Information Nation: Expanding Education's Frontier to Find "Generation Tech"

by Ariel Beery and Esther D. Kustanowitz

I. Searching... But for What?

What is the first thing you do when you have a question? If you're in our age group -- that is, under 40 -- you likely head to your computer, open a web browser, and type in nine simple characters in a magical combination that promises free access to any and every piece of information: Google.com.

Not so long ago, the process was different. Question-bearers would head to the nearest, smartest person they knew -- a parent, a *rebbe*, a professor -- and ask. If it were a specialized question— say, pertaining to math or science or Jewish life—you would quite probably approach a specialist. You'd never think of accepting an answer from someone you thought might be just guessing.

But today's system is different than the one that most of us grew up with. While many before us bought our music from physical stores and went to the library to find periodicals to support our research papers, today's students don't remember a time in which term papers weren't e-mailed to professors. Technology has transformed how we seek information, forever altering the pace of our lives and our learning.

But there is a problem with Google, and Internet search in general: Google is no better at determining truth than a popularity contest is at determining a person's value. That is, whereas an increasing number of computer-literate people today are using the Internet to answer their queries, their instant searches yield not definitive, unbiased answers, but an endless list of sources that may -- or, more likely, may not -- be accurate and/or useful. As website managers unlock the secrets of how to achiever higher and higher placement on Google's results pages -- a ranking independent from the source's authority or accuracy -- the Internet becomes a generator for rubbish that looks convincingly similar to accurate content.

For those in the Jewish community who are concerned about not only the quality of Jewish education, but also the continuation of guided Jewish curiosity, this problem is magnified: In the past, a conversation with an expert would yield an unknown array of unknowns, opening new horizons, begging the student forward. "Asking about *Shavuot*?" the wizened source might ask a student with a practical question. "Then you should really also know about the *Bikkurim* (First Fruits), because the way we celebrate *Shavuot* now is very different than the way it was celebrated in the past." In this way, question brings question, and new paths are opened.

Not so with the web, which generally returns only as much as you ask of it -- and sometimes less. At the time of this article's writing, a quick Google search about *Hanukkah* returns the following websites as its top three: Wikipedia, funsocialstudieswebsites.learninghaven, and holidays.net. MyJewishLearning, coming in fourth, is the only one of these sites that can be seen as "reliable" — funsocialstudieswebsites includes a picture of pilgrims and pyramids on its *Hanukkah* page. And in all cases, the website lacks the intuition of a teacher, who would know which buttons to push in order to elicit increased curiosity from and yield inspiration in students.

The Information Age, therefore, poses a unique challenge to the Jewish People: When the relationship between teacher and student is no longer a given, and much of processed information comes from self-directed searches, the very concept of *V'Shinantem Le'Banecha,* (and you shall instill in your children) — which is both a central theme in the *Sh'ma* and the key to Judaism's persistence over generations — is shaken to its core.

Despite all the challenges presented by the Information Age, with the right attitude and armed with an understanding of how things work, today's Jewish educators can implement technology that will work toward the continuity of the Jewish People.

II. Education as Transmission, and the Impact of the Information Age
As the *Ethics of the Fathers* tells it, first there were the stone-hewn tablets of Law. And then Moses passed on the Law, verbally no doubt, to Joshua. Joshua to the elders, and the elders to a new group with a new technology of deriving Law, the Prophets. And the Prophets passed the Law, as it then was, to a new group with a radically different way of deriving meaning and passing on customs: the men of the Great Assembly. After them came the rabbis and a whole new form of *darshanut* – which can be translated as searching and is the core of what has become present day Judaism.

Each of these transactions was, in effect, an evolutionary, generational shift: The Law that Moses passed to Joshua, even by the most Orthodox of interpretations, was not passed down in the same manner as the Prophets when they passed the Law unto the Great Assembly. The Written Law became written because of a relatively new technology. And the Great Assembly and their intellectual successors undertook a huge shift in transmission of the Law: Those portions which had previously remained oral were now also written down. True, this to an extent altered the nature of the information, and also opened it up to new audiences and created a whole new universe of possibilities for interpretation, for instruction, for searching.

