Reconstructing an unintentional library: Fueling community discussion and education about the Holocaust using Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Books

Towson University's Albert S. Cook Library, in collaboration with Brandeis University Library, Sandra R. Berman Center for Humanity, Tolerance, and Holocaust Education, University of Denver, Yeshiva University, and The Jewish Theological Seminary are requesting $249,857 in IMLS support to develop infrastructure for strong collaboration among a network of library and museum professionals, who will implement community programs for education on Holocaust disinformation, supported by rare primary source materials, our Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR) books. This project fulfills Goal 5 and Objective 5.2 of the National Leadership Grant Program. The goal of strengthening the collaborations between libraries, archives, and museums will be fulfilled through the partnerships between JCR holding institutions and their local museums; we will engage our museums and community institutions by uniting the records of these rare collections online and organizing programming featuring primary source-based learning to combat misinformation. The project will result in a shared catalog of the JCR books, the story of which will be used to engage our community on Holocaust education. As the last generations of living survivors pass away, the role of physical artifacts in giving witness and fighting disinformation is growing exponentially. Since many U.S. institutions hold JCR books, we will include partners Brandeis University, University of Denver, Yeshiva University, and The Jewish Theological Seminary in the project, giving them guidance on how to locate their books and provide best practice for working with a community partner to engage wider audiences in Holocaust education in their geographic area.

Project Justification
This project addresses Objective 5.2 of the National Leadership Grants for Libraries Program by creating a partnership among Towson University (TU), Sandra R. Berman Center for Humanity, Tolerance, and Holocaust Education, Brandeis University, University of Denver, Yeshiva University, and The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) that will combat rising antisemitism, particularly as fueled by rampant misinformation and disinformation, through use of physical artifacts: books that directly relate their stories of Nazi crimes. The partner institutions hold in their collections tens of thousands of Nazi-looted books, recovered by Allied forces at the end of World War II and, in the absence of owners or heirs in their countries of origin, distributed to libraries and educational institutions throughout the world by an organization formed for this purpose, Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc. (JCR). Partners will identify and make discoverable JCR books in their collections and use these books for an online catalog, in-person and online programming, and additional modes of community engagement. They will also document this work, creating templates for additional owners of JCR materials and partner museums to continue the work beyond the purview of the partners' institutions and life of this grant. As detailed below, various institutions internationally have undertaken work of this type; the collaboration proposed here will be crucial in strengthening networks among library and museum professionals—including from institutions beyond the partner organizations named here—and bring together information from disparate sources into a single, accessible format.

The problem
This project has significant impact at the nexus of the fight against misinformation and disinformation and against antisemitism. In a recent nationwide poll (Claims Conference, 2020), 63% of Millennials and Gen Z respondents did not know that 6 million Jews were murdered during the Holocaust during WWII. One in ten respondents had never heard the term, "Holocaust." These troubling statistics show the need for more education on the Holocaust, a need that the State of Maryland acknowledged when the Maryland State Department of Education required curriculum changes to expand instruction on the Holocaust in public K-12 schools in 2019 (Gaines, 2019). The war in the Middle East and the recent rise of antisemitism on college campuses (Singh, 2023) make this work all the more relevant; Towson University recently hosted Education Secretary Miguel Cardona and White House Domestic Policy Advisor Neera Tanden to discuss issues of antisemitism on Baltimore-area campuses (CBS News, 2023). Prior to the discussion, both Secretary Cardona and Advisor Tanden were shown a selection from the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR) book collection and associated Holocaust collections. This conversation resulted from the Biden administration release of National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism (The White House, 2023). Though the neologism "disinformation" had not

yet entered circulation when historian Deborah Lipstadt refuted Holocaust denier David Irving in court, the claim that the Nazi regime did not systematically murder Jews is perhaps the most prominent, most troubling example of the phenomenon in recent times. Unfortunately, intentional spreading of anti-Jewish conspiracy theories continues, particularly online (Finkelstein, 2020). Given Russian authorities' proven use of social media to disseminate disinformation geared towards disrupting U.S. elections, those same authorities' history of using online antisemitism (Global Engagement Center, 2024) to advance its own aims is especially troubling. All this occurs as the last generation of Holocaust survivors is passing from this world. In the absence of human witnesses, the looted books in the partner institutions' collections can provide tangible evidence of Nazi atrocities.

Background
During World War II, the Nazis stole millions of books, works of art, and cultural items from countless European Jewish cultural centers, including universities, libraries, museums, and private collections. Their aim was to parallel the annihilation of the Jewish people with the eradication of its culture (Rose, 2001). At the same time, they sought to use the stolen books to create research institutes, such as the Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des neuen Deutschlands, to study the "Jewish Question" and maintain libraries of these stolen books to serve their purposes (Markner, 2007). At the end of the war, Allied forces discovered vast abandoned storehouses of cultural items looted from countries across the European continent. The Office of Military Government, United States (OMGUS) took on the task of surveying these millions of stolen items to determine their provenance and attempted to repatriate them. The Offenbach Archival Depot, located in Offenbach, Germany was established and dedicated to the effort to identify, sort, and return the stolen books to their original owners or to the countries of origin. OMGUS reviewed markings in the books, including stamps and signatures, and between 1946 and 1947, approximately 2.5 million books were identified and returned to libraries and other institutions throughout Europe. However, approximately 500,000 books remained with no identifiable or living heir, and Jewish organizations objected vociferously to their repatriation to Germany and other countries where Jews had been systematically murdered. With input from governments and Jewish organizations around the world, a committee was established to oversee the distribution of these heirless books to communities of Jewish culture and learning that would value and care for them. This process led to the establishment of an organization known as Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc. (JCR), charged with distributing the books to appropriate heirs.

