

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

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The Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Online Collections began as a project to preserve and digitize some 750,000 documents in New York and some 150,000 documents in Lithuania. Since its inception in 2015, we have discovered nearly 300,000 additional documents among our collections in New York and approximately 200,000 otherwise

unknown documents in Vilnius, Lithuania. The number of books has also increased. The project is now approximately 55% greater than when first conceived, and this is reflected in the growth of the project's budget from \$4.9 million to \$6.4 million. To date, YIVO has raised some \$5.85 million from numerous sources. We are deeply grateful to all those who have helped us preserve these precious materials and bring them at long last to light.

Among the now 1.3 million documents of the Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Online Collections, hundreds of thousands have remained hidden and unread, both in Lithuania and New York,

since they were seized by the Nazis in 1941. Making these available on the Vilna Collections web portal will change forever the landscape of scholarship on the history of Jewish life in Eastern Europe and Russia. But this project also has a deeper, perhaps moral, dimension that is felt by everyone who has worked on it and experienced first-hand the thrill of these new discoveries. Through them we touch the past and it touches us. Uniting the materials divided between New York and Vilnius is also a profound act of healing some of the deepest historical wounds suffered by the Jewish people, even as we know that the wounds inflicted on us by the Shoah can never truly heal. What YIVO hopes to give future generations through this project is not simply information about their heritage, but the authentic voices of their past that finally can reach us through what has been a long and terrible silence.

Jonathan Brent
Executive Director & CEO



LOCATED IN THE CENTER FOR JEWISH HISTORY

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THE EDWARD BLANK YIVO VILNA ONLINE COLLECTIONS

Winter 2019 NEWSLETTER

About the Project

**"THESE MATERIALS ARE
HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS"**

During World War II, the Nazis looted YIVO's archive and library and other Jewish libraries in Vilnius, Lithuania. The Jews who were forced to sort the materials for the Nazis risked their lives to smuggle some of the rare treasures to hiding places in the Vilna Ghetto. Much was destroyed, but soon after the war some of the materials were recovered by YIVO (by then relocated to the United States) with the help of the U.S. Army. Other items were recovered and rescued from the Soviets by a Lithuanian librarian, who hid them for over 40 years until they were rediscovered in 1988. In 2017, an additional 170,000 documents were discovered, including rare and unpublished works.

The Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Online Collections project, launched in 2015, is a \$6.4 million, international landmark digital initiative that has inspired funders, scholars, and lay people around the world. Our teams in New York and Lithuania are completing the processing, conservation, and digitization of these collections ahead of schedule.

This project reunites YIVO's divided prewar library and archival collections, newly discovered Holocaust documentation, and remnants of the famed Strashun Library through a dedicated web portal. It is a partnership between the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, the Lithuanian Central State Archives, the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, and the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences.

YIVO has raised **\$5.7 million** out of **\$6.4 million**

DIGITIZATION PROGRESS THROUGH DECEMBER 1, 2018

OVER 2.6 MILLION PAGES DIGITIZED



Over 95%
books digitized
[Project goal: 12,200 books]



Over 50%
archival
documents digitized
[Project goal:
Est. 1.3 million pages]



950,000
images available online
(books and documents)
[Project goal:
Est. 3.3 million pages]

NEWS & UPDATES

Project Manager Hired for the Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Online Collections

In June 2018, Jill Strykowski joined YIVO as the new Project Manager for the Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Online Collections.

Jill has a rich background in cataloging of books and media, archival digitization, information technology and advanced research techniques. In addition to her career as a technical services librarian, Jill freelances as a web and graphics editor in the New York Metro Area.

As an educator, Jill specializes in working with faculty and students to conduct research and learning online. She is well-versed in issues of copyright for digital learners and emerging technologies for presenting educational materials online.



She is a native of Berkeley, California and spent her undergraduate years in Los Angeles. She graduated with honors from the University of Southern California in 2006, with a BA in Art History and a minor in technical theater. She moved to New York City shortly after finishing this degree.

Jill has a master's degree in Library & Information Science (an MSLIS from Long Island University) and another in Archives & Public History (an MA from New York University).



