

Report On The Survey Of Jewish
Book Week, 1996

By Keith Harris, Jewish Continuity Research
Co-ordinator

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Marion Cohen and the executive committee of Jewish book week for allowing us to carry out the survey. I am also grateful to Dr Steve Miller, Marlena Schmool and Anthony Lerman for allowing us to use data from the JPR survey of social attitudes of British Jews for comparative purposes. Dr Steve Miller, Mike Cohen at K advertising and Dr Clive Seale at Goldsmiths College gave useful methodological advice at various stages of the research process.

Introduction

This report outlines the aims, methodology and results of a survey carried out for the arts, media and culture task group of Jewish Continuity, on people attending Jewish Book Week in March 1996. The arts, media and culture task group within Jewish Continuity aims to contribute to the overall process of Jewish Continuity through the promotion and support of Jewish Arts and Cultural events. Such events are viewed as potential "gateways" into the community for those with an otherwise limited involvement in it. However, there is currently insufficient information into who attends such events and what success they have in reaching people on the margins of the community. The task group therefore decided to begin a programme of research into Jewish Arts and Cultural events. This programme would involve Jewish Continuity carrying out surveys at major Jewish events, the results of which would be shared with the organisations involved.

The programme was named the "Jewish Cultural Events Survey" and it was decided to begin with Jewish Book Week. Information about the history, aims and organisation of this event is given in appendix A. In consultation with the organisers and members of Jewish Continuity, the following research questions were identified:

- Who comes to Jewish Book Week? In particular what are the levels of Jewish observance, identification and commitment of those who attend? Are those Jews who attend Jewish Book Week "on the margins" of the community?
- Where did those who attend hear about the event?
- Are particular types of events during Jewish Book Week more likely to attract a particular audience? [i.e. is it possible to target specific events at specific sections of the Jewish population]

Although the survey was carried out principally for Jewish Continuity, it was hoped that answering these questions would produce information of use to Jewish Book Week.

The Method¹

The only way to obtain an accurate survey is to ensure that everyone in a particular population is questioned, or a pre-determined percentage of that population is sampled. It is not enough to simply make questionnaires available as efforts have to be made to ensure that everyone who is eligible actively accepts or refuses one. Ideally, everyone attending Jewish Book Week would have been given a questionnaire. However, due to cost restraints it was decided to give a questionnaire to a sample of the event instead. Two days were chosen during which everyone attending was offered a questionnaire. Staff were employed to stand at the entrance and offer a questionnaire to everyone entering and to encourage people to fill them in before going in. The questionnaire (shown in Appendix B) was designed to be as short and easy to complete as possible.

The two days of the survey were the Monday and final Sunday and were chosen to represent what would probably be two extremes of the event. Monday would probably be a quiet day. There were not many talks and lectures occurring and those that were, were on relatively "secular" themes - such as a debate on ethics in journalism. The final Sunday was chosen as it would probably be busier with a large number of events of different types occurring throughout the day. Taken together, these two days represented a sample from which generalisations about the whole of Jewish Book Week could be drawn.

The method appeared to be successful. 78% of people attending on Monday and 58% on Sunday completed questionnaires, giving a total response rate of 65%. This compares favourably with the response rate achieved on national government surveys. There was no reason to expect a "biased response" (where one section of the audience was more likely to refuse co-operation) as there were few complaints. It seemed that response fell at busy times of the day, such as at the start of talks and lectures. We can therefore be confident in the quality of the data that is analysed in subsequent sections.

