Pathfinder Series

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Where does one begin to search for a response to a reference question in a field with which you are unfamiliar? Your access to guides, handbooks or bibliographies may be limited by your own collection, your location, or not knowing whom to contact or where to begin.

In response to the needs of librarians, Judaica Librarianship initiates a Pathfinder Series, a guide to reference tools and sources. Each Pathfinder explores a different subject area. It offers a guide to and through the literature in the field—from introductory and survey articles, major texts, handbooks, encyclopedias, dictionaries, bibliographies (published separately or as articles), indexes, and journals—to societies associated with the field, reports, non-print materials, and the names of major research collections. In short, it enables one to identify all the indispensable sources from basic to technical works in a given field.

After publication in Judaica Librarianship, each Pathfinder will be available as part of a series of AJL publications. All readers are invited to prepare Pathfinders in subject areas in which they have expertise. Contact the Vice-President of the R & S or SSC Division of AJL for a set of guidelines.

As the first in this series, Judaica Librarianship Contributing Editor for the Responsa column, Zachary Baker, presents a Pathfinder on Yiddish Studies.

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Yiddish Studies Pathfinder

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Scope

Yiddish Studies encompasses the Yiddish language and its literature, along with such related areas as folklore, theater, and press. Yiddish is a fusion language composed of elements deriving from Middle High German, Hebrew, Aramaic, and several Slavic languages. Spoken by 10,000,000 Ashkenazi Jews at the outbreak of World War II, its history can be traced back to the era of the Crusades. At present, between two and three million people speak or understand Yiddish.

Yiddish literature, which had its origins during the Italian Renaissance, flourished during the half century leading up to the calamitous Holocaust period, producing such noted writers as Mendele Moykher Sforim (Sholem-Yankev Abramovitsh), I. L. Peretz, Sholom Aleichem (S. Rabinovitsh), and the Nobel Prize-winning storyteller Isaac Bashevis Singer. In recent years, Yiddish courses have been offered on many university campuses, and the stature of Yiddish Studies has grown apace with this rise in academic interest. Included in this Pathfinder are essential resources in both Yiddish and English, with the stress laid, however, on materials available in English.

Materials dealing with the various aspects of Yiddish Studies are listed in library catalogs under the following headings (arranged in logical order):

Yiddish language
Yiddish philology
Yiddish literature
Yiddish drama
Yiddish fiction
Yiddish letters
Yiddish orations
Yiddish poetry
Yiddish wit and humor
Authors, Yiddish
Yiddish imprints
Almanacs, Yiddish
Yiddish newspapers
Theater, Yiddish
Yiddish songs

Introductions to the various aspects of Yiddish Studies appear in the Encyclopaedia Judaica (Jerusalem: Keter Press, 1972). See the following articles:

"Yiddish language," by Uriel Weinreich;
"Yiddish literature," by Chone Shmeruk;
"Theater," subsection "Yiddish theater," by Alfred Abraham Greenbaum;
"Press," by various authors.

The EJ also includes biographies of many Yiddish writers and personalities. Always consult the index (vol. 1) before searching the other volumes for a topic. Articles include bibliographic references.

Major Works in Yiddish Studies include the following:

A. Yiddish language.


An exhaustive study of the history of Yiddish, including the text, but excluding the footnotes and bibliography contained in the Yiddish original: (Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh. New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1973. 4 vols.) The 99-page index includes all Yiddish words mentioned in the text and constitutes a guide to romanized Yiddish and a key to Yiddish etymological data.


A concise and sophisticated overview of Yiddish.


Scholarly articles on Yiddish, in English. Vol. 1 includes bibliographies of works by Sholom Aleichem and I. L. Peretz in English translation. Vols. 2 and 3 were published at The Hague: Mouton; vol. 4 was published in Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues (ISHI).

Essays, mainly in English, though some are in Yiddish.

**B. Yiddish Literature.**

1) History of Yiddish literature.


Historical survey. The author has also written *The flowering of Yiddish literature* (New York: Yoseloff, 1963) and *The maturing of Yiddish literature* (New York: Jonathan David, 1970).


Concise historical survey.


Includes extensive discussion of early and modern Yiddish literature.


