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FAU's Judaica Sound Archives[®] Connects Scholars to Rescued Recordings Using Innovative Technology

BOCA RATON, FL (September 16, 2009) - The Judaica Sound Archives[®] (JSA), a cultural heritage preservation project at Florida Atlantic University's Boca Raton campus, is using specially designed software to connect scholars, students and teachers to its digitized Judaic music collection, which is one of the world's largest collections of its type.

The software enabled the JSA at FAU Libraries to create the JSA-Research Station, which is a search engine and classroom aid for researchers, teachers and students of Judaic music, history and culture. Since the research station's inception, centers in Israel, Canada, England and the U.S. have signed agreements to use it.

Cassette and 8-track tapes, 78 rpm recordings (some produced as early as 1901), LPs and 45 rpm recordings, and recordings of CDs are among the materials digitized on the research station. The recordings contain Jewish popular music, Yiddish theater, comedy, children's music, classical music, Israeli and Yiddish folk, and sacred and Sephardic music. Also included are selections by Jewish performers, composers and conductors, as well as Jewish art songs and instrumental pieces. Many of the recordings are copyrighted. None may be downloaded or copied.

"Many of these recordings are rare or historic," said Nathan Tinanoff, JSA's founder and director. "Never before has so much Judaic music and voice been so easily accessible and so beautifully reproduced."

Tinanoff and Dr. Maxine Schackman, JSA's assistant director, demonstrated the JSA-Research Station to more than 200 people at the annual Association of Jewish Libraries Convention in Chicago in July. Many of the participants expressed enthusiasm for the research station's wealth of discography information, label and album cover images, and its tens of thousands of digitized audio tracks.

The JSA-Research Station allows FAU to partner with other centers of Judaic study, facilitating communication between scholars and providing unprecedented access to historic sound recordings. "We have one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Judaic sound recordings in the world. We want to collaborate with people who can make use of it," said Schackman.

Educators and scholars who have used the JSA-Research Station credit the project with enhancing the study of Jewish recorded voice, music and culture.

The JSA-Research Station is “equivalent to visiting the archives in person,” said Claire Solomon, an assistant professor at Washington University in St. Louis. Jonathon Rosenbaum, president of Gratz College in Melrose Park, Pa., said “this is an endeavor that has no full parallel any place in the world.”

Using a customized secure browser, the JSA-Research Station features a database search tool for finding song titles, performers, genre and language. Discography information for 78 rpm recordings, scans of record labels for 78 rpm and LPs, and LP album cover scans, often containing information about the recording can be viewed while the selection is being played.

Professor Mark Kligman, professor of Jewish Musicology at Hebrew Union College in New York, is helping the JSA to pioneer the use of the JSA-Research Station within the classroom setting and integrating its use with assigned course work and research.

The JSA began collecting and preserving Judaic audio recordings from the early 20th century in 2002 and now has more than 100,000 tracks of music and voice recorded on 78 rpm, LPs, tape and CD formats. The collection continues to grow annually at a rate of 10,000 donated recordings. “There’s not a day that a carton of recordings or tapes doesn’t arrive,” Schackman said.

JSA’s website, www.fau.edu/jsa, has become the premier site for Judaic music on the internet. It features more than 60 performers who have given JSA permission to air their recordings on the internet. Listeners can tune in to more than 8,500 audio tracks in a searchable, non-downloadable format. The web site is highly successful and in the last year, had more than 23,000 visits from 77 countries.

For more information on the Judaica Sound Archives[®] or its Research Station, call Nathan Tinanoff at 561-297-2207 or Dr. Maxine Schackman at 561-297-3765.

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Florida Atlantic University opened its doors in 1964 as the fifth public university in Florida. Today, the University serves more than 27,000 undergraduate and graduate students on seven campuses strategically located along 150 miles of Florida's southeastern coastline. Building on its rich tradition as a teaching university, with a world-class faculty, FAU hosts ten colleges: College of Architecture, Urban & Public Affairs, Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts & Letters, the Charles E. Schmidt College of Biomedical Science, the College of Business, the College of Education, the College of Engineering & Computer Science, the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College, the Graduate College, the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing and the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science.