

Bibliyotekn: Yiddish Popular Book Series, 1890–1939

Nathan Cohen

Bar Ilan University

INTRODUCTION

In the Western world, one of the first projects that sought to introduce the uneducated reading public to high quality literature emerged in France in the mid-seventeenth century and lasted until the French Revolution: a multivolume series of books or booklets with blue wrappers entitled *Bibliothèque bleue*. The numerous issues that comprised this home library were “borrowed from all genres, all periods, and the literature of all nations,” occasionally shortened and/or simplified (Chartier 1987, 241; see also Outram 1995, 27–29). Similar early initiatives emerged in England (Waller 2006, 45–46; Wagner 2005–2023) and Spain, while a German enterprise, *Die Blauen Bücher*, appeared by the turn of the twentieth century (Völkner 2010, 251–58).

Similar “libraries”—or inexpensive, small-format editions of classic Russian and European literary works—were published in Russia since the 1870s, but due to distribution difficulties, especially in far-flung areas, they became widely popular only at the beginning of the 1880s. Lev Tolstoy, together with his secretary, author Vladimir Chertkov, founded the *Posrednik* (Mediator) publishing house in St. Petersburg with the intention of printing popular books. In 1892, the well-known Moscow publisher Ivan Sytin joined the partnership and succeeded in marketing and distributing belles-lettres to the rural reading public and to those who read aloud for the benefit of the illiterate. Some of the titles produced by this publishing house were adaptations of literary texts with didactic messages, while others were works of popular science. In the first four years of its existence, *Posrednik* printed more than twelve million copies of the booklets (Ruud 1990, 7–38; Brooks 1978, 126–28; Brooks 1985, 66–69, 295–99, 313–24, 333–43).

Another leading Russian publisher who distributed popular scientific texts and didactic literature was Florentiĭ Pavlenkov. From the 1890s onwards, he published three illustrated *bibliothèques* that included hundreds of issues on scientific topics and biographies of persons famed for their contribution to the Russian nation and to humanity in general (Brooks 1985, 344–46). Pavlenkov was imitated by other publishers, who started to print such *bibliothèques* (Ruud 1990, 52–53). The *Znanie* (Knowledge) writers’ association and publishing house, active in St. Petersburg in the years 1898–1913, and managed by Maxim Gorky from 1902, also published dozens of works

from the best of modern Russian literature.¹ From the end of the nineteenth century until the revolution of 1917, public groups such as the St. Petersburg Literacy Committee and the Union for the War against Drunkenness printed and distributed belles-lettres and popular scientific works for the masses and also established libraries and reading rooms.

As a means of distributing knowledge, multi-volume series were also popular in Congress Poland in the mid-nineteenth century. By 1918, no fewer than 150 different *bibliyotekn* had been published there (Kostecki 1992, 975–76; Jazdon, 1997; Martuszevska 1992, 577–87).

Aware of the importance of educating and enlightening the “common people,” intellectuals all across the European continent sought to publish and disseminate multi-volume series in a uniform shape and size and at a low cost to the consumer. They were given attractive covers and easily recognizable titles that secured customer loyalty and helped readers find items of interest. Occasionally, larger anthologies were published in parallel with the series. Publishers of these innovative works generally had national, social, and cultural reasons to expose readers to current public discourse. In a period during which public libraries were not a widespread phenomenon in Eastern Europe (Stuart 1998, 401–40; Kołodziejska 1967, 16–28; Bieńkowska and Chamerska 1990, 63–71), such “private libraries” or libraries “without walls,” as Roger Chartier dubbed them (1994, 61), functioned as influential cultural agents.

The idea of providing such accessible content for uneducated reading audiences inspired East European Jewish writers, publishers, and cultural activists as well.² This article provides a thematic survey of initiatives to publish Yiddish book series, better known as *bibliyotekn* (libraries), in the Pale of Settlement, in imperial Russia, in Congress Poland, and in the second Polish Republic. It sheds light on one aspect of the developing Yiddish book market, based on 78 titles published between the 1890s and the outbreak of World War II (for a list, see the appendix).³ The first two sections of the article consider the reading public, the following two sections concern publishing policies, and the final section focuses on publications for young readers. The series discussed differ significantly from the nineteenth-century American Dime Novels or British

1. The Znanie publishing house was popular among Jewish readers as well because it published stories by the Russian Jewish writers Semyon Yushkevitch and David Aizman and Russian translations of Sholem Asch’s Yiddish stories (Veidlinger 2009, 95–96).

2. Most of those involved in the Jewish book market during this period were men. A few women authors wrote children’s educational series, however the Polish novelist Eliza Orzeszkowa (1841–1910) was widely represented in Yiddish translation.

3. The current survey of the *bibliyotekn* genre came out of my study of the changing Yiddish book market in the Pale of Settlement and independent Poland (1860–1939). The 78-title corpus was compiled after consulting bibliographical records in various library catalogs, hard-copy and digitized *bibliyotekn* issues, booksellers’ lists, and numerous announcements in the Yiddish daily press. Although the survey is meant to be as comprehensive as possible, I do not claim to have seen or listed all existing Yiddish *bibliyotekn*, yet I believe that the provided list covers their vast majority.

Penny Dreadfuls, and from their Russian, Polish, and Yiddish counterparts. Such sensational, entertaining publications were distributed in greater numbers in Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, bearing the derogatory name *shund*. Many Yiddish titles were imported from the United States and/or serialized for distribution (see Goldstein 2014, 105–39). Those publications are beyond the scope of this article.



In the final decades of the nineteenth century the Yiddish book market⁴ experienced an unprecedented momentum in book production and distribution of literature in many genres. By the close of the century, the mention of a well-known author's name became instrumental in sales promotions. Political and ideological publishers—whose interest went beyond profit making—also became active in the market.

Russian censorship shaped the history of the Yiddish book as well as these internal processes. In 1836, the Russian authorities forbade the operation of Hebrew presses within the Pale of Settlement, except in Vilna and Zhitomir. Vilna was indeed well known as a center of the Jewish intelligentsia and was home to prestigious printing houses, but it was later surpassed by Warsaw. Nevertheless, by the end of the nineteenth century, and even in later years, Vilna remained the center of Yiddish socialist and academic publishing. Located outside the Pale, Warsaw rapidly became a productive hub for the Hebrew and Yiddish press. The Warsaw censor was known to be less punctilious than his counterparts in other locations, attracting printers and others involved in book production to settle in the city, and even soliciting manuscripts from afar. Both cities became prominent centers for Yiddish *bibliyotekn*.

The failed socialist revolution of 1905 eased Russian censorship, which had previously posed a threat to printed material in Yiddish (Cohen 2023, 48, 158, 164; Elyashevich 2008). The market for newspapers and Jewish books enjoyed relative freedom although extra attention was paid to publications of the socialist Bund movement. Many of them were confiscated by the authorities, compelling the Bund to distribute its titles in secret.

In the second Polish Republic (October 7, 1918, to September 30, 1939), censorship was directed primarily at the daily press, and again, with special attention to Yiddish socialist publications. During that period and despite many hardships, the Jewish primary school system in general, and the Yiddish one in particular, grew significantly (Kazdan 1947; Eisenstein 1950; Frost 1998).

4. The earliest Yiddish print books were published in the 1530s in Kraków and included a Bible concordance and three titles related to ethics (Turmiansky 2016).

However, there were limited higher education options for Jewish primary school graduates. Only some of the Jewish primary school's graduates attended gymnasias, and because secondary education in Hebrew or Yiddish was quite limited, most students went on to schools where Polish was the language of instruction. As a result, Polish replaced Yiddish as the language of choice among the learning youth (Cohen 2002a). For that reason, and despite the tendency to acculturate among a certain group of the Jewish youth, the 1920s represent the most productive and vibrant years of the Yiddish book market. From the end of that decade and onwards, that market was affected by economic hardships, on the one hand, and continuous attempts to support and encourage Yiddish literature on the other (Cohen 2003, 204–215). One of the means by which cultural institutions and activists tried to cope with that economic crisis was through publishing inexpensive and accessible *bibliyotekn*.

DISTRIBUTING KNOWLEDGE AND REFINING PUBLIC LITERARY TASTES

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of vibrant literary production in Hebrew (Miron 1987, 31–36, 65–70). One representative of this renaissance in Hebrew printing was the writer and publisher Abraham Leib Shalkovich (1866–1921), known by his pen name Ben-Avigdor. He settled in Warsaw and in 1891 he spearheaded a successful initiative in the Hebrew book market: *Sifre agorah* (penny books)—a series of 45 booklets published over five years and sold at an affordable price. The booklets were characterized by their realistic content, an innovation in contemporary Hebrew literature. Ben-Avigdor introduced another novelty by paying royalties to each of the contributing authors (Ben-Avigdor 1891, statement of intentions; for Ben-Avigdor and his project, see Shaked 1977, 219–25; Shalhav 1994, 8–48, 65–70; Holtzman 2013, 21–41; Gilboa 1991, 7–30; and Lefon-Kandelshein 2005, 115–44).

