

## **Council of American Jewish Museums**

### **A Brief Institutional History**

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#### **Prelude**

On March 16, 1976, author and screenwriter David Ebin sent a two-page memo titled "Museums and Exhibits" to Harry Barron, executive director of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture (NFJC). In his memo, Ebin observed that there had been a "measurable increase of exhibits and gallery displays by Jewish institutions and museums devoted to the many facets of the Jewish experience" and that "the Jewish public and community is eager and indeed hungers for this johnny-come-lately addition to the general field of Jewish cultural renewal and refreshment."<sup>1</sup>

Ebin then proposed that the NFJC support "an initial study conference focused on the Jewish exhibition and museum complex." This, Ebin thought, might lead to a structure of Jewish museums parallel to the national Council of Archives and Research Libraries in Jewish Studies, known by its acronym as CARLJS, which had been established in 1971. Dr. Barron's response is not documented, but Ebin's memo demonstrates his awareness that by the mid-seventies a new, dynamic field of Jewish cultural engagement had emerged on the American scene. And the very next year, with the assistance of the NFJC, first steps were taken to establish a Council of American Jewish Museums (CAJM).

Over the subsequent forty years, CAJM has evolved and developed its mission, programs, and governance. What follows is a brief overview of a complicated institutional history, which was shaped by the dozens of people--and others besides--who are listed in the attached appendices.

#### **Deciding to Associate**

The catalyst for American Jewish museums to formally associate was an Israeli academic, Prof. Dov Noy of Hebrew University. In 1976-77, Noy, the founder-director of the Haifa Ethnological Museum and Folklore Archives (1956), was a visiting professor in Los Angeles when he became the principal organizer of a conference on Jewish folklore to be held in Chicago at the Spertus College in May 1977. Writing to the directors of North American Jewish museums in December 1976, Prof. Noy invited them to attend the folklore conference with the hope "that an

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<sup>1</sup> American Jewish Historical Society, NFJC Papers, Council of American Jewish Museums, Box 112, Folder 8.

organizational professional body of curators in Jewish museums will be established . . . under the auspices of the AJS [Association for Jewish Studies]."<sup>2</sup>

In March 1977, Prof. Noy (writing with Nancy Berman, director of the Skirball Museum) repeated his earlier invitation and echoed David Ebin's observations: "The past decade," he wrote, "has witnessed tremendous growth in terms of the quality and professionalism of the several Jewish museums in both the United States and Canada. . . . While we each develop sophisticated programs responsive to our own various communities, there are still many *common* goals and practices. . . . We need a forum where we can share ideas, problems, goals, and mutually beneficial exhibition plans." Ms. Berman and Prof. Noy proposed that Jewish museum representatives gather on the last day of the folklore conference, following a session on "Visual Aspects [of Jewish folklore]" to form "an Association of Jewish Museums."<sup>3</sup>

On May 3, 1977, representatives of six American Jewish museums--the Magnes (Berkeley), B'nai B'rith Klutznick (DC), HUC Skirball (Los Angeles), Yeshiva University Museum (NYC), The Jewish Museum (NYC), and Spertus (Chicago)--met and agreed to establish a Council of American Jewish Museums.<sup>4</sup> The decision was announced the same day (May 3, 1977) in a press release circulated by the Spertus Museum. The new Council would "encourage support and further development of Jewish museums in collection, preservation, and interpretation of Jewish art and artifacts for public education and [the] advancement of scholarship." The Council aimed to foster cooperative efforts, advance scholarship, and facilitate "optimal utilization" of collections. "A preliminary committee has been selected to initiate standards, ideologies, and programs," the release declared.<sup>5</sup> Prof. Noy, having convened the critical meeting and completed his academic year in LA, passed on leadership of the nascent organization to Arthur Feldman, director of the Spertus Museum and his colleagues.<sup>6</sup>

## Getting Started

Sylvia A. Herskowitz, director of the Yeshiva University Museum, hailed the formation of a Jewish museum association as "the beginning of a momentous event for American Jewish

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<sup>2</sup> Yeshiva University Museum (YUM), Sylvia Herskowitz Papers, CAJM 1977 file, Dov Noy to Sylvia Herskowitz, December 3, 1976.

