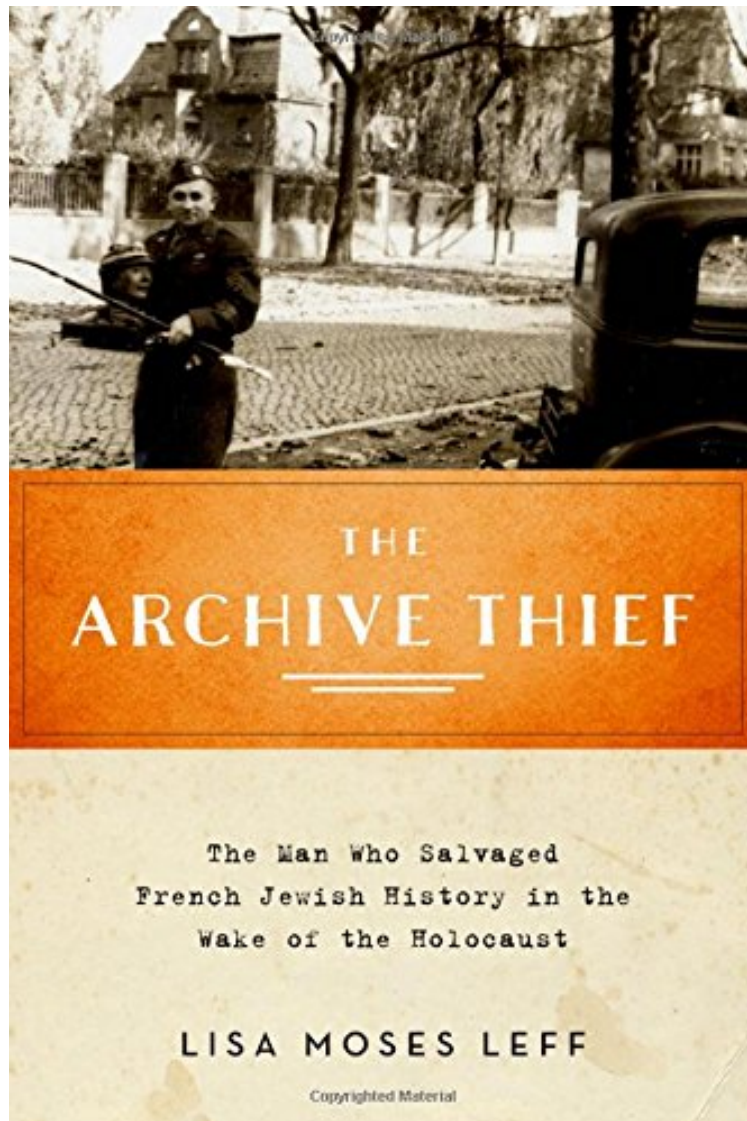


(Download pdf ebook) The Archive Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust (Oxford Series on History and Archives)

The Archive Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust (Oxford Series on History and Archives)

Lisa Moses Leff

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Lisa Moses Leff : The Archive Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust (Oxford Series on History and Archives) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be

worth my time, and all praised *The Archive Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust* (Oxford Series on History and Archives):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Words matter because they are what history is made of. By KGRemarkable information about the creation of history in general and French Jewish history in particular. original documents reveal and preserve precious information. facts replace silent ignorance. The long history of Jews in France is not common knowledge. The efforts of one flawed man to save this information and make it public are brilliantly revealed in this book. I recommend this book to all Jews, to people interested in how history is written and to folks who can see a person in many shades of gray and not simply in stark contrasts. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Beautifully written. By Valeria I'm loving this book! It has a creative view of the archive, history and their interconnection. Impressive the contradictory role of one man in the making and destruction of the archives. Beautifully written. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Customer A fascinating and revealing story, beautifully rendered. It is simultaneously a detective story and cultural history--a rare combination.

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, Jewish historian Zosa Szajkowski gathered up tens of thousands of documents from Nazi buildings in Berlin, and later, public archives and private synagogues in France, and moved them all, illicitly, to New York. In *The Archive Thief*, Lisa Moses Leff reconstructs Szajkowski's story in all its ambiguity. Born into poverty in Russian Poland, Szajkowski first made his name in Paris as a communist journalist. In the late 1930s, as he saw the threats to Jewish safety rising in Europe, he broke with the party and committed himself to defending his people in a new way, as a scholar associated with the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Following a harrowing 1941 escape from France and U.S. army service, Szajkowski struggled to remake his life as a historian, eking out a living as a YIVO archivist in postwar New York. His scholarly output was tremendous nevertheless; he published scores of studies on French Jewish history that opened up new ways of thinking about Jewish emancipation, modernization, and the rise of modern antisemitism. But underlying Szajkowski's scholarly accomplishments were the documents he stole, moved, and eventually sold to American and Israeli research libraries, where they remain today. Part detective story, part analysis of the construction of history, *The Archive Thief* offers a window into the debates over the rightful ownership of contested Jewish archives and the powerful ideological, economic, and psychological forces that have made Jewish scholars care so deeply about preserving the remnants of their past.