Authoritative history of Jewish literature in various languages, from early medieval times to the 19th-century Russian-Jewish Haskalah. Vol. 7 (vol. 6 of the original Yiddish edition: *Di geshikhte fun der literatur bay yidn*) is devoted to Old Yiddish literature.

2) Bio-bibliographical dictionaries of Yiddish authors.


Though dated, still in many ways the authoritative bio-bibliographical work.


Unlike Reyzen's later *Leksikon*, this one includes pre-modern Yiddish writers, plus a list of contemporaneous Yiddish periodicals.

3) Bio-bibliographies of individual Yiddish authors.


Numerous bibliographies of works about (though not by) individual Yiddish writers were compiled by Ephim H. Jeshurin. These are indexed in Shlomo Shunam's *Bibliography of Jewish bibliographies* (cited below).

**C. Yiddish folklore.**


Contains a rich selection of material from Yiddish sources, including folk tales, songs, and anecdotes.


Lists books and articles in various languages.

**D. Yiddish theater and film.**


Historical overview of Yiddish cinema.


A useful one-volume guide to the Yiddish stage.


Biographical lexicon of Yiddish actors, directors, and playwrights. Vol. 2 published in Warsaw, vols. 5 and 6 in Mexico. Caution: Only vols. 1 and 2 are in alphabetical order (other vols. are individually indexed). Vol. 5 is devoted to Yiddish stage personalities who perished during the Holocaust.

**E. Yiddish songs and folk music.**


See "Topical index" for entries: Badkhen; Eastern Europe; Folksongs: Yiddish; Folksongs: Yiddish, Collections of; Folk songs: Yiddish and Hebrew, Collections of; Klezmer; Yiddish popular songs;
Yiddish theater music. See also individual names in that index and in the "Author index."


Includes song texts in Yiddish and in romanization, along with English summaries of songs. Special section of songs by Mordecai Gebirtig.


Representative selection of Yiddish folk songs, with romanizations and English translations of song texts (Yiddish song texts also provided).


Topical overview of the history and development of Yiddish folk music, with abundant samples of songs and an extensive bibliography.


Dated, but still invaluable. See chapters in Section 1 (Literature): Badchonim; Klezmonim; Folk music; Jewish musicians; and in Section 2 (Music): Vocal music; Dramatic music; Folk music; Songs of the working classes; Music for children; Recorded music.


Comprehensive collection of Yiddish folk songs. Introduction by Abba Kovner and song texts in English, Yiddish and Hebrew (song texts also given in romanization). Includes songs in the following categories: Love songs; Cradle songs; Family songs; Weddings and festivals; Humor and satire; Hassidic songs; Multi-lingual songs; Poverty, toil and deprivation; Jewish soldiers' songs; Struggle and resistance songs; Ghetto and partisan songs; Religious and national songs; Homeward to Zion.


Includes 57 Yiddish theater songs, with English summaries.

E. Yiddish press.

The Jewish press that was: accounts, evaluations and memories of Jewish papers in pre-Holocaust Europe. Editorial board: David Flinker, Shalom Rosenfeld, Mordechai Tzarin; editor of English edition: Ari Bar. Tel Aviv, World Federation of Jewish Journalists, 1980.


Survey of published literature on the Jewish press world-wide, including many references to the Yiddish press.

Yiddish-language Dictionaries include the following:


4 vols. of a projected 13 have appeared so far, covering the letter alef. The "dictionnaire of record" for Yiddish.


Yiddish thesaurus, to some extent modeled on Roget. Includes synonyms, idioms, and proverbs.

Spivak, Charles David; Yehoash (Solomon Bloomgarden). Idish vertebukh (Yiddish dictionary; containing all the Hebrew and Chaldaic elements of the Yiddish language, illustrated with proverbs and idiomatic expressions). New York: Yehoash, 1911.22

Dictionary of the yoshn-koydesh component of Yiddish.


This tri-lingual dictionary includes the largest number of Yiddish words of any Yiddish-English dictionary. A reprint edition, with a new introduction by Prof. Dovid Katz, is scheduled to be published in Sept. 1987 (Schocken: YIVO).


The most up-to-date dictionary of its kind, and an authority on the standard language.


