“Resources in Yiddish Studies: Part 4, Yiddish Literature and Culture”

by Zachary M. Baker


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“RESOURCES IN YIDDISH STUDIES: YIDDISH LITERATURE AND CULTURE”

Zachary M. Baker

Introduction.

This is the fourth 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)
6. Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust (Yiddish focus)

Since we have begun publishing this Research Guide we have received suggestions for the inclusion of additional sources, which are always welcome. Readers are invited to contribute suggestions to be incorporated into the guides.

For many of us, literature is the key port of entry to Yiddishland. This section of the Research Guide focuses on print reference sources for Yiddish literature. In addition, resources (including, where available, websites) on Yiddish Music, Theater, Cinema, and
Media are included here. Though most of these items originally appeared in print, a significant number have been digitized and are accessible online via the Yiddish Book Center and the Internet Archive. ¹

Reminder: online audio recordings of Yiddish literature are noted in Part 2 of the Research Guide, Digital Collections in Yiddish Studies.

¹ A couple of years ago I was invited to contribute a bibliographical survey to a publication that is now on hiatus. One of the subsections of that survey is on Yiddish publishing; rather than let it go to waste I have included it in this section of the Research Guide. An important bibliography on Jewish (including Yiddish) education is included here as well.
LITERATURE:

(a) Biographical and bibliographical works; surveys.

Faith Jones observes that Yiddish Studies is especially rich in biographical encyclopedias of authors and theater personalities (from the prominent to the obscure). She writes, “As the sheer number of biographical dictionaries in Yiddish attests, the form took root in secular Yiddish culture as a central genre.”2 Entries for the essential leksikon are included in this subsection. In addition, many Yiddish (and also Hebrew) authors wrote under pen names, and that in turn yielded at least two extensive thesauri of pseudonyms, which are also cited below.


Pathfinders—a genre now superseded by online research guides such as this one—typically provided bibliographical, library-centric overviews of reference tools and major works in specific subject areas. The “Yiddish Studies Pathfinder” listed Library of Congress subject headings, introductory articles, study aids (textbooks), dictionaries, encyclopedias, indexes, journals, and libraries, plus sections covering core titles in Yiddish language, literature, folklore, theater and film, songs and folk music, and press.


Beyder (1920-2003), a Soviet Yiddish author and editor who emigrated to the U.S. in the 1990s, collaborated with Estraiakh, Clinical Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies and Rauch Associate Professor of Yiddish Studies at New York University, to produce this bio-bibliographical guide to Soviet Yiddish authors.


Includes extensive bio-bibliographical entries (in English) for forty major Yiddish authors. The late Joseph Sherman was the Fellow in Yiddish Studies at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. Contributors to the volume include Yiddish literary scholars from North America and Europe. Entries are also accessible online (paid subscription resource) through the Gale Group.

Chaim Leib Fox [Fuks], 100 yor yidishe un hebreishe literatur in Kanade (100 years of Yiddish and Hebrew literature in Canada). Montréal: Kh. L. Fuks bukh fond komitet, 1980.

Bio-bibliographical lexicon of Canadian Yiddish authors. The book unfortunately includes a large number of typographical errors.

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Pierre Anctil, an anthropologist from Quebec, has published numerous translations and studies in French, relating to Yiddish literature in Canada—especially Montreal.

Louis Fridhandler, *Indexes to the Works Sholem-Aleykhem*. Fridhandler, who was a frequent contributor to the *Mendele* e-mail discussion list, compiled this invaluable PDF set of indexes to stories and other writings by Sholem Aleichem in that author’s collected works and selected other sources. It also includes listings of translations into English at the time of its compilation. The indexes, which were compiled circa 2000-2005, are in transliteration.


Berl Kagan, *Leksikon fun yidish-shraybers: mit hesofes un tikunim tsum leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur, un 5,800 pseudonimen* (Lexicon of Yiddish-Writers). New York: R. Ilman-Kohen, 1986. Successor to the *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur* (next entry). Because the “Nayer leksikon” was issued over a period of twenty-five years, Kagan’s *Leksikon* updates its articles and fills in gaps in its coverage. (For example it includes an entry for Isaac Bashevis Singer, who is absent from the “Nayer leksikon.”) It also includes a list of Yiddish authors’ pseudonyms. Available online via the Yiddish Book Center.