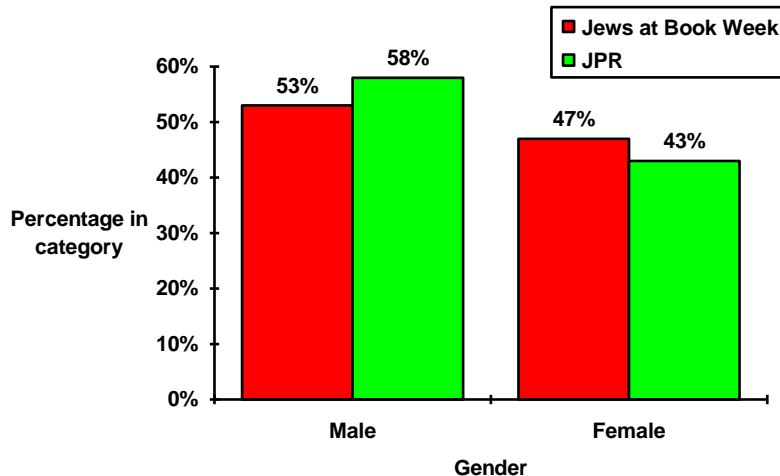
¹ A more technical methodological discussion is given in the appendix.

Characteristics of the Jewish book week audience

89% of the audience were Jewish. That 11% were non-Jews is perhaps higher than expected although it may be largely accounted for by non-Jews attending with Jewish partners. However, because the research questions were aimed at the Jewish community, data concerning the non-Jewish section of the audience will not be presented unless it sheds light on the Jews. In addition, where possible, the findings will be compared to the Jewish population as a whole. The source for data on the Jewish population is the JPR 1995 Survey of Social and Political Attitudes of British Jews and is published by permission.

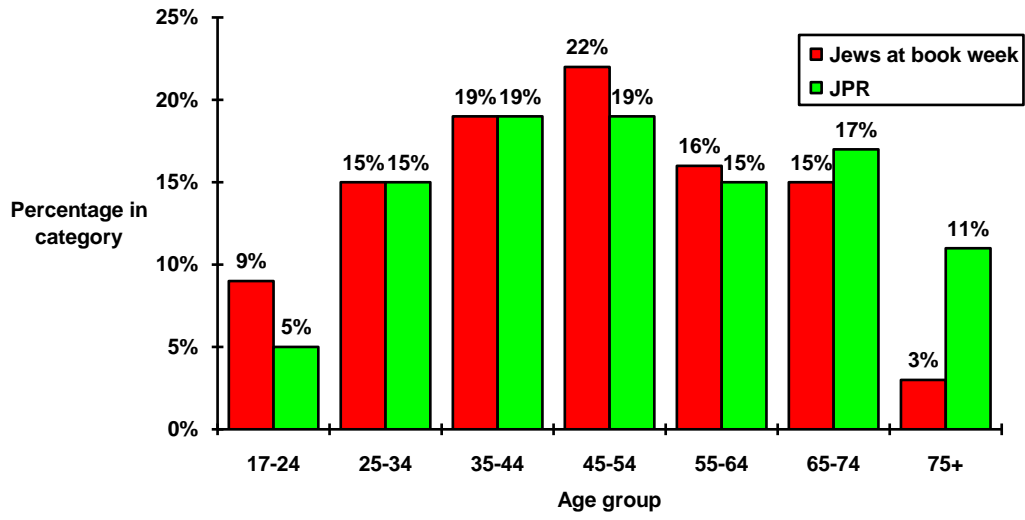
1) Gender

The Jewish Book Week audience was fairly evenly spread between men and women and indeed more evenly spread than the Jewish community as a whole



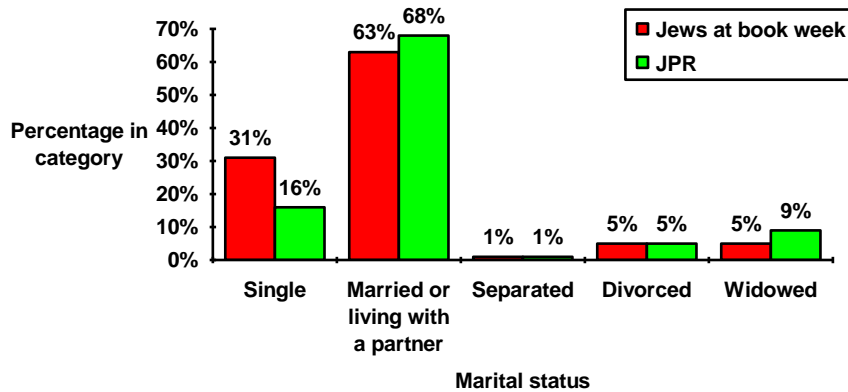
2) Age

Compared to the Jewish community as a whole, the Jews at book week were much less likely to be 75 years or over and slightly more likely to be 17 to 54 years:

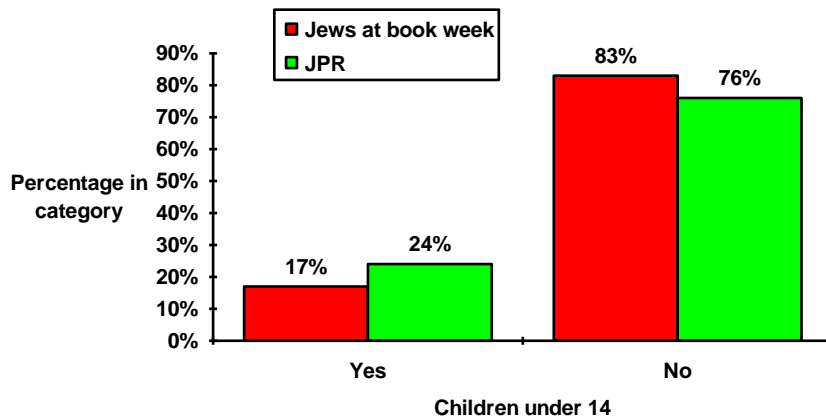


3) Marital status and children

The book week audience is fairly similar to the Jewish community in marital status but slightly more likely to be single and slightly less likely to be widowed. This is unsurprising given the age profile of the event.

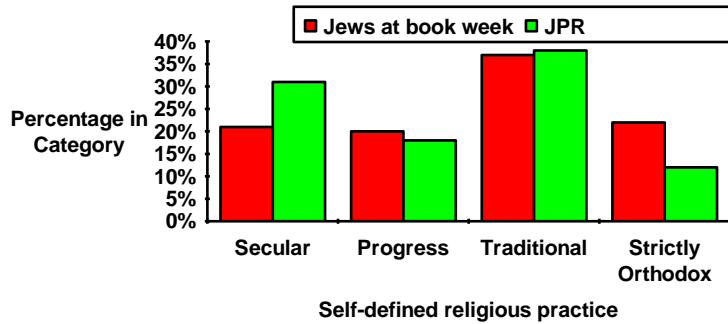


The Jews at book week were also less likely to have children under 14:

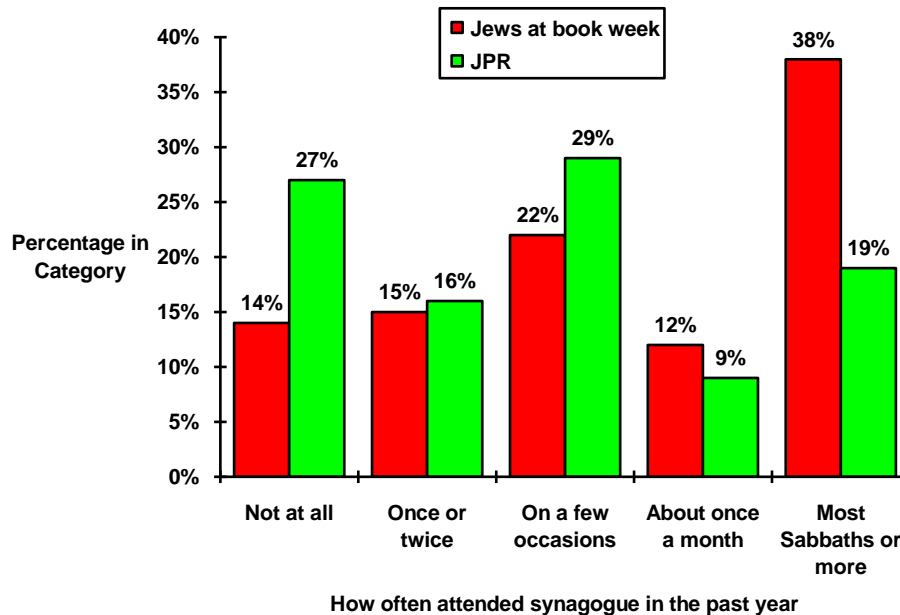


4) Jewish feeling, involvement and practice

Jews attending book week are more likely to be strictly orthodox and less likely to be secular (non-practising)²:

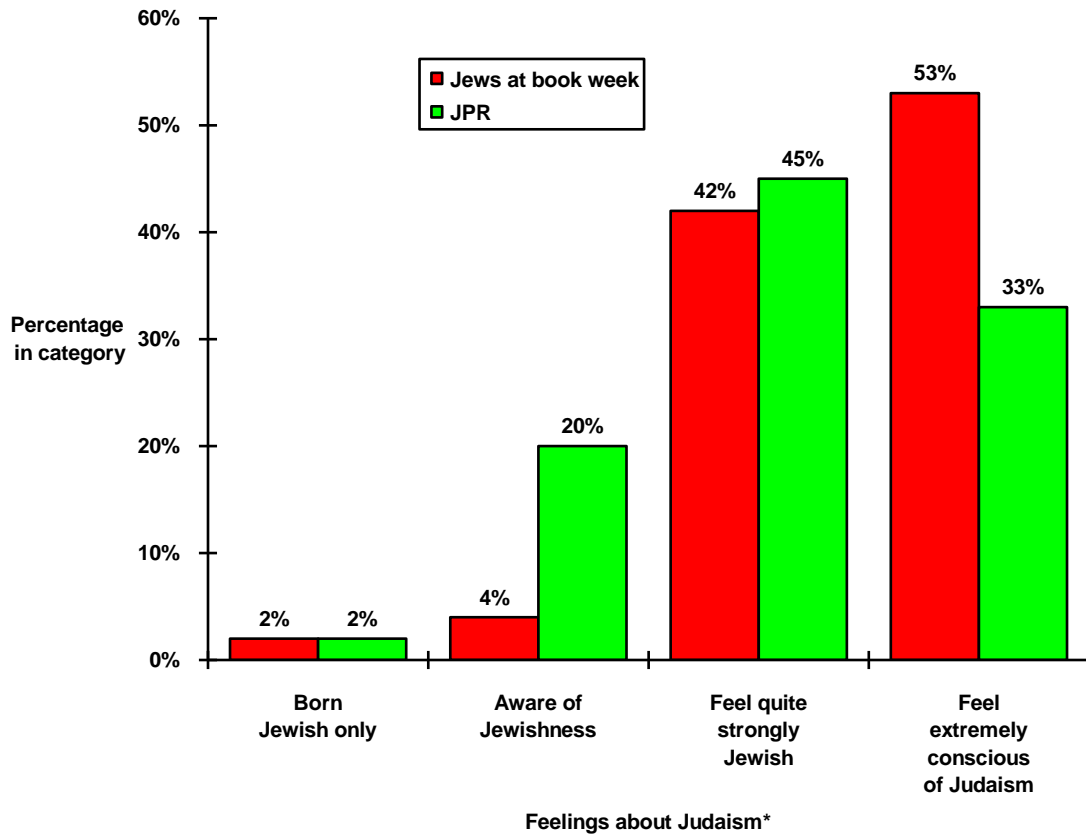


They are also far more likely to attend synagogue every Shabbat than the wider Jewish community:



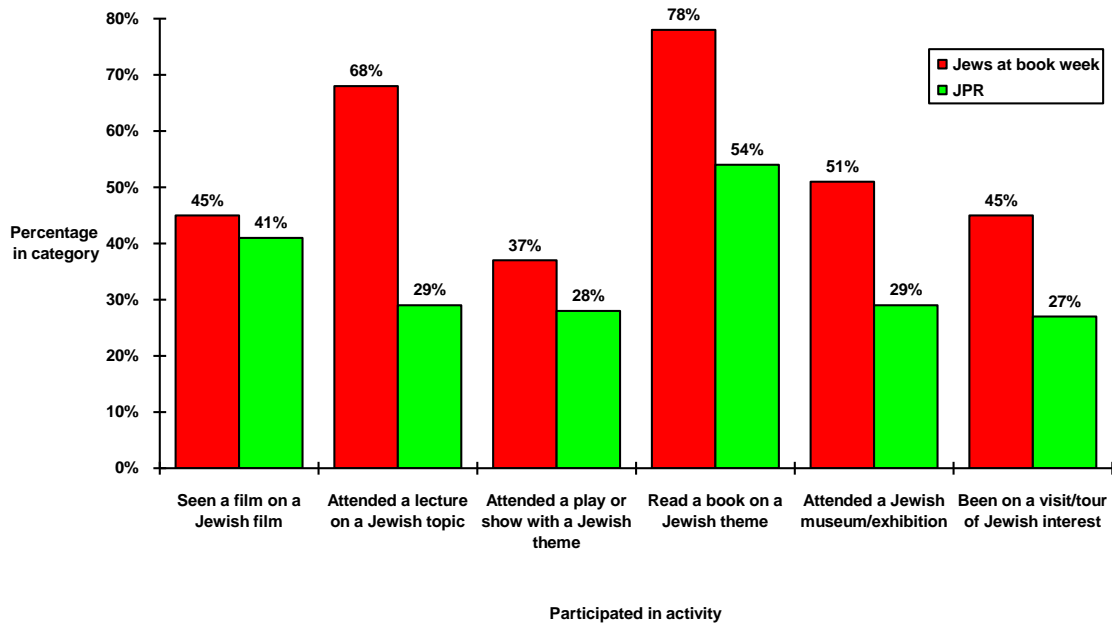
However they expressed their Judaism, the Jewish audience consisted overwhelmingly of strongly identified Jews - considerably more so than the Jewish community as a whole:

² The question asking about synagogue membership was not analysed as it was badly worded and produced untrustworthy data.



* The full responses are given in appendix B, question 7.

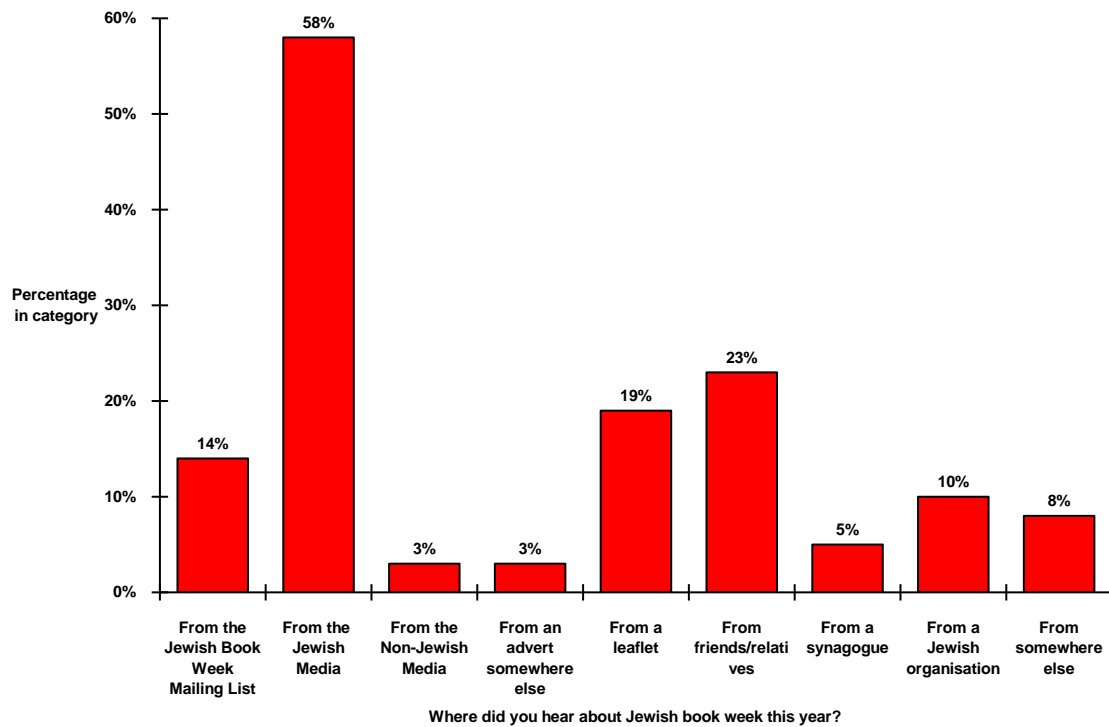
Perhaps unsurprisingly, 92% of Jews attending book week had participated in some sort of Jewish activity in the previous 12 months, compared to 72% of the community as a whole. As the following graph shows, they were much more likely to have previously attended "intellectual" activities such as lectures on a Jewish theme:



Despite this high level of involvement in Jewish cultural activities, only 57% had been to Jewish book week in previous years. This is a difficult statistic to interpret and will be looked at in more detail in a subsequent section.

5) Where people heard about book week

The question asking where people heard about Jewish book week suffered from a slightly ambiguous construction and options that were not specific enough. It is clear however that a large majority heard about the event either from a friend or relative or from the Jewish media:



Summary

The Jews attending Jewish book week come from all sections of the Jewish community - no section is in a tiny minority. However, they are practically all people who feel very conscious of their Judaism and they are more likely to be practising, religiously observant and involved in community activities. They are also more likely to be younger than the community as a whole.

Exploring the data in more detail

The results presented above only show the basic characteristics of the audience. However, the data can be analysed using more complex statistical procedures to answer more complex questions. The procedure used is called crosstabulation and allows us to compare different sections of the audience in their behaviour. In order to make the analysis clearer I will not be presenting the results in the form of tables of numbers. In addition, the following analysis is of the entire data set, including the non-Jews.

1) Who has been to book week before?

People who have been to book week before are somewhat more likely to be one or more of the following than those who have not:

- Older
- Jewish
- More observant
- Attending synagogue more often
- Participating in other Jewish activities

We do not of course know whether this is the case every year, however we can tentatively hypothesise that people "grow in" to book week with age.

2) Where do people hear about book week?

Due to the unclear nature of the question it was difficult to determine whether different types of people hear about book week from different sources. However, there is evidence to suggest that people hearing about book week from the Jewish media are more likely to be:

- Jewish women
- More practising Jews
- People who have been to book week before
- People who have participated in Jewish activities in the last 12 months

In contrast, it seems that people hearing about book week from friends and relatives are more likely to be:

- Less practising Jews

- Those who have not been to book week before
- Younger people who are involved in Jewish activities

These findings are given some support by other research done by Jewish Continuity that suggests that people "on the margins" of the community are less likely to read about events in Jewish periodicals such as the *Jewish Chronicle* or *New Moon*. Moreover, our research also suggests that younger people tend to hear about events by word of mouth. One possible reason why less practising Jews and those who have not been to book week before are more likely to hear about the event from friends and relatives, is that they have no other access to news about the Jewish community.

3) Do different sorts of events occurring at book week attract different audiences?

Throughout Jewish book week various lectures took place in addition to the book fair. An important question is whether events on different themes attract different kinds of people - for example would an event on a secular theme attract a more secular audience. This was difficult to investigate as the questionnaire does not ask whether the respondent is attending an event. Instead, it was assumed that everyone entering book week during the hour when an event began was attending that event. This assumption was proved to be legitimate through observation at the event.

No significant relationships were found between attending a particular event and type of person. There was no evidence that particular events attracted particular people to them. However, some relationships were found between when people attended and type of person. Those attending on Monday were somewhat more likely to be:

- Older (particular over 54)
- People who have been to book week before
- People who have participated in Jewish activities in the last 12 months

In addition, people attending after 1:30pm on Monday were somewhat more likely to be:

- Female
- Female with children under 14
- Jewish

One explanation for some of these findings is that older people, women and women with children are less likely to be at work and able to attend on Monday. In addition, we might also explain the greater likelihood that those who had been before and those who had participated in other Jewish activities would attend on Monday, by a greater willingness to attend on a less convenient day.

