

Remembering Paul Hamburg

Description

It is with deep sadness that I must inform the UCB Library community of the death of Paul Hamburg, our esteemed and beloved former Judaica Librarian.

As UCB Judaica Librarian from 2002-2015, Paul worked closely with the (then) Doctoral Program in Jewish Studies, devoting great care and seemingly boundless energy to building collections to sustain and enrich Berkeley's thriving Jewish Studies scholarship in the key fields of Comparative Literature, History and Near Eastern Studies, as well as across the disciplines.

For Paul, the Library was not confined to a particular building or place, but was everywhere that ideas and scholarship happen: in the classroom and at home, at cultural events and in conversations on campus, in cafes and on the streets of Berkeley. And he helped make it so through his class and library workshops, the rich array of public lectures and events he organized, as well as the Hebrew literary salon held in his own home — to name just a few.

In his work, Paul was dynamic and tenacious, seeking always to enrich and protect library collections. And his approach was also warmly personal: we who were graduate students during his tenure always felt his keen interest in our research, while our faculty noted Paul's tireless pursuit of hard-to-find materials they needed. Moreover, the substantial benefits UCB scholars reaped from Paul's work had roots in the rich network of connections he sustained with scholars, librarians and booksellers throughout the world.

I've noticed that, while writing this short (and insufficient) tribute, I've had to repeatedly edit for overuse of the word "warm" – and that is very telling. Although Paul was certainly serious, dogged and scholarly in his work, and could certainly be a tough customer when defending a worthy cause, the first and lasting impression he gave was always of hearty enthusiasm. And while most of Paul's hard work was not visible to the scholars he served, that warmth spoke volumes about the values that drove him: a deep devotion to learning and teaching, and to the growth of a library not only of books but of ideas, not only of this time and place, but also of the past and future.

Edited excerpt of email Ruth Haber wrote and Abby Scheel sent to library staff

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