



Visual History Archive

Visual Archives in Education & Research:

The Visual History Archive (VHA)

of the „*Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education*“
of the University of Southern California

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1. What is the Visual History Archive (VHA)

The Visual History Archive is the world's largest online archive of video testimonies.

It contains 52,000 video testimonies of Holocaust survivors and other witnesses.

The interviews were conducted in the years 1994 - 1999.

The interviews were done by volunteers in 56 countries and in 32 languages.

Languages

32 languages:

24,827 interviews in English
7,085 interviews in Russian
6,302 interviews in Hebrew
1,879 interviews in French
1,566 interviews in Polish
1.354 interviews in Spanish
1.349 interviews in Hungarian
931 interviews in German

...

56 countries:

19,841 interviews in the U.S.A
8,504 interviews in Israel
3,433 interviews in the Ukraine
674 interviews in Germany
15 interviews in Colombia

...

Who was interviewed?

Video testimonies of Holocaust survivors and other witnesses

Survivors:

- Jewish Survivors	49,000
- Sinti & Roma Survivors (Gypsies)	400
- Political Prisoner Survivors	160
- Homosexual Survivors	8
- Jehovahs Witness Survivors	80
- Survivors of Eugenics Policies	13

Witnesses:

- Rescuers & Aid Providers	1,100
- Liberators & Liberation Witnesses	360
- War Crime Trials Participants	70

2. Indexing and Cataloguing

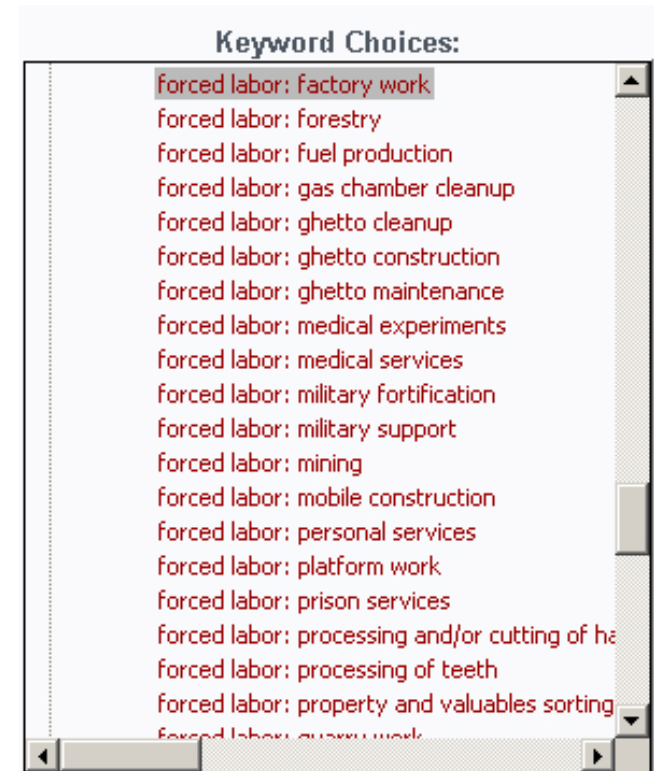
By 2005 most of the material was digitized, catalogued, indexed and integrated into a web-based platform.

Cataloguing:

The interviewees filled out questionnaires, which were used for cataloguing.

Indexing:

The contents have been made searchable by dividing the interviews into one-minute segments, which were matched with words from a thesaurus.





Interview Interface: Gad Beck

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S E A R C H
 V I E W I N G S C R E E N

Gad Beck



Choose One:

- ◀ Video
- Slide Show

<< Tape 2 >>

Right-click on your mouse for additional video controls.

- ZOOM adjusts the size of the video screen.
- VOLUME adjusts the sound.

To start video, click here:

- All Keywords in this Segment ▶
- All People in this Segment
- Biographical Profile
- All People in this Testimony
- Donor Recognition

Keywords for Segment #49

forced labor
 Berlin (Prussia, Germany)
 Germany 1939 (September 1) - 1945 (May 7)

Keywords for Segment #50

- Maximize/Minimize Data
- Next Segment
- Previous Segment
- Back to Search Results
- Choose New Search
- Save to Projects

Project Webpage

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Das Visual History Archive an der Freien Universität Berlin

Die Freie Universität Berlin ermöglicht als erste europäische Universität den Zugang zu dem Visual History Archive des Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education der University of Southern California (USC). Studierende, Lehrende und Forschende der Freien Universität sowie externe WissenschaftlerInnen und Forschungseinrichtungen haben Zugriff auf das weltweit größte historische Video-Archiv. Das Archiv beinhaltet etwa 52.000 Video-Zeitzeugeninterviews mit Überlebenden und Zeugen des Holocaust.