<sup>3</sup> YUM, Sylvia Herskowitz papers, CAJM 1877 file, Nancy Berman and Dov Noy form letter, March 11, 1977. Grace Cohen Grossman, curator of the Spertus Museum, opened the museological discussion. She recalls that the session was intended "to further efforts to 'collect, preserve, and interpret Jewish artifacts,'" Email, Grace Cohen Grossman to Gabriel Goldstein and Melissa Martens Yaverbaum, February 15, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> The six Jewish museums listed were represented by their directors: Nancy Berman (Skirball), Anna Cohn (B'nai B'rith), Arthur Feldman (Spertus), Seymour Fromer (Magnes), Sylvia Herskowitz (YUM), and Joy Ungerleider-Mayerson (JM-NY). Also in attendance at this initial meeting were Sylvia Plotkin (Judaica Museum of Temple Beth Israel); Grace Cohen Grossman (Spertus), who opened the session; and Barbara Kirshenblatt Gimblett (YIVO).

<sup>5</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 112, Folder 8, Press Release, May 3, 1977.

<sup>6</sup> YUM, Sylvia Herskowitz papers, CAJM 1977 file, Dov Noy to Sylvia Plotkin, May 12, 1977.

cultural life."<sup>7</sup> To turn an intention into a reality, however, required organization. Seymour Fromer, director of the Magnes Museum in Berkeley, wrote a week later to the National Foundation for Jewish Culture (NFJC) asking for travel subsidies to bring representatives of the seven professionally staffed Jewish museums to Chicago in August 1977 for an organizational meeting. A grant from the NFJC's Newman Fund provided travel monies for what the Newman Awards Committee termed an "important formative meeting of the new Council."<sup>8</sup> At the event in Chicago, six of the seven prospective member museums were represented: the Magnes (Berkeley), B'nai B'rith Klutznick (DC), HUC Skirball (Los Angeles), the Museum of American Jewish History (Philadelphia), The Jewish Museum (NYC), and the Spertus (Chicago).<sup>9</sup>

The newly formed Council quickly established a pattern for regular meetings. The first of these gatherings took place in January 1978, the first day at the Magnes Museum in Berkeley and the second day at the HUC Skirball Museum in Los Angeles. At this initial annual meeting, Arthur Feldman, director of the Spertus Museum, who had been serving as CAJM chair *pro tem*, was succeeded as Council Chair by Seymour Fromer of the Magnes.<sup>10</sup> During the meeting, it was suggested that the NFJC could serve as CAJM coordinator, as it was doing for CARLJS. However, Abraham Atik, program director of the NFJC, who favored an "association" of CAJM and NFJC, cautioned that the Foundation could *not* undertake to serve as the coordinator of CAJM activities.<sup>11</sup> No formal action appears to have been taken at that time, though the NFJC continued to provide partial travel subsidies for subsequent annual CAJM gatherings.

As soon as CAJM was formally established in August 1977, Arthur Feldman, director of the Spertus Museum, began preparing a set of draft by-laws to govern the new organization. These by-laws envisioned early incorporation, attainment of 501(c)(3) status, and a governance structure independent of any other agency or organization. However, it soon became apparent that CAJM lacked the stature and resources to sustain itself. In December 1980, NFJC agreed to serve as a "sponsoring agency" for CAJM, to provide staff and office support, subsidies for travel, and grants for particular projects.<sup>12</sup> Then, in March 1981, the CAJM By-Laws were amended to read that the "Council is administered by the NFJC" and "operates under the non-profit auspices of the NFJC." The new by-laws also specified that the NFJC would provide CAJM with staff services and general operating support.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> YUM, Sylvia Herskowitz papers, CAJM 1977 file, Sylvia A. Herskowitz to Dov Noy, May 4, 1977.

