

## CHAPTER 2



## Collecting, Indexing and Digitizing Survivor Accounts

### Holocaust Testimonies in the Digital Age

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Survivors have always played an important role in shaping historical knowledge about and remembrance of the Holocaust. First, they contributed significantly to knowledge about what actually happened at the concentration camps: in the weeks after their liberation, survivors led Allied soldiers, journalists, politicians, as well as the German civilians who were ordered to visit the sites, around the camps, showing them the conditions in which victims had had to live, demonstrating torture methods and explaining how the gas chambers and furnaces worked; survivors also appeared as witnesses in the Nazi trials and did not just identify perpetrators but also provided a great deal of historical detail; and their experiences were recorded and collected by organizations such as the Polish Central Jewish Historical Commission (*Centralną Żydowska Komisja Historyczna*) and the Hungarian National Committee for Attending Deportees (*Deportáltakat Gondozó Országos Bizottság*), by individuals such as David Boder, and later by the Wiener Library, Yad Vashem and other institutions, in the form of questionnaires or witness statements.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the survivors kept the memory of these horrible events alive through descriptions of their own fates, thereby also remembering those who were killed in the concentration and extermination camps; they held memorial services, campaigned for the establishment of memorials and monuments and were living reminders to prevent future genocides.

Nevertheless, as Annette Wieworka has suggested, the survivors and 'their personal, individual memories' mostly remained 'confined within closed family-like groups'<sup>2</sup> and only over time drew significant public attention.<sup>3</sup> Survivors' testimonies became socially significant in the Eichmann trial (1961), which is why Wieworka defines this moment as the 'advent of the witness'.<sup>4</sup> The survivors' testimony about their personal experiences as witnesses for the prosecution, even though — as Hannah Arendt charged<sup>5</sup> — it contributed little to establishing truth in the legal sense, was broadcast on the radio, reported in cinema newsreels and televised in thirty-eight countries.<sup>6</sup> Yet despite the Eichmann trial's worldwide distribution of Holocaust testimony, there was no 'cosmopolitization of memories', such as Daniel

Levy and Natan Sznajder find in the 1990s.<sup>7</sup> Just as historiography and memorial culture still took place within national frameworks during the early 1960s, the survivors were also — if at all — organized in national victims' organizations (such as, for instance, the national committees of the different concentration camps and the national associations of those persecuted by or resisting the Nazis) or they met in private or in regional or local groups (Jewish communities or local associations of Holocaust survivors).

The persistence of national memory collectives makes clear that, despite the Eichmann trial's worldwide broadcasting, it did not set in motion any cosmopolitization of Holocaust remembrance in the sense of a 'de-nationalization'. The trial is nevertheless a telling reference point for engagement with transnational remembrance, as it illustrates that worldwide attention towards Holocaust survivors requires the use of media, and that the act of testimony is connected to certain media constellations. At the time of the trial, radio, cinema and television were responsible for the distribution of Holocaust testimony, whereas nowadays global access to survivor testimony is enabled by databases, MPEG files and the internet.

This chapter deals with audiovisual Holocaust testimony in the digital age. Of particular interest here are the media conditions that now determine the rationale of the collection and the dissemination of testimony. Survivors' testimony can take the form of many different media: from written documents (questionnaires, interview transcripts, autobiographical reports), to audio recordings and video testimonies. While these testimonies were long only accessible in the libraries and institutional archives responsible for their collection, digitalization and the internet have significantly changed the conditions of access to these documents, as media technology now offers access that is no longer tied to any one particular location. The example of video testimony shows this development particularly clearly — especially considering the longstanding technological challenges in providing access to collections of moving images. It will become clear that access to video testimony is characterized by a particular tension between the global and the local that on the one hand results from technological conditions and on the other from ethical concerns.

Given that survivors' testimony takes material form — for instance, paper, audiotape, videocassette, or hard drive — it could be concluded that storing on these media compensates for the generational shift: even after the last eye witnesses have died, their admonishing voices will still be audible. Their testimony is captured in thousands of video interviews that will still be accessible after their death. This mediatization does not detract from the power of their statements. The immediacy of the video image, one of this medium's main characteristics, enables us — as James Young notes about video testimonies — to 'respond to pictures of people as if they actually were people'.<sup>8</sup>

However, video testimony also presents the new millennium with a challenge. Tony Kushner calls it a 'crucial point in the use of Holocaust testimony' and wonders about the 'use that is to be made of this material'.<sup>9</sup> This chapter will take up that question and analyze the range of services offered by two witness projects. Its main concern is to show to what extent media-technological developments

effect changes in the access to and uses of witness testimony. This excludes the use of testimonies in historiography, their fragmentation and montage in documentary films or museum exhibits, as well as the selection criteria for the use of clips in TV programs, which are mainly oriented towards generating coherence and affect; existing publications already cover these subjects.<sup>10</sup> The following will instead deal with the media conditions that make these different uses possible in the first place. It is therefore important to study the media-technological conditions of the collecting, archiving and accessing of Holocaust testimony.