Diese Internetpräsenz bietet Informationen zu den Hintergründen und Nutzungsmöglichkeiten des Visual History Archive und den Angeboten an der Freien Universität Berlin.

- [Nutzungshinweise »](#)
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News

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Evaluation der Nutzerfreundlichkeit des Visual History Archive
17.09.2007

▶ [30.08 -1.09: Tagung - Zwangsarbeit und Nationalsozialismus](#)

Vorstellung des Visual History Archive in einem Workshop und auf dem Markt der Möglichkeiten
09.08.2007

▶ [Zusammenarbeit mit der Topographie des Terrors](#)

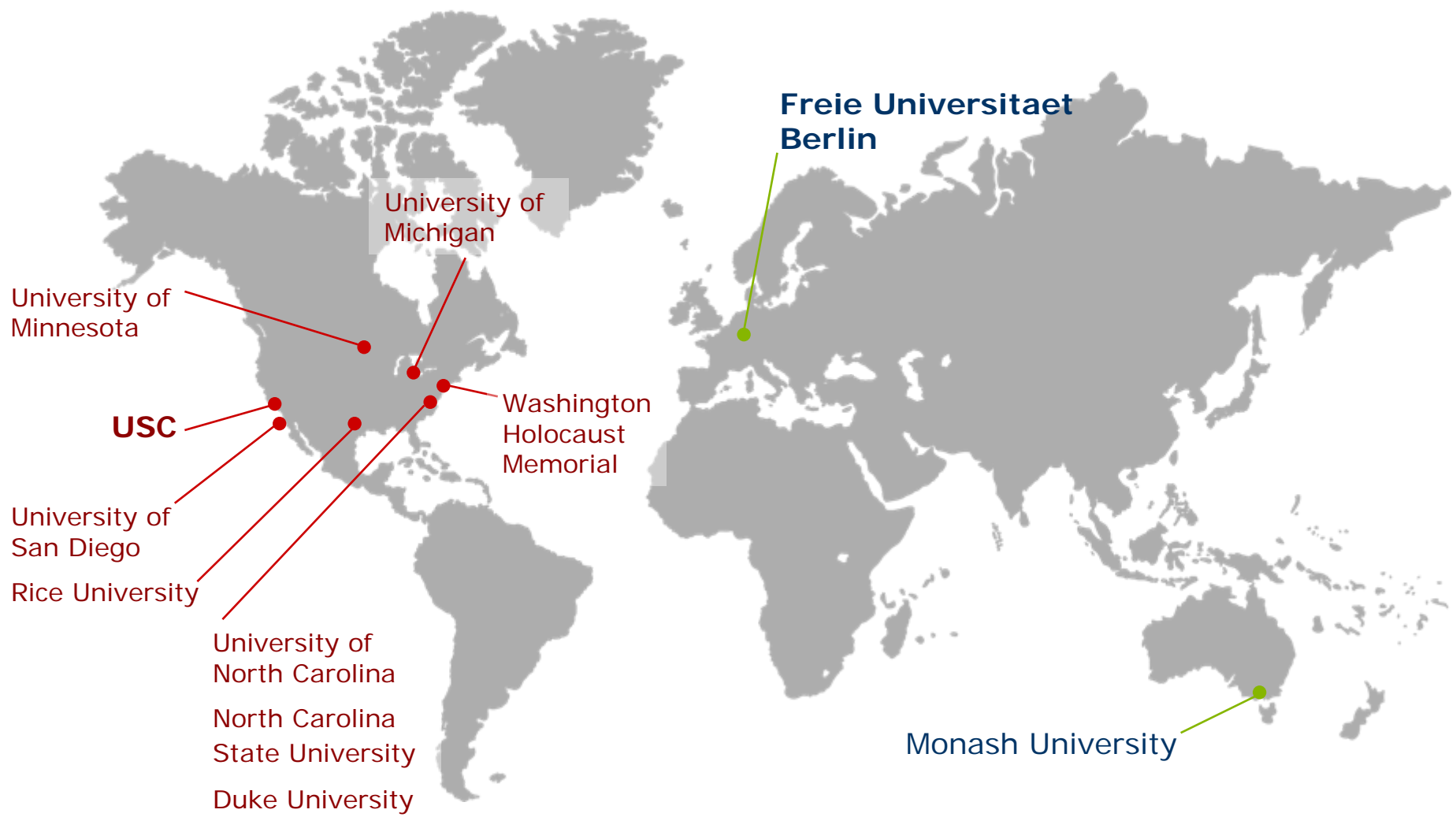
Projekt zur Evaluation der Usability des Visual History Archive
06.07.2007

