

May 31, 2011

## JGS Toronto

### **Some Observations on Shelly's 2011-05-03 Indexing Project Meeting Notes**

I think Shelly did an excellent job summarizing the discussions at the May 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, which was not easy, as we covered a lot of ground. I thought I would highlight a couple of issues and – for the sake of clarity – add some screen shots, especially where there are areas that require attention.

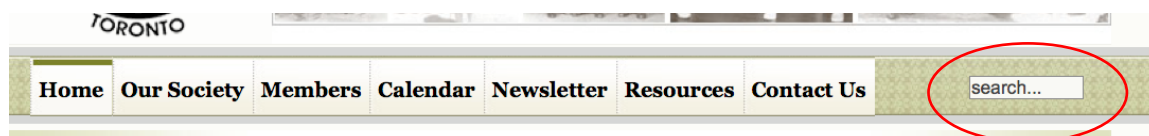
I like Shelly's "Objective" statement, because it illustrates that this is not merely an indexing project, but rather a usability/content management and delivery project. Indexing is just one possible option for achieving the objective.

### **The Current Situation**

The back issues of Shem Tov have been scanned to pdf format and OCR'd, which means that their full text is available for searching, but there is currently no mechanism on the site for performing such a full text search.

The current system for accessing Shem Tov content relies on browsing and/or consulting Henry's existing index. According to the Back Issue page of the website, this index covers Volumes X through XX (1994 - 2005). If this is correct, the only way to consult the 1988-1993 index is to consult the ST issue in which it is contained (vol. X, Nr. 2).

This is the search window on the main website. It does not return full-text search results from the back issues or the 1988-1993 index. It does return results from the 1994-2005 index, which is a page on the website.



So if I search for "Ukraine," I get one hit from the Back Issue Index, which seems to indicate that there are multiple articles. I can't tell, because the text is truncated:

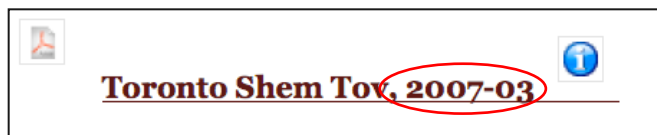
7. [Back Issue Index](#)  
(Newsletter/Shem Tov)  
...1990 XII, 3 If I forget Thee. The Destruction of the Shtetl Butrimantz XV, 3 Jewish Roots in  
the Ukraine and Moldova XV, 4 Family Who's Who - XV, 4 From Immigration to Integratio...

If I click on the [Back Issue Index](#) hyperlink, it takes me to the main Back Issue Index page, rather than a list of hits for “Ukraine.” The only way to find articles containing “Ukraine” is to use my browser’s search feature (usually Ctrl-F) to search the page, one hit at a time. Many users are unfamiliar with this feature, and it is not an ideal solution.

Once I locate an article in the index, I then have to find it among the back issues. This is problematic, because the index provides a volume and issue number, but no year.



I can see that there’s an article in Volume X, number 4 that I might be interested in, but when I go to the browse-only listing of back issues, all I see is a year, followed by a number that I first thought was an issue number but in fact appears to be something else.



This one, for example, is Volume XXIII, No. 1, so I have no idea what the “-03” refers to.

Even if I open – or download – a random issue, and extrapolate from that what year Vol. X would have been (1994), there’s no easy way to go to that year.

Although the bar under Documents purports to allow me to sort the 88 issues, by name and date,



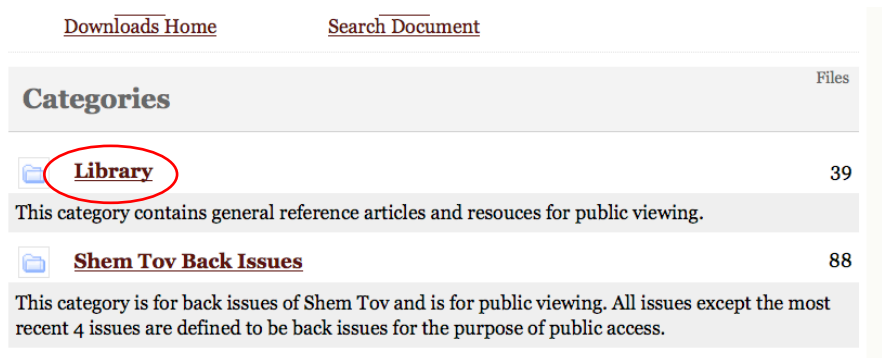
“Name” isn’t helpful, because the documents are all named “Toronto Shem Tov” and “Date” doesn’t cause them to be sorted by date, either ascendant or descendant.