<sup>8</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 112, Folder 8, Letter, Seymour Fromer to Abraham Atik, May 9, 1977. Award letter from Paul H. Vishny, Chair of the Newman Awards Committee, June 20, 1977.

<sup>9</sup> The six museums were represented by: Nancy Berman (Skirball), Anna Cohn (B'nai B'rith), Avi Decter (MAJH), Arthur Feldman (Spertus), Seymour Fromer (Magnes), and Susan Goodman (JM-NY). The seventh member museum, YUM, was not represented at this meeting.

<sup>10</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 112, Folder 8, News Release dated February 1978.

<sup>11</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 112, Folder 8, Notes on the CAJM meeting, January 22, 1978.

<sup>12</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 111, Folder 6, Notes of CAJM meeting, December 2, 1980.

<sup>13</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 112, Folder 1, "By-Laws, 1991-1993" Over the years, CAJM is variously described as "administered by the NFJC," "under the aegis of the NFJC," "a program function of NFJC," and "associated with the NFJC."

Even in its first years, CAJM took consequential actions to promote awareness of the emerging field of Jewish museums in America and to serve as a vehicle for collegial communication and conversation. From the outset, CAJM planned for an annual meeting at one or more of the constituent organizations, usually in December or January. In 1985, the annual meeting in January was supplemented by gatherings in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Association of Museums (AAM), which most of the early Council members attended with some regularity. At these meetings, members shared information on their exhibition schedules and discussed possibilities for collaborating on particular exhibitions that could travel to multiple sites. By April 1982, CAJM was discussing establishment of a Jewish Exhibition Travelling Service (JETS) as a possible ongoing program as well as a published *Catalog of Travelling Exhibitions of Jewish Interest*. CAJM also undertook to circulate in North America *La Nacion*, an exhibition developed by Beth Hatefutsot.<sup>14</sup>

CAJM initiatives during these early years were based largely on opportunity. In 1981-82, for example, the NFJC agreed to subsidize a special issue of the *Jewish Folklore and Ethnography Newsletter* devoted to American Jewish ethnography. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett proposed that CAJM take the lead in developing articles for this journal. Alice Greenwald chaired a CAJM sub-committee that created the pieces that were published in October 1982. Another early initiative, also supported by the NFJC, was a program of internships in Jewish museum curatorship, which was discussed at length but apparently never implemented. In a parallel effort, CAJM encouraged its members to participate in the NEA-funded Seminar in Jewish Art developed by Vivian Mann at the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1984.

The principal focus during these early years, however, was on creating greater awareness of the Jewish museum enterprise among Jewish communal leaders and their communities through some kind of national promotional campaign. Among the measures CAJM considered, but which were not realized, were a PSA (public service announcement) and a survey of Jewish communal leaders, both of which were intended to educate key constituencies. Other ideas for promotion included a book on treasures of American Jewish museums, a calendar featuring key objects from member institutions' collections, and joint production of high-end objects for sale in Jewish stores.<sup>15</sup>

At the end of 1982, CAJM revised its by-laws to establish clearer and more concrete criteria for member institutions. These included:

- major Judaica holdings and eligibility for AAM membership;
- institutional commitment to ongoing continuity;
- 501(c)(3) status;
- an annual operating budget of at least \$150,000;
- a program of changing exhibitions with related documentation.

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<sup>14</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 120, Folder 5 and Box 111, Folder 6.

<sup>15</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 111, Folder 6.

Despite these relatively stringent standards, CAJM declared that it was not an accrediting agency, but rather a collegial group. Its principal concerns were, the Council announced, to promote the importance of the Council and of Jewish museums nationally and to support joint projects. Or, as Nancy Berman put it in a 1983 retrospective of the Council, CAJM was "an umbrella organization which might promote a more comprehensive sense of overall mission as well as help in enlarging the impact of Jewish museums upon the Jewish and general populace."<sup>16</sup> The immediate questions were how to grow and govern the new organization.

