⁷¹

Generally speaking, the books transferred to the JCR were placed into various categories, including those that were unidentifiable and of Jewish content in the German language; books that were identifiable and other archival materials belonging to private owners and Jewish institutions in Germany; unidentifiable books and partially identifiable books in languages other than German; identifiable books from the Baltic states.²⁷² After some difficulties sorting through these book collections, the JCR decided to adopt the same principle for distribution with books as they did with ceremonial objects: the 40:40:20 model.²⁷³ In Israel, the Hebrew University was given first priority. However, books were also sent to Jewish institutions in Antwerp, Brussels, Paris, Teheran, Rome,

²⁷¹ Lehmann, p. 23.

²⁷² *Plunder and Restitution: The U.S. and Holocaust Victims' Assets: Findings and Recommendations of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the U.S. and Staff Report.* "Chapter V. Restitution of Victims' Assets."

²⁷³ Already in 1949, an allocations committee was formed which decided on a plan for book distribution: 1) books would go to the Jewish National and University Library, 2) to major Jewish communities remaining in Western Germany (for immediate use consisting primarily of German Judaica, 3) to European institutions outside of Germany subsidized by the JDC, and 4) to countries to be determined. While the JCR oversaw the book distribution in a number of places, the JDC was responsible for the book distribution in Western Europe. Herman, p. 137.

Strasbourg, Algiers and Amsterdam, with each receiving between 4 and 528 books. About 10,000 books went to survivors of Jewish communities in Germany.²⁷⁴ OAD officials also gave the JDC permission to distribute some 25,000 books in Displaced Persons camps (DP-camps) between 1946 and 1947. However, since the JDC was soon unable to reconcile how many books had been borrowed and where, a second and similar request for book distribution by the JDC was denied.²⁷⁵

According to the Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, heirless books were distributed as follows²⁷⁶:

World Distribution of Books 1 July 1949 to 31 January 1952:

Country	Number of Books
Israel	191,423
United States	160,886
Canada	2,031
Belgium	824
France	8,193
Germany	11,814
Great Britain	19,082
Holland	1,813
Sweden	696
Switzerland	7,843
South Africa	7,269
Morocco	378
Australia	3,307
Argentina	5,053
Bolivia	1,281
Brazil	2,463
Chile	1,219
Costa Rica	442
Ecuador	225
Mexico	804
Peru	529
Uruguay	1,670
Venezuela	456
Others	2,044
TOTAL	431,745

Within the United States, as mentioned previously, 160,886 books were distributed. The distribution favored Jewish institutions, such as the Jewish Theological Seminary (which received 13,320 books and periodicals), Brandeis University (which received 11,288 books and periodicals), and the Yiddish

²⁷⁴ Herman, *Hashavat Avedab*, pp. 274, 276.

²⁷⁵ Idem, pp. 164, 167.

²⁷⁶ "Introductory Statement," Tentative List, p. 5; Herman, *Hashavat Avedab*, p. 225.

Scientific Institute (YIVO, which received 12,360 books and periodicals), especially in regard to rare books.²⁷⁷

But the decision was soon made to also send books, including rare volumes, to the Library of Congress, Harvard University, the New York Public Library, Columbia University, Yale University, and others. By the time book distribution ended in 1952, the JCR had distributed 160,886 books to 48 libraries and institutions in the United States.²⁷⁸

Each receiving institution was required to sign an agreement with the JCR that stated, “Each library is asked to adhere to the following procedure, so that all books will be treated as part of the cultural heritage of European Jewry.” The terms of the agreement were:

- “1. No books received may be sold, nor may any be exchanged for other books without the permission of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction obtained prior to the exchange.
2. The recipient will furnish Jewish Cultural Reconstruction with an itemized receipt, listing authors and their titles, within six months after the delivery of each shipment.
3. The recipient places at the disposal of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction all duplicates of publications already in its library unless Jewish Cultural Reconstruction authorizes the recipient in writing to retain them specifically.
4. Any books identified by a claimant as his property to the satisfaction of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction within two years of its delivery to the recipient shall be returned promptly to the claimant or to Jewish Cultural Reconstruction upon the latter’s request.
5. Any book which Jewish Cultural Reconstruction may desire to re-allocate to another library within two years of its delivery to the recipient shall likewise be promptly returned to Jewish Cultural Reconstruction upon its request. However, the total number of items requested for re-allocation shall not exceed 10% of the number of items allocated to the recipient.”²⁷⁹

After the institutions agreed to these terms and signed the agreement letter, they received special bookplates and the following request:

“In view of the extraordinary history of the books which are now being distributed by the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc. to Jewish libraries and institutions of higher learning throughout the world, we feel that it will be of great importance to have each volume marked, so that present and future readers may be reminded of those who once cherished them before they became victims of the great Jewish catastrophe.

Without such distinctive mark it will also be impossible for present and future scholars to retrace the history and the whereabouts of the great cultural treasures of European Jewry which once were the pride of scholars, institutions and private collections.

²⁷⁷ Herman, *Hashavat Avedab*, pp. 164, 167.

²⁷⁸ *Idem*.

²⁷⁹ Direct quote from “JCR, Inc., “Memorandum to Libraries Co-operating with JCR,” June 20, 1949, Dept. of Special Collections and Univ. Archives, Stanford Univ. Libs., Salo Baron Papers, Box 232, Folder 10 [123234]; “Agreement Between Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc., and Recipient Libraries,” NACP, RG 260, Ardelia Hall Collection, Box 66, JRSO [311758]. See also, memo from JCR, “Memorandum to Libraries Co-operating with JCR,” June 20, 1949, Dept. of Special Collections & Univ. Archives, Stanford Univ. Libs., Salo Baron Papers, Box 32, Folder 10 [123234].” quoted after: *Plunder and Restitution: The U.S. and Holocaust Victims’ Assets: Findings and Recommendations of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the U.S. and Staff Report*. “Chapter V. Restitution of Victims’ Assets.”

We therefore are sending you today bookplates which should be pasted into each of the volumes which you received from us. We trust that you will understand the historic significance of this request and will gladly comply with it.”²⁸⁰

While most books remained at the libraries to which they were sent to, the JCR was also able to reconstitute some 9,000 volumes from the Brooklyn-based depot to their original owners.²⁸¹ Further restitutions were rare, and as time progressed not only did many JCR bookplates disappear, but numerous books were often simply integrated into already existing library collections without specifically marking them or were simply sold off. In many cases the book’s journey from its original murdered owner, followed by its redistribution by the JCR, is no longer traceable.²⁸²

Aside from religious objects and books, the JCR was also faced with spoliated archival collections for which it equally assumed responsibility.²⁸³ If after the war the origin of the archives, or the appropriate heirs, were known, these archival records were restituted. In cases where the archival records were deemed heirless, which often meant that they originated from German Jewish communities, the decision was made to send them to Jewish organizations in New York and Jerusalem, particularly to the Israel Historical Society.²⁸⁴

By the time that the JCR operation closed in Germany on 31 January 1951, JCR had asked that all pending claims, shipments, and incoming information be handled through the JRSO office in Nuremberg.²⁸⁵ And while the JCR ceased its active operations in the early 1950s, it officially closed only on November 9, 1977. Jewish Cultural Reconstruction therefore existed for nearly 30 years.²⁸⁶

While its name was misleading, since the JCR ultimately did not strive to rebuild destroyed shtetl libraries or yeshivot, nor to restore European Jewish life, it insisted that Jewish objects – books, archives and religious as well as ceremonial objects – ought to stay in Jewish hands, wherever Jews may live. Their new geopolitical understanding, after facing up to a decimated and shattered European Jewry that emerged after the Holocaust, helped Jews around the world to maintain their ties with the culture and literature of the world the Nazis had aimed to destroy.