The “Nayer leksikon” was a successor to the titles by Reyzen [Reyzen], below. Biographies of authors included in Reyzen’s 1926-1929 *Leksikon* were updated and biographies of younger authors were introduced. A number of Yiddish authors—among them Isaac Bashevis Singer and Kadya Molodowsky—refused to have their biographies included in the “Nayer leksikon” because its publication was subsidized by West German reparations funds (through the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany). English translation (ongoing project): “Yiddish Leksikon” blog. Joshua Fogel, a professor of Chinese history at York University (Toronto), has translated into English—and in some cases, updated—over 3,000 articles from the *Leksikon fun der nayer yidisher literatur*. [editorial note: *In geveb* interviewed Fogel about his project.]

Leonard Prager, with the help of A. A. Greenbaum, *Yiddish Literary and Linguistic Periodicals and Miscellanies: A Selective Annotated*
Annotated bibliography of 386 Yiddish literary magazines and zamlbikher (miscellanies).
Includes indexes of titles, editors, contributors, places of publication, years of publication (of the zamlbikher). The computer program that was used to generate the bibliography yielded entries that are entirely in uppercase letters; annotations are in English; Yiddish titles are transliterated.

A personal view of Yiddish writers, artistic and cultural figures, and public personages, by a noted Yiddish poet and cultural figure.
Available online via the Yiddish Book Center: vol. 1 (1945); vol. 2 (1947); vol. 3 (1958); vol. 4, part 1 (1980); vol. 4, part 2 (1982).

Rejzen was a leading Yiddish cultural figure in interwar Vilna: editor of the Vilner tog newspaper and a leader of the YIVO Institute. Reyzen’s Leksikon provides the most comprehensive coverage for Yiddish authors who were active through the 1920s. As such, it is not entirely superseded by the “Nayer leksikon” (see above). Its bibliographies are extensive and invaluable, and many entries are accompanied by photographs of their subjects. (However, there is no entry for “Reyzen, Zalmen” [!].) Vols. 1-2 were originally published in 1926-1927, and updated versions were issued in 1928 and 1930. A fifth volume was in preparation when World War II broke out. This edition is the successor to the next title.
Available online via the Yiddish Book Center: vol. 1 (1928); vol. 2 (1927); vol. 3 (1929); vol. 4 (1929).

The earliest of numerous bio-bibliographical dictionaries of Yiddish literary personages. Reyzen’s 1914 Leksikon has the following features that distinguish it from later leksikonen: (1) entries for Old Yiddish authors (e.g., Eliyahu ben Asher ha-Levi Ashkenazi, aka Elye Bokher); (2) a bibliography of Yiddish periodicals (1686-1913), and (3) an index of names.
Available online via the Yiddish Book Center.

The Forverts, founded in 1897, is the oldest continuously published Yiddish newspaper. This Leksikon includes detailed entries for over 200 of its contributors, journalists and literary authors alike.
Available online via the Yiddish Book Center.
Classified bibliography of the YIVO Institute’s scholarly publications from Vilna and New York, from the 1920s until the first half of the 1950s.

Chemist by day and literary historian in his spare time, Zinberg (Tsinberg) produced this multivolume history of Jewish literary productivity. Remarkably, he did so in the quickly changing political circumstances of Leningrad during the 1920s and 1930s. (Zinberg was arrested in April 1938 and died either later that year or in early 1939.) Coverage extends from the Middle Ages through the second third of the nineteenth century. Yiddish literature is treated in several volumes, in the context of the Haskalah [Eastern European Jewish Enlightenment], and there is a separate volume devoted to Old Yiddish literature. Available online via the Yiddish Book Center: vol. 1 (1929), vol. 2 (1930), vol. 3 (1931), vol. 4 (1933), vol. 5 (1935), vol. 6 (1935), vol. 7 book 1 (1936), vol. 8 book 2 (1937). Lacking (online): vol. 7 book 2, vol. 8 book 1.

Also available in the following translations:

(b) Pseudonyms; Bio-bibliographical lexicons.

Saul Chajes, Otsar beduye ha-shem: hu maťeåh ha-shemot ha-beduyim, shel ha-mehåbrim be-sifrut Yisra'el be-`Ivrit uve-`idit-kinuuyehem, simanehem ve-notarikonehem `im pitronotehem – mi-tekyfat ha-geonim `ad ha-et ha-`hadashah (Thesaurus pseudonymorum quae in litteratura hebraica et judaeo-germanica inveniuntur = Pseudonymen-Lexikon der hebräischen und jiddischen Literatur). Wien: Dr. Heinrich Glanz, 1933.
Hebrew and Yiddish authors have employed a legion of pen names. Chajes’s Otsar beduye ha-shem is the most comprehensive index of authors’ pseudonyms, up to the time of its publication in 1933.

