

Letter to the Medical library.

Just as its outer covering obscures the inner workings of the body, so too are the machines that run the medical library at the Jewish General Hospital. For almost half a century, I have made use of the medical Library for the acquisition of both knowledge and learning. I have always been amazed by the ability of the staff to point me in the right direction. They are the most gracious guardians of a heritage of medical knowledge, one of mankind's greatest endeavors for the greater good. That these librarians are able to perform their duties with such ease is the result of a special kind of education. They are the graduates of library science schools where they are taught a special discipline that tells them where knowledge can be located. Somehow the expanse of time, from the papyrus scroll to the printed page, culminating with the information technology of today displayed on a computer screen, is but a small step for these people.

Personally the transition for me has not been easy. The feel of the book is important to me as well as the touch of the printed page. But, times change. The Cumulus index, a weighty tome that has been the principal search engine for researchers, has now been replaced by databases that can answer your queries within seconds, simply by touching a button on the keyboard.

All of this has changed the appearance of the Medical Library. Thousands of bound journals are slowly disappearing from the stacks, while more space is made available for banks of computers. The reference texts are still prominently displayed at the librarian's desk and the hushed silence still persists.

"Lest we forget" a small reference section surrounded by sofa seats is still present, reminding us of the great Jewish medical scholarship spanning the Middle Ages to the present. It also catalogs how man's greatest good -medical knowledge- can be subverted to man's greatest evil by unleashing a murderous medicine on mankind. This too is to be catalogued.

The existence of a Medical Library within the confines of a general hospital is simply a miracle. It is a place of hushed silence and reverence, befitting the collected knowledge of man's greatest good. This is meant as a tribute to the Guardian staff of the Medical Library, who has made it so.

*B. Weisner*  
APRIL 2011