The Information Age represents no less, and in many cases more, of a generational shift that is part of the traditional evolution of Jewish education. First, it continues the general trend in distancing the transmitter of the knowledge from the receiver. When transmission was Oral, you had to really know the source; when written, you more-or-less knew that the authors were reputable. Now that it is digital, there is very little you can really know about where the answers are coming from.

Second, the Information Age continues the general trend extending the potential reach of knowledge. The human voice can carry only so far, and there are only so many books in the world; digital information has endless reach and is infinitely replicable, a flowing stream that can only be quenched by a break in the network, which is usually quickly restored with little or no damage to the original information.

Third, the Information Age continues the general trend of increasing the body of commentary and discussion on any unit of knowledge, and, as a result, its potential complexity. Verbal comments

have little permanence; written remarks last longer, but online discussion of a source can quickly overshadow the source itself, establishing through links and Google hits additional pundits who are often perceived as potential equals of the author of the original source.

Lastly, the Information Age also continues the general tradition in the Jewish community of the democratization of knowledge. First there was the Voice of God, which required *Kohanim* to serve a specialized intermediary role; then came the Scribes, and from the Scribes came many, many Rabbis, who brought the Law to the people by increasing the importance of wizened debate. Now, any human being with a computer and an Internet connection can access every single Jewish text ever produced and blog about those texts, thereby challenging the voices of our tradition and entering into fierce debate with contemporary scholars. This might be the most radical of shifts: In the past, one expected a searcher to be able to identify and seek out "the greats" and to narrow down the path towards an answer accordingly.

Now, with thousands of blogs and opinions posted throughout the Internet, the searcher who is not already equipped with a basic perspective on the chain of transmission can easily become lost in the complexity of the web. For example, who's to know that Jews for Jesus aren't experts on the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb? How can you tell if a blogger called "Rabbi Shimon" or any other official sounding name is correct when he writes that *Chabad* and other black-hat-wearing movements all believe that Israel is a sin that needs to be wiped off the map before the coming of the Messiah?

As Daniel Septimus, the editor-in-chief of [MyJewishLearning.com](#) -- one of the largest Jewish-knowledge sites on the Internet -- points out, "To understand the Internet's significance for Jewish life, you need to understand the values of the Internet: choice, empowerment, democracy (the foundations of [Wikipedia](#), [YouTube](#), [MySpace](#), blogs, etc). The Internet has practical ramifications for Judaism -- like quickly finding out what time *Shabbat* starts -- but these are relatively inconsequential when compared with the Internet's potential to contribute to the systematic democratization of Jewish life."

While today's learner has been branded as "untraditional" because the traditional paradigm of exclusive transmission from teacher to student is no longer valid, the reality is that he is actually engaging in the traditional process of absorbing the information presented through the tools available in a natural evolution. She may quest for the same religious, spiritual, or cultural truths that her grandparents did, but, whereas her ancestors sought answers under social duress and from relative poverty, she quests from a place of relative privilege and prosperity and through technologies with speeds and a multiplicity of voices that her grandparents never dreamed were possible. Such communication begets community, because, in the simplest of explanations, once you can communicate with everyone at any time, you become conscious of your time's value: You want to communicate with someone who is worth the time.

This is why today's community exists not just around the synagogue, Hebrew school, or college campus -- it's virtual as well as real, online as well as off. While dwindling numbers at local synagogues and Jewish community centers may cause alarm among the community's elder statespeople, their reaction is grounded in the specifically local. But on an international level, however, they needn't worry that people who affiliate differently are lost to the Jewish people. Even the most technologically hooked-in people admit that no educational or online iteration of community has replaced the need to gather in person; rather, it has supplemented it. This movement, while untraditional, ultimately serves to enhance and enrich the number of opinions and attitudes that one person can be exposed to over the course of their quest for knowledge.

