# Ex Libris Customer (1978-2005) Questionnaire – Yosef Branse

**1… What is your name and the name of the institution(s) where you worked with Aleph (and/or other Ex Libris products)?**

My name is Yosef Branse. I have been working at the University of Haifa Library since the summer of 1981.

**2…When did your site install Ex Libris software and when did you start working with it?**

According to the chronology maintained through 1996 by Elhanan Adler, our installation history was this:

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Version 2.3 was installed on 8.11.90
Final version of 2.3 was installed on 22/1/91.
Version 2.4 installed 25/9/91
Final version of 2.4 was installed on 30/1/92
Version 2.5 installed 30/9/92
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Version 3.2-5 installed on: 1-aug-1995
   Updated 3.2-5-8 installed on: 7-2-96
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In 2003-2004 we made a major conversion from Aleph 300 to Aleph 500 (version 14), which also meant a transition from VMS to Linux, Basic to php, and familiarity with Oracle. In the intervening years, we upgraded to later versions of Aleph 500 according to the standard practice of Israeli libraries to upgrade to even-numbered releases, as follows:
Version 16: c. August 2005
Version 18: August 2007
Version 20: October 2010
Version 22: October 2014

**3…What was your job title, or, more generally, what did you do?   Were there particular projects you were involved in?**

I was initially a technical writer preparing documentation for the systems being developed in-house (cataloging, circulation, reader data, acquisitions, etc.). Over time, I took on additional responsibilities, such as technical support and programming. A lot of my work, then and now, involved developing local "value-added" interfaces based on Aleph (and nowadays Alma).
I was part of a small team - headed by Elhanan and not formally defined as an IT department until 2000 - dealing with computing matters.
I didn't have an official job designation at the time, but currently I bear the grandiose title of "Database and Programming Coordinator," which sounds more impressive than what I actually do.

**4…Were there modules which you felt were particularly good, distinguishing Aleph from other vendors' versions of the same module?**

**5…Who were Aleph/Ex Libris' main competitors?**

In the 1980s there was serious discussion as to which system would be adopted by the Israeli academic libraries: Aleph or that developed in Haifa.
Aleph won.

6…I think that two early decisions were very important:
- support of standards:  the MARC and MAB formats, and, later UNIMARC
- the early use of Unicode, the ability to handle multiple languages and scripts – Hebrew and English from the first and, very early, Danish/German/Italian – laying the groundwork for making Aleph a system which could be implemented in virtually *any* language
- Others?

7…Comments on the role of user groups (ICAU, NAAUG, SMUG, etc.)?

I was not involved with these, but for some reason was selected to go to the 2005 ICAU conference in London, including the SMUG conference immediately following. Although I was just a passive observer of the events, it was an interesting historical moment due to the subsequent transition from ICAU/SMUG to Igelu.

8…Were there particularly interesting/valuable Ex Libris staff that you remember?

Yoel Kortick, Aharon Rivlin.

9…It seems that, with ALEPH 500, the choice of a Linux / Oracle environment was important -- but maybe most of the competitors' products also operated in this environment?

10…Are there particular interesting, fun, or odd things that you remember?

In June 2004, sometime after the upgrade to Aleph 500, a University lecturer discovered that the Hebrew interface wasn't adequate for his Apple Macintosh, and threatened to make a scandal. Several other Apple-using faculty members chimed in that they were also affected. Tempers and egos were calmed when it was found that the Mac 0SX operating system worked OK with the Netscape 7.1 browser.

 Even after the switch to Aleph 500, Aleph 300 kept running for several years on our faithful old Alpha 4100, primarily as a reference for the Aleph systems librarian. When she retired, at the end of 2007, I had to write Elhanan Adler to ask how to shut down Aleph 300. I jealously maintained the Alpha itself, an incongruous relic in the Library's server room, until 2010, when it was put in storage somewhere, in preparation for our move to a new building.


11…If your library has stopped using Aleph, when did that happen – and what was the successor system?

We migrated from Aleph to Alma, with the official "go-live" in August 2016.

12…If you moved to a different library, please describe briefly your history since that time.

I have been here since 1981, and barring unforeseen circumstances will remain until I retire in 2021.