**MUSIC, THEATER, CINEMA, MEDIA:**

Several audio resources for Yiddish music that are listed here were also included in Part 2: Digital Collections. This list also includes some audio resources that were not noted in that section.

**Digital Yiddish Theatre Project**
“A research consortium dedicated to the application of digital humanities tools and methods to the study of Yiddish theatre and drama.” The DYTP maintains an active blog of the history of Yiddish performance.

**Robert and Molly Freedman Jewish Sound Archive**, Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text & Image (SCETI), University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.
Sample recordings are streamed online.

**Irene Heskes and Lawrence Marwick. Yiddish American Popular Songs, 1895 to 1950: A Catalog Based on the Lawrence Marwick Roster of Copyright Entries.** Washington: Library of Congress, 1992. This catalog lists Yiddish songs that were registered for copyright in Washington, DC. The roster bears the name of the late head of the Hebraic Section at the Library of Congress, who initiated the bibliographical project that eventually resulted in this publication. Accessible online via the Hathi Trust.


**Library of Congress, National Jukebox:** Yiddish recordings. Over 70 Yiddish musical recordings are accessible via this Library of Congress website.
**Milken Archive of Jewish Music**, Santa Monica, CA.
Founded in 1990 by Lowell Milken, the archive now comprises “over 600 pieces of music by roughly 200 composers.”

Chana Mlotek, the compiler / co-compiler of these anthologies of Yiddish songs, was the long-time music archivist at the YIVO Institute (New York City. “With Yiddish texts and music, parallel transliterations, historical background, synopses, guitar chords” (from the title page of *Mir trogn a gezang*).


*Combined Index of Yosl & Chana Mlotek’s 3 Yiddish Songbooks:* A-K, L-Z.

**National Sound Archive** (National Library of Israel).
“The National Sound Archive of Israel provides access to thousands of hours of digitized music recordings.” Access is primarily available only on premises at the NLI in Jerusalem.

**The Harry Orvomaa Collection of Jewish Records** (via DISMARC).
“Harry Orvomaa (originally Orscholik, 1927-1990) was a Finnish record producer and record collector, and in the 1980s he donated a collection of historical Jewish 78 rpm records to Suomen äänitearkisto, the Finnish Institute of Recorded Sound. The collection includes about 280 recordings from many European countries, Palestine and the United States, and spans the decades from the 1910s to the 1950s. The Orvomaa collection has now been digitized with the support of the Kone Foundation, and the catalogue is accessible on the Dismarc (Discover Music Archives) website. There are also label scans, and about half of the recordings are available for streaming. To study the collection, go to www.dismarc.org and choose ‘advanced search,’ and write HOC in the field ‘archive.’” (From the ARSC Newsletter, no. 142 (2016), p. 12.

**Recorded Sound Archives** (formerly: Judaica Sound Archives), Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL.
The RSA’s Judaic Collection “boasts one of the largest and most extensive collections of Judaic music in the world,” with recordings of Yiddish music very well represented in its holdings. Many of the audio tracks of these recordings are fully accessible online via the RSA.
The most extensive English-language history of the Yiddish theater, well-illustrated. Subsequently reissued; most recently by Syracuse University Press, 1996.


**Yiddish-Language Playscripts** (Library of Congress, American Memory).
“The 77 unpublished manuscripts presented here include light comedies and dramas, and have been selected from the more than 1,290 copyright-deposit plays known as the Marwick Collection and housed in the Hebraic Section of the African and Middle Eastern Division.”


Bibliography of over 1,200 Yiddish play scripts registered with the U.S. Copyright Office. Scripts copyrighted after June 30, 1909 were deposited at the Library of Congress.

**Yiddish Radio Project.** A co-production of Sound Portraits Productions and Living Traditions, 2002.
Website for the National Public Radio series about the history of Yiddish radio. Audio examples are in RealPlayer format.

“NYPL’s comprehensive Yiddish theater collection includes hundreds of play manuscripts, published plays, sheet music, music manuscripts, memoirs, oral histories, posters, playbills, and photographs, as well as secondary sources.”