Between 1949 and 1952 the JCR distributed more than 426,000 items around the world; approximately 160,000 books came to the United States. Baltimore Hebrew College (BHC, later Baltimore Hebrew University, then Baltimore Hebrew Institute at Towson University) received 12 shipments of Judaica, amounting to more than 4,500 JCR books, rare books, pamphlets, and periodicals (Herman, 2008). BHC was identified by JCR as a priority recipient institution, along with 16 other Jewish institutions across the U.S., including Brandeis University. Despite their shared priority status, Brandeis received more than 11,000 JCR items or more than double what Baltimore Hebrew College received.

Upon receiving the books, most U.S. libraries integrated them into their general collections or, as appropriate according to the books' inherent nature (and not their status as repatriated books), into their rare books collections. Along with the books, libraries received special JCR bookplates, which they were requested to affix to the inside covers before shelving. The intent here was to ensure that these books would bear witness to the horrific attempt to eradicate an entire people and their culture from the world ("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], Herman, 2008). However, attaching the bookplates was done inconsistently, and, over the years, even in the institutions that were compliant, many that were affixed have fallen out. If libraries originally noted the books' special provenance in their card catalogs, those records have not been transferred to the current online systems. In other words, in order to use the JCR books for Holocaust education, they must first be identified. This echoes the words of Hannah Arendt, Executive Secretary of JCR, "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" (Arendt, 1949).

The project
We are seeking funding for a two-part project: (1) Develop, test, and share best practices and digital tools for book identification and cataloging with other JCR libraries so that the records can be deposited in a shared online catalog, and (2) Partner with museums, schools, universities, and other cultural institutions to create Holocaust education programming that enables these books to share their stories within our communities and around the world.

Based on preliminary conversations with several institutions that received JCR books, the project team has ascertained that there was great variability in how the different organizations treated their JCR collections upon receipt. Due to the failure of many institutions to comply with the condition requiring the affixing of bookplates and the variability in how they were absorbed into existing collections, the books thereby lost their clear connection with JCR's work and their unique histories. Some institutions, such as Baltimore Hebrew College, inserted the bookplates sent along with the books, then added them to their general collection; no special collections designation had yet been established. Among the few institutions that did catalog at least some of their JCR books, the project team has found that the cataloging for JCR books was inconsistent. The MARC cataloging standard was not piloted until 1965, well after the U.S. libraries would have accessioned their JCR books. As cataloging standards evolved and as some JCR libraries like Baltimore Hebrew College were subsumed by other institutions, it resulted in a lack of uniformity, even within the same library's cataloging records. This non-standardized cataloging makes it very challenging, if not impossible, to identify and capture those items to form the basis for a shared JCR materials catalog. It is important to note that most libraries that received JCR books did not even take these initial steps. Many of the institutions that received large numbers of JCR materials were among those that did not bookplate them upon receipt; nor did they note their JCR provenance in their catalogs.

For these institutions with millions of volumes in their collections, this means that, if they have not already discarded their JCR books, those items constitute a few thousand volumes that are essentially obscured within their massive collections. This hidden status makes it extremely difficult for researchers to learn more about these books and for students to learn about their story and their role in the Holocaust. Ultimately the dual lack of bookplates and catalog annotation means that these JCR books, these books that are the last remains of some individual lives, these books that witnessed and bear the scars of one of the worst atrocities in history, are hidden away within libraries around the world and are potentially in danger of being discarded and lost forever. In contrast, strong collaboration among holding institutions will preserve them, in aggregate, as a shared cultural artifact.

Target groups
The project will directly reach researchers, library, collections, and museum professionals, educators in secondary and higher education, and those engaged in informal education. A shared JCR catalog, whether building on an existing database, such as the Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project, Looted Cultural Assets, or on a new open catalog, would allow researchers from around the world to access this collection in one digital location. This catalog would also serve as a tool, along with the primary source JCR books as an artifact, to educate our communities about the realities of the Holocaust. During our final phase of community engagement, we will promote the catalog and JCR books to our broader communities of educators in order to raise awareness and engagement with themes about the Holocaust. TU will create templates for outreach and engagement with various community groups for libraries holding JCR books. Our target groups of researchers, librarians, museums professionals, and K-12 educators will ultimately share their lessons and exhibits with further beneficiaries. These beneficiaries include college students, campus staff and faculty, K-12 students, and museum patrons, or the general public.

Outreach and engagement

TU is well-positioned to serve as a model for outreach and engagement; its campus was the first in the state of Maryland to have a Community Engagement designation from Carnegie. As an anchor institution in the greater Baltimore area, TU has an engagement focus on social justice and an extensive network of partner organizations (BTU-partnerships for greater Baltimore, n.d.) throughout Baltimore, Maryland, and the larger DC metro region. TU also recently founded the Sandra R. Berman Center for Humanity, Tolerance, and Holocaust Education, stewarded by Dr. Hana Bor. The Sandra R. Berman Center is committed to "raising awareness of the history of remembrance" (Sandra R. Berman Center, n.d.) and organizes educational programs, commemorative events, and includes displays featuring some of Cook Library's Special Collections and University Archives' materials. The Baltimore Hebrew Institute (BHI) is also a close partner on this grant; BHI provides advanced degrees in multiple Jewish Studies subjects, including Holocaust Education. BHI also offers non-degree courses, partners with Towson's Hillel community, and organizes lectures, events and trips (Baltimore Hebrew Institute, n.d.).