One of the contributors to Ben-Avigdor's *Sifre agorah* was a young author from Vilna, Yitshak Goydo (1868–1925), who, after emigrating to the United States, became a literary critic and theater historian writing under the penname of B. Gorin. Motivated by Ben-Avigdor's success, Goydo returned to Vilna and embarked on a similar project in Yiddish (1893–1894). His *Kleyne ertsehlungen* (Small Stories, Figure 1) series contained six booklets that espoused socialist ideals.

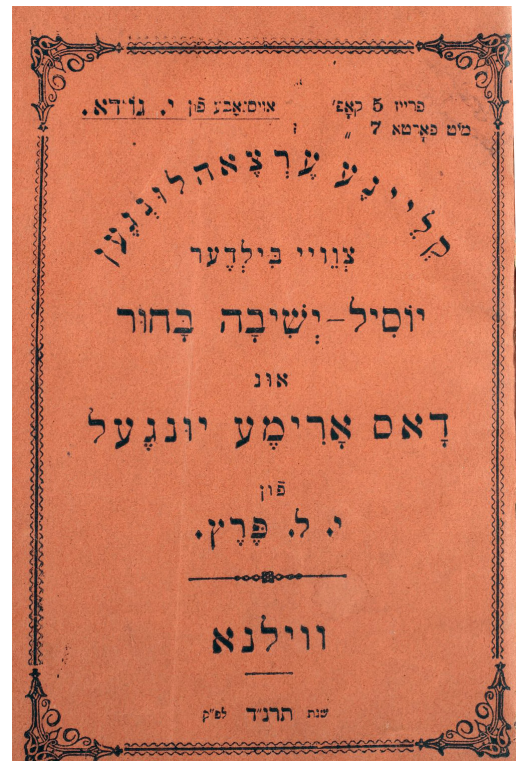


FIGURE 1. Two stories by Isaac Leib Peretz. *Kleyne ertsehlungen* (Small Stories). Vilna: Goydo, 1894. Source: National Library of Israel

Those small and inexpensive Hebrew publications (17 cm) circulated widely and inspired similar endeavors, known as *bibliyotekn*, in the Yiddish book market. The *bibliyotekn* should not be confused with the earlier *bibliyotek*, which signified an anthology of high-quality literary works. Sholem Aleichem (Solomon Rabinovitch) published two short-lived anthologies of works by contemporary Yiddish writers in a literary series, *Di Yudishe folks bibliyotek* (The Jewish People’s Library; Berdichev and Kiev 1888 and 1889). Despite the use of the term “people’s library” the books were not popular reading. Sholem Aleichem lacked the means to publish additional volumes in the series. Isaac Leib Peretz filled the void by publishing three volumes of his *Di Yudishe bibliyotek* (The Jewish Library, 1891–1895) in Warsaw, significantly omitting the word “people’s” from the title.⁵ Mordecai Spector’s five-volume anthology *Der hoyzfraynd* (The Home Friend, 1887–1896) followed that trend, avoiding the term *bibliyotek* altogether.

Some fifty years later, the Yidisher yisnshaftlekher instițut (Yiddish Scientific Institute, YIVO) published high-quality scientific books in Vilna under the general title *bibliyotek*. The institute’s non-periodical publications from the mid-1930s were issued under the general title *YIVO bibliyotek*, manifesting its library-like character.



The popular series discussed below, including series not explicitly denoted “*bibliyotekn*,” made Yiddish belles-lettres and works of nonfiction readily available to all readers. In contrast with the entertaining sensational, serialized novels that were largely competing with them, *bibliyotekn* served to distribute knowledge, widen horizons, and introduce the general public to the best original and translated literary works.

At the same time, the Yidisher zhargonisher komițet (Committee for the Advancement of Yiddish [Culture]) was established in Vilna (1895) with the aim of ensuring that the Yiddish language achieved an appropriate and respectable place among other languages and cultures, including Hebrew. The committee collaborated with the Warsaw-based Yiddish activists and publishers Avraham-Hersh Koțik (1868–1933) and Alțer Bresler (1866–1930), who launched a new series: *Yisnshaftlikhe folks bikher* (Scientific Popular Books). The booklets they published were mainly based on translated or adapted texts from the Russian. From 1894 to 1896, the committee dis-

5. Peretz had attempted to realize his writing aspirations in print for years. Finally, in 1907, he negotiated a contract with A. M. Evalenko, publisher of the *Internastyonale bibliyotek* (International Library) in New York—one of the first *bibliyotekn* across the ocean, established in the late 1890s.

tributed a seven-booklet series in Vilna. Among its publications were the titles “How Did People Live Thousands of Years Ago?” “Labor and Capital,” “Winter Evenings: Scientific Discussions” on basic concepts in chemistry, and “Adam’s Generations: The Prehistory of Mankind: Stories about Wild People.”⁶

Between 1898 and 1900, Lazar (Eli’ezer) Tsuḳerman, the son of and successor to the Warsaw bookseller and publisher Avraham Tsuḳerman, published his *Tsuḳermans folksbibliyoṭek* (Tsuḳerman’s Popular Library). The series consisted of only four booklets, all adaptations, including “The Merchant of Venice,” “Captain Dreyfus on Devil’s Island,” “The Eternal Jew” by Eugène Sue, and “The Goldmakers’ Village” by Johann Heinrich Zschokke. Seeking to increase awareness of healthcare and personal hygiene, Tsuḳerman established another series, *Zayt gezond* (Be Well). Six of the 12 planned volumes, all written by Dr. Meir Gotḷieb (born 1866), were published between 1899 and 1903.⁷ The subject of health and hygiene interested other publishers and editors. In 1901 and 1902, Dr. M. Yeynin (born 1868) published at least two brochures under the title, *Higyenishe bibliyoṭek* (Hygiene Library), one devoted to basic rules of hygiene and the other on hygiene and optimal conditions for the *heyder* (traditional, religious classroom, mainly for boys). In 1926, the Warsaw Jewish school educator Meir Reis (born 1891) published a public health series of probably only two issues, titled *Yisnshafṭlekhe bibliyoṭek: der yeg tsum yisn* (Scientific Library: The Way to Knowledge). One issue was *Higyene fun der froy: a yegvayzer far froyen un meydlekh* (The Hygiene of the Female: a Guide for Women and Girls). Another short-lived venture was undertaken in Warsaw in 1930 with two booklets of the *Bibliyoṭek gezunṭ un lebn* (Library of Health and Life), devoted to family life and motherhood. A more successful enterprise was launched in Vilna by the well-known physician and activist Dr. Z. Schabad (1864–1935), who edited the biweekly journal *Folksgezunṭ* (People’s Health, 1923–1937). In 1928, the journal offered its subscribers the *higyenishe bibliyoṭek* (Hygiene Library) of 18 issues, published by TOZ, or Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia Ludności Żydowskiej w Polsce (Society for Safeguarding the Health of the Jewish Population) in Warsaw. In 1934, Dr. Schabad launched the *Ilustrirṭe popular-yisnshafṭlekhe meditsinische bibliyoṭek “Folksgezunṭ”* (Illustrated Popular Scientific Medical Library “People’s Health”). After four issues it ceased to appear, probably due to Schabad’s death.

In 1900, the Vilna Jewish musician Yitshāḳ Pirozhniḳoy (1859–1933) published a series of 12 stories translated into Yiddish from Russian, Polish, German, French, English, Italian, and

6. For more information about Koṭiḳ, Bresler and the committee, see Cohen 2023, 76, 89–90.

7. Among the topics in this series were first aid, tuberculosis, digestive illnesses, “male illnesses” (sexually transmitted diseases, gonorrhea), and mental diseases. The booklets were later reprinted as a collection and reissued in several editions.

Swedish, entitled *Pirozhnikovs bibliyotek barimte ertselungen* (Pirozhnikov’s Library of Famous Stories), “in small and elegant volumes”⁸ (Figure 2).

Yehoshu‘a Mezah (1834–1917), a traditionalist *maskil* who was born in Zhagar and lived in Vilna for the last 25 years of his life, penned numerous Hebrew works in addition to several hundred booklets in Yiddish—some of them original works and others translated or adapted from the Hebrew or Russian. Among them was the series *Populere zhargon bibliyotek* (Popular Yiddish Library, 1907–1908), consisting of at least 17 booklets about the natural world (Goldshmidt 1918, 192–202).⁹

Pinhas Kąntoroꝟits (1866–1927) was involved in the Hebrew and Yiddish literary milieu in Warsaw in the 1880s. In 1907, he founded the Yavneh publishing house. With the series *Visenshaftlikhe folks-bibliyotek* (Popular Scientific Library, 1907), which included six translations of popular Russian scientific literature and plans for more, Kąntoroꝟits aimed to widen the horizons of Yiddish-speaking Jewish workers whose free time was limited and precious (Kąntoroꝟits, 1907, 31). That year, and maybe for the benefit of those readers who had more free time, he published a series of at least 13 plays, primarily by Yiddish playwrights, titled *Yudisher teater-bibliyotek* (Yiddish Theater Library, 1907).

THE IDEOLOGICAL SPHERE

From the 1890s and especially after 1905, as well as in the interwar period, Jewish politics played a significant role in everyday life. Jewish political movements and parties had clear positions regarding questions of social, economic, cultural, and educational matters. Political movements had their own institutions, including newspapers, school networks, youth movements, libraries, and publishing houses. The publication of *bibliyotekn* was another manifestation of ideological and political activism.

