



Institute for Jewish Research

ידישער וויסנשאַפֿטלעכער אינסטיטוט • י״וואָ

PRESS NEWS

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For Immediate Release

YIVO Launches Educational Program (EPYC) Promoting Yiddish Culture & Eastern European Past

Curriculum & Web site Designed for Jewish Education

December 1, 2004 - New York - The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research today announced the launch of its Educational Program on Yiddish Culture, known as **EPYC**, which includes an interactive web site and curriculum created to familiarize secondary education students and teachers with 1,000 years of Eastern European Jewish history and culture. The media rich web site, “When these streets heard Yiddish” (<http://epyc.yivo.org>) employs the latest online technologies in an easy-to-navigate format, while presenting students with an in-depth study of Jewish life in Eastern Europe before World War II. This is achieved by touring the sites’ three distinct sections covering “**Jewish Culture**”, “**Lives**” and “**Places**”. The web site is relevant to educational and adult audiences of diverse backgrounds and learning objectives – from novice learners who know little about Judaism to experienced students (grades 9 to 12) of Jewish History who want to learn more about Jewish life before the Holocaust. The web site can be used as a primary resource on Eastern European Jewish history and as an adjunct to **EPYC’s** printed material for secondary school education, a comprehensive mini-library that includes master essays on Eastern European Jewish history, student text and workbooks, a teacher’s guide and an appendix of source material.

The **EPYC** program introduces YIVO’s unique archive and library of manuscripts, photographs, posters, sound recordings, books and journals, to a broader audience and new generation. Audiences will delight in exploring the **EPYC** web site’s rich information items such as timelines, maps on Jewish emigration, monographs of Eastern European cities, audio clips of music and voices of Yiddish speakers.

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The other objective of the *EPYC* web site is to provide secondary Jewish schools and other educational institutions with substantial resources on the subject of East European Jewish culture. *EPYC* is meant to encompass the legacy of this civilization, which continues to be so influential in shaping the culture, religious practices, politics and demographics of today's Jewish world. Online viewers can embark on self-guided *EPYC* tours, browsing and learning, especially when using the site as a companion tool to the formal *EPYC* curriculum and printed materials.

The *EPYC* program was conceived in 1999 by Dr. Adina Cimet, a distinguished sociologist, in conjunction with the YIVO Leadership Forum, a volunteer committee of mostly second-generation Holocaust survivors and others, as a comprehensive resource for secondary school education. Once the YIVO Board of Directors approved the program, Dr. Cimet assumed the position as *EPYC* Program Director and assembled a distinguished advisory board of educators and scholars to comment on the program structure and content. The panel of nine experts included Dr. Samuel Kassow, the Charles Northam Professor of Judaic Studies at Trinity College and a specialist in Eastern European History, and Dr. Barry Holtz Baumritter, Professor of Jewish Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

Dr. Cimet led the program development team that included YIVO researchers Avi Patt, Jesse Aaron Cohen and Michael Cohen. The program also benefitted from the consultancy of Joshua Feinberg, a curriculum specialist and museum educator.

Soon after the *EPYC* curriculum was completed, YIVO developed a pilot program, sponsored, in part, by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, Inc., an organization working to secure compensation and restitution for survivors of the Holocaust and the heirs of victims. Additional funding for *EPYC* came from private donors, such as the Smart Family Foundation. A group of eighteen prestigious Jewish day, supplemental and public schools from the United States, Mexico and Israel, formed the *EPYC* pilot program.

Suzanne Leon, *EPYC* Marketing Director says, "The success of the pilot program confirms that *EPYC* is an invaluable resource for Jewish educators and students across the spectrum. It may also be successfully used as a resource for Holocaust Studies and to promote multiculturalism and tolerance in public schools." Ms. Leon goes on to note that the next phase of the program is to train educators. Thus, YIVO is considering a Teacher Fellowship Program to develop a corps of Master Teachers in the field of East European Jewish History.

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In addition, YIVO will also produce a Hebrew-language edition of **EPYC** for distribution to the Israeli educational market in September 2005. The **EPYC** curriculum will be made available for purchase online in the near future.

EPYC Debut at AJS Convention

The **EPYC** curriculum can be viewed as a portable mini-library, which will enlighten and delight future generations of Jewish and non-Jewish online visitors of all ages with the legacy of Eastern European Jewry and Yiddish culture. Educators and teachers can view this dynamic program at the YIVO booth during the up-coming American Jewish Studies Convention, taking place from December 19 to 21, 2004, at the Hyatt Regency in Chicago.

EPYC Site Result of Integrating Web Technologies

Besides Flash technology, the **EPYC** web site utilizes open source technology to facilitate its development cycle and manage the presentation of its expansive content. While the site is the result of integrating various web technologies, the end product is a complete educational package that is easy and engaging to use for its intended audiences. New York Chart & Diagram, a design firm, is responsible for the **EPYC** web site development, while Iridesco is credited with its implementation .

About YIVO Institute for Jewish Research:

Founded in Vilna, Poland (now Vilnius, Lithuania) in 1925, YIVO has been headquartered in New York City since 1940. The institute is devoted to the study of East European Jewish life, Yiddish language and culture, and the American Jewish immigrant experience, while preserving the primary artifacts of this cultural legacy. The YIVO Library and Archives are an unprecedented repository of Jewish life and culture, with over 355,000 volumes in twelve major languages, and more than 22,000,000 archival pieces. YIVO offers a wide range of cultural events, Yiddish language classes, scholarly publications, research opportunities and post-graduate fellowships. Details on YIVO or its programs can be found online at www.yivo.org or by calling 212 294 6140. An **EPYC** press kit can be viewed online at www.yivo.org/press/epycfr/htm.

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