III. Adjusting Jewish Education to the Information Age

A December 2006 study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project broke down the numbers of "Who's Online," revealing that 83% of people ages 18-29 use the Internet. One demographic older, ages 30-49, stays solidly online with 82%. (In case you're curious, the 50-64 demographic sector sees a slight drop-off, to 70%, but ages 65+ drops to 30%.)

Today's teens and twenties, and, yes, even thirties and forties, live their lives online, and, short of a forbidding divine order, will continue to do so. Educators hoping to understand students of all ages do themselves a disservice in ignoring the rise of online community. Only by immersing themselves in the means of communication of today's youth can they gain the access to young hearts and minds. And only by understanding how adults search for information online can they hope to provide compelling and accurate content and develop strategies for answering the challenges posed by the Internet (as raised above). Ignoring the technological revolution and insisting on traditional models is irresponsible, creating an unbridgeable chasm between students and teachers.

More traditional teachers may balk at embracing technology at the same rate that their students consume and upgrade, but becoming a part of that world is essential toward creating meaningful tools to connect to the curriculum and providing a qualitative, philosophically sound explanation as to why curiosity into Jewish matters is important -- thereby encouraging additional searching. Facebook is an especially interesting example, as it provides the opportunity for networking (expanding connections through an infinitely expanding circle of friends); dating; and microcosmic communities that center around a single concept, event, identity or hobby, ranging in seriousness from "Superman Wears Jack Bauer Pajamas," celebrating the uberhero protagonist of the television show '24,' to "Bring Our Kidnapped Soldiers Back," a group that illustrates that a year after their kidnapping and the 2006 war with Lebanon, the soldiers are not forgotten. But Facebook is not an end unto itself; it is a tool to develop a new form of relationship with young Jews.

Educators and other non-profit professionals often talk about "meeting today's learners where they are." But the problem is that there's no one place that they "are" -- there are only places they are passing through. The ubiquity of Internet sites, communities, and connections available to today's learners creates an intricately modular, ever-shifting model for learning that is infinitely customizable to students' educational needs and lifestyle. Recognizing that Jewish learners are passing through multiple portals of interest, it is important that Jewish educators embrace the future in the present tense by developing sensitivity to these new modes of communication. As Liel Liebovitz's April article in the New York *Jewish Week* ("Virtual Values, Real Victims," April 20, 2007) illustrated, Jewish educators must keep current with the pace of their students' lives. The article contained several spot-on observations by Ira Miller, the dean of Ramaz's Upper School, including that "zero tolerance edicts drive everything underground and don't achieve anything."

Today's educators have to be quicker than their predecessors, and more diverse in terms of their educational and technological experience. Teachers should join online communities, to see first-hand what it means to communicate at this new pace, with this new perspective on space-time. They should subscribe to magazines like *Wired* and *Business 2.0* (which may be going out of business) to enhance their knowledge of how people today and tomorrow will be connecting to online resources, opportunities, and communities. And it goes without saying that every teacher needs to have an RSS reader set up to follow all the latest online publications -- and the blogs that their students subscribe to, or write.

The professors and experts of today should not despair. Their expertise and wisdom is not in question; it simply is sought out through different channels. As Chris Anderson, the editor of *Wired* magazine, writes, it's all about transparency: The more an expert provides expertise and wisdom to the world -- through blogs, newsletters, etc. -- the more that expert will be relevant and

appreciated. While some information seekers might search primarily for peer-oriented data, professional journalists or academically-minded seekers may visit websites like refdesk.com, allexperts.com and profnet.com. Experts who embrace new technologies will discover that, in addition to being presented at conferences, their ideas can find life and exposure in online discussions on a grassroots level. And, as is often the case, if a conversation is so layered or resonant in the virtual world that it merits a spillover into real life, the world takes notice.