8. Most translations were not directly from the original language. In the same year Pirozhnikov also published three issues of *Bibliyotek far kolonistn un gertner* (Library for Settlers and Gardeners) for the farming community, edited by agronomist M. Veler to promote agricultural activity among Jews. Pirozhnikov’s attempts to maintain his publishing business ceased after he emigrated to the United States in 1912. For more about Pirozhnikov, see Cohen 2023.

9. According to the testimony of Haykl Lunski, head librarian at the Strashun Library in Vilna, Mezah also penned *tehines* in Yiddish (Lunski 1937, 295).



FIGURE 2. “Der Golem” (The Golem) by Leopold Ritter von Sacher-Masoch. *Pirozhnikovs bibliyotek* (Pirozhnikov’s Library) #11. Vilna: Pirozhnikov, 1900. Source: National Library of Israel

A relatively early such initiative was the *Tsiyenistishe kopike bibliyotek* (Zionist Penny Library), begun in Odessa in 1905 by the Zionist activist Dr. Joseph Sapir (1869–1935). By the outbreak of World War I, 37 works had been published in the series, each printed in 7,000–35,000 copies (Brodoyski 1914, 2). Most of the titles were slim brochures offering descriptions of life in the Land of Israel (Palestine), episodes from Jewish history, and current Zionist ideological and theoretical writings. A much less successful Zionist series, the *Tsiyenistishe bibliyotek* (Zionist Library, 1903), published only a few issues. It was part of a larger publishing enterprise led by Ben-Avigdor, the *Folksbildung* (Popular Education), which functioned as the Yiddish branch of the flourishing Tushiyah Hebrew publishing house. Three decades later, six booklets (out of 12 planned), devoted to current affairs of the Jewish Zionist community in the Land of Israel, were published in Vilna under the same title and by a publishing house bearing the same name. Between 1928 and 1934, the he-Ḥaluts youth movement in Warsaw published series under at least four similar titles, amounting to some 10 small issues.¹⁰ Likewise, the Zionist socialist movement had its *Tsienistishe-sotsyalistishe bibliyotek* (Zionist Socialist Library, 1921–1922), which included only a handful of slim issues. Although the Zionist movement garnered strength and influence in the newly established Polish state, it seemed to achieve only minor success in producing popular Yiddish publications, probably due to its inherent connection with Hebrew or the use of Polish in everyday life.

Socialist and ideological Yiddishist series were published simultaneously in Vilna, St. Petersburg, and Warsaw. The Vilna series *Internatsyionale bibliyotek* (International Library, 1905–1906) contained 18 booklets of belles-lettres—most of them translated—along with economic and social theory and criticism. That same year (1906), the St. Petersburg *Yidishe bibliyotek* (Yiddish Library) published five brochures of socialist theory in translation. A somewhat less fiery socialist series, consisting of eight issues, was published in Warsaw under the title *Tsayt bibliyotek* (Time Library).

After World War I, an impressive Jewish school network developed in the second Polish Republic (Frost 1998). Most Jewish elementary schools and youth movements were closely connected to political movements and therefore a significant portion of the publications targeted at young readers bore clear ideological messages. In the interwar period, the number of socialist series grew significantly. For at least nine years (1927–1936), the Bund in Warsaw and its youth movement, *Tsukunft* (Future), published thin booklets at irregular intervals “which are required for our youth” (*Fir yor arbeyt un kamf* 1929, 14). That series, entitled *Sotsyalistishe yugnt bibliyotek* (Socialist Youth Library), contained socialist ideological teachings and biographies of leading

10. *he-Ḥaluts ha-tsa'ir bibliyotek* (The Young he-Ḥaluts Library), 1928 (one issue); *he-Ḥaluts bibliyotek* (The he-Ḥaluts Library), 1929–1930 (five issues); *he-Ḥaluts groshn bibliyotek* (The he-Ḥaluts Penny Library), 1930 (two issues); *Bibliyotek fun he-Ḥaluts ha-medinati* (Library of Territorial he-Ḥaluts), 1934 (one issue).

figures.¹¹ In 1938, the Bund's early youth movement, *Sotsyalistisher Kinder Farband* (Socialist Children Association, or SKIF), produced its own series, *Skif bibliyotek*, with at least six issues of more than 100 pages each; one of them (no. 6), authored by three Jewish educators, was devoted to games and leisure activities. The *Frayhayt* (Freedom) socialist youth movement published the *Frayhayt bibliyotek*, comprising at least four issues (Warsaw 1928) of ideological texts.

The Yiddishist cultural organization *Ḳultur Lige* was founded by socialist activists in Kiev (Kyiv) in early 1918. Some three years later, several of its founders settled in Warsaw, and shortly thereafter the organization became closely identified with the Bund.¹² At the beginning of the 1920s, it published a *Ḳlasiker bibliyotek far yugnt* (Classics Library for Youth), but probably only two titles appeared, one by Mendele Moykher Sforim and the other by Sholem Aleichem. Likewise, the *Peretz bibliyotek* of “selected books of the young Yiddish literature” (series subtitle), edited by the cultural activist Nachman Mayzel (1887–1966) and poet Melekh Ravitch (1893–1976), managed to publish no more than a handful of booklets. A more successful project was *Ḳultur Lige's Shul bibliyotek* (School Library), which produced dozens of thin booklets between 1921 and 1930, many of them illustrated. In the series were selected stories by classical Yiddish writers as well as translated texts, among them works by Hayyim Nahman Bialik. Simultaneously, following Yosef Yashunski's (1881–1943)¹³ review of a remarkable popular scientific book series in Germany, France, Poland, and Russia (Yashunski 1929, 22–37), the *Ḳultur Lige* began producing a new series of popular scientific books in Yiddish, *Natur un Ḳultur* (Nature and Culture), edited by Yashunski. Seventeen books of more than a hundred pages each, all translated from foreign languages, were published in the series between 1929 and 1931. Notably, during the same time period, another publisher issued his own *Yachkovskis popular-yisnshafklikhe bibliyotek* (Yachkovski's Popular-Scientific Library), which consisted of some 20 lengthy scientific works translated into Yiddish.

The Poyle Tsiyen party established its own series, although only six issues of *Arbeṭer bibliyotek* (Workers' Library, 1918) appeared in Lublin, and one issue appeared in Warsaw (1924). The Poyle Tsiyen weekly organ, *Arbeṭer tsaytung* (The Worker's Newspaper), published its own *bibliyotek*, but probably no more than two booklets were produced (1933). Most of the socialist-oriented series were directed at the younger generation, the forthcoming leadership of the movement who would advance the realization of a socialist future.

11. I located 17 issues. In 1936, two issues of a series called *Ṭashn sotsyalistishe bibliyotek* (Pocket Socialist Library) also appeared.

12. For *Ḳultur Lige* in general and on its publishing activity at its first stage, see Moss 2009, 169–72.

13. Yosef Yashunski was a translator and popularizer of scientific texts into Yiddish. A Bundist activist and educator, he contributed to numerous Yiddish newspapers and journals and organized many professional courses and workshops in the Warsaw Ghetto. Perished in Treblinka (1943?).

Orthodox political circles contributed their share to popular Yiddish publications in the interwar period. The Zionist Orthodox educational network Yavne had its *Folks-bibliyotek yavne* (Popular Library Yavne, 1938–1939) with at least 12 booklets devoted to Jewish holidays and traditional themes, all edited by Yehudah Yefet (David Shapiro, 1905–1942, perished in Treblinka). According to a brief proclamation in one of the booklets, the purpose of the series was to “disseminate Jewish knowledge among the general public” (“Shvues bukh” 1938, 51). The Beyš Yankev educational network published two *bibliyotekn* in Lodz. Its *Kindler bibliyotek* (Children’s Library) was distributed in 1929 through its monthly organ, *Beyš Yankev Zhurnal* (Beyš Yankev Journal), under the leadership of its enthusiastic editor Eliezer Gershon Friedenson (1899–1943, perished in Majdanek). That series was followed by *Undzer bibliyotek far kinder un yugnt* (Our Library for Children and Youth, 1931–1932), which included at least 10 thin booklets, seven of them authored by the Orthodox Yiddish writer Eliezer Schindler, and three by the founder of Beyš Yankev, Sarah Shenirer. Here too, the focus on the younger generation—girls in this case—is evident. Those publications, as well as the Zionist and socialist publications, were distributed to members of the various movements’ school networks and youth movements.

