“Resources in Yiddish Studies: ‘Meta-’ resources”

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“RESOURCES IN YIDDISH STUDIES: ‘META’- RESOURCES”

Zachary M. Baker

**Introduction:** Emerging scholars have limited opportunities for systematic orientation in the research resources of Yiddish Studies. As Zachary Baker commented elsewhere, “information literacy” is something that graduate students and faculty are likely to attain informally and on their own; classroom training is generally not available for this purpose. That’s why we’re publishing this online bibliographical series devoted to research resources in Yiddish Studies. It builds upon a day-long workshop devoted to resources in Yiddish Studies, which Baker led in April 2015 at the University of California-Berkeley.

This research guide will be divided into the following units, to be published in installments, each of which will take the form of a stand-alone post:

1. “Meta”-resources – bibliographies, web gateways, online scholarship, indexes, library and archival resources, encyclopedias.
2. Full-text electronic resources in Yiddish Studies.
3. Yiddish linguistic scholarship, including dictionaries.
4. Yiddish literature and culture.
5. Bibliographies of imprints (by country or region).
6. Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust (Yiddish focus).

Each unit is accompanied by a brief introduction. Where warranted, entries include brief annotations.
The principal genres represented in this research guide are bibliographies, indexes, catalogs of libraries and archives, dictionaries, encyclopedias, bio-bibliographies, bibliographical periodicals, web gateways, and full-text resources. A small number of foundational works (such as Max Weinreich’s *History of the Yiddish Language*) are also included, but the guide is not intended to replicate the detailed listings of the bibliographies that are cited.

When warranted, print and online resources are included alongside one another in this guide. For example, the *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur* (*Biographical Dictionary of Modern Yiddish Literature*)—an important bio-bibliographical encyclopedia of Yiddish authors that was published in eight volumes from 1956 to 1981—has been digitized by the Yiddish Book Center and is accessible online via the Internet Archive. Accordingly, its print and online manifestations are cited here side-by-side.

Most but not all of the online resources cited here are accessible free of charge: for example, the RAMBI Index of Articles on Jewish Studies and the Index to Yiddish Periodicals. However, some are accessible only to individual and institutional subscribers, e.g., the MLA International Bibliography (produced by the Modern Language Association).

Much of what has been digitized is not fully available online—and is not likely to be for the foreseeable future. During the past decade, Google has digitized millions of volumes for its Google Book Search service, but due to copyright restrictions only a minority are accessible from cover to cover. Audio recordings that have been digitized and that were issued after a certain year (1922, in the U.S.) tend to be accessible only on the home institutions’ premises and not over the internet. One notable exception to this practice is the Internet Archive, which provides full access to digitized books and audio content. These are taken down only when copyright holders object to their having been put online.

A final caveat: many of the links that are included here will either change or disappear altogether within months or even weeks of the guide’s publication on the web. There is nothing “forever” about the web—or digital resources in general. The sites that have been preserved by the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine are but islands in a vast archipelago of defunct websites. Libraries have begun to pick up the slack, through highly selective, in-depth web-archiving initiatives. And long-term preservation of digital content is still a work in progress.
1. **“META-” RESOURCES**

**OVERVIEW:**


An extensive bibliographical survey of Yiddish Studies scholarship, mainly in English, and primarily from the 1980s to the early 2000s.


(Online; subscription resource.)

An annotated, online bibliography of scholarship in, and sources for, Yiddish Studies. Citations are for works in English, Yiddish, and Hebrew.


A research guide and a gateway to Yiddish-related web resources, drawing upon the excellent holdings of the Dorot Jewish Division at NYPL. The Yiddish Research Bibliography and Guide includes hyperlinks, when available, to digitized and full-text resources, as well as to online databases.

**YOR** (עַשְׁנָה יאָפָה, זוכט מע אַז)

Compiled by Dov-Ber Kerler, Indiana University. Research guide and links; this web page is in Yiddish.

**GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY:**


Brisman was for many years the Jewish Studies bibliographer at the University of California – Los Angeles. While building up a first-rate research collection at UCLA he published this series of bibliographical guides. Though by now it is somewhat outdated, the *Jewish Research Literature* series is indispensable for the detailed background that it provides on many of the Yiddish reference sources that are discussed in this online guide.


