

Visual History Archive

Providing online access to universities and institutions around the globe.



Map indicates the number of testimonies collected per country
(see sf.usc.edu/collectingtestimoniesworldwide/)



Numbers of testimonies collected in each country

Visual History Archive

Introduction



PHOTO BY PETER LOPEZ

USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education is dedicated to making audio-visual interviews with survivors and other witnesses of the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity a compelling voice for education and action. With a current collection of 51,696 eyewitness testimonies, the Institute’s Visual History Archive preserves history as told by the people who

lived it. Each testimony is a unique source of insight and knowledge offering powerful stories from history that demand to be explored and shared. In this way we will be able to see their faces and hear their voices, allowing them to teach, and inspire action against intolerance.

In the spring of 2013, the Visual History Archive expanded to include testimonies from eyewitnesses of genocide from Rwanda, accomplished in collaboration with Aegis Trust and the Kigali Genocide Memorial, with additional support provided by IBUKA.

Approaching its 20th Anniversary in 2014, the Institute is committed to teaching with testimony, endeavoring to make the power of each story accessible to students, educators, scholars, and the general public on every continent.

The archive is digitized, fully searchable, and hyperlinked to the minute, allowing students, professors, researchers, and others to retrieve whole testimonies and segments within testimonies that relate to their area of interest through a set of 62,000 indexing terms, 1.2 million names, and 700,000 images. Currently, the archive is available to the public in its entirety at 48 institutions in 12 countries.

Testimonies in Research

“From the viewpoint of historians, the most important benefit of using testimonies is that they bring into history events that would otherwise remain completely unknown, since they are missing from conventional documentation found in archives—most of which was written by perpetrators and organizers of genocide. Testimonies can save events from oblivion, but they can also provide very different perspectives of events known through conventional documentation.”

—Omer Bartov,
John P. Birkelund Distinguished Professor of European History and Professor of History and Professor of German Studies,
Brown University

Number of Testimonies by Language

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------|-------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| Bulgarian | 624 | Japanese..... | 1 | Sign..... | 5 |
| Croatian..... | 393 | Kinyarwanda | 55 | Slovak..... | 566 |
| Czech | 560 | Ladino..... | 9 | Slovenian..... | 6 |
| Danish..... | 67 | Latvian..... | 1 | Spanish..... | 1,345 |
| Dutch..... | 1,076 | Lithuanian..... | 46 | Swedish..... | 264 |
| English..... | 24,683 | Macedonian..... | 9 | Ukrainian | 304 |
| Flemish..... | 5 | Norwegian | 34 | Yiddish..... | 554 |
| French..... | 1,861 | Polish..... | 1,502 | | |
| German | 922 | Portuguese | 560 | | |
| Greek..... | 305 | Romani | 24 | | |
| Hebrew..... | 6,271 | Romanian | 129 | | |
| Hungarian | 1,338 | Russian | 7,083 | | |
| Italian | 433 | Serbian | 378 | | |

Number of Testimonies Collected in Each Country

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------------|--------|
| Argentina..... | 726 | Georgia..... | 6 | Romania..... | 147 |
| Australia..... | 2,475 | Germany | 668 | Russia..... | 674 |
| Austria | 187 | Greece..... | 303 | Rwanda | 53 |
| Belarus..... | 246 | Hungary | 786 | Serbia and Montenegro | 346 |
| Belgium..... | 204 | Ireland..... | 4 | Slovakia..... | 656 |
| Bolivia..... | 23 | Israel..... | 8,450 | Slovenia..... | 11 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 55 | Italy..... | 417 | South Africa..... | 250 |
| Brazil..... | 564 | Japan..... | 1 | Spain | 7 |
| Bulgaria..... | 628 | Kazakhstan..... | 6 | Sweden | 325 |
| Canada | 2,815 | Latvia..... | 79 | Switzerland..... | 69 |
| Chile | 65 | Lithuania..... | 137 | Ukraine..... | 3,427 |
| Colombia | 15 | Macedonia | 9 | United Kingdom | 863 |
| Costa Rica | 19 | Mexico..... | 111 | United States..... | 19,759 |
| Croatia | 327 | Moldova..... | 284 | Uruguay | 122 |
| Czech Republic..... | 563 | The Netherlands | 1,044 | Uzbekistan..... | 25 |
| Denmark..... | 94 | New Zealand | 53 | Venezuela..... | 227 |
| Ecuador..... | 9 | Norway..... | 34 | Zimbabwe..... | 8 |
| Estonia..... | 9 | Peru | 2 | | |
| Finland..... | 1 | Poland..... | 1,372 | | |
| France..... | 1,651 | Portugal..... | 2 | | |

Number of Testimonies by Experience

The USC Shoah Foundation Interviewed:

Holocaust/World War II era, 1939–1945:

| | | | |
|--|--------|-------------------------------------|----|
| Jewish Survivors | 48,978 | War Crimes Trials Participants..... | 62 |
| Rescuers and Aid Providers (Holocaust) | 1,133 | Miscellaneous (WWII)..... | 32 |
| Roma and Sinti Survivors..... | 407 | Survivors of Eugenics Policies..... | 13 |
| Liberators and Liberation Witnesses | 362 | Non-Jewish Forced Laborers..... | 11 |
| Political Prisoners | 261 | Homosexual Survivors..... | 6 |
| Jehovah's Witness Survivors..... | 83 | | |

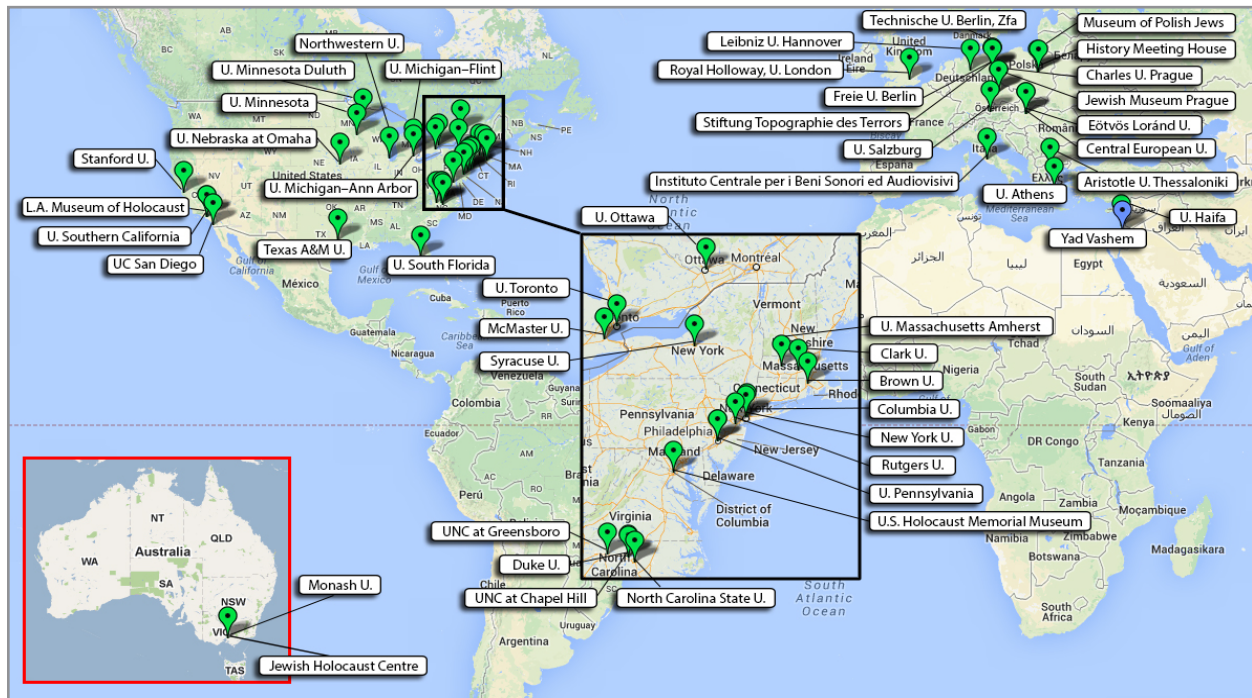
Rwandan Tutsi Genocide, 1994:*

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----|--|---|
| Tutsi Survivors | 58 | Rescuers & Aid Providers (Rwandan Tutsi Genocide)..... | 7 |
|-----------------------|----|--|---|

* Accomplished in collaboration with Aegis Trust and the Kigali Genocide Memorial, with additional support provided by IBUKA.

Visual History Archive

Universities and Institutions with Full Access



2003

University of Southern California

2004

University of Michigan

2006

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

2007

University of Minnesota

Monash University, Australia

Duke University

North Carolina State University

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

University of California, San Diego

2008

Columbia University

Syracuse University

Brown University

University of South Florida

Yad Vashem, Israel

Technische Universität Berlin, Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung, Germany

2009

Texas A&M University

Stanford University

Central European University, Hungary

Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic

Clark University

University of North Carolina at Greensboro

2010

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

University of Minnesota Duluth

Jewish Holocaust Centre, Australia

Universität Salzburg, Austria

New York University

2011

Northwestern University

Royal Holloway, University of London, United Kingdom

University of Massachusetts Amherst

McMaster University, Canada

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

University of Athens, Greece

Leibniz Universität Hannover, Germany

2012

University of Pennsylvania

History Meeting House, Poland

University of Haifa

Jewish Museum Prague

L.A. Museum of the Holocaust

Stiftung Topographie des Terror, Germany

2013

University of Nebraska Omaha

Instituto Centrale per i Beni Sonori ed Audiovisivi, Italy

University of Toronto, Canada

University of Ottawa, Canada

Drexel University

Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Poland

Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

Map Legend

Full VHA Access (47)



Video and Data Only (1)



Courses Using the VHA

Visual History Archive Undergraduate and Graduate Courses

Given the broad scope and diverse content of the USC Shoah Foundation’s archive, the testimonies have the potential to support research and pedagogy in many disciplines. More than 390 undergraduate and graduate courses in over 25 academic disciplines have utilized testimony from the archive so far. As access to the archive increases, so does the variety of courses that take advantage of this deep resource.



