

YIVO. Founded in 1925, YIVO (Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut, or Yiddish Scientific Institute) became the leading institution for scholarship in Yiddish and about the history and culture of East European Jews and their emigrant communities.

Origins and Founding. YIVO's origins can be traced to the early nineteenth century, when the German Wissenschaft des Judentums (Science of Judaism) movement marked the first attempt to study Jewish history and texts using modern criteria of empiricism and objectivity. While repudiating the assimilationist goals of the Wissenschaft scholars, YIVO's founders drew on their methodology and also incorporated the Haskalah's interest in propagating secular knowledge. By 1891, the impact of secularization and modernization led Simon Dubnow (Shimen

Dubnov) to issue a call to save neglected historical materials that documented the East European Jewish past. Dubnow believed that knowledge of this past was crucial for creating a new Jewish culture suited to the modern period. As a historian, he developed a sociological approach to the study of Jewish history, emphasizing the role of mass movements and the common people rather than the intellectual achievements of prominent individuals.



Simon Dubnow at a YIVO international scholarly conference, Vilna, Poland, 1935. (YIVO Archives)

Dubnow was also the leading theoretician of Diaspora nationalism, a movement that fought for Jews to hold rights as national minorities. Scholars such as Ber Borokhov, the pioneer of Yiddish philology and theoretician of Labor Zionism, turned to the study of Yiddish in part to bolster claims that East European Jewry constituted a distinct national group since it possessed a rich culture and its own national language. They also insisted that Yiddish, the traditionally denigrated vernacular, could fill the high cultural functions historically reserved for Hebrew or non-Jewish tongues. Their program was descriptive, as it documented the long history of Yiddish to refute claims that the language was no more than a corrupt dialect of German. It was also prescriptive, as it standardized the language and thus transformed it into a suitable vehicle for national culture. From its inception, Yiddish scholarship was closely engaged with contemporary issues that affected the wider Jewish community.

These developments began to bear fruit just prior to World War I, with the writer and ethnographer S. A. An-ski's expeditions to document Jewish folklore (1912–1914) and the publication of *Der pinkes* (The Record Book; 1912–1913), the

first work of modern Yiddish scholarship and the earliest to use Yiddish itself as the medium of academic discourse. During the war, the first Yiddish schools were opened in lands under German occupation, creating a need for pedagogical materials in the language. At the end of the war, Diaspora nationalists welcomed the Minorities Treaties, which mandated that the states of Eastern Europe support the educational institutions of national minority populations, including the Jews. As cultural work resumed in the early 1920s, scholars in Vilna, Warsaw, and Berlin began the first Yiddish scholarly journals, *Yidishe filologye* (Yiddish Philology; 1924–1926) and *Bleter far idisher demografye, statistik, un ekonomik* (Pages for Jewish Demography, Economics, and Statistics; 1923–1925). Thus, in the wake of World War I new possibilities opened up for Yiddish scholarship, both to serve the constituency created by the Yiddish school system and to benefit from the postwar political order.

The initiative for creating an institutional base for Yiddish scholarship came from a group of Russian Jewish émigrés living in Berlin. They were led by the linguist Nokhem Shtif and historian Eliyahu Tsherikover (Elias Tcherikower), who had already collaborated in documenting the Ukrainian pogroms of 1918–1921. Spurred by a talk by A. S. Zaks (Sachs), a New York-based activist and writer, in October 1924 Shtif composed a lengthy memorandum entitled “Vegn a yidishn akademishn institute” (On a Yiddish Academic Institute). This document surveyed the state of Yiddish scholarship to date and proposed the founding of a central body to coordinate research, collect relevant material, assure scholars of employment, and train future experts in the field. It would also have the authority to standardize Yiddish spelling, grammar, and usage as demanded by the Diaspora nationalists. In this way, the institute would fill the practical functions of a national library, university, and academy while playing an important symbolic role for Yiddish-speaking Jewry who did not have a state to call their own.

In February 1925, Shtif distributed his memorandum to leading Yiddish cultural figures in Berlin, New York, and Vilna. By far, the most enthusiastic response came from the last of these cities. There the scholars Max Weinreich and Zalman Reisen organized a joint meeting of two local educational organizations to discuss Shtif’s plan. The assembled group, which met on 24 March, proposed placing more weight on the envisioned institute’s teaching component, favoring work linked to the larger Jewish public and in particular to the secular Yiddish school system. With these modifications, later summarized in “Vilner tezisn vegn a yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut” (Vilna Theses on a Yiddish Scientific Institute), the participants voted to endorse the memorandum, an event later considered to mark the founding of YIVO.

