



Claims Conference ועידת התביעות  
The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

## International Shoah Archivists Working Forum

### ***Participant Information***

#### ***General Information***

##### ***Name and address of institution/archive:***

Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation  
PO Box 3168  
Los Angeles, CA 90078-3168

##### ***Internet address of web site, if applicable:***

[www.vhf.org](http://www.vhf.org)

##### ***Brief description of archival collecting scope in regard to the Holocaust (please indicate any focus on specific geographic areas, topics, or time periods):***

Videotaped testimonies and pre-interview questionnaires of about 51,700 Holocaust survivors and other victim groups and/or witnesses. The testimonies were taken 56 countries and in 32 languages different languages. The Foundation interviewed Jewish survivors, homosexual survivors, Jehovah's Witness survivors, liberators and liberation witnesses, political prisoners, rescuers and aid providers, Roma and Sinti survivors, survivors of Eugenics policies, and war crimes trials participants. Almost half of the archive's testimonies were collected in English – most of them in the United States. Among the 31 one other languages, over 7,000 are in Russian and over 6,300 in Hebrew. The following languages have between 1,000 or 2,000 testimonies in the archive: Dutch (1,000), French (1,800), Hungarian (1,300), Polish (1,400), Spanish (1,300). The following languages are represented with approx. 500 to 1,000 testimonies: Bulgarian (600), Czech (500), German (900), Portuguese (500), Slovak (500), Yiddish (500).

Testimonies collected usually include discussions about one's prewar (20%), wartime (60%) and postwar (20%) experience. But that is depended on an interviewee's age and experience as well.

Interviews were collected in the years from 1994 to 1999.  
They are on average 2.5 hours long.

### ***Microfilming and Digitization***

***Total estimated number of pages of Holocaust-relevant archival records (for purposes of estimating, please assume that 1 meter=10,000 pages and 1 foot=3,000 pages):***

***Estimated number of pages of original records:***

***Estimated number of pages of these original records that have been microfilmed:***

***Estimated number of pages of these original records that have been digitized:***

Pre-Interview Questionnaires (ca. 51,000): ca. 2,000,000 pages = 200 meters; all scanned/digitized (pdfs)

***Estimated number of pages of records microfilmed and/or duplicated from elsewhere:***

***Estimated number of pages of these records microfilmed and/or duplicated from elsewhere that are on microfilm: ./.***

***Estimated number of pages of these records microfilmed and/or duplicated from elsewhere that have been digitized: ./.***

### ***Conservation of Individual Items of Particular Significance***

If there are specific original archival materials in your collection that are of major historical significance and of exceptional intrinsic value that are in urgent need of conservation, please list them:

***If you know of specific original archival materials in collections other than your own that are of major historical significance and of exceptional intrinsic value that are in urgent need of conservation, please list them:***

## ***Acquisitions***

***If your archive is actively acquiring Holocaust-relevant archival records, please briefly describe your acquisitions program, including an estimate of the average number of pages acquired annually and the sources for such acquisitions (private donors, other repositories, etc.):***

***If your archive has an exchange program with other archives, please briefly describe it:***

***Does a list of your institution's microfilming and other acquisitions projects already completed and/or currently in progress exist? If so, in what form is it and how can it be accessed?***

## ***Cataloging***

***Briefly describe your current cataloging practices:***

Cataloging efforts include entering biographical data about each interviewee from Pre-Interview Questionnaires (PIQ) into a searchable database. Each experience group (Jewish survivors, Sinti and Roma Survivors etc.) has its own PIQ with questions tailored to that experience. The information in the database thus varies depending on which type of experience has been entered. Some questions, such as date, city and country of birth, are entered for all interviewees.

In addition, the Shoah Foundation is in the process of indexing each videotaped testimony assigning keywords to digital time codes. An indexer watches the testimony from beginning to end, associating keyword terms and names of people mentioned, based upon the content which emerges from the interviewee, while the system creates one minute segments.

***Estimated proportion of Holocaust-related collections in your archive that are already adequately cataloged and in what language(s):***

Catalogued: 90% of the archives

Indexed: 50% of the archives (all English language testimonies)

The Catalogue and Indexing is done in English. The source material is in 32 different languages. English-language source material constitutes almost half of the archives.

***Has your archive developed a controlled vocabulary for the cataloging of its collections? If so, please describe briefly. If not, please explain:***

A controlled vocabulary (the Shoah Foundation Thesaurus) has been developed in order to provide access to the collection of testimonies. Keywords from the Thesaurus are used to both catalogue the PIQ information and index the segmented videotaped testimonies. The structure of the Thesaurus has been guided by the ANSI/NISO Z39.19 Guidelines for the construction, format, and management of monolingual thesauri.

Relationships represented:

There are two main types of relationships between terms: equivalence and hierarchical relationships. The equivalence relationship is expressed between synonyms and sometimes quasi-synonyms. This is achieved by designating one term to be the preferred term and assigning the other terms as non-preferred terms. In addition, the Foundation's Thesaurus represents the generic and whole/part hierarchical relationships:

generic - e.g.: Places

- >settlement and landscapes
  - >settlements
    - >cities
      - >cities in Europe
        - >cities in Poland
          - Warsaw (Poland)

whole/part hierarchical - e.g.: Academic life

- education in the ghettos

Each preferred term is represented in both.

Kinds of terms:

The Thesaurus consists of two broad categories of kinds of terms— experiential terms and reference terms. Experiential terms are those keywords that are used to index the personal experiences of the individual. Although testimonial experiences themselves are often emotionally charged, these descriptors have been carefully crafted as neutral terms in an effort to avoid editorial comment. Reference terms are those that refer to a specific or named person (famous or infamous), organization, object, event, or geographic location. European geographic terms are established as of pre-WWII. All other geographic place names are established as of the year 2000. Certain terms, the specifics of which cannot be verified using the sources available at the Foundation, have been designated as unverified or grouped together under generic terms of the given name.

The Shoah Foundation Thesaurus remains a work in progress that grows as the collection continues to be indexed and refined with the discovery of more detailed research materials.

***Are the cataloging records accessible in an electronic format? If so, are they accessible to the public (if the electronic catalog is available on the Internet, please provide the Internet address)?***

A Testimony Catalogue of about 44,000 records (interviews) is available thru the Foundation's website: [www.vhf.org](http://www.vhf.org).

***Is there more detailed information such as finding aids, survey notes, or other descriptive tools available for the collections in your archive? If so, please describe (if available on the Internet, please provide the Internet address; if not available on the Internet, please attach an example). Is such more detailed information available to the public?***

## ***Accessibility***

***Briefly describe your current policies regarding access to your collections.***

A testimony catalogue searching data from Pre-Interview Questionnaires can be accessed thru the internet as described above. The video is not available thru the internet.

The videotaped collection can currently be accessed at four different sites: Tapper Center at the Shoah Foundation and at three universities: USC, Rice and Yale.

The Foundation has made and will continue to make available specific clips of testimonies on its internet website in order to provide samples of the archives and/or embedded within its educational tools which can be downloaded. Those clips are put on the website with prior permission by survivors.

***Does your archive duplicate archival collections for other repositories? If so, please explain under what circumstances:***

The Foundation has engaged and continues to engage in partnerships with like-minded institutions within the US and world-wide to provide copies of testimonies in various formats (vhs or dvd). The Foundation is committed to continue its efforts in providing copies of testimonies to the places where they were taken.