Bio-bibliographical encyclopedia of personalities and troupes associated with the Yiddish theater worldwide. Digitization of page proofs for the unpublished seventh volume is in the works.
Available online via the Yiddish Book Center: vol. 1 (1931); vol. 2 (1934); vol. 3 (1959); vol. 4 (1963); vol. 5 – Kdoyshim band (1967); vol. 6 (1969).


FOLKLORE:


Extensive and “canonical” collection of Yiddish proverbs and sayings. Proverbs are in Yiddish (Hebrew alphabet and transcription), with German translations. Introduction and glossary are in German; includes a Yiddish index. The first edition (only forty-eight pages) was published in Warsaw, 1888.

Accessible online via the Yiddish Book Center and Google Books.

Other editions and related publications:
Partial reprint of the 1908 Warsaw edition.

Reprint of the 1908 Warsaw edition, plus its supplement of erotic and “rustic” proverbs (published separately in 1908).

Translation of Erotica und Rustica. English and Yiddish with transcription in Roman characters.

Partial reprint of the 1908 Warsaw edition.

Monograph about Jewish folklore scholarship in Poland to 1939; based on the author’s doctoral dissertation.

Collection of Yiddish similes, with equivalents in Hebrew, English, and Russian. The compiler, who is affiliated with the Section for German, Russian, and East European Studies at the Hebrew University (Jerusalem), has published several other quadrilingual
collections:


**Lomir hern gute bsures: yidishe brokhes un kloles [Let’s Hear Only Good News].**

Collection of Yiddish blessings and curses.


** Matai Yehudi tsohek: me-otsar ha-humor be-Yidish = Ven lakht a Yid: yidisher humor = When a Jew Laughs: Yiddish Humour = Kogda evrei smeñuśia? evreiskii ñūmor.**

One of many bilingual (Yiddish-English) and multilingual collections of Yiddish proverbs that have been published. In 1999 the compiler produced a companion volume: More Words, More Arrows: A Further Collection of Yiddish Folk Sayings (Detroit: Wayne State University Press). That “collection of more than 2,000 Yiddish sayings from Eastern Europe and North America includes ditties, rhymes and word plays ranging from the comic to the serious, and presents the sayings in bilingual format - both Yiddish and English” (source: Nielsen Book Data).

Anthology of Yiddish folktales, from the collections of the YIVO Institute’s Archives.

**EDUCATION:**

This 700-plus-page classified bibliography includes sections on Yiddish secular schools. Citations in Yiddish are scattered throughout many of the other topics covered by this reference work. The compiler worked as a Jewish educator in the Detroit metropolitan area.
PUBLISHERS, PUBLISHING, LIBRARIES:

The books and articles cited in this section were originally intended for a chapter in an anthology whose publication has been postponed indefinitely.

Beginning in the late 1980s and continuing until her death, Fira Bramson (1924-2016) spearheaded efforts to recover and catalog the Judaica holdings of the National Library of Lithuania. This article is about the great Yiddish literary publishing house founded by Boris Kletskin and headquartered in Vilna.

Article about the Vilna YIVO’s library.


Dujovne has published a number of studies on the Jewish book trade, including Yiddish publishing, in Argentina.

Both Hebrew and Yiddish printing and publishing in Canada are covered in this study.


Printing costs for rabbinical books were commonly underwritten by subscription; lists of subscribers—generally under the names of localities where they resided—were included in the books. From the standpoint of Yiddish Studies, the key feature of this book is that it is arranged alphabetically by the Yiddish names of these cities and towns. As such, it is the most comprehensive gazetteer of Yiddish place names that has been published to date. Available [online](http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org) via the Yiddish Book Center.


Yiddish books, libraries, and their readers in Poland.


Kruk was director of the Bronislaw Grosser Library (affiliated with the Jewish Labor Bund) in Warsaw before World War II. He fled to Vilna after the outbreak of World War II. For two years, during the Nazi occupation of Vilna (1941-1943) he ran the Vilna Ghetto Library, which was located in the building (and housed the books) of the prewar *Mefitse-haskalah* library. The diary that he wrote there was found and published after the war. Kruk perished in the Klooga concentration camp, in Estonia.


The Yiddish book trade in 1929. Maria Kühn-Ludewig has published a number of articles on Yiddish book publishing and libraries.


Monograph about the Tomor publishing house of Vilna.


Yiddish book publishers in Berlin after World War I.

Rebecca E. Margolis. *Jewish Roots, Canadian Soil: Yiddish Culture in*