### Collecting Video Testimony

In what follows, two projects of recording interviews will serve as examples of the possibilities and challenges that Holocaust testimony presents in the digital era. These are the two most prominent video testimony archives, the Fortunoff Video Archive and the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Archive. With contemporary changes in the media landscape (digitization, the internet), both archives have seen considerable changes in the conditions under which they record testimony. This has required the archives both to adapt and to reformulate their tasks and objectives, especially in relation to handling testimony. In order to discuss the questions and problems that have arisen or arise in this process, it is first necessary to describe both archives' inception as well as their practices so far. This excludes their interview methods, already studied elsewhere.<sup>11</sup>

The Fortunoff Video Archive started as a grassroots movement in New Haven at the end of the 1970s. This was a time when Holocaust awareness was slowly starting to grow in the US. Multiple states included the Holocaust in their mandatory curricula, NBC was showing the *Holocaust* mini-series (1978), and President Carter appointed a commission to gather suggestions for an appropriate form of Holocaust remembrance (the commission's report led to the construction of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and the introduction of national Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust).<sup>12</sup> Aside from these nationwide efforts and events, there were also many local initiatives, for instance in New Haven, where private citizens instigated the construction of the first Holocaust monument on state land, which was inaugurated in 1977.

In sync with these developments, Laurel Vlock, a producer for the local TV channel WTNH planned a documentary program about the Holocaust. During her research she contacted Dori Laub, a psychoanalyst who specialized in the psychological effects of the Holocaust and was a child survivor himself. Ultimately their collaboration led to the recording of several video interviews with Holocaust survivors in the spring of 1979, during which 'Vlock and Laub both realized that what they had recorded was extraordinary and that the impact of these stories should be shared', as Joanne Weiner Rudof states in her review of the archive's history.<sup>13</sup> Over the next two years, the Holocaust Survivors Film Project, as the initiative was then called, recorded nearly 200 further video interviews in New Haven and a few other American cities.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand these conversations were 'a corrective response' to popular media representations of the Holocaust,<sup>15</sup> on the

other they may have provided the survivors with a chance to free themselves from their nightmares.<sup>16</sup> Finally, they created 'video recordings of public broadcasting quality' for 'future educators and filmmakers'.<sup>17</sup> Since 1981 the collection has belonged to Yale University, which has continued the project since. The collection of what has since been renamed the Fortunoff Video Archive now comprises around 4400 interviews.

Amongst the conditions of possibility of such a witness archive are not only the growing awareness of the Holocaust in the US, but also the availability of video technology. The introduction of video cameras on the consumer market enabled many grassroots movements to record video of marginalized people telling their own story in their own words. The technology also proved well suited to the Holocaust Survivors Film Project: it is inexpensive and easy to use, and the duration of videotapes allows for relatively long interviews without annoying interruptions (which are necessary when recording interviews on film and having to change reels). Through its visual dimension, video testimony can furthermore provide more information than a transcript of a survivor's words: aside from the Holocaust survivors' statements, the camera also registers their searches for words, their hesitations and silences, and of course their facial expressions and visible emotions. It is not least this visual dimension and the (apparent) immediacy of the video image that contributes to the compassion that the interviews are often understood to produce in viewers.

Video technology was also important to the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, which was founded in 1994. When Steven Spielberg was shooting *Schindler's List* (1993) in Krakow — so the founding myth of the organization goes — several Holocaust survivors working as extras expressed their desire to report on their own experiences in the camps. Touched by their suggestion, Spielberg started a foundation to record the stories and the voices of the survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust. Faced with the knowledge that time was pressing 50 years after the end of the war, the foundation made it its goal to collect at least 50,000 interviews within five years. To achieve this, they hired 1000 videographers and trained 2300 interviewers who interviewed witnesses in fifty-six countries and thirty-two languages. Since 2006 the Shoah Foundation has been affiliated with the University of Southern California, where the Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education collects the interviews, makes them accessible and, as will be shown below, suggests various ways of using the collection.

The witness project of the Shoah Foundation, as well as *Schindler's List*, can be seen as examples of the 'de-territorialization and individualization of memory'.<sup>18</sup> Although Levy and Sznajder have already extensively discussed the globalization of Holocaust remembrance that goes along with Spielberg's project, I would like to point out one further feature of the project. Contrary to the Holocaust Survivors Film Project, which was started in opposition to popular media representations and was grounded in the counter-public sphere, the witness project of the Shoah Foundation is mainly characterized by what Derrida calls an archontic rationality: it aims to collect and protect as much testimony as possible before all the witnesses die, and then systematically categorize these to make them accessible.<sup>19</sup>

### Global Collection and Local Networks

The size of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Archive collection is not just due to the resources made available for the continuation of the project,<sup>20</sup> but it can also be seen as an expression of the globally spreading awareness of the Holocaust. Whereas most of the testimony collections were limited to the local or the national, the Shoah Foundation has aimed to collect testimonies globally since its very inception. Although the Fortunoff Video Archive began as a local project limited to the New Haven community, it too orientated itself more internationally over time (and with its growing financial means) and began also to interview survivors living abroad. The fact that its reach was limited to the US and Israel in the 1980s and later was extended to Canada and Western Europe is not just related to the geographical location of Holocaust survivors, but also to the bipolar world order before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Only with the opening up of the Eastern Bloc did the visibility of Eastern European survivors increase and did they become available for witness projects. No wonder, then, that the Shoah Foundation, with its decidedly global mission (as well as its origin on a Krakow film set), started holding interviews in the former Eastern Bloc in the middle of the 1990s.<sup>21</sup>

The global mission of the Shoah Foundation was a special challenge not only because of the scope of the project. As the foundation implemented its strategies from the top down and had its main seat in the US, it also had to contend with the difficulty of contacting survivors abroad. Although flyers were distributed and ads placed in newspapers in search of willing witnesses, these people reacted rather cautiously. It became clear that the willingness to talk about Holocaust-related experiences is dependent on the trust placed in the people or the organization conducting the project. To that end, the Shoah Foundation contacted local groups such as Jewish communities or survivor organizations and hired people to function as regional coordinators of the interview project. This cooperation made sure that the survivors got to know the person who invited them to contribute to a global collection of Holocaust testimony. After the first interviews in a region new contributors were then often found on the basis of past contributors' recommendations; other survivors got in touch as they had heard about the project from others. The fact that all contributors were sent a videocassette of their interview provided further stimulus to contribute to the project. 'Providing interviewees with copies of their testimonies for their private use proved to be the best form of outreach', acknowledges the Shoah Foundation.<sup>22</sup> If the collection of interviews is driven by the need to ensure that as many memories as possible are recorded, the Shoah Foundation's sending contributors videocassettes of their interviews also reveals their concerns over the passing down of family memories, positioning them at the heart of memory discourse.