Cook Library's Special Collections and University Archives, Dr. Bor, and BHI have partnered on Holocaust education in the past, including a well-attended international virtual symposium on teaching the Holocaust amidst much disinformation (Hobstetter, 2022); White Gloves sessions highlighting our JCR book collections (Collins, 2015); and its traveling Vergissmeinnicht (Forget Me Not) exhibition (Lucas, 2017). Both Towson University, on behalf of Baltimore Hebrew Institute, and Brandeis share a commitment to caring for the Jewish cultural objects in their possession and making them available to the researchers, educators, and students who can learn from them.

Repatriation of Nazi looted art is a well-developed field that has been in the public eye for some time. Known heirs of the owners of art stolen from Jews have taken the lead in this regard. Repatriation of stolen art is also closely related to a broader wave of discourse and action in the museum world, as it begins to come to terms with the colonial-imperial practices that filled the world's largest, most important encyclopedic museums (Pogrebin & Bowley, 2023; Roberts, 2019).

The identification and repatriation of Nazi-looted books is a far less glamourous endeavor, involving larger numbers of objects, most of which, on an individual basis, have little monetary value. It has thus been slower to develop. Several monographs on the acts of Nazi looting have appeared (Glickman, 2016; Fishman, 2017; Leff, 2015). Others have documented the development and activities of JCR (Herman, 2008; Gallas, 2020; Heuberger, 2022). Several libraries have begun work on identifying JCR and other looted books in their collections. These include the Hebrew and Yiddish language books at the Library of Congress (though apparently not books they received in other European languages) and the University of Pennsylvania (Brener, 2021; Berger, 2019). And, crucially, some Jewish institutions in Europe, reconstituted and renewed in recent decades, have begun to seek to recreate their pre-World War II collections, whether physically, as at the Jewish Museum in Prague (Mizrachi et al., 2022), or virtually, such as the Leo Baeck Institute's Library of Lost Books, representing the collections of the renowned Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, which operated in Berlin from 1872 to 1942 (Rosenbaum, 2024). Until recently, however, all of these efforts have been conducted separately by institutions working largely in isolation from one another. Each has therefore conducted research and developed workflows independently, effectively doubling efforts, failing to build as fully as possible on work done by others. This has also meant that no agreed-upon standards have been established for how to identify such books in catalog records in a way that would be shareable across institutions, or that individual researchers could use in their searches in different catalogs. Recognizing this key lacuna, Towson University began to look for partners to collaborate on identifying, recording, and virtually reunifying this unintended collection of books, and identified Brandeis as such a partner.

Project Work Plan

Over the last 10 years, staff at TU's Albert S. Cook Library have developed best practices for identifying, cataloging, and sharing its JCR collection in order to make it more accessible. Meanwhile, Brandeis has also inventoried JCR

books it holds. The IMLS National Leadership Implementation Grant will allow us to link our Holocaust education programs to tangible evidence of primary source JCR books seized during the Holocaust. Our target groups are broad for this grant; individual outreach templates will inform how to engage with the various groups.

Key staff on the project include TU co-PIs Suzanna Yaukey, Dean of University Libraries; Elaine Mael, Jewish Studies Librarian; Dr. Ashley Todd-Diaz, Assistant University Librarian for Special Collections and University Archives; Joyce Garczynski, Assistant University Librarian for Communication & Digital Scholarship; Dr. Hana Bor, Director of the Sandra R. Berman Center for Humanity, Tolerance, and Holocaust Education; Brandeis University co-PIs Mark Paris, Associate University Librarian for Scholarly Resources & Discovery; Dr. Rachel Greenblatt, Judaica Librarian; Lou Hartman, Metadata Coordinator; and Ari Kleinman, Metadata Librarian, Hebrew Specialty, University of Denver co-PI David Fasman, Metadata Technician, Beck Archives; Yeshiva University co-PIs Tina Weiss, Head Librarian of Hebraica-Judaica; Shulamith Berger, Curator of Special Collections; and the Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary, co-PI Naomi Steinberger, Director of Library Services. Planning for the entire project will be led by co-PIs Yaukey and Mael. At the start of the project, we will hire Scott Ostroff, part-time project coordinator, supervised by Todd-Diaz, who will work with the co-PIs to plan and confirm dates, update schedules and the project timelines as needed, and manage communication for the project. Ostroff has worked on the existing JCR project as an intern since Fall 2023 and is committed to advancing its goals. Ostroff will set up timelines in project management software Asana, for which TU has a subscription, and track progress on each of the tasks for various milestones. Hiring of the project coordinator and student assistants at Brandeis will occur in August and September 2024.

The project will span three years with three phases, many of which run concurrently: (1) investigating shared catalog options for the JCR books; (2) refining existing best practices for cataloging and locating JCR books; and (3) launching educational initiatives and providing templates for other pilot institutions to engage their varied communities. Resources needed for the project include time for co-PIs Mael, Greenblatt, Kleinman, and Hartman, funds for student assistants at Brandeis and other subawardees' institutions, travel for dissemination; and catering, materials, and supply costs for outreach events. Target groups for this project who may utilize some of our JCR materials and guidelines in primary source instruction include K-12 teachers, academic librarians who teach information literacy, campuses organizing events, and museums organizing exhibits and events.