Contains over 8,500 Yiddish words and phrases in transliteration and English translation.

Study Aids for learning Yiddish include the following:


Basic introductory grammar.


Intended for students who have concluded a basic Yiddish course using College Yiddish.


Emphasizes oral expression; intended for beginners.

Yiddish-language Encyclopedias include the following works:


Begun as a general encyclopedia in Yiddish, of which 5 vols. (covering most of the first two letters of the Yiddish alphabet) were published. These were followed by 7 vols. on strictly Jewish topics, all of which (along with vol. 5 of the alphabetic set) were published in New York: Central Yiddish Culture Organization (CYCO).


The only complete encyclopedia in Yiddish; invaluable for its treatment of Jewish religious topics.

General Bibliographical Resources not to be overlooked include the following:


A comprehensive list of bibliographies covering all branches of Judaic scholarship, including Yiddish language, literature, theater, folklore, and press. Exhaustively indexed.
Since these two booklists were published, many works have been translated from Yiddish into English. Most of these are included in the section, "Yiddish literature," in *The Reader’s adviser*. 13th ed. New York: R. R. Bowker, 1986.  
In 2 parts: 100 years of Yiddish literature; Bibliography of Jewish education and pedagogy.  
Miller, David Neal. "Yiddish." With the editorial help of Yungtruf. In: *The third Jewish catalog: creating community*. Published for the Association for the Advancement of Jewish Culture; Bibliography of Jewish education and pedagogy.  
Prager, Leonard. *Jeshurin, Ephim H.*  
Useful introduction to available Yiddish resources.  
A valuable guide to two often neglected genres: serials and zamlbikher.  
Comprehensive bibliography of all periodicals and original monographic works in Yiddish and Hebrew, published in the Soviet Union from 1917 to 1960. Excludes translations into Yiddish and reprints of non-Soviet Yiddish literature. Arranged by subject, with author and title indexes.  
Annual list of new Yiddish books published worldwide.  
Journal articles and other literature on Yiddish Studies can be found by checking the following INDEXES:  
Annual index to Judaica journal literature, beginning coverage with 1966. Several Yiddish journals are among those scanned; includes separate headings for Yiddish literature.  
**Index to Jewish periodicals.** Vol. 1–3. Cleveland, June 1983–.  
Semi-annual index to current Judaica periodicals in English.  
**MLA international bibliography of books and articles on the modern languages and literatures.** Vol. 1–3. New York: The Modern Language Association, 1921–.  
Yiddish language and literature have been included since 1951. Available for on-line searching through DIALOG.  
Current JOURNALS in the field of Yiddish include the following:  
*Di goldene keyt*. no. 1–3 Tel Aviv, 1949–1956.  
Edited by poet Abraham Sutzkever, this is the premier literary journal to have appeared in Yiddish since World War II.  
*Sovetish heymland*. Moscow, 1982–.  
Though often brimming with tendentious propaganda, this monthly journal contains important works of belles-lettres and criticism.  
The oldest continually published Yiddish periodical.  
Devoted primarily to Yiddish literary research and criticism. Appears irregularly.  
The following LIBRARIES contain important research collections in the field of Yiddish and Yiddish language and literature:  
YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (formerly: Yiddish Scientific Institute—YIVO; Yiddish name: Yidisher visnshaftkeher institut). 1048 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10028. Librarian: Dina Abramowicz.  
New York Public Library, Jewish Division. 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10018. Division chief: Dr. Leonard Gold.  
The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 3080 Broadway, New York, NY 10027. Library director: Dr. Menahem Schmetzer.  
Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion, Kliau Library. 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220. Chief librarian: Dr. Herbert Zafren. Also at this address: American Jewish Periodicals Center.  
Jewish Public Library. 5151, chemin de la Cote Sainte Catherine, Montreal, Quebec H3W 1M6 Canada. Library Director: Naomi Caruso.  
This is merely a sampling of major Yiddish Studies collections. Libraries seeking to develop a Core Collection in the field should contact: National Yiddish Book Center. P.O. Box 969, Old East Street School, Amherst, MA 01004. Director: Aaron Lansky.  
*Hebrew and Yiddish bibliographic data are on the following page.*

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