The procedure with which the Shoah Foundation won survivors' contributions to a global witness archive thus presupposes the existence of local organizations and networks, as the interview partners were located through these local groups. In this light one could discuss which groups were contacted and which people were not reached in this process. Here, though, I would like to stress one of the

key conditions for this worldwide collection of Holocaust testimonies: it was only through cooperation with local groups and their networks that the Shoah Foundation's global mission could ever be successful.

For a more 'organically' grown project like the Fortunoff Video Archive, getting in touch with survivors was a much less complicated issue: as a grassroots movement, the Holocaust Survivors Film Project was itself part of a network. The first interviewees were friends, family members and acquaintances from New Haven and later on also from other American cities. This network was also connected to survivors in other countries, who in turn were organized in similar networks and gradually then were also interviewed themselves. To conduct these interviews more people were trained in the particular practice of the Fortunoff Video Archive and then sent out to record the interviews wherever the survivors were living.

Whereas the Shoah Foundation thus always had a global mission that could only succeed through cooperation with local organizations, the Fortunoff Video Archive's originally local network expanded over time so that its collection today also includes interviews conducted on various continents. Both developments thus point to the cosmopolitanization of Holocaust memory.

### Databases

As the Holocaust Survivors Film Project was from the start occupied with recording the interviews, handing over the tapes to Yale University made it possible for the recordings to be accessible. Scholars dealing with the narrative structures of autobiographical accounts, with memory and trauma, or with the Holocaust as a historical event could all view the videos at Yale's university library. In the early days of the video project, during the analogue era, viewing the material meant watching it on VCRs from start to finish, as videocassettes are only linearly accessible and the interview content was then not yet searchable. The building of a computerized database for the university library, which from the mid-1980s would include the witness interviews, was the first sign of the witness testimony's transition to the digital era. This made the interviews easier to search on site; global access of the kind now possible through Orbis, the Yale university library catalogue, was then still unthinkable.

For the Shoah Foundation and its goal of collecting at least 50,000 witness testimonies, on the other hand, it was clear from the outset that indexing the interviews' content would be of central importance. To this end a cataloguing and indexing system was developed. This so-called Testimony Catalogue lists personal information (name, place of birth, family, religion), relevant places (ghettos, camps) and general experiences (hiding, resistance, flight, forced marches), all information taken from questionnaires filled out by the interviewees in preparation for the interview. The witness interviews are additionally indexed with the help of a thesaurus comprised of 50,000 terms, the majority of which are geographical. During the indexing process the video recordings are divided in one-minute segments, which are then accorded one or more relevant terms by a historical content analyst or indexer. Using a keyword search and through the search terms' links to time codes, thematic



FIG. 2.1. Interface of the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive online, showing the testimony of Basia Toporski. Website capture.

passages from an interview can be called up to the precise minute. This database function on the one hand implies users who search for specific locations and on the other users who do not view entire interviews but only fragments of them.

The difference in registering the interviews that becomes apparent when comparing the Fortunoff Video Archive and the Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive especially clarifies the media-technological developments that took place over the fifteen years that separate the beginnings of the two projects: the analogue recording process of video technology, which requires a linear playback of the tape, stands in sharp contrast to the database logic of the digital age that is based on fragmentation. That the Fortunoff Video Archive now also makes use of digital possibilities will be shown later. The fragmentation of the statements and the ability to call these up by means of keywords imply a change of attitude in watching the interviews. There is a difference between inserting a videocassette in a VCR about which one only knows that it will contain the testimony of a Holocaust survivor and clicking a keyword that triggers a brief interview excerpt. In the latter case one surely is less likely to listen empathetically in the way that viewers are often thought to do when faced with Holocaust survivor testimony. The argument that video testimony shows 'whole human beings'<sup>23</sup> can also be called into question in light of the statements' fragmentation. And, finally, another aspect of the database causes unease in connection to the Holocaust, as systematic data collection was just what the Nazis used to identify Jews, Roma and Sinti.<sup>24</sup>

The multitude of languages resulting from the Shoah Foundation's global reach in collecting testimony presents an additional challenge for the indexing of the collection by the minute. In order for the database to function, the keywords need to be standardized. This does not only mean that the spelling of names and places needs to be standardized, but also that the indexing thesaurus can only exist in one language — which, in the case of the Visual History Archive's interviews in thirty-two different languages, means translating any non-English testimony. As the thesaurus is composed of English terms, all interviews in other languages had to be transferred into English keywords. It is only through this translation that any particular witness testimony can be found in the database at all. Prerequisite for access to the multilingual archive of the Shoah Foundation is thus the use and knowledge of its standard language, English.

