Jewish Virtual Learning Networks

A mapping of online 'Communities of Practice' in the North American Jewish institutional world

Submitted by

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"This report is dedicated to Jack Slomovic,

who served as a founding Board member of the Jim Joseph Foundation.

His recent passing is a prodigious loss to his family, colleagues, and the community.

Jack was an exceptionally strong individual—a Holocaust survivor who fought for Israel

statehood. He was an ardent supporter of Jewish education.

His contributions will be missed.

May these pages serve as a tribute to his memory."

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Executive Summary

This survey represents a first mapping of professional online learning networks in the North American Jewish institutional world.

- The theoretical concept of 'Communities of Practice' is manifest in a variety of Jewish Virtual Learning Networks (JVLNs), ranging from groups with scheduled meetings and well-organized facilitation through loose online networks in which people may participate at their convenience.

- The contemporary concept of 'Communities of Practice' is seen by some as corresponding to classic forms of Jewish community-based learning.

- The results presented here are drawn from a literature survey and analysis, interviews and on-line questionnaires

- Most professional JVLNs have institutional sponsors.

- Most professional JVLNs have facilitators, moderators or list managers, who play a crucial role in the group's functioning.

- JVLNs efficiently and affordably enable people with common professional interests to share knowledge across boundaries: institutional, denominational and geographic. Transcending geographic distance is a particularly important advantage; the vast majority of the groups are national or international.

- Most JVLNs recruit members within Jewish organizations, not from the general public.

- JVLNs blur hierarchical relations; this is seen as one of their key advantages.

- The main area of interest among JVLNs is education, followed by leadership development.

- The primary areas of need are funding (especially for paid facilitators) and training.

- The greatest challenges facing JVLNs are their need to constantly adapt to changing technology and the necessity of finding (and funding) skilled facilitators.

- The majority of respondents said they had not received formal training in JVLNs facilitation. Of those who did, the Jim Joseph Foundation Fellows – Leading Educators Online program initiated by JJF and Lookstein Center was the most commonly cited.

Comparison of different formats

- Two basic categories of Jewish Virtual Learning Networks were distinguished: Communities of Practice-Professional Learning Networks (CoP-PLNs), which have scheduled facilitated meetings and pre-established set of topics; and Professional Discussion Groups (PDGs), which refers to formats of online networks such as listservs and email groups that have less regulated participation. There is, in fact, a spectrum of types of JVLNs, with some formats fitting between these two categories, which should be seen as preliminary and not absolute.

- CoP-PLNs tend to have fewer, more active participants, while PDGs may host large lists of mainly passive members.

- CoP-PLNs are more likely to focus around one profession and subject, while PDGs more often span professions.

- CoP-PLNs are less likely to include volunteer leaders than PDGs.

Key to acronyms used *in this report*

JVLN: Jewish Virtual Learning Network. This is the overarching general term used to indicate all the formats of groups included in the research.

CoP: Community of Practice. This is a theoretical concept of interactive learning communities.

CoP-PLN: Community of Practice-Professional Learning Network. These two similar formats have (among other distinctive features) scheduled meetings and agendas.

PDG: Professional Discussion Group. This includes formats such as email mailing lists, listservs, wikis and nings.[1]

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1   The status of wikis and nings is not clear-cut. Some experts consider them to be internet communication tools that could be used either by a CoP-PLN learning community or as a platform for a PDG discussion group. Others indicated that wikis and nings are a kind of CoP or at least a significant step towards CoP. As the number of such JVLNs was very small, we opted not to include them in the more clearly defined CoP-PLN category.

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Introduction

Online learning groups and "Communities of Practice" represent a rapidly growing phenomenon, and the Jewish world is successfully taking part in the professional and educational opportunities made available through these relatively new forms of technology-based networks. Though much has been written on CoPs, this survey represents the first effort to map, through quantitative and qualitative empirical data, the field of Jewish professional online Communities of Practice, learning networks and discussion groups.

Definition of a Community of Practice

The concept of "Communities of Practice" (CoP) was developed in 1991 by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in their book *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. They propose that learning is not the passive gaining of knowledge from an exterior source, but an interactive process in which the learner is an active explorer and creative contributor within a learning community. Correspondingly, "participation" is considered the central trait of learning, rather than "acquisition." Learning means participating in the production of knowledge, and this participatory learning occurs within a group. Analysis results from deliberation among the members of the community, which then puts their ideas into practice, shares the resulting experience for further scrutiny and so forth (Engeström 2007; Plaskoff 2008). CoPs offer, in the words of Judith Zorfass (2007: 37-38), "…ongoing sharing, support, collaboration and accountability…" which is "essential to combat the isolation that is endemic to the teaching profession." Members of a Community of Practice share the experience of generating new knowledge through their interaction. Many professionals in a wide range of fields (education, medicine, business) are involved in communities of practice as a mode of learning and communication.

There are a variety of modes of organizations which correspond to Lave and Wenger's theoretical concept of a Community of Practice and operate along the basic principles they outlined. Some call themselves by the name "Community of Practice". Others use the term Professional Learning Network (PLN), which is similar to a CoP with the added specification of that the group consists of professionals organized around an issue related to their work (Hord & Sommers, 2007). Some, such as listservs or Google groups, which have a moderator and mailing list but are not a real 'community', may more accurately be called Networks of Practice (Esther Feldman, personal communication, 27 June, 2011) or Professional Discussion Groups (similar to Berge & Collins (1995) concept of computer-mediated scholarly discussion groups). Some groups refer to themselves using the internet application or platform which they use, such as listserv, email discussion group (i.e. Google or Yahoo), wiki or ning; depending on the nature of their interaction, these may be Networks or Communities of Practice. The different names may reflect subtle but important differences between how various types of organizations function, although similar groups may simply have chosen to call themselves by different terms.

One reason for the multiplicity of names is the novelty of this type of organization. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, it is in the nature of this mode of organization and communication to be flexible and adaptable. The concept of a Community of Practice manifests in different formats under different circumstances and according to the specific needs of each group. A single organization may change during the course of its operation.

Strictly defining a CoP according to Lave and Wenger's theoretical concept necessitates both a community and a practice. More loosely, some consider the activity or practice the main component, and the community may form as a result.

Certainly, the concept is still under development; in a literature survey of 140 previous studies of CoPs, we found that about a third looked at the theory behind the CoP phenomenon (a complete reference list and detailed report on the literature survey and analysis are given in Appendix A). Theoretical explorations in this relatively new field are far more common than in the related but more established field of informal education, in which only about 3% of recent studies considered theoretical issues (Cohen, E.H., 2007). The theoretical concept of the CoP has a strong ideological component and proponents express high expectations for its potential impact on education and community.

Jewish Communities of Practice

In the Jewish world, Communities of Practice have been organized among, for example, teachers, directors, fundraisers, social workers, educators for summer camps, special needs educators, even accountants and computer experts. CoPs provide a forum for exchange among Jewish professionals and lay leaders in different geographic areas or those affiliated with the various denominations, national organizations and Jewish school networks. Such CoPs are being used for various purposes such as training, connecting alumni of intensive programs (thus promoting their long-term impacts), and providing forums for addressing a wide range of technical, logistical, financial, pedagogic and content-related issues in Jewish organized communal life.

As we heard in the interviews during this research, the ideology of CoPs has been adopted and adapted by proponents in the Jewish world. Some of those involved with Jewish communities of practice see them as a revolutionary mode of operation, enabling a more tolerant, non-hierarchical and pluralistic type of learning which is not possible through traditional types of education. Moreover, some see CoPs as a modern manifestation of classic Jewish polemics, with roots in Talmudic discourse, and therefore a characteristically Jewish form of learning. Concurrent with the rise of communities of practice in the Jewish world, there is also a revival of the *chavruta* (study partner) model of learning in modern Jewish educational settings, and both represent interactive, relationship-based learning (Holzer & Kent, 2011; Raider-Roth & Holzer, 2009). Internet-based JVLNs, in specific, are similar to the *chavruta* model of learning, in that in both learning partners move within a nonlinear and inter-connected field of texts, entering into an ongoing dialogue with other commentators who are not physically present (Alexenberg, 2008; Rosen, 2000). Further, some *chavruta* partners, today, meet online rather than in person (Holzer & Kent, 2011). Future research exploring the similarities between these two phenomena may provide insights into both.

In particular, the ideological component regarding the importance of the CoP concept for contemporary education and community-building influences training programs for CoP moderators. However, ideology

seems to be less strongly expressed among practitioners and participants in the field. In the interviews and open comments in the surveys, we found that practitioners tend to be more focused on the practical benefits of web-based professional learning networks.

One of the first Jewish Communities of Practice to be organized was Kehiliyot. The purpose of Kehiliyot was to offer online training to facilitators of existing JVLNs which were addressing needs of the North American Jewish community in various areas such as education, social work, and outreach. In this way it may be considered a 'meta-CoP'. Its participants (numbering between 10 and 20) were very active and satisfied. In fact, many facilitators in Jewish CoPs today were once involved with Kehiliyot. However, the CoP could not maintain its funding and was therefore dismantled. All that remains are the informal connections between the alumni.

The Jim Joseph Fellows program has to some extent expanded upon the work begun by Kehiliyot. It too put forth as its goal to support the development of leaders and facilitators who will launch new CoPs (virtual and in-person in all their various formats) within their institutions and domain. Some of the new Jewish Virtual Learning Networks we encountered during this survey are a result of the Jim Joseph program.

An operational definition

For the purposes of this research, the general term Jewish Virtual Learning Network (JVLN) is used to describe all the forms of Communities of Practice, email discussion groups, Professional Learning Networks, etc.[2] A JVLN is defined as a group of people

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2   As noted by Levy (2005), scientific definitions must be "reliable" and "clear"; the possibility of other valid ways to define a phenomenon does not invalidate a reliable clear definition.

who interact regularly via the internet in order to share knowledge and learn about a common area of interest. In the current study, only networks in which members actively engage in learning were considered, not purely social networks. All have some connection to the Jewish community through content or membership. Additionally, the survey only covers organizations that operate primarily online, although some also have occasional face-to-face interactions.

One of the parameters of the research was to investigate North American JVLNs. The individuals contacted to participate in the survey were all associated with North American Jewish institutions and organizations. We found, however, that the online nature of JVLNs and the reality of the 'virtual world' make such geographic definitions less precise and less relevant. Many of the groups had at least some participants who lived outside North America (often in Israel). Nevertheless, the intention was to investigate the phenomenon as it pertains to the North American Jewish institutional world and we did not include, for example, online networks conducted in Hebrew for mainly Israeli participants.

Sociologically speaking, in North America where the Jews are well-acculturated into the general society ethnicity depends heavily on networks. This is particularly true for today's young adults, who gain important information and contacts through informal networks (virtual or face-to-face) which may be considered Communities of Practice. However, the current research focuses on Jewish *professional* learning networks, that is, those run by and for the benefit of Jewish institutions and organizations.

In sum, those contacted for the survey were individuals actively involved in a group of professionals, connected with a North American Jewish institution, who interact regularly via the internet for the purpose of interactive learning and knowledge-sharing.

Methods

Literature survey

A literature search was conducted on recent studies of Communities of Practice. 140 sample articles were coded according to the methods employed and the core issues addressed. The articles were located through the scholar.google search engine using the keywords "Community of Practice" or "Communities of Practice". Articles selected were either published in peer-reviewed journals, chapters in books, or published proceedings from academic conferences. Articles which did not make explicit the methods used were not included in the sample. A sample of articles meeting these criteria was selected at random. Analysis of this literature was helpful in defining the parameters of the current research.

Interviews

Fifteen interviews were conducted. Three were held face-to-face in Israel and the remaining twelve were conducted by telephone with people in the US. The first interviewees were suggested to us by Naava Frank and Charles Edelsberg. These interviewees recommended others, thus building the list through a snowball method. The interviewees were Jewish professionals holding a variety of central positions in JVLNs, whether in relation to content, facilitating, or the technical challenges presented by on-line communication. The interviews gave a deep and rich view from the perspective of those involved in the field. In a few cases we encountered some resistance to the idea of

the online survey, emanating from an ideologically-based concern that such a research format would not adequately capture the uniqueness of each experience in a Community of Practice.

Among the previously published studies on CoPs, just under half (47%) used interviews as one of their methods of investigating the phenomenon.

Compilation of survey population

We identified some 1500 people active in major international, national, and regional institutions and foundations pertaining to various facets of Jewish life in North America including the major Jewish communities, the various denominations, Bureaus of Jewish education, Lookstein (animating the Lookjed list) and the Mandel School North America Alumni.

A preliminary inquiry was sent to representatives from these institutions, which asked if they were aware of a JVLN operating in their area and if so to send us its name and contact information (see Appendix B). This provided the basis for the survey population who received the online questionnaire.

Questionnaires

The questionnaire was designed based on issues identified in the interviews with experts (see Appendix B). The questionnaire was co-authored by Dr. Erik

Cohen and Dr. Naava Frank,[3] with input from many others including the fifteen interviewees whose comments were essential in identifying the issues to be covered. Drafts of the questionnaire were sent to the Jim Joseph Foundation and to experts such as Dr. Shalom Berger, Esther Feldman and others for revision.

The finalized version was distributed online via the SurveyMonkey tool to facilitators, managers and moderators of professional JVLNs. Eighty-four completed questionnaires were collected in three waves, each wave targeting a different type of JVLN.[4] Most of the respondents were supportive of the research and cooperative. Given the busy schedules of these professionals, it is not trivial that they took the time to fill out the questionnaire and, in many cases, to add comments. Some individuals we contacted responded that they were not directly involved in a JVLN; in some cases they forwarded the questionnaire to colleagues they felt were more appropriate respondents. We did not find among the practitioners any ideologically-based resistance to the idea of the research itself.

As only a fifth of the previous studies in the compiled sample used questionnaires or surveys (see Appendix A, Table 1, page 36 below), the current study makes an important contribution to the quantitative data in the field, providing a broad picture and allowing for a statistical comparison between types of JVLNs.

Data analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using classic distribution tables and a multi-dimensional tool known as Smallest Space Analysis (SSA). The SSA

graphically portrays the structural relationships of the data. It begins with the calculation of a matrix of the correlations among selected variables. The variables are plotted as points in a 'map' in such a way that strongly correlated items are located close together and weakly correlated items are far apart. All of the variables are considered simultaneously in the construction of the map. Sub-populations (in this case, members in different types of JVLNs) may be compared in the context of the map by introducing them as 'external variables'. External variables are placed in the map according to their correlations with the set of primary variables; the structure of the map is fixed, and does not change with the addition of the external variables.

Confidentiality

Survey respondents agreed to provide full details for the purpose of the research in exchange for an assurance of confidentiality. The aim of the research was a general mapping of the field, not a case study of any particular JVLN. Therefore, even references to comments made in response to the open questions or in the interviews are made in such a way that the identity of the individual person or individual JVLN cannot be discerned.