There’s a Search Document feature at the top of the screen listing the back issues:

A screenshot of a "Search Document" form. The form has a title "Search a Document" and a "Search Document" link. It includes fields for "Search Keyword:", "Select Category:" (with a dropdown menu), "Ordering:" (with a dropdown menu and a "Reverse" checkbox), "Search by:" (with a dropdown menu and a "Not" checkbox), and "Search where:" (with a dropdown menu). A "Search" button is at the bottom.

It's not very helpful, because it does not allow for full text search. Searching "Name" is not helpful, as the document names are nearly identical (Toronto Shem Tov), and there is no description at present. Since the year is part of the name, I was able to search for "1994" and get four hits. I note Arthur's suggestion to add the tables of contents to the description field to enhance search; perhaps Arthur can let us know whether full-text search is an option.

One side issue we encountered at the meeting concerns the "Downloads Home" button, which leads to



We felt that "Library" could cause confusion with our physical library and should be changed. Perhaps "Document Archive" would be better? We also noticed that there is no other way to get to the above screen, e.g. directly from the home page. Unless you happened to be browsing back issues of Shem Tov, and happened, out of curiosity, to click "Downloads Home," you'd never know that those resources were there.



### Usability/Design Observations

These are my own personal observations; I'm just throwing them out here to see if anyone agrees.



I find that there's a lot of information here that is of little or no use to the typical user.

First, the "hot!" and "new!" exclamations. This is not a social networking site. I don't think most users care whether a particular issue has enough hits to make it hot, or even to see the number of hits. That information may be useful to the webmaster, but doesn't need to be displayed.

Similarly, the type of information displayed by clicking  or [Details](#) does not seem to me to be of interest to the typical user. The  distracts the eye, and all it displays is the document name, size, and “application/pdf”. The “Details” link provides extensive information, but I’d really like to find out whether it has any meaning for our users.

[Downloads Home](#) [Search Document](#)

**Details for Toronto Shem Tov, 2009-06**

Property	Value
Name	Toronto Shem Tov, 2009-06
Description	
Filename	Toronto-Shem-Tov-2009-06.pdf
Filesize	570.6 kB
Filetype	pdf (Mime Type: application/pdf)
Creator	ryman
Created On:	10/17/2009 14:46
Viewers	Everybody
Maintained by	Editor
Hits	185 Hits
Last updated on	10/17/2009 14:47
Homepage	
CRC Checksum	
MD5 Checksum	

## PDF Delivery Issues

It wasn’t initially clear to everyone at the meeting that whatever the search mechanism, the result will be a pdf of an entire issue, not the specific article requested. The problem with delivering pdf content is that its behaviour depends on the browser being used.

The buttons “Download” and “View” for example, may be misleading, depending on the user’s browser and browser settings.



When I click “View” or the issue name in Firefox on my Mac, the pdf does not open in a browser window, but is downloaded. I could change these settings, but we have to keep in mind a user group that may not be inclined or able to do that. I’m going to do a bit more research into this, but if Arthur or anyone else has any thoughts on delivering pdf content, I’d be extremely grateful.

## Proposals

We felt it would make sense to update Henry's topic list and update and complete the indexing. The index entries should indicate the year, and the document name as displayed should include the Volume and issue numbers. Although I'm not usually in favour of static pages with nothing but hyperlinks, we agreed that it might be a good idea to add clickable links to the index that would take the user to that issue. This doesn't resolve the pdf delivery or search problems, but is probably the most realistic thing we could accomplish this summer.

An alternative to putting the tables of contents in the "Description" field might be to add tags based on the index headings. Again, this would lead to an issue, not a specific article, but would enhance search.

Ideally, the pdfs would be full-text searchable. This would require figuring out how to display hits (relevance, date, etc.). I'd be grateful for more technical input on this.

I agreed to propose a revised topic list, which I will try to get to very soon. We should be able to get started with tagging as soon as Sara is available, but – again – some technical input is required, probably from Arthur.

- Bette