IV. Rules of Engagement: Beyond the Education Frontier
Whereas "old-school" Jewish involvement required a synagogue or JCC as the center of Jewish life, affiliation and engagement is becoming a different animal in the age of the Internet. To discover why people engage with Jewish life, how, and at what level requires a long-term, in-depth, longitudinal study of people's behaviors online and off and their previous level of engagement with the Jewish community. But a few initiatives that have sprung up in the last few years point to a shift -- as Septimus notes, "A key factor in a Jew's decision to remain Jewish in the information age will be a sense of choice. And the Internet -- with its seemingly endless and fluid stream of information and possibilities -- engenders a sense of choice. If the Jewish world can build media that harness this ethos it can help contribute to a revitalized Judaism."

For example, not everyone gets their Judaism information from MyLewishLearning. Some access through Beliefnet, which creates an overall religious context by juxtaposing Jewish content with content about other religions. Some access through About.com, looking for a more general source with links to other places by subject. Still others may only trust Aish.com or Chabad.com, or eschew those portals for a site affiliated with a certain denomination, institution, or organization. This choice that is available online also has to be available offline and to provide for "picture-in-picture" information, or multiple windows open at once.

Revitalized Judaism, as Septimus puts it, should be about inspiring, innovating toward the interesting and intriguing, providing a venue for creativity and innovation -- becoming an organizing framework, a platform, and not a top-driven programming organization. This is not the same thing as "making Judaism hip" through Matisyahu concerts or parties at bars on the Lower East Side of Manhattan that serve a "Manischevetini" (a Grey Goose Martini with triple sec and a splash of Manischewitz wine). Those parties are often exactly the opposite of what youth want: Hip programming is often as top-down driven as services at your local synagogue. You can lead a horse to an interesting program about art or music, but you can't make him enroll in an ongoing course of Jewish learning. To have a lasting impact, events have to serve two levels of purpose: grabbing the participant in the moment by showing that everyone-is-doing-it and leaving an impression or an opportunity for that person to drill further down, below "the home page" of what is presented.

One example of which we're proud is PresenText--an art show about text, image and technology sponsored by *PresenTense Magazine* and inspired by youth publications past and present. Although the event was framed by our team-mate Polly Zavadivker as an art show based on journalistic content, it also illustrated that even the written word is not permanent as it is subject to interpretations and recontextualizations. For example, a piece called "Blogging *Talmud*" brought together past and present in a traditional form that gave those who know of the *Talmud* to see it in a new light, while also teaching those who have no such experience a way into the traditional Jewish paradigm. As such, participants were inspired by the grassroots nature of the events generation. Leadership by example opens doors to those who would like to join -- and they were also invited to delve deeper into the subject matter, leading them to seek more information about the ideas behind the exhibit.

TWO JEWS, THREE BLOGS

Two Jews, three opinions. *That's the shul I wouldn't be caught* dead in. *I don't 'hold by' that rabbi. With a plethora of voices and myriad opportunities for self-expression and dissent, blogging is the perfect venue for Jews with something to say.* (Which means, of course, all Jews.)

According to the Pew Internet Study, eight million American adults have started blogs. But for many (62 percent of the Internet-using population, according to the survey), blogging is still something foreign and feared; perhaps **the word itself** sounds too journalistically informal, or conveys the perception that blog access requires advanced technology. But after overcoming initial hesitations, Jews are discovering the endless potential of blogging. Perhaps it's because the format, in which multiple opinions create an open conversation on a central text, already exists in the Jewish literary experience...it's called the **Talmud.**

Sacrilegious as it might seem, realistically, it's not much of a stretch. If the Talmud were being compiled today, instead of separate Babylonian and Jerusalem versions, we would likely have one Big Blog edition, a living document, constantly evolving through international, interdenominational discussion. No longer the private domain of rabbis and sages, this contemporary Talmud would be **accessible to everyone.**