### **Growing the Council**

Within a few years of its founding, there was intense awareness among CAJM's seven charter members that the Jewish museum field was growing rapidly, that many new institutions required attention and encouragement, and that CAJM itself had to become more diverse and more representative of the field as a whole. As Richard Siegel described it in 1987, "until now CAJM has been primarily a professional organization for the museum directors with some clearinghouse and planning functions."<sup>17</sup> To better represent the field, to stimulate program development, and to increase chances for fundraising, the Council would need to expand its membership.

A number of ideas were floated about how to grow CAJM membership. Most of CAJM's attention was focused on creating an "Associates Program" as a way of engaging Jewish museums who could not meet CAJM's membership standards. While this was intended to encourage small, new museums and galleries to associate with CAJM, the proposal fell short of full membership. Starting in 1985 and culminating in March 1987, the seven CAJM members hashed out a new membership structure with three categories of membership: Charter Members comprised the seven founding museums; General Members were those institutions that could meet the same standards as the original seven institutions; and Associate Members, were those organizations that collected and/or exhibited Jewish art and material culture, but could not (yet) meet the standards of General Members. Participation in meetings would be open to all members, but governance was limited to "full" members and to NFJC staff *ex officio*.<sup>18</sup>

CAJM's revised membership criteria went into effect in 1987, marking a critical turning point in CAJM history. CAJM sent out information on membership to 87 organizations around the country.<sup>19</sup> The results were immediate: membership jumped from seven to 16 institutions by the

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<sup>16</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 111, Folder 6, Annual Meeting Notes, December 20-21, 1982.

<sup>17</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 115, Folder 7.

<sup>18</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 111, Folder 6 Box 114 Folder 2 "Meetings 1989-1992," Revised By-Laws March 19, 1987. Box 115, Folder 7, Memo to CAJM from Richard A. Siegel, Avi Y. Decter, and SS, 1985. Box 115, Folder 7, Memo from Joan Rosenbaum and Richard Siegel to CAJM, [March] 1987.

<sup>19</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 115, Folder 7.

January 1988 annual meeting.<sup>20</sup> Eighteen months later, CAJM membership had more than doubled, with 41 member institutions.<sup>21</sup> However, even with revised membership criteria and the adherence of an additional museum in the General Membership category, the founding members continued to distinguish themselves by retaining the title of "Charter" membership. Charter members held reserved seats on the CAJM Steering Committee. Informal distinctions were also made; at the January 1989 annual meeting, an evening was set aside for a "Charter Members Dinner," while the program noted that this same time slot was a "Free evening for all other CAJM Members."<sup>22</sup>

In 1993, the distinction between Charter and General membership was eliminated in the By-Laws, which now specified that the Steering Committee would comprise six members and a chair, at least three of whom would represent General Members. The By-Laws also confirmed the role of the NFJC, giving the Foundation two seats on the CAJM Steering Committee, *ex officio*.<sup>23</sup> That same year, the Steering Committee changed its nominating procedure, establishing two-term limits and nominating seven candidates for five open spots on the Steering Committee. However, in subsequent years, the Nominating Committee reverted to proposing a full slate of recommended candidates for membership on the Steering Committee.

Extending CAJM membership to individuals--as distinct from institutions--was a lengthy and sometimes fraught process. In 1987, CAJM had provision for individual memberships, but these were limited to members of governing boards of Jewish museums.<sup>24</sup> While CAJM recognized that other individuals--independent museum professionals, staff at general museums, artists, designers, and others--had an interest or stake the Jewish museum enterprise, many CAJM leaders were concerned that CAJM meetings would be overrun with individuals seeking to peddle their services and products. After several years of debate, a category of individual membership was established, though it took additional time before these members were allowed to serve on the CAJM Steering Committee.<sup>25</sup>

Membership in CAJM continued to grow in subsequent years, culminating in 70 institutional members and about 60 individual members--a number that has held steady for roughly the past decade. With growth in numbers came growth in activity, but resources remained limited. The tension between intentions and constraints manifested itself mostly in the ongoing dialogue between CAJM and its chief sponsor, the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.