The Warsaw-based Orthodox publishing company Yeshurun planned a *bibliyotek* bearing its name, aiming to publish a monthly brochure that would serve as “propaganda material for Jewish pious thought,” support the Jewish Orthodox Agudath Israel party, and strengthen the observant way of life (Ehrmann 1929: 3, back cover). Probably no more than three brochures were published in the series.¹⁴

FOR PROFIT PUBLISHING

The emergence of Yiddish daily newspapers in 1903 led to competition with the vibrant Yiddish book market, which offered *shund* literature in inexpensive booklets issued in dozens, occasionally hundreds of installments. Beginning in 1906, Yiddish newspapers, mainly in Warsaw, tried to attract general readership as well, by providing an inexpensive option to people with limited free time. Besides reporting on current affairs, newspapers offered articles about the natural and social sciences, technology, and law. They also published literary works by well-known authors and sensational novels by anonymous writers, occasionally simultaneously. Contemporary *bibliyotekn* targeted the same readership. Spending money on a single booklet that provided limited content was less economical than subscribing to a newspaper, which offered more variety on an ongoing basis. Although competition with the daily press was a losing battle, *bibliyotekn* contin-

14. Other attempts to publish series were the *Tashen bibliyotek* (Pocket Library) by Farlag Beyš Yankev Zhurnal, of which only one issue was discovered (Lodz, 1930), and *Propaganda bibliyotek far beyš-Yankev un bnoš-agudeš-yišroel* (Propaganda Library for Beyš Yankev and Agudath Israel Girls, Lodz, 1930), with 10 planned issues.

ued to be published.¹⁵ Private and cooperative initiatives were more successful than institutional publishers (Cohen 2006; Goldstein 2014), yet the fierce competition did not deter newcomers from entering the business (see the below example of Gitlin).

After gaining some experience in Chicago and making business contacts there, the Slonim-born (Belorussian) printer and publisher Ya‘aḳov Lidski (1868–1921) settled in Warsaw. In 1900, he opened the first modern Yiddish publishing house in the city, giving it the pretentious name *Progres* (Progress). Four years later, he launched his *Kleyne folks-bibliyotek* (Small Popular-Library) to “give the Jewish masses inexpensive and useful books of European and Jewish literature to refine their literary taste and [to enable them to achieve] a higher level of education” (Reclus 1906, back cover). No more than 10 booklets of the series were likely published. In 1910, Lidski established a similar series entitled *Eyuropeishe liṭeraṭur* (European Literature), with Abraham Reisen (1876–1953) as its editor. By 1914, the series published 39 issues out of the planned 62.

The St. Petersburg publishing house *Di Naye Bibliyotek* (The New Library, 1903; Figure 3) planned to publish numerous translations of Hebrew and world literature into Yiddish as well as original Yiddish works. However, during the three years of its operation it managed to publish only seven volumes.¹⁶ At the same time in Odessa, the Bessarabian Yiddish author Eliezer David Rosental (1856–1932) established a publishing house called *Ariel*, planning to publish his *Bibliyotek dos lebn* (The Life Library) of 20 booklets of works by Yiddish Bessarabian writers and translations from Russian. In reality, only five booklets were published.

Back in Warsaw, B. Szymin (1880–1942, perished in the Ghetto of Otwock) established another modern Yiddish publishing house in the first decade of the twentieth century. Its first project (1907) was *Universal bibliyotek* (Universal Library), which included stories by Jewish writers such as Sholem Asch, Mosheh Sṭavski, and Gershom Shofman, as



FIGURE 3. “Spartak” (Spartacus) by Raffaello Giovagnoli (1873/4), *Di Naye Bibliyotek* (The New Library) #5. St. Petesrburg, 1905 [probably translated from the Russian translation]. Source: National Library of Israel

15. For more information about the tense relations between the daily Yiddish newspapers and the defensive modern highbrow Yiddish literature both in the Russian Empire and in Poland, see Cohen 2023, 154–57; 1995; and 2008.

16. Yitshak Pirozhnikoy published a *Naye bibliyotek* in Vilna in 1904 but only one issue appeared.

well as by non-Jewish writers such as Knut Hamsun and Guy de Maupassant. In 1909, Szymin promoted a new project, *Shimins groyse velt bibliyotek* (Szymin’s Great World Library). During its three-year existence, a new issue was added to the series every two weeks, amounting to a total of 66 booklets. This series was sold to subscribers and its issues were printed on high quality paper. It offered the best of contemporary world and Jewish literature, including nonfiction works. Szymin’s publishing house likewise distributed book prizes to series’ subscribers and marketed unsold booklets at a significant discount (Figure 4).

שימינים גרויסע	
וועלט-ביבליאטעק	
צווייטער יאהרגאנג	ערשטער יאהרגאנג
1 אברהם ריווען: אלטע-וועלט.	1 מ. ז. פֿייערבערג: וואהן?
2 יונגווארג	2 ארטור שניצלער: געוואסענע שריפטן I באנד
3 דר. גינצבורג: דער חלמוד.	3 י. מ. וויסענבערג: שריפטן I באנד
4 יודישע געשיכטע: 3-ער באנד	4 שריפטן II
5 4-ער באנד	5 הענריך היינעס: I
6 משה: א זאמעל-בוך.	6 II
7 הלל ציטלין: שריפטן I באנד	7 ז. שניאור: I
8 II	8 II
9 משה טייטש: I	9 ערווארד קופלנג: דאס בוך פֿון דער וויסע
10 II	10 י. שטיינבערג: שריפטן
11 י. ראָזענפֿעלד: און די שאַלע געסלאך	11 מ. סטאווסקי: אידליקע און בילדער
12 משה טייטש: III באנד ליעדער	12 ז. י. אנכי: צווישן הַאָל און קרד I באנד
13 פראָפֿ. לאַצאַרוס: ירמיהו הנביא	13 II
14—15 ז. י. אנכי: רב אבא	14 מאַקס נאָרדוי: אויסגעוועהלטע שריפטן I באנד
16—17 הלל ציטלין: דאָס פראָב-לעם פֿון גוטס און שלעכטס	15 II
18 יודישע געשיכטע: V באנד	16 יודישע געשיכטע: רעד. הלל ציטלין I באנד
19 הלל ציטלין: דאָס פראָבלעם פֿון גוטס און שלעכטס	17 מאַקס נאָרדוי: אויסגעוועהלטע שריפטן III באנד
20 שאַנטאַפֿי דעלאַסאַסי: געשיכטע פֿון גלויבען און רעליגיאָנען	18 ארטור שניצלער: שטערבען (א גרויסע ערצעהלונג)
21 יודישע געשיכטע: 6-ער באנד	19 י. מ. וויסענבערג: שריפטן III באנד (די וואַלד-מיידלע)
22—23 שאַנטאַפֿי דעלאַסאַסי: די געשטע פֿון גלויבען און רעליגיאָנען	20 ארטור שניצלער: שטערבען II באנד
24 יודישע געשיכטע: 7-ער באנד	21 יודישע געשיכטע: II
	22 י. מ. וויסענבערג: שריפטן III באנד
	23 י. מ. וויסענבערג: שריפטן III באנד
	24 י. מ. וויסענבערג: שריפטן III באנד

FIGURE 4. *Shimins groyse velt bibliyotek* (Szymin’s Great World Library), series title list, in Eliza Orzeszkowa, *Mirażela*, Warsaw: Shimin 1911, 195. Source: National Library of Israel

During 1907, a small Warsaw publishing house called *Algemeyne bibliyotek* (General Library) succeeded in publishing no fewer than 24 booklets, primarily translations from Russian. Significant in this project was a Polish-Russian-Yiddish dictionary, which was distributed in weekly installments.¹⁷ It was compiled by Ber Karlinski, a well-known author and journalist, who adapted various works into Yiddish for *Shimins groyse yelt bibliyotek* (Karliner 1911). Later it became evident that the dictionary contained serious errors and lacked any lexicographical value.

While publishers in Warsaw took advantage of the relatively comfortable conditions and vibrant book market during the first decade of the twentieth century, the short-lived Odessa publishing house Di Bin (The Bee) published short stories by Yiddish writers in a series titled *Di kleyne bibliyotek* (The Small Library, 1905). The series probably contained no more than four booklets.

Despite the growing competition in the Yiddish publishing sphere in Warsaw, in 1911 Eliyahu Gitlin opened a new publishing house and bookstore. To make his mark, he launched the *E. Gitlins folks-bibliyotek* (E. Gitlin's Popular-Library) of original and translated literary works. It seems that the initiative was successful, because a decade later, he had published 15 illustrated booklets for children, titled *Ilustrirte kinder bibliyotek* (Illustrated Children's Library, 1926). Most of the series issues were written by the Bundist educator and author Jacob Pat (1890–1966). Three years later, two issues related to judicial matters were published in Gitlin's *Yidische yuridische bibliyotek* (Yiddish, or Jewish Juridical Library), but in the following years, Gitlin focused on publishing Hebrew textbooks. His brand was still associated with Yiddish and Hebrew books in the 1930s, which makes it one of the few long-lasting Jewish publishers.¹⁸

Based on their shared financial interests, long-term acquaintance, and periods of professional collaboration, the publishing houses run by Ben-Avigdor, Lidski, Szymin, Mordekhai Kaplan, and Shlomoh Shreberk of Vilna were amalgamated under the name Tsentral or Merkaz (Center) in the summer of 1911 (Yakovovits 1997). A branch of that publishing house opened in New York later that year, and in the following year the partners signed a detailed agreement (May 31, 1912) to name Simon Druckerman of New York as the publishing company's distributor in North America.¹⁹ Tsentral did not publish *bibliyotekn* at that point but did distribute them through its network of bookstores in Poland.

17. The distributing of literary and other works in instalments was quite common, usually practiced by newspapers and periodical publications, either to attract new subscribers or to reward existing subscribers. In the case of the *Algemeyne bibliyotek*, the publishing house probably adopted this method to attract new subscribers.

18. See for example L. Shefer's *Limdu 'Ivrit* (Learn Hebrew; Warsaw 1934, 7th edition), designed for individual study or school setting. It was based on the Berlitz system of language learning and included a Hebrew-Yiddish-Polish-English-German dictionary.

