Simon Schama, historian and author of the BBC’s five-part series A History of the Jews, has called the YIVO Institute the “embodiment of the collective memory of the Jewish people of Eastern Europe.” The core of this memory is the Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Collections. The project to preserve and digitize these materials will ensure their survival for generations to come; it will globally stimulate and disseminate new research and new knowledge; and, moreover, it will enable us to recover the memory of Jewish life in Eastern Europe and Russia shattered by the Holocaust.

This project is one of the essential undertakings of the Jewish people today for building Jewish identity and the Jewish future in America and around the world.

Jonathan Brent
Executive Director

YIVO has raised $5 million out of $5.6 million

DIGITIZATION PROGRESS
THROUGH DEC. 15, 2016

8,526
books digitized
(1,466,858 pages)
[Project goal: 11,700 books]

307,507
pages of archival documents digitized
[Project goal: Est. 1 million pages]
Study of the Jewish Question. In 1945, the U.S. Army found the books andates—to select and crate Jewish books from the library for the Institute for National Endowment for the Humanities

The Government of the Republic of Lithuania
The Good Will Foundation
The Conference on Jewish Material Claims

Benefactors $100,000+
Partners $500,000+
Builders $1,000,000+

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We gratefully acknowledge and thank the following donors for their generous support of this project:

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The Government of the Republic of Lithuania
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Prof. Simon Schama
Mrs. Louise Sulkes in honor of the memory of her beloved husband, Abraham Alvin Sulkes
Ms. Karen Underhill and Mr. Richard Meller
Ms. Deborah Waroff

*SAT OF JANUARY 1, 2017

Selected Artifacts · New Discoveries from the Vilna Collections

Long-forgotten Memoir from American Jewish Comedian Eddie Cantor
Eddie Cantor (né Israel Itzkowitz, 1892-1964) was a radio and television star best known for his comedy routines, vaudeville, and his performance in the Ziegfeld Follies. In the 1930s, he published a Yiddish memoir in New York City's Yiddish daily newspaper (in English, The Jewish Daily). Most of his 12-part memoir was rediscovered, yellowed and tattered, earlier this year in a box of uncatalogued theater reviews and letters, in the Esther Rokhl Kaminska Theater Museum Collection, part of the Vilna Collections. The memoir reveals details of his childhood years, marked by tragedy, resilience, and humor.

A Package of Jewish Suffering: Hebrew Classic Reimagined in Yiddish
A 1901 Yiddish translation by prolific Hebrew and Yiddish writer Yehoshua Mezakh (1834-1917) of Solomon ibn Verga's classic Hebrew work (The Staff of Judah). The classic was first printed in Turkey in the mid-16th century and was reprinted many times in many different places. It chronicles persecutions of Jews in different lands, and is an example of rabbinical writing on events in Jewish history. This book from the YIVO Library was once part of the famed Strashun Jewish public library in Vilna and is one of the many Yiddish works being digitized for the project.

What Was Considered Funny Two Hundred Years Ago?
Among the early 19th-century books digitized for the project at the Martynas Mažvydas Library was a collection of Yiddish anecdotes. The collection is intended primarily for women, who were not that much available to read in Yiddish. While most Yiddish books available were mostly in old-style German handwriting (Kurrentschrift), she has processed collections that are predominantly in Yiddish. While most Yiddish books available were intended primarily for women, (The Staff of Judah) was unique in that it openly discusses and tatters, rather than suppresses, the many Yiddish works being digitized for the project.