Where little Jewish life exists, blogs sprout like **springtime crocuses,** in metropolitan centers like **New York, Los Angeles and Chicago.** Where Jewish living thrives, so does Jewish blogging. From every denominational position, every new blogger has a pulpit and a congregation. The face of Jewish identity and the nature of community itself is changing. "The People of the Book" are **morphing into 'the People of the Blog'.**

Today's **spiritual seekers,** rabbis, students, and the average Joe Jew are also reaching out through blogging, seeking community and spiritual connection. "Some people write with searing honesty about why they rejected Orthodoxy, others about why they embraced it. Others write about their courtships, their losses, their journeys, their love," says blogger Rabbi Neil Fleischmann. When she posted about lifting the Torah during a prayer service, Karen Perolman, a first-year-rabbinical student in Jerusalem, recalls that she "really felt **the weight of Torah** and the weight I was going to carry my whole life as a Jewish professional. When I read my old posts, I can see how much my Jewish identity has changed."

Blogging has become the great equalizer, celebrating individuality and creating connections between the ostensibly dissimilar. For Orthodox screenwriter Robert Avrech, a self-proclaimed "hermit by nature," the blog suddenly expanded his social horizons. "For the first time in my life, I have close friends who are Reform Jews, Conservative Jews, atheist Jews, and many deeply religious Christians who read and comment. This is all something of a **nes, a miracle.**"

"The more I looked around online, the more I found out about Judaism that I had no idea existed," says YoYenta's thirty-something Jessica Leigh, **temporarily based** in the San Francisco Bay area. "After reading so much about what I don't know, what I don't practice, all the references and Hebrew quotations that I don't get, I feel inclined to become more observant."

Especially in areas lacking a centralized, accessible Jewish community, Jews turn to the Internet for a personalized Judaism that they design themselves, a la carte and online. "While blogs themselves won't replace religious or social institutions, they can do much to **enhance** them," says Oklahoma-based technology consultant Simon Fleischmann, 35, of Up-Load.com. "As the Internet continues to grow, the use of blogs, and other community-builders like podcasts and online forums, will only expand in influence," he predicts.

On the college campus, life happens on the Internet. Through LiveJournals, MySpace, Friendster blogs, and message boards, students pursue connection and community. And Jewish innovators are jumping on the campus blogwagon, using online communities to access the minds, hearts, and Jewish souls of **Generation Tech.**

Southern California's Beach Hillel runs an active online community featuring blogs, podcasts, and bulletin boards, has several MySpace profiles, and in 2005, launched a **conference on Jewish student identity,** with co-sponsorship from group blog Jewlicious (for which, full disclosure, I am also a contributor). The 2006 conference drew 350 participants from more than 40 schools: Jews from all over the political, religious, and creative map. And because the conference sprouted from blog roots, post-conference discussion has flourished online, through blog posts, Flickr picture sharing, and MySpace recollections.

So far, there are a **limited number** of documented cases of bloggers who have met their spouses online. But there is an expectation of connection—reading someone's writings provides a solid foundation than meeting someone at a party or even online dating. Group blogs like Jewschool and Jewlicious, whose team members live in different geographical locations, spend so much time together online that the relationship often translates extremely well into offline reality. When bloggers travel, meetings with local bloggers are de rigueur and transition to bigger **blogger parties,** where people are introduced by bloghandle ("I'm Esther-JDaters Anonymous") and where loyal readers and fellow bloggers can meet the people behind the posts.

For those exploring Jewish identity, the option of anonymity is often a major draw. But others reject disguise. As Rabbi Fleischmann puts it, "By being myself I feel that I truly connect with people to a much greater degree than if I was completely **anonymous.**"

Connection. Identity. Community. Self-expression. All of these are the goals of those who participate in the blogculture. But sometimes, these goals create conflict...turf wars can happen quicker than you can say "**Beit Hillel** versus **Beit Shammai.**" Once the gloves are off, leader loyalties are tested. Interblog conflicts utilize PhotoShopped images and text to engage rivals in everything from good-natured kidding to near-libelous reputation-skewering.

