

## Yizkor Books

The memorial books are the fruit of the impulse to write a testament for future generations. They constitute an unprecedented, truly popular labor to record in writing as much as possible of a destroyed world.

Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin,  
*From a Ruined Garden*

### Definition

Yizkor books are memorial books that recollect Eastern European Jewish communities, and were typically created by *landsmanshaftn* (societies of immigrants from the same town) after the Holocaust. Usually written in Hebrew or Yiddish, most Yizkor books were compiled by ordinary people who remembered life in their hometown, not by professional writers, editors, or historians.

### Yizkor Books as a Genealogical Resource

Because the production of Yizkor Books was a grassroots phenomenon, the books vary in their usefulness for family history research. Most, however, have at least some focus on families and individuals, and contain many names and information about family relationships. Many also contain necrologies, or lists of Holocaust victims, from one or more towns. Yizkor books convey the culture and feeling of Jewish life in Eastern Europe before the Holocaust through personal narratives, photographs, maps, and drawings.

### Where to Find Yizkor Books

Yizkor books can be found at the Center for Jewish History's Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (<http://www.yivo.org/yizkor>), the New York Public Library, the Jewish Theological Seminary Library, the Yeshiva University Library, Yad Vashem, and many other Jewish libraries. You can search for Yizkor books on the Center for Jewish History's online catalogs at <http://search.cjh.org>. See the following sources for more information:

*From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry*, edited and translated by Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin (Indiana University Press, 1998). The book includes a scholarly introduction to the genre and translations of selections from over sixty memorial books.

**Genealogy Institute DS 135 .P6 F77**

*Bibliography of Eastern European Yizkor (Memorial) Books with Call Numbers for Five Judaica Libraries in New York.* Appendix B of *Genealogical Resources in New York*, edited by Estelle M. Guzik (Jewish Genealogical Society, 2003).

**Genealogy Institute Z 5313 .U6 N524 2003**

*In Memoriam* (Sdu Uitgeverij Koninginnegracht, 1995). This book is a listing of Jews from the Netherlands that were killed in the Holocaust. You can browse the book at the Center for Jewish History or search through it online at <http://www.joodsmonument.nl/index.php>.

**Genealogy Institute DS135.N4 I5 1995**

*Memorial to the Jews Deported from France, 1942-1944: Documentation of the deportation of the victims of the Final Solution in France*, by Serge Klarsfeld (Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1983). The book lists those victims of the Holocaust deported from France, including detailed information about specific convoys that left France to the various concentration and extermination camps.

**Genealogy Institute DS135.F83 K4313 1983**

JewishGenYizkor Book Project, [www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/](http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/)

This site has a database of Yizkor books, showing the libraries that possess each book, and Yizkor book translations submitted by volunteers. Also included is a Necrology index where you can search through the lists of Holocaust martyrs published in the translated Yizkor books.

New York Public Library, [www.nypl.org/research/chss/jws/yizkorbooks\\_intro.cfm](http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/jws/yizkorbooks_intro.cfm)

650 of the 700 postwar Yizkor books at the New York Public Library have been scanned and are now accessible online.