“Resources in Yiddish Studies: Yiddish Linguistic Scholarship”

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*In geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies* (September 2016)

For the online version of this article:

“RESOURCES IN YIDDISH STUDIES: YIDDISH LINGUISTIC SCHOLARSHIP”

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Introduction: This is the third 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 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 to be included in addenda.

We now turn from the “meta-” resources discussed in the first two sections of this Research Guide, to publications and other resources devoted to the Yiddish language itself. The emphasis here is on reference sources and foundational works, primarily in Yiddish or English, with a tendency toward the latest scholarship. (Textbooks are excluded.) As is often the case with bibliographical compilations, the listings are not comprehensive; we welcome suggestions for materials that might have been included in
this section. Note that some of the works cited here do include extensive bibliographies and notes that the researcher can turn to for genuinely in-depth guidance. (Highly recommended is the most recent of these: the 2016 edition of the late Solomon A. Birnbaum’s *Yiddish: A Survey and a Grammar*; listed below.) While the resources discussed in Part 2 of this Research Guide were digital in nature, those cited in this and the remaining sections are in a mix of formats – primarily print-based but often with digital versions that are accessible online. Online access to digitized versions of printed works is primarily possible thanks to the efforts of the Yiddish Book Center and the Internet Archive.

1. YIDDISH LANGUAGE


The LCAAJ was a project initiated at Columbia University by Uriel Weinreich (who died in 1967) and carried on by his colleague and successor, the late Marvin (Mikhl) Herzog. As described on a [Columbia University Libraries web page](http), “The archive consists of approximately 6,000 [5,755] hours of spoken Yiddish recorded in Israel, Alsace, the USA, Canada, and Mexico from emigrant speakers native to more than 600 communities throughout Central and Eastern Europe. It is the largest and geographically most diverse record of living Yiddish – an irreplaceable repository pertaining to all aspects of Ashkenazic Jewish language and culture in pre-Holocaust Europe.” Three volumes have been published to date; in addition, five supplements (*Beihefte*) to the LCAAJ were published between 1995 and 2008.

**Associated websites:**

- [EYDES](http) (Evidence of Yiddish Documented in European Societies). Based in Germany, EYDES collaborated with Columbia University to digitize the LCAAJ’s tape recordings – a project that was completed in 2005. Online access to the digitized recordings is provided through EYDES.

- [LCAAJ Collection of Spoken Yiddish](http). In 2016, the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded a grant to the Columbia University Libraries for the digitization of paper documents in the LCAAJ archive.


Drawing upon his advanced training in computer science, mathematics and linguistics, Beider’s work is the most recent synthesis of the historical dialectology of Yiddish. (An extensive [review by Alec [Leyzer] Burko](http), can be found on *In geveb*.)
Birnbaum’s survey draws upon his study of Yiddish grammar, *Praktische Grammatik der jiddischen Sprache*, which was originally published in Vienna and Leipzig (1917) and has been frequently reissued in Germany since World War II, under the title *Grammatik der jiddischen Sprache* (most recently in Munich, 2011). *Yiddish: A Survey and a Grammar* includes an exhaustive – and absolutely indispensable – bibliography of Yiddish linguistic scholarship (pp. [309]-388. 2nd edition. With new essays by David Birnbaum and Eleazar Birnbaum, Kalman Weiser, and Jean Baumgarten. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016.

“This new edition includes three introductory essays on S. A. Birnbaum’s life and scholarship [and] an updated supplementary bibliography.” The 2016 bibliography (pp. [391]-429 includes citations to Yiddish linguistic and literary scholarship published since the first edition appeared.


Borokhov – the trailblazing exponent of socialist Zionism – was also a pioneering figure in Yiddish linguistic scholarship in Yiddish. “Di biblioteyk…” is an extensive bibliography of research on Yiddish published to date (1912). It accompanies the author’s article, “Di oyfgabn fun der yidisher filologye,” in the same volume (cols. [1]-22).

Both works are available online via the Yiddish Book Center.

This 2,200-item bibliography is an update of the 1959 bibliography by Uriel and Beatrice Weinreich, *Yiddish Language and Folklore* (see below).