On 7–12 August 1925, nine delegates from Western and Eastern Europe met at a conference in Berlin. They created an organizational committee to oversee the work of the institute, consisting of Shtif and Tsherikover in Berlin and Weinreich and Reisen in Vilna, and also established four academic sections as proposed by Shtif. The Philological Section for the study of language, literature, and folklore was to be located in Vilna and headed by Weinreich; the Historical and Social-Economic

(later the Economic-Statistical) Sections, headed by Tsherikover and Yankev Leshtshinski (Ya'akov Lestschinsky) respectively, would be in Berlin; and the Pedagogical (later the Psychological-Pedagogical) was slated for Warsaw. Each section would produce its own series of the institute's journal, *Shriftn fun yidishn visnshaftlekhn institut* (Writings of the Yiddish Scientific Institute).

In October 1925, supporters in Vilna founded the Society of Friends of the Yiddish Scientific Institute, an organization that soon served de facto as the main governing body of the institute. At the same time in New York, the Amopteyl (short for Amerikaner Opteyl or American Section) was created under the leadership of historian Yankev (Jacob) Shatzky. The institute also launched the newsletter *Yedies fun YIVO* (YIVO News) to document its growing activity.

Zamlen and the Philological Section. Since YIVO was to serve as the first central repository for material on Yiddish-speaking Jewry, each of its divisions undertook to survey and gather sources in its field before beginning analytical research. YIVO's limited staff could only carry out this massive task with the aid of an extensive network of volunteer *zamlers* (collectors), ordinary men and women who gathered documents, data, and funds for YIVO in their local communities throughout Eastern Europe and internationally. In 1929, a survey determined that one-quarter of the collectors had ties to Yiddish schools, while nearly one-third were impoverished manual laborers who often lacked high levels of formal education. Some wrote to YIVO asking for small sums to cover the costs of paper and postage. These individuals took enormous pride in helping to build Yiddish culture, and their dedication attested to YIVO's link to the broader Jewish community. The work of collection was thus crucial for YIVO in practical, methodological, and symbolic terms.

Recognizing the central role of *zamlen*, the first division of the institute to begin work was its Bibliographic Commission, one of several subdivisions of the Philological Section. This department was charged with recording, and if possible collecting, all new publications in Yiddish and related material written in other languages. In 1927, the renamed Bibliographic Center became an independent unit of the institute, devoted to current books and journals. The first and only volume of its *Bibliografishe yorbikher* (Bibliographic Yearbooks) was issued in 1928. At the same time, the YIVO library and archives were created to house older material.

The most enthusiastic and prolific *zamlers* were those who had been recruited by the Ethnographic Commission, known after 1930 as the Folklore Commission. In its first year, this part of the institute operated under the joint sponsorship of the An-ski Vilna Jewish Historic-Ethnographic Society. By 1929, the members of 163 *zamlerkrayzn* (collectors circles) had sent more than 50,000 copies of proverbs, folktales, and folk songs to YIVO. The analysis and publication of this material proceeded more slowly, in part because the leading folklorist, Y. L. Cahan, was living in New York. Cahan's visit to Vilna in 1930 spurred work, but the fruits of the *zamlers'* labor appeared in print only in 1938 as *Yidisher folklor* (Yiddish Folklore).

The work of the Ethnographic Commission was rooted in the Dubnovian concern with preserving a vanishing traditional culture, and was thus focused on the past. Other areas of the Philological Section addressed the contemporary needs of the Yiddish language and its speakers. The Terminological Commission recruited *zamlers* to record Yiddish terms from various professions and technical fields, yet it also aimed to serve a prescriptive function by determining standard vocabulary. In this way, it aided the work of communal and educational organizations that functioned in Yiddish and needed a range of up-to-date and specialized terminology. While most of the collections of the Terminological Commission remained unpublished, like the other divisions of the section its scholars contributed to the three volumes of *Filologishe shriftn* (Philological Writings) issued in 1926, 1928, and 1929. The approach of the Linguistic Commission, created to address questions of proper usage, was explicitly prescriptive and it attempted to disseminate its recommendations to a wide audience. In 1938, it finally created a popular journal that would address “questions of practical language knowledge,” *Yidish far ale* (Yiddish for Everyone).