19. The agreement is found in the Shreberk Archive.

Magnus Krinski (1863–1916), a well-known educator and editor in Warsaw, established a Hebrew publishing house titled *ha-’Or* (The Light, 1903) with a Yiddish division, *Bikher far ale* (Books for All, 1905; Figure 5). This initiative seems to have lasted longer than all other contemporaneous *bibliyotekn*. During its first year of existence, it produced more than 40 booklets, and dozens more appeared in the following years. From 1908, *Bikher far ale* also published books. In 1910, it launched the series *Groyse bibliyotek* (Large Library), issuing 14 volumes on a range of topics and in various genres before World War I.

The competition among publishers motivated Levi Levin-Epshtayn (1866–1938), who was known to issue both religious books and popular folktales, to offer Yiddish readers a new series: *Universal bibliyotek* (Universal Library, 1914). Most of the nine published booklets included a preface, the author’s biography, and occasionally the author’s portrait. The nine additional planned booklets never appeared due to the outbreak of the war.²⁰

Before emigrating to the United States in 1926, Shimon Yatshkovski founded a publishing house bearing his name (1923) and issued 10 booklets of original and translated works in his *Mozayik bibliyotek* (Mosaic Library, 1925). Yatshkoki employed two well-qualified translators, Shelomoh Sheynberg (1891–1942) and Mark Rakowsky (1890–1982).²¹ After Yatshkovski left for America, Rakowsky published his own series (*Bibliyotek Mark Rašovski*), from 1926 through the mid-1930s. It contained at least 30 translated books, many of them from the French. He even developed a sub-series of 11 booklets, *Kleyne bibliyotek* (Small Library), covering current affairs (1936). Shelomoh Sheynberg also managed a project initiated by the Yiddish writers’ PEN-Club



FIGURE 5. “A shtayk fun kábtsonim” (A baggers’ strike) by Mordecai Spector. *Bikher far ale* (Books for All) #21, Warsaw, 1905. Source: National Library of Israel

20. Levin-Epshtayn continued his activity in Warsaw until 1934, when he emigrated to the Land of Israel (Palestine) and joined his brother Eliyahu Zeev’s publishing business.

21. Translations constituted a significant portion of all books published in Yiddish (at least in Poland) in the 1920s (about 30 percent), but their proportion declined to 10–11 percent in the late 1930s, possibly due to an increase in foreign language literacy (Mayzel 1937, 1–2; based on “reliable accessible estimations” for 1936). See also *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny* 1936, 239; 1937, 326; 1938, 334; 1939, 344. The 1937 list of newly published books produced by *Ḳult-bukh* (Yiddishist book storage cooperative) included no translations at all. In the following year, only one translation was listed among the 39 new books published (*Bikher kaṭalog: Ḳooperativer bikher-lager “Ḳult-bukh”* [1939], 9–12.)

in Warsaw, *Yidishe universal bibliyotek* (Jewish, or Yiddish Universal Library), a series of some 60 volumes of renowned world literature (1934–1939). The Association of Jewish Writers and Journalists in Warsaw acknowledged and encouraged the project, at least initially. By mid-1938, it had already published 40 books that were distributed in over 100,000 copies (Association of Jewish Writers and Journalists 1934; Gelman 1938, 8).

NEWSPAPER-SPONSORED *BIBLIYOTEKN*

As soon as the popular Yiddish daily newspaper *Idishes tageblat* (Jewish Daily Paper) made its debut in Warsaw in May 1906, its energetic editor and publisher Shemu'el Ya'aqov Yatskan (1874–1936) started producing its companion series, *Hoyz bibliyotek* (Home Library). That 50-booklet series primarily offered works of popular science and history, with a small selection of belles-lettres and current affairs. Upon the completion of the series, the booklets were bound together and sold as volumes for the price of 1.5 rubles. Following the great success of his first newspaper, Yatskan launched another one, the well-known Warsaw *Haynt* (Today), which was published continuously between 1908 and 1939. Around 1910, Yatskan established the publishing house Yehudiyah, that published in collaboration with *Haynt* another series, *Familiyen bibliyotek* (Family Library, 1910–1914), of some 150 volumes. Most of the materials in the jointly published series were belles-lettres (about half of them by Sholem Aleichem) and the remainder were works of popular science and history. The issues were either distributed to the newspaper's subscribers or sold separately through Lidski's Progres publishing house and later by the Tsentral publishing house.²² Between 1913 and 1914, Yehudiyah published another series titled *Folks-universitet*, (People's University). The first issue was introduced with the intention to publish “a complete series of books that will encompass all [branches] of knowledge; everything that a cultured person needs to know” (Kotik 1913, 3). To meet that challenge, an editorial committee of experts was appointed that included the critic Baal-Makhshoves (Dr. Isidor Elyashev, 1873–1924), the Hebrew educator Cemach Feldshtein (1884–1944 or 1945; perished in a labor camp), and the engineer Isar Yosef ben Mosheh Ainhorn (1871–1925). By the outbreak of World War I, 19 booklets of 100–120 pages had appeared in the series.

Shabse Rapoport, editor of the first Yiddish daily newspaper in the Russian Empire, *Der fraynd* (The Friend), was inspired by Yatskan's success. The *Fraynd-bibliyotek* (Friend Library) was launched in 1911, after the editorial team of the newspaper was forced to leave St. Petersburg and move to Warsaw due to financial hardships. Despite their hope to increase the newspaper's sales, the project failed after only 12 booklets appeared, in installments of two booklets per month.

From January to March of 1910, the Zionist publisher and author Meir Jacob Freid (1871–1940) edited and published an illustrated weekly intended for the entire family, titled *Der shtrahl* (The

22. A few of the late issues of the *Familiyen bibliyotek* added New York as the place of publication, although that was not the case. See, for example, Sholem Aleichem's *Goles datshe* (1912).

Beam). Freid aspired to supplement each issue with a literary work in a separate booklet titled *Shṭrahl-bibliyotek*, however of the 50 booklets promoted in the advertisement (Beam Library; “Der shṭrahl” 1910), only two have been located.

During the early 1930s, cultural institutions such as the Yiddish PEN-Club and editors of literary journals embarked upon various enterprises to encourage the purchase of Yiddish books. Their efforts were met with limited success. An exceptional and outstanding project was the *Groshn bibliyotek* (The Penny Library), initiated by the daily *Haynt*. The series contained 64-page booklets that were disseminated in thousands of copies. Between 1931 and 1937, the *Haynt* published 275 numbered booklets. Without doubt, it was the most successful series published in Yiddish in interwar Poland in terms of duration, variety, and distribution.

BIBLIYOTEKŦN FOR CHILDREN

With a growing awareness of the need for modern Yiddish education in the first decade of the twentieth century, writers, cultural activists, publishers, and editors recognized the importance of Yiddish literature for children. The first such publications appeared close to the outbreak of World War I. In contrast with *bibliyotekŦn* for children that carried a clear political message (either socialist or Orthodox), the secular *bibliyotekŦn* contained fewer political undertones.

The well-known Vilna publisher Boris Kletskin (1875–1937) founded the first Yiddish children’s journal, *GrinŦke beymelekh* (Small Green Trees). At the same time, he introduced a children’s series titled *Ķinder bibliyotek* (Children’s Library), which was planned to include works by the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, Edmondo De Amicis, and others. Due to the outbreak of the war, however, Kletskin issued only three booklets, followed by several more published after the war (1919).

Another Vilna publisher, Shlomoh ShreberĶ (1876–1944), founded his own series for children, *Ķinder bibliyotek* (Children’s Library) just before World War I (Figure 6). It was also interrupted by the war, but ShreberĶ renewed the endeavor in 1919, and published 13 booklets. Notably, some of the texts in this series were authored by a woman writer,



FIGURE 6. “Dray matones” (Three presents), adapted for children by Isaac Leib Peretz, *Ķinder bibliyotek* (Children’s Library) #3, Vilna [1913/4?]. Source: National Library of Israel.

Sara Reisen (1885–1974). In 1932, Shreberk immigrated to the Land of Israel (Palestine), where he founded the Yizre’el publishing house and issued many children’s books and textbooks. After his death, his business was divided between his son Alexander, who continued to operate the Yizre’el firm, and his daughter Ida, who reestablished the Sh. Shreberk publishing house.

The Lodz writer Yosef Rayin (1890–1937) established a publishing company for children, *Far unzer yungyarg* (For Our Youth), in 1916. Between 1917 and 1921, he published his *Rayins ilustrirte kinder-bibliyotek* (Rayin’s Illustrated Children’s Library). In its first year, the series included five booklets in a variety of genres. In 1922, Rayin settled in the USSR. He continued to publish there until he was executed in 1937, during the Great Purges that targeted Yiddish culture and its agents. At the same time, the Vilna translator David Roykhel (1890–1941 or 1942) initiated his *Roykhels ilustrirte kinder-bibliyotek* (Roykhel’s Illustrated Children’s Library, 1917–1918), with seven booklets.