Phase 1: A Shared Catalog for JCR Books & Test Loads of Records
The first part of this project will involve locating an appropriate shared catalog for the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Books. Many existing shared catalogs include looted art, cultural objects, documents, and monographs such as the Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project, the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR) database, or Looted Cultural Assets. We are not certain that one of these databases will be the proper database for submitting our records; they each have different purposes, approaches to metadata, and catalog linking. The staff reviewing potential catalog solutions will include the JCR project coordinator, Jewish Studies librarians at both institutions, metadata specialists, catalogers, Associate University Librarian for Scholarly Resources & Discovery, and IT personnel from TU. Jewish Studies librarians at TU and Brandeis will reach out to these databases to ascertain if the organizations have interest in including JCR records from November to December 2024.

Fundamentally, the catalog should have the ability to dynamically link the records to their home institutions and provide enough provenance information about the materials to be used as a discrete collection by researchers. Should we need to build our own catalog, there are some existing opportunities to do so. Columbia University has offered to share the software they used to develop their Footprints catalog; building out this catalog and modernizing it would be important should we consider this opportunity. There are also opportunities to share collections via an integrated library management system, if there is parity in solutions used across participating institutions; Alma from Ex Libris in particular offers the possibility of a network zone of shared collections. Lastly, projects such as the SHARP SCELC Shared Print Discovery Catalog are options for spinning up shared catalogs. During November 2025, Ostroff will reach out to subawardee institutions to survey the various catalogs and systems they are using that may be applicable. Ostroff

will compile a list of existing catalogs and systems that should be assessed as potential solutions for the JCR books shared catalog. From April to June 2025, Yaukey, Paris, and Ostroff will assess the viability of Jewish cultural databases, catalog software such as the Footprints software, and proprietary catalog software as potential solutions for the JCR shared catalog.

As part of phase 1, a technological strategy will be developed by Yaukey, Paris, and Ostroff from July through August 2025 for the shared catalog, including technical requirements for digitization of any markings, digital preservation plans, software evaluation, and plans for sustainability. We expect that some cataloging corrections will need to be made to normalize the fields used to indicate the collection status of the JCR book records; any corrections needed will be done by Mael, Kleinman, and Hartman from July to August 2025. In August 2025, we will share our results with co-PIs for discussion and review. Once a system is chosen, we anticipate launching and test loading TU and Brandeis records to the catalog from August to October 2025, followed by a testing period of November to January 2025. The shared catalog will be launched in February 2026. After the catalog has launched, Yaukey, Paris, Ostroff, Mael, Kleinman, and Hartman will document plans and procedures for future partner loads into the shared catalog (March 2026 through June 2026). We will publicize the catalog launch through the Association of Jewish Libraries, listservs on Special Collections, via social media, and via local media through the remainder of the grant period and beyond. There is no intention of building software for this grant, rather adopting an existing system that suits our metadata, provenance, and sustainability needs. The cost of building or hosting a catalog has not been addressed in this proposal, as TU has existing funding sources that are likely to be able to cover the spin-up and maintenance costs.

Phase 2: Refining Best Practices for Cataloging and Locating JCR Books
Phase 2 will happen alongside phase 1 and includes a collaboration between Mael at TU and Kleinman and Hartman at Brandeis to refine our existing best practices for locating and cataloging JCR books, with task-based work completed by student assistants or other part-time temporary workers.

There is interest in locating these materials; the Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL) is the leading international professional organization of Judaica librarians and the leading authority on Judaica librarianship, supporting access to information and Jewish literacy globally. In the recent years, member librarians of the AJL have increased their interest in surfacing and publicizing looted materials in general and Nazi-looted materials in particular. A White Paper on Judaica Provenance will soon be released by a committee led by the AJL and the National Library of Israel. This work encompasses all looted materials from the Nazi era and other time periods. It will offer guidance on best practices for the curator or librarian seeking to purchase materials, when there is a possibility they were illegally or inappropriately obtained by the seller. In recent months, several AJL librarians interested in the related but very different task of discovery of the JCR materials already in their collections has led to the formation of the AJL Task Force on Nazi-era Looted Books. The goals of this task force are to share information, identify best practices for detecting JCR materials, annotate their electronic catalog records, and create digital databases relevant to these collections.

The AJL Task Force includes participants from the Leo Baeck Institute, University of Toronto, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Yeshiva University, Columbia University, The Jewish Theological Seminary, American Jewish University, University of Denver, the United States Historical Memorial Museum, Library of Congress, and Stanford University, as well as additional libraries. In the proposed project, the Co-PIs will work closely with the AJL Task Force in building national, perhaps even international, standards and channels for working together. This will be accomplished by working with the AJL Task Force as a reviewer for phases 2 and 3 of the project (best practices documentation and reviewing marketing materials), and as potential future partners for activating phase 3 of the project (community outreach and engagement).

TU and Brandeis have both made progress in locating JCR books within their stacks. Over the last year, Mael has cross-referenced JCR shipments received by the Baltimore Hebrew College to find a total number of items that we are searching for and to determine any clues as to where they might be located. Mael supervises a student assistant who is actively searching within the BHI stacks for JCR titles using targeted instructions for locating possible JCR books. TU currently employees Ostroff to inventory the BHI books in Special Collections and University Archives, specifically searching for and recording JCR markings. Brandeis staff, along with student employees, have been searching the Brandeis stacks for possible JCR titles using date and publication location criteria to focus on the most likely materials. They are documenting any marginalia and photographing stamps and bookplates. Many of the books are not findable as a collection in the libraries' respective current catalogs, so TU and Brandeis will determine the best MARC field to designate collection status, such as through a 590 local note or a 561 ownership and custodial history note.