The Orthographic Commission similarly planned to set normative rules, but controversy arose over whether it would recommend the spelling of words of Hebrew and Aramaic origin phonetically, a policy that had been adopted in the Soviet Union and was thus associated with pro-Communist, antireligious, and anti-Zionist sympathies. In 1931, the commission sponsored a conference that approved phonetic spelling, but its decision was never adopted by the institute. When YIVO promulgated its orthographic rules in 1936 and the Tsentrale Yidishe Shul Organizatsye (Central Yiddish School Organization; TSYSHO) agreed to implement them in its classrooms, the traditional treatment of the Hebrew and Aramaic component of Yiddish was retained. This episode illustrates how the commitment of the YIVO leaders to address current issues sometimes led to political disputes, despite efforts to avoid partisan stances that they feared might have compromised their academic integrity.

The Economic-Statistical and Historical Sections. The dilemmas of engagement came to the fore in the work of the Economic-Statistical Section, which investigated contemporary Jewish demographic and economic trends. Yankev Leshtshinski turned the timeliness of these themes to his advantage, obtaining data and funds from organizations such as the American Joint Distribution Committee, the public health organization Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia (Society for the Protection of the Health of the Jews, known by its acronym TOZ), and the local Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden (German Jewish Aid Society). These groups in turn looked to the Economic-Statistical Section for analyses of the pressing problems with which they dealt. The Economic-Statistical Section was also aware of the difficulties raised by the politically charged nature of its work. While it published two volumes of *Shriftn*, in 1928 and 1932, its plans for a more popular journal with current statistical information were delayed in part by doubts about the scholarly objectivity of such a venture. *Yidishe ekonomik* (Jewish Economics) finally appeared in 1937.

The work of the Historical Section was necessarily focused on the Jewish past, but it, too, sought to produce scholarship that had contemporary relevance. In the spirit of Dubnow, this section defined its focus as the history of the Jews in Eastern Europe from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, with an emphasis on the recent past and on the experiences of large numbers of ordinary Jews. Its scholars chose topics such as the Jewish labor movement to reflect both the historical experience and the immediate concerns of the Jewish masses in the interwar period.

The Historical Section's activities were hampered by Tsherikover's absences from Berlin, by a dearth of additional scholars who were prepared to take up the work, and by Shatsky's distant location in New York. The gap was filled by a group of young Warsaw-trained historians led by Emanuel Ringelblum and Raphael Mahler. In 1926, Ringelblum proposed creating a Historical Commission (later the Historical Commission for Poland) focusing specifically on the Polish-Jewish past. This body allowed Ringelblum and his colleagues to work in Warsaw with a degree of independence from Berlin and Vilna. Their projects included recruiting *zamlers* in 1937 to document nearly 300 *pinkeysim* (record books) of local communal organizations. The Warsaw-based scholars also produced the journals *Yunger historiker* (Young Historian; 1926–1929) and *Bleter far geshikhte* (Pages for History; 1934–1938), which complemented the section's three volumes of *Historishe shriftn* (Historical Writings) published in 1929, 1937, and 1939.

The Psychological-Pedagogical Section and the Yiddish Schools. Although the Psychological-Pedagogical Section was originally planned to be located in Warsaw, it functioned sporadically in Berlin and Vilna before renewing its work in 1927 under the leadership of Leybush (Leibush) Lehrer of New York. It held meetings in Vilna, however, with a membership composed largely of educational activists. From the first, YIVO's leaders in Vilna had close ties to the Yiddish schools. They emphasized projects related to contemporary pedagogy and worked to obtain financial support from TSYHO. The Psychological-Pedagogical Section recruited the staff of the schools and organizations such as OSE to gather data by observing Jewish children and youth in their charge. It offered conferences, social work programs, and teacher-training courses, particularly in the years 1937–1939, as well as providing standard Yiddish terminology and spelling rules for the classroom.

