

YIVO INSTITUTE
FOR JEWISH RESEARCH

USER GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research is dedicated to the preservation and study of the history and culture of East European Jewry worldwide. It was founded by scholars and intellectuals in Vilna, Poland (now Vilnius, Lithuania), in 1925 to document and study Jewish life in all its aspects: language, history, religion, folkways, and material culture.

For nearly a century, YIVO has pioneered new forms of Jewish scholarship, research, education, and cultural expression. Our public programs and exhibitions, as well as online and on-site courses, extend our global outreach and enable us to share our vast resources.

The YIVO Archives contains twenty-four million unique items and the largest collection of primary source Holocaust materials in the world outside of Yad Vashem and our Library has over 400,000 volumes—the single largest resource for such study in the world.

We encourage you to make use of this precious material from which we learn about our unique history and culture and to use the many resources you have learned about today in your important work of Holocaust education.

THE YIVO ARCHIVES

The YIVO Archives contains twenty-four million records in more than twenty languages. The 2,500 collections that make up the YIVO Archives include manuscripts, letters, printed ephemera, sheet music, posters, artworks and artifacts, photographs, film and videos, and sound recordings. These collections focus on a number of important areas including Jewish history, language, literature, and culture in Eastern Europe; Jewish educational, political, and labor organizations; Jewish immigration to the United States, Israel, and other countries in the Diaspora; and World War II and the Holocaust.

YIVO's Holocaust collection, one of the largest in the world, includes original handwritten Holocaust diaries, survivors' testimonies, documents created in the ghettos and concentration camps, official records of Nazi government agencies, files of Jewish wartime organizations contacted by refugees seeking to escape from Europe and to find shelter and freedom, and extensive documentation on the aftermath of the war reflected in records of the displaced persons camps in Austria, Germany and Italy. The Archives also has close to 20,000 photographs of Jewish life during and after the Holocaust, art works and artifacts, printed and handwritten music, and posters and broadsides depicting the resurgence and renewal of Jewish life in the DP camps.



Over five million pages of YIVO's collection have been digitized and are available online here:

archives.cjh.org/repositories/7


These materials are free to access, download, and print.

The YIVO Archives also provides remote reference services including complimentary reference photographs and paid research assistance. See this link for more information:

yivo.org/Remote-Research

For any questions related to YIVO's collections or how to access our holdings in person or online, please contact reference@yivo.org.

PRIMARY SOURCE LEARNING AT YIVO



YIVO BRUCE AND FRANCESCA CERNIA SLOVIN ONLINE MUSEUM

In 2020 YIVO launched the first exhibition of its landmark YIVO Cernia Slovin Online Museum: [*Beba Epstein: The Extraordinary Life of an Ordinary Girl*](#). It explores East European Jewish life in the 20th century and the Holocaust through the memoir of Beba Epstein, a girl born in Vilna in 1922. Beba wrote her memoir at the age of 14 in 1936. She survived the Shoah and went on to have a full life in the United States after the War. Her memoir also survived but was hidden in Vilnius until 2017 when it was discovered as part of YIVO's massive project to digitize all of its prewar collections, some 1.5 million documents and 12,000 books.

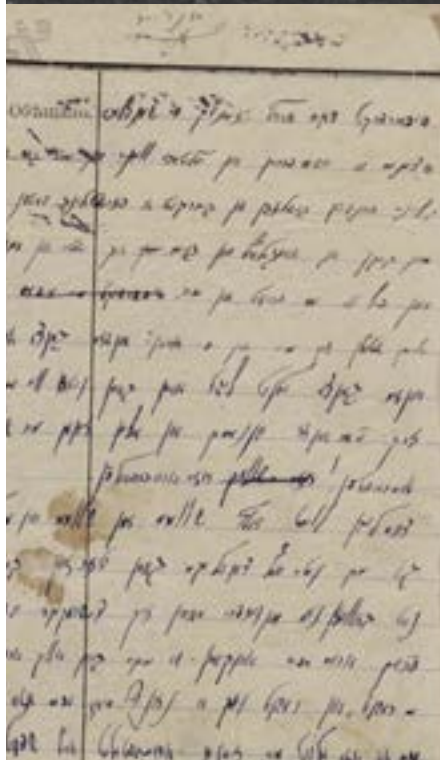
The exhibition, *Beba Epstein: The Extraordinary Life of an Ordinary Girl*, provides interactive experiences through which visitors discover her exceptional fate but also that she was not so different from other teenagers today. The exhibition includes many [teaching resources](#), including hundreds of primary documents, translated, and set in context, for elementary, middle, and high school levels, with a focus on middle school. The entire exhibition has recently been [translated into Lithuanian](#) for use in the Lithuanian school system. It has been viewed in over 160 countries.