The data in the appendices is also presented in such a way as to preserve the strictest confidentiality. In Appendix F, which gives the responses to open questions in the questionnaire, all specific references have been deleted. Further, the responses to each question have been arranged so that a given line in the list does not pertain to the same JVLN in response to each of the open questions. All specific information pertaining to organizations, CoPs or individuals cited in this report was already available in the public domain (internet sites, journals, books, proceedings from conferences, etc.) and does not infringe on the confidentiality of the survey.

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3   Naava Frank was both on the research team and an informant for the research.

4   The last questionnaire was filled out very late and therefore could not be included in the data analysis.

Results

Basic parameters of the JVLNs

Self-definition. There were a variety of ways in which questionnaire respondents and interviewees described the online networks in which they were active. Some referred to it as a chavruta (Hebrew term for a learning partnership) or even simply "the group." The most common terms respondents used were Community of Practice (35%), email discussion group (26%) and listserv (17%). Other names such as Professional Learning Network, or technical terms such as portal, wiki, or ning, were mentioned by small numbers of respondents.

For the purposes of the following analysis, a Community of Practice (CoP) refers specifically to groups that have a permanent set of participants and that deal with a pre-established (even if vast) set of topics. The term Professional Learning Network (PLN) has essentially the same format, but specifies that the members are professionals and implies that the purpose of the learning will have some bearing on their work lives. Also, the two terms give emphasis to *practice* or *learning*, respectively. CoPs and PLNs have scheduled meetings. Over time participants become well-acquainted with each other and a group dynamic is set into motion. The meetings may take place face-to-face or online, although this survey, as noted, only considered those that meet primarily online. Typically, on-line communities with scheduled meetings convened every month, but the frequency of interaction varied widely; some held weekly meetings, others had only a few meetings a year.

In contrast, the various types of electronic mailing lists, discussion groups and interactive websites usually do not have scheduled meetings, but are open at all times, to be used at the convenience of the participants. Some participants are continuously active in the group's online conversation, while others only seldom post a question, reaction or opinion, remaining mainly as passive observers. Some of these groups allow participants to post comments anonymously. This enables them to voice criticisms and difficulties concerning work without the risk of being identified by their colleagues and employers; at the same time, anonymous participation makes it more difficult to create a group dynamic. It is significant that the word 'community' is lacking in these terms. Compared with CoPs, these formats have a relatively more open, but also more fragmentary, style of participation. At the same time, these web-based applications are more tightly defined in terms of format, proscribed by the configuration of the specific programs being used.

However, it is important to remember (as pointed out by Rabbi Dr. Berger of the Lookstein Center) that care must be taken in creating boundaries between the types of JVLNs surveyed. An active listserv, in fact, was used as an example of an online community of practice by Wenger, White and Smith in *Digital Habitats* (2009). Wikis, also, represent an intermediate step between

email lists with erratic participation and facilitated CoPs. The formats other than CoPs and PLNs are indicated by the term Professional Discussion Groups (PDGs).

The full cross-tabulations for all questionnaire items according to these two categories (CoP-PLN and PDG) and for the total population of respondents are given in Appendix C.[5]

Duration. All the JVLNs surveyed are relatively new: 83% have been founded since 2000 and 59% were launched within the past five years. The oldest, a single example, has been operating since 1990. While the same group may exist for a number of years its participants may change. The CoP and PLN formats are growing particularly rapidly; 57% of the surveyed groups in this category were established in 2010 or 2011, as compared to 15% of the PDGs.

The interviewed experts spoke about the lifespan and life cycle of Communities of Practice. In analyzing these interviews we understood that the launching of a CoP (in its various forms) presents an inherent challenge because the decision to begin the group must be made prior to the convening of the group itself. The individuals and/or institutions who wish to launch a CoP must take the first steps in deciding the preliminary format and goals of the groups. Then they must recruit participants and orient them in the functioning of a CoP so they can become active partners in making subsequent decisions regarding the unfolding and development of the group's format, goals and activities.

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5   A second set of cross-tabulations combined CoPs, PLNs, Wikis and Ning groups into one category and compared these with the other formats (listservs & email discussion groups). Since only one group was defined as a Wiki and two as Ning groups, the results were essentially the same. In this report, the data for the CoP-PLN category are used. The cross-tabulations for the alternative categories are given in Appendix D.

At the other end of the lifespan of the CoP is the question of when and how the group will end, whether by an a priori decision that the group would function for a given length of time (JESNA, 2011: 7-8) by group consensus to dismantle the CoP (which, from what we heard, is a relatively rare occurrence), due to dwindling participation, or because of an institutional decision to end funding and support. A small number of respondents (some 2 or 3) indicated in the open questions that their JVLN had been organized around a particular program with a distinct timeframe, though the JVLN may continue for some time following the course.

Membership. The number of participants in the surveyed JVLNs varied widely, from only a few members to several thousand. Only a fifth of the networks had fewer than 15 active participants. A third of the networks had between 15 and 50 active participants. About a quarter had between 50 and 100 active participants. The remaining fifth had over 100 active participants. Some respondents described 'active members' as people who, for example, participate in meetings, web-seminars or classes. Others had less stringent criteria, and considered anyone who adds information or comments to the group's online discussion (even if only once or twice a year), or simply signs up online with the group, as active participants.

When passive participants were considered too, some of the largest groups claimed thousands or even tens of thousands of members—the two largest indicated some 90,000 members. Such large memberships seemed to occur primarily in the more loosely organized websites and email discussion groups (PDGs) rather than in the more community-oriented CoPs and PLNs. Gray (2004) notes the different contributions made and benefits received by members of various levels of participation in CoPs.

Based on evaluative case studies of several large CoPs in the Jewish educational world, JESNA (2011) differentiates between three levels of involvement and estimates proportions of members in a 'mature' CoP which will correspond to each type: core (10-15% of members), active (15%-20%) and peripheral (the remaining 65%-75%). The current research surveyed facilitators and moderators, who were clearly core members, but asked them only to differentiate between other members as either 'active' or 'passive'. From the larger survey population of the present research, we collected precise data on the ratio of active and passive members in the different JVLN formats, which revealed some interesting differences. First, there is a very wide range in participation. In CoP-VLNs between 13% and 88% of members are active (with an average of 46%). In the PDGs, the range is even more dramatic, from 2% to 100% being active, with an average of 25%. The higher average proportion of active members among the CoP-VLNs is in line with the definition of this category and its other characteristics. The average rate of active members in CoP-VLNs is somewhat higher than the upper end of JESNA's two categories of core and active members (35%), while the average for PDGs is the same as the lower end. However, as noted, the reality is far more diverse than the proportions of member involvement as estimated by JESNA.

While overall there was even representation of males (48%) and females (52%), there was a stark difference along gender lines in the different types of JVLNs. Females were far more active in the CoP-PLN framework; 72% of the respondents in these types of groups were women. This corresponds to the high representation of women in professions related to education, which is the primary area of interest for the Jewish CoPs. In contrast, only 37% of those in the PDGs were female.

There was also a difference in the age makeup of the facilitators / moderators / core members who represented the different types of groups in the survey. The PDGs had greater representation at both ends of the age spectrum. None of the respondents from the CoP-PLNs were under 30, whereas 8% of those from the PDGs were. At the same time, only 7% of the respondents from the CoP-PLNs were over 60, compared with 25% of those in the PDGs. This wider age range among the PDGs indicates greater representation of students and retirees; this relates to the finding discussed below that PDGs have a higher proportion of people participating as a pastime. In contrast, the CoP-PLNs, which were more directly work-related, draw from people in the midst of their career lives.

One of the features of the virtual format is the ability to transcend geographic distances which make face-to-face encounters difficult. Over half the respondents (52%) said their JVLN operates internationally, linking professional colleagues from around the world. Thus, the very concept of geographical boundaries—a virtual network 'based' in a given country—becomes indistinct. Over a third (38%) described their JVLN as national. A quarter said they operate locally, for example in Denver-Boulder Colorado, San Francisco, or the NYC metropolitan area. (Some respondents indicated more than one option, i.e. that they operate on national and international levels). The CoP-PLNs were more likely to be national groups while the PDGs were more likely to operate internationally.

The section of the questionnaire in which the respondents were asked to describe their group's participants differentiated between 'professionals' and 'volunteer leaders'. As seen in Table 1, just over half the groups included professionals from a variety of fields; the remainder limited membership to those working in

a specific profession. Some examples of field-specific groups were JVLNs for Jewish educators, professionals doing special needs work in Jewish schools, directors of early childhood Jewish programs, or professionals with the PJ Library Program. The CoP-PLNs were more likely to have members from one specific profession, while the PDGs were more often comprised of participants from various professions.

Less than a fifth of the JVLNs opened their membership to the general public, with no difference between the different types of groups. Most recruited members from one specific organization or from several similar organizations. The CoP-PLNs were more likely to recruit from one organization, the PDGs to draw from several related organizations.

About half said their JVLNs had volunteer leaders. These were usually associated with a community institution such as the local federation, or more commonly with an organization such as a school or synagogue. Only a few mentioned volunteers associated with a special interest group; two such examples were volunteers concerned with Jewish social justice, and members with knowledge of the web and internet (as opposed to the professional subject around which the group was organized).

The category "volunteer leaders", in this case, seems to refer to participants who are not involved in the group directly as part of their profession, but as members of the Jewish community with some interest in the group's function (a parent associated with a school, a synagogue member, a Jewish Federation representative). Those involved in the group as part of their professional life (whether or not they are paid for the time they spend with the JVLN) were not considered volunteers. The CoP-PLNs were far less likely to have volunteers among their members. As pointed out by one of the interviewees, this may be due in part to the more tightly delineated time commitment necessary for participation in a group with scheduled meetings. Volunteers are less likely to be able or willing to dedicate time during work hours to a JVLN that is not related to their job, whereas the professionals involved (including the facilitator and moderators) are less likely to wish to schedule meetings during the evenings and weekends. The PDGs which allow participants to contribute at their own convenience (email discussion groups etc.) do not pose this scheduling difficulty and thus a higher percentage of them included volunteer leaders.

Table 1: **Membership in various types of Jewish Virtual Learning Networks,** *(Percentage of positive responses)*

	CoP-PLNs	PDGs	Total JVLNs
Members recruited from a specific profession	58	39	47
Members recruited from a variety of professions	42	61	53
Members recruited from within a specific organization	45	62	56
Members recruited from multiple similar organizations (synagogues, camps etc.)	52	40	44
Members recruited from the general public	19	18	19
Community level volunteer leaders (federation, national)	10	36	26
Organizational level volunteer leaders (synagogue, school)	28	64	50
No volunteer leaders	72	32	47

The respondents, who were all facilitators or core members of the JVLNs, held a variety of professional positions in the institutions with which the groups were affiliated, such as: education directors of synagogues, summer camps, teacher institutes, faculty advisors, outreach consultants, communications coordinators, technology specialists, etc.

Hierarchy. One of the core concepts of the community of practice is that learners are active participants, thus blurring or spanning traditional hierarchical relationships (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The ways in which CoPs are affecting the culture of the workplace, social relations and participants' professional and personal identities are among the most interesting and important features of the phenomenon. This is attested to by the large number of the studies in the literature survey which explored personal impacts (over a third of the sampled articles), socio-political issues (about a quarter), or cultural aspects (another quarter).

Almost 80% of the respondents said their JVLNs included members from various levels of the organizational hierarchy and the same percentage said that these hierarchical relationships were blurred in the context of the group's functioning. The vast majority (72%) said this promotion of less hierarchical relationships was one of the main benefits of the JVLN. Interestingly, while the CoP-PLNs were less likely to include members from across the organizational hierarchy, they were significantly more likely to bypass those relationships within the context of the group: 91% of those in the CoP-PLNs said hierarchies were blurred, compared with 69% of those in the PDGs. Thus it seems that although the CoP-PLNs drew from a more narrow range of positions, members being mainly professionals in the organizations, within the context of the group the differences between them became

less emphasized. This was manifest through more informal relations between members, allowing for free expression of opinions. At the same time, as seen in Table 4, representatives of the CoP-PLNs were less likely to say their groups 'absolutely' reduced hierarchy. It seems the CoP-PLN format introduces informality among professionals in the same field, but the PDGs are more open to people from vastly different parts of the professional hierarchy.

The blurring of hierarchy does not mean that everyone involved holds the same level of responsibility or plays the same role in the group's functioning.

Sponsorship. Many institutions strive to establish grassroots CoPs, groups that answer a need raised by workers in the field and is then given support by the institution, because such an approach is more likely to attract participants, to generate enthusiasm and thus to succeed. Almost 80% of the respondents said their JVLN had an organizational sponsor. This was equally true across the different types of formats (a small percentage, about 4% did not know whether or not their group had a sponsor). Many of the sponsoring organizations mentioned were international, such as the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the Mandel Foundation, the Lookstein Center for Jewish Education, or the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. Some were national, such as the Ramah Commission, the Jim Joseph Foundation and the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education. Others were local, such as the Bradley University Hillel or the Community Foundation for Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago or White Meadow Temple of New Jersey. Some JVLNs had an institutional affiliation separate from their sponsor, such as with a university.

The importance of the sponsor was clearly illustrated by the history of Kehiliyot, which dissolved when

institutional sponsorship ended. Despite the informality of JVLN work, it demands great investment on the part of the facilitator and without institutional backing it cannot survive. Though JVLNs may incur lower expenses than face-to-face meetings (by largely eliminating travel and being more time efficient) they still need funds, particularly for highly trained professional facilitators who represent an expensive but indispensable resource. Other respondents, too, described JVLNs they had been involved with but which ended due to loss of their sponsor.

Facilitators. The majority of the JVLNs had a facilitator or moderator. In most cases, those who completed the online survey were the regular facilitators of a group. A small number of groups had rotating facilitators, with someone different taking on the role for a period of time or for each meeting. Other roles described were founders, organizers, list mangers or core members. Within this distinctive type of informal education, the facilitator acts as a sort of informal educator, helping participants benefit from the interactive educational opportunities of the group (Smith, 2009).

The survey included an open question about training as a JVLN facilitator. Of the sixty who responded to this question, forty said they had received no formal training; several of these noted they would find it helpful to do so. Eleven said they had received training through the Jim Joseph Foundation, three through the Lookstein Center and some mentioned specific teachers with JJF. This shows the first fruits of the initiative of the JJF-Lookstein center in providing training for CoP facilitators.

In the interviews we heard that the facilitator's role was of the utmost importance to the smooth running and survival of a community of practice. Also, some of the defunct JVLNs with which respondents had previously been involved ceased activity when they lost (or changed) facilitators. Facilitators maintain the group's activity by scheduling meetings, informing participants of the time and topic for upcoming meetings, and letting them know if some preparation is needed prior to a meeting (such as reading a certain document). Facilitators consult with participants about their needs and desires, collect and circulate reactions to past meetings, and sometimes arrange for expert guests to take part in the meetings.

Moreover, during meetings the facilitator monitors and regulates the flow of participation. This requires special skills, particularly since participants are not in the same room. One of the facilitator's responsibilities is to ensure that all members get a chance to share their opinions, concerns, experiences and information, limiting the more talkative participants and enabling more taciturn members to share their thoughts. Some JVLNs designate strict time slots for each of its activities, which the facilitator must enforce.