The postwar years were dedicated to intense efforts to establish a modern Yiddish school system in independent Poland (Kazdan 1947, 17–163). While *Ḳultur lige* was reorganizing in Warsaw and issuing textbooks suitable for all class levels, it also published *bibliyotekn* for young readers. Those quite remarkable initiatives enjoyed but little success. In 1920, the Warsaw publisher Y. Shiminovich launched his *Ḳinder bibliyotek* with probably no more than six issues. Under the same title, and perhaps as a continuation, the publishing house named Yidish started issuing its own series (1921–1922) with fourteen booklets, some authored by Sara Reisen and another woman writer, Rachel Shabad. In 1921, the short-lived Dineson School (named after the well-known Yiddish writer Jacob Dineson, 1856–1919), published six booklets in the *Yugnt bibliyotek* (Youth Library) series. The following year, Szymin’s publishing house also issued a series called *Yugnt bibliyotek* with 15 books and booklets of translated world literature under the editorship of the writer, translator, and editor, David Kassel (1881–1935). Kassel presented that series as the first attempt to provide the youth with “internal and external nice books,” containing both literary and scientific content, either translated or originally written in Yiddish (Rid 1921, back cover). A major advocate of Jewish children’s literature in Vilna was Solomon Bastomski (1891–1941). One of the founders of the modern Yiddish school system, Bastomski owned the *Di Naye Yidishe Folksshul* (The New Yiddish Primary School) publishing house, dedicated to children’s literature. He was also the editor of the long-running children’s journals *Grininke bey-melekh* (Little Green Trees) and *Der haver* (The Friend), and contributed—either as publisher or editor—to a series titled *Bibliyotek grininke beymelekh* (Little Green Trees Library, 1921–1939). The series included more than 70 booklets containing original and translated stories, folktales, songs, and plays (Bar-El 2006, 273–308). During the 1920s, Bastomski published and edited at

least three additional series with dozens of publications, in diverse fields and genres, appropriate for various reading levels and ages.²³

In 1936, a group of Yiddish teachers in Warsaw, headed by educator Mojsze Tajchman founded the publishing house *Kindersfraynd* (Children’s Friend), which issued a journal bearing the same name. Motivated to add new materials to the developing Yiddish literature for children, *Kindersfraynd* launched three series: *Bibliyotek A* for children and youth, with forty-nine booklets produced by March 1938; *Bibliyotek B* for toddlers, with the same number of booklets; and eight issues of *Muzikalische bibliyotek* (Musical Library). Most of those initiatives were targeted at a broad, nonpartisan audience.

CONCLUSION

The *bibliyotekn* reviewed in this article include 78 series of at least 1,585 issues, published in Eastern Europe between 1893 and 1939. Of this corpus, 39 percent were published prior to World War I, five percent between 1914 and 1918, and 56 percent in interwar Poland. In the prewar period, most of the *bibliyotekn* were published for a general audience. Half of the titles published in the interwar period were aimed at young readers, to encourage and foster a curious, intelligent, and involved community of Yiddish readers. Warsaw was the dominant place of publication (59 percent), followed by Vilna (22 percent)²⁴ and Lodz (six percent), mainly thanks to the publishing center of *Beyš Yankev*.

The study of Yiddish *bibliyotekn* in Eastern Europe reveals numerous trends. Clearly, editors and publishers took an interest in producing texts that appealed to the literary tastes of the reading public and perhaps even attempted to influence them. Publishing in the dynamic Yiddish book market required entrepreneurs to consider the readers’ level of education and their social class in the context of political, economic, and cultural values. The two major factors that determined the content of the publications were ideological considerations and commercial interests. Quite often the two overlapped, and there was generally an inverse relationship between the quality of the literature published and the expected profits. Therefore, despite the original objective of the *bibliyotekn* project to disseminate highbrow literature, publishers found it difficult to survive when competing with the literature of Hassidic hagiographies, romantic tales, or fantastic novels. Publishing *bibliyotekn* may have been less risky in the short term but it required a long-

23. The series *Kinders literatur* (Children’s Literature) published in Vilna 28 booklets between 1918 and 1926. *Bibliyotek far yingere kinder* (Library for Young Children) and *Bibliyotek far elttere kinder* (Library for Older Children), both there in the years 1923–1924 with 32 booklets in the first series and 21 in the other. *Yugnt bibliyotek “haver”* (Youth Library “[the] Friend”), 1924–1927 with 25 booklets.

24. Quite similar proportions can be viewed regarding named publishers (64 percent from Warsaw and 24 percent from Vilna) and editors (65 percent from Warsaw and 31 percent from Vilna).

term commitment from consumers. Although a broad range of Yiddish *bibliyotekn* appeared on the market, only those publishers with significant financial backing—such as Lidski, Szymin, Yatskan, and later publishers of the *Haynt* newspaper (as a cooperative and not as an independent enterprise)—could maintain their businesses. Cultural and educational institutions supported by political movements, such as *Ḳultur lige* and *Beyṣ Yankev*, had better chances of surviving the competition. The *he-Ḥaluts* Zionist movement was an outlier in this regard, as it published Hebrew books. As an independent publisher, Solomon Bastomski may be seen as an exceptional example of success from the early years of the twentieth century through the mid-1920s.

Hundreds of Jewish libraries existed in the Pale of Settlement and later in the Second Polish Republic (Cohen 2002b; 2023, 288–349). Their budgets were so limited that every purchase of new materials necessitated careful review. Because most libraries did not publish activity reports or statistics, it is impossible to locate data about *bibliyotekn* in library collections, but there is no reason to assume they were excluded, either as single publications or as full runs (Cohen 2002b). Among the 1,800 Yiddish titles listed in a sample catalog of recommended books for public libraries, assembled by the library department of *Ḳultur lige* (*Dos Yidishe bukh* 1929), many were published prior to World War I or originated in New York. It is unknown how many libraries accepted these recommendations and to what extent. Many *bibliyotekn* were thin publications printed on poor-quality paper that could easily deteriorate—doubtless another important consideration in collection development. The booklets were occasionally bound together—even if they were not part of the same series—and cataloged as “bound-with” books (Rauchfleisch and Weiss 1929, 20). Moreover, since *bibliyotekn* were directed toward young readers in the interwar period, they were distributed in schools and collected in school libraries, which may have affected acquisition decisions in public libraries. Regrettably, it is difficult to discern the circulation and reception of these series because the libraries and their catalogs were destroyed in the Holocaust.

SOURCES

PRIMARY SOURCES

“Association of Jewish Writers and Journalists.” 1934. *Der moment*, October 12, 8. [advertisement]

Ben-Avigdor. 1891. *Le’ah mokheret ha-dagim* [Leah the fish seller]; see *Me-rehov ha-Yehudim: (temunot, tsiyurim ve-sipurim me-“Rehov ha-Yehudim”ba-‘yir N be-Erets Ruminiya)* #1. Varshe: Bi-defus ha-aḥim Shuldberg.

Bikher-qaṭalog: Ḳooperatiyer bikher-lager “Ḳult-bukh.” 1939. Varshe: Ḳult-bukh.

Brodoyski, Gregory. 1914. *Di geshikhṭe fun Erets Yiśro’el*. Odessa: Ferlag Tsiyenistishe ḳopiḳe bibliyotek.

“Der shtrahl.” 1910. *Der fraynd*, 8 April, 5. [advertisement]

Dos Yidishe bukh: muster katalog far folksbibliyotekn. 1929. Varshe: Kultur Lige.

Ehrmann, Naftoli Hertz. 1929. *Pedagogische ophandlungen.* Varshe: Yeshurun.

Fir yor arbët un kamf: algemayner sakhakl. 1929. Varshe: Tsentral komitet fun yugnt bund Tsukunft.

Gelman, Barukh. 1938. “Fertsik bikher ‘Yidishe uniwersal bibliyotek,’” *Foroys* 3, 8.

Kantorovits, P. 1907. *Di ershte yedies` fun magnetizm un elektritsitet.* Varshe: Yavne, 31.

Karliner, B. [Ber Karlinski]. 1911. *Fremd-verterbukh.* Varshe: Ferlag B. Szymin.

Kotik, Avraham-Hersh. 1913. *Di ershte yedies` fun natuyvisenshaft. Folks-univerzitet*, Vol. 1. Varshe: Ferlag “Yehudiyah.”

Mały Rocznik Statystyczny [Concise statistical yearbook of Poland]. 1936–1939. Warszawa: Nakładem Głównego Urzędu Statystycznego.

Mayzel, Nachman. 1937. “Di Yidishe literatur in 1936.” *Literarishe bleter* 1: 1–2.

Rauchfleisch, I. and Dr. Leyzer Weiss. 1929. *Hantbukh far bibliyotekn.* Varshe: A. Shklyar.

Reclus, Élisée. 1906. “Der hungeriker.” #10. Varshe: Kleyne folks-bibliyotek

Reid, Mayne. 1921. *Yaldkinder* [The forest children; Yiddish translation of *The Bush Boys*], translated by G. Shtayn. Varshe: B. Szymin.

Shreberk Archive. National Library of Israel (unnumbered).

“Shyues` bukh.” *Folks-bibliyotek Yavne.* 1938. [Varshe]: Folks bibliyotek Yavne.