YIVO, however, rejected some proposed joint projects with TSYSHO that it feared would lead to charges of political partisanship. Although the section produced two volumes of *Shriftn*, in 1933 and 1940, it never realized its plans to publish textbooks. Still, the institute valued its relationship not only with Yiddish teachers but also with students, who were encouraged to collect materials for the Pedagogical Museum. YIVO hoped that these youngsters--the first generation ever to receive a modern, systematic education in Yiddish--would eventually become both its *zamlers* and the audience for its scholarly material. In addition to the publications mentioned above, its output included the journal *YIVO-bleter* (YIVO Pages), begun in 1931 as a more regular forum for work from each of the institute's sections. Some branches also issued their own publications, most notably the

Amopteyl's journals *Der pinkes* (1927–1929) and *Yorbukh fun amopteyl* (American Section Yearbook; 1938–1939).

YIVO celebrated the accomplishments of its sections and other divisions, such as the Ester Rokhl Kaminska Theater Museum, at its first conference held in Vilna on 24–27 October 1929. Upon this occasion, YIVO's leaders officially proclaimed the founding of the institute and laid the cornerstone of their new headquarters in Vilna. Although they also established a new governance structure, in practice the administrative work was carried out by an executive office consisting of Max Weinreich, Zalman Reisen, and Zelig Kalmanovitsh (the last of whom joined YIVO's staff in 1928). For the remainder of the interwar period, YIVO's activity was centered on these individuals--especially Weinreich--and on the city of Vilna.

Finances. YIVO's founders originally planned to locate their institute in Berlin, in part because they focused their hopes for financial assistance on the relatively affluent Jewish communities of Western Europe and the United States. However, from the start their most dedicated backing came from Vilna, the borderlands of eastern Poland, and the Baltic States. Eventually the founders realized that only in the heartland of Eastern Europe could they cultivate close ties to the masses of Yiddish-speaking Jews whom they saw as both their object of study and the audiences for their work. The headquarters was informally transferred to Vilna in 1927. Historically a center of Jewish learning and in the interwar period a flourishing center of Yiddish culture, Vilna was the ideal city for YIVO to become the apex of a network of institutions built on the assumptions of Diaspora nationalism.

At the same time, YIVO considered itself to be an international center for Yiddish-speaking Jewry. Accordingly, it established more than 30 branches and support groups across the region and in émigré communities throughout the world. In another manifestation of the *zamlers* phenomenon, ordinary Jews from North America to South Africa responded to the institute's appeals for financial contributions. Yet YIVO's staunchest supporters were from the impoverished communities of Eastern Europe, whose donations were typically tiny sums that could not cover the costs of the institute's work. As a result, YIVO was often on the verge of bankruptcy.

The institute's leaders employed a variety of strategies in their ongoing struggle for financial solvency, including sending emissaries to conduct fundraising campaigns throughout the world. The relatively affluent American Jewish community provided the main part of YIVO's budget throughout the interwar period, via donations from individual supporters as well as from organizations such as the American Joint Distribution Committee. In 1927, YIVO began to appeal for regular annual subsidies from Jewish organizations, *kehiles* (organized Jewish communities), and city governments in Poland. The institute argued that it served as a national academy, library, and university, claiming that as Yiddish-speaking Jewry had no state to provide it with public funds, it deserved to benefit from a kind of voluntary tax. In 1930, several dozen *kehiles* and city governments provided subsidies totaling more than 10 percent of the institute's budget.

Buoyed by its early successes, in 1928 YIVO purchased a plot of land at 18 Wiwulski Street in Vilna. Yet as it began converting an existing structure to serve as its headquarters, starting in 1930 the economic depression drastically reduced the institute's income while construction costs far exceeded estimations. Emergency fundraising campaigns enabled YIVO to survive, although it was forced to cut its staff and budget nearly in half. By the time it moved into its new facilities in early 1933, it had gone deeply into debt and not paid salaries for over a year. Nevertheless, its freshly renovated building, in a neighborhood of broad, tree-lined streets at a remove from the revered but decaying Jewish quarter, became an international symbol of the highest achievements of a truly modern Yiddish culture.