As noted in the report issued by JESNA (2011), the facilitators' role changes during the evolving stages of a CoP. As the group is being launched, the facilitator recruits members, helps them to arrive at agreement regarding the group's purpose, goals and design, and works to establish a trustful 'community' relationship among them. In addition to the roles discussed above, facilitators of a well-established and large group may help sub-groups form around specific issues. Facilitators may also assist in ending a CoP which has become inactive or fulfilled its stated purpose, providing some sense of closure or assisting in launching spin-off groups.

Goals, purposes and activities

Most of the respondents described their JVLNs as interactive learning communities, effective helping their members to network and keep up-to-date. In the

open question regarding the goals of the JVLNs, we saw that some of the groups' goals were quite concrete and minimalistic, such as to announce upcoming events or to provide relevant and interesting information to members. Other goals were more related to the group itself, such as creating a community of colleagues, creating a professional support network and providing a safe forum for evaluation and critique. Still others related to the fields in which they worked, such as creating programs in Jewish education and social work, and expanding their effectiveness and impact in schools and communities.

Those involved with groups of the CoP-PLN format were far more likely to say their group was a learning community "to a very great extent" whereas those involved with PDGs tended to give more emphasis to networking and keeping up to date.

A few of the many specific goals listed by respondents were to aid communication between school and families, to provide Jews everywhere with the opportunity to learn Torah, to share best practices among the Ramah summer camp network, and to publicize programs in Israel for students.

The main field in which the JVLNs operate was, by far, education (91%), followed by leadership development (57%) and a small minority (7%) in social work, with little difference between the various formats.

Most of the JVLNs' activities, by definition, took place online. Over three quarters included among their activities a listserv or electronic mailing list for distributing specific information to a registered group of people. This was particularly prevalent among PDGs. Half the respondents said their groups had occasional face-to-face meetings. Many of the interviewees stressed that at least one face-to-face meeting must take place for the participants to get to know each other on a more personal level and to maintain their interest and participation in the group. In many cases, an initial meeting such as a convention or workshop inspired the establishment of a JVLN, which enabled continued communication. Alternatively, participants may arrange a personal meeting after a period of on-line activity. The CoP-PLNs were only slightly more likely to have held face-to-face meetings.

Often, virtual meetings employed a combination of computer technology with a telephone line. In this way participants may follow a meeting on their computer screen, view power-point presentations, guest speakers, or films as relevant, then add their own comments by telephone or via computer. The groups with scheduled meetings, (CoP-PLNs) were more likely to have conference calls and especially webinars (interactive web-based seminars).

Some groups of professionals organized JVLNs around specific fields within Jewish community life, such as

Table 2: **Purpose of JVLNs, by format** *(Percentage of positive responses answering "to a great extent")*

	CoP-PLNs	PDGs	Total JVLNs
A goal of the JVLN is, to a great extent…			
To create a learning community	74	46	57
Interactive exchange between members	71	67	68
Networking	43	51	48
Keeping up to date	52	69	63

directors of Jewish camps for disabled children or technology specialists working for Jewish organizations. Others had more broadly defined subjects such as addressing the challenges of contemporary Orthodox education, fundraising, or coordinating between various Jewish social services. Sometimes JVLNs organize within the framework of a university, such as several new initiatives at Yeshiva University.

Some of the diverse topics which respondents and interviewees said had been covered in recent meetings were the teaching of prayer, organizing an Israeli movie night, dealing with anti-Semitism on campus, working with special needs students, teaching Hebrew as a second language, how to present Israel in Jewish day schools and planning activities for upcoming Jewish holidays.

One example of a large listserv is the PresenTense group which "enables young Jews to have global conversations about new ideas and envision a better future" while helping them find support and resources through fellowships, support for innovative projects, and publication of an online journal. Another is Lookjed, sponsored by the Lookstein Center, which describes itself as a "virtual community [of] over 3300 teachers, principals, community lay leaders, and students planning a career in Jewish education [who] 'come together' two or three times a week to network with one another and to discuss issues of concern to them

and to the educational community." This listserv links professionals in the Jewish day school world.

In looking at the three major denominations in American Jewish institutional life, we found that the Orthodox community already is linked through several JVLNs, such as Lookjed[6] and Mifgashim (a listserv for principals and teachers of Jewish day schools). The Conservative movement has launched several JVLNs with the assistance of Jim Joseph alumni, for example, through the Jewish Educators Assembly. There are few JVLNs within the Reform denomination, though there is one for Reform rabbis and a listserv of alumni of Hebrew Union College is about to be launched. There has been some activity to promote CoPs among the Reform movement, such as a presentation by Estee Solomon Gray and Josh Plaskoff at the 2011 convention of the Reform movement's National Association of Temple Organizers (NATE) and the effort of one of the Jim Joseph Foundation fellows.

Advantages, challenges and needs

Advantages of JVLNs. Almost all the respondents agreed that JVLNs are important to the Jewish community. Interestingly, while those involved in the CoP-PLN format were slightly more convinced that the groups are 'very important' a sizeable minority said they thought they were *not* important, whereas none of those involved in the PDGs answered negatively.

Table 3: **Importance of JVLNs to the Jewish community** (*Percentage of positive responses*)

	CoP-PLNs	PDGs	Total JVLNs
Very important	43	39	41
Important	43	61	53
Not important	13	0	6

6   The majority of US Jewish day schools, and therefore the majority of Lookjed members, affiliates with the Orthodox movement, though Lookjed also includes professionals working in non-Orthodox Jewish day schools.

Survey respondents were given a list of possible advantages of and challenges to JVLNs. The responses to the advantages are given in Table 4. The percentages of positive responses (to some extent or to a great extent) are given first, with the percentage answering 'to a great extent' in parentheses.

Looking first at the results for the entire population, we see that virtually everyone agreed that JVLNs encourage knowledge-sharing and overcome geographic differences, and the vast majority felt they do so to a great extent. These may be considered the strongest advantages. While almost all agreed that JVLNs are efficient, less than half said they were efficient "to a great extent".

Many of the interviewees were extremely enthusiastic about JVLNs, and the potentialities they open up, and predicted that they will become a widespread tool of professional work. Indeed, over 70% of the respondents agreed with every one of the advantages in the list. There was some ambiguity as to the extent to which they save time, allow a trial and error learning process and promote less hierarchy, though still a clear majority said they do, at least to some extent.

A few graphic differences can be seen between the responses of those involved with the CoP-PLNs and the PDGs. Those working with the CoP-PLNs were significantly less likely to say that the groups save time and overcome hierarchies to a great extent.

On the other hand, they were much more emphatic (by 20% or more) in saying that the online groups enable people with niche interests to connect, are flexible, and enable collaboration between institutions and across denominations.

Table 4: **Advantages of JVLNs, by format** (*Percentage of positive responses; percentage answering "to a great extent" in parentheses*)

	CoP-PLNs	PDGs	Total JVLNs
JVLNs….			
encourage sharing knowledge	100 (93)	95 (77)	97 (84)
overcome geographic distances	97 (87)	97 (77)	97 (81)
are efficient	100 (34)	95 (49)	97 (43)
enable people with niche interests to connect	100 (77)	89 (37)	94 (54)
are an affordable way to bring people together	100 (63)	95 (67)	93 (65)
are flexible according to changing interest and circumstances	100 (62)	87 (41)	93 (50)
enable collaboration between institutions	97 (83)	85 (41)	89 (59)
provide immediate gratification	93 (41)	79 (26)	85 (33)
promote synergy of skills	93 (28)	77 (28)	84 (28)
maintain networks between face-to-face encounters	86 (48)	76 (38)	80 (42)
encourage volunteer participation	74 (26)	74 (21)	74 (23)
enable collaboration between denominations	85 (59)	65 (24)	73 (39)
allow <trial and error> learning process	86 (7)	71 (15)	73 (12)
promote less hierarchical relations	65 (23)	77 (44)	72 (35)
save time	65 (17)	74 (41)	71 (31)

This pan-institutional or cross-denominational character of many JVLNs has another advantage. Jewish professionals, particularly those new to a community, school or institution, struggle with a host of sociological, religious, political, pedagogical and emotional issues. Some of these cannot be easily addressed within the institution itself due to interpersonal or organizational sensitivities. A JVLN can offer a network through which professionals may more comfortably seek advice and knowledge from colleagues.

It is interesting to note that those in the CoP-PLNs were less enthusiastic about their groups' efficiency, ability to save time, or tendency to allow trial and error, as can be seen in the percentage who selected the response "to a great extent" in answer to these questions. These responses may reflect the relative difficulty of running these types of groups.

The convenience of being able to share information with colleagues—whether they are in the same city or across the world—without having to leave one's office is clear. This is particularly important for professionals in small communities who lack a local professional community with whom to discuss problems and dilemmas. Via JVLN-sponsored activities such as webinars, they may take part in training programs once only available in large Jewish centers. Also, the North American Jewish community is becoming increasingly mobile, and those who recently moved are highly likely to use the internet as a source for Jewish information (JFNA, 2009).

The widely recognized advantages of enabling people with similar interests to share knowledge affordably and efficiently across distances and institutional divides are not trivial. Estee Solomon Gray and Joshua Plaskoff

(Plaskoff & Gray, 2011; Plaskoff, 2008)[7] consider what they call "link" to be essential to Jewish practice and peoplehood, proposing that, "…the most basic acts of Jewish life are all forms of linking…" and that commandments, texts, rituals, learning, prayer, even the fundamental concept of Covenant, serve to form links between an individual and God, self, and others. Modern technologies are, in this view, aids to age-old links.

Challenges to JVLNs. At the same time, there are a number of difficulties and challenges associated with JVLNs, which may account for the gap between the ideological enthusiasm for them and their actual (modest) rate of spread. 27% of the respondents said they had previously been involved in a JVLN which has disbanded and 18% said they knew of such cases. The questionnaire included a list of several potentially common challenges and respondents indicated the extent to which they saw each as a difficulty. In the interviews, some of the experts expanded upon this subject in-depth.

The two greatest concerns pertained to the ever-changing technologies that participants must navigate with some skill, and the need for trained and competent facilitators or moderators. These are not necessarily disadvantages of JVLNs, but rather requirements which must be met to ensure success. It is notable that the insistence on the essentiality of a skilled moderator was emphasized far more strongly among those involved with CoP-PLNs.

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7   Also http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8j-bdBaF-9k

Table 5: **Challenges and difficulties of JVLNs by format** (*Percentage of positive responses; percentage answering "to a great extent" in parentheses*)

	CoP-PLNs	PDGs	Total JVLNs
JVLNs….			
need to adapt with changing technology	*89 (52)*	*95 (51)*	*92 (52)*
do not work well without skilled moderators	*94 (77)*	*80 (31)*	*86 (51)*
give advantage to younger people*	*37 (7)*	*67 (21)*	*54 (15)*
require high computer literacy	*66 (13)*	*40 (11)*	*52 (12)*
are burdened by logistical problems	*50 (14)*	*49 (10)*	*45 (12)*
encounter difficulties in recruiting funding	*46 (19)*	*42 (21)*	*44 (20)*

* This could be seen as an advantage by some and a disadvantage by others.

Logistics and funding were considered challenges by less than half the respondents and serious problems by about a fifth, with little difference across formats.

Also about half the respondents said JVLNs give an advantage to younger people. Here, too, we see a large difference among the various formats: a third of those involved in the more facilitated CoP-PLNs noted a disparity according to age, as compared with two thirds of those involved with the PDGs. There are several reasons for the perception that JVLNs are more accessible to young people. First, of course, is that those educated in the age of computers tend to be more literate in use of the technology and more easily able to adapt to its rapid changes. This technological aspect is of great interest and concern within the field. Almost half the previous studies in the literature survey (virtually all of which were conducted within the past 15 years) looked at technological aspects of Communities of Practice.

Another reason older participants may be perceived as being at a disadvantage is that they may have less experience or be less comfortable with the informal style of learning prevalent in a JVLN (or any Community of Practice), with traits such as peer learning and relatively non-hierarchical relations ('symmetry' in the terminology of Kahane, 1997). Third, the non-hierarchical structure reduces the disadvantage usually experienced by younger people in the early stages of their careers.

In the interviews and the survey we inquired about failed or defunct JVLNs and the reasons for their inability to continue. The informal framework, in many ways advantageous, can also be a weakness. Some JVLNs disintegrated due to lack of structure. Maintaining a JVLN, given the busy schedules of the professionals involved, requires concentrated effort and organization. An oft-cited reason for the dismantling of an otherwise successful JVLN was the cessation of organizational funding, resulting in inability to pay for a professional facilitator.

An opposing view posits that groups may become too structured and lose the beneficial informal characteristics of a Community of Practice. Thompson (2005) supplies empirical data to support the claim that freedom of expression and mutual development of ideas are essential to a Community of Practice, and that institutional control may be detrimental. In this vein, one of the survey respondents said a JVLN had ended when its corporate sponsor "wanted to take total control of the effort."

In the interviews it was pointed out that one of the challenges, particularly in the early stages of the group, is creating an atmosphere of trust and cooperation, which may be a stark contrast to the competition, mistrust and secrecy that prevails in many workplaces.

A related challenge is generating a dynamic to enable participants to reify, modify, and work towards their common goals. This dynamic must be maintained, encouraging ongoing participation as well as a perpetual renewal of the informal social contract of trust and cooperation between members, in the face of problems which may emerge within the group itself or in the larger work environment.

Wenger, McDermott & Snyder (2002) describe a 'sense of aliveness' that must be present for a CoP to be truly successful. A group with such a sense of aliveness can respond to the challenges raised in each of the subsequent stages in the life of the CoP. The group must offer something of value to participants. Value, on the one hand, refers to the benefit that participants gain, justifying their investment of time, energy, professional knowledge, etc. Moreover, a CoP must have value in an ethical sense; the open and cooperative relationship forged within the CoP itself may extend to participants' work in the fields of Jewish education, social work, and religious activity.

Needs. Just over half the respondents said their group could use some form of support. Those in the CoP-PLNs were more likely to say they needed support. The most requested specific need was funding, particularly among the CoP-PLNs which have greater need for professional facilitators. Training and coaching were requested by a slighter higher percentage of the respondents from the PDGs.

Some of the specific needs mentioned in response to the open question were an ongoing paid facilitator and coordinators for various topics within the network.

A multi-dimensional analysis

To further explore the phenomenon of JVLNs we conducted a multi-dimensional analysis using the Smallest Space Analysis (SSA) technique. First, the correlations between the responses to the 21 possible advantages and challenges were calculated. That is, how likely was it that a respondent who said one statement was true also answered that a second was true? For example, it was found that respondents who said that JVLNs are burdened by logistical difficulties were highly likely to also say they require a high degree of computer literacy (correlation of +93) but highly unlikely to say they are efficient (correlation of -90). The correlation matrix among the 21 variables (given in Appendix D) provided the input data for the SSA.

Table 6: **Needs of JVLNs**

	CoP-PLNs	PDGs	Total JVLNs
Need some form of support	61	47	53
Need funding	29	18	22
Need training	13	24	20
Need coaching	13	18	16
Need initial guidance on how to become an effective facilitator for a JVLN	13	12	12
Need help on how to create an online course	13	12	12

The 21 items were placed by computer program in the map according to their correlations, such that strongly correlated items are close together and weakly correlated items are far apart, as shown in Figure 1.