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<sup>20</sup> NFJC/CAJM Box 114 Folder 1 "Annual Meeting Expenses," Expanded Membership

<sup>21</sup> NFJC/CAJM Box 113 Folder 2 "Annual Meetings 1987-1989" Membership List, June 1989.

<sup>22</sup> NFJC/CAJM Box 112, Folder 1 1987 Amendments to the By-Laws, which called for representation of each category of members on the Steering Committee; Box 113 Folder 2 "Annual Meetings 1987-1989" 1989 Annual Meeting Program. Box 112, Folder 9, announcing new rules for the CAJM Steering Committee, declared that the CAJM directors would serve as the Steering Committee in 1987 and as the Nominating Committee for 1988.

<sup>23</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 112, Folder 1, 1993 By-Laws.

<sup>24</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 115, Folder 7

<sup>25</sup> Email Ori Soltes to Avi Decter, November 7, 2018.

## **Governance Issues**

The founders of CAJM in 1977 had projected establishment of an independent, stand-alone institution. Yet from its organizing meeting in August 1977 through 2003, governance of CAJM was in complex relationship with the NFJC. For decades, that relationship was a topic of deliberation between CAJM and NFJC leadership, even as it shaped the Council's mission, programs, and services. In fact, the NFJC--and particularly its long-time executive, Richard Siegel--was one of the most important influences in shaping the newly formed Council and in sustaining its development.

The nature, forms, and extent of NFJC staffing and support persisted as a theme of CAJM meetings, minutes, reports, and by-law revisions, through 2003. At its 1984 Annual meeting, Richard Siegel, then the NFJC's Arts Services Director, was asked to draft "a plan for an independent CAJM with objectives, programs, staff and budget."<sup>26</sup> The next year, Siegel was writing to CAJM leaders that "in the long run [the Council] may want to become more or less independent."<sup>27</sup>

The relationship between CAJM and the NFJC remained dynamic and unresolved for twenty-five years. At CAJM's semi-annual meeting at Spertus in May 1990, the NFJC declared that its role was "raising cultural issues in the [Jewish] community" and made clear that NFJC could best serve CAJM "as facilitator of its agenda and as an advocate for the field."<sup>28</sup> The NFJC-CAJM relationship was, as usual, a key topic of conversation in the 1993 Steering Committee conference calls. At one point in the ongoing conversation, the Steering Committee requested control of its monies collected from dues and held by the NFJC. NFJC responded in a memo noting that initially NFJC support had consisted of subsidies for travel, but that by 1985 the NFJC was providing 25% of its Program Associate position in support of CAJM and that by 1991 NFJC staff support had increased to portions of two staff positions. In fact, the memo explained, CAJM income in 1993 was estimated at \$3,000, while NFJC support cost an estimated \$38,700.<sup>29</sup> CAJM's relationship to the NFJC continued as before, with the NFJC providing non-profit status, staff support, and modest funding for specific projects.

## **Becoming Independent**

Commencing in 2002, the issue of CAJM independence was finally resolved. CAJM and the NFJC established a joint committee to develop a strategic plan for CAJM, one that would lead CAJM toward organizational autonomy in a defined sequence of steps. Adoption of an agreed

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<sup>26</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 112, Folder 9, Notes on the CAJM Annual Meeting, December 10-11, 1984.

<sup>27</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers Box 112, Folder 4, Memo from Richard A. Siegel to CAJM, October 29, 1985.

<sup>28</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers Box 114 Folder 1, Summary of 1990 Semi-Annual Meeting

<sup>29</sup> NFJC/CAJM Box 112, Folder 6, "Memorandum, Richard A. Siegel and Avi Y. Decter to the CAJM Steering Committee, March 3, 1993.

upon plan came in 2003 and within a few months CAJM appointed its first executive director, Joanne Marks Kauvar of Denver, former administrator of the Mizel Museum of Judaica, director of the Mizel Center for Arts and Culture, and a chair of CAJM's membership committee. Although Ms. Kauvar's position started at 4 (paid) days per week, the fact that CAJM now had its own, largely self-funded staff member, marked a key moment in the transition to institutional independence.