“An exhaustive index in Yiddish and English to Yiddish-language periodicals and collective volumes of linguistic interest which were published in Europe and the US between 1913 and 1958” (annotation: © Book News, Inc.). Entries are in Yiddish, and on facing pages in English and transliteration; index is in Yiddish only. Co-published with the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.


“This is the first comprehensive study of Yiddish in the former Soviet Union. A chronicle of orthographic and other reforms from the state of the language in pre-Revolutionary
Russia, through active language planning in the 1920s and 1930s, repression, and subsequent developments up to the 1980s is recreated from contemporary publications and archival materials. Later chapters draw on the author's own experience as a Yiddish writer and lexicographer in Moscow” (source: Nielsen Book Data). Based on the author’s Oxford doctoral dissertation. Estraikh has written and edited numerous studies on the Yiddish language and literature.

Overview of Yiddish syntax, phonology and morphology; its history and dialectology; and sociolinguistic issues connected with Yiddish. Jacobs trained at Columbia University and is an emeritus professor of linguistics at Ohio State University.

**Jewish Language Research Website: Yiddish.**
Concise, encyclopedia-style overview of Yiddish linguistics, with selected bibliographies.

A reference grammar intended for “university students enrolled in Yiddish language courses” and “the more advanced student or general reader...” “The Grammar has grown from materials and methodology developed at the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies between 1978 and 1986.” Katz is also the author of Words on Fire: The Unfinished Story of Yiddish (New York: Basic Books, 2004), and Yiddish and Power (Houndmills; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), among other studies.

The magnum opus of the YIVO Institute’s longtime research director, this is the most influential history of Yiddish. Though some of Weinreich’s hypotheses and conclusions have been questioned and challenged, this remains the fundamental work against which all subsequent studies in the field are measured.

English translation: History of the Yiddish Language. Translated by Shlomo Noble, with the assistance of Joshua A. Fishman. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. The 1980 translation excludes the two volumes of endnotes of the Yiddish original but has an extensive index that includes all lexical items mentioned in the text.


Weinreich’s extensive endnotes were verified and updated for inclusion in the 2008 edition.

**Uriel Weinreich and Beatrice Weinreich, Yiddish Language and Folklore: A Selective Bibliography for Research. 's-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1959.**
This 66-page bibliography combines the interests of its co-compilers, Uriel Weinreich (Yiddish linguistics) and Beatrice Silverman Weinreich (Yiddish folklore).
YIDDISH DICTIONARIES AND LEXICOGRAPHY:


Available online from the publisher (registration is required).


Just published, this dictionary complements (but does not mirror) the Beinfeld-Bochner dictionary. Mordkhe Schaechter, who taught Yiddish for many years at Columbia University, participated in the LCAAJ project and contributed to the *Modern English-Yiddish, Yiddish-English Dictionary* (discussed below). [editor’s note: *In geveb* published a conversation about the dictionary here.]


Intended to be a comprehensive academic dictionary of the Yiddish language, along the lines of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the four volumes published cover the letter *alef* only. (Fortunately, prefixes to many Yiddish words begin with that letter!)


Also available: a searchable online version via Raphael Finkel’s University of Kentucky website.


Online version of an edition of a dictionary that came out in 1910 and is accessible via Raphael Finkel’s University of Kentucky website. Harkavy, a native of Novogrudok, in present-day Belarus, compiled dictionaries (read on!), wrote textbooks and letter-writing manuals, and also published translations into Yiddish.


The “descriptive” dictionary par excellence, until the publication of the
Beinfeld-Bochner dictionary this was the go-to resource for English-speaking students of Yiddish seeking words not included in other Yiddish-English dictionaries. Cited here is the reprint of the 1928 expanded second edition, which includes a new introduction by Dovid Katz. Available online via Hebrewbooks.org. The 1928 edition is available online via the Yiddish Book Center.


Idish verterbukh: enthalt ale hebreishe (un khaldeishe) verter, oysdruken un eygennemen, tsuzamengeshtelt un erklehrt fun Yehoash un Khayim [Charles] Spivak. New York: Veker, 1926. Originally published in 1911. Though largely superseded by Niborski's Verterbukh fun loshn-koydesh shtamike verter in yidish, this dictionary retains much of its utility and its value. It was the product of a collaboration between a Yiddish poet, Yehoash (Solomon Bloomgarden) and a medical doctor, Charles (Khayim) Spivak, who attended to Yehoash while the latter was a patient at the Jewish Consumptive Relief Society's sanatorium in Denver. The 1911 and 1926 editions are available online via the Yiddish Book Center.