### Digitization

The ease of use of video technology makes it ideally suited to recording interviews, though using video as a storage medium also has its difficulties. As it is a known fact that the life span of videocassettes is limited, the Fortunoff Video Archive started to copy its tapes in the mid-1990s.<sup>25</sup> The development of other video standards also presents issues, as the eventual discontinuation of the players necessary to view the recorded material inevitably means that after the last suitable machine breaks down, the material will no longer be accessible. Copying the older material onto new tapes thus often also means a reformatting to a more up-to-date video format. The Shoah Foundation decided to record its interviews on Beta SP, a professional (analogue) format also used for television. Yet this format too has since been superseded, which is why the Foundation is now working to convert all its 52,000 videos into digital Motion JPEG 2000 files — a project undertaken with the help of robotic technology and documented on the Foundation's homepage and YouTube Channel.<sup>26</sup>

As already mentioned, videocassettes require viewing on site. Although it is possible to make copies, this process always involves a loss of data and thus a degradation in quality. The fact that the Shoah Foundation makes copies of the interviews available to interested institutional parties (museums, libraries, educational institutes and so on) might have been a reason for their choice of a high-resolution (analogue) video format, as it guarantees the copies' image quality. The digitization of video formats, however, opens up brand new possibilities: not only does copying no longer entail any loss of data or quality, the interviews can also be copied in many different ways (to discs, hard drives and so on) and they can be distributed much more easily. The convenient DVD medium, for instance, means a considerable saving on storage space for the many institutes that possess copies of part of the Foundation's collection.<sup>27</sup> In their digital incarnation the interviews ultimately separate themselves from their material carriers even more and it becomes technically possible to view them anywhere (no longer just at the site of the archive). Yet, there are numerous obstacles still blocking global access to Holocaust witness testimony, as will be shown later on.

The Shoah Foundation started the digitization of its circa 100,000 hours of material in 2008, and by May 2012 96% of the interviews had been converted into

digital form. Aside from preservation copies in the Motion JPEG 2000 format there were also copies made in other formats (MPEG1 and 2, QuickTime, Flash, Windows Media Player) in order to enable 'access to the testimonies by students, academics, and researchers *around the world*'.<sup>28</sup>

Parts of the Fortunoff Video Archive collection are now also available in digital form (through the support of the Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas [Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe], among other organizations). This digitization not only aims to preserve the interviews, but also to improve their availability and 'provide our testimonies to other universities and museums for research purposes'.<sup>29</sup> Given this self-description as a research archive, one can conclude that new media have clearly contributed to a shift in the rationale behind the collection, which originally started as a counter-public project.

### Local Archives and Global Access

The Shoah Foundation firstly makes its interviews accessible through single videocassettes or DVDs available to interested institutions (museums, memorials, libraries, history workshops, survivors' groups, Jewish communities and so on). Secondly, it has also drawn up licensing agreements with selected institutions that allow these access to the entire Visual History Archive. Though at first this was only possible from American institutions, soon licenses were granted around the world — completely in agreement with the global mission of the archive's interview collection — with Berlin's Free University (Freie Universität Berlin; FU) the first non-US institution to gain access to the entire archive. Prerequisites of any cooperation with the Visual History Archive are being connected to a high-performance network (Internet 2 or GÉANT, for example) that guarantees data speeds of at least 100 mbps, a video server with at least 1 TB of storage space, as well as the capacity to provide archive users with assistance. These requirements explain why the licensed partners of the Visual History Archive are almost exclusively universities, as these are bound to be connected to research networks with high-transmission capacities anyway. These transmission rates and storage capacities are necessary because the Shoah Foundation uses the Internet to send the video testimonies as MPEG1 files from Los Angeles to cooperating institutions, where they are then stored on local servers. As local capacity is limited, these institutions never host a complete copy of the entire collection, only a part of it. At the FU in Berlin, for instance, only copies of the German-language interviews and those related to the city of Berlin are kept. Should someone be interested in testimony that is not (yet) locally available, those specific files will be requested from Los Angeles and usually uploaded to the local server within hours.

In order to view the video testimony you thus have to visit an archive or library that either has a collection of videocassettes or DVDs or is connected to the Visual History Archive through a research network that provides access to all 52,000 interviews. These licensed institutions — thirty-eight in total, twenty-three of which are in the US — can be found in ten countries: the others are Canada, Australia, Israel, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland, the United Kingdom and Greece.

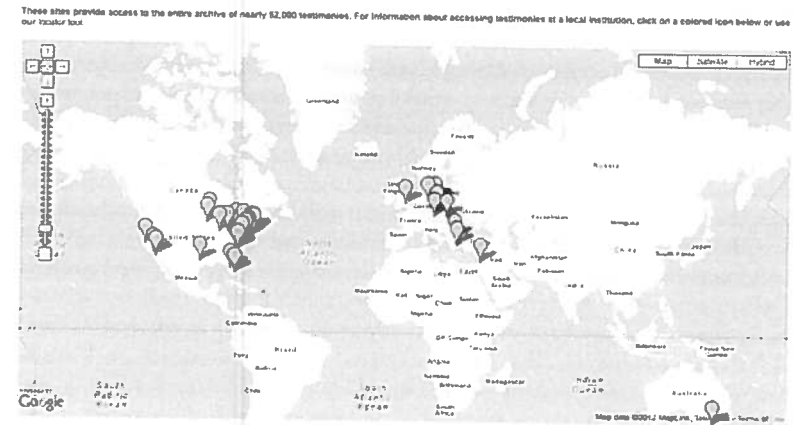


FIG. 2.2. Global map of institutions with public access to the USC Shoah Foundation's video archive. Website capture. Visual History Archive online.

