

**2023**



**Annual  
Report**

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**Dear Friends,**

We thank you for your support and dedication to furthering JBI's mission of inclusion and accessibility. With your help, JBI is ensuring that individuals who are blind, have low vision, or are print disabled are connected with Jewish education, culture, and heritage, and fully able to participate in their communities.

One of the actions we are most excited to highlight from 2023 is our new strategic plan. With this new roadmap, we are set to grow, evolve, and better connect to our current patrons and expand our outreach to many who do not yet access our services. Our new strategic initiatives will broaden and enhance our services, further foster a feeling of connection to our community, encourage learning, and ensure inclusion. These goals are all the more relevant in the wake of October 7th, which has reinforced the importance of our mission and the need to remove all barriers to access to Jewish life and its rich heritage.

**Key elements of our new strategic plan include:**

- 1. Increasing the number of books and texts available, and the formats in which they're offered**

We are expanding our library's selection of high-quality braille, large print, and audio content, including fiction, nonfiction, young adult reads, and books for children and families to enjoy together, as well as liturgical offerings. We are also continuing our efforts to expand digital options, and increase accessibility for those with a physical disability, dyslexia, or other reading disabilities.

## 2. Offering new and engaging programming

We are focusing on new live and virtual programs to give patrons additional opportunities to engage with JBI, with one another, and the Jewish community, through our accessible materials. These include virtual book clubs, text study sessions, language classes, and author readings. Our new Patrons' Council provides an outlet for members to share valuable input and shape such programming.

## 3. Upgrading our technologies

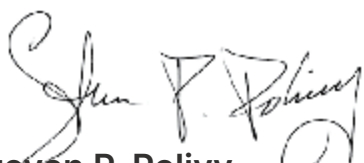
It is critical that our patrons have quick and easy access to the information and texts they need, in the formats they prefer. We are investing in new up-to-date systems to improve accessibility, including a new website, online library, and improved technologies for digital, on-demand materials.

## 4. Championing increased inclusion and accessibility, especially within the Jewish community

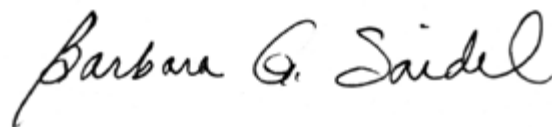
We are partnering with schools, camps, synagogues, museums, libraries, social service organizations, and retirement homes across the country to encourage the creation and promotion of content further enabling engagement in Jewish life. Thanks to a grant awarded by the New York Community Trust, we are able to provide large print, braille and audio materials to the patrons of organizations across NYC for the next two years free of charge.

Going forward, we will continue to strengthen these and other programs, all of which deepen JBI's ability to deliver meaningful services to our patrons, from older adults seeking literature for enjoyment, to students pursuing a Jewish education, to anyone wishing to access their religious practice. For many with visual impairments who might otherwise feel isolated, JBI's collection of books, periodicals, religious texts, and cultural programs are a crucial link to Jewish life and culture.

It is only due to your ongoing support that we have the ability and resources to undertake these new initiatives and efforts, which are more important today than ever. We thank you for your passionate commitment to bringing us together to access—and celebrate—Jewish life and culture.



**Steven P. Polivy**  
Co-Chair of the Board



**Barbara Saidel**  
Co-Chair of the Board



### Dear Friends,

In an ever-increasingly complex world, finding ways to create belonging and community and develop a deeper understanding of and engagement with Judaism—in all its facets—is challenging. But this year has proven to me that JBI is inspired and ready to take this

important work on. I am extremely proud of what JBI's board and staff have done to explore and implement creative ways to advance our core mission of making the Jewish world accessible to everyone who has vision impairment of any kind.

At the same time, JBI continues to be responsive to the needs of its patrons, developing important audio, braille, and large print materials of Jewish interest—many of which are often simply not available anywhere else. And we're simultaneously forging new paths to patrons through enhanced technology, diverse partnerships with organizations whose missions overlap with ours, and amplification of our work across media and social media to reach growing audiences.

This year we have also come to embrace the critical role we can play in building and strengthening access to the Jewish community in multiple ways. We are expanding new in-person and virtual programs, such as book groups, poetry workshops, Patrons' Council meetings, lectures, and special events, and introducing a new hybrid Judaism 101 series this fall.

I have also had the privilege of attending conferences of the blind, meeting people from vision impairment service organizations around the country, and working closely with patrons and others with disabilities, and the message I've come to understand is very clear. Creating barrier-free access does not mean waiting until someone asks for assistance, but rather ensuring that individuals with accessibility needs never have to ask to feel fully welcomed, encouraged, dignified, and included in our community.

To this end, JBI is actively collaborating with other organizations like synagogues, museums, social service providers, and cultural groups on inclusion initiatives and serving as accessibility consultants to others seeking to instill accessibility and inclusion as a core value and build it into their organizational culture, capabilities, and offerings.

We at JBI consider all of this work to be a moral imperative, and we are proactive and passionate about making inclusion a reality for everyone. True inclusion requires intentional efforts to accommodate the needs of all members of our community and ensuring that anyone who seeks to learn more about Jewish life, culture, ritual, and community can do so easily. JBI believes there should never be barriers to engagement with our stories and sacred texts. Leviticus notes that we must not “put a stumbling block before the blind.” And while the verse is usually applied metaphorically, here at JBI we are mindful of its literal meaning as well. Inclusion aligns with our core values of justice, compassion, and love for all, and enables us to fully engage as Jews.

And for all the work we’ve accomplished, I truly believe that we can look forward to even more positive impact as we continue to implement technology updates currently underway, nurture our partnerships, diversify and update our materials, and create more new programming. Whether you are a longtime patron or someone just learning about JBI, we are here to serve as a place where anyone with visual impairment or print disability can come to gain barrier-free access to Jewish community and Judaism.

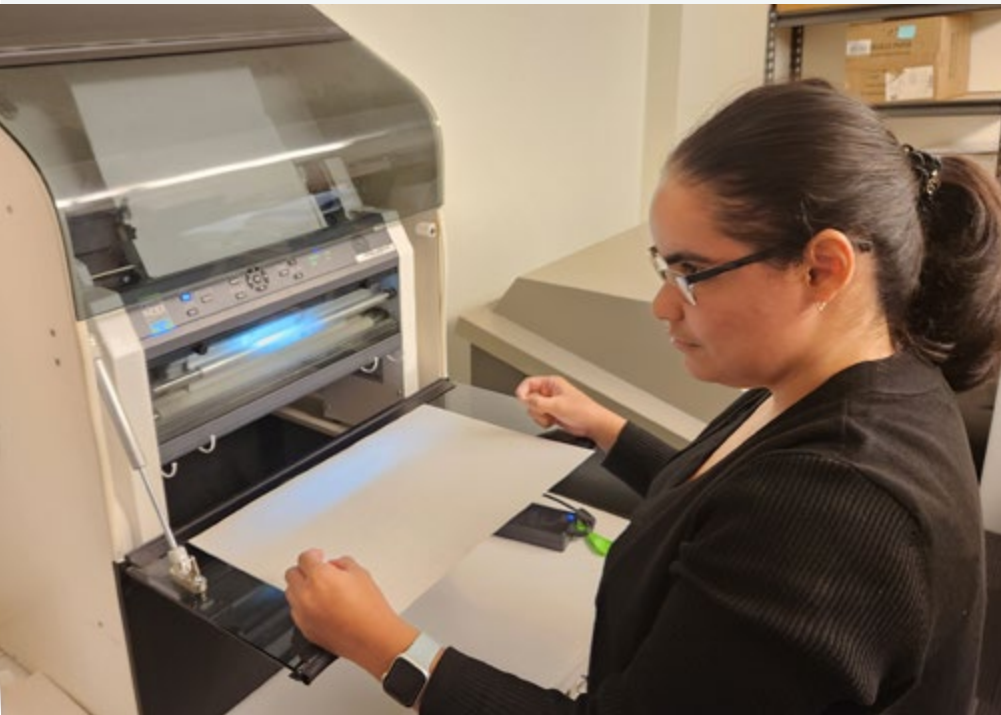
Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Livia Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Livia" being more prominent and the last name "Thompson" following in a similar style.

**Livia Thompson**  
**Executive Director**

# 2023 Highlights

- We launched a new strategic plan focused on providing even better services to our patrons through increased programming, broader offerings and new technologies.
- We engaged new patrons through our ever-increasing circulating library, liturgical, and lifecycle materials, customized offerings, and cultural programming.
- We are now serving approximately 12,000 individuals directly, plus many more indirectly through our work with collaborating organizations.
- We circulated 14,000 audiobooks.
- We increased our communication with patrons through more frequent newsletters (braille, large print, and email) and we established our JBI Patrons' Council to share news and opportunities, build community, and solicit patrons' input and feedback.
- We produced and distributed 4,800 large print and braille liturgical and lifecycle materials, including our braille and large print *luach*.
- We regularly produced and distributed audio magazines and cultural programs for more than 1,000 magazine readers.



*JBI Audio and Braille Technician Keila Alequin preparing an edition of the Jewish Braille Review.*

- We expanded our capacity to help partnering organizations produce braille, large print, and audio materials to make their programming and communities more accessible for people with visual impairment.
- We grew JBI's social media presence significantly through increased activity and engagement on Facebook and LinkedIn, and a new Instagram account. We are leveraging these platforms to reach new audiences and keep our patrons and partners informed.
- We added new audio and braille titles to our circulating library, childrens books in multiple accessible formats, and new editions of liturgical offerings including three new *Haggadot*, a PJ Library High Holy Days guide, *Selichot*, and more.
- We broadened our collaborations with more than 200 organizations that serve people with visual impairments and Jewish social service organizations. A few examples: PJ Library, Jewish Book Council, Matan, JASA, Xavier Society for the Blind, CSB Cares, Visions, Vision Services Alliance, DOROT, and the National Library Services of the Library of Congress.
- We awarded four exceptional college and graduate students with Nathan L. and Suzanne K. Wolfson Scholarships totaling \$60,000.



“My Aunt Rita has not been able to enjoy a seder in years due to visual impairment. Thanks to the large print *Haggadah* from JBI, a beloved family member can now fully participate in the family seder.”

— Maxine, Canada

“I couldn’t live without JBI. I can’t read books in print anymore and your audio books are like islands of knowledge that I can enjoy. It is so wonderful and comforting to know you are there. I can just pick up the phone and whatever I need comes in the mail, it is so easy. This simple act of what you do is a blessing and it makes my life more enjoyable.”

— Judith, New Rochelle, NY

“With my braille Haggadah from JBI, I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to read aloud when my turn arrived. As we reached each of the Seder prayers, which my family recited in unison, I joined them as I read from my braille Haggadah.”

— Jack, Worcester, MA

“Today I received May-June’s *Jewish Braille Review* magazine and perused it while enjoying some sunny moments in my backyard. It’s a real pleasure to pick up a braille volume, with no cables, wires or power supply and walk outside just like a sighted person with a newspaper.”

— Michael, Long Island, NY

“I want you to know how much I appreciate receiving *JBI Voices*. The October issue on Israel was very insightful and the meditation in this past month’s issue was enjoyable. It makes a difference to me that you are using human voices to record and not A.I.”

— Tina, Salem, OR

“The last Zoom book club WAS EXCELLENT!! (I just wish they were more frequent.) I’m really enjoying this month’s book—as different as possible from the last one.”

— Tatyana, Brookline, MA

If you or a loved one could benefit from JBI’s services, please call 1-800-433-1531 or visit [www.jbilibrary.org](http://www.jbilibrary.org). JBI’s knowledgeable librarians will be happy to help.





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***Three of JBI's Russian-speaking patrons at a social gathering to talk about the books they are reading from our collection.***



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2023  
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BEQUESTS**

**We will always  
remember their  
kindness.**

**We gratefully acknowledge the thoughtfulness  
and compassion of those whose forward thinking  
has done so much to enable JBI to meet the special  
needs of blind and visually impaired patrons.**

Bess Ruth Abel  
Gloria S. Adelson  
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***JBI patron and volunteer, Trish, reads from a large-print book.***

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 Morris & Shirley Ostrow and  
 John & Anne Flavin  
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 Teri Lukin-Zahn & Steven Zahn  
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Marcia L. Warner, in memory of  
Judy Tenney  
Ira Warren  
Marcia & Robert Waxman  
Dr. Linda Weinberg, in memory  
of Renee Flager and in honor  
of Lynne and Andy Levin  
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Michelle Bucy and Hallie  
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Richter+Ratner  
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher  
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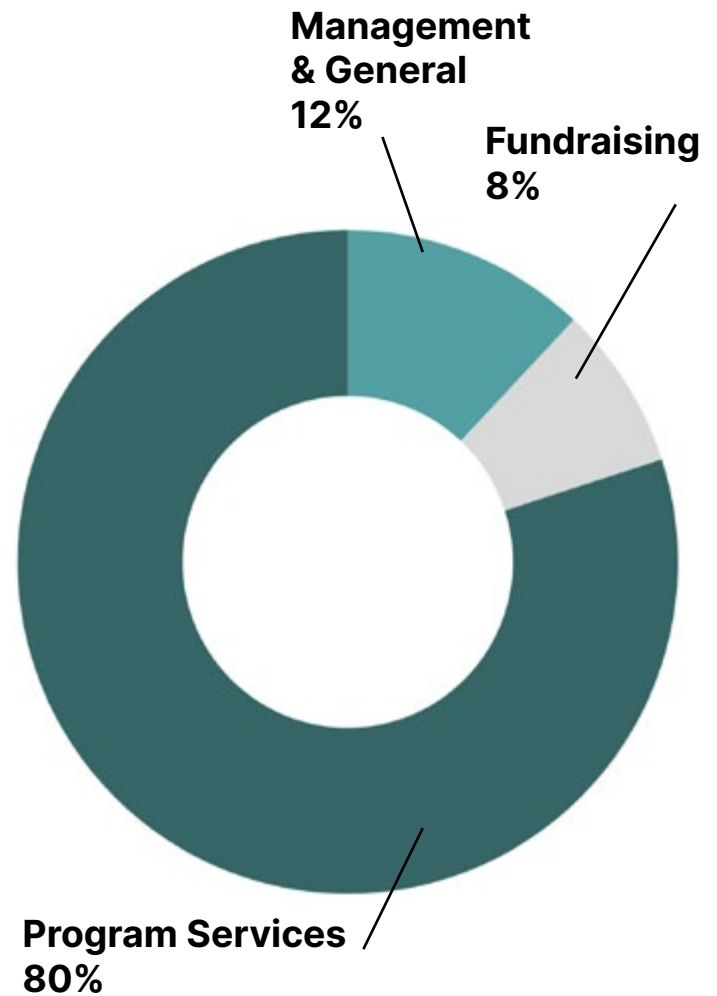
## Condensed Statement of Activities (December 31, 2023)

<b>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>		<b>2023</b>
Contributions and Grants		1,699,493
Legacies and Bequests		513,734
Investment Activity		2,203,889
Other Revenue and Support		336,019
<b>TOTAL Support and Revenue</b>		<b>4,753,135</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Program Services		
Libraries and Library Development Services	1,879,979	
Educational and Cultural Programs	136,519	
JB I Periodicals	118,758	
Outreach to Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union	44,096	
Israeli Assistance Program	69,702	
Outreach and Library Recruitment	801,831	
<b>TOTAL Program Service</b>		<b>3,050,885</b>
Management and General	476,631	
Fundraising	323,292	
<b>TOTAL Expenses</b>		<b>3,850,808</b>
Change in Net Assets		902,327

## Condensed Balance Sheet (December 31, 2023)

<b>ASSETS</b>		<b>2023</b>
Cash and Cash Equivalents		1,609,815
Investments		15,849,564
Contributions Receivable		305,600
Property and Equipment, Net		4,834,420
Other Assets		1,810,045
<b>TOTAL Assets</b>		<b>24,409,444</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses		160,188
Other Liabilities		127,275
<b>TOTAL Liabilities</b>		<b>287,463</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Without Donor Restrictions		
General Operating	748,427	
Board-Designated Reserve	508,937	
Board-Designated Endowment	8,621,729	
Investment in Property and Equipment, Net	500,577	
<b>TOTAL Without Donor Restrictions</b>		<b>10,379,670</b>
With Donor Restrictions		
Purpose Restricted	1,944,400	
Beneficial Interest in Trusts and Perpetual Trusts	1,390,340	
Endowment	6,073,728	
Investment in Property and Equipment, Net	4,333,843	
<b>TOTAL Net Assets</b>		<b>24,121,981</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		<b>24,409,444</b>

## 2023 JBI FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES





## Who We Are

Founded in 1931 as the Jewish Braille Institute, JBI provides people of all ages and backgrounds living with blindness, low vision, or print disability access to a vast circulating library, liturgical texts, customized materials, and cultural offerings, enabling connection to the rich literary, cultural, and religious life of the Jewish community.

JBI creates and distributes thousands of Jewish-interest materials in audio, braille, and large print formats that are provided free of charge and delivered directly to our patrons' doorsteps.

We are committed to increasing accessibility and inclusion for all individuals living with vision impairment, from our youngest readers pursuing a Jewish education to adults seeking materials for pleasure or religious observance to families who read together—and everyone in between with an interest in Jewish life and culture.

## Who We Serve

Our patrons include people of all ages and backgrounds, located around the world, who are blind, have low vision, or are print disabled. We also work with a variety of organizations and groups seeking to promote wider accessibility to braille, audio, and large-print texts for their communities. These include schools, libraries, summer camps, publishers, nonprofit organizations, senior centers, synagogues, and other partners.

## Mission Statement

JBI seeks to empower blind, visually impaired and reading disabled individuals to participate fully in educational, cultural and communal life by providing free access to works of Jewish and general interest through its Braille, Large Print, and Audio Libraries. Our global programs in many languages serve people of all ages and backgrounds.

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