We might therefore suggest that the major factor influencing when people attend Jewish book week is convenience. People who are in work and people who have not been to the event before are less likely to make the effort to attend on Monday, either during the day or the evening. Following on from this, we might speculate that lectures and other such "side events" are not enough of a magnet to entice people to Jewish book week at inconvenient times. It may be that people attend Jewish book week first and the side events second.

Conclusions

1) The method used was successful, although some possible technical improvements are mentioned in the appendix. A high response rate was achieved and the data yielded thought-provoking findings. As a pilot study, it suggests that research on audiences at Jewish events can be done cheaply and effectively.

2) Whilst Jewish book week does not attract Jews "on the margins" of the community in disproportionate numbers, the event does attract a broad cross-section of committed and active Jews. They are more likely to be younger and Jewishly observant than Jews in the community as a whole.

3) If younger, more secular Jews are to be attracted in larger numbers to Jewish book week, publicity and scheduling are key variables to bear in mind. Such people would be more likely to respond to publicity campaigns that penetrate "word of mouth" networks rather than through the established Jewish media. If special events are to be targeted, they will need to be scheduled at convenient "leisure" times. As things stand however, there is no evidence that events and lectures on different topics attract different audiences. It seems that publicity should concentrate on making Jewish Book Week itself attractive.

Appendix A - Jewish Book Week - The Organisation

Appendix B - Technical Details

The Method

Three people were employed and briefed to act as staff during the event. The event was divided into hour long slots and a rota drawn up. During each hour the three staff had different duties. One person was to count everyone coming into the event using a "clicker". Another was to give questionnaires out and a third to act as a "trouble-shooter". Fortunately, the event had only one entrance and exit point, making it easier to ensure that no one was missed. Detailed rules were drawn up as to who should be counted as eligible for a questionnaire. Anyone under 14 or associated with the event was ineligible and not to be counted. However, if in doubt the person clicking was told to count them anyway. Respondents were encouraged to fill in the questionnaires on entry, but if necessary they were allowed to take a questionnaire with them into the event or to come back later. A complicating factor was that staff had to mark each questionnaire with the time the respondent entered the event, further emphasising the need to encourage them to fill in the questionnaire on entry.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire is shown in appendix B. It consists of a short preamble, 12 questions and a tear-off address slip. The address slip was designed to obtain addresses for a mailing list and clear wordings ensured respondents were aware that questionnaires were not linked up to addresses. The code of conduct of the Market Research Society and the requirements of the data protection act were taken into account. The questionnaire was designed to be as short as possible so as to ensure that everyone attending completed one before entering the event. All the questions are fixed-choice to aid in fast completion.

Below the preamble are two sets of boxes to be marked up by the event staff. The first two refer to the day the questionnaire was given out (1 = Monday, 2 = Sunday), the second referring to the time (10 = 10:30-11:30 etc.).

Questions 1 and 2 are the only questions specifically about Jewish Book Week. The first was included to help indicate whether there is a hard-core audience who attends every year. The second lists possible places where respondents might have heard about the event. When connected to demographic information, the question was designed to help in targeting future advertising. An open-ended option was added at the end of question 2 in case any option was not listed. Question 3 was taken from the JPR survey and investigates involvement in Jewish arts and cultural events. Respondents could tick all that applied, allowing for the subsequent development of scales during the analysis procedure. In addition, its previous use in a large-scale sample survey of the entire community allows for the comparison of the Jewish Book Week audience with the Jewish community as a whole.

Question 4 is a filter for questions 5 to 8. The questionnaire treats anyone considering themselves to be Jewish to be Jewish. There are many definitions of Judaism and this one was used due to its simplicity and its breadth. In addition, it is also the definition used in the previous Jewish surveys from which 4 questionnaires on the survey are taken (3, 5, 7 and 8). Questions 5,

7 and 8 have been shown in factor analysis to be good predictors of three elements of Jewish identity. Question 5 measures levels of religious practice, question 7 measures Jewish ethnic identification and 8 measures religious identification. Like question 3, these questions were imported with virtually no changes to ensure full comparability with existing data³. Question 6 was also added to investigate synagogue membership and attendance. This question is an altered version of a question used in previous surveys. Questions 5-8 provide a simple mechanism to split the sample into different kinds of Jews - from secular, non-practising Jews to the Ultra-Orthodox. Questions 9 to 12 ask for standard demographic information to be answered by everyone. Question 12 asks whether respondents have any children under 14. This question was added in order to investigate whether attendance at Book Week was effected by the need for baby-sitters!