The methods TU and Brandeis will use to identify additional JCR books in their collections and to lay the foundation for the best practices will be focused on the markings and scars on the books. By positive identification of stamps, bookplates, or other markings associated with the Offenbach Archival Depot (OAD) or the JCR, evidence will be provided to establish provenance. For example, one easily identifiable stamp is one that was applied at the OAD and bears its name. To facilitate the sorting of the millions of volumes collected at the OAD, the Director of the depository supervised the compilation of two photo albums with images of library stamps that workers might find. These volumes are accessible online and can be consulted to identify libraries that were affected by Nazi looting; these stamps may still appear in JCR collections in libraries and could help identify materials. Another proof is the presence of a JCR bookplate, originally applied when an institution received the book as part of a shipment. Applying the bookplate was not mandatory, but if it is present in a book then that is confirmation that it is a JCR book. In addition, the TU staff have developed catalog record and accession record search parameters that can be useful in narrowing the collection so that the JCR books can be located more efficiently. The review of our best practice documents from TU and Brandeis will begin in November 2024 and continue through February 2025.

Some work has already been completed for the purpose of providing instructions to other libraries holding JCR titles. Both TU and Brandeis have created instructions and best practices for how to find JCR materials within their unique libraries (See supporting document 2). These include digitization of key markings indicating the process for locating materials. Mael, Kleinman, and Hartman will compare notes and begin drafting a best practices document, which will include step-by-step instructions to find receipts and shipments of JCR books, and lists of best practices for searching, compiling, documenting, cataloging and digitizing identifying markings. Both institutions will digitize markings from the books that help with identifications. The standards set forth in these guidelines will specify digitization format, resolution, additional metadata schema to use, and file naming conventions. These instructions will be drafted from February 2025 to be completed by April 2025.

For those institutions interested in building more inclusive records, we will also share best practices for creating both localized metadata fields as well as additional standardized fields for subject headings and summaries that enhance discovery while also emphasizing the diversity of the resources and their origins. This will include guidelines on how to enhance and flesh out records with incomplete metadata to improve access with an emphasis on fields that contain metadata, based on this project's parameters. These recommendations for more inclusive cataloging will be drafted between March and May 2025.

Concurrently, as these practices, guidelines and standards are refined, Mael, Kleinman, and Greenblatt will share the best practices and guidelines with the AJL Task Force in June 2025. The practices, guidelines and standards will be shared in Google Drive with options to suggest edits and comment on processes and practices. AJL's Task Force will serve as a reviewer of all documentation created from this grant; some of the libraries on the task force are likely to also benefit from the deliverables from this grant. For instance, Columbia University has expressed interest in implementing our best practice documentation to find, catalog, and publicize JCR materials from this grant. Ostroff will work with Mael, Kleinman, and Greenblatt to update shared documentation that includes the iterative feedback

from the AJL Task Force. This review will simultaneously strengthen working relationships among member institutions of the Task Force, who together with project partners, will continue to build collaborations among libraries that hold JCR and related materials.

In the latter part of Phase 2, Ostroff, TU and Brandeis Co-PIs will work with the University of Denver, Yeshiva University, and JTS to provide support on how to locate their books and upgrade catalog records. Fasman, Weiss, Berger, and Steinberger will directly or indirectly supervise student employees that can complete the work to find items in the collection or assist with marketing and outreach plans. Project coordinator Ostroff acts as the person ensuring we are meeting initial timelines, escalating needs for change in schedule to the co-PIs, logging the creation of templates by co-PIs, and making sure that templates are properly shared and saved. Ostroff will provide support for hiring students including the sharing of position descriptions, tasks and duties, and interview questions. Additionally, they will share best practices and guidelines for student workers, as well as explicit template instructions for students attempting to locate books. Subawardee institutions will hire students from July 2025 to August 2025, who after hire, will search for materials from September 2025 through December 2026. As these institutions gain momentum, the project coordinator will organize monthly check-ins for the TU and Brandeis co-PIs and bimonthly meetings for all co-PIs at institutions receiving subawards. As progress is made finding materials at subawardee institutions, Mael, Kleinman, Hartman and Ostroff will update the best practices documents with improvements and clarifications (October 2026 through January 2027). In February 2027, Mael, Kleinman and Hartman will work with the AJL Task Force on a second review of the best practice documents, incorporating their review feedback. Once the best practice documentation is close to completion, we plan to begin disseminating results of the grant at national conferences, via journals, book chapters, and other publication routes (February 2027 through end of the grant and beyond).

Phase 3: Outreach and Education
Our third phase, beginning in year 2, will connect our work to locate JCR books at U.S. institutions to educate various audiences on Holocaust disinformation. Under the leadership of Garczynski, we will create, test, and deploy marketing plans and collateral that libraries with JCR books can use to share them with three primary audiences. These audiences include: (1) K-12 schools and universities, (2) Museums and other cultural and religious institutions, such as synagogues, churches, and mosques, and (3) Community organizations, retirement centers, and civic organizations. The grants team will develop unique plans and materials tailored to each of the three audiences. The plans will provide background information on that audience, suggested methods for connecting with that audience, and sample messages that libraries can deploy to foster partnerships with these organizations. These will be authored from August through October 2025. In addition, these plans will be accompanied by sample marketing and educational collateral materials such as lesson plans (See supporting document 3 and Nasr & Garczynski, 2013), program/event plans, sample outreach assessment surveys, flier templates, press release templates, videos, social media content, and graphics/logos that libraries with JCR books can adapt for their own outreach. These additional materials will be drafted and authored from October 2025 through December 2025. Once the templates and materials have been created, we will share them with the AJL Task Force for review (January 2026).