Three basic regions may be recognized. On the left-hand side of the map is a region consisting of Challenges for well-functioning JVLN, including finding a skilled moderator, securing funding, and adapting to changing technology. In the upper-right hand part of the map is a region of Advantages of JVLNs, including enabling pan-institutional and pan-denominational collaboration, overcoming geographic distance, and efficiency. In the lower- right hand part of the map is a region of items related to Mode of Operation, such as non-hierarchical relations and permitting trial and error learning.

Next, two sub-populations were introduced as external variables: the respondents involved with CoP-PLNs and respondents involved with PDGs.[8] The correlations between each sub-population and the set of 21 original variables were calculated (given in Appendix D). That is, how likely is it that someone involved in a JVLN of the various formats agreed with each of the 21 statements? Their placement in the map takes into account simultaneously the entire set of correlations. They may be 'pulled' towards items with which they have a strong positive correlation, or 'pushed' away from those with which they have a negative correlation. For example, those involved in CoP-PLNs had a strong positive correlation with the statement that JVLNs promote connections among people with niche interests (+75) and a negative correlation with the statement that JVLNs give an advantage to younger people (-54). Those with the PDGs, in direct contrast,

were unlikely to say JVLNs connect people with niche interests (-75) and likely to say they give advantage to the young (+54).

The two populations were placed at opposite extremes of the map, indicating their distinctive places vis-à-vis the world of JVLNs. The respondents in the CoP-PLN groups are at the upper side of the map, in the region titled Advantages. They were placed closest to the items corresponding to the statements that JVLNs enable pan-institutional and cross-denominational collaboration, connect people with niche interests and maintain networks. They were also placed quite close to the statement that JVLNs require a skilled moderator, which is just across the border in the Challenges region.

The respondents associated with the PDGs are at the bottom of the map, in the region titled Mode of Operation. These operational factors play a relatively greater role in the participants' perceptions of the functioning of these types of JVLNs.

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8   An SSA which also includes external variables representing the expanded CoP-PLN-wiki-ning category and the corresponding Other category was conducted, and is given in Appendix E.

Figure 1: **Smallest Space Analysis of JVLNs' advantages and challenges**
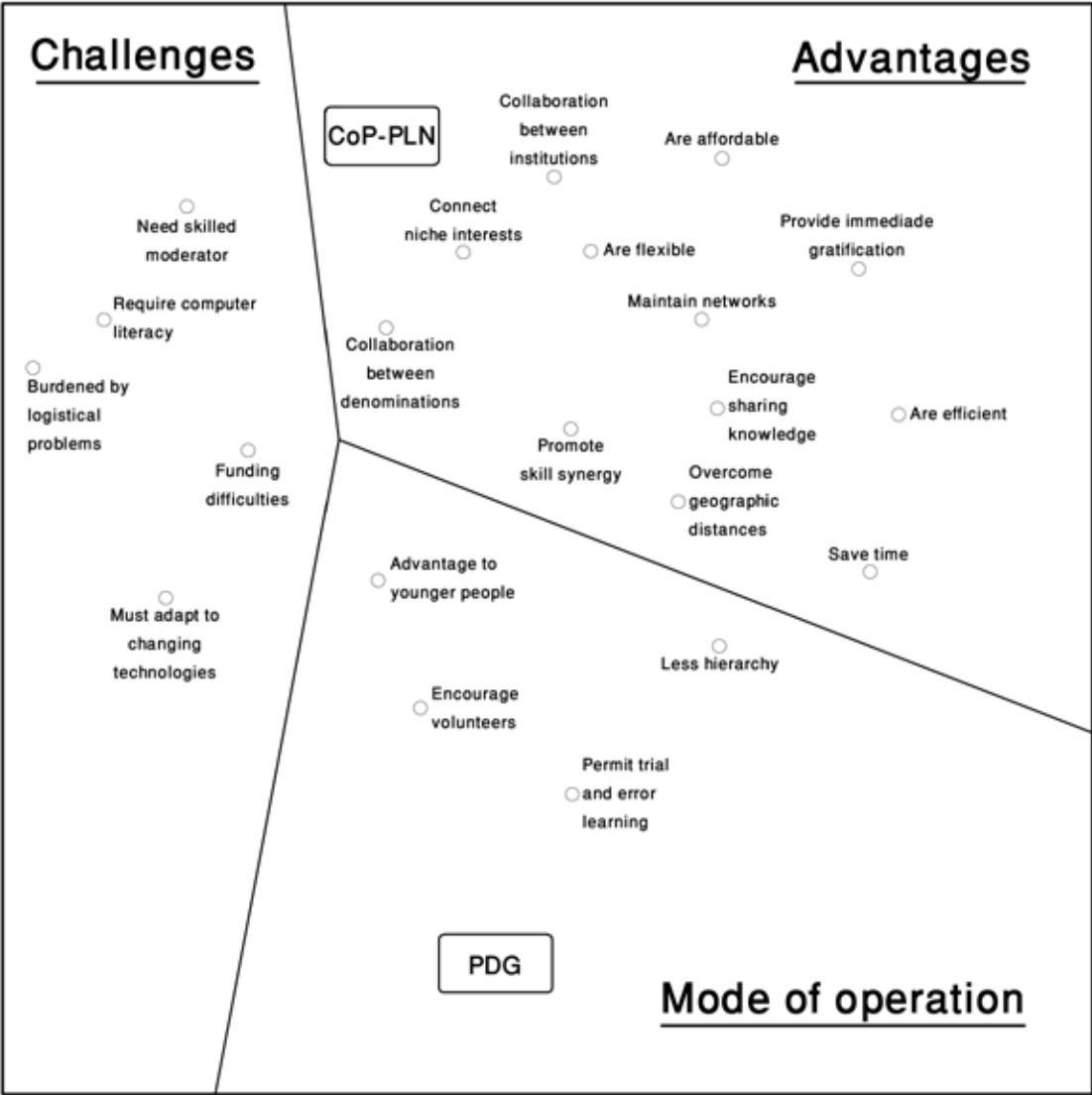
Conclusion

The successful functioning of a JVLN depends on many parameters. It needs a sense of organizational security sufficient to enable a professional facilitator to adequately organize the group and its activities. The group's goals must be sufficiently clear to link the professionals and volunteer leaders involved. At the same time, the organization must not stifle the distinctively informal nature of a group in which participants' may freely contribute and learn together informally.

It has been noted that the dynamics of a group meeting primarily online differ somewhat from a group meeting face-to-face (Verburg & Andriessen 2006). Engeström (2007, p. 11) likens multi-faceted interaction through the internet to the biological mycorrhizae[9] formation "…which is simultaneously a living, expanding process (or bundle of developing connections) *and* a relatively durable, stabilized structure; both a mental landscape and a material infrastructure."

It is hoped that this survey will set the foundation for future research in the field, as there are several aspects of the community of practice phenomenon still to be explored. One is CoPs whose primary activities are face-to-face meetings, lectures and activities. Though these may maintain connections and send notices online they are not considered virtual networks. Second,

there are a number of structured CoPs whose goals are personal, rather than professional, and therefore were not considered in the current research, but which represent their own type of contribution. For example, there is an online group which distributes texts to be used by *chavruta* study groups that meet in person.

While the structure of the Community of Practice and the Virtual Learning Network in particular is still evolving, there is much enthusiasm for the contribution it may make to the Jewish world. Some of the most ideological proponents hope that the innovation of the CoP may revolutionize Jewish educational systems, places of work, and even family relations, leading, they believe, to a better world. In considering the sociological, theological, historical and philosophical dimensions of Lave and Wenger's concept of the CoP, some feel this type of organization may be fundamental to today's Jewish thought and life.

The field is new and changing rapidly. While it has not yet become as widespread as was anticipated at the outset of the research, the fact that most of the JVLNs have been organized within the past few years indicates the potential growth of the phenomenon. That many of the respondents also knew of JVLNs which were launched and failed shows the need to identify challenges and needs and to take steps towards actualizing the potential of the format, so passionately articulated by the proponents of Communities of Practice. It is hoped that the data and analysis here makes a constructive contribution to this goal.

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9   In nature, mycorrhizae refer to a symbiotic relationship between a fungus and the roots of a plant; the visible elements of the system are dependent on a much larger, hidden structure (Engeström, 2007).

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Appendices

Appendix A

Communities of Practice literature search and analysis

A literature search was conducted on recent studies of Communities of Practice. 140 sample articles were coded according to the methods employed and the core issues addressed. The articles were located through the scholar.google search engine using the keywords "Community of Practice" or "Communities of Practice". Articles selected were either published in peer-reviewed journals, chapters in books, or published proceedings from academic conferences. Articles which did not make explicit the methods used were not included in the sample. A sample of articles meeting these criteria was selected at random.

Methods employed in studying communities of practice.

- The most frequent method used was examination case studies of one or more specific Communities of Practice; this was employed in almost 60% of the studies in the sample.

- Qualitative methods were used far more frequently than quantitative methods. Almost half the studies interviewed individuals involved in Communities of Practice. Almost a third used observation (most often at meetings of CoPs). In contrast, barely a fifth of the studies used surveys or questionnaires. However, the qualitative method of focus groups was only rarely employed, cited in only 9% of the studies.

- A third of the studies included some type of literature review (beyond a simple introduction of the concept). In some cases this was a systematic literature survey (as was done in the current study); in others, the concept of Communities of Practice was examined through an overview review of previous studies of the subject.

- Other frequent sources of information were entries of participants in online sites for a Community of Practice (23%) and other documentation (29%) such as reports from meetings.

- Action and participatory research is relatively common in this field, used in over a fifth of the surveys (this may be contrasted with a previous study on informal education, in which only 4% of the 117 articles in the sample). Action or participatory research refers to studies in which one or more of the authors personally participated in a Community of Practice, most commonly the CoP considered in the case study.

- A small percentage of studies (9%) inventoried various programs, generally to categorize various types of CoPs.

Issues explored in studies of Communities of Practice.

- The most common issue explicitly explored in the sample of studies concerned interpersonal relations between members of a Community of Practice. This was considered in over two thirds of the cases.

- The second most common issue was education, explored in over half the cases.

Table 7: **Methods employed in the sample of Communities of Practice studies**

	Used in % of cases
Case studies	59%
Interviews	47%
Literature review	33%
Observation	32%
Archive material	29%
Entries in CoP website	23%
Action/participatory research	22%
Surveys	21%
Focus groups/workshops	9%
Inventory of programs	9%
Demographics	2%

- Given the inherent nature of a Community of Practice as a group of people who interact regularly to share knowledge and learn about a common area of interest, the primary interest in interpersonal relations and education is logical.

- Almost half the studies considered technological aspects of Communities of Practice. Virtually all of the studies considered were conducted in the past 15 years, when the use of online communication became increasingly omnipresent. Many studies considered the impact of online communication on the formation and functioning of a CoP (i.e. allowing for international participation). Others examined particular programs or tools for use within CoPs.

- 45% of the studies evaluated the success of and challenges to the functioning and impact of CoPs. Some examined only one case, others compared several cases.

- 41% of the studies looked at the logistics or organizational structure of CoPs.

- Just over a third of the articles explored personal impacts on participants, such as professional development or impact on participants' sense of identity.

Table 8: **Issues addressed in the sample of Communities of Practice studies**

	Addressed in % of cases
Interpersonal	64%
Educational	54%
Technological	48%
Evaluation	45%
Logistical/organizational	41%
Personal	35%
Theoretical	34%
Socio-political	25%
Cultural	24%

- Approximately a third of the articles looked at the theory behind the CoP phenomenon, such as identifying core characteristics of what may be considered a Community of Practice. (Again, this may be contrasted with the study of research on informal education, in which only 3% of the sample articles addressed theoretical issues).[10]

- A quarter of the studies looked at socio-political issues. This category included issues such as gender equality or social hierarchy within the CoP, or the impact of CoPs on the functioning of a social arena such as health care or education.

- Just under a quarter of the articles looked at cultural issues, such as how CoPs (especially online CoPs) affected the culture of the workplace, or how CoPs were adapted to different work or educational milieus.

Structural analysis of the literature survey

The Smallest Space Analysis technique (described in the data analysis section of the Methods chapter) was used to explore the structural relationships of the content and methods in the literature of CoPs.

SSA of content issues addressed. Interpersonal issues were located at the center of the map, indicating their equally strong correlations with the other issues. The other issues are arranged in a rough circle around this center. A region including educational and evaluative issues is located opposite the region for theoretical issues.

A region including educational and evaluative issues is located opposite the region for theoretical issues. A region of technological and logistical/organizational issues is opposite the two regions for personal issues and socio-political and culture issues. Thus we see two basic oppositions: theoretical versus practical and technical versus social.

Figure 2: **SSA of content issues addressed in sampled literature on CoPs**
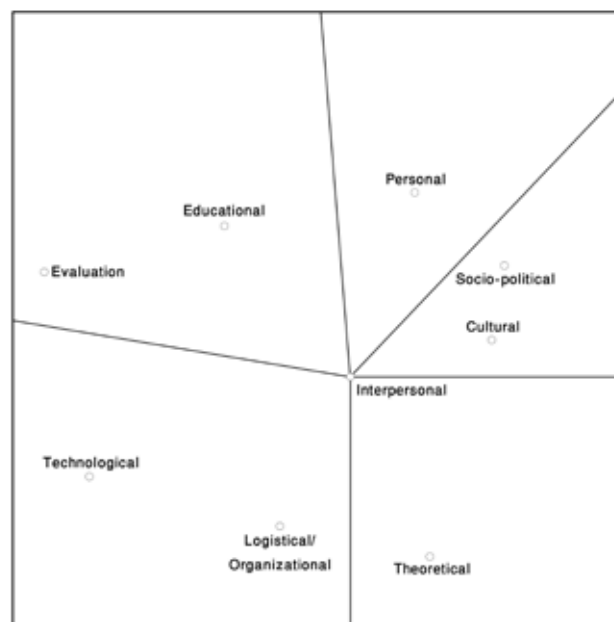
10   Cohen, E.H. (2007). Researching informal education: A preliminary mapping. *Bulletin de Méthodologie Sociologique*, 93, 70-88.

Figure 3: **SSA of methods employed in sampled literature on CoPs**
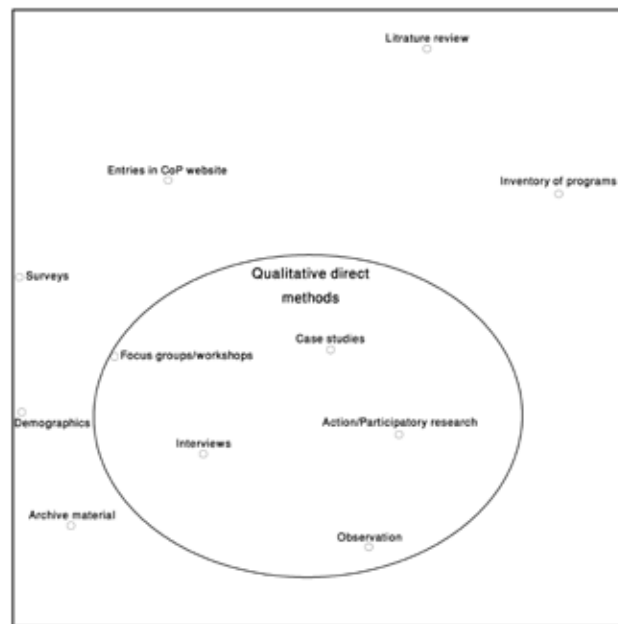
SSA of the methods employed. This SSA shows two concentric circles. One includes the direct qualitative methods. Around the periphery of this circle are arranged the quantitative methods and indirect qualitative methods (such as reading entries in websites and archive material).

