In order to understand Steinschneider’s contribution to Jewish literature in Italy and his interest in Italian culture in general, it is necessary to dwell on his vast network of friends and intellectual contacts as they appear in his works and correspondence. At that time, scholarly information was mainly transmitted by letter, which explains why the accumulation of knowledge was not always systematic and linear, but often depended on casual encounters and personal idiosyncrasies. His letters are monuments of erudition that cast an invaluable light onto the intellectual world of many of the key figures of the European *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and represent as well a precious key in appraising the kinds of social relationships prevalent between scholars and lay people, Jews and Christians, in the crucial period when both Germany and Italy were becoming independent.

However, the dispersal of the mostly unpublished correspondence to and from Steinschneider and the scant interest shown until recently in 19th-century epistolography make it difficult to rightly assess the contents and the extent of his international connections. To establish a list of Steinschneider’s correspondents is by no means an easy task. His library, together with many of his private documents, manuscripts and letters, came into the custody of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York after his death in 1907. All this material was offered by Adeline Goldberg, Steinschneider’s trusted collaborator until his last days, and purchased through the munificence of Jacob H. Schiff at the insistence of Alexander Marx and George Alexander Kohut.

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1 I owe special thanks to Ms. Ellen Kastel and Mr. David Sclar, archivists at JTS (Jewish Theological Seminary) in New York, for their invaluable help and support to me while studying Steinschneider’s correspondence there.

2 Cf. G. A. Kohut, “Steinschneideriana,” in *Studies in Jewish Bibliography and Related Subjects in Memory of Abraham Solomon Freidus (1867–1923)* (New York: Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1929), p. 86. To this collection were later added the letters addressed to Steinschneider which were offered to the JTS by Ephraim Deinard. Cf.
In recent years the epistolary collection has been put in alphabetical order according to the authors of the extant letters, but some of them have not been correctly identified, others escaped the attention of the cataloguers and there are still many boxes with unsorted material. Moreover, no catalogue of the letters themselves exists, and they are neither chronologically nor typologically ordered. In the partial list of correspondents we find no mention either of the letters’ contents or of the languages in which they were written. This situation required a thorough revision of all the correspondence ex novo and in loco, an investigation that has proved invaluable, considerably enlarging the number of known correspondents and revealing new facts about Steinschneider’s Italian connections. Unfortunately, Steinschneider did not keep copies of his own letters and therefore in most cases we can only infer their contents from the answers and questions that were addressed to him by his Italian correspondents. Nevertheless, in the Samuel David Luzzatto archives at the Centro Bibliografico dell’Unione delle Comunità Ebraiche Italiane in Rome, I was able to find 67 letters and short notes sent by Steinschneider to S. D. Luzzatto between April 1844 and September 1865. Some other documents relating to Steinschneider are to be found at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana in Rome.

Moreover, it has been possible to fill many lacunae in our knowledge of Steinschneider’s vast network of contacts on the Italian peninsula through the study of his published letter-exchanges, such as the one with Prince Baldassarre Boncompagni (1821–1894) and the ones that appeared in the Italian Jewish journal, Vessillo Israelitico. Other sources have also been very helpful, mostly articles by Steinschneider.


1 Since the bulk of the correspondence has been microfilmed, it is this version that I have checked, courtesy of the JTS Archives. The call number of the Steinschneider papers is ARC 108, JTS archives (henceforth: JTS).

2 In a letter at the Centro Bibliografico, Archivio Shadal No. 271, dated September 10, 1857, Steinschneider wrote to S. D. Luzzatto: “Io non fo copie delle mie lettere.”

3 I am grateful to Dr Gisèle Lévy, librarian at the Centro Bibliografico dell’UCEI (henceforth: CB), and to her assistant David Jacobini for their help in Rome.

4 My thanks to Gad Freudenthal, who called my attention to this information, recorded by Delio Vania Proverbio in his introduction to the catalogue B. Richler (ed.), Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 2008), when this article was already in print.