Scholarship in Times of Crisis. In the years following the opening of its headquarters, YIVO sustained and even expanded its activities. However, the continuing economic crisis and growing antisemitism led to increasingly sharper debates about the extent to which it should become politically involved. One faction of YIVO's leadership complained that the institute pursued narrow academic work and thus alienated its core support among ordinary Jews. Based in Warsaw and led by historian Raphael Mahler, this faction called on YIVO to reaffirm its commitment to the masses by pursuing Marxist scholarship and openly affiliating with socialist political parties such as the Jewish Labor Bund and Left Po'ale Tsiyon. Its opponents, who included the institute's most important figures such as Weinreich and Kalmanovitsh, countered that YIVO must serve the broadest possible audience by avoiding political stances that would alienate one or another segment of the Jewish public.

Tensions came to the fore at YIVO's World Convention in 1935, an occasion at which Marc Chagall inaugurated the institute's Art Section with an exhibit of his drawings. Discussions were dominated, however, by debates over the proper response to contemporary conditions. A majority resisted calls for greater politicization, arguing that YIVO must remain a bastion of neutrality in order to provide objective analyses of the crisis. Nevertheless, the institute's leaders resolved to emphasize projects that had a direct bearing on the pressing issues facing an increasingly embattled East European Jewish community.

YIVO's work in the mid- and late 1930s was also shaped by Weinreich's growing interest in the emerging social science disciplines of anthropology, psychology, and sociology, an absorption that prompted him to translate Freud's *Introduction to Psychoanalysis* into Yiddish (1936–1938). In 1934, he founded the Division of Youth Research to study the problems of contemporary Jewish children and adolescents from an interdisciplinary perspective. Three autobiographical contests held by the division generated more than 600 entries and provided the basis for Weinreich's *Der veg tsu undzer yungt* (*The Way to Our Youth*; 1935). Moreover, just as *zamlers* believed their contributions aided the growth of Yiddish culture, so did the contests encourage young people to view their own experiences as valuable, boosting their self-esteem and thus ameliorating the very problem the researchers set out to document.

The last major element of YIVO's original plan was realized in 1934 with the creation of the Dr. Tsemakh Shabad Aspirantur (graduate-level training program) to educate aspiring scholars. Three years later, the Borekh Kahan-Virgili Pro-aspirantur was founded as a preparatory program for such students who had not received a university-level education, although it later focused on preparing future teachers and social workers. The fact that many students stayed longer than originally envisioned and aimed for careers other than scholarship demonstrates both the programs' high intellectual standards and the limited professional prospects for young Jews in Poland in the late 1930s.

The programs also attest to an increased commitment in these years to serving the broader Jewish community, as the Pro-aspirantur welcomed the support of the Tsentrale Yidishe Shul Organizatsye. In addition to their agreement on Yiddish orthography (1936), YIVO collaborated with TSYSHO on a series of teachers' conferences and training courses that took place between 1937 and 1939. The institute also published more works intended for a popular audience, such as the journals *Yidishe ekonomik* (1937–1939) and *Yidish far ale* (1938–1939), and Weinreich's study *Di shvartse pintelekh* (The Little Black Dots; 1939). On the eve of World War II, YIVO thus operated under severe budget constraints and political pressures but with renewed energy, spurred by the very challenges it faced.

World War II. Soviet forces captured Vilna on 19 September 1939. They arrested and later killed Zalman Reisen before turning the city over to Lithuanian authorities in October. At this point, YIVO continued to function under its Soviet-appointed head Moyshe Lerer. However, in June 1940, the Soviets retook Vilna and in the following October, YIVO was forcibly absorbed into the government-run Institute of Lithuanian Studies. In January 1941, YIVO was renamed the Institute of Jewish Culture and was made part of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Lithuania. The linguist Noah Pryłucki (Noyekh Prilutski), who was also appointed to a chair of Yiddish at the University of Vilna, was made the institute's head.

On 24 June 1941, the Nazis captured Vilna. In March 1942, representatives of the Einsatzstab Rosenberg (Rosenberg Operation Group), the body charged with looting Jewish cultural property for the Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage (Institute for the Study of the Jewish Question) in Frankfurt, established a sorting center in the YIVO building. Workers were forced to select the most valuable objects from the collections of YIVO and other local Jewish institutions to be sent to Frankfurt, while the remaining items would be destroyed. Among the laborers were Zelig Kalmanovitsh; Ume Olkenitski, director of the Ester Rokhl Kaminska Theater Museum; and the poets Avrom Sutzkever (a former *pro-aspirant*) and Shmerl Kaczerginski (Shmerke Katsherginski).