SSA of content issues and methods. A third SSA considered both content issues and methods together. Since the SSA procedure considers the correlations between all the variables simultaneously, the positions of individual items are not the same as in the previous two maps. Nevertheless, we can still recognize the opposition between social issues in the top half and technical/logistical issues at the bottom as well as between theoretical issues at the left and evaluative issues at the right.

Figure 4: **SSA of issues addressed and methods employed in sampled literature on CoPs**
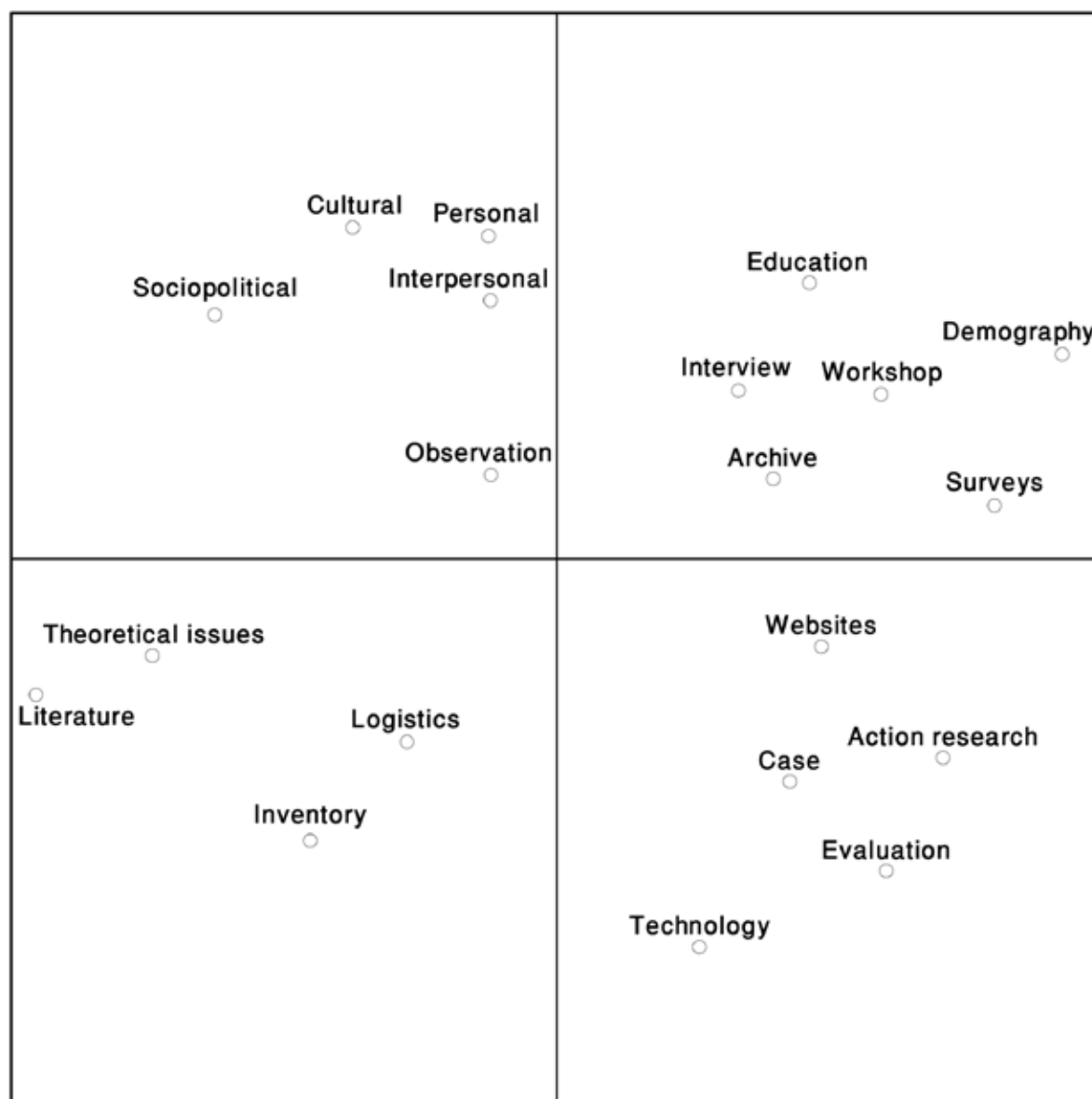
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Appendix B

Screening Questionnaire

We are currently conducting a mapping survey of Virtual Jewish Networks (VJN) with an emphasis on Virtual Jewish Communities of Practice (VJ-CoP) in the US, concerned with Jewish culture and education, for the Jim Joseph Foundation and the Lookstein Center for Jewish Education in the Diaspora.

Fill out this questionnaire should not take more than 5 minutes.

Your name: _____

Email: _____

Are you active in a Jewish CoP? 1. Yes   2. No

If yes, please detail:

CoP Name	Contact information	Email
1/ _____		
2/ _____		

Are you planning on starting a Jewish CoP?
1. Yes   2. No

If yes when do you think it will start to work?
_____

How can we contact you about this CoP?
_____

Do you know of any other Jewish CoPs in your area / organization?

CoP Name	Contact information	Email
1/ _____		
2/ _____		
3/ _____		
4/ _____		

Thanks a lot for your contribution.

Full survey questionnaire

Questionnaire for Moderators, Facilitators and Managers

1. How would you define your Jewish Virtual Network (JVN)? It could be an Email discussion group (example: a Google group, a Yahoo group, or any email-based list where everyone can post); or a Community of practice (CoP); or a Professional Learning Communities (PLC), or any other type:

2. What is the purpose of your JVN?

3. To what extent is the goal of your JVN?

	Yes, to a large extent	Yes, to some extent	No
Creation of a learning community	○	○	○
Interactive exchange between members	○	○	○
Networking	○	○	○
Keeping up to date	○	○	○

4. Does your JVN have a name? If so, what is it?

5. Does your JVN have an organizational sponsor (e.g. national organization, denominational organization, local organization)?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I don't know

If your JVN is sponsored, can you indicate by whom?

6. Institutional affiliation (if different from sponsor)

7. Approximate date of launching the JVN activities

8. Estimated total number of

participants (total)

"passive" participants

"active" participants

9. How would you define an "active" participant?

10. Main fields of activity of your JVN: [indicate all relevant possibilities]:

☐ Education

☐ Leadership development

☐ Social work

☐ Other (please specify)

[_____]

11. Is your JVN

☐ International

☐ National

☐ Local

If Local, please indicate locality

[_____]

12. Does your JVN include professionals of:

○ A specific profession (principals, teachers, etc)

○ A variety of professions

Specify which

[_____]

13. Does your JVN include volunteer leaders? [indicate all relevant possibilities]

☐ No

☐ Yes, community level leaders (federation, national)

☐ Yes, organizational level leaders (e.g. synagogue, school)

☐ Yes, an interest group (Such as environment, hunger). Please specify

[_____]

14. How are the members of this JVN recruited? [indicate all relevant possibilities]

☐ Within a specific organization

☐ From similar organizations e.g. synagogues, camps

☐ From the general public

15. Type of activities [indicate all relevant possibilities]

- ☐ Listserv
- ☐ Face to face
- ☐ Webinar
- ☐ Conference call
- ☐ Publication
- ☐ Annual Conference
- ☐ Discussion forum
- ☐ Ning Site
- ☐ Project
- ☐ Knowledge and resource sharing
- ☐ Q & A
- ☐ Other (please specify)

16. Frequency of activities

17. Content of activities (please tell us what were the topics of the last three meetings)

18. Do people within your JVN come from different positions within organizational hierarchies?

- ○ Yes, to a large extent
- ○ Yes, to some extent
- ○ No

19. If yes, are hierarchical relationships within the organization maintained in the way members interact in your JVN?

- ○ Yes, hierarchical relations are maintained to a great extent
- ○ Yes, to some extent
- ○ No, hierarchical relations are blurred

20. Have you personally been involved in a JVN that stopped its activities?

○ Yes

○ No

If YES, tell us more about it: time, circumstances, reasons, etc

```



```

21. Do you know of a JVN, that you were not personally involved in, that stopped its activities?

○ Yes

○ No

If YES, tell us more about it: time, circumstances, reasons, etc

```



```

22. What is your role in your JVN?

☐ Permanent facilitator

☐ Facilitator by rotation

☐ Core member

☐ Other (please specify)

```

```

23. Are you ever been trained as a Virtual Network Facilitator? Please elaborate

```

```

24. In general, how would you rate the importance of JVNs for the Jewish community?

○ Very Important

○ Important

○ Not Important

○ Not Important at all

25. To what extent does each of the following statements pertain to YOUR JVN?

	To a great extent	To some extent	No
A. JVN is efficient	○	○	○
B. JVN overcomes geographical distances	○	○	○
C. JVN gives advantage to younger people	○	○	○
D. JVN promotes less hierarchical relations	○	○	○
E. JVN encourages sharing knowledge	○	○	○
F. JVN enables more collaboration between various institutions	○	○	○
G. JVN enables more collaboration between various denominations	○	○	○
H. JVN is burdened by logistical problems	○	○	○
I. JVN requires high computer literacy	○	○	○
J. JVN allows members to save time	○	○	○
K. JVN promotes synergy of skills	○	○	○
L. JVN encourages volunteer participation	○	○	○
M. JVN allows a 'trial and error' learning process	○	○	○
N. JVN is flexible according to changing interests and circumstances	○	○	○
O. JVN provides immediate gratification	○	○	○
P. JVN encounters difficulties in recruiting funding	○	○	○
Q. JVN enables people with niche interests to connect with one another	○	○	○
R. JVN maintains personal networks in between face-to-face encounters	○	○	○
S. JVN is an affordable way to bring people together	○	○	○
T. JVN needs to adapt with changing technology	○	○	○
U. JVN does not work well without a skilled moderator	○	○	○

26. According to your own experience, which of the items listed above are the most prominent?
(Indicate the relevant LETTER appearing at the beginning of each item)

First Choice   [   ]
Second Choice   [   ]
Third Choice   [   ]
Fourth Choice   [   ]

27. We are looking to connect with other Jewish Virtual Networks. Do you know of any in your area, organization and/or profession?

○ Yes

○ No

28. If YES, could you please provide the contact information?
(name of program, contact name and email)

A   [   ]
B   [   ]
C   [   ]

29. Is there, in your opinion, a group of professionals who would benefit from participating in JVN, and are not currently doing so? Please describe:

30. Are you active in another JVN?

○ Yes

○ No

If YES, please specify the name

31. Do you feel a need for support for your JVN?

○ Yes

○ No

32. If YES, please indicate in the following list your main needs [indicate all relevant items]

☐ Initial guidance on how to become an effective facilitator for a Virtual Network

☐ Funding

☐ Training

☐ Coaching

☐ Creating an Online Course

☐ Other (please specify)

33. First and Last Name

34. Gender

○ Female   ○ Male

35. Age

○ 20-29   ○ 30-39   ○ 40-49   ○ 50-59   ○ 60+

36. Email address

37. Institution

38. Role in institution

39. Please use the space below for any other comments you wish to make regarding the topics covered in this questionnaire. We would also appreciate receiving any relevant material you have regarding your Jewish Virtual Network (articles, publications, etc) to be sent to ehcohen@biu.ac.il.

Thank you for your time!

Appendix C

Cross-tabulations for CoP-PLN, PDG and total population[11]

How would you define your VLN?

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
CoP	90	0	35
portal	0	10	6
various	0	14	9
email	0	42	26
listserv	0	28	17
PLC	10	0	4
Ning	0	4	2
wiki	0	2	1
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

To what extent is your VLN a learning community?

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	74	46	57
to some extent	26	40	34
no	0	15	9
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**48**	**79**

To what extent is your VLN interactive?

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	71	67	68
to some extent	26	23	24
no	3	10	8
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**48**	**79**

To what extent is your VLN networking?

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	43	51	48
to some extent	50	28	36
no	7	21	16
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**47**	**77**

To what extent is your VLN keeping up to date?

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	52	69	63
to some extent	42	24	31
no	6	6	6
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**49**	**80**

11   Cross-tabulations for expanded category of CoP-PLN-wiki-ning vs. Other formats are available upon request.

Does your VLN have an organizational sponsor (e.g. national organization, denominational organization, local organization)?