Taken together, these 12 questions were designed so as to gather the maximum amount of information from respondents in an extremely short space of time and without antagonising anyone. Data from the questionnaires can be used to analyse what sort of people respondents are, how this effects when they attend and how Jewish Book Week fits into an overall Jewish life-style.

³ The exception was question 8 which had a "Just Jewish" option which was removed. Factor analysis had shown this option to be unnecessary.

The Analysis

The returned questionnaires were entered into SPSS. Frequency counts were then run and the data "cleaned" for keying and other errors. This enabled a calculation of response rates on a daily and hourly basis. It also showed which questions were misunderstood by respondents. These results provide valuable lessons for future surveys of this kind.

Response rates of 78% for the Monday and 58% for the Sunday were achieved, a total response rate of 65%. By calculating response on an hourly basis and comparing with occurrences at the event during these hourly segments, some of the causes of non-response could be guessed at. There is some evidence that response rates went down when there was a large influx of people just before a talk took place inside the event. This suggests non-response due to people being in a hurry. However, accurate hourly response rates fluctuated greatly, suggesting possible errors by event staff in clicking - although over the period of the day the errors probably cancelled out to produce a fairly accurate count of people attending.

Frequency counts together with feedback from the field highlighted problems in the questionnaire. 45 people answered the "Other" category on question 2. When these questionnaires were examined it was found that most could be recoded without the need for extra codes. In addition, a substantial minority of respondents had ticked 2 or more boxes on the question. All this suggests that the question should be reworded either to give more options or to give fewer but clearer options. Preliminary analysis also indicated that question 6 is unusable. Only a minority answered it correctly by placing ticks in both columns. The question should be split into two separate questions. Another problem was non-response to particular questions. 20 people answered the first page of the questionnaire only, probably due to the lack of an instruction to turn the page. 36 Jews did not answer any of the Jewish questions. 60 people did not give their age and (perhaps oddly) 54 people did not say whether they had children under 14.

Thus response seemed to decline at busy times and as the questionnaire proceeded. It seems that people were anxious to fill in the questionnaire and get into the event. This may have led to some non-response bias, busy people and those attending at busy times perhaps being under-represented. These people may have been younger than average and were perhaps missed due to walking faster past the field staff. Nevertheless, it is impossible to get direct evidence for non-response bias and even if there was a bias towards older, less busy respondents, this may have been offset by a greater refusal rate for older people as staff working in the field suggested.

Where the book week data was compared to the JPR data, the Mann-Whitney test was run to check significance ($p < 0.05$). All results reported were significant. In crosstabulation, "significance" was taken to be $p < 0.05$ where minimum expected frequencies are greater than 5. Following de Vaus⁴, Phi is used as the descriptive statistic for 2 by 2 crosstabulations where both variables are nominal and Cramers V with other nominal/nominal and nominal/ordinal crosstabulations. Gamma was used for ordinal/ordinal crosstabulations but none are presented in this paper.

⁴ D A de Vaus (1991), "Surveys in Social Research", UCL Press: London

A feature of the analysis was the difficulty in finding significant results. This partly suggests that whilst the sample is relatively heterogeneous, the differences within it are either not great or not measurable through the available variables even when categories are collapsed. If this survey were repeated, one answer would be to include more questions, in particular a question on current employment status and highest level of education. Yet, the questionnaire had to be as short as possible and the addition of further questions could have led to a fall in response. A more acceptable solution would be to carry out the survey over the whole of Jewish book week rather than two days. The greater sample size *could* lead to greater significance in some instances. Response could also be increased by offering questionnaires as people left the event as well as when they entered, reducing bias against busy people.

In reporting results of crosstabulation, I have not printed descriptive statistics. However, most correlations were relatively weak (Phi/Cramers $V < 0.3$ or less).

Appendix C - The Questionnaire