Meanwhile, the NFJC was entering a transition of its own: Richard Siegel, a long-time advocate and supporter of the Council, retired as executive of the Foundation. The NFJC then chose to follow a different direction, changing its name to the Foundation for Jewish Culture, (which implied a global scope of activities) and putting new emphasis on support for creative individuals. In this context of change, Macy Hart, then Chair of the CAJM Steering Committee, negotiated the terms of a separation from the Foundation and oversaw incorporation of CAJM as an autonomous non-profit corporation. CAJM's status as a 501(c)(3) organization followed in quick order.

Joanne Kauvar served as CAJM's executive director for a decade,. Under her leadership, new educational and professional programs were launched, the annual conference continued to grow in scale, complexity, and coherence, and CAJM was able not only to sustain itself and to balance its budget, but also to build a cash reserve. In addition, CAJM was able to secure additional part-time staff: Amy Waterman directed CAJM communications and managed the CAJM website and newsletter, while Mindy Humphrey handled day-to-day finances and provided support on-site at CAJM's annual conference. When Ms. Kauvar retired in 2014, she left CAJM an active, stable organization with a growing organizational agenda. Upon the occasion of her retirement, CAJM established a special fund in her honor, with which to support fellowships for new professionals to attend the annual CAJM conference.

After a national search, Ms. Kauvar was succeeded as CAJM executive director by Melissa Martens Yaverbaum. Ms. Yaverbaum, who had served as director of collections and exhibitions at the Museum of Jewish Heritage and had been curator of Jewish Museum of Maryland, had also served as a CAJM conference co-chair and as chair of the CAJM Steering Committee. Under her leadership, CAJM continues to grow its program of services and activities, with new emphasis on CAJM as a thought-leader in multiple museum communities. CAJM's by-laws were revised in 2014 to expand the CAJM Board, and in 2017 CAJM added two new officer titles-- chair of communications and chair of advocacy. As of December 2018, CAJM membership numbered 70 institutional members, 60 individual members, and 11 affiliate organizations, with highly engaged professional and volunteer leadership, and an expanding program of yearly services and activities.

## **Mission and Programs**



At the outset, CAJM's mission--parallel to that of CARLJS--gave highest priority to advocating for an emerging field, that of Jewish museums and related institutions. In 1984, for instance, CAJM's priorities started with advocacy for Jewish museums as a field, followed by staff training, joint projects, and promotion/fundraising.<sup>30</sup> In January 1987, CAJM issued a "Statement of Purpose" which emphasized "promoting the interests of non-profit Jewish museums and exhibiting organizations in the United States through advocacy, coordination, fundraising, and cooperative programs."<sup>31</sup>

Two years later, in December 1988, CAJM issued a "Statement of Objectives." The Council's primary purpose was still to "promote the interests of American Jewish museums." To this end, CAJM had expanded its membership to better represent the numbers and diversity of American Jewish museums. Specific objectives were: to facilitate communication through meetings; to produce occasional publications; to promote adoption of a national code of ethics; and to advocate on behalf of the Jewish museum field.<sup>32</sup> At the 1989 Annual Meeting, CAJM stated its broad purposes as advocacy for the field, coordination of member projects, and cooperative programming.<sup>33</sup>

By 1993, CAJM had refined its "essential elements" to embrace membership and administration, conferences and the newsletter, and communication.<sup>34</sup> In effect, CAJM had supplanted its original mission of advocacy for the emerging field with improving communication and, potentially, collaborations among members to better serve constituencies and communities.

As of this writing, CAJM's mission is "to strengthen Jewish museums as essential resources and vital centers of culture, knowledge, and discourse," with the vision to make "communities . . . more vibrant and inclusive by their Jewish museums."

