



Stephanie Wellen Levine
English Department, Tufts University
1105 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
617-576-0409
swlevine@verizon.net

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Rabbi Elkanah Shmotkin
Director
Jewish Educational Media
784 Eastern Parkway, Suite 403
Brooklyn, New York 11213

Dear Rabbi Shmotkin:

I am writing this letter in support of Jewish Educational Media's ambitious preservation and access plans for the thousands of hours of film and video material in its collection. This unique moving image archive, which documents the Chabad Movement and the Lubavitcher Rebbe, will be a boon for scholars and researchers across the academic spectrum. Having unrestricted scholarly access to these invaluable images will benefit researchers like myself, along with historians, sociologists, ethnographers, filmmakers and any student of religion.

There may be no other 20th century rabbi as recognizable, influential—or controversial—as the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Having the opportunity to view and study these film and video materials, which span over 8 decades, will provide perspective and endless opportunity for scholarship and study of the Rebbe and/or the Chabad movement for current and future generations. That you are seeking out academics and filmmakers alike to inform them about JEM and opening the collection for research and study is admirable.

I also realize that preservation efforts like the one JEM is involved in takes a commitment of staff and resources and an institutional mission to support it. And I know that if you were to wait longer, many of the materials in your collection, particularly those on open reel videotape, might degrade beyond technical capabilities to save them. While the expense to preserve and reformat the older and obsolete tape formats is high, the cost to researchers and scholars would be immeasurable if the collection remained inaccessible.

Having conducted research at archives and libraries around the country and abroad and having lectured and written extensively about Chasidism, I look forward to adding Jewish Educational Media to the list of institutions that I will consult for future research projects. Additionally, I would welcome the opportunity to participate in any future seminars or programs that would benefit from my expertise. Please let me know of the progress you are making, and any new collections you receive. I look forward to visiting JEM sometime in the future.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Wellen Levine,
English Department, Tufts University
Author of *Mystics, Mavericks, and Merrymakers: An Intimate Journey among Hasidic Girls*