Perhaps blog conflicts teach readers and commenters an important lesson: **words are powerful,** and once you send them out into the world, you cannot get them back. Or perhaps the lesson will go unheard and unheeded. Time will tell, but the Jblogosphere will surely be there to record it all—with posts and comments galore—as **the conversation continues.**

Original and commentary text by Esther D. Kustanowitz

Dead in. The sages admonish, Isn't it forbidden to end sentences with prepositions? Strunk & White says yes. Although many contemporary authorities have approved prepositions at the end of sentences, many still cling to the ancient tradition.

All Jews. Who is a Jew? Birthright Israel says, one Jewish parent. Orthodox Jews say, if the womb is Jewish, so is the baby. Mel Gibson says, police officers who cite him for DWI.

The word itself. What does the word sound like? Some say, it is like 'blah.' Others say, it reminds us of the second plague visited upon the Egyptians.

The Talmud. The Oral Law, made up of the Mishnah and the Gemara.

Accessible to everyone. Doesn't open accessibility also open the document to errors? Bill Gates says, "404 File Not Found."

Springtime crocuses. Some people say, what of regions in which the frozen tundra prevents the sprouting of flowers, even in spring? And others reply, this is not meant to be literal, but is a general reference to the springtime season, whatever the actual impact to flora and fauna.

New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. Non-dwellers inquire, And what of the other cities? Demographers note, not just in these three cities, but in any city containing a strong Jewish population.

Morphing into 'the People of the Blog.' People have asked, will the advent of blogging obviate the need for traditional journalism? Others have asked, what of books? Have they no place in the Jewish future? The answer is complex, and is debated by experts in other places. As it is written in the book of Yul Brynner, "so it shall be written, and so it shall be done."

Spiritual seekers. Entertainment Tonight asks, who is considered a spiritual seeker? The National Enquirer says, If the embrace of spirituality is intended to deflect attention from their bomb of a movie career, they are not considered seekers. Rabbi Boteach says, Kabbalah for the sake of career is not Kabbalah.

The weight of Torah. How much does a Torah weigh? A rabbi once said, Torah is the weight of all that was and all that will be, plus the expectations of one's parents. Countered a parent, we don't want to be a burden, do what you think is best, as long as you're happy.

Nes, a miracle. What is a miracle? The Orthodox say, every aspect of our lives is a miracle, from the time we get up in the morning until we go to sleep. The Conservative say, life is a miracle but our choices are our own. The Reform say tikkun olam is our chance to create our own miracles. The Vatican countered, it is not a miracle unless we so declare it.

Temporarily based. How many years make a "temporary" dwelling? Existentialists say, all dwellings are temporary, because life is temporary. Single columnists say, while everything is temporary, a dwelling is temporary until it becomes a home filled with love. Parents say, even if you are evicted from your apartment, you will always have a home with us.

Enhance. What parts of religious or social institutions require enhancement? Synagogue rabbis say, it is written: "Our house is a house of prayer, and so it will be called among the nations." The twentysomething and thirtysomething were sought but could not be reached for comment. But PresenTense Magazine has written, Because current institutional structures do not permit our generation to flourish—we need to create space, in print, online and in-person, to carry on the conversation.

Generation Tech. Said the professors of media studies, What is Generation Tech? Is it Generation X or Generation Y? Wired Magazine replied, X+Y=Tech, as it is written, "Those who have MySpace or Facebook accounts, or who engage in text messaging." And if the parents should ask, what is the difference between text messaging and instant messaging, the children will respond, LOL.

Conference on Jewish student identity. A third conference will take place in March 2007.