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
yes	81	78	79
no	13	20	17
does not know	6	2	4
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Approximate date of launching the VLN activities:

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
1990	0	2	1
1995	0	2	1
1996	0	2	1
1997	0	5	3
1998	0	10	6
1999	0	7	4
2000	0	17	10
2001	0	5	3
2002	0	2	1
2003	4	2	3
2004	7	0	3
2006	11	0	4
2007	4	10	7
2008	7	10	9
2009	11	10	10
2010	36	10	20
2011	21	5	12
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**28**	**41**	**69**

Estimated total number of participants:

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
7	10	0	4
10	7	0	3
11	3	0	1
12	7	0	3
15	3	2	3
18	3	0	1
20	0	2	1
23	3	0	1
25	7	0	3
29	3	0	1
30	7	2	4
40	7	0	3
43	3	0	1
50	13	2	6
70	0	2	1
77	3	0	1
80	0	2	1
100	0	4	3
140	3	0	1
145	0	2	1
147	0	2	1
150	3	2	3
200	0	4	3
224	3	0	1
236	0	2	1
240	0	2	1
241	3	0	1
250	0	2	1
300	3	10	8
334	0	2	1
350	3	0	1
365	0	2	1
400	0	10	6
500	0	2	1
570	0	2	1
650	0	2	1
800	0	2	1
1000	0	10	6
1050	0	2	1
1084	0	2	1
2000	0	4	3
2500	0	2	1
3500	0	2	1
6000	0	2	1
7000	0	2	1
10000	0	4	3
90000	0	4	3
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**49**	**79**

Estimated number of "passive" participants:

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
3	4	0	2
6	9	0	3
8	0	0	0
10	4	0	2
12	9	0	3
13	4	2	3
15	13	0	5
20	4	2	3
22	4	0	2
30	9	0	3
35	4	0	2
36	0	2	2
40	4	0	2
60	9	0	3
67	4	0	2
70	0	2	2
80	0	2	2
90	0	2	2
100	4	5	5
120	0	2	2
127	0	2	2
150	0	7	5
154	4	0	2
156	0	2	2
160	0	2	2
200	0	2	2
225	0	5	3
234	0	2	2
240	0	2	2
250	0	2	2
260	4	0	2
280	0	2	2
300	4	5	5
350	0	5	3
400	0	2	2
500	0	5	3
550	0	2	2
700	0	2	2
900	0	2	2
1000	0	5	3
2200	0	2	2
3000	0	5	3
3500	0	2	2
8000	0	2	2
9000	0	2	2
40000	0	2	2
88000	0	2	2
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**23**	**42**	**65**

Estimated number of "active" participants:

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
2	0	2	1
3	4	0	1
4	4	0	1
6	7	0	3
7	7	0	3
8	4	0	1
10	4	7	6
11	4	0	1
12	4	0	1
13	4	0	1
15	7	2	4
16	4	0	1
17	0	0	0
18	4	0	1
20	7	10	9
22	4	0	1
25	0	2	1
28	4	0	1
35	7	0	3
40	4	2	3
50	4	10	7
60	0	2	1
70	4	2	3
75	0	5	3
80	7	2	4
90	4	0	1
100	0	17	10
140	0	2	1
150	0	2	1
200	0	5	3
300	0	2	1
500	0	5	3
800	0	2	1
1000	0	5	3

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
2000	0	5	3
3000	0	2	1
3500	0	2	1
50000	0	2	1
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**27**	**42**	**69**

Main fields of activity of your VLN: [indicate all relevant possibilities]:

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total

education

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	11	7	9
yes	89	93	91
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

leadership development

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	43	44	43
yes	57	56	57
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**28**	**41**	**69**

social work

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	93	93	93
yes	7	7	7
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**28**	**41**	**69**

Is your VLN…?

international

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	60	40	48
yes	40	60	53
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**50**	**80**

national

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	50	70	56
yes	50	30	38
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**50**	**80**

local

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	90	66	75
yes	10	34	25
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**50**	**80**

Type of participants: [indicate all relevant possibilities]:

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
A specific profession	58	39	47
various professions	42	61	53
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**44**	**75**

volunteer leaders

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
volunteer leaders	28	68	53
no volunteer leaders	72	32	47
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**29**	**47**	**76**

community level volunteer leaders (federation, national)

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	90	64	74
yes	10	36	26
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**29**	**47**	**76**

organizational level volunteer leaders (synagogue, school)

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	72	36	50
yes	28	64	50
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**29**	**47**	**76**

How are the members of this VLN recruited?

Within a specific organization

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	55	38	44
yes	56	45	62
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Between organizations e.g. synagogues, camps

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	48	60	56
yes	52	40	44
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

From the general public

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	81	82	81
yes	19	18	19
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Type of activities [indicate all relevant possibilities]:

Listserv

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	39	14	23
yes	61	86	77
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Face to face

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	45	52	49
yes	55	48	51
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Webinar

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	32	70	56
yes	68	30	44
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Conference call

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	39	60	52
yes	61	40	48
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Publication

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	81	76	78
yes	19	24	22
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Annual Conference

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	71	68	69
yes	29	32	31
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Discussion forum

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	58	72	67
yes	42	28	33
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Ning Site

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	87	96	93
yes	13	4	7
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Project

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	90	86	88
yes	10	14	17
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Knowledge and resource sharing

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	16	60	43
yes	84	40	57
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Q & A

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	71	80	77
yes	29	20	23
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Do people within your VLN come from different positions within organizational hierarchies?

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	19	49	36
to some extent	55	33	42
no	26	18	21
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**39**	**70**

Are hierarchical relationships within the organization maintained in the way members interact?

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	0	13	7
to some extent	9	19	15
hierarchy is blurred	91	69	78
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**22**	**32**	**54**

Have you personally been involved in a VLN that stopped its activities?

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
yes	34	21	27
no	66	79	73
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**29**	**38**	**67**

Do you know of a VLN that stopped its activities?

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
yes	12	23	18
no	88	77	82
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**26**	**35**	**61**

What is your role in the VLN?

permanent facilitator

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	25	10	17
yes	75	90	83
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**24**	**30**	**54**

facilitator by rotation

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	100	87	93
yes	13	7	83
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**24**	**30**	**54**

core member

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	67	83	76
yes	33	17	24
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**24**	**30**	**54**

In general, how would you rate the importance of VLNs for the Jewish community?

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
very important	43	39	41
important	43	61	53
not important	13	0	6
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**38**	**68**

What do you think are the main opportunities and obstacles of VLNs in the Jewish community?

VLNs are efficient

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	34	49	43
to some extent	66	46	54
no	0	5	3
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**29**	**39**	**68**

VLNs overcome geographical distances

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	87	77	81
to some extent	10	21	16
no	3	3	3
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**39**	**69**

VLNs give advantage to younger people

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	7	21	15
to some extent	30	46	39
no	63	33	45
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**27**	**39**	**66**

VLNs promote less hierarchical relations

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	23	44	35
to some extent	42	33	37
no	35	23	28
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**26**	**39**	**65**

VLNs encourage sharing knowledge

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	93	77	84
to some extent	7	18	13
no	0	5	3
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**39**	**69**

VLNs enable more collaboration between various institutions

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	83	41	59
to some extent	13	44	30
no	3	15	10
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**39**	**69**

VLNs enable more collaboration between various denominations

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	59	24	39
to some extent	26	41	34
no	15	35	27
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**27**	**37**	**64**

VLNs are burdened by logistical problems

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	14	10	12
to some extent	36	31	33
no	50	59	55
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**28**	**39**	**67**

VLNs allow 'trial and error' learning process

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	7	15	12
to some extent	79	56	66
no	14	28	22
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**29**	**39**	**68**

VLNs require high computer literacy

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	13	11	12
to some extent	53	29	40
no	33	61	49
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**38**	**68**

VLNs are flexible according to changing interest and circumstances

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	62	41	50
to some extent	38	46	43
no	0	13	7
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**29**	**39**	**68**

VLNs save time

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	17	41	31
to some extent	48	33	40
no	34	26	29
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**29**	**39**	**68**

VLNs provide immediate gratification

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	41	26	33
to some extent	52	53	52
no	7	21	15
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**29**	**38**	**67**

VLNs promote synergy of skills

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	28	28	28
to some extent	66	49	56
no	7	23	16
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**29**	**39**	**68**

VLNs encounter difficulties in recruiting funding

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	19	21	20
to some extent	27	21	24
no	54	58	56
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**26**	**33**	**59**

VLNs encourage volunteer participation

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	26	21	23
to some extent	48	53	51
no	26	26	26
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**27**	**38**	**65**

VLNs enable people with niche interests to connect with one another

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	77	37	54
to some extent	23	53	40
no	0	11	6
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**38**	**68**

VLNs maintain in-person networks in between face-to-face encounters

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	48	38	42
to some extent	38	38	38
no	14	24	20
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**29**	**37**	**66**

VLNs are an affordable way to bring people together

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	63	67	65
to some extent	37	28	32
no	0	5	3
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**39**	**69**

VLNs need to adapt with changing technology

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	52	51	52
to some extent	37	44	41
no	11	5	8
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**27**	**39**	**66**

VLNs do not work well without skilled moderators

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
to a great extent	77	31	51
to some extent	17	49	35
no	7	21	14
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**39**	**69**

According to your own experience, which of the items listed above are the <u>most prominent</u>?

first choice

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
efficient	7	9	8
geography	7	24	16
sharing know	27	35	31
collaboration instit	3	3	3

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
logistic burden	3	0	2
computer literacy	0	3	2
time saving	0	3	2
trial and error	0	3	2
funding diff	3	0	2
niche	17	3	9
mainains net	3	3	3
affordable	0	9	5
skilled moderator	30	6	17
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**34**	**64**

second choice

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
efficient	0	9	5
geography	20	6	13
less hierarchy	3	0	2
sharing know	23	16	19
collaboration instit	10	3	6
collaboration denom	3	0	2
logistic burden	0	6	3
computer literacy	3	0	2
skills synergy	7	6	6
volunteer part	3	0	2
flexible	3	9	6
gratification	3	3	3
funding diff	3	3	3
niche	0	3	2
mainains net	3	9	6
affordable	7	16	11
changing tech	3	3	3
skilled moderator	3	6	5
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**32**	**62**

third choice

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
efficient	3	0	2
geography	7	16	11
younger	0	3	2
less hierarchy	0	3	2
sharing know	10	3	7

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
collaboration instit	20	6	13
collaboration denom	0	3	2
logistic burden	3	0	2
computer literacy	0	3	2
time saving	7	13	10
volunteer part	3	3	3
flexible	10	13	11
gratification	0	3	2
funding diff	3	3	3
niche	10	10	10
mainains net	3	0	2
affordable	7	13	10
affordable	7	13	10
skilled moderator	13	3	8
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**31**	**61**

fourth choice

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
efficient	4	0	2
geography	18	10	14
less hierarchy	4	3	4
sharing know	11	10	11
collaboration instit	4	3	4
collaboration denom	4	0	2
computer literacy	4	0	2
time saving	0	3	2
skills synergy	0	3	2
volunteer part	0	10	5
flexible	14	14	14
gratification	4	0	2
funding diff	4	0	2
niche	7	3	5
mainains net	7	21	14
affordable	4	14	9
changing tech	4	3	4
skilled moderator	11	0	5
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**28**	**29**	**57**

We are looking to connect with other Jewish Virtual Learning Networks. Do you know of any in your area, organization and/or profession?

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
yes	17	29	24
no	83	71	76
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**29**	**38**	**67**

Are you active in another VLN?

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
yes	43	43	43
no	57	57	57
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**30**	**35**	**65**

Do you feel a need for support for your VLN?

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
yes	61	46	53
no	39	53	47
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**28**	**36**	**64**

If YES, please indicate in the following list your main needs:

Initial guidance on how to become an effective facilitator for a VLN

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	87	88	88
yes	13	12	12
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Funding

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	71	82	78
yes	29	18	22
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Training

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	87	76	80
yes	13	24	20
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

Coaching

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	87	82	84
yes	13	18	16
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

How to create an Online Course?

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
no	87	88	88
yes	13	12	12
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**31**	**50**	**81**

gender

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
female	72	37	52
male	28	63	48
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**29**	**38**	**67**

age

	CoP-PLC	PDG	Total
20-29	0	8	5
30-39	39	17	27
40-49	18	17	17
50-59	36	33	34
60+	7	25	17
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**
Number	**28**	**36**	**64**

Appendix D

Correlation matrix for 21 original variables of SSA

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1	100	100	28	31	64	29	15	-90	-72	70	57	6	35	64	68	-21	26	49	51	23	-11
2	100	100	62	38	63	53	69	-52	-16	62	71	46	70	56	64	36	38	73	45	18	-18
3	28	62	100	46	24	-10	18	28	49	49	45	56	38	31	19	53	34	39	-10	34	20
4	31	38	46	100	74	9	39	-34	3	55	74	11	9	32	22	29	29	14	34	39	-3
5	64	63	24	74	100	86	68	-65	-44	66	98	75	34	89	58	22	92	63	46	-50	-17
6	29	53	-10	9	86	100	73	-13	-15	22	79	23	18	79	49	19	90	50	52	3	51
7	15	69	18	39	68	73	100	22	32	21	64	20	41	33	-1	66	79	47	29	27	41
8	-90	-52	28	-34	-65	-13	22	100	93	-48	-51	6	6	-43	-62	61	21	4	-36	12	51
9	-72	-16	49	3	-44	-15	32	93	100	-37	-38	5	9	-10	-37	47	31	14	-24	19	60
10	70	62	49	55	66	22	21	-48	-37	100	48	19	7	29	25	-5	39	48	66	5	-32
11	57	71	45	74	98	79	64	-51	-38	48	100	67	47	81	57	42	74	66	63	26	-5
12	6	46	56	11	75	23	20	6	5	19	67	100	76	53	21	44	31	6	-15	31	-12
13	35	70	38	9	34	18	41	6	9	7	47	76	100	75	2	26	15	9	4	-16	-18
14	64	56	31	32	89	79	33	-43	-10	29	81	53	75	100	65	10	70	51	41	-39	17
15	68	64	19	22	58	49	-1	-62	-37	25	57	21	2	65	100	-5	59	53	52	7	-3
16	-21	36	53	29	22	19	66	61	47	-5	42	44	26	10	-5	100	54	45	-23	62	36
17	26	38	34	29	92	90	79	21	31	39	74	31	15	70	59	54	100	75	60	5	44
18	49	73	39	14	63	50	47	4	14	48	66	6	9	51	53	45	75	100	78	27	23
19	51	45	-10	34	46	52	29	-36	-24	66	63	-15	4	41	52	-23	60	78	100	9	-4
20	23	18	34	39	-50	3	27	12	19	5	26	31	-16	-39	7	62	5	27	9	100	61
21	-11	-18	20	-3	-17	51	41	51	60	-32	-5	-12	-18	17	-3	36	44	23	-4	61	1000

Key

1. VLNs are efficient
2. VLNs overcome geographical distances
3. VLNs give advantage to younger people
4. VLNs promote less hierarchical relations
5. VLNs encourage sharing knowledge
6. VLNs enable more collaboration between various institutions
7. VLNs enable more collaboration between various denominations
8. VLNs are burdened by logistical problems
9. VLNs require high computer literacy
10. VLNs allow to save time
11. VLNs promote synergy of skills
12. VLNs encourage volunteer participation
13. VLNs allow 'trial and error' learning process
14. VLNs are flexible according to changing interest and circumstances
15. VLNs provide immediate gratification
16. VLNs encounter difficulties in recruiting funding
17. VLNs enable people with niche interests to connect with one another
18. VLNs maintain in-person networks in between face-to-face encounters
19. VLNs are an affordable way to bring people together
20. VLNs need to adapt with changing technology
21. VLNs do not work well without skilled moderators

Correlation array for 21 original variables and external variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
CoP-PLN	-17	25	-54	-36	68	74	59	18	40	-38	23	7	11	52	41	2	75	26	4	-8	71
PDG	17	-25	54	36	-68	-74	-59	-18	-40	38	-23	-7	-11	-52	-41	-2	-75	-26	-4	8	-71
CoP-PLN-wiki-ning	-39	3	-46	-37	22	69	56	36	55	-49	2	-1	14	40	19	-6	63	5	5	-2	74
other	39	-3	46	37	-22	-69	-56	-36	-55	49	-2	1	-14	-40	-19	6	-63	-5	-5	2	-74

Coefficient of Alienation for SSA
DIMENSIONALITY 2

Coefficient of Alienation =.23

Serial Number	Item coeff. of Alienation	Plotted 1	Coordinates 2
1	.19031	71.20	62.56
2	.25900	56.91	56.99
3	.26584	33.72	47.48
4	.31707	57.99	45.39
5	.26973	59.66	64.61
6	.24050	48.97	81.24
7	.24791	35.49	70.47
8	.12917	.00	67.80
9	.14833	5.40	68.63
10	.22385	69.56	54.40
11	.21642	53.71	62.91
12	.25981	40.67	40.55
13	.30444	46.09	37.45
14	.28513	57.37	67.87
15	.18576	68.32	75.51
16	.14324	22.16	59.21
17	.19854	43.54	74.62
18	.24161	49.05	75.56
19	.19667	62.39	83.48
20	.31433	17.24	48.37
21	.14534	16.22	82.01