Representative of a “meta-meta” genre that was formerly taught in research methods courses but is now often overlooked. Shunami, a librarian at the Jewish National and
University Library, in Jerusalem (now the National Library of Israel), compiled this authoritative work, which includes an extensive section in each volume devoted to “Judeo-German; Yiddish.” In addition, citations for bibliographies in Yiddish on a variety of subjects are sprinkled throughout this work.

**BIBLIOGRAPHICAL PERIODICALS:**

*Bibliografishe yorbikher fun yivo. Ĭarshe: Farlag Ḳulturlige, 1928.*
Available online via the Yiddish Book Center.
Only one volume of this Yiddish bibliographical annual ever appeared. It was published under the aegis of the Yidisher visnshaftlekher institut—YiIVO, in Vilna, and was intended to serve as the “Yiddish national bibliography.” In addition to books, it also indexed articles on literature and culture appearing in the Yiddish press.

Available online via the Yiddish Book Center.
No further volumes published. Though issued in Moscow, this bibliographical collection was sponsored by the Institut far yidischer kultur ba der ukrainisher visnshaftlekher akademye (Bibliologishe komisyve).

An invaluable bibliographical publication, which included yearly lists of newly published Yiddish books worldwide, plus essays about booklore and library collections.

*Kiryat sefer: riv’on bibliyografi shel Bet ha-sefarim ha-le’umi veha-universita’i bi-Yerushlayim. Jerusalem: Jewish National and University Library, 1924-present.*
Searchable online.
Israel’s national bibliography of Hebraica, *Kiryat sefer* contains comprehensive bibliographical listings, including works in Yiddish. For many years it also included bibliographical essays and reviews.

**WEB GATEWAYS AND KEY WEBSITES:**

The proliferation of online resources is paralleled by a plethora of web gateways devoted to Yiddish. Some links from these gateways are out of date, as websites change their URLs or are shut down altogether.

- **Mendele**
  Links to Yiddish online resources, via the website for the Mendele discussion list.
● **Yiddish Book Center**  
With links to the center’s online resources, including digitized books, audio recordings, oral histories, yizkor books, and educational programs.

● **Yiddish links**  
“Links to Excellent Yiddish Sites/Groups,” via derbay.org.

● **Yiddishweb**  
Via the Maison de la culture Yiddish – Bibliothèque Medem / Medem-bibliotek, Paris.

● **YIVO Institute for Jewish Research**  
Website of the premier Yiddish-oriented research center, founded in 1925 and relocated from Vilna to New York City in 1940.

**ONLINE INDEXES:**

● **Central and Eastern European Online Library**  
Subscription database, with numerous citations to recent Eastern European scholarship on Yiddish. For non-subscribers there is no charge for searching; individual articles are available for purchase.

● **Index to Yiddish Periodicals**  
“A bibliographical database using Yiddish, which aims to record the materials published in the Yiddish press.” Especially strong for its indexing of Yiddish periodicals and newspapers in Eastern Europe, and of Yiddish literary and cultural publications in the United States. The Abraham Icchok Lerner Index to Yiddish Periodicals (official name), which is under the aegis of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Beth Shalom Aleichem, now has direct links to full-text of around 40% of its material, through many of the collections described elsewhere in this guide. The Index continues to update with new links to full-text as they become available.

● **MLA International Bibliography**  
Home page of this subscription database, which is published by the Modern Language Association. “An essential tool for research in all aspects of modern languages and literature,” with links to full text when available, the *MLA International Bibliography* includes thousands of citations to journal articles, dissertations, and monographs relating to Yiddish language and literature.

● **RAMBI: Index of Articles on Jewish Studies**  
Home page of the most comprehensive index of scholarly articles in Jewish Studies, with links to both its old and new search platforms. Edited by the Jewish National and University Library (now: National Library of Israel) since 1966, RAMBI (*רשימת מאמרים בהדעי היהדות*) indexes articles in journals, *festschriften*, and anthologies. Some citations include links to full text (mostly in subscription databases). Coverage of scholarship on (and in some cases, in) Yiddish is extensive.
ONLINE SCHOLARLY FORUMS:

- **In geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies**
  Online scholarship in the field, primarily in English. Includes the following subdivisions: Articles; Texts & Translations; Pedagogy; Blog; Reviews; Interviews.