In June 2024, YIVO will launch the second exhibition of the online museum: ***Yitskhok Rudashevski: A Teenager's Account of Life and Death in the Vilna Ghetto***. The exhibition explores the Nazi occupation in Vilna and life in the Vilna Ghetto through the diary of Yitskhok Rudashevski, a teenager who was murdered at the Ponar forest. For Yitskhok and his friends, maintaining Jewish culture became their way of resisting the atrocities of the Holocaust.

The exhibition features teaching resources for classroom use with a focus on high school students.

The YIVO Online Museum's innovative, interactive storytelling draws on hundreds of materials from YIVO's collections and is a new digital educational resource in Holocaust education.

View the Exhibitions in the Online Museum and teacher resources at museum.yivo.org.





THE YIVO LEARNING AND MEDIA CENTER

The YIVO Learning and Media Center (YLMC) is a new, in-person venture that creates archival based lessons for visiting school groups as well as members of the broader public and presents Jewish history through primary sources.

High school students are our largest target audience. However, college and university groups have also visited. Each lesson is modified in consultation with the teacher to meet the needs of a specific group, according to age, make-up and educational level. Each lesson enables students to explore topics such as Jewish life in interwar Poland and cultural resistance during the Holocaust while at the same time gives them the tools to do their own archival research.

To learn more about the YLMC please visit our page on YIVO's website, yivo.org/YLMC. To arrange a visit please contact YLMC Educator Susannah Trubman by email at strubman@yivo.org or reach her by phone at 347.534.1250.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

YIVO's public programs make our collections accessible to a wide, general public and fosters the creation of contemporary Jewish culture. In 2023, over 21,000 individuals from twenty-nine countries participated in 80 YIVO public programs.

YIVO's public programs are accessible to a global audience both in person and via zoom. All of our programs are recorded and available on our website (yivo.org/Video) and YouTube channel (youtube.com/user/yivoinstitute).

Many of YIVO's programs focus on the Holocaust and antisemitism. Recent highlights include *Four Winters*, a film about Jewish partisans during World War II; a book talk with Michael Hagemeister on *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*; a lecture by Alan Steinweis about antisemitism in German scholarship; and a series on *The Origins and Ideology of Hamas*, curated by Jeffrey Herf.

YIVO recently partnered with the Yale Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies on a podcast titled *Those Who Were There: Voices from the Holocaust* which tells the story of the Holocaust in Vilna through primary source testimonies:

fortunoff.library.yale.edu/education/podcasts

To be notified of YIVO's upcoming public programs please sign up for our Newsletter at yivo.org.

Explore recordings of some of YIVO's past events about the study of the Holocaust on YIVO's YouTube channel:

- ▶ [Jan Grabowski on Holocaust Distortion in Poland and Beyond](#) (Jan. 8, 2024)
- ▶ [Unresolved History: Jews and Lithuanians After the Holocaust: A panel with Leonidas Donskis, Faina Kukliansky, and Saulius Suziedėlis](#) (Feb. 14, 2014)
- ▶ [Holocaust Scholarship on Trial: A panel with Masha Gessen, Jan Grabowski, and Cecile Kuznitz](#) (Feb. 16, 2021)
- ▶ [The Yiddish Historians and the Struggle for a Jewish History of the Holocaust: A conversation with Mark L. Smith and Samuel Kassow](#) (Oct. 29, 2021)
- ▶ [Father Debois on Memory of the Past and the Battle for a Promising Future](#) (May 6, 2019)
- ▶ [Alan Steinweis on Legitimizing Genocide: Science, Scholarship, and the Complicity of the Academy](#) (Jan. 11, 2023)
- ▶ [Kalman Weiser on Confronting Hitler's Professors: Yiddish scholarship and the Nazis](#) (Jul. 21, 2020)
- ▶ [Book talk with Michael Hagemeister. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion in Court: The Bern Trial \(1933-1935\) & Antisemitic International](#) (Apr 10, 2024)
- ▶ [Hamas and the Origins of Islamic Antisemitism](#) (Feb. 26, 2024)
- ▶ [Colonialism, Racism, and the Arab Israeli War of 1948](#) (Mar. 25, 2024)
- ▶ [Responses to October 7th](#) (Apr. 16, 2024)

Images:

COVER

Children in the Strobl Displaced Persons Camp, Austria, 1947.

2.

Shelves in the YIVO Archives stacks.

3.

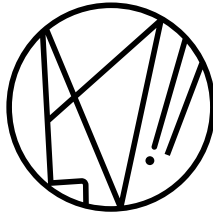
A sample from YIVO's collection of *kennkarten*, the identity cards given out to the Jews by the Nazi regime.

4.

Photo of Yitskhok Rudashevski in the 1930s, and a page from the diary he kept in the Vilna Ghetto. Rudashevski photo courtesy of Ghetto Fighters' House Museum, Israel/ Photo Archive.

5.

Students from The Frisch School during a visit with the YIVO Learning and Media Center, 2023.



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