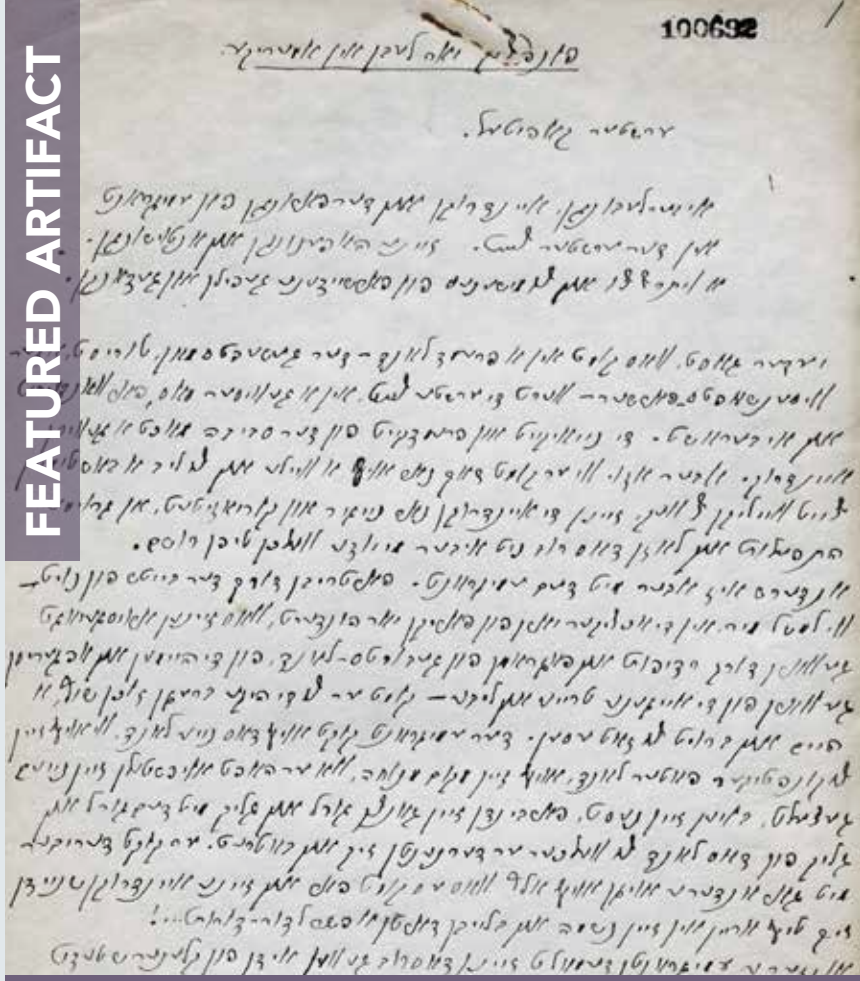
YIVO Launches New Search Portal for the Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Online Collections

We are pleased to announce the launch of a new edition of the Vilna Collections search portal at vilmacollections.yivo.org.

Visit to see what we've cataloged, preserved, and digitized so far in both New York and Lithuania: some

950,000 book and document pages. Now with improved search filtering, advanced search, and search results that include related entries in the *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*.

FEATURED ARTIFACT



Fifty Years of Life in America

IMAGE: First page of the manuscript of Yisroel Yekhiel Kopeloff's memoir, *Fifty Years of Life in America* (YIVO RG 3 Yiddish Literature and Language, Folder 2738)

There was a constant back and forth between YIVO while it was located in Vilna, Poland, and its supporters and colleagues in the United States. YIVO was keenly interested in documenting Jewish life everywhere, including in America. So, within the Vilna Collections are many books, newspapers, posters, theater playbills, letters, and manuscripts from America.

One example is this 42-page manuscript excerpt of the published memoirs of Yisroel Yekhiel Kopeloff, a Yiddish writer and activist who was born in Bobroisk. A Socialist Revolutionary and an anti-tsarist activist, he became a political refugee and fled to America in 1882. Entitled *Fuftsik yor lebn in Amerike* (*Fifty Years of Life in America*) it was sent around 1919 to Vilna, to Zalmen Reyzn—a scholar and journalist—for use in his *Leksikon fun der yudisher literatur un prese* (*Biographical Dictionary of Yiddish Literature and Press*), a comprehensive resource for the study of Yiddish literature.

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*AS OF DECEMBER 19, 2018