TU's White Gloves sessions have proven to be an excellent template for an educational program to engage the community with the JCR books: In 2011, Towson's Jewish Studies Librarian and the Special Collections and University Archives staff developed a community outreach program using the JCR materials as artifacts. At these sessions, the staff share the background of the JCR books and their journey to the US, and then allow participants to handle the books, exploring their condition and markings as they interact with evidence of the Holocaust. To date, Towson University librarians have conducted about 25 of these sessions within the Baltimore region, reaching more than 550 participants. While these sessions are certainly impactful, they represent only a small portion of the JCR books, and the audience is only a small fraction of those who could benefit from learning about their story. With few Holocaust survivors remaining to share their stories and surveys demonstrating a decline in knowledge about the Holocaust, JCR books as a shared online collection can serve as a valuable teaching tool that enable students and the

broader public across the United States to learn about this important topic. Our intention is for White Gloves sessions to be one of many options that institutions with JCR books can employ to reach out to the surrounding community.

After the TU/Brandeis grants team has developed these plans and materials, and they have been reviewed by the AJL Task Force, we will pilot test them in the Baltimore/D.C. metro area with members of the target audiences from February 2026 through December 2026. In collaboration with Dr. Bor of the Berman Center, we will organize campus and community events as well as partner with community institutions. Initial community partners who have expressed interest in hosting JCR events and sharing information about the collection include the Jewish Museum of Baltimore, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Summer Teacher Institute at TU (for K-12 teachers), and the Jewish Community Center of Baltimore. We will survey the attendees who participate in these pilot events to assess their learning and interest in additional educational opportunities. That feedback will then be used to refine and update the project's lesson and program plans. We also intend to gather feedback from these organizations about the plans and marketing/educational materials and that feedback will then be incorporated into the plans and marketing/educational materials going forward. After this pilot phase, other AJL's Task Force partner libraries with JCR books will be invited to adopt, adapt, and assess these materials in their own community education and outreach efforts (September 2026). We will offer up to four JCR book libraries reimbursement for marketing materials and food for events in order to facilitate these educational programs. We intend to select the libraries receiving reimbursement based on the quality of their proposed outreach plans to their communities, including the introduction of the JCR books to unique and novel audiences. Via email and during bimonthly check-in meetings online from October 2026 through the end of the grant period, TU will also provide coaching to and gather feedback from these partner libraries as they initiate their own JCR community programming and outreach.

Generation of a Foundational Report & Dissemination
Concurrently in the final year of the grant from October 2026 through the end of the grant period, TU and Brandeis will co-author a JCR best practices foundational report detailing the successes and challenges of the entire grant project. We will disseminate our project broadly by sharing best practice at regional and national conferences hosted by associations such as the Association of Jewish Libraries, Society of American Archivists, American Library Association, and Association of College & Research Libraries, hosting webinars, and promoting the foundational report and project generally on multiple listservs including the Association of College & Research Libraries, the Society of American Archivists, and Hasafran--the Association of Jewish Libraries' electronic discussion forum. Co-Principal Investigator Dr. Ashley Todd-Diaz will include our findings from this project into classes she teaches on archival theory and practice for Emporia State University and Drexel University.

Diversity Plan
TU is a majority minority campus with 59% of our students identifying as a racial or ethnic minority, a statistic that coincides with the diversity rates of the state of Maryland. Community events will be marketed to attract a broad audience including the racial, religious, gender, and socio-economic diversity represented in our communities.

We intend to create best practice documentation for localized metadata that helps not just with discovery but will also highlight the diversity of the resources and their origins. As mentioned in the project work plan, this includes updates to subject headings and summary fields. Focusing on creating best practices for the usage of localized and standardized metadata that allows for members of diverse communities to be able to access Nazi-era looted resources not only better enhances access for everyone but ensures a higher likelihood that different groups of people utilizing different keywords and terminology are able to access the resources that are a part of the best practices and standards produced. Our team understands that enhancing standardized metadata and utilizing localized metadata for a project of this size can be a daunting task; what we propose is sharing best practices on how to do this work, should institutions have the interest and resources to do so.

Project Results

Ultimately, this project establishes a network of institutions employing a shared model for using library collections, in this case rare primary source materials, to educate various target audiences that academic libraries and community libraries serve on misinformation. The outreach conducted as part of this project has the ability to create new or strengthen existing community partnerships with additional institutions who adopt the model in the future. Misinformation is a considerable problem in our current society; libraries should play a pivotal role in helping the public to be more information literate. Because of the resurgence of Holocaust denial, this is an exemplary project to debunk falsehoods and educate a large audience. This project could model outreach programs for all kinds of libraries and museums, who hope to challenge misinformation generally.

The outcome of this project will be multifold: (1) cemented best practice for locating, cataloging, and describing JCR books; (2) a shared catalog or database of JCR materials; (3) guides and best practice for reaching out to community museums, institutions and partners to elicit participation in programming including sample marketing materials; and (4) a foundational report summarizing the results of the implementation grant. All guides and materials will be shared via institutional repositories from TU and Brandeis University; pushed out via social media campaigns by TU, Brandeis and our partners; publicized in media outlets; presented at conferences and symposia; and submitted for peer reviewed articles and book chapters. TU will host a project page on the library website describing the grant, providing access to deliverables, and sharing any press, research or accolades regarding the project generally. Should we incur ongoing hosting costs for a shared catalog, TU is prepared to fund the costs of the catalog long-term to ensure sustainability.

