



# Ubi

Enabling access to Jewish life  
through audio, braille, and large print texts

# 2022

## ANNUAL REPORT



**Dear Friends,**

We want to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all of JBI's supporters, partners, volunteers, staff, and other friends. With your dedicated assistance in 2022, JBI emerged from "Covid-times" to a time of broadened outreach, exciting new projects, production enhancements, and new collaborations. Cultivating partnerships with social service organizations, advocacy groups, publishers of content of Jewish interest, the Jewish movements, and other libraries has been a major focus over the past year. During 2022, we recruited new board members with fresh voices and diversity of skills, backgrounds, and experiences.

All that JBI does is focused on our mission to provide people of all ages and backgrounds who are blind, have low vision, are print disabled, or are reading disabled with the accessible materials they need to participate more fully in educational, cultural, and communal life. Whether seeking access to the written word for enjoyment, information, or religious observance, we want everyone who needs us to know of and to benefit from JBI's free services. JBI's role is to fulfill the unique requests of our patrons and ensure that they are not excluded due to the inability to read standard print.

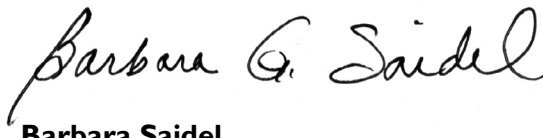
JBI is currently nearing the end of a strategic planning process, and we know we will be pursuing several areas to meet our expanded goals. These include an investment in technology to better serve our current patrons and to attract a wider audience, increasing our programmatic offerings to enhance the ways we engage people, improving our outreach to reach more people who could benefit from our services, and amplifying impact through advocating for accessibility. We look forward to sharing more about JBI's new strategic plan with you in the months to come.

JBI serves people ranging in age from the youngest readers and students wishing to pursue a Jewish education or mark important Jewish milestones, to adults who want to access the written word for pleasure, information, or religious observance, to families seeking to read together—and everyone in between with an interest in Jewish life and culture. We know that many of our library patrons, especially older adults with low vision, would otherwise be more isolated than ever. For them, JBI's books, periodicals, liturgical texts, and cultural programs are a lifeline.

Thank you for your support and for your caring. JBI's work would not be possible without you.



**Steven P. Polivy**  
Co-Chair of the Board



**Barbara Saidel**  
Co-Chair of the Board



## **A Personal Reflection From Co-Chair Barbara Saidel**

Barbara's early commitment to JBI was based, in part, on the pleasure she witnessed when her blind grandmother was able to listen to audiobooks on reel-to-reel tapes in Yiddish in the 1960s. She could no longer read, but listening to news and novels helped her enjoy both fiction and nonfiction and remain connected to the world outside her home.

Since Barbara joined the board in 2009, she has become more convinced than ever that what we do matters, and truly brightens the days of the people who listen to or read our materials.



## **A Personal Reflection From Co-Chair Steven P. Polivy**

Steven had not heard of JBI before a colleague introduced him to JBI to handle a specific legal issue relating to the renovation of its building in 2005. He was very soon thereafter impressed with the dedication that JBI's staff had to the mission of improving the lives of the thousands of patrons who relied upon JBI's services.

He agreed to assist JBI with another assignment, this time pro bono, and soon thereafter agreed to serve on the JBI Board. Steven remains grateful to JBI for all of its offerings and is thrilled to be part of the JBI family.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER



### Dear Friends,

I was fortunate to become part of JBI's leadership in 2022 and quickly realized what a unique and special role it plays. I have been particularly moved by the joy JBI brings to so many people by fostering greater inclusion, access, and connections to the richness of Jewish cultural, literary, and religious life. We spent 2022 strengthening our work to meet our goals, challenging the status quo, and developing new collaborations and engagements to reach more

patrons, including by being more effective in our production and circulation of relevant materials.

With a vibrant board and staff, we are excited about JBI's ability to continue to grow, evolve, and make an even bigger impact, and do even more in the years to come. We explored ways to embrace change, enhance our outreach, and strengthen every aspect of our work. We also saw an increase in the number and engagement of our patrons, and greater connectivity with the many communities we support (Jewish, low vision, social service agencies, educational and religious organizations, and more) — creating opportunities to better serve both individual patrons and the different kinds of organizations that serve them.

I invite you to take a tour of our facilities and learn more about how we produce and circulate our materials. Please do not hesitate to connect by calling 212-545-8030, or emailing me at [lthompson@jbilibrary.org](mailto:lthompson@jbilibrary.org), with any questions that you have or to make an appointment for a tour or just a chat.