Nahum Stutchkoff, Der oytser fun der Yidisher shprakh (Thesaurus of the Yiddish Language); unter der redaktsye fun Maks Vaynraykh [Max Weinreich]. [New York]: Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut-Yivo, 1950. What more can I say? No Yiddish library (personal or institutional) should be without a copy of Stutchkoff's Oytser. It is not only a thesaurus providing synonyms of tens of thousands of Yiddish words (along the lines of Roget's, in English), but it is moreover an exceptionally rich compendium of Yiddish idioms and sayings. Available online via the Yiddish Book Center and YIVOlibrarybooks.org.

Nahum Stutchkoff, Yidisher gramen-leksikon (35,000 verter) (Yiddish Rhyming Lexicon). New York: Leksik, 1931. Stutchkoff was so enamored of rhymes that, two decades before the Oytser, he published this rhyming dictionary. Available online via the Yiddish Book Center.

Published one year after the untimely death of its compiler, this dictionary remains essential for study and reference purposes – not least because it goes in both directions. In contrast to the Beinfeld-Bochner dictionary (described above), Weinreich’s dictionary is prescriptive. For example, words considered non-standard (such as daytshmerîzmen) are marked as such – if they are included at all. And its puritanical aspects have also been remarked upon. However, it was also quite forward-looking in its inclusion of 1960s-era terminology (hence the qualifier “modern” in its title).

*Yidish verterbukh oyfn veb = Yiddish Dictionary Online.*
A searchable, Yiddish-English and English-Yiddish dictionary; it also includes alphabetical lists of words in English and Yiddish (in both the Hebrew and Latin alphabets) along with the Latin transliterations and pronunciations of the Yiddish words, plus Yiddish grammar tables.

**ONOMASTICS (NAMES):**

--. *A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Kingdom of Poland.* Teaneck, NJ: Avotaynu, 1996.
Before he went on to produce his book *Origins of Yiddish Dialects* (2015, discussed above), Beider compiled several dictionaries of personal and family names commonly used by Ashkenazic Jews. As was noted above, Beider was trained in computer science – and one conjectures that this background meshed with his interest in Jewish names and their etymologies, ultimately leading him to specialize in Yiddish linguistics. Each of the onomastic works cited here reflects his exhaustive research and technical expertise.

One of the interesting features of this bibliography, which was compiled by the former head of the Price Library of Judaica at the University of Florida (Gainesville), is that it includes an index to columns on Jewish family names that Norbert Pearlroth (the researcher for the “Ripley’s Believe It or Not” newspaper feature) contributed to *The National Jewish Post and Opinion* from 1945 until 1977.

“This work identifies and describes over 3,000 books, essays in books, and articles on Jewish given names and family names throughout history, spanning the Biblical period to modern times” (source: Nielsen Book Data). Singerman’s collaborator, David L. Gold, is a Columbia-trained linguist who later taught at the University of Haifa, where he established the Association for the Study of Jewish Languages.

TOOLS FOR TYPING IN YIDDISH:

**Multilingual keyboard: Yiddish.**

**Typing in Yiddish on a Mac.**
Instructions on how to type in Yiddish on a Macintosh computer, through the *Yiddish Klal* keyboard layout that was developed by Isaac Bleaman, a graduate student in Linguistics at New York University. “Note that this keyboard implements the standard Yiddish orthography endorsed by the YIVO (and codified in this book). If you would like to type without the YIVO diacritics, I recommend installing a phonetic Hebrew keyboard or the standard Israeli keyboard layout.”

**Yiddish Typewriter.**
“This facility does not translate English or German into Yiddish. It just interconverts various Yiddish representations. Unless you select other input and output forms, you are expected to type in YIVO transcription form and you get back a spelling check of your text. Once it looks right, you can select instead to receive your text in various other output forms. You might want to use cut-and-paste from other programs to enter your text.” Developed by Raphael Finkel, a Yiddishist and professor of computer science at the University of Kentucky.