Limited number. Some people meet their spouses and cease their blogging. But others who meet via blogging go on to blog together in joint blogs about how much they love each other. Other couples say, that's so sweet. And singles say, if you'll excuse me, I have to go hurl.

Blogger parties. The sages recall there once was in New York a blogger party at which bloggers wore stickers with funny phrases on them as conversation pieces. And it came to pass that one blogger wore her sticker—which read "I take money from homeless people"—on her shirt for the entire train ride from Murray Hill back to the Upper West Side.

Anonymous. The rabbis say, anonymity is deception, as it is written, "I am God." As God identifies Godself, so should we identify ourselves. But there are other rabbis who say, God is sometimes hidden, as it is said, "I am that I am." Another rabbi points out, we learn from the Book of Esther that sometimes God is even more hidden. As God's name does not appear in the megillah, sometimes our names must be hidden in order to achieve miracles.

Beit Hillel/Beit Shammai. Two opposing houses of Jewish thought in the Talmudic era.

Words are powerful. As the cliché says, "the pen is mightier than the sword." As the writer says, "The word is mighty, and words can wound. Still, opposite a word, a smart writer would probably prefer another word."

The conversation continues. Beyond the original document, as the editors of PresenTense have said, the articles are just the beginning of the conversation—the real goal is to create multiple opportunities for young Jews to connect, as we continue to converse on the issues that are important to our generation.

CAJE

In another example from our own experience, the annual Jewlicious Festival in Long Beach, CA, creates an opportunity for hundreds of students from across North America to meet their peers of varying religious affiliations "in the live," while being treated to endless educational and social options over the course of a three-day weekend. The event, billed as an expression of "Jewnity," is a modular model inspired by the Internet itself, with different channels offering different levels and modalities of engagement. No religious affiliation is pushed on any participant. There's no "educational minimum," and because it's largely student-organized, the event is filled with young, relevant voices from lecture rooms to the concert stage. Multiple disciplines are addressed through multiple channels and access points, just like the Internet, providing participants the opportunity to surf to those topics that intrigue them. All the while there is a definite respect present for religious observance framing the bounds of the discourse, an organizing framework around which creativity is clustered.

V. Coming to Terms with the Paradigm Shift: Push, but Don't Push Too Hard
For the Jewish Community to survive and thrive, and the chain of tradition to remain unbroken, Jewish educators should not be intimidated by the universe of choices that the Internet provides. They need to take the lead in adapting to Information Age modes of transmission. Teachers, rabbis, and informal educators alike are entrusted with a product that has proven its success throughout the generations, a legacy that arguably makes life better and adds value to everyday existence. Jews of today are searching for the meaning of life, just as Jews did in generations past -- and educators should be confident that they have the most fitting tradition of meaning for Jews. Being in possession of such a treasure, however, is only worth so much; without sharing the wisdom, the value become degraded.

Educators, therefore, should not wait for the young to come to them: the youth will not pull, will not go out of their way to search out that that does not present itself easily, since they live lives that are already oversaturated by information, and, in many cases, do not even know that they are searching for the very knowledge the Jewish tradition possesses. Instead, the process of education should be a process involving data-pushing, that is, spreading what knowledge the educator possesses across multiple media, making ideas and reasons open and apparent, and enabling the youth to engage in multiple ways, each according to where they are passing through.

But when pushing out these ideas, it is important not to push too hard: As marketing firms have learned, over-selling can be even more deadly to a product than not selling at all. Educators should remain true to their ideals, authentic in their aspirations, and transparent in their motives. By adapting their behavior to the protocols of the Information Age, educators will find themselves as co-creators in a new age of Jewish consciousness, writing another chapter in *Pirkei Avot, the Ethics of the Fathers*: And the People of the Great Assembly gave the *Torah* to the Rabbis, and the Rabbis gave it to their students, who uploaded it onto the Internet, where it could be accessed by all.

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