

## **The Archives Matter / À vos archives !**

## Reflections on Using Archives, by a Guest Author

In the spirit of how most things are being done differently in the pandemic-influenced spring of 2020, this volume's Archives Matter section is a departure from our usual format. Instead of the usual selection of archivist contributions from Canadian Jewish historical repositories, for this issue I have called on a guest author from outside the profession, and thus bring you the following poignant and thought-provoking reflection by a user of archives.

Lianne Koren's piece "A Mysterious Collection: Musings on Archival Power and Historical Vulnerability" is based on and condensed from her hitherto unpublished paper titled "Operation Magic Carpet: Mythology, Representation and Historical Construction."

Starting from a perspective mingling archival documents, memory and history, her article draws on collections at archival repositories and embodies the type of critical investigation of material evidence that the Archives Matter section seeks to inspire in researchers. Koren analyses the historical records in a way that recalls Marshall McLuhan's famous assertion that "the medium is the message" and thus that the information-bearing media should in itself constitute a focus for study.

In choosing to take the section in this direction, I was inspired by the memory of hearing Dr. Norma Joseph present a paper at the annual ACJS conference in Vancouver on June 2, 2019 called, "No Longer Silent: Iraqi Jewish Immigrants and the CJC." Joseph's discussion focused on the contrast between what her interview subjects reported to her about the Canadian Jewish community's aid to Iraqi Jewish immigrants, versus the contrasting narrative reflected through the archival records of Canadian Jewish Congress and JIAS.

Similarly to how Joseph's research confronted the way that verbal recollections of a historical period by interview subjects differed from archival document evidence of the period, Koren reflects on how the Jewish agency photographs she discovered in a Jewish community archives contradict other sources which focus on the lived experience of these photo subjects.

These types of analytical appraisals of our collections are essential for both researchers and curators, as they motivate us to stand back from the written, spoken, and pictorial evidence in order to seek an understanding of the wider context surrounding their preservation. They remind us to always look for the other side of the story; to seek out other voices and to carefully evaluate both corroboration and contradiction.

### **Janice Rosen**

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