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“Resources in Yiddish Studies: The Holocaust”

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“RESOURCES IN YIDDISH STUDIES: THE HOLOCAUST”

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Introduction.

This is the sixth installment in an online bibliographical series devoted to research resources in Yiddish Studies. The search guide is divided into the following units, which are being published in installments:

1. [“Meta”-resources](#): bibliographies, web gateways, online scholarship, indexes, library and archival resources, encyclopedias.
2. [Digital collections](#) in Yiddish Studies.
3. [Yiddish linguistic scholarship, including dictionaries](#).
4. [Yiddish literature and culture](#).
5. Bibliographies of imprints (by country or region); The Yiddish Press
6. Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust (Yiddish focus).

Since the first installment of this Research Guide came out we have received suggestions for the inclusion of additional sources, which are always welcome. Readers are invited to [contribute suggestions](#), which may be included in updated versions of the guides.

It is something of a cliché to observe that Holocaust survivors kept silent following the traumatic events of World War II. It is also a considerable exaggeration, to say the least, as the documentary evidence reveals. As early as 1940, the historian Emanuel Ringelblum organized the grass-roots archival collecting initiative in the Warsaw Ghetto known by the code name *Oyneg shabes*.

Immediately following their liberation, Holocaust survivors (with support from Jewish organizations abroad and, in some cases, from local governments) followed in Ringelblum's footsteps by establishing historical commissions which recorded thousands of testimonies and eyewitness accounts. They were aware that it was up to the survivors themselves to gather the evidence that might be of use to war-crimes tribunals. In addition, as with *Oyneg shabes*, the historical commissions' archives would eventually be made available to scholars studying the Holocaust period.

Thousands of accounts by survivors were published in the Yiddish newspapers and magazines that came out in the postwar displaced-persons camps and abroad. Longer narratives appeared as books in such series as *Dos poylishe yidntum* (published in Buenos Aires). Elie Wiesel's book *Un di velt hot geshvign* – later adapted and translated as *La nuit / Night* – was part of that series. And years before Holocaust Studies was recognized as a field of legitimate academic inquiry, the YIVO Institute, in New York, and Yad Vashem, in Jerusalem, embarked on their ambitious Joint Documentary Projects, which eventually yielded over a dozen book-length research guides and bibliographies. Four of these are listed in this section; to paraphrase Elie Wiesel: *Neyn, mir hobn davke nit geshvign!* [No, indeed we did *not* remain silent!]

Bibliographies:

Philip Friedman and Josef Gar, *Bibliografye fun yidishe bikher vegn khurbn un gvure* (*Bibliography of Yiddish Books on the Catastrophe and Heroism*). New York: YIVO, 1962. (*Joint Documentary Projects: Bibliographical Series*, 3.)

Classified bibliography of Yiddish books on the Holocaust, subdivided into the following sections: 1. Documentation. – 2. Research. – 3. Literature and Art. – 4. Resistance. – 5. Reflections on the Catastrophe.

Included among the 1,771 entries are summaries of the contents of approximately 175 individual issues of historical and scholarly journals and yearbooks (e.g., *Fun letstn khurbn, Bleter far geshikhte*).

Supplement: David Bass. *Bibliografye fun yidishe bikher vegn khurbn un gvure*. New York: [YIVO], 1970. (*Joint Documentary Projects: Bibliographical Series*, 11.)

Lists 456 Yiddish books published from 1960 to 1970.

Josef Gar and Philip Friedman, *Bibliografye fun artiklen vegn khurbn un gvure in yidisher periodike* (*Bibliography of Articles on the Catastrophe and Heroism in Yiddish Periodicals*). New York: YIVO, 1966-69. 2 vols. (*Joint Documentary Projects*:

Bibliographical Series, 9-10.)

The first volume contains 3,597 entries (“a single entry may refer to more than one bibliographical item”) from European – including Soviet – publications from 1939 to 1950. These are listed in the following sections: 1. Countries and Communities. – 2. Refugees. – 3. Concentration Camps and Prisons. – 4. Biographical Material. – 5. Jews in the Armed Forces. – 6. Resistance. – 7. Underground Leaders, Fighters in the Ghettos and Concentration Camps, Partisans. Includes addenda for: Underground Periodicals; Nazi-Controlled Jewish Press; List of Periodicals Screened.

The second volume “contains 5,717 entries screened from about one hundred Yiddish periodicals published in the United States of America from September, 1939, to the end of December, 1950.”

From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry, edited and translated by Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin; with geographical index and bibliography by Zachary M. Baker. 2nd, expanded ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998. Hundreds of community memorial volumes – *yizker-bikher* – were compiled and published by *landsmanshaftn*, town-of-origin mutual-aid societies, in the wake of the Holocaust. In fact, the *Lodzher yizker-bukh* – which was the first of this genre to incorporate “*yizker-bukh*” into its title – was published as early as 1943. This anthology of excerpts from *yizker-bikher* includes a comprehensive bibliography of the genre as of 1998. The first edition was published by Schocken, 1983. As noted in Part 2 of the Research Guide, *yizker-bikher* from the collections of the Dorot Jewish Division of the New York Public Library are accessible online via NYPL’s [Yizkor Books](#) web page.

Guide to Jewish History under Nazi Impact, by Jacob Robinson and Philip Friedman. New York: YIVO, 1960. (*Joint Documentary Projects: Bibliographical Series*, 1.)

