

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

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**DONATE ONLINE** | [vilnacollections.yivo.org/Donate](http://vilnacollections.yivo.org/Donate)



Despite the coronavirus pandemic, YIVO and the Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Online Collections project have continued to thrive. Staff has been redeployed to work remotely and prepare for the time when our physical premises will reopen. I'm delighted to report that over this period substantial

progress has been made in processing and preparing the books and documents of EBYVOC. YIVO's Lithuanian partners have completed all archival and library work, with the exception of the new discoveries made at the Lithuanian National Library in 2017. We

are nearing completion (scheduled for December 2021) of this monumental contribution to Jewish knowledge and Jewish communal life that will affect individuals and institutions throughout the world. We are proud of our accomplishments yet humble before the work of the generations that preceded us without whose foresight and often heroic efforts our work would not have been possible; and we are grateful to all who have helped support this work and are continuing to help us raise the \$1 million necessary for the final stage of the Project.

JONATHAN BRENT  
*Executive Director & CEO*



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## THE EDWARD BLANK YIVO VILNA ONLINE COLLECTIONS

### Summer 2020 NEWSLETTER

### ABOUT THE PROJECT

#### "THESE MATERIALS ARE HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS"

During World War II, the Nazis looted YIVO's archive and library, along with other Jewish libraries in Vilnius, Lithuania. The Jews who were forced to sort the materials for the Nazis risked their lives to smuggle these rare treasures to hiding places in the Vilna Ghetto. Much was destroyed, but some of the materials were returned to YIVO (who had by then relocated to the United States), with the help of the U.S. Army. Other items remained in Vilnius to be recovered and rescued from the Soviets by a Lithuanian librarian, who hid them for over 40 years until they were rediscovered in 1988. In 2017, approximately 200,000 additional documents were discovered in Lithuania, including rare and unpublished works.

The Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Online Collections project, launched in 2015, is a \$7 million, international landmark digital initiative to process, conserve, and digitally reunite YIVO's divided prewar library and archival collections through a dedicated web portal. These materials include newly-discovered Holocaust documentation and the remnants of the famed Strashun Library.

This project is a partnership between the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, the Lithuanian Central State Archives, the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, and the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences.

It has inspired funders, scholars, and laypeople around the world.

YIVO has raised **\$6 million** out of **\$7 million**

#### DIGITIZATION PROGRESS THROUGH JUNE 8, 2020

**OVER 3 MILLION** PAGES DIGITIZED



**100%**  
books digitized  
50% available online  
[Project goal: 12,500 books]



**Over 50%**  
archival documents  
digitized  
[Project goal:  
Est. 2 million pages]



**Nearly 50%**  
images of books and  
documents available online  
[Project goal:  
Est. 4.1 million images]

[VILNACOLLECTIONS.YIVO.ORG](http://VILNACOLLECTIONS.YIVO.ORG)

# NEWS & UPDATES

## WROBLEWSKI LIBRARY MATERIALS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

Nearly 21,000 pages of archival documents from the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences are now available online as Record Group 8001. These materials, which have been housed at the Wroblewski Library since 1948, were officially added

to the Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Online Collections project in 2017. Conserved, processed, and digitized by our partners at the Wroblewski Library, many of these documents correspond to materials housed in the YIVO Archives and fill in missing gaps in YIVO's collections. The digital files can be accessed here:

► <https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/7/resources/20004>

## LITHUANIA RESUMES DIGITIZATION WORK

After a forced closure due to the pandemic, we are pleased to announce that conservation, processing, and digitization work has resumed at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania.

The team at the National Library is continuing work on the 170,000 pages of newly discovered materials that were added to the Project in 2017. Work on this cache of materials, which has not been seen by researchers or the public since prior to World War II, represents the final stage of the Project in Lithuania. It is estimated that digitization of these 170,000 pages will be completed in early 2021, and all materials will be available online by the end of that year.

## YIVO'S VOLUNTEERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

At the end of March, YIVO announced a call for volunteers to help summarize 100 youth autobiographies from the project. In the 1930s, the YIVO Division of Youth Research began a youth auto-

biography contest. Sixteen- to twenty-two-year-olds submitted their work in hopes of winning a cash prize. The autobiographies provide invaluable insights on everyday life in the interwar period – primarily in Yiddish, though there are also entries in Polish, German, Hebrew, English, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, French, and Czech. About 400 of the over 600 original diaries were recovered after the Holocaust. Forty-three volunteers from around the world are working on writing and editing summaries, which will be added to the online catalog, making the collection significantly easier to navigate.

# FEATURED ARTIFACT



## AN-SKI'S THE DYBBUK MANUSCRIPT

This year marks the 100th *yortsayt* of writer and ethnographer S. An-ski. Among his most famous works is *The Dybbuk*, a play which blurs the boundary between the natural and supernatural as two families are ensnared in spiritual possession. This play was based on material An-ski collected on an ethnographic expedition he organized through Jewish towns of western Russian just before World War I.

First written by An-ski in Russian and then translated by him into Yiddish, the original Yiddish manuscript was lost. The Hebrew poet Hayyim Nachman Bialik translated the original version of *The Dybbuk* into Hebrew and published this translation in 1918. According to information provided by YIVO's archivists in the 1950s, after a fire destroyed the original Yiddish manuscript, An-ski used Bialik's Hebrew version to recreate a Yiddish text of the play. This manuscript was kept in the An-ski Historical and Ethnographic Society in Vilna until World War II. A few fragmentary pages of the reconstructed Yiddish manuscript were saved by Avram Sutzkever and the Paper Brigade, were buried in the Vilna Ghetto, and were then recovered after the war.

An-ski's manuscript pages, which are found in the Sutzkever-Kaczerginski Collection, Part II: Collection of Literary and Historical Manuscripts (RG 223.2), have been digitized as part of the Project and will be available online by the end of 2020.

# OUR DONORS\*

We greatly appreciate and acknowledge the following donors for their generous support of this Project:

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\* as of JUNE 8, 2020