Although CAJM's programmatic emphases have varied over time, a number of themes persist throughout the past 40 years. One thread is the promotion of communication and collegial networking among Jewish museum professionals. CAJM's annual and other conferences, its newsletter, and its website are key elements in this effort. A second long-standing goal is enhanced professional development. One of the Council's first initiatives was a series of internships; since 2003, CAJM has intensified efforts to provide professional development opportunities for its members. A third basic thrust of CAJM programming is to encourage collaboration among member institutions. Cooperative programs directly sponsored by CAJM, such as the Jewish Exhibition Travelling Service, have been episodic, but communications and networking have promoted resource sharing across the field through CAJM's history.

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<sup>30</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 111, Folder 6.

<sup>31</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 111, Folder 6.

<sup>32</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 111, Folder 6. A memo by Andrea Morgan, CAJM's NFJC liaison, written in August 1988, noted that CAJM was striving to provide small-scale, high-quality travelling exhibitions, standard terminology for Judaica cataloging, travel support for professional staff, and coordination of ethnographic and fine arts activities.

<sup>33</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 114, Folder 1.

<sup>34</sup> NFJC/CAJM papers, Box 112, Folder 6, Memorandum, February 1, 1993.

Three other CAJM efforts deserve special mention. Over the decades, CAJM has steadily expanded its participation in the affairs of the global Jewish museum community. CAJM has regularly been represented in gatherings of the Association of European Jewish Museums and has welcomed AEJM and representatives of Israeli museums to its annual conferences, especially after 1987, when CAJM sponsored its first International Conference of Jewish Museums. In more recent years, CAJM has sent delegations of fellowship recipients to Israel (2015) and to Poland (2017). The international dimension of CAJM's engagement has grown in recent years and is likely to continue.

During the past twenty years, new issues in American politics and in Jewish communal affairs have emerged, among them demographic shifts (see Pew study of 2013), changing priorities in Jewish philanthropy, divisions over American-Israel relationships, and an increase in antisemitic acts in America and broad. As a result, CAJM has been giving increased attention to community and civic engagement. In recent years, CAJM has issued a number of statements on matters of Jewish and public interest, and has established advocacy, justice, and civic engagement as a function of the organization.

Lastly, CAJM has been fortifying its role as a thought leader in the field. For more than 20 years, CAJM has sponsored a session at almost every annual meeting of the American Alliance of Museums, and is a member of the AAM's Council of Affiliates. CAJM has deepened the content of its annual conference, bringing in cutting-edge thought leaders from different fields to share insights about current practice and new approaches. Several "idea labs" and workshops have been convened to address specific concerns, including the future of collections in our institutions, the design of new building projects, and the potential of Judaica in Jewish renewal.

In May of 2015, CAJM established its Advisory Council of distinguished leaders across Jewish culture and the museum field. In 2018, CAJM launched a director's forum, as well as a special initiative on *Combating Antisemitism* (as a direct response to the shootings at the Tree of Life Synagogue and the rise of antisemitic acts on American soil). CAJM's leadership in promoting next practice and addressing social concerns continues to draw interest from other museum networks and the Jewish community.

While CAJM continues to experiment with new program priorities and formats in response to the needs of its members and issues at large, CAJM has realized quite a few of its founders' aspirations and continues to function as a valuable network and convener for the field of Jewish museums. New alliances with cultural and educational agencies--ranging from the Association for Jewish Studies to the American Alliance of Museums, International Sites of Conscience, and Reboot--will spread CAJM's impact for the years to come.

## A NOTE ON SOURCES

This account is based on four principal sources: the files of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture at the American Jewish Historical Society; the CAJM files of Sylvia Herskowitz at the Yeshiva University Museum; CAJM newsletters (print and digital) from the CAJM administrative office; and personal recollections of several colleagues including Avi Y. Decter, Nancy Berman, Arthur Feldman, Karen Franklin, Alice Greenwald, Grace Cohen Grossman, Ori Z. Soltes, and Amy E. Waterman.