Yashunski, Yosef. 1929. “Naturvisnshaftlekhe bikher-seryes.” *Bikher velt* 1: 22–37.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Bar-El, Adina. 2006. *Ben ha-`etsim ha-yerakrakim: itone yeladim be-Yidish uve-`Ivrit be-Polin, 1918–1939* [Under the little green trees: Yiddish and Hebrew children’s periodicals in Poland, 1918–1939]. Mekhon Dov Sadan: Hotsa’at ha-Sifriyah ha-Tsiyonit. [Hebrew]

- Bieńkowska, Barbara, and Halina Chamerska. 1990. *Books in Poland: Past and Present*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Brooks, Jeffrey. 1978. "Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era." In *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800–1914*, edited by William Mills Todd III, 97–150. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Brooks, Jeffrey. 1985. *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861–1917*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Chartier, Roger. 1987. *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*. Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Chartier, Roger. 1994. *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Cohen, Hagit. 2006. *Ba-ḥanuto shel mokher ha-sefarim: ḥanuyot sefarim yehudiyot be-mizrah Eropah ba-maḥatsit ha-sheniyah shel ha-me'ah ha-tesha'-'esreh* [At the bookseller's shop: the Jewish book trade in Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth century]. Yerushalayim: Hotsa'at sefarim 'a.sh. Y.L. Magnes Press. [Hebrew]
- Cohen, Hagit. 2016. *Nifla'ot ba-'olam he-ḥadash: sefarim ye-kor'im be-Yidish be-Artsot ha-Berit, 1890–1940* [Wonders of the new world: books and readers in Yiddish in the United States, 1890–1940]. Ra'anana: ha-Universitah ha-petuhah. [Hebrew]
- Cohen, Nathan. 1995. "ha-'Itonut bola'at et ha-sifrut: le-verur ma'arekhet ha-yaḥasim ben sofrim ve-'itona'im kotve Yidish be-Polin ben shete milḥamot ha-'olam" ["The press is swallowing up our literature": the relationship between Yiddish authors and journalists in Poland during the interwar period"]. *Qeshet* 18: 87–92. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23913577> [Hebrew]
- Cohen, Nathan. 2002a. "The Jews of Independent Poland: Linguistic and Cultural Changes." In *Starting the Twenty-First Century: Sociological Reflections & Challenges*, edited by Ernest Krausz and Gitta Tulea, 161–75. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Cohen, Nathan. 2002b. "Sifriyot Yehudiyot ye-kor'eihen be-Polin ben shete milḥamot ha-'olam" [Jewish libraries in interwar Poland and their readers]. *Zion* 67 (2): 163–88. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23564527> [Hebrew]
- Cohen, Nathan. 2003. *Sefer, sofer ye-'iton: Merkaz ha-tarbut ha-Yehudit be-Varshah, 1918–1942* [Books, writers and newspapers: the Jewish cultural center in Warsaw, 1918–1942]. Yerushalayim: Hotsa'at sefarim 'a.sh. Y.L. Magnes. [Hebrew]

- Cohen, Nathan. 2008. “The Yiddish Press and Yiddish Literature: A Fertile but Complex Relationship.” *Modern Judaism* 28 (2): 149–72. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30130943>.
- Cohen, Nathan. 2017. “I. L. Peretz’s Part in the Warsaw Yiddish Publishing Arena.” In *The Trilingual Literature of Polish Jews from Different Perspectives: In Memory of I.L. Peretz*, edited by Alina Molisak and Shoshana Ronen, 254–267. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Cohen, Nathan. 2023. *Yiddish Transformed: Reading Habits in the Russian Empire, 1860–1914*. New York, NY : Berghahn Books.
- Cohen, Nathan. Forthcoming. “Yiddish Publishing Strategies in Eastern Europe (1880–1914).”
- Cohen, Tova, and Shmuel Feiner. 2006. *Ḳol ‘almah ‘Ivriyah: kitve nashim maškilot ba-me’ah ha-tesha ‘-‘eśreh*. Tel Aviv: ha-Ḳibuts ha-me’uḥad.
- Eisenstein, Miriam. 1950. *Jewish Schools in Poland, 1919–39: Their Philosophy and Development*. New York: King’s Crown Press.
- Elyashevich, Dmitrii. 2008. “A Note on the Jewish Press and Censorship during the First Russian Revolution.” In *The Revolution of 1905 and Russia’s Jews*, edited by Stefani Hoffman and Ezra Mendelsohn, 49–54. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Frost, Shimon. 1998. *Schooling as a Socio-Political Expression*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University.
- Gilboa, Menucha. 1991. *ha-Mahalakh he-ḥadash umi-ḥutsah lo ba-sifrut ha-‘Ivrit*. Tel-Aviv: The Katz Research Institute for Hebrew Literature.
- Goldshmidt, A. I. 1918. “Yehoshua Meyzakh.” In *Vilner zamelbukh*, edited by Cemakh Shabad, vol. 2, 192–202. Vılna: n.p.
- Goldstein, Eric L. 2014. “A Taste of Freedom: American Yiddish Publications in Imperial Russia.” In *Transnational Traditions: New Perspectives on American Jewish History*, edited by Ava F. Kahn and Adam D. Mendelsohn, 105–39. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Holtzman, Avner. 2013. “‘Shalem ashalem lahem be‘ad yetsire ruḥam be-khesef male’: Al hula-deta shel ha-sifrut ha-‘Ivrit kema‘arekhet kalkalit.” *Ot* 3: 21–41. [Hebrew]
- Jazdon, Artur. 1997. *Wielkopolskie serie wydawnicze do 1945 roku*. Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza.

- Kagan, Berl. 1986. *Leḥsiḥon fun Yidish shraybers*. New York: Rayah Ilman-Kagan.
- Kazdan, Ḥayyim Solomon. 1947. *Di geshikhte fun Yidishn shulyezn in umophengiḡn Poyln*. Mexico: Gezelshaft ḡultur un hilf.
- Kołodziejska, Jadwiga. 1967. *Publiczne biblioteki samorzędowe w okresie międzywojennym*. Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Bibliotekarzy Polskich.
- Kostecki, Janusz. 1992. “Ruch Wydawniczy.” In *Słownik Literaturi Polskiej XX wieku*, 970–85. Wrocław: Ossolineum.
- Lefon-Kandelshein, Esther. 2005. “‘Sifre agorah’: Sifrut yafah meḡorit u-modernit be-‘Ivrit be-mizraḡ Eropah (1891–1896).” *Gal‘ed* 24: 115–44.
- Lunski, Ḥayḡl. 1937. “Vilner bibliyofiln, mokhre-seforim un pakntreger.” *Fun noentn over* 4: 295.
- Martuszevska, Anna. 1992. “Literatura obiegów popularnych.” In *Słownik Literatury Polskiej XX Wieku*, edited by Alina Brodzka et al., 577–87. Wrocław: Ossolineum.
- Minkov, N. B. 1945. “Maḡerialn un noḡitsn.” *YIVO bleter* 25: 442–65.
- Miron, Dan. 1987. *Bodedim be-mo‘adam: li-dyoḡanah shel ha-republiḡah ha-sifrutit ha-‘Ivrit bi-teḡilat ha-me‘ah ha-‘eśrim* [When loners come together: a portrait of Hebrew literature at the turn of the twentieth century]. Tel Aviv: Am oved. [Hebrew]
- Moss, Kenneth B. 2009. *Jewish Renaissance in the Russian Revolution*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Outram, Dorinda. 1995. *The Enlightenment*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ruud, Charles A. 1990. *Russian Entrepreneur: Publisher Ivan Sytin of Moscow, 1851–1934*. Montreal; Buffalo: McGill-Queen’s University Press.
- Shaked, Gershon. 1977. *ha-Siporet ha-‘Ivrit, 1880–1970*, vol. 1: Ba-golah [Hebrew narrative fiction, 1880–1980, vol. 1: diaspora]. Yerushalayim: Ha-Ḳibuts ha-me‘uḡad and Keter.
- Shalhav, Shulamit. 1994. “mi-Kayanot le-ma‘aśim: Pereḡ rishon be-toldot ha-molut ha-‘Ivrit ha-ḡilonit ha-modernit.” MA diss., Tel Aviv University.

Stuart, Mary. 1998. “‘The Ennobling Illusion’: The Public Library Movement in Late Imperial Russia.” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 76 (3): 401–40.

Turniansky, Chava. 2016. “Yiddish Literature: Yiddish Literature before 1800.” *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. Accessed July 27, 2023. https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Yiddish_Literature/Yiddish_Literature_before_1800.

Veidlinger, Jeffrey. 2009. *Jewish Public Culture in the Late Russian Empire*. Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Volkner, Katrin. 2010. “Bildung for Sale: Karl Robert Langewiesche’s Blaue Bücher and the Business of ‘Reading-Up.’” In *Publishing Culture and the “Reading Nation”: German Book History in the Long Nineteenth Century*, edited by Lynne Tatlock, 251–70. Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House.

Wagner, David Paul. 2005–2023. “Publishing History, Penny Popular Novels (The Masterpiece Library).” Accessed July 11, 2023. <https://www.publishinghistory.com/penny-popular-novels-masterpiece-library-review-of-reviews.html>.

Waller, Philip. 2006. *Writers, Readers, & Reputations: Literary Life in Britain 1870–1918*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Yakovovits, Bernard. 1997. “‘Aśot ve-ḥafets sefarim harbeh: Le-toldoteha shel Hotsa’at sefarim ‘Tsentral’ be-Varshah, 1911–1933.” MA diss., Universiṭat Tel-Aviv.

Title	Year	Number of Issues	Editor	Publisher	Place of publication
Algemyne bibliyotek	1906–1907	24		Algemyne	Warsaw
Arbeter bibliyotek	1918	6		Poyle Tsiyen	Lublin, Warsaw
Arbeter bibliyotek	1924	1		Poyle Tsiyen	Lublin, Warsaw
Arbeter tsaytung bibliyotek	1933–1934	2	Tsuker, M.	Arbeter tsaytung	Warsaw
Bibliyotek A	1936–1938	49	Taykman, Mosheh	Kinderfraynd	Warsaw
Bibliyotek B	1936–1938	49	Taykman, Mosheh	Kinderfraynd	Warsaw
Bibliyotek dos lebn	1904–1905	20	Rosental, Eliezer David	Ariel	Odessa
Bibliyotek far eltere kinder	1923–1904	21	Bastomski, Solomon	Naye yidishe	Vilna
Bibliyotek far kolonistn un gertner	1900–1901	3	Veler, Mark	Vilna	
Bibliyotek far yingere kinder	1923–1904	32	Bastomski, Solomon	Naye yidishe folksshul	Vilna
Bibliyotek gezunt un lebn	1930–1931	2	Der doktor		Warsaw
Bibliyotek grininke beyemelekh	1921–1939	70	Bastomski, Solomon	Tsentrale yidishe shul organizatsye/ Naye yidishe folksshul/ Naye yidishe shul	Vilna
Bibliyotek Mark Raḳovski	1926–1930s	40	Raḳovski, Mark	Bibliyotek Mark Raḳovski	Warsaw
Bikher far ale	1905–1914	50	Ḳrinski, Magnus	Bikher far ale	Warsaw

Year	Number of Issues	Editor	Publisher	Place of publication
Di kleyne bibliyotek	1905	4		Odessa
Di naye bibliyotek	1903-1905	7		Lurye, Yosef St. Petersburg
E. Gitlins folks-bibliyotek	1911-1912	2	Gitlin, Eliyahu	E. Gitlins folks-bibliyotek Warsaw
Eyropaishe literatur	1910-1914	39	Reisen, Abraham	Progres Warsaw
Familyen bibliyotek	1909-1914	150	Yatskan, Shemu'el Ya'aqov	Haynt Warsaw
Folks-bibliyotek Yavne	1938-1939	12	Shapiro, David (pen name: Yehudah Yefet)	Haohela Warsaw
Folks-universitet	1913-1914	19	Baal-Makhshoves (Dr. Isidor Elyashev)	Yehudiyah Warsaw
Frayhayt bibliyotek	1927-1928	4		Frayhayt Warsaw
Fraynd-bibliyotek	1911	12	Rapoport, Shabse?	Der Fraynd Warsaw
Groshn bibliyotek	1931-1937	275		Haynt Warsaw
Groyse bibliyotek	1910-1914	14	Krinski, Magnus	Bikher far ale Warsaw
he-Haluts ha-tsa'ir bibliyotek, he-Haluts bibliyotek, he-Haluts groshn bibliyotek, Bibliyotek fun he-Haluts ha-medinati	1928-1934	10		he-Haluts Warsaw
Higyenishe bibliyotek	1901-1902	2	Yeynin, Dr. M.	Yitshak Pirozhnikoy/ Di Tsayt Vilna, Warsaw
Higyenishe bibliyotek	1928	18	Schabad, Z.	TOZ Vilna (Warsaw)
Hoyz bibliyotek	1906-1909	50	Yatskan, Shemu'el Ya'aqov	Idishes tageblat Warsaw
Humoristishe bibliyotek	1912-1913	3	Babitski Brothers	M.G. Sapir? Vilna
Ilustrirte kinder bibliyotek	1921	15	Pat, Jacob?	E. Gitlin Warsaw
Ilustrirte popular-visnshaftlekhe meditsinishe bibliyotek "folksgezunt"	1934	4	Schabad, Z.?	Folksgezunt Vilna
Internatsyonale bibliyotek	1905-1906	18		Internatsyonale bibliyotek Vilna
Kinder bibliyotek	1919-1921	13		Shreberk Vilna
Kinder bibliyotek	1920	6		Shimovich, Y. Warsaw
Kinderbibliyotek	1921-1922	14		Yidish Warsaw
Kinder bibliyotek	1914	3	Kletskin, Boris?	Boris Kletskin Vilna
Kinder bibliyotek	1914	13	Shlomo Shreberk	Boris Kletskin/ Shlomo Shreberk Vilna
Kinder bibliyotek	1929	3		Ertziehung and Beyß Yankev Zhurnal Lodz
Kinder literatur	1918-1926	28	Bastomski, Solomon	Naye yidishe folksshul Vilna
Klasiker bibliyotek far yugnt	1921, 1923	2		Kultur lige Warsaw
Kleyne bibliyotek	1936	11	Rakovsky, Mark?	Bibliyotek Mark Rakovsky Warsaw
Kleyne ertseylungen	1893-1894	6	Goydo, Yitshak	Yitshak Goydo Vilna
Kleyne folks-bibliyotek	1904-1906	10	Lidski, Ya'aqov	Progres Warsaw
Mozayik bibliyotek	1925	10	Yatshkovski, Shimon	Shimon Yatshkovski? Warsaw
Muzikalishe bibliyotek	1937-1908	8	Taykhman, Mosheh	Kinderfraynd Warsaw

Title	Year	Number of Issues	Editor	Publisher	Place of publication
Peretz bibliyotek	1923-1904	4	Mayzel, Nachman and	Peretz bibliyotek	Warsaw
Pirozhnikoy's bibliyotek barimte ertseylungen	1900	12	Pirozhnikoy, Yitshak	Yitshak Pirozhnikoy	Vilna
Populere zhargon bibliyotek	1907-1908	17	Mezah, Yehoshu'a	L. Epel & P. Garber	Vilna
Propaganda bibliyotek far Beys Yankev un bnoš-agudeš-yisroel	1930	10		Beys Yankev Zhurnal	Lodz
Rayins ilustrirte kinder bibliyotek	1917-1921	5	Rayin, Yosef	Far unzer yungyarg	Lodz
Roykhels ilustrirte kinder-bibliyotek	1917-1918	7	Roykhel, David		Vilna
Shimins groyse velt bibliyotek	1909	66	Szymin, B.	B. Szymin	Warsaw
Shtrahl-bibliyotek	1910	2	M.Y. Freyd	Shtrahl	Warsaw
Shul bibliyotek	1921-1930	32		Kultur lige	Warsaw
Skif bibliyotek	1938	6		Skif bibliyotek	Warsaw
Sotsyalistishe yugnt bibliyotek	1927-1936	17		Tsukunft (Bund)	Warsaw
Tashen bibliyotek	1930	1		Beys Yankev Zhurnal	Lodz
Tsayt bibliyotek	1905-1906	8		B. Szymin	Warsaw
Tsienistishe-sotsyalistishe bibliyotek	1921-1922	3		Bafrayung	Warsaw
Tsiyenistishe bibliyotek	1903	4	Ben-Avigdor	Folksbildung (Tushiyah)	Warsaw-Cracow
Tsiyenistishe bibliyotek	1932-1933	12		Tsiyenistishe bibliyotek	Vilna
Tsiyenistishe kopike bibliyotek	1907-1914	37		Yosef Sapir	Odessa
Tsukermans folks bibliyotek	1898-1900	4	Tsukerman, Lazar (Eli'ezer)	Lazar (Eli'ezer) Tsukerman	Warsaw
Undzer bibliyotek far kinder un yugnt	1931-1932	9		Beys Yankev	Lodz
Visenshaftlikhe folks-bibliyotek	1907	6	Kantorovits, P.	Yavne	Warsaw
Visenshaftlikhe bibliyotek: der veg tsum yisn	1926	2	Reis, Meir	Meir Reis	Warsaw
Visenshaftlikhe folks bikher	1894-1896	7	Kotik, Avraham-Hersh	Avraham-Hersh Kotik and Alter Bresler	Warsaw
Yachkovskis popular-yisnshafklikhe bibliyotek	1929-1931	20	Yachkovski, Yosef	Yosef Yachkovski	Warsaw
Yeshurun bibliyotek	1929	2		Yeshuron	Warsaw
Yidishe bibliyotek	1906	5		Yosef Lurye	St. Petersburg
Yidishe universal bibliyotek	1934-1939	60	Sheynberg, Shelomoh	Yidishe universal bibliyotek	Warsaw
Yidishe yuridishe bibliyotek	1928-1928	2	E. Gitlin		Warsaw
Yudisher teater-bibliyotek	1907	13	Kantorovits, P.	Yavne	Warsaw
Yugnt bibliyotek	1921	6		Dineson shul farlag	Warsaw
Yugnt bibliyotek	1921-1922	15	David Kassel	B. Szymin	Warsaw
Yugnt bibliyotek "khaver"	1924-1927	25	Bastomski, Solomon	Naye yidishe folksshul	Vilna
Zayt Gezund	1899-1903	12	Gotlieb, Dr. Meir	Lazar (Eli'ezer) Tsukerman	Warsaw