- **Mendele: Forum for Yiddish Language and Literature**
  “Mendele is a moderated mailing list dedicated to the lively exchange of views, information, news and just about anything else related to the Yiddish language and Yiddish literature.” Posts are mostly in English, though some are in transliterated Yiddish. The Mendele archive (1991-present) is available through Google. Also associated with Mendele:
    For scholarly discussions of Yiddish language, literature, and culture.
  o **Yiddish Theatre Forum**, 2002-2006
    “Founded in 2002 to foster greater interaction among scholars, artists, librarians, and lay people interested in the history of Yiddish theatre and drama.”

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVAL UNION CATALOGS:

Union catalogs provide combined listings of library and/or archival holdings across multiple repositories.

- **ArchiveGrid.org**
  “ArchiveGrid includes over four million records describing archival materials, bringing together information about historical documents, personal papers, family histories, and more. With over 1,000 different archival institutions represented, ArchiveGrid helps researchers looking for primary source materials held in archives, libraries, museums and historical societies.” Includes listings for archival collections—many of them Yiddish-related—in over two dozen countries.

- **The Inter-University Center for Digital Information Services: MALMAD**
  The MALMAD home page links to the Israel Union Catalog (ULI), both old and new search interfaces, and to the Israel Union List of Serials (ULS). ULI includes “over 6.5 million bibliographic records in the catalogs of the Israeli university and college libraries, as well as selected research institutes and other libraries.”

- **National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections: NUCMC (“Nuck-Muck”)**
  “The mission of the NUCMC program is to provide and promote bibliographic access to ... archival and manuscript collections held by eligible repositories located throughout the United States and its territories. The program’s mission is further realized by the provision of free searching, via NUCMC gateways, of archival and manuscript cataloging in OCLC WorldCat.”
SELECTED JEWISH (AND YIDDISH) LIBRARY AND ARCHIVAL RESOURCES:

**AHEYM**, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.
“The Archives of Historical and Ethnographic Yiddish Memories explores Jewish life in Eastern Europe before, during and after World War II. The archive consists of nearly 400 interviews, conducted primarily in Yiddish, and mostly in small towns throughout Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia.”

This Yiddish cultural center was established in 2002 as a merger between the Association pour l’étude et la diffusion de la culture Yiddish and the Bibliothèque Medem (Medem-bibliotek). The library’s extensive Yiddish collections are listed in the Rachel online catalog, which the Bibliothèque Medem shares with other important Judaica libraries and cultural agencies in France.

**Center for Jewish History online finding aids**
Combined archival catalog of the Center for Jewish History’s partner institutions: The American Jewish Historical Society, American Sephardi Federation, Leo Baeck Institute Yeshiva University Museum, and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Related site: Center for Jewish History Digital Collections.

**Fundación IWO**, Buenos Aires.
The Fundación IWO is the foremost Yiddish cultural center in Latin America (founded in 1928 as the Buenos Aires branch of the YIVO Institute, then headquartered in Vilna), with an extensive library and archive.

**Harvard College Library, Judaica Division**, Cambridge, MA.
Harvard holds the largest university library collection of Judaica and Hebraica in North America, with extensive Yiddish holdings, including the archives of the Yiddish actors Joseph Buloff and Luba Kadison, and the Vilna-born collector Leyzer Ran.

**Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion**, Cincinnati, OH.
HUC-JIR is home to the Klau Library (one of the most important Judaica libraries in the U.S.), the American Jewish Archives, and the American Jewish Periodical Center, which has microfilm copies of many American Yiddish newspapers.

**Jewish Public Library**, Montreal.
The JPL, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2014, is both a neighborhood public
library and the most significant repository of Yiddish books, periodicals, and archives in Canada. Its archives include the papers of Canadian Yiddish authors, local Yiddish schools, and audio recordings of public events held at the JPL from 1951 until about 2005. “The majority of our [archival] collections are now searchable on the Canadian Jewish Heritage Network database, www.cjhn.ca. Selections of these collections have also been digitized and can be viewed through the database.” The audio recordings have been digitized by the Yiddish Book Center and are accessible via the Internet Archive.