What is striking about both the contents of the local servers of these major partners and the video collections of the (at this time 175) 'small' institutions that feature material from the Visual History Archive is that their selection is based on their respective national perspective. Just as it seems self-evident that the German-language interviews were the first ones uploaded onto the FU servers in Berlin, so have Holocaust memorials, Jewish museums and cultural centres in Europe, Australia and New Zealand almost exclusively collected videos that were recorded in their country or language. The Joods Historisch Museum in Amsterdam, for instance, holds 1049 video interviews that were recorded in the Netherlands, the War Memorial Museum in Auckland fifty-three interviews conducted in New Zealand, the Center for Jewish Studies in Bucharest five interviews in Romanian, and the Jewish community in Zagreb six interviews in Croatian. Despite the global orientation of the Shoah Foundation's interview project the composition of the local collections is just as limited to the national perspective as before. These collections thus do not differ significantly from many other witness archives whose local or national historical focus has always been explicit.

The video interviews of the Fortunoff Video Archive are also accessible from various places. The interviews that came into being through the assistance of local organizations are included in the collections of those institutions and are thus accessible there as well. About a quarter of the complete archive has been digitized and made accessible to the Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the organization that also funded the digitization process. These video testimonies are viewable in the Information Centre of the Berlin Holocaust Memorial as well as the offices of the foundation, alongside interviews conducted by the foundation itself or by one of its other partners.

The selection of interviews from the Fortunoff Video Archive that is accessible in Berlin is greatly influenced by the place where they can be seen. The Memorial

to the Murdered Jews of Europe is a tourist attraction which has significantly contributed to Berlin's city branding due to its impressive design and central location, between the Brandenburg Gate and Potsdamer Platz. As a tourist destination the Memorial has many international visitors, whom it provides with information in many languages, and the video interviews that can be viewed at the Information Centre also cover a wide range of languages. The database of the Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, which covers all the video testimonies, is also a testament to the efforts to make the archive accessible to as many different users as possible: all the interviews are transcribed in their original language and translated into German in their entirety. It is possible to read these texts while you watch the testimonies.<sup>30</sup>

The archive's location in Berlin clearly shows the tension between the local and the global that characterizes the witness archive in the new millennium. On the one hand, it is evident from looking at the Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive that, despite its worldwide collection of witness testimony, this global archive is dominated by local or national historical access. The design of the database definitely contributes to this, as it enables filtering for a single language and as its thesaurus of 50,000 keywords, 'most of which are of geographic nature',<sup>31</sup> already suggests that most searches are for places. The Fortunoff Video Archive interviews available at the Berlin Holocaust Memorial, on the other hand, make it clear that any transnational archive use is also dependent on the archive's location.

### Holocaust Testimony on the Internet

Although the Shoah Foundation's project to interview as many survivors as possible was pressed for time since its inception, fifty years after the Holocaust, it can be argued from a media-technological standpoint that to keep pace with contemporary technological developments it started too soon. While the Shoah Foundation is still digitizing its collection and uploading this to its institutional partners' servers, the technological possibilities have long since developed much further. The fact that the Shoah Foundation has made copies of its digitized videos in various formats already shows that it has long anticipated new ways of transmission and access. Web/database gateways and video compression and streaming technology indeed do not just enable online database access, but also the viewing of video testimony on the Internet.

In the light of their affinity for technology and their global mission it is no wonder that the Shoah Foundation has long aimed to provide a web-based solution to accessing its archive. Parts of the Visual History Archive are already accessible online today. Once registered as a user, anyone can search the database online for names, experience groups (e.g. 'Jewish survivor', 'homosexual survivor', 'liberator'), keywords, as well as the language in which interviews were conducted. Via the homepage of the Visual History Archive Online, it is furthermore possible to stream over 1000 English-language video testimonies. In large part these interviews have been placed on YouTube, where the Shoah Foundation has its own channel. Whereas the Visual History Archive Online, with its search functionality and its

partitioning in segments that are visible and searchable during the video streaming, is clearly aimed at and based on (scholarly) research, the rationale behind the placement of Holocaust testimony on YouTube is mainly to make the videos easily accessible to anyone (without the need for registration). This was made possible through the release agreement the interview partners signed, which transferred all rights to this type of utilization to the Shoah Foundation.<sup>32</sup>

The video testimony of the Fortunoff Video Archive, on the other hand, cannot be found online (with the exception of a few interview compilations and edited testimonies that were created in the 1980s and placed on YouTube by Yale University in 2009). The Fortunoff Video Archive has secured control over its collection through the contracts it drew up with its cooperation partners. The contract stipulates, for instance, that the interviews in the collection of the Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe are not allowed to be edited, and that they are exclusively accessible at the Information Centre and at the Foundation's offices. Any use of excerpts, for example in presentations or lectures, requires an official request to be filed with the Fortunoff Video Archive. This usage limitation is not least based on legal grounds, as the Holocaust survivors were promised the protection of their interests and the right to deny permission for any further use of their testimony. While it has passed on its collection to various other institutions, the Fortunoff Video Archive thus secures its power over the collection.

Although many interviewees might not have any objection to the publication of their testimony on the Internet, the Fortunoff Video Archive does not make their testimony available online. This decision is, on the one hand, based on wanting to protect the interests of Holocaust survivors; after all, these conversations feature some deeply personal stories. On the other hand, the foundation is trying to prevent the testimony from being abused. It is well known that interviews with witnesses can contain factual errors: names or dates can be falsely recalled, media depictions mix with people's own experiences, and descriptions of traumatic experiences often do not exactly match the verifiable, intersubjective external reality.<sup>33</sup> Holocaust deniers use these 'faulty' statements by survivors to strengthen their arguments.