2022 was quite a year, and we are grateful for the support and encouragement of so many of you as we continue this journey to make sure that JBI fully meets, and even exceeds, its goals. I also want to thank JBI's staff for their hard work supporting all of JBI's patrons and for being fully engaged and looking toward JBI's future. We are excited by all that 2023 has in store for us. With your support, we can bring Jewish texts to even more people seeking to engage in Jewish life and community.

**Sincerely,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Livia Thompson'.

**Livia Thompson**  
Executive Director

# Some 2022 Highlights



- **We commenced transcription** of a new Braille Siddur, created Braille editions of three new Haggadot, and began offering twin vision children's books (braille transparency over printed picture books), underscoring our commitment to braille production;
- **We explored collaborations** with organizations including PJ Library, Jewish Book Council, Matan, and JASA in order to serve broader populations that may benefit from our services;
- **We began increasing our social** media presence with more frequent Facebook posts, and expanded other outreach efforts to directly reach more individuals about our work;
- **We produced and distributed** 4,500 large print and braille liturgical and lifecycle materials, including our braille and large print luach;
- **We circulated 13,000 audio-**books;
- **We regularly produced and** distributed audio magazines and cultural programs for more than 1,000 magazine readers;
- **We initiated the first step in** upgrading our technology to better support our patrons and provide easier access to our materials;
- **We engaged 1,350 new patrons** through our circulating library, liturgical and lifecycle materials, customized offerings, or cultural programming;
- **We strengthened relationships** with colleagues at organizations such as Xavier Society for the Blind, CSB Cares, Visions, Vision Services Alliance, The Lighthouse/Guild, and the National Library Services of the Library of Congress, and discussed new ways to partner, share information, and learn from one another;
- **We increased our regular** communication with our patrons through frequent newsletters (braille and large print, as well as via email) in order to share updates, keep our patrons informed and encourage their input in asking for what they need;
- **We awarded four exceptional** college and graduate students with The Nathan L. and Suzanne K. Wolfson Scholarships.



# Words of Thanks to JBI

The ability to have a Bat Mitzvah and being able to read in braille, the whole 23 verses, was amazing. It was really helpful for her to be able to follow along and gave her the same freedom and flexibility as any other kid. Her Bat Mitzvah was such a great achievement for her, and it was so heartfelt. We as a family were so excited for her to reach this achievement.

— Missy A., Riverdale, NY



Thank you so much for your help selecting books for me. I also enjoy the JBI Russian Voice and eagerly wait for every edition to come. The work that JBI is doing has a great impact on my life. I'm very grateful.

— Tatyana E., Brookline, MA

My son just received the siddurim and chumashim and other books that you sent. He is non-verbal and can't regularly vocalize on his own. Yesterday was the first day he opened the siddur for Shacharit. He davens every day and puts on tefillin with the help of caregivers. When he saw it, he made noises, more than we'd ever heard him make on his own at one time. This is a big advancement for him. We think that when he actually saw the text clearly and was able to keep the book open with its spiral binding, he could actually concentrate on the prayers. ... Now, he is very happy. Thank you so much.

— Jenny, Ra'anana, Israel



Although driving, watching TV and reading pretty much ended for me when I was diagnosed with Macular Degeneration, JBI returned me to my love of reading. Only this time I heard the stories and enjoyed the books even more. Thank you for being my lifeline.

— Phyllis, Boca Raton, FL

Thanks to JBI, my husband and I had the best Purim this year. We were able to read from the large print Megillah, something we hadn't done for a long time because of vision problems.

— Annette, Highland Park, NJ

What you do is invaluable for people like me. I was a teacher and taught literature in school all my life. When I lost my sight, I thought my life was over. How could I live without books? JBI talking books saved me and my sanity, I can't thank you enough.

— Mariya M., Mayfield Heights, OH

If you or a loved one could benefit from JBI's services, please call 1-800-433-1531 or visit [www.jbilibrary.org](http://www.jbilibrary.org). JBI's knowledgeable librarians will be happy to help.



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We gratefully acknowledge the thoughtfulness and compassion of those whose forward thinking has done so much to enable JBI to meet the special needs of blind and visually impaired patrons. We will always remember their kindness.