[weitere News »](#)

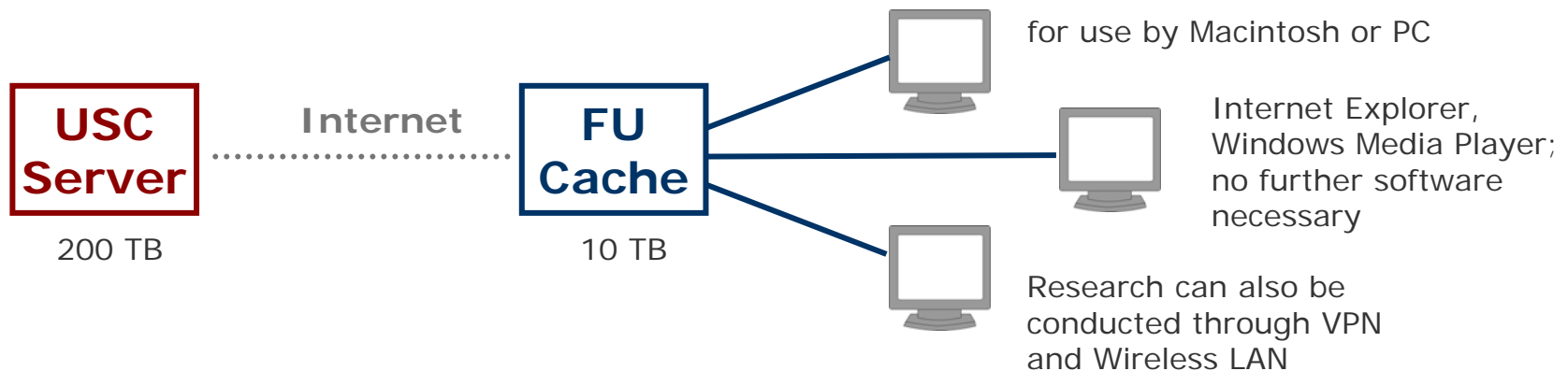
www.vha.fu-berlin.de



Full Access to the Visual History Archive



Technical Realization



- All research functions are permanently available – but most of the videos need to be ordered before they can be watched.
- The videos are provided by USC in MPEG1 format (high quality – cannot be streamed over the internet – need constant high data exchange rate 3Mbit/sec).
- Videos are transferred from USC to a local FU cache server. Users access the video cache through the quick local network.
- All German interviews are permanently available. Additional interviews can be requested and then stay on the server.
- Videos can only be seen at the FU!

The VHA at the Freie Universitaet Berlin

In November 2006 the complete archive was made available at the Freie Universitaet Berlin.

In addition to FU members, academics from various European countries have used the VHA at the Freie Universitaet Berlin.

There were 860 new registered users in one semester.

Utilizing the Archive

Unlike other archives the VHA is well-suited for teaching!

- Material is digitized and therefore not sensitive to over or improper use.
- Interviews can be accessed promptly.
- Parallel work with the material is possible.
- The structure and indexing is consistent and clear. Therefore it is easy for users to navigate through the material.
- Users can save “notes” and research results in a personalized section of the interface.

Learner-group: University Students

The Archive was used in very different fields at different departments of the Free University Berlin:

Departments of

History, Political Science, English and German Philology, Film Studies,
...

The VHA was used for example

- as a historical resource, providing additional facts (Oral History)
- as an example for the discussion of international remembrance-cultures
- to teach qualitative methods in Social Sciences (by analyzing interviews)
- to analyze film methods and approaches

Learner-group: High School Pupils

Experience with school-classes (10th grade – age 16)

Aim: The interviews should add a personal perspective to information learned in school.

Approach: research by keyword (thematic)

Observation:

Pupils were unable to distinguish between a representative and an untypical situation.

Using only the archive would have led to a inaccurate picture of history.

Lesson:

Adequate background information is important - teachers need to prepare the students well.

The archive should be modified and enriched with additional features and materials which serve learner needs.

Vision

Ways to improve the Archive for learners' needs:

- To affiliate the Archive with e-Learning applications (these should give background information like legal texts, short historical overviews or introductions and then lead the students to the keyword search)
- Establish a user to user information flow that offers interactive and collaborative capabilities:
Addition of tagging facilities and user annotations
- Building a platform that includes thematically related digital archives to enable cross-over comprehensive searches of the entire contents