Eric Hunt, for instance, uses for his internet-distributed film *The Last Days of the Big Lie* (2009) interview excerpts from the Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive to expose 'Steven Spielberg's Holocaust Hoax', to cite the subtitle of this 124-minute concoction. Statements by interviewed survivors are called into question through confrontation with other documents and otherwise used to trivialize the Holocaust. 'Out of 50,000 video interviews there must be some Jews telling some semblances of truth about life in the concentration camps', starts the voice-over of a sequence in which various witnesses recall camp orchestras, plays, the soccer league, painting, libraries and movie theaters, as well as report on the beer and cigarettes that were for sale in the camp canteens. These statements were taken from Shoah Foundation interviews that are accessible online and have been downloaded and edited to be part of Hunt's relativist, revisionist and anti-Semitic project.

The archives under discussion here react very differently to the mash-up culture of the digital age that generates new meanings from recombined audiovisual material: while the Fortunoff Video Archive controls the distribution of its interviews, the

Shoah Foundation makes its videos accessible to anyone. Furthermore, as will be shown, it even encourages its users to make these kinds of remixes. This does not just change the rationale behind Holocaust testimony collection, but it also gives the testimony itself a new role.

### New Roles for Testimony Archives

Video testimony of the Holocaust has many roles: for survivors the act of testifying can be a kind of indictment or it can have a therapeutic effect; for the viewer it can be a source of information or an admonition. It functions as a historical source, provides insight into the construction of meaning and into memory processes, inspires literary works and enriches historical exhibitions with its personal stories. The vast number of already available recordings presents every researcher with the challenge of choosing which testimonies to view. Faced with the lack of an overview of the complete collection it is no wonder that, in the case of the Visual History Archive, users with no particular search in mind are likely to start their research based on geographical locations.

The Shoah Foundation reacts to this issue by acting as a curator and suggesting to different user groups specific selections.<sup>34</sup> The website sets out 'Testimony Clips', 'Online Exhibits' and 'Segments for the Classroom' on specific themes, with the possibility of also watching the entire interviews if the user chooses. These recommendations guarantee the users meaningful interview excerpts without having to sift through the extensive database and view the interviews in their entirety.

Along with this pre-selection of interviews, the Shoah Foundation now more strongly takes on an educational role, which it has also explicitly included in its strategies. Aside from interview excerpts, the website also features educational and teaching material for schools (in various languages), and it also organizes various (international) workshops for teachers. With its suggestion of including video testimony in the classroom, the Shoah Foundation is responding to students' growing media consumption,<sup>35</sup> and the teaching objectives to be achieved with the use of Holocaust testimony are extremely diverse: they can 'provide a human face to history', help 'appreciate the invalidity of stereotypes, misconceptions, and/or generalizations', 'provide students with an affective understanding of history', 'help students identify different types of information available in primary sources' and 'sensitize students to the distinction between fact and opinion, and essential and non-essential information'.<sup>36</sup> Since 2011, teachers who are invited to join the IWitness Community have been able to do so by using IWitness, an educational tool developed by the Shoah Foundation, Yad Vashem, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and other institutions that makes more than 1000 interviews accessible for educational purposes (and is still in its testing phase in 2012).

The interviews in the Fortunoff Video Archive are also increasingly integrated in teaching. The Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, for instance, offers a wide range of options for schools, including project days in the video archive.<sup>37</sup> Its Information Centre furthermore accentuates another way the witness testimony is used: in its 'Room of Sites' audio stations are installed where visitors can sit down and listen to the memories of survivors who talk about their

experience at one of the places that are presented in the exhibition. The specific way the testimonies are presented and the intensity of the interviews invites visitors to pause and listen, thereby stimulating empathy and commemorating the victims to whom the monument is dedicated. Here, the interviews are first acknowledged as testimony and appreciated in terms of the memorial and commemorative moment they represent.<sup>38</sup>

Both testimony archives show evidence of shifts in their original goals and roles. Whereas the Holocaust Survivors Film Project aimed to give survivors the opportunity to tell the story of their lives, the testimonies in the Fortunoff Video Archive are nowadays used as historical sources, as texts in literary or trauma studies, or to commemorate the Holocaust itself. In the case of the Shoah Foundation interviews, the shift becomes even more apparent: their goal initially was to collect as many interviews as possible, then it became to make them searchable and to digitize the video tapes. Whereas the interviews were collected as Holocaust testimony, they are now being used to stimulate tolerance (through its Testimony to Tolerance Initiative) and to serve as comparisons to memories of other genocides, which the Shoah Foundation has been collecting in the form of interviews with genocide survivors in Armenia, Cambodia and Rwanda since 2011.

The Shoah Foundation in particular focuses more on education. Its Holocaust testimony does not serve solely to teach tolerance and humanity. The Shoah Foundation also wants to use its IWitness educational tool to contribute to practicing new media applications. Besides the conveying of historical knowledge, 'digital citizenship' and 'multi-literacies for the 21st century' are also central teaching goals of the online educational tool. Just as the name suggests that students working with IWitness will become secondary witnesses of the Holocaust,<sup>39</sup> so the website emphasizes that 'students have the opportunity to use technology to become more active learners while encountering survivors and other eyewitnesses talking about their experiences before, during and after the Holocaust. This application empowers them to participate in their own learning by providing them with the tools to think critically, investigate, develop projects, analyze, and collaborate with others'.<sup>40</sup> And thus the testimony is reframed as practice material to learn digital citizenship skills.

