In the spring of 2010, I received a faculty development grant to continue research initiated four years ago for a book I am writing called, *Advertising, Designer Identities, and the American Jewish Experience*. The book, which investigates the impact of advertising on the design of American Jewish identities, will be published by Rutgers’ University Press. Despite its ubiquity within the cultural and visual landscape of American Jewish life and discourse, all too often, advertising has taken a back seat to other media such as film, literature, television, and comedy. Essentially, advertising receives nothing more than a passing reference. My project accordingly aims to “out” advertising as an instrumental tool in the construction of American Jewish identities.

My faculty development grant enabled me to pursue vital research for my forthcoming book in the Dorot Jewish division of the New York Public library. In order to argue for the instrumentality of advertising in the design of American Jewish identities, it is critical to examine the evidence of American Jewish experiences left behind in the Jewish journals and newspapers of communities across the United States. By following various communities of American Jews over the course of the twentieth century through papers like *The American Israelite* in Cincinnati, the *B’nai Brith Messenger* in Los Angeles, the *Chicago Sentinel*, the *Texas Jewish Herald Frontier*, and *The Orthodox Union*, my research can effectively contextualize the various pockets and denominations of American Jewish life, and ascertain how advertising spoke to different American Jews and contoured their identities. Due to the vast scope of my research, my examination of the above-mentioned papers and journals focused on two important marketing moments within the Jewish calendar: Passover and the Jewish New Year—Rosh Hashanah. I was stunned, yet fascinated to observe how Easter attire was advertised alongside Passover products in various newspapers early in the twentieth century, indicating to assimilating European immigrants how, in the words of the Jewish Enlightenment philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn, to be “a man on the street and a Jew at home.” Such were the subtle messages conveyed to Americanizing Jews.

Thanks to the grant, I had the opportunity to spend one week reviewing microfilm, thereby making good headway into this essential research. I am excited to be able to present original material that will ultimately demonstrate to the readers of my book the heterogeneity of American Jewish life, and the important nuances in the American Jewish experience signaled by advertising. And, while scholarly studies of American Jews regularly consult Jewish journals and newspapers, to my knowledge no one has undertaken a critical analysis of the advertisements along with the content and layout as a window into the development of Jewish life across America.

Although American Jews were one of the earliest markets to be targeted by the advertising industry, in many respects the advertising history embedded within my project has general applications. I am particularly thankful for the opportunity to extend my knowledge of advertising by reviewing thousands of print ads, and I look forward to sharing my insights in my History of Graphic Design, Advertising, and Illustration courses. I additionally hope to have the opportunity to present my work to the larger community of Otis faculty.