At the same time, Hannah Arendt instinctively knew that without real cooperation from German libraries and other German institutions²⁸⁷ it would not be possible to fully discover and locate surviving cultural assets.²⁸⁸ In her mind, the Jewish cultural objects found in the various archival

²⁸⁰ Letter from Hannah Arendt, Exe. Secy., JCR, to "Dear Friends", Sept. 1949, Harvard Univ. Lib., Correspondence between the Harvard Lib. & the JCR Org. [122325]. quoted after: *Plunder and Restitution: The U.S. and Holocaust Victims' Assets: Findings and Recommendations of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the U.S. and Staff Report*. "Chapter V. Restitution of Victims' Assets." Glickman, p. 271.

²⁸¹ Glickman, p. 275.

²⁸² For an analysis of the fate of JCR books distributed to the United States, please see the United States chapter within the *Descriptive Catalogue*.

²⁸³ Yoram Mayorek, "The Fate of Jewish Archives During and After the Holocaust," Jean-Claude Kuperminc, Rafaële Arditti (eds.), *Preserving Jewish Archives as Part of the European Cultural Heritage: Proceedings of the Conference on Judaica Archives in Europe for Archivists and Librarians*. Potsdam, 1999, 11-13 July, Paris 2001, p. 33.

²⁸⁴ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, "JCR" (online edition, accessed through the New York Public Library).

²⁸⁵ Herman, *Hashavat Avedah*, p. 222.

²⁸⁶ Idem, p. 276.

²⁸⁷ Arendt reflected on this situation in her report for the Commentary Journal: Hannah Arendt, "The Aftermath of Nazi Rule. Report from Germany," *Commentary*, 10, 1959, pp. 342-353.

²⁸⁸ In 1950 Arendt concluded that "bei dem wahrscheinlichen Aussterben der deutschen Gemeinden in den nächsten Jahren [das] kulturelle Eigentum der jüdischen Gemeinden automatisch an den deutschen Staat fallen würde." UI.

depots within the U.S. zone of occupation were only the tip of the iceberg. In an article in the 1950s, Arendt referred to the fragments of what once were the great German Jewish collections that surfaced after the war. She stressed that especially Judaica and Hebraica had to be researched,²⁸⁹ since without any proper examination within German institutions, the problem of spoliated Jewish artifacts could not be properly addressed, and these objects would remain in the wrong hands. Arendt repeated her plea in 1952, but to little avail.

In her efforts to convince German bureaucrats at libraries, archives or within the post-war German government, she often referred to the “Tentative List of Jewish Cultural Treasures in Axis-Occupied Countries” as evidence of the vast German Jewish heritage.²⁹⁰ But despite her pleas for voluntary help from German libraries, it would take more than 50 years, until the convening of a 1998 international conference in Washington, for wide-ranging provenance research to be conducted into the holdings of state institutions.²⁹¹

Stamford, Baron Papers, M0580, Box 232, Folder 5, Hannah Arendt, Memorandum an Dr. Weis, JRSO von der Sitzung des Bayrischen Landesverbandes am 22 Januar 1950. here cited after Elisabeth Gallas, “In der Lücke der Zeit,” in: Nicolas Berg, *Konstellationen, Über Geschichte, Erfahrung und Erkenntnis*, Festschrift für Dan Diner zum 65. Geburtstag, Göttingen 2011, p. 270. See also Sznajder, pp. 66-67.

²⁸⁹ “In Frage kommen vor allem Judaica und Hebraica aller Art (Bücher, Inkunablen, Manuskripte, Archivalien) [...]“ here quoted after Sznajder, Natan. „Hannah Arendt in München (1949/50)“. *Hannah.Arendt.net. Zeitschrift für politisches Denken*. Vol. 4, Nr. 1, 2008; online available at: <http://www.hannaharendt.net/index.php/han/article/view/136/238>

²⁹⁰ Sznajder, *Die Rettung der Bücher*, p. 69.

²⁹¹ Schidorsky, p. 191-192.