The very first volume in the Yad Vashem-YIVO Joint Bibliographical Series, “this [*Guide*] is a multilingual reference book which lists 3841 entries in 24 languages,” including Yiddish. This pioneering survey of resources on Holocaust Studies is in four main sections (with 22 sub-sections): 1. The Jewish Catastrophe in Historical Perspective. – 2. Reference Tools. – 3. Research: Institutions, Methods, and Techniques. – 4. Documentation.

Includes introductions by Benzion Dinur (Jerusalem) and Salo W. Baron (New York).

Biographical lexicons:

Lerer-yizker-bukh: di umgekumene lerer fun tsisho shuln in poyln (*Teacher Memorial Book*), [editor, H. Sh. Kazdan]. New York: Komitet tsu fareybikn dem ondenk fun di umgekumene lerer fun di Tsisho shuln in Poyln, 1954.

Biographical encyclopedia of Tsisho (Central Yiddish School Organization) teachers who perished between 1939 and 1945. Also includes articles about the Tsisho organization in Poland, the Ts.B.K. (Central Educational Committee) in Vilna, Yiddish schools in Bialystok, Tsisho-affiliated teacher seminaries, and the Medem Sanatorium (Otwock, Poland).

Józef Sandel, *Umgekumene yidishe kinstler in poyln* (*Żydowscy Artyści plastycy ofiary*

hitlerowskiej okupacji w Polsce). Varshe: Yidish bukh, 1957. 2 vols.

Biographical encyclopedia of over 100 Polish Jewish artists, art historians, critics, and scholars who perished during the Holocaust. Includes black-and-white reproductions of their works.

Available online via the Yiddish Book Center: [vol. 1](#), [vol. 2](#).

Zalmen Zylbercweig, *Leksikon fun yidishn teater* (*Lexicon of the Yiddish Theatre = Lexicon del teatro judío*). New York: Elisheva, 1931-1969. 6 vols. Vol. 5: *Kdoyshim-band* (Mexico City: Elisheva, 1967).

This volume of Zylbercweig's *Leksikon* includes biographies of approximately 150 Yiddish theater personalities who perished during the Holocaust.

[Available online](#) via the Yiddish Book Center.

In Conclusion:

As was mentioned in Part 1, the "Resources in Yiddish Studies" series had its origins in a workshop that I led at the University of California – Berkeley in April 2015. The reference works and online resources that were discussed then are included in this Research Guide. In the course of preparing each section of the guide I have added items that were not included in the Berkeley workshop, either for lack of time on that occasion or because they were not yet available then.

Bibliographical work is by its very nature a dynamic process; therefore, a bibliographer's work is never complete. Omissions result both when the bibliographer has overlooked particular sources or has made conscious, curatorial decisions to exclude them. (For my part, I confess to an implicitly Anglo-American bias in many of my selections for this Research Guide.) And almost inevitably, as soon as a bibliography is put to bed, new materials surface that beg to be added to the compilation.

In the print era, such addenda were either tacked on in a supplement or they remained unpublished altogether. In that connection, the sorry fate of the lost, fifth volume of Zalmen Reyzen's bio-bibliographical *Leksikon* of Yiddish writers comes to mind – as does the tragic fate of Reyzen himself, a victim of Stalinist repression in 1940. A happier denouement appears to be in store for volume seven of Zalmen Zylbercweig's *Leksikon* of the Yiddish theater, for which only the galleys exist: there is hope that the final volume of this important reference work will be digitized and published on the web, through the good graces of the [Digital Yiddish Theatre Project](#).

So much has changed during the four decades of my career as a librarian. My work at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in the 1970s and early 1980s consisted of typing cards for the thousands of Yiddish books that I was assigned to catalog. Those cards – and others – were eventually reproduced in the *Yiddish Catalog and Authority File of the YIVO Library* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990; that publication is cited in Part 1 of this Research Guide). Even now, not all of YIVO's bibliographical records for Yiddish books are included in the WorldCat database – and for that reason the *Yiddish Catalog and*

Authority File of the YIVO Library has not been entirely superseded. That is why, in my interactions with researchers, I continue to underscore the importance of the print legacy.

And yet: In 2002, when I first led a Research Methods seminar for graduate students in Jewish Studies at Stanford, the syllabus was essentially a very long bibliography of print reference works that I had been introduced to in courses that I had previously taken, or had learned about (and used) on the job. Recent iterations of that seminar have been weighted much more heavily toward online resources. More information is now available online and, with it, research habits have changed. While Shlomo Shunami's *Bibliography of Jewish Bibliographies* continues to occupy an honored position on my bookshelf – I even consult it from time to time – experience teaches me that students regard Shunami and publications like it as bibliographical tombstones.

Indeed, the web has transformed and (when at its best) democratized the research process. As this Research Guide attests, many older publications have been digitized and put online; a host of DIY projects facilitate the ability, say, to type in Yiddish; indexes and full-text databases offer ready access to ever more primary and secondary source material; and Wikipedia – whatever its shortcomings – serves as a handy informational tool. Now, when a researcher brings a new or overlooked source to my attention, it can be quickly added to the Research Guide in its proper location – and not grafted on at the end, seemingly as an afterthought.

Ultimately, though (as Stanford's library director, Michael Keller, likes to say), when it comes to content "it's all stuff." And it is in that spirit that I have strived to make "Resources in Yiddish Studies" an inclusive, format-neutral reference compendium for researchers. The process of compiling it has been an engrossing learning experience for me, and I hope that readers of this series will find the guide useful.