

Map of/Excerpts from Jerry and Randy's May 21, 2017, conversation with Judy Levi (via Skype)

[Link to complete unedited \(1-hour\) audio recording](#)



Randy Menakes



Judy Levi



Jerry Specht

Interview map/excerpts

h:mm:ss

- 0:00:50 Jerry/Judy's first meeting
- 0:04:00 Judy's "trip out of hell" (flight from Jerusalem to Montreal)
- 0:05:00 Randy/Judy's first meeting
- 0:07:45 Boston Office
- 0:09:10 Jerry/Randy's history
- 0:12:00 Judy, pre-ALEPH history at the JNUL (Jewish National and University Library)
 - 0:15:15 Union List of Serials in Israel Libraries, mid '70's, Yohanan
- 0:17:10 *ALEPH becomes official project (1978)*
 - "One of the reasons it was successful was that it wasn't the idea of some corporation"
 - 0:17:45 "The first idea was to get a ready-made program [DOBIS-LIBIS] but the IBM computer would have been six months too late, so we said "OK, we'll do it."
- 0:18:40 Carmella Ronen came to Hebrew University in 1974
 - "You think you and Randy worked closely together; Carmella and I were Tweedledum and Tweedledee!"
- 0:20:30 Unfeasibility of merging 23 libraries' card catalogs necessitated automated solution

- 0:22:00 Physical merging of 23 collections
- 0:24:30 Character set issues: Hebrew, Arabic, Latin, Cyrillic
“We even drew the fonts!”
- 0:26:00 Yohanan’s foresight
- 0:27:40 1981 visit to CDC headquarters in Minneapolis/St.Paul
“We always said that Yohanan wanted to ‘see his baby walk’ ”. Chutzpah!
- 0:28:40 CSIC in Madrid – first customer outside Israel (1982)
- 0:29:00 People critical in early success
- 0:31:20 “Let me tell you something about Udi and Azriel ...”
“If you don’t have the proper marketing ...”
“We tried it [breaking into North American market] before that ourselves”
Jerry: “You need to have a good system too.”
- 0:33:20 Table-driven system
- 0:35:30 Kate Ward/Notre Dame’s experience:
“It was a feeling of empowerment ... and sheer terror....
We were co-developers, co-conspirators.”
- 0:38:00 Herbert van de Sompel; SFX
- 0:38:30 Judy: “... we were having so much fun doing what we were doing. It wasn’t a job.”
- 0:39:00 Yohanan’s apartment;
[Barbara: “Like Steve Jobs; the equivalent of the garage in the U.S.”]
- 0:40:00 Randy: “... bond between customers and the product ...
making the system unique and yours alone.”
System seminars;
Ex Libris is pretty darn good at resource allocation
- 0:43:40 Decision **not** to go for public library market
Judy: “The public library thing came up at least twice.”
Alma is 99% academic libraries
- 0:48:10 Interesting/memorable customers
Judy: “Training session where I had to explain how to use the mouse.”
“I enjoyed Denmark; DTV was ... special”
- 0:50:20 Randy: National Library of Japan ... challenging
Cultural sensitivity training... Two extremes: Israel and Japan
- 0:54:30 Randy: Kos System Seminar: “eye-opening to me ... the professionalism;
Interaction with customers; involvement late into the night ...
Cooperative development.”
Judy: “It keeps customers loyal. They’ve invested their spirit in it.
It isn’t just that they paid their money and they got what they got.
They have ongoing influence.”
- 0:56:00 Jerry: “You want to take advantage of that.... You want to have them feel
involved because they’re really bright people who can really contribute.”

0:57:50 Judy: “Just to give you an example of when Yohanan *didn't* want to do something....”

Jerry: “I always felt that Yohanan did a good job of picking up on ideas and recognizing when something did really need to be done.”

0:58:45 “Aleph Record Relationships” document; Judy: “a truly impressive, but rather frightening diagram.”

1:00:40 Holdings records ... “We didn't want to do it,... but it had to be done.”

1:02:20 “Alma came as I was winding up.”

1:03:00 *What are each of you most proud of having done in your years with Ex Libris?*

Judy: “I'm proud of the personal and working relationships that we had at the Jerusalem office.”

“From the viewpoint of the most exciting time: the beginning ... the actual, physical move of these libraries up to Mt. Scopus and the creation of the new library.”

“Really, working with wonderful people: the customers, the distributors, the offices around the world.

“I feel very lucky that I happened to land in the right place at the right time: If I had stayed in the Library and not gone into the computers, I don't know whether I would have stayed with libraries....”

1:07:10 Randy: “It's been a great place to spend my career, and especially academic libraries.

I think of a lot of really interesting visits I had ... CUNY....”

Judy: “At least 14 different ways in Aleph for calculating late return fines.”

1:09:45 *Things that you'd do differently if you had them to do over?*

Randy: “Taking Project Management position supervising three or four people. I don't think it suited my talents as well as some other things....”

1:10:50 Jerry: “At one time (with NOTIS) I was supervising 12 people.

I was OK as a manager, but wasn't a really good manager.

I felt that as a troubleshooter, I could do *really* well.”

1:11:20 Judy: “I'm kind of laughing to myself because we three have this in common...

I never wanted to be a manager...

“At one point in 1999, Udi said to me: “OK. You have to head these people (the Aleph Support).... After three or four years they realized that, no, this should be taken away from me.”

Jerry: “They don't necessarily go together.”

Anything else?

Randy: “I'll say this: it's been wonderful working with you two....

“Judy, it's been great talking with you again. It's been a while.

You've got a great spirit.”