External Variables

Serial Number	Item coeff. of Alienation	Plotted 1	Coordinates 2
22	.20592	33.77	87.37
23	.19413	43.63	.00
24	.17308	25.92	100.00
25	.40649	45.60	47.02

Appendix E

SSA including external variables representing respondents from the expanded category of CoP-PLN-wiki-ning and corresponding Other format
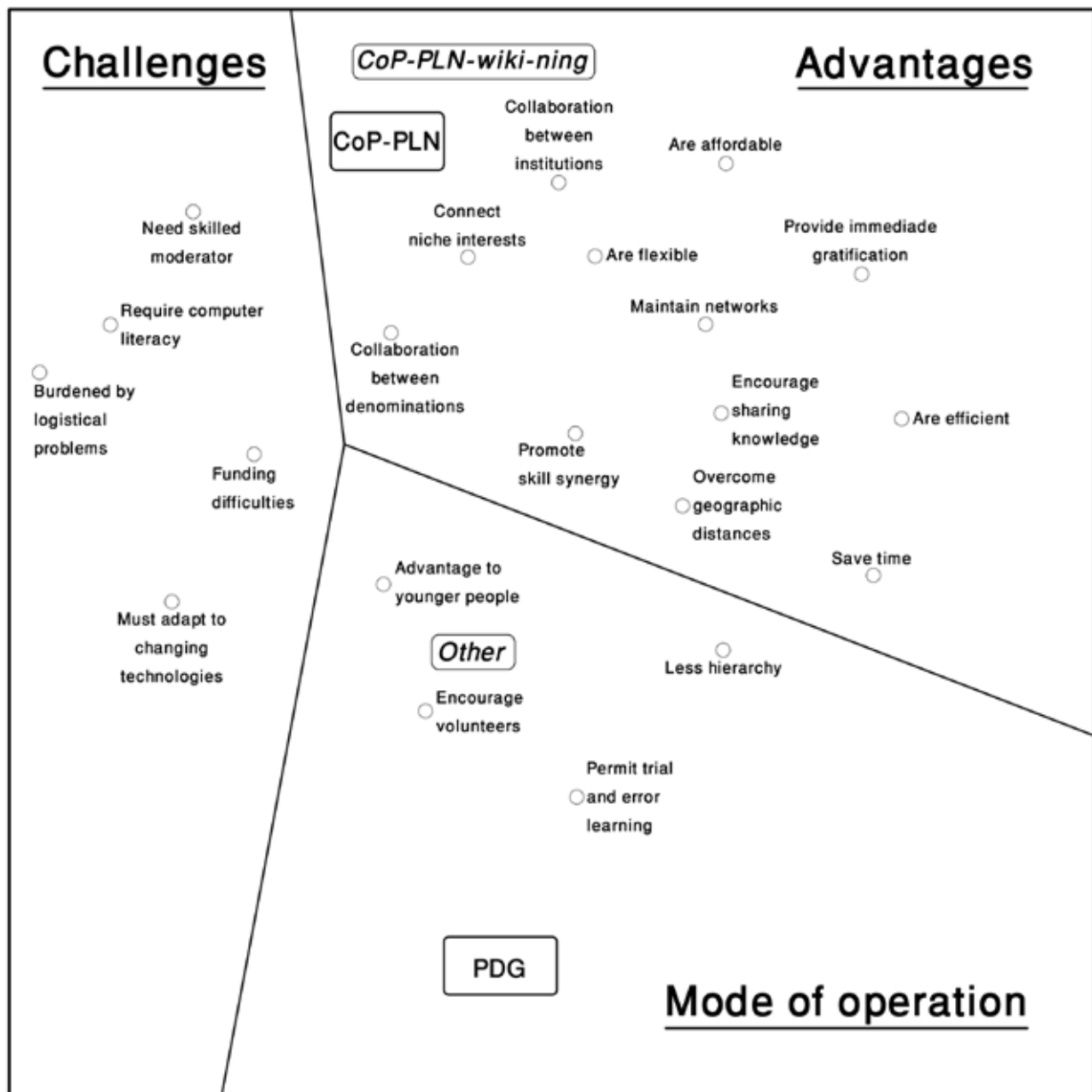
Appendix F

Responses to key open questions in survey

To ensure confidentiality, all identifying names have been deleted; the number in the list does not correspond to a particular group.

How would you define your Jewish Virtual Network (JVN)? It could be an Email discussion group (example: a Google group, a Yahoo group, or any email-based list where everyone can post); or a Community of practice (CoP); or a Professional Learning Communities (PLC), or any other type

1. a Community of Practice in the classical sense- an intentional group of individuals who are brought together around a common domain (in this case, doing special needs work in Jewish schools) for the purpose of improving their practice
2. A facebook group, a web page, and a Constant Contact e-mail distribution list.
3. A listserve for Synagogue Administrators in a given region
4. all of the above
5. an email based list where everyone can post
6. an email-based list specifically comprised of local Jewish educators where everyone can post, exchange ideas, share resources, submit announcements related to our work in Jewish education. CoP.
7. Communities of Practice
8. Community of Practice
9. Community of Practice
10. Community of Practice
11. Community of Practice
12. Community of Practice
13. CoP
14. CoP
15. CoP
16. CoP
17. CoP
18. CoP
19. CoP
20. CoP
21. CoP
22. CoP
23. CoP
24. COP and PLC
25. CoP as well as a google group
26. Either a CoP or a PLC
27. e-mail based list
28. email based list where some can post
29. Email based list with one-way communication.
30. E-mail based lists (approximately 7 or 8 I moderate)
31. Email discussion group
32. email discussion group
33. email discussion group
34. Email discussion group
35. e-mail discussion group
36. E-mail discussion group
37. Email discussion group (Yahoo group)
38. email discussion group, facebook group and page
39. eMail discussion group, peer-2-peer discussion group
40. Email discussion groups primarily.
41. First list serve: E-mail information network--one-way from the list serve to participants under my management. . Second list serve is a conversation among participants of the new directors institute of USCJ and that is interactive.
42. Google Group COP PLC
43. Google Group embedded in a Google site
44. group of trainees
45. I am connected with several Jewish virtual networks. I manage an online learning community, but that also includes a network for students coming to and in Israel.
46. I am part of an online/phone learning community
47. I have no clue what a Jewish Virtual Network is.
48. I moderate a listserv.

49. I participate in several: our staff work together virtually, mostly by email, including staff listserves; we are beginning to use Google docs, calendars etc. for this purpose as well; we communicate with our participants via listserve and invite their ongoing communication through that medium; we strive to create CoPs among alumni with listserves, conference calls, resource banks etc.; we are beginning to work with closed social network groups etc.

50. I would define it as a community of practice, I suppose, but honestly I am not sure what that term means to other people. To me it is a community of people who are supporting one another>s practice in a specific area.

51. it is a listserve open to members of a network of Jewish educators and including about 1/5 of the current membership.

52. It is a Ning network with occasional synchronous meetings.

53. It is a ning which provides a framework for sharing ideas and resources. The Network also sponsors monthly webinars.

54. it>s still evolving and is a mix. Probably mostly a PLC right now.

55. list serv facebook blog.......

56. List serv where subscribers can post and/or respond to the posts of others.

57. List Serve of alumni, Newsletter

58. List Serve of alumni, Newsletter

59. Listserv

60. Listserv

61. Listserv

62. Listserv - Discussion Group

63. listserve

64. Listsrev that networks some 300 synagogue executives together

65. moderated e-mail discussion group

66. My group is a coP

67. never use it--could never get into it and gave up trying

68. Official List of Temple members

69. On Line synagogue experience

70. PLC

71. portal with possibilities of threaded discussion, sharing documents that can be edited on line, calendar, photos, etc.

72. The professionals> listserv s are really a COP. The lay leaders> more a discussion group.

73. Various - Tweeter, Email group discussions, COP for special needs professionals, and some Google groups for the sharing of documents.

74. We are a center for online learning

75. we have a google group and a CoP

76. We have a Professional Learning Community. We share through a google group, webinars, affinity groups, website.

77. We have an email listserv for directors of early childhood Jewish programs and a second email for participants in the Community of practice who are taking part in the an on-line course.

78. We offered two CoPs last year. One used video conference and the other was a hybrid of video conference and in-person for those in the NYC area.

79. We run a community of practice through NING site

80. We use Google groups and email lists with limited posting rights.

81. Webmaster of hagesher.org and moderator of a listserv

82. Website and accompanying email newsletter

83. wiki

84. Yahoo Group

What is the purpose of your JVLN?

1. a) mode of communication and collective work b) to sustain a sense of community over time and space during the course of an 18 mo. program; c) to sustain commitment to practice and develop understanding of personal and professional application once the program has been concluded

2. Adult sacred text study

3. aid communication between school and families, promote interaction among families

4. An e-mail collation of news and comments on campus Jewish issues by and for Jewish faculty and staff from all disciplines and all Jewish viewpoints at U.S. and Canadian colleges and universities

5. announce upcoming events

6. Communication Learning

7. communication, networking, support system, learning

8. Connect different professional, clergy and lay leadership, information and best practice exchange between communities and from movement centers

9. Connect teachers of Jewish history in day schools with one another.

10. Create an opportunity for educators in our communities to network with each other by sharing information or discussing and debating issues of concern or interest related to our work in Jewish education. This interaction, we hope, will contribute to the continuous development of a community of colleagues among Jewish educators.

11. Director of a program in Jewish summer camps

12. Discussion among Jewish supplementary-school directors and principals

13. distribute information to congregants

14. enhance communications among constituents

15. facilitators of CoP to participate with other Jewish leaders of CoP

16. CoP is to : • To strengthen the field of Jewish family education • To offer professional development to practitioners in the field • To develop a network of trusted friends and colleagues • To create effective programs that extend Jewish learning into the home • To provide a safe forum for sharing and evaluating family programs • To expand the influence of Jewish family education in the Jewish education field.

17. For Conservative Jewish Education professionals to learn about using technology both in the classroom and for their own professional needs

18. For Jewish early childhood education leaders to learn from each other, study together, and have a network of support

19. the CoP is a professional, online community focused on social/emotional issues in Jewish day schools and the larger Jewish community. This community of practice is open to all mental health professionals, educators and community leaders interested is sharing resources and best practices, discuss trends and needs, develop collaborative research and work together to maximize our positive impact on the well being of Jewish children and adolescents.

20. inform our congregants of events and activities

21. Informative (giving information about different programs/news/etc.)

22. It is for special needs program directors of a summer camp network to share information and receive support and develop and professional network with fellow special needs program directors.

23. links alumni of a program together

24. Meets the needs of professionals in Jewish day schools

25. multi-use from working with colleagues, providing resources, asking/answering questions.........

26. networking, professional development, advocacy and support

27. Online learning - Jewish learning student forums - mutual assistance for students coming to Israel or in Israel

28. Our JVN consists of teacher and administrative leaders from a small group of schools whose shared goal is supporting one another in creating strong systems of school-based induction.

29. Pass along vital information to help the community grow or make decisions

30. Peer exchanges; sharing of policies and best practices; support and information

31. provide a method of communication to/from/for members -- it is unmoderated

32. provide Jewish educational online

33. provide professional development and support for day school teachers who teach general studies

34. Q/A, exchange of ideas

35. Reform temple educators, pursuing learning on how we do and redefine our jobs

36. Resource sharing and networking

37. share resources among teachers

38. Share resources and information about the field

39. Sharing information, articles, ideas, questions for rabbis and Jewish professionals.

40. Sharing of documents (Torah readers, committee work, etc.) and sharing of weekly information as it relates to congregational happenings et al.

41. strengthening kehillot by networking

42. supporting practitioners of sustained (non-immersive) Jewish service-learning.

43. Synagogue webmasters discuss and share issues etc.

44. The purpose is for the directors of the special needs programs to discuss common issues and share information

45. To allow synagogue officers the opportunity to share leadership experiences.

46. to build collegial networks, enhance professional development; increase skills and knowledge

47. to communicate best practices in Jewish education, in educational practice, and information about the Conservative Movement.

48. To connect JCC Jewish educators to discuss issues and share resources.

49. to connect people for the purpose of the community - exchange knowledge for a particular purpose.

50. To connect Recon congregational education directors

51. To convene the CoPs.

52. To create a community before we met, to continue our conversations and learning after a 10-day seminar, post our work for comments by the group, to post and comment on relevant articles on the subject of Jewish peoplehood and to stay connected to each other and this important topic.

53. To disseminate messages for an organization.

54. to do continued training with a finite group of participants mid-way through their training process

55. To encourage «cross conversation» ... in some cases, readers benefit from simply reading and following threads of particular interest, and in other cases represents the first step in reaching out to colleagues with demonstrated experience with specific topics to be followed up by personal outreach (e-mail or telephone)

56. To enhance the work of the members in providing for the needs of children in Jewish schools who have learning differences

57. To extend the learning and reflect about Jewish education that participants began when they were students

58. To facilitate communication between North American day school educators

59. To facilitate communication between synagogue leadership.

60. to facilitate communication to and among congregation members

61. To get messages out to the congregation

62. To help staff and lay leaders of Jewish orgs best use social technologies.

63. To help teachers and principals successfully implement a particular curriculum in their schools. This will empower Jewish children to speak in their Heritage language and improve Jewish knowledge and identity.

64. To list important announcements

65. To mass communicate to all Jewish teens in a given geographic region

66. To provide a virtual meeting place for individuals interested in positive Jewish educational change to connect with one another and access relevant resources.

67. To provide an ongoing professional development opportunity for teachers living in different parts of North America.

68. To provide information on current research in Jewish day schools.

69. To provide Jews everywhere with the opportunity to learn Torah

70. To provide multiple opportunities for heads of bureaus of Jewish education to share interests, successes, challenges and learn together how to do their jobs better

71. To publicize events, programs, and opportunities for students to attend conferences and participate in Israel and other Jewish study and touring programs.

72. to share ideas, post questions, serve as a collegial venue

73. To share information about experiences and best practices for special needs campers in a specific camping movement.

74. to stimulate discussion

75. To strengthen professional development in Jewish day schools in North America.

76. To support Jewish day school admission professionals

77. To support program professionals across the continent in reaching out to and engaging families with young children in Jewish life.

78. To train staff members and professionals; to share best practices throughout our camping movement; to teach various networks of young adults.

79. using Constant Contact & Facebook

80. We meet to learn together and prepare for camp. We discuss daily aspects of camp

81. We use JVN to keep campers, parents and staff connected to a summer camp network during the off season

82. an online community for educators interested in the development and advancement of educational technology integration. Together we learn from one another, share resources, create educational tools and projects and stay on top of this rapidly growing field.

How would you define an "active" participant?

