Vilnius Jewish Public Library - its story, purpose, current activities and challenges.
The aim and purpose of this presentation is to bring knowledge about the Vilnius Jewish Public Library to such a honorable and competent audience like yours and to plant its existence in between the branches of the world-wide tree of Jewish libraries and most professional and progressive libraries of the globe.
Jews in Lithuania

- There are multiple sources about the richness of the heritage starting from the very Middle Ages.

- One of them to start with might be YIVO institute - http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Vilnius
Libraries in Lithuania

- They were very numerous before the Holocaust. They are mentioned on the page “Jews in Lithuania” -
  - http://www.zyda.lt/lt/content/search/?searchstring=biblioteka&x=0&y=0

- And Yad Vashem -
Libraries in Lithuania

- Strashun Library of course has a very special significance -
  https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mattityahu_Strashun
Mattityahu Strashun Library (Vilnius Jewish Library). 1930 m.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mattityahu_Strashun
Libraries in Lithuania

- And of course the YIVO collection cannot escape being mentioned - [https://www.yivo.org/The-Vilna-Collection](https://www.yivo.org/The-Vilna-Collection)
Libraries in Lithuania

- Which was split into two parts by the Holocaust
Libraries in Lithuania

- But it is going to be reunited via an international project

Old Vilnius panorama. 1912.
Jewish street before the II WW.
St. Catherine church. Miron Butkowski, 1895.
The Great Synagogue after the WW 2. J. Bulhak.
Vilnius cathedral. Albert Swieykowski, 1861-1866.
For about 80 years there was no such an actual word combination as “Jewish Library” in use under Vilnius and Lithuania skies altogether.
How did it start?

- I meet Wyman Brent. Who is Wyman?
Prehistory

- I meet Aage Mhyre. Who is Aage?
- Architect, journalist, activist, editor: http://vilnews.com/
Prehistory

- I meet Petras Austrevicius. Who is Petras? Presently -

I meet MP Emanuelis Zingeris. Who is Emanuelis?

http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w5_show?p_r=8801&p_k=2&p_a=5&p_asm_id=43&p_kade_id=7
Two years of preparatory work before library opening
Meeting The French Ambassador François Laumonier in Lithuania. Psychologist Žilvinas Beliauskas, Ambassador François Laumonie (middle), the initiator of the Vilnius Jewish Library Wyman Brent.
Wayman Brent with the Japanese Ambassador in Lithuania Miyoko Akashi.
Meeting in the Japanese embassy in Lithuania. From the right: Ambasador Miyoko Akashi, Wyman Brent, embassy staff members and psychologist Zilvinas Beliauskas.
Counselor for Public Affairs
US Embassy Vilnius then and now in Israel.
Meeting an American writer and essayist Nancy Wright Beasley (on the right - the author of ‘Izzy’s Fire’) - [https://vimeo.com/68880264](https://vimeo.com/68880264) and art critic Nomeda Repsyte (middle).
At the VJL project public presentation and book exhibit in the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute -
At the VJL project public presentation and book exhibit in the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute -
Presentation of the Vilnius Jewish Library project in Uzupis Art Incubator "Galera",
Presentation of Vilnius Jewish Library in Užupis Art Incubator “Galera”. Prof. Dovid Katz (center), former Lithuanian Ambassador to Israel Romas Misūnas (on the right)
Presentation of Vilnius Jewish Library in Užupis Art Incubator “Galera”.
Wyman Brent and Bill Pahl.
Presentation of Vilnius Jewish Library in Užupis Art Incubator “Galera”. Wyman Brent.
Book exhibit from Vilnius Jewish Library to be in “Galera”, Užupis Art Incubator.
Presentation of Vilnius Jewish Library in Užupis Art Incubator “Galera”.
Presentation of Vilnius Jewish Library in Užupis Art Incubator “Galera”. Bill Pahl and Vilniaus city mayor Artūras Zuokas.
Seeing the neglected premises for the library. Left to right: Culture Minister Arunas Gelūnas, MP Petras Auštreivičius, Economy Vice-Minister Rimantas Žilius, Government Chancellor Deividas Matulionis, Adomas Mickevičius Public Library director Petras Zurlys.
Culture Minister Arunas Gelūnas and Parliament Vice-Speaker Petras Aušrevičius
Evaluating the condition of the premises given to establish Vilnius Jewish Public Library before finance allocation MP Petras Auštreivičius, LR Culture minister Arūnas Gelūnas, Economy vice-minister Rimantas Žilius and Government Chancellor Deividas Matulionis.
Presentation of Vilnius Jewish Public Library in National Minorities House.
Presentation of Vilnius Jewish Public Library in National Minorities House.
Promoting and discussing the library project

In the period of two years the idea and project was discussed in numerous meetings with state officials and cultural activists. Here one of the meetings at the Minister of Culture Arunas Gelunas (right) office together with the Parliament Vice-Speaker Petras Auštrevičius (center)
Of course we went to meet the Head of Lithuanian Jewish Community then Simonas Alperavičius, the director of the Community Simonas Gurevičius and Council Member Daumantas Todesas.
Guidance from Heavens

- Favorable Coincidences:
  - Prime Minister’s background and positive attitude.
  - Economical Crisis and structural reforms
  - Probably the most intellectual Culture Minister
  - Prosecutors.
How come?

- The Prime Minister is a son of a professor, famous literary critic and he didn't have to be “converted” into book lover.

- Economic crises of the 2009 and on made him an unpopular reformer applying austerity measures and cuttings everywhere and causing closing of institutions. That caused vacating of numerous premises.

- The Minister of Culture turned out to be a lover and expert of Jewish literature and culture.

- Prosecutors found some violations in contract buying during reconstruction works of the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania and stopped the financing of the project. Thus, the allocated money became hanging in the air and the Ministry of Culture had to make decisions where to invest in order not to lose the millions since that was a huge project - http://www.valdovurumai.lt/en. A part of the allocated money went to our library reconstruction and installation works. Around 215 00 Euros.
Jewish Library initiator Wyman Brent at the board of the library to be opened (2011).
Preparations for the Grand Opening (December, 2011).
Preparations for the Grand Opening (December, 2011).
On December 16, 2011 we had our grand opening ceremony. The PM Vytautas Kubilius giving a speech.
VILNIUS JEWISH PUBLIC LIBRARY
CHARITY AND SUPPORT FOUNDATION

Vilnius Jewish Public Library
Charity and Support Foundation

http://www.vilnius-jewish-library-foundation.com/
Vilnius Jewish Theater

http://www.vilnius-jewish-theater.com/
Jerusalem is no longer in Lithuania
On memory and place

Israel Rozenson
Efrata - College of Education
Jerusalem 2009
Jerusalem is no longer in Lithuania; it perished in the Holocaust. However, this book deals with memory as a living phenomenon which can create new realities and, to a certain extent, can make the past come alive. In the concluding chapter I will present possibilities for a continuing dialogue between Jews, Israelis and Lithuanians in light of the Jewish approach to Lithuanian memory, as described in this book. It is my hope that the memory of what has been annihilated will become increasingly significant for both Jews and Lithuanians.
Wyman today

- Marries Andrea Oberheiden and settles in Germany. Now he is the Honorary Chairman of the Watch Council of the VJPL.

Wyman today

He comes on certain occasions, like opening of a monument to the famous Litvak Al Jolson.
Wyman Brent – an American who fell in love with Vilnius and Jewish books who initiated the foundation of Vilnius Jewish Public Library and donated thousands of books to it.

Trailer to "Wyman Brent & The Vilnius Jewish Library"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=noTb9F2gWKY

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daTf9Ij1I7w