The evaluative role of the Association of Jewish Libraries (see supporting document 4) helps to gain international attention from Jewish libraries on our project and outputs; something that will also serve replicability as many of these organizations can be grant partners, future partners, or can adopt materials produced from the grant. As our communication plans in particular will engage many audiences, the AJL Task Force will help our team to stay focused on producing relevant, replicable results.

Our first two outcomes of cementing best practice for locating JCR books and producing a shared catalog aid in the equitable and discoverable cataloging of JCR books. The guides and best practices for communication with external audiences facilitate community engagement, debunk myths of Holocaust denial, and can be generalized long-term for engagement with other library collections or services, not only limited to Nazi-era looted materials. The culminating foundational report will serve as a guidebook to those completing similar outreach initiatives to engage their communities on previously hidden or difficult to find collections.

Our specific work in this grant strengthens the ability of the libraries and museums involved now and in the future to "work collaboratively for the benefit of the communities they serve" (Goal 5, IMLS National Leadership Grants for Libraries). Furthermore, it advances all of IMLS' strategic goals of lifelong learning, community engagement, collections stewardship and access, and excellence in public service. Combatting misinformation has been an issue for years now; our project works to debunk the egregious denial of the Holocaust by many Americans while also providing best practice for other libraries and museums to fight disinformation.

Reconstructing an Unintentional Library - Schedule of Completion

Timeline columns (monthly): 8/1/2024, 9/1/2024, 10/1/2024, 11/1/2024, 12/1/2024, 1/1/2025, 2/1/2025, 3/1/2025, 4/1/2025, 5/1/2025, 6/1/2025, 7/1/2025, 8/1/2025, 9/1/2025, 10/1/2025, 11/1/2025, 12/1/2025, 1/1/2026, 2/1/2026, 3/1/2026, 4/1/2026, 5/1/2026, 6/1/2026, 7/1/2026, 8/1/2026, 9/1/2026, 10/1/2026, 11/1/2026, 12/1/2026, 1/1/2027, 2/1/2027, 3/1/2027, 4/1/2027, 5/1/2027, 6/1/2027, 7/1/2027

Task Name	Scheduled period (shaded months)
Hire & onboard project coordinator	8/1/2024
Hire Brandeis student assistants	8/1/2024 – 9/1/2024
Phase 1: A Shared Catalog for JCR Books & Test Load of Records	
Outreach to databases JDCRP, ERR, Looted Cultural Assets	11/1/2024 – 12/1/2024
Determine subawardee applicable systems	1/1/2025
Create list of potential vendor-provided shared catalog systems	2/1/2025
Assess cultural databases & vendor-provided shared catalog systems	3/1/2025 – 6/1/2025
Define system requirements for shared catalog	7/1/2025 – 8/1/2025
Correct any catalog record issues at Brandeis and TU	8/1/2025
Share results with co-PIs & stakeholders for decision	8/1/2025
Test load Brandeis and TU records to the shared catalog	8/1/2025 – 10/1/2025
Test catalog internally	11/1/2025 – 12/1/2025
Launch shared catalog	1/1/2026
Create plan for loads of subsequent partner data beyond life of grant	3/1/2026 – 6/1/2026
Publicize shared catalog	3/1/2026 – 7/1/2027
Phase 2: Refining Best Practices for Cataloging and Locating JCR Books	
Review existing best practice documents from TU and Brandeis	11/1/2024 – 2/1/2025
Create comprehensive instructions for partners based on TU & Brandeis documentation	3/1/2025 – 5/1/2025
Create recommendations for localized metadata	5/1/2025 – 6/1/2025
AJL reviews templates & best practices (review 1)	7/1/2025
Hire student assistants at subawardee institutions	8/1/2025 – 9/1/2025
Student assistants search for JCR books & add to shared catalog as found	10/1/2025 – 12/1/2026
Update best practice documents as subawardees share experiences	11/1/2025 – 1/1/2027
AJL reviews templates & best practices (review 2)	2/1/2027
Disseminate on the project	2/1/2027 – 7/1/2027

Phase 3: Outreach & Education																																
Create marketing templates for 3 audiences												� ▪ ▪ ▪																					

Create marketing templates for 3 audiences

Create marketing materials to accompany communication templates

AJL reviews templates & materials
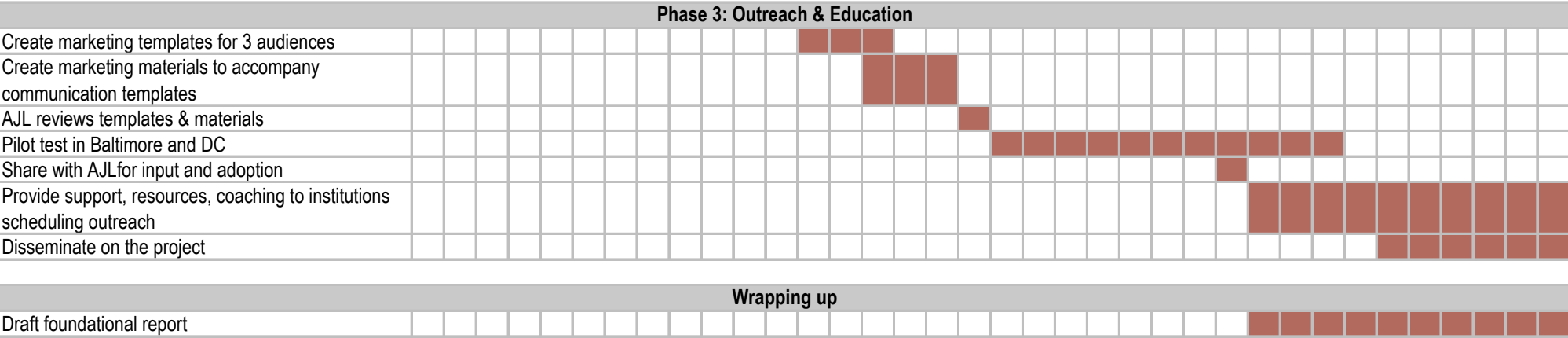
Pilot test in Baltimore and DC

