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For Immediate Release

**YIVO Institute for Jewish Research
Launches ‘EPYC’ Interactive Web site**

Online Program Promotes Yiddish Culture & Eastern European Jewish Past

December 1, 2004 - New York - The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research announced the launch of its new web site, “When These Streets Heard Yiddish”, promoting Eastern European Jewish History and Culture. The interactive web site was created to familiarize educators, students and the general public with 1,000 years of Eastern European Jewish History and Yiddish culture. It was also conceived as a companion tool to the new curricula, the Educational Program on Yiddish Culture (*EPYC*). The media rich web site (<http://epyc.yivo.org>) employs the latest online technologies in an easy-to-navigate format, while presenting viewers with an in-depth study of Jewish life in Eastern Europe before World War II. This is achieved by touring the web site’s three distinct sections covering “**Jewish Culture**”, “**Lives**” and “**Places**”. The site is relevant to educational and adult audiences of diverse backgrounds and learning objectives – from novice learners who know little about Eastern **European** Jewish life to advanced high school and college students who want to learn more about Jewish life before the Holocaust.

EPYC introduces YIVO’s unique resources, including its archives and library (i.e. manuscripts, photographs, posters, sound recordings, world-class books and journals,) to a broader audience and new generation. While browsing the information- rich items and self-guided tours, viewers will be engaged by the wealth of material presented to heighten the user’s learning experiences. Online viewers will discover photographs of daily Eastern European Jewish communal and cultural life, documents (old and new), interactive maps, monographs of communities in Eastern Europe, rare prewar film footage, audio clips of music, and voices of Yiddish speakers. In addition, the web site

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can also be used as a primary resource on Eastern European Jewish History for libraries and/or as an adjunct to *EPYC*'s printed material for secondary school education. *EPYC*'s one-of-a kind online program is meant to stimulate the legacy of this civilization, which has been so influential in shaping the culture, religious practices, politics and demographics of today's Jewish world.

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.

In 2003, a pilot program was launched that included a group of eighteen prestigious Jewish day, supplemental and public schools from the U.S, Mexico and Israel, which was sponsored, in part, by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, Inc. Following on the pilot program's success, YIVO will offer the curriculum for purchase online in the near future, and produce a Hebrew-language edition in 2005.

Dr. Carl J. Rheins, YIVO Executive Director, says that "the *EPYC* web site will enlighten future generations of Jewish and non-Jewish online students of all ages with the legacy of Eastern European Jewry and Yiddish Culture's rich legacy". Dr. Rheins will be presenting the *EPYC* web site "When these streets heard Yiddish" and program at YIVO's booth, during the Association of Jewish Studies' Annual Meeting, taking place December 19 to 21, 2004, in Chicago.

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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 audience. The design firm of New York Chart & Diagram is responsible with the web site's development while Iridesco Inc. 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 Eastern European Jewish life, the Yiddish language, 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 objects. 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.institute.org/press/epycfr/htm.

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