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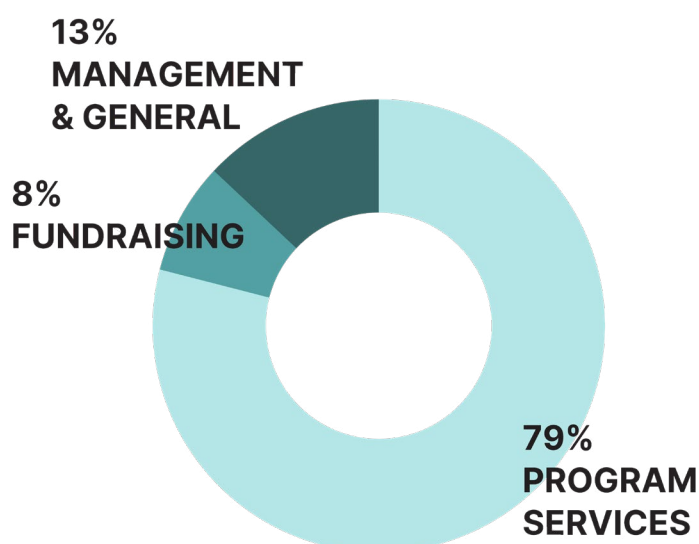
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     Emanu-el, Dallas, TX  
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 Dr. John H. Wu  
 Mr. & Mrs. Barry Yavitch, in memory of Bernard  
     Yavitch & in honor of Mr. & Mrs. Josh Yavitch  
 Joseph Younes  
 Mrs. Abbe B. Young & Mrs. Elisabeth A. Harris  
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 Mark Ziring  
 Herbert and Grace Zwerner Philanthropic Fund

## 2022 FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES



## Condensed Balance Sheet (Year Ended December 31, 2022)

<b>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>		<b>2022</b>
Contributions and Grants		2,440,461
Legacies and bequests		1,400,811
Investment activity		(2,549,353)
Other revenue and support		(38,703)
Total support and revenue		1,253,216
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Program services:		
Libraries and library development services		1,336,761
Educational and cultural programs		141,136
JBI periodicals		297,403
Outreach to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union		82,885
Israeli assistance program		350,248
Outreach and Library recruitment		752,875
Total Program services		2,961,308
Management and general		499,394
Fundraising		306,190
Total expenses		3,766,892
Change in net assets		(2,513,676)

## Condensed Balance Sheet (Year Ended December 31, 2022)

<b>ASSETS</b>		<b>2022</b>
Accounts payable and accrued expenses		1,986,972
Investments		14,728,166
Contributions receivable		30,000
Property and equipment, net		5,108,351
Other assets		1,557,325
Total assets		23,410,814
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses		147,862
Other liabilities		43,298
Total liabilities		191,160
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Without Donor Restrictions		
General operating		1,933,439
Board designated reserve		500,240
Board designated endowment		7,260,434
Investment in Property and equipment, net		461,908
Total Without Donor Restrictions		10,156,021
With Donor Restrictions		
Purpose restricted		1,797,776
Beneficial interest in Trusts and Perpetual Trusts		1,263,010
Endowment		5,356,404
Investment in Property and equipment, net		4,646,443
Total Net Assets		23,219,654
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		<b>23,410,814</b>

## Who We Are

Founded in 1931 as the Jewish Braille Institute, JBI provides people of all ages and backgrounds living with blindness, low vision, or print disability access to a vast circulating library, liturgical texts, customized materials, and cultural offerings, enabling connection to the rich literary, cultural, and religious life of the Jewish community.

JBI creates and distributes thousands of Jewish-interest materials in audio, braille, and large print formats that are provided free of charge and delivered directly to our patrons' doorsteps.

We are committed to increasing accessibility and inclusion for all individuals living with vision impairment, from our youngest readers pursuing a Jewish education to adults seeking materials for pleasure or religious observance to families who read together—and everyone in between with an interest in Jewish life and culture.

## Who We Serve

Our patrons include people of all ages and backgrounds, located around the world, who are blind, have low vision, or are print disabled. We also work with a variety of organizations and groups seeking to promote wider accessibility to braille, audio, and large-print texts for their communities. These include schools, libraries, summer camps, publishers, nonprofit organizations, senior centers, synagogues, and other partners.

## Mission Statement

JBI seeks to empower blind, visually impaired and reading disabled individuals to participate fully in educational, cultural and communal life by providing free access to works of Jewish and general interest through its Braille, Large Print, and Audio Libraries. Our global programs in many languages serve people of all ages and backgrounds.

# JBI BOARD & OFFICERS (AS OF JULY 2023)

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<b>Director of Development and Engagement</b>
Arlene Arfe
<b>Head Librarian</b>

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Leopold Dubov**
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\* Honorary Life Trustee  
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