Share with AJLfor input and adoption

Provide support, resources, coaching to institutions scheduling outreach

Disseminate on the project

Wrapping up

Draft foundational report

Digital Products Plan

Applicant Name: Towson University

Project Title: Reconstructing an unintentional library: Fueling community discussion and education about the Holocaust using Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Books

Type of Digital Products Created as Part of this Project

As part of this grant, we will produce a shared catalog of known Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR) books that includes consistent Marc data across at least 4 institutions, with the potential of including more institutions after the conclusion of the grant. We will share best practices including (1) steps to locate the books based on accession dates and other helpful details; (2) guides that include scans and photos of markings found in the JCR books; (3) guidance on cataloging these books for discovery in a shared catalog (and within the institution's catalog); (4) communication plans for promoting the collection written for specific audiences that can be reused by partner institutions and the field generally; (5) communication materials such as lesson plans, program/event plans, assessment surveys, flier templates, press release templates, videos, social media content, and graphics/logos that can be reused by partner institutions or others with JCR materials; (6) a foundational report detailing what has been learned during the project and how that can guide others to organize similar projects.

Items #2-6 will mostly be in document format, with the exception of graphics, logos and videos, which will be produced in JPG, TIFF, and MPEG4 formats, depending on the media selected. In our narrative we have explained that we will first seek an existing database that could potentially host our materials; should this not be possible, we will seek an open source or proprietary software that can host a shared catalog. Possibilities include Footprints from Columbia, Alma from Ex Libris, or SHARP SCELC Shared Print Discovery Catalog. Fundamentally, the catalog should have the ability to dynamically link the records to their home institutions and provide enough provenance and information about the materials to be used as a complete collection by researchers.

Availability

The shared catalog will be freely accessible throughout the world, regardless of the platform chosen to host the content. The templates created that share steps to find the JCR books, provide guidance on cataloging, and provide guidance on communication will be shared in both TU and Brandeis' institutional repositories (ScholarWorks from DSpace and ScholarWorks from Esploro by Ex Libris) for public download. Communication materials will be shared from the project website and can be reused by participating institutions or adapted freely for use in similar communications initiatives at universities and cultural heritage institutions. Our foundational report will be shared in our institutional repositories.

We will publicize the release of each of these outputs via social media campaigns, in media outlets, at conferences and symposia, and for peer reviewed articles and book chapters. When anything is published in a journal or book chapter, we will first prioritize those in gold open access platforms where free access is guaranteed. If this is not possible, i.e. most likely in the case of book chapters, we will guarantee that green open access, or self-archiving is still possible with publication.

Access

All materials will be produced and labeled with a CC-BY-NC-SA license, meaning that the work may be adapted with proper attribution to TU and Brandeis as long as it is for non-commercial uses and that adaptations are shared under the same terms.

Sustainability

If a shared catalog will be selected for this project instead of submitting to existing looted assets databases, Albert S. Cook Library at Towson University is committed to funding either vendor costs for a proprietary system, or staff time for open-source software maintenance as well as hosting costs.

For any drafts of materials, we will maintain these in shared Google Drive and/or Microsoft OneDrive project folders for three years after the project concludes. This includes drafts of papers, best practice document drafts, drafts of our foundational reports, social media communications and templates and other project communications.

Long-term we will share the grant outputs (best practice guidelines and documents, communication plans, templates for outreach, the foundational report) in our institutional repositories. TU's ScholarWorks/ MD-SOAR repository is hosted by the central consortial USMAI team on DSpace; Brandeis' repository is hosted in Esploro by Ex Libris. MD-SOAR, a DSpace-based open access institutional repository platform, is used within the USMAI consortium for hosting and distribution of open access resources such as electronic theses and dissertations, journal article preprints and manuscripts, institutional grey literature, and other forms of output from USMAI library consortium member institutions. MD-SOAR is hosted at the University of Maryland College Park and is administered by the USMAI's Consortial Library Applications Support (CLAS) team. Regular backups of files uploaded to MD-SOAR are performed with backup copies stored at both the Cherry Hill Data Center and the A. V. Williams Data Center, providing geographically redundant storage for backups. Fixity checks are regularly performed to ensure data are not corrupted on our production instance. MD-SOAR is supported through member funding with infrastructure and development staff provided by UMCP. Brandeis preserves preservation copies of materials to Preservica, which are saved on Amazon Glacier. Documents for public use are stored in Esploro. These materials will also be shared on the project website hosted by TU in Drupal. After the grant period concludes, Elaine Mael, Jewish Studies Librarian at TU, will consult with Towson University's Special Collections and University Archives Department to determine if the file types are still sustainable, or if conversions may be necessary.