PHOTO BY MARK BERNDT

Pictured below is a word cloud of academic disciplines weighted by the number of courses taught using the archive in each discipline.

Course Disciplines



Visual History Archive

Selected Courses

Courses Using the VHA

| Title | Department | University |
|---|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Animation, Simulation, and Performance | Culture, Art, & Technology | University of California, San Diego |
| Autobiographical Memory and Memory Disorders | Psychology | Freie Universität, Berlin |
| Body, Mind, and Healing: Introduction to Medical Anthropology | Anthropology | University of Southern California |
| Communicating Illness, Grief, and Loss | Communication | University of South Florida |
| Gendered Memories of War and Political Violence | Gender Studies | Central European University |
| History of the Holocaust | Jewish Studies | University of Minnesota |
| Italy and Germany: Similarities and Differences | Political Science | Freie Universität Berlin |
| Jewish Folklore | Folklore | University of Pennsylvania |
| The Literature of the Holocaust | Freshman Forum | Syracuse University |
| Media and Memory: Representing the Holocaust | Modern Culture & Media | Brown University |
| Natural Language Processing Applications | Applied Linguistics | Charles University in Prague |
| Nazism and Stalinism in Comparative Perspective | History | University of California, San Diego |
| Representations of the Holocaust | Cinema-Television | University of Southern California |
| Social Memory | Sociology and Social Anthropology | Central European University |
| Voices of the Holocaust | Communications Studies | U. of North Carolina at Greensboro |

Student Engagement



PHOTO BY MARK BERNDT

“No matter how our civilization advances, there are certain values that define us as individuals and as a society... The content of the Visual History Archive is priceless material to teach those core values to our students.”

—C.L. Max Nikias,
President,
University of Southern California

Course title: *French IV: Paris as Seen by Writers, Filmmakers, and Photographers*
Professor: *Colin Keaveney, French and Italian*
Institution: *University of Southern California*



PHOTO BY KIM FOX
Professor Keaveney speaking at a conference at USC in March 2010.

Overview: Professor Keaveney’s upper-level French course explores themes of love, loss, collective and personal memory, and modernity through readings of French literary texts, theoretical readings, films, poems, and songs. One of the texts used in the class is the French novel *Dora Bruder*, which tells the story of a young girl who was sent to Auschwitz. The book combines different aspects of memory, loss, life, chronology, and French history, and reconstructs what the girl’s life may have been like, even though very little is known about her.

Pedagogical Use of the VHA: Students are asked to actively imagine Dora Bruder’s experience with the aid of contemporary documents, such as birth certificates, police reports, etc., and are also assigned French-language segments from the VHA based upon topical relevance. Students then have the responsibility to make connections between the segments in the VHA and the text. This involves recounting victim testimonies while putting them in the context of the assigned text. Professor Keaveney uses an example from the text that refers to a particular police report describing the arrest of Louise Jacobson, who was then deported and killed at Auschwitz. The VHA interview with her sister Nadia Kaluski-Jacobson allows students to compare the dry, official account from the text with a personal true story of loss and bereavement.

Observations

Professor Keaveney contends that “the VHA can provide factual and emotionally powerful information to allow students to better understand those who experienced the German occupation of France in the 1940s.” The content within the VHA is rich in historical knowledge, which gives students more substance, meaning, and depth to the French literature explored in the course. It also enhances the class discussions for more compelling and productive dialogue. This same methodological approach can be incorporated in other language and literature courses, such as Russian, German, Italian, Spanish, and others.

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Course Case Study

Teaching with Testimony

Course title: *Animation, Simulation, and Performance*
Professor: *Emily Roxworthy, Theatre and Dance*
Institution: *University of California, San Diego*

Overview: Professor Roxworthy's course *Animation, Simulation, and Performance* focuses on graphic representations of war, such as comic books, animated films, and video games about World War II and the global war on terror. Students learn how to analyze still and moving images of wartime atrocities, particularly in terms of the impact that different representational media have on the communicative power of these images.



Professor Roxworthy addressing students and Holocaust survivors at a workshop at UCSD in March 2011.

Pedagogical Use of the VHA: In their first analytical-essay assignment, students compare the first volume of Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel *