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Online Archive of The Jewish Chronicle

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ADVISOR REVIEWS—STANDARD REVIEW

Online Archive of The Jewish Chronicle

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Date of Review: July 21, 2018

Composite Score: ★★ ★ 5/8

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Abstract

The Jewish Chronicle (JC), a weekly newspaper based in London, England, offers free access to the text and video content on its website and subscription-based access to its full-text archive, which dates back to its founding in 1841. The search interface and the OCR underlying the page scans can be problematic at times, but this is nonetheless a valuable resource; over 175 years' worth of material on Jewish history and the larger social culture will be of interest to scholars in a variety of fields.

Pricing Options

The JC offers both individual subscriptions and multi-user licenses. This, however, is not immediately apparent. Clicking Subscribe on the home page takes users to just the individual options:

- Residents of the United Kingdom may choose monthly or annual subscriptions; rates are £7.50 and £90.00 respectively.
- Users outside the UK must select an annual subscription for £160.00 (approximately \$210 as of July 1, 2018). Refunds for cancellations are pro-rated, and can be requested only within the first 16 weeks of the subscription.
- Individual subscriptions include the weekly edition, in both print and digital form, and access to the online archive.

The multi-user option is tucked away in Item 7.5 in the Terms & Conditions, which states that “the JC may, on payment of the applicable fees, grant multi-user licenses...to a single company or institution” (<https://www.thejc.com/terms-and-conditions-1.148541>). No fee structure for these licenses is available anywhere on the site, and the JC staff declined to provide details via e-mail. Librarians interested

in institutional subscriptions will therefore need to send an inquiry to <customerservices@thejc.com>.

It is also possible to access the archives without a subscription, for “an administration fee of £2.50 per session.” The duration of a “session” is not defined, and like the multi-user licenses, this option is somewhat hidden. It comes up only when a user searches the archive and clicks a link to gain access to an article.

Product Overview/Description

The Jewish Chronicle bills itself as “the world’s oldest and most influential Jewish newspaper” (<https://www.thejc.com/about-us-1.539>). When it began publication in 1841, each issue was only a few pages long and sold for two pennies. Since then, its size and scope have steadily increased. Today, it is published every Friday; each issue is approximately 50 to 60 pages long and carries a retail price of £2.50 (approximately \$3.50). Sections include World News, Community News, Education, Judaism, Social & Personal, Life, Sport, and Comment. Subscribers also have access to a digital edition of the newspaper; it is released each Thursday, and is “an exact digital replica of the printed newspaper” (<https://www.thejc.com/faqs#3>).

The Jewish Chronicle 1841-1941: A Century of Newspaper History (London: The Jewish Chronicle, 1949) provides a helpful survey of its agendas and editorial positions. The “inaugural statement,” which occupied the entire front page of the first issue, stated that it was meant to be a “truly Jewish paper,” one that would teach a Jewish man “how to know himself, to love mankind, and to seek his Creator” (p. 16). Later in the 1840s, other publications commented on its “liberal principles in religion;” the paper would go on to express an “attitude of sympathy” to “the Reform Movement” and, starting in the early years

of the twentieth century, to become a staunch advocate of “uncompromising nationalism” (pp. 32-33, 136, 138). This description was echoed in 1993 by David Cesarani, who described it as “a firm and influential champion of Zionism.”

Whatever its political and ecclesiastical perspectives, the JC is a valuable resource for Jews and Gentiles, for academics and the general reader. Its website has pop-up ads, but overall it is cleanly designed and easy to use (see Figure 1).

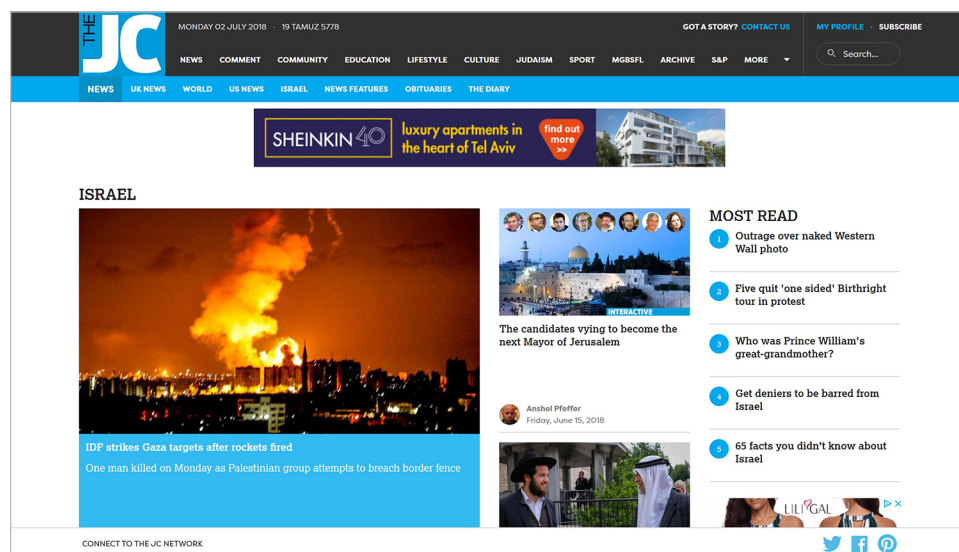


FIGURE 1 The Jewish Chronicle Home Page

FIGURE 2 Online Archive of The Jewish Chronicle Search Page

The menu bar at the top has section headings similar to those in the print edition; scrolling down the page yields such additional features as Most Read, Latest News, and Jews in the News. There is also a section entitled JCTV with video stories that have been uploaded to YouTube. Content is not limited to current stories; when I visited several sections of the site on July 2, 2018, I was able to view stories going back several years.

Anyone with internet access can view content on the site and follow the newspaper on Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest. E-mail newsletters, the ability to comment on stories and upload content, and other services are available to Registered Users at no cost; full access to the archive is limited to subscribers who have paid the fees discussed above.

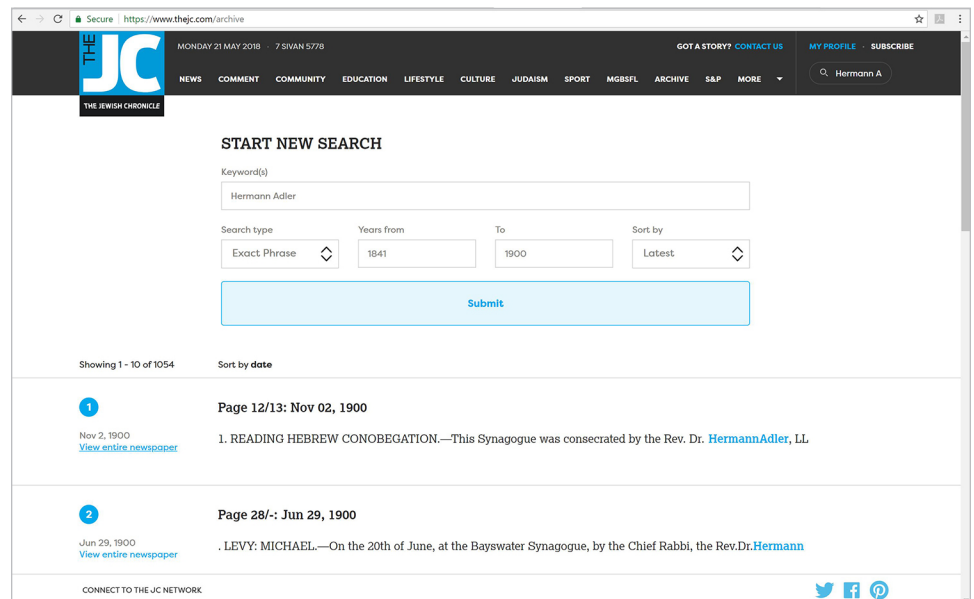
The archive is the focus of this review. It contains the full text of issues dating from the newspaper's founding in 1841 to nearly the present day (there appears to be a lag of approximately six months; when I searched the archive on July 2, 2018, the most recent issue I could find was dated January 5). The articles will be of interest to a range of users: rabbis, members of the Jewish community around the world, and scholars working in fields such as history, journalism, religion, sociology, and political science.

User Interface/Navigation/Searching

In the nineteenth century, the newspaper experienced two mergers with competing publications, so there are three titles represented in the archive: *The Jewish Chronicle* itself, *The Voice of Jacob* (1841-1846), and *The Jewish Chronicle and Hebrew Observer* (1854-1869).

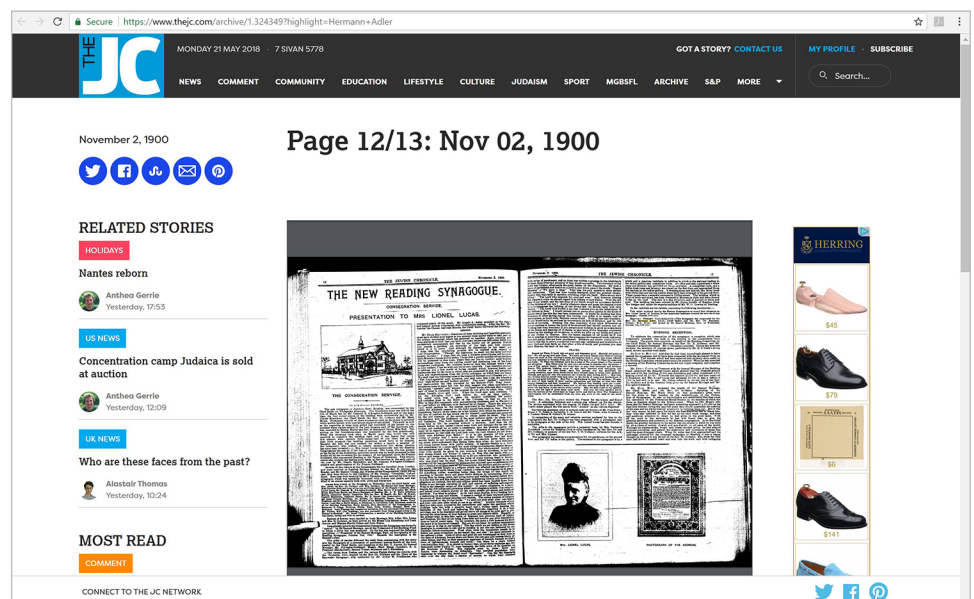
Access is provided via Web browsers and iOS and Android apps; no installation or special software is required. The website does not provide accessibility information such as compatibility with screen readers or compliance with WCAG guidelines. Functionality appears to be essentially the same across all platforms; for this review, I used a laptop running Windows 10 and Google Chrome.

FIGURE 3 Online Archive of The Jewish Chronicle Search Result Detail



Searching options are less robust than those found in most academic databases. Keyword(s) is the only search field, and users can choose from three Search types: Any Word, All Words, and Exact Phrase. Any and All are the functional equivalent of Boolean operators OR and AND; searching with NOT, however, is apparently not an option. Truncation searching is enabled. The search can encompass any time span between 1841 and the present day; results can be sorted by Latest, Oldest, and Relevance. Users may select to read an entire issue or go directly to the article containing their search terms (see Figure 2).

Pages will come up within the browser. They can be searched and saved in several ways; the link can be e-mailed, and the page(s) can be printed or downloaded as PDF files (printing and downloading may not be fully supported on the mobile apps) (see Figure 3).





Online Archive of The Jewish Chronicle Review Scores Composite: ★★ ★ 5/8

The maximum number of stars in each category is 5.

Content: ★★★★★

Over 175 years' worth of full-text content makes the archive an essential resource for scholars working on any aspect of Jewish studies from the 1840s to the present.

User Interface/Searchability: ★★ 1/2

The interface is not fully user-friendly. Keyword(s) is the only search option, and there is not always an efficient way to go to a specific issue of the newspaper. Furthermore, due to issues/mistakes with the OCR, the search results may not be 100% comprehensive or reliable.

Pricing: ★★★★★

As described in the review, a subscription for users outside the U.K. costs approximately \$215/year, or \$18/month. This seems to be in line with weekly, all-inclusive subscriptions to major American newspapers such as *The New York Times* (approximately \$20 for digital access and home delivery of the Sunday edition).

Purchase/Contract Options: ★★★

The £2.50 fee per "session" may be valuable, especially for users outside the U.K. who do not wish to subscribe for an entire year. There is, however, no digital-only subscription option, and more transparency about the fee structure for institutional subscriptions would be helpful.

Critical Evaluation

I begin this section with some disclosures. In June 2016, I purchased a one-year individual subscription, funded by a research grant from Marshall University. When I approached the JC about writing a review, they kindly renewed my subscription at no charge.

They have not, however, been very accommodating since then. They declined to answer my questions about the fee structure for multi-user licenses, the quality of the OCR underlying the page scans, and so on, so I was able to write this review using only the information available on the site.

The archive itself offers a wealth of material, but users may encounter a few obstacles or challenges as they try to navigate it. The search interface, while uncluttered, may be a bit too minimal, with a keyword search the only option.

An option to go directly to a specific date would be especially helpful. This can be attempted via a keyword search with abbreviations or truncation, but this may not always succeed. If, for example, a user were searching for the issue published on November 16, 1928, the following results would be found:

- An Exact Phrase search for "November 16 1928" would yield two results, both of which are articles published on that date.
- An All Words search for "Nov* 16 1928" would yield 830 results; links to eight articles published on that date appear on pages 2 and 3.
- An All Words search for "Nov 16 1928" would yield articles published on November 2nd, 9th, 23rd, and 30th, but none on the 16th itself.
- Exact Phrase searches for "Nov 16 1928" and "Nov* 16 1928" would return no results at all.

The system, moreover, will not recognize dates entered according to the British convention of day/month/year. The only way to capture all relevant results is to run a truncation search for "Nov* 16 1928" and then scan through all 837 results (earlier in the day the system provided 830 results for the same search string).

Another, perhaps related, shortcoming is the imperfect nature of the OCR underlying the page scans. It is not 100% accurate; in Figure 2, for example, "Congregation" is rendered "Conobegation." It is therefore possible that relevant information will be excluded from the search results.

Even with these limitations, this is a very valuable tool. Its contemporary coverage of the Jewish experience since the middle of the twentieth century offers scholars a wealth of primary and secondary source material, and the ability to download an unlimited number of articles makes it possible to assemble their own research libraries.

Competitive Products

Several other websites listed below provide access to other Jewish newspapers, either through a list of links or search portals of their own.

The Jewish Genealogical Society of British Columbia (<<http://jgsbc.ca/resources/newspapers/>>) has links to approximately 40 publications, with an emphasis on North America. *The Jewish Chronicle* is the first link in the International section of the list.

The National Library of Israel (<<http://web.nli.org.il/sites/JPress/English/Pages/default.aspx>>) provides searchable, full-text access to nearly 150 newspapers published worldwide. Most, not surprisingly, are in Yiddish or Hebrew; as of May 21, 2018, the list of seven English-language papers did not include the *Jewish Chronicle*.

Contact Information

The Jewish Chronicle

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London, NW11 7QE
United Kingdom
Phone: +44 (0) 20 7415 1570
E-mail: <customerservices@thejc.com>
Producer URL: <https://www.thejc.com/>
Product URL: <https://www.thejc.com/archive>

The New York Public Library's "Quick Guide to Jewish Periodicals" (<<https://www.nypl.org/blog/2015/03/26/guide-jewish-periodicals>>), last updated in March 2015, lists 19 newspapers published in English and other languages (again, excluding *The Jewish Chronicle*). Dates of publication range from 1771 to the present day.

ProQuest Historical Newspapers - American Jewish Newspapers (<http://www.proquest.com/products-services/hnp_aj_n_shtml.html>), available by institutional subscription, provides access to four newspapers published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

One of the more robust resources is a page hosted by the University of Minnesota libraries (<https://www.lib.umn.edu/libdata/page_print.phtml?page_id=3504>). It lists publications restricted to users affiliated with the university, archival collections in Minneapolis and Cleveland, freely available sites such as *Chronicling America* and the American Jewish Historical Society, the titles of several books about Jewish papers, and online bibliographies about the press and Jewish studies more broadly defined.

Only a few of these newspapers were published during the nineteenth century, and many others have only a small part of their content online. They can still be valuable, especially for local or regional news, but *The Jewish Chronicle* stands out as perhaps the most comprehensive resource that is currently available.

Purchase & Contract Provisions

As stated in the Critical Evaluation section, the JC did not provide detailed purchase and contract information. Users and potential sub-

Free Text Keywords: Newspapers | Digital archives | Jewish history | Religious studies

Primary Category: Other (Current News, Judaism)

Secondary Categories: Business & Economics; History & Area Studies; Humanities; Language and Literature; Multidisciplinary (or interdisciplinary); Philosophy & Religion

Type of product being reviewed: Newspaper or news source; Primary source digital content; Publisher or Organization content/repository; Website

Target Audience: General public; Undergraduate (including community colleges); Graduate/Faculty/Researcher

Access: Hybrid (some OA); Subscription

scribers will therefore need to attempt to find what they need in the Terms & Conditions section of the website. Relevant passages might include Section 2.7, which states that any part of the site may be changed or removed "at any time at our absolute discretion without notice." Researchers who wish to ensure permanent access to archival materials should therefore download PDF files as described above.

Use and redistribution of downloaded material is governed by section 5.1 of the Terms:

We and/or our licensors own the copyright, trademarks, database rights and other intellectual property in the website and all of the material published on it. You may only use the material on the website for your own personal non-commercial purposes. Save as permitted in this paragraph 5.1, you may not copy, reproduce, distribute, upload, post or transmit in any form, any of the content of the website without our express prior written permission nor may you modify, license, create derivative works from, transfer or sell any content, software or information obtained from the website without our express prior written permission. If you do want to use our content in any way, you may be charged an administration fee to search for it and then a payment for use on your channels.

Authentication

Authentication takes place via a user name and password. Security is addressed in section 6.3 of the Terms & Conditions:

During the registration process you will be asked to select a user name and password. You must not disclose your user name and password to any other person. You are responsible for protecting and securing your user name and password from unauthorized use as you will be responsible for all actions that occur using such details whether by you or by someone else. If you believe that there has been a breach of security you must notify us immediately via email on customerservices@thejc.com. You must not select or use a user name of another person with the intent to masquerade as that person or use another person's log in details. We recommend that you do not select an obvious user password and that you change it regularly.

Author's References

Readers interested in the broader history of the newspaper and its place in Jewish history may wish to consult David Cesarani's *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841–1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and the JC's own centennial history, *The Jewish Chronicle, 1841-1941; A Century of Newspaper History* (London, 1949).

About the Author

Robert H. Ellison is an Assistant Professor of English at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia. He also serves as the director of Marshall's Center for Sermon Studies and editor-in-chief of *Sermon Studies*, a peer-reviewed, Open Access journal.

Larry R. Sheret is the Instruction & Emerging Technologies Librarian at Marshall University and serves on the boards of Marshall University's Center for Sermon Studies and of the journal *Sermon Studies*. ■