**National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.**
The NLI, formerly the Jewish National and University Library, was established in 1892 and is now one of the world’s premier repositories of Judaica, Hebraica, and (of course) Israeliiana. Catalog records for the NLI’s Yiddish holdings are accessible both through its own online catalog and through the Israel Union Catalog. The NLI is devoting considerable resources to digitizing rare and important materials in its collections and in cooperation with other libraries, notably through the Historical Jewish Press (JPress) project.

**New York Public Library, Dorot Jewish Division, New York, NY.**
“The Dorot Jewish Division was established as a distinct collection with funding contributed by Jacob Schiff in 1897, just two years after the formation of The New York Public Library.” Its Yiddish holdings—especially of the Yiddish press worldwide—are unmatched. The Dorot Jewish Division’s holdings on the Yiddish theater include the personal papers of the Yiddish actor and impresario Boris Thomashefsky.

**YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.**
Founded in 1925, with its headquarters in Vilna until 1940, the YIVO Institute has during the course of its history served as the world’s main research center devoted to Yiddish in all of its dimensions. Its library and archives are also a major repository of source materials relating to Jewish history in Eastern Europe and the United States, and the Holocaust and its aftermath. Among published and online resources focusing on YIVO, its history, and its resources are the following:


*YIVO Digital Archive on Jewish Life in Poland*
YIVO Library. *Yiddish Catalog and Authority File of the YIVO Library*, edited by Zachary M. Baker and Bella Hass Weinberg. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990. 5 vols. Because not all of the YIVO Library’s holdings are listed online, this printed catalog remains an essential research tool.
Żydowski Instytut Historyczny (Jewish Historical Institute), Warsaw.
The Jewish Historical Institute (Yidisher historisher institut) was established in 1947 and is located in the building that once housed the Central Jewish Library of the Warsaw Jewish community (attached to the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street, which was destroyed during World War II). Among other things, its archives and library house the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto—a legacy of the legendary Oyneg Shabes initiative that was led by the historian Emanuel Ringelblum.

SELECTED JEWISH (AND YIDDISH) ENCYCLOPEDIAS (listed chronologically):

Although quite dated, in many ways the JE remains the “industry standard,” as far as Jewish encyclopedias are concerned. Coverage of Yiddish-related topics is impressive—especially considering that Yiddish literature was just entering its heyday at the time of publication.

Shimeon Brisman describes this as the “first major multivolume encyclopedia in Yiddish. Planned as a 10-volume work containing 40,000 entries.” Vols. 1-5 constitute a general encyclopedia. “The seven volumes of the Yidn series contained a large number of studies, some of them almost complete books, dealing with various phases of Jewish life and culture,” Brisman writes.

This edition of the EJ ranks with The Jewish Encyclopedia as the most important Jewish encyclopedia in English. Yiddish topics are covered in great breadth and depth in the EJ. The entry for “Yiddish language” is by Uriel Weinreich, and the entry for “Yiddish literature” is by Chone Shmeruk. Edited and published in Jerusalem, articles in the EJ tend to reflect Israeli perspectives and scholarship of its time.

A partial update of the 1971 edition of the *EJ*. Barry Walfish (University of Toronto) has characterized it as *Encyclopaedia Interrupta*.

**Symcha Pietruszka, Yidishe folks-entsiklopedye: far yidishe religye, geshikhte, filozofye, literatur, biografye, lender-kibutsim un andere inyonim. 2nd ed. New York; Montreal: Gal'ed, 1949. 2 vols.**

The 1943 edition is available online via the Yiddish Book Center: [vol. 1](#), [vol. 2](#).

The 1949 edition is available online via the Yiddish Book Center: [vol. 1](#), [vol. 2](#).

First issued in Montreal in 1943, the “Yidishe folks-entsiklopedye remains even now the only complete Jewish encyclopedia in Yiddish,” Brisman states. “Its emphasis . . . was mainly on Judaism of the past; modern Judaism was assigned less importance.”


Also available [online](#), with audio and video examples supplementing the texts, maps, and images in the print edition.

*The YIVO Encyclopedia* represents the state of the art for Jewish encyclopedias in general, and for its treatment of Jewish history and culture in a specific region. Its coverage of Yiddish-related topics is both extensive and deep. Contributors include specialists in North American, Western and Eastern Europe, and Israel, and the encyclopedia takes full advantage of scholarly advances made since the fall of the Berlin Wall.