"[A] brilliant new book...Leff has produced a page-turning account that offers a model for how post-Holocaust Jewish history should be written. The work ponders questions that should interest both specialist and generalist readers and ought to be assigned widely and debated extensively."--Nathan Kurz, *English Historical* "[A] superb book...Pages fly by as her meticulous and surprising study of the extraordinary life of her 'hero' keeps her reader breathless...[A]n astonishing work of history, founded on a group of original documents by means of which she raises fundamental questions about the very nature of the archive as it fluctuates between being a state memoir and a way to preserve a particular history and culture."--*Journal of Modern History* "[H]ow the chaos, needs, and rivalries of post-Second World War Jewish collectors and institutions played into [Szajkowski's] hands, is the subject of Lisa Moses Leff's engrossing and painstakingly documented book. Her research was made all the more demanding by the fact that there is no way of knowing all that is actually missing from collections...It is the wider context of her book that is so fascinating, for it raises important questions about the very nature of archives themselves, particularly what she calls 'archives of catastrophe'."--*Times Literary Supplement* "Through Szajkowski's personal biography, Leff has illuminated the larger story of how Jewish archives and libraries were constructed and reconfigured in the aftermath of World War II, as the centers of gravity in the Jewish world shifted from Europe to Israel and the United States...Leff casts new light on this transformative moment in postwar Jewish life. As a result of her beautifully written and deeply researched book, we have a greater appreciation of the degree to which the libraries and archives on which we depend are themselves 'historical artifacts'. In this sense, Leff's thought-provoking and imaginative book raises questions that will intrigue all historians. This work also constitutes a fitting tribute to a man who, despite his flaws and weaknesses, made immense contributions to the field of Jewish history."--*Jewish History* "Lisa Moses Leff tells Szajkowski's fascinating story in a book as gripping as a crime novel, with profound insight into the role played by archive collections in the modern construction of national histories. Leff creates a complex portrait of this 'archive thief,' who was no simple villain. Szajkowski's story is stunning and Leff tells it exceptionally well. *The Archive Thief* is a meticulously researched scholarly work that deftly incorporates archival sources, Szajkowski's published writings, and his private correspondence. It is beautifully written and sophisticated without ever becoming pedantic."--*H-France* "The *Archive Thief*' is a richly detailed and sympathetic portrait that unfolds with elements of a detective story. In writing about the trajectory of Szajkowski's life and career, she raises provocative questions about the nature of collecting, the role of archives and where they belong, and the very writing of history."--*The Jewish Week* "A work of learned detection and a history of the making of history, this absorbing study is also a portrait of, perhaps, the oddest of all

creators of modern Jewish scholarship. A shy, roguish, charming man, self-taught, an erstwhile Communist and fighter in the French Foreign Legion, Zosa Szajkowski's jagged, complex life is explored in this work with perceptiveness, and commendable empathy."--Steven J. Zipperstein, Daniel E. Koshland Professor in Jewish Culture and History, Stanford University"With her dogged research, keen analysis and scintillating writing, Lisa Leff in *The Archive Thief* marries historical scholarship with the detective genre. The story of Zosa Szajkowski could have been - and maybe still will be--the stuff of a great mystery novel, played out on multiple continents, with a perplexing villain who sometimes seems like a hero. But instead Lisa Leff has used these details to show the complex work done by archives and the deep ideological meaning associated with the documents of the past."--Hasia Diner, Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History and Director of the Goldstein-Goren Center for American Jewish History, New York University"Why did an accomplished Jewish historian steal tens of thousands of historical documents? In unraveling that mystery, Lisa Moses Leff has created a compelling personal portrait, while at the same time elucidating key issues of Jewish history and historiography in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Meticulously researched and beautifully written, *The Archive Thief* is more than just a fine work of scholarship; it is also a page-turner."--Aaron Lansky, author of *Outwitting History: The Amazing Adventures of a Man Who Rescued a Million Yiddish Books*"Leff, in this deeply researched and intriguing book, draws a nuanced portrait of a scholar who turned to crime to preserve his status as a historian of modern Jewish history."--Times of Israel

About the Author Lisa Moses Leff is Professor of History at American University in Washington, D.C. She is the author of *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France*.