Storing Yiddish Trash: A Shund Database

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Description: Popular Yiddish literature is often referred to as shund, meaning “trash,” a designation that carries with it a pejorative judgment articulated by nineteenth and twentieth century critics, as well as contemporary scholars. This has resulted in the nearly complete neglect of the thousands of titles, in book form and as serialized in the Yiddish press, that make up the vast majority of Yiddish literature - the most read, but least reread texts. To begin countering this gap in scholarship, Saul will present on his database project, shund.org, a searchable bibliography of popular Yiddish fiction and a platform for digital reading and scholarship. Such a resource can help reshape how we tell the story of Yiddish literature beyond canonical hierarchies.

Saul Zaritt is Associate Professor of Yiddish Literature at Harvard University. His book, Jewish American Writing and World Literature: Maybe to Millions, Maybe to Nobody appeared in 2020. He is a founding editor of In geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies. He is currently at work on a book about Yiddish and the politics of translation.