In line with this teaching aim, IWitness also makes it possible to cut together a video of one's own using material from the interviews. This functionality not only attracts those interested in following in Spielberg's footsteps, but it mainly responds to the mash-up and remix culture of the digital age. With the aim of developing media literacy, students are invited to use the witness testimony to develop 'a thoughtful visual dialogue by editing your own video projects and sharing them with the community'.<sup>41</sup> The monitoring by the teachers who can follow the progress and the projects of their students seems to guarantee that the mash-ups will not be used to relativize the Holocaust. The 'Editing Ethics' tutorial furthermore explains the 'Editing Basics and Ethics for IWitness Users',<sup>42</sup> which again are based on the standards for digital citizenship.

That the tasks and goals of witness archives transform over time is self-evident — just as is the fact that the witnesses' memories and the politics of memory change.



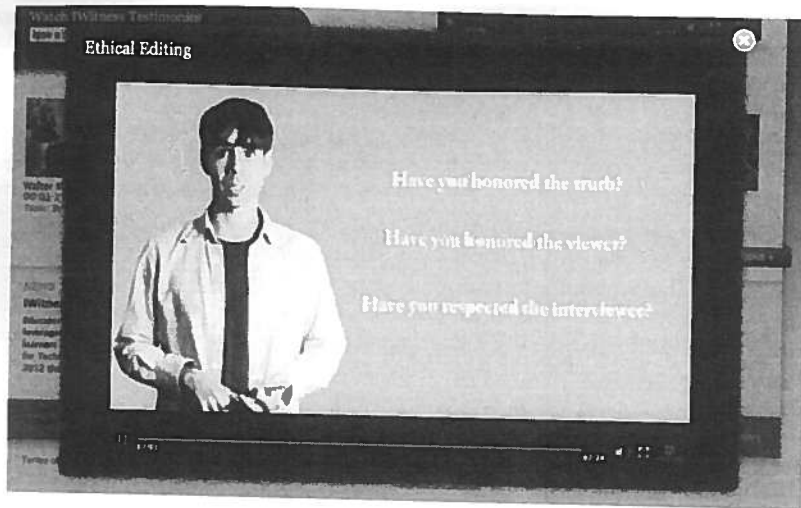


FIG. 2.3. 'Editing Ethics' Tutorial on IWitness. Website capture.

After a phase in which the survivors' need to tell their stories was key, much now revolves around the archives' use to younger generations. The media the archives have on offer grant us insight into the way they see themselves as well as the way they see their users. One current answer to Kushner's question about the use of testimony today is that it forms part of attempts to enhance digital literacy. The Shoah Foundation's interviews, with their specific forms of media processing (database, segmentation, digitization and so on), present an excellent training ground for this development.

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#### Websites

- 'About Us', *IWitness Website, USC Shoah Foundation* <<http://iwitness.usc.edu/SFI/About.aspx>> [accessed 16 May 2012]
- 'Cataloguing Guidelines', *USC Shoah Foundation Website* <[http://sfi.usc.edu/download/Cataloguing\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://sfi.usc.edu/download/Cataloguing_Guidelines.pdf)> [accessed 16 May 2012]
- 'Considerations and Guidelines for the Use of Visual History Testimony in Education', *USC Shoah Foundation Website* <[http://sfi.usc.edu/download/Considerations%20and%20Guidelines%20for%20the%20Use%20of%20Visual%20History%20Testimony%20in%20Education\\_10.19.pdf](http://sfi.usc.edu/download/Considerations%20and%20Guidelines%20for%20the%20Use%20of%20Visual%20History%20Testimony%20in%20Education_10.19.pdf)> [accessed 16 May 2012]
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- 'Preservation Effort Underway', *USC Shoah Foundation Website* <<http://dornsife.usc.edu/vhi/album/index.php?nid=532>> [accessed 16 May 2012]

- 'Preserving History', *USC Shoah Foundation YouTube Channel* <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avqW5yzKzxM&feature=plcp>> [accessed 8 November 2012]
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#### Notes to Chapter 2

I would like to thank Verena-Lucia Nägel and Daniel Baranowski, who have generously granted me insight into the working methods of the Visual History Archive at the Freie Universität Berlin and the video archive of the Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas.

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- Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 55.
- The dating of the first real public awareness and recognition of Holocaust survivors varies from country to country, and is closely related to their political function within society. See, in the case of the US, Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999); and in that of Israel, Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York: Owl Books, 2000).
- Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, p. 57.
- Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, revised and enlarged edition (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 225.
- See 'The Eichmann Trial', *Television Age*, 7 August 1961, p. 27.
- Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, trans. by Assenka Oksiloff (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), p. 16.
- James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 164.
- Kushner, 'Holocaust Testimonies, Ethics, and the Problem of Representation', p. 275.
- On the use of testimony in historical studies, see Christopher R. Browning, *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), and Kushner, 'Holocaust Testimonies, Ethics, and the Problem of Representation'. On its use in television, see Judith Keilbach, *Geschichtsbilder und Zeitzengen: Zur Darstellung des Nationalsozialismus im bundesdeutschen Fernsehen* (Münster: Lit, 2008).
- For more on this, see Henry Greenspan and Sidney Bolkosky, 'When Is an Interview an Interview? Notes from Listening to Holocaust Survivors', *Poetics Today*, 27 (2006), 431–49.
- Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, pp. 207–26.
- See Joanne Weiner Rudolf, 'A Yale University and New Haven Community Project: From Local to Global' (2007) <[http://www.library.yale.edu/testimonies/publications/Local\\_to\\_Global.pdf](http://www.library.yale.edu/testimonies/publications/Local_to_Global.pdf)> [accessed 16 May 2012].
- Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 133.
- Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 176–77.
- See, for example, Shoshana Felman, 'Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching', in



- Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1–56 (p. 46).
17. Hartman, *The Longest Shadow*, p. 144.
18. Levy and Sznajder, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, p. 152.
19. On the archontic function of archives see Jacques Derrida, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression', *Diacritics*, 25.2 (Summer 1995), 9–63 (p. 10).
20. The foundation was funded by the proceeds of *Schindler's List*.
21. The highest numbers of interviews were recorded in the US (19,841 interviews) and Israel (8504), followed by Ukraine (3433). In Poland there were 1438 interviews, in Hungary 802, in Russia 675, in Slovakia 656, in Bulgaria 611, in the Czech Republic 566, in Belarus 248, in Bosnia-Herzegovina 55, in Croatia 326, in Estonia 9, in Georgia 6, in Latvia 79, in Lithuania 137, in Kazakhstan 6, in Macedonia 9, in Moldavia 278, in Romania 146, in Serbia and Montenegro 345, in Slovenia 11, and in Uzbekistan 25.
22. 'The Interview', *USC Shoah Foundation Website* <<http://dornsife.usc.edu/vhi/theinterview.php>> [accessed 16 May 2012].
23. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, p. 163.
24. Cf. Edwin Black, *IBM and the Holocaust: The Strategic Alliance between Nazi Germany and America's Most Powerful Corporation* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2001). The adoption of identity categories such as 'homosexual survivor', 'Jewish survivor', 'Jehovah's Witness', or 'Sinti and Roma', which the Shoah Foundation uses to describe different 'experience groups', appears especially problematic.
25. Rudolf, 'A Yale University and New Haven Community Project', p. 11.
26. 'Preserving the Archive', *USC Shoah Foundation Website* <<http://dornsife.usc.edu/vhi/preservation/technical.php>> [accessed 16 May 2012]; 'Preservation Effort Underway', *USC Shoah Foundation Website* <<http://dornsife.usc.edu/vhi/album/index.php?mid=532>> [accessed 16 May 2012]; 'Preserving History', *USC Shoah Foundation YouTube Channel* <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awqW5yzKzXM&feature=plcp>> [accessed 8 November 2012].
27. Cf. Derek Kompare, 'Publishing Flow: DVD Box Sets and the Reconception of Television', *Television & New Media*, 7 (2006), 335–60 (p. 346).
28. 'Preserving the Archive', <<http://dornsife.usc.edu/vhi/preservation/technical.php>> [accessed 16 May 2012]; author's emphasis.
29. Rudolf, 'A Yale University and New Haven Community Project', p. 17.
30. These transcripts cannot however be searched in full and the keywords are not created according to a given thesaurus but result from each individual's interview. For more on this, see Daniel Baranowski, 'Die Singularität des Zeugnisses: Zu den Auswertungen des Videoarchivs am Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas', in *Ich bin die Stimme der sechs Millionen: Das Videoarchiv im Ort der Information*, ed. by Daniel Baranowski (Berlin: Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, 2009), pp. 72–86 (p. 82).
31. 'Cataloguing Guidelines', *USC Shoah Foundation Website* <[http://stf.usc.edu/download/Cataloguing\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://stf.usc.edu/download/Cataloguing_Guidelines.pdf)> [accessed 16 May 2012], p. 3.
32. 'Interviewee Release Agreement', *USC Shoah Foundation Website* <[http://stf.usc.edu/download/Release\\_Agreement.pdf](http://stf.usc.edu/download/Release_Agreement.pdf)> [accessed 16 May 2012].
33. On 'false' memories, see Dori Laub, 'Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening', in Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, pp. 57–74 (pp. 59–63).
34. On the role of the curator, see Robert Gehl, 'YouTube as Archive: Who Will Curate this Digital Wunderkammer?', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 12 (2009), 43–60.
35. 'Considerations and Guidelines for the Use of Visual History Testimony in Education', *USC Shoah Foundation Website* <[http://stf.usc.edu/download/Considerations%20and%20Guidelines%20for%20the%20Use%20of%20Visual%20History%20Testimony%20in%20Education\\_10\\_19.pdf](http://stf.usc.edu/download/Considerations%20and%20Guidelines%20for%20the%20Use%20of%20Visual%20History%20Testimony%20in%20Education_10_19.pdf)> [accessed 16 May 2012], p. 3.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.
37. 'Projekttag im Videoarchiv', *Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas Website* <<http://www.stiftung-denkmal.de/besuch/angebote-fuer-schulen/projekttag-im-videoarchiv.html#e1548>> [accessed 16 May 2012].
38. Baranowski, 'Die Singularität des Zeugnisses', p. 74.

39. On the concept of secondary or intellectual witnesses, see Geoffrey H. Hartman, 'Shoah and Intellectual Witness', *Partisan Review*, 65.1 (1998), 37–48.
40. 'About Us', *IIWitness Website, USC Shoah Foundation* <<http://iwwitness.usc.edu/SFI/About.aspx>> [accessed 19 May 2012].
41. 'Who Can Join?', *IIWitness Website, USC Shoah Foundation* <<http://iwwitness.usc.edu/SFI/account/register.aspx>> [accessed 19 May 2012].
42. 'Editing Ethics', *IIWitness Website, USC Shoah Foundation* <<http://iwwitness.usc.edu/SFI/Default.aspx>> [accessed 19 May 2012].