

Oneg Shabbat

Code name for a secret archive in the Warsaw Ghetto, which was founded and run by historian Emanuel Ringelblum. In Hebrew, the phrase *Oneg Shabbat* literally means "Sabbath delight," and usually refers to a Sabbath afternoon gathering. Ringelblum's archive was given the name *Oneg Shabbat* because the archive staff held its secret meetings on the Sabbath.

Ringelblum instituted the archive in October 1939. As an historian, he understood that history was about to be made for the Jews, and he felt that it was extremely important to document their experiences. In November 1940 the Jews of Warsaw were forced into a Ghetto. At that point, Ringelblum and his colleagues decided to turn the archive into an organized operation that would include tens of historians, writers, and teachers. The group's main goals were to document the events taking place within the Warsaw Ghetto and all over Poland; to gather items of historical value; and to record the personal testimony of Jews who been released from prisoner of war and forced labor camps, and that of Jewish refugees from all over Poland who had reached Warsaw. The archive members also tried to get their hands on as many German documents as possible that related to the deportation of Jews and their extermination. In addition, they made huge efforts to send the information they had amassed to the free world. They managed to send reports to Jewish organizations and to the Polish Government-in-Exile in London via the Polish underground.

In August 1942, March 1943, and again in April 1943, the archivists began sealing the contents of the *Oneg Shabbat* Archives in metal containers and hiding them in various places in the ghetto. The first group of documents- made up of 1,209 items- was discovered in September 1946, and the second group of 484 items in December 1950. The third group has never been found. The *Oneg Shabbat* Archive is the single most important historical source from the era of Nazi occupation in Poland. Much of what has been found so far has been published by Yad Vashem in Hebrew translation.