

# Zero to 50M

Seventeen years ago, there were few options for Jewish children's books. PJ Library changed that by providing stories and delivering a milestone 50 million books worldwide to date.

BY REBECCA NORDQUIST  
MANAGING EDITOR

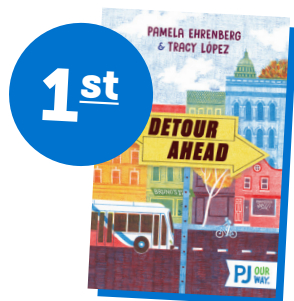
Rosalind Torrey, an original PJ Library parent in the United States, admits that she had zero Jewish children's books on her bookshelf in the early 2000s. A Jewishly engaged family, they had some Jewish music in the home, but books? "I really don't remember any," she said.

Torrey wasn't alone. That's exactly why Harold Grinspoon founded PJ Library in 2005 — to bring Jewish stories into homes everywhere. And since that first book, *Before You Were Born*, was sent to about

## PJ Publishing

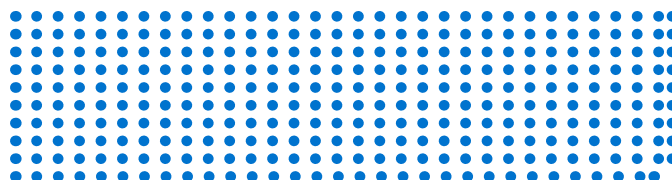
In March, PJ Publishing, PJ Library's in-house imprint since 2014, released the middle-grade book *Detour Ahead* about a neurodiverse girl who befriends a Salvadoran American boy.

It's PJ Publishing's first book published for PJ Our Way (children ages 9–12), another signal that the imprint is quickly becoming a destination for accomplished authors and illustrators.



## All-Access Community

319 US zip codes with only **ONE** subscriber



**What happens when a family lives outside of a PJ Library-supported community in the US and Canada?** Funded by the PJ Library Alliance, a collective of donors that supports PJ Library's growth, the All-Access Community reaches families — and potential subscribers — who live outside of supported zip codes and connects them to each other and Jewish life. In fact, its subscriber base in the US alone (17,364) has surpassed Los Angeles (11,404) to become the second largest community. (New York is No. 1 with 36,816 subscribers.)

## Digital Content

**248,182**  
downloads

PJ Library is about more than books in hand. The digital content team is busy creating audiobooks, including *Detour Ahead*, and podcasts too. In fact, the podcasts *Beyond the Bookcase*, *Afternoons with Mimi*, and *Have I Got a Story for You!* have been downloaded more than 248,000 times total. Go to [pjourway.org/audiobooks](http://pjourway.org/audiobooks) and [pjlibrary.org/podcast](http://pjlibrary.org/podcast) to listen.

## Distribution



Imagine 226,507 books. Now imagine the logistics behind delivering those books in one month (in this case, May) all around the US and Canada. Every month, it takes an average of five tractor trailers to haul that month's books to the post office. Want another blow-your-mind fact? The main warehouse receives up to 25 deliveries of books from tractor trailers monthly for future mailings.

140 families in the US, PJ Library has delivered 50 million books globally and shared more than 1,100 stories that reflect the Jewish experience from many perspectives. Fun fact: that includes 16 different versions of the story of Noah's Ark.

The books that arrived on Torrey's doorstep in Massachusetts "transformed what was in our home," she said. "PJ Library was very much part of the rhythm of our bedtime routine. For children, there's a sense of comfort when you feel represented and the morals you're being raised with are represented in literature too."

**"These are books that I'm saving for the next generation."**

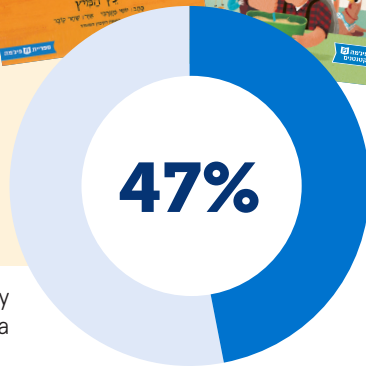
ROSALIND TORREY

Almost two decades later, *Bagels from Benny*, *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat*, and *Chicken Man*, among other "keepers," as Torrey calls them, still sit on her bookshelf, and there are more stored away. "These are books that I'm saving for the next generation," she said.

To celebrate the milestone of 50 million books, here's a look at some little-known stories about the inner workings of PJ Library and the impact it's made along the way in the lives — and bookshelves — of families like Torrey and her three children.

### Keren Grinspoon Israel

Keren Grinspoon Israel, aka the Grinspoon Foundation Israel, has provided 23.5 million books — or nearly half of all PJ Library books — to more than 3.1 million children in schools since 2011 through its literacy program Sifriyat Pijama, which is Hebrew for PJ Library.



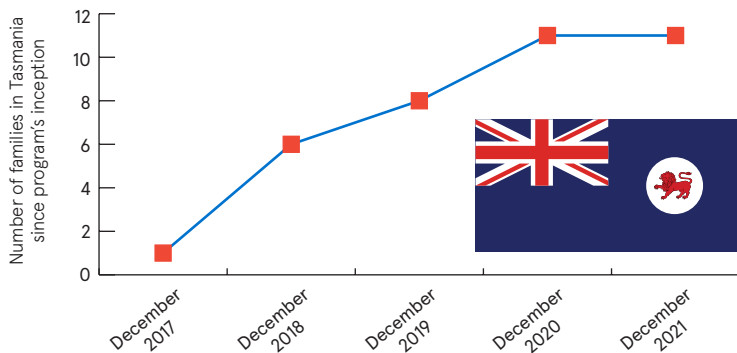
Percentage of total PJ Library books distributed by Sifriyat Pijama

### Community Engagement

**What's a super benefit of PJ Library? Community — both virtual and in person.**

Nearly 200 local communities organize countless events each year to bring people together, and the Get Together initiative offers families guidance and financial incentives to host Jewish experiences themselves. Since 2016, more than 21,000 families have taken part in about 7,000 Get Together gatherings.

### Global Reach



**Quick geography quiz: Where's Tasmania?** (Honor system here.) Tasmania is an Australian island state south of the main island with about half a million people — and a handful of PJ Library families. The International Fund helps support programs like these and delivers Jewish stories into unexpected places — because every family matters.

### Donor Support



How has PJ Library managed to accomplish all of this — and much more — in 17 years? The support of its donors, of course! In 2021, 8,102 people of all ages and backgrounds helped PJ Library raise more than \$1 million toward its \$40 million operating budget with an average gift of \$93.57. These donations and other generous gifts help advance PJ Library's mission of free stories and programming to all, proving that every dollar makes a difference.