1. A participant in a synchronous gathering.
2. A person who visits the website more than once a week
3. Able to access the daily entries and post as well.
4. accessed the portal for information for parents uploaded pictures, items for teachers
5. Active would be someone who opens and reads the emails sent. We do not have a way of tracking this through our listservs.
6. An active participant is one who posts to the discussion forums
7. An active participant is someone who views the materials, adds to the discussions and participates on the webinars and/or breakout sessions.
8. An active participant to me is someone who contributes to the community in any fashion. This can be done by posting a blog, article, video, comment, etc.
9. Anyone who has email.
10. Ask questions on email and webinars, present on webinars, respond to questions from others on listserv, participate in planning learning sessions
11. attend conference calls
12. Attend the webinar, or post on google discussion group
13. Attends our every 6 weeks mega-meeting video meeting. Participates actively in those meetings. active also refers to those who post to our google group
14. Before I define it, I think I also see active participation as a fluctuation. There are some who are always active and some who become active once in a while. How I define «active» is any member who contributes to the community. This would be by posting a blog, resource, video, comment, etc. While one could argue that reading and checking the community is activity, it is difficult to measure and does little to grow the community. However, that individual may be taking what they learn and apply it to their professional life and that is certainly valuable.
15. Comes to majority of webinars, speaks up (voice and/or chat), proactively emails to share knowledge and ask questions, presents their work as case studies on webinars or blog posts.
16. Comes to meetings; adds to discussion; offers to lead the group; contributes to online learning

17. contributes teaching material to wiki
18. frequent poster of information -- provides new areas of discussion
19. Hard to define- participants who respond, who contribute or ask to contribute. It isn>t interactive. In the works
20. Have posted to listserv.
21. listserv participant
22. One who either adds posts or resources, participates in a forum or group, or participates in a webinar
23. one who participates at least a few times a month
24. One who participates in activities other than simply attending webinars
25. One who participates in discussions and asks questions
26. One who responds at least occasionally to questions posed, or who adds personal insights to general «conversations» . . at least a few times a month . . of course some «seasons» are more active than others in synagogue life!
27. One who responds or initiates discussion
28. One who signs on
29. Participates in any of the following: google group postings, webinars, affinity groups.
30. participates in conference, calls, webinars and/or listserv
31. participates in webinars, conference calls, attends f2f, posts, connects to other members
32. participates more frequently, takes on leadership role
33. participates in our phone calls
34. People that open the emails from Constant Contact.
35. people who attend programs; read our Journal; participate in webinars
36. People who write at least one message every six months
37. Posted over the last year.
38. Posting at least 2 X per month
39. posting on facebook or sending an email
40. Posts a message or reply at least a few times a year
41. Posts a question or response appx. once every 2 months
42. Posts at least once every 10 days. (Others may repost elsewhere- we don>t track that.)
43. posts questions and answers, responds to questions of others, shares information, responds to surveys

44. Posts to the list. Only 50 post regularly.

45. reads newsletter, or website at least 1x week

46. reads the newsletter, engages in the listserve, affinity groups, information sharing, participates in affinity groups

47. reads the newsletter, engages in the listserve, affinity groups, information sharing

48. Regular participation; postings and/or replies with some regular frequency

49. Regular reader of the posts.

50. Responds to e-mail info, asks questions through the list serve or offers information through the list serve

51. shares in the work flow; contributes occasionally to the conversation online;

52. someone who regularly attends posted programs

53. Somebody who participates in list serve discussions, in webinars of interest and attends in-person meetings.

54. Someone involved in creating materials for the CoP. asking questions, participating in webinars, etc.

55. someone who attends meetings or webinars and/or actively makes participates in the listserv

56. Someone who contributes to the learning of others.

57. Someone who contributes to the listserv at least twice a year

58. Someone who emails and posts a great deal.

59. Someone who has signed up and created an account with the group

60. Someone who joins the meetings and participates.

61. Someone who opens up an email.

62. Someone who participates at all conferences and shares information

63. Someone who participates in CoP web-based conference calls and uses Google Groups

64. Someone who participates in either asking or answering questions on the listserve and who regularly participates in the monthly conference calls/webinars

65. Someone who posts 2 or more times a year

66. someone who posts a few times in a given year

67. Someone who posts regularly (once a month)

68. Someone who posts to the list at least once a year

69. Someone who posts/checks in/initiates conversation or agendas

70. Someone who reads, comments or «likes» in the facebook group, blog readers, AND twitter followers

71. Someone who speaks up, posting to the group.

72. Subscribers who post to the list

73. takes one of our classes

74. The core people who participate in 2+ webinars each year, the steering committee members.

75. They are all «active» because the list is for announcements only, no exchange.

76. Those subscribers who post queries and announcements and / or respond to posts made on the listserv.

77. Those who respond to facebook invitations, or post their own invitations and announcements on our facebook group.

78. we have a core group of 3 members who are leading the CoP. We have not really launched the CoP yet but 40 people signed up for it when it launches.

Content of activities (please tell us what were the topics of the last three meetings)

1. Admission: Linking Day Schools and Financial Management: Technology Budgeting

2. Appreciative Leadership / Pirkei Avot text study / Building playgrounds

3. Board meeting to approve a new mission statement Meeting to learn about research conducted on Christian Continuing Education Discussion about features to add to organization›s website

4. Bringing camp/experiential education to congregational schools; training for special needs counselors; educational implications of changes within the movement.

5. calendar of the school year, contracts for teachers, salary structure, job postings......

6. Camp Curriculum / Adult Jewish Learning / Creating a Diversified Program Sampling

7. Changing Role of the Educator / Teen Engagement / Relationship building among parents

8. comments on weekly study; staff planning; synagogue meditation groups

9. content of recent posts include language acquisition and suggestions on end-of-year activities

10. Core group wrote a mission statement. Core group worked with a writer to create a case study on how Jewish day schools create a PLC. Core group is planning the community launch.

11. Cultural events in Jerusalem / Spring classes / Maimonides, Psalms of Hallel

12. day school and camp collaboration, yield activities, PJ - library and day school collaborations

13. discussion of a book

14. Discussion of core values of the early childhood program / Inquiry based research in ECE / Interfaith families

15. educational vision, holiday programming, managing the religious school budget

16. Educational, networking, information sharing, professional development.

17. environment / healthy relationships / tzedakah

18. innovation in Jewish education, inclusion of learners, technology in the classroom

19. Intro to technology, collaborative tools, wikis

20. Israel; Gender; Leadership; Adaptive Change

21. jData / graduation / connecting with Hillel

22. Jewish education- advocacy for professionals, collegial collaboration, best practices

23. Leadership Development in service-learning programs How to create effective follow-through programming after a service-learning experience

24. Leadership in a digital age; live streaming services and events; using Facebook Causes

25. Lunch and Learn conference calls which are open to the JVN as well as to others included: Handling conflicts of interest in the grant making process, issues related to adolescent community participation

26. Many topics related to camp. Days off, recruiting update, this year's curriculum,

27. n/a

28. no activities

29. no meetings -- general listserv

30. No meetings Recent discussion topics: early childhood, technology, Hebrew pedagogy

31. No meetings. Everything is done on the ning platform and is asynchronous.

32. personal Judaic studies paths

33. Preparing for camp (staff week, etc) Updating web conferencing with staff and campers Updating fund raising activities for program Idea sharing and problem solving specific camp issues

34. professional development/best practices, crisis resolution, contract negotiations

35. Recent active discussions focused on such topics as gender separation in schools, the place of academic Talmud study in high school and Charter Schools

36. Shabbat morning davvening; organizational meetings

37. Shabbat services and dinner; Sunday bagel brunch; Israeli movie night

38. strategic planning; utilization of volunteer services; best practices

39. Strategies to Help Struggling Learners / Engaging Students in the Learning Process, In God's Image: Celebrating the Child with Special Needs in Jewish Life, Sensitizing Your Students to Their Peer's Learning Challenges

40. summer planning staffing / internships in and out of cam

41. Summer Programming / Purim and Pesach Programming / Engaging Parents and Children

42. support for challenges teachers encounter, resource sharing

43. Supporting mentors in learning to mentor more effectively

44. Synagogue governance issues

45. teaching and learning of tefillah (2 such meetings) planning PD activities for faculty using a particular video

46. teaching workshops about curriculum

47. technology and Jewish education; community wide change efforts in Jewish education; family based and empowered alternatives to Hebrew school

48. Three part series on Voice Thread and postings on Yom Ha>atzmaut, Pesach and Purim

49. training pieces around how to build programs in their institutions

50. Trends in synagogue work / Development of association to professionalize the work on-line tools for sharing

51. Upcoming summer of camp--planning staff week introducing staff member who will be supporting several of our programs, across the camps / Shabbat programs at various camps

52. We do not have meetings. It is all done asynchronously.

53. We have two levels of virtual networks, one for those who worked for our organization and the other for those who are in the schools with which we work

54. we share program ideas from each of our camps, we ask questions and share resources

55. Webinar on Complementary School mergers Survey on Leading Complementary School Change In-Person 3-day meeting about Leading Community Change

56. Website Migration, Google Email issues, WordPress website CMS

57. WHO IS A JEW IN NORTH AMERICA? ANTI-SEMITISM ON CAMPUS Jewish history made a part of today

58. Yom Haatzmaut celebrations and rituals, kashrut warnings and availabilities, Lag B>Omer preparations

59. 6.6.11 webinar on Social Media 6.3.11 Google group posting about children>s book author recommendations 6.1..11 Google posting regarding secular grants for communities 5.11 webinar on Rosh Hashanah programming

60. presentations with guest experts: Incorporating Philanthropy and Advocacy into Service-Learning; What should we do? How to do meaningful Community Mapping, and Stories from the Field presenter speaking about his J-Serve project. For May we joined a larger conference call on the psychology and physical development process of teens.

61. Webinar on topic of Jewish Peoplehood - May 3, 2011 Teaching Holocaust through Art Workshop - May 1, 2011 Teaching Torah Using G-dcast resources - April 28, 2011

Have you personally been involved in a JVN that stopped its activities?

If YES, tell us more about it: time, circumstances, reasons, etc

1. After 4-6 sessions of the CoPs we realized that this was not the most effective way for professionals to share ideas and learn from one another. We are looking to re-think and re-structure the CoPs.

2. An earlier CoP which was created to plan the 2011 Annual Conference. Lasted from 7/1/10 until the end of the conference itself, 1/31/11

3. the listserv was hosted on a university server, and the university stopped offering that service to student groups, so we were forced to find an

alternative, and settled on Constant Contact. The transition has been a positive one: Constant Contact better serves our needs.

4. Circumstances and reasons: In 2003, my organization compiled a list of local individuals who all were in some way involved in Jewish teen learning (almost 1000 names, and participants ranged from service providers to parents and funders) and those names and corresponding e-mail addresses were then used to create a list serve, where everyone had the ability to post to the entire list serve. That list serve was ultimately stopped after a few months of operation due to a high volume of complaints which were received from individuals that objected to having their names subscribed to that list serve without either their knowledge or consent.

5. For several years we coordinated a working group on congregational educational change for leaders of local, regional, and national synagogue education change initiatives. After a number of years and the emergence of new networking opportunities it seemed appropriate to sunset this group.

6. Funding was stopped for a national CoP for people who run national CoP>s.

7. grant / funding completed

8. I also had a listserv that was not just for education directors, but when the professionals shifted to a confidential listserv, the one that included teachers and parents died from lack of active participants

9. we ended some of the previous CoPs when they did not fit in with the focus of the strategic plan.

10. it was a national CoP that lost its facilitator

11. it was another group of trainees - educators from religious schools. It phased out after their year of training.

12. It was sponsored through an institution and did not continue after several years.

13. The CoP was funded by a foundation. When funding ended, activity ended. We hope it can get started again but as of now there is no facilitated activity.

14. Leadership changed and the new organizer did not keep it going

15. Lost funding, or group outgrew its goals, or I outgrew its goals.

16. CoP for Israel educators

17. The «sponsor» (under its aegis, it did NOT provide financial support) wanted to take total control of the effort.
18. The main challenge is facilitation. Without facilitation it is very difficult to sustain JVNs. During the economic downturn and continuing on, remaining staff have larger workloads precluding «extracurricular» activities
19. The participants no longer found the content of the conversations compelling.
20. We ran one under a completely different program and I think it was organic enough- we needed all the participants input to know what were the things that would make them want to come to a community of practice on line. We are restarting it with what we have learned from the peoplehood COP.

Do you know of a JVN, that you were not personally involved in, that stopped its activities?
If YES, tell us more about it: time, circumstances, reasons, etc

1. [name of defunct JVLN]
2. The JVLN is different from before. I was more involved originally, and keep dropping off of their radar under current structure
3. institution redefined its goals
4. due to conflict, postings outside the parameters of the JVN, lack of usefulness or dissolution of interest group
5. Lack of interest - technology changed. Less synagogue bulletin editors or the need to discuss.
6. Not enough activity
7. so many of them that I cannot even recall.
8. The JVS was volunteer led. People›s lives changed-- new jobs, children, etc. The group fell apart because no one could continue to organize it as a volunteer

Have you ever been trained as a Virtual Network Facilitator? Please elaborate

1. Have had coaching over the years, but not any formal training.
2. I do the training. I started the listserv initiated in late 1997 and we also have forums, portals/Facebook and blogs but limited.
3. I have served as a director for several non-profits. We were trained to provide community services in a variety of aspects (NOT Jewish, but used their principles here)
4. I participated in Kehilliyot, a meta-COP. The meetings centered around best practices. It was not formal training, but I do feel I learned a lot from it. JCSA has been paying to continue the Wiki Space for Kehilliyot in the hopes we›ll be able to revive it. The facilitator lost the grant money which had sustained it initially
5. I was not trained specifically as a VN facilitator but I was trained in graduate school to run a learning network.
6. Jim Joseph Fellowship facilitated by the Lookstein center.
7. Jim Joseph fellowship with the Lookstein Center
8. Jim Joseph Foundation Fellow
9. Jim Joseph Foundation Fellowship
10. Jim Joseph Foundation fellowship
11. Jim Joseph Foundation Fellowship.
12. JJF fellow
13. JJFF
14. JJFF
15. JJFF Fellowship.
16. No
17. no
18. No
19. no
20. no
21. no
22. No
23. no
24. no
25. no
26. NO
27. no

28. No
29. No
30. no
31. no
32. no
33. no
34. no
35. no
36. No
37. no
38. No
39. no
40. No
41. no
42. no
43. no
44. No and I believe this would be very useful.
45. No, not relevant here
46. no, would like to be however!
47. No.
48. no.
49. No.
50. No.
51. No.
52. no.
53. No.
54. No--learned on the go.
55. Not formally. When I began the list the concept had not yet been developed.
56. Not in a formal way, but do receive support through the Jim Joseph Fellowship
57. On-the-ground training for over 15 years in different projects for different organizations
58. our facilitator was trained by Naava Frank (as was I)
59. This question is not in English. Yes, although outside of this research survey the use of the term VNF is not part of the process. I am a Jim Joseph Fellow at the Lookstein Center at Bar Ilan University
60. Yes (by AOL for another group)
61. Yes from the Lookstein Center
62. Yes, our organization has a consultant who trains and supports our CoP facilitators

63. yes, took CP Square course on CoP facilitation, coached by John Smith for 3 years.
64. Yes. I was trained by Naava Frank and Michael Miloff back in 2004 in how to create and facilitate CoP>s