A group that was dubbed the "paper brigade," led by Sutzkever and Kaczerginski, risked their lives daily by hiding material in the building's attic or smuggling it into the Vilna ghetto, where they buried it or gave it to non-Jewish contacts for safekeeping. Since it was located outside the ghetto, the YIVO headquarters also served as a transit point for smuggled weapons for the Jewish

partisan movement. Such activity continued until the liquidation of the Vilna ghetto in September 1943. Some of the hiding places went undiscovered and the items stored there survived the war, but the YIVO headquarters and its contents were completely destroyed.

After the liberation of the city by the Soviets in July 1944, Sutzkever and Kacerginski recovered whatever hidden material had remained intact and transferred it to the Museum of Jewish Art and Culture that they established in Vilna. Nevertheless, several dozen tons of surviving YIVO documents were destroyed before they could be transported. Realizing that Jewish cultural property was still in peril under Soviet control, the two poets began to smuggle material out of Vilna. Indeed, by 1949 the museum had been shut and its collections sent to the Lithuanian National Book Chamber, where knowledge of their very existence was suppressed for the next 50 years.

Postwar Adjustment. In January 1940, the New York branch of YIVO, then located on Lafayette Street in Manhattan, was designated as the institute's temporary headquarters. Max Weinreich, who had been in Copenhagen when the war began, was reunited with YIVO's other surviving founders, Eliyahu Tsherikover and Yankev Leshtshinski in New York. In 1942, the institute moved to its own building at 531–535 West 123rd Street. By July 1947, parts of the institute's collections that had been sent by the Nazis to Frankfurt had been recovered and brought to YIVO's now-permanent New York headquarters. Also recovered were the surviving parts of Vilna's famed Strashun Library and YIVO materials that had been hidden by Tsherikover in France during the war.

Even in one of the darkest hours of Jewish history, the institute continued its commitment to address contemporary issues. During the war, it was the first organization to bring word of the unfolding catastrophe to the American public. In 1944, it published a brochure on the Warsaw Ghetto uprising as well as the last article by Emanuel Ringelblum, whose leadership of the underground *Oyneg shabes* (Sabbath Joy) archive in the Warsaw ghetto was clearly inspired by his work for the Historical Section. At the end of the war, YIVO became the pioneer of Holocaust studies *avant la lettre*, immediately recruiting *zamlers* to collect survivors' testimonies and documents from displaced-persons camps. In 1946, it published Weinreich's *Hitler's Professors* and later collaborated with Israel's Yad Vashem Martyrs' and Heroes' Memorial Authority to produce 15 volumes of Holocaust bibliographies (1960–1978).

At the same time, Weinreich insisted that the interdisciplinary social science approach he had developed in the 1930s could as usefully be applied to the problems of American Jewry, which needed both an understanding of its East European roots and the tools of modern scholarship. Under his leadership as research director, a post he held until his death in 1969, YIVO turned its attention to American themes, sponsoring an autobiography contest for American Jewish immigrants (1942) and the two-volume *Geshikhte fun der yidisher arbeter bavegung in di fareynikte shtatn* (History of the Jewish Labor Movement in the United States; 1943–1945). While reaffirming its commitment to Yiddish, for example with the journal *Yidishe*

shprakh (Yiddish Language; 1941–1986), it reached out to the Anglophone academic world by publishing translations of its work in the *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* (1946–1996) and elsewhere. In the 1950s, the acquisition of records from organizations including the American Jewish Committee and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) made the YIVO Archives a major center for the study of American Jewish history.

The institute also issued a series of standard reference works, including the textbook *College Yiddish* (1949) by Uriel Weinreich, the son of Max and a distinguished linguist in his own right, and the lexicon *Oytser fun der yidisher shprakh* (Thesaurus of the Yiddish Language; 1950) by Nokhem Stutchkoff. In 1953, work began on the *Groyser verterbukh fun der yidisher shprakh* (Great Dictionary of the Yiddish Language), four volumes of which appeared between 1961 and 1980 (although the project was not officially under YIVO auspices). Despite this intensive activity, however, Weinreich's vision proved elusive at a time when Jewish studies did not exist on American campuses and most American Jews associated Yiddish with an immigrant past they were eager to leave behind. YIVO's efforts to broaden its base of support met with limited success, as the individuals whose donations amounted to about 80 percent of its budget were primarily aging European-born Jews.

"The Vanderbilt YIVO." In 1955, YIVO moved to a former Vanderbilt mansion at 1048 Fifth Avenue in New York City. Its grandiose new surroundings belied its internal problems. The change of its English name that year from the Yiddish Scientific Institute to the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research prompted concerns about a lessening commitment to Yiddish, while budget constraints meant that its journals appeared only sporadically. A period of relative quiet was capped by the tragic early death of Uriel Weinreich in 1967, followed by the passing of Max Weinreich two years later.

A period of renewed activity began in the late 1960s, as Uriel Weinreich's *Modern English-Yiddish Yiddish-English Dictionary* (1968) appeared posthumously, followed by his father's four-volume magnum opus *Di geshikhhte fun der yidisher shprakh* (The History of the Yiddish Language; 1973). Beginning in 1968, the Uriel Weinreich Program in Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture, an intensive summer language course sponsored jointly with Columbia University, filled a crucial need at a time when the ranks of native-born Yiddish speakers was thinning. In the same year, the Max Weinreich Center for Advanced Jewish Studies was created, offering an array of classes to graduate students who received credit at their home universities. The alumni of both programs soon became leaders in the expanding field of Jewish studies across the United States, fulfilling their namesakes' vision of YIVO in fruitful dialogue with the American academic scene.

Throughout the 1970s, the Weinreich Center benefited from U.S. government grants, which also made it possible for YIVO to extend its collecting, cataloging, and preservation projects in its library and archives. Among its projects was *Image Before My Eyes*, which explored interwar Polish Jewry and took form as an exhibit (1976), book (1977), and documentary film (1980). In 1982, the Max and Frieda

Weinstein Archive of Recorded Sound was created. Two years later, its director Henry Sapoznik founded the Yiddish Folk Arts Program, popularly known as KlezKamp, a program that was subsequently copied throughout the world (and has been run independently since 1994). YIVO thus became the incubator of the klezmer revival, the explosion of interest in East European Jewish music that has grown into a worldwide phenomenon.

The Post-Soviet Legacy and the Center for Jewish History. It had been assumed since World War II that any items from YIVO's prewar collection that had survived the Nazis in Vilna were destroyed during the Stalinist era. However, with the advent of perestroika at the end of the 1980s, word reached New York that much of what had remained of YIVO's collection had instead been hidden in the Lithuanian National Book Chamber by library director Antanas Ulpis. After several years of negotiations, the government of now-independent Lithuania refused to recognize YIVO's legal ownership of these materials but allowed the archival portions to be brought to New York in 1995–1996 to be sorted and duplicated, with the original documents returning to Vilna. The same decade saw a revival of Jewish scholarship in the former Soviet Union. In 1991, David E. Fishman established Project Judaica, a joint venture of YIVO, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and the Russian State University of the Humanities in Moscow; it was the first program in Jewish studies in post-Soviet Russia.

In these years the renamed *YIVO Annual* (1990–1996) and *YIVO-bleter* (1991–) were revived and the first volumes of *The Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry*, a project begun by Uriel Weinreich in 1959, finally began to appear (1992–). The library and archives continued to expand, most notably with the acquisition of the Bund Archives of the Jewish Labor Movement in 1992. YIVO also greatly improved access to its collections with the publication of *The Yiddish Catalog and Authority File of the YIVO Library* (1990) and *The Guide to the YIVO Archives* (1998), as well as with the start of on-line cataloging projects. The institute's New York staff went to the aid of the Argentine branch of YIVO, run since World War II as an independent institution, after it was severely damaged in the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center in Buenos Aires.

By the early 1990s, YIVO was outgrowing the size of its headquarters on Fifth Avenue. In response, the institute's major supporters created the Center for Jewish History to house several Jewish academic organizations, including the Leo Baeck Institute and the American Jewish Historical Society. In 1994, YIVO relocated to temporary offices and in early 1999 moved to the Center's new building at 15 West 16th Street, where it shares a reading room and other resources with its partner institutions. By 2000, researchers from around the world could consult its more than 350,000 volumes and 10,000 linear feet of archival material, the largest existing collections on Yiddish culture and East European Jewry. YIVO's publications, lectures, and exhibits, now primarily in English, attract both a scholarly and popular audience, continuing the work begun by its founders 75 years before.

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