



Hôpital général juif
Jewish General Hospital

Collecting Material: Outreach in Our Communities

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Subsidized by the Jewish General Hospital (JGH) Health Sciences Library, the JGH Archives was set up in 2008, aiming to provide better preservation for and easier access to the existing historical records housed in the library. As the archivist of the JGH Archives, it is always fascinating for me to see how well the institutional memory has been kept and how much that still needs to be done to keep a growing record of the JGH heritage. Like a typical archival institution, the JGH Archives collects and preserves textual records, photographs, artifacts and audiovisual materials relating to the hospital, its departments and personnel. Unlike most public or long established archives, collecting materials is never as easy as it sounds to us. As we all know that the macro-environment in which the JGH Archives resides is a hospital whose primary concern is always patient care and the Archives itself is still fairly new. Taking these into account, outreach has never been more important and meaningful to me than it was before. In the past four years, various outreach programs have been designed and implemented to help boost our visibility and connect potential and existing donors to the archival collections. Here are some examples:

Memos and Mass Mailing

The existing collections in the JGH Archives indicate that each department is a treasure trove of archives. The first attempt was “We Want Your Archives” memos on the bulletin boards throughout the hospital. However that only resulted in a few phone calls from departments wondering what to do with their patient files. In the second and the third attempts, a more detailed flyer with images of concrete examples of materials we are collecting was created, with an e-version put up on our website, as well as a shortened version published in *Pulse*, a JGH publication. For a more targeted follow-up, an internal mailing of the flyer only to the heads of all the departments and their secretaries was made. One month after the third attempt we realized that expecting immediate results of this type of promotional approach was not realistic in a hospital setting where most of the staff focus on patient care rather than old files locked in their cabinets. Other approaches must be adopted as well.

Exhibitions

Both physical and virtual exhibitions are an excellent way for archives and museums to reach out to the community. The JGH Archives is no exception. This approach so far has been very successful for us, especially when they are part of an anniversary celebration. Depending on the occasion and the budget, traditional physical exhibition could be more mobile and creative. In 2009, a traveling exhibit during the hospital’s 75th anniversary was mounted in carefully selected locations, including AMC Forum 22, public libraries, and academic libraries during school days. A PowerPoint presentation, another format of



the exhibit, was concurrently given in a number of residencies and community centers. By doing so, we were able to bring the JGH history up close to many more people.

During the preparation of various exhibitions, we worked closely with the Public Affairs and Communication Department, managed to solicit loan items from pertinent departments and external institutions, and established connections with not only many JGH old-timers but also enthusiasts from the Jewish community at large. All these personal interactions have contributed to new acquisitions during and after the events.



Photos of various exhibits curated by the JGH Archives. Clockwise from right: mini photographic display on site of the Health Sciences Library (2012-), exhibit in the hospital's main lobby celebrating The Auxiliary's 75th anniversary (2011), traveling exhibit touring the AMC Forum 22 during the JGH 75th anniversary (2009).

Open House

Open house is another traditional but effective way to reach out. The 2011 Open House of the Health Sciences Library where the JGH Archives is physically located, provided us an excellent opportunity to showcase some great aspects of our collections and design a historical photo quiz which saw a great participation. A majority of the guests and visitors completed the quiz and prizes were won for the most correct answers.



Guests of the Open House of the Health Sciences Library participating in the historical photo quiz designed by the JGH Archives, 2011.

And there are more.

Little things count. Informational pieces, such as brochures about our services, flyers on archival donations, e-greeting cards during holiday seasons were designed in-house and sent out to the friends of the JGH Archives. There are other things that we have been

doing, such as paying appraisal visits to doctor's office, making sure we are heard by the higher administration by regularly giving short but informative presentations to the hospital's Senior Management Team, getting involved in community events and education programs, networking with fellow archivists by attending either national conferences or small and intimate local round-table forums, just to name a few. All these endeavors contribute to the sustainability and the growth of our collections.



Some promotional material examples designed by the JGH Archives. Clockwise from top right: JGH Archives brochure, Seasonal Greetings card, Call for Archival Donations flyer and We Want Your Archives memo. 2011-2012

Outreach programs promote good will and a positive long-term relationship between an archival institution and its constituents. For a hospital archive like us, promotion and visibility play a key role in encouraging donations from the hospital community and the community beyond. It is our hope that through a variety of outreach endeavors, our existing and potential users will gain better understanding of our work and become more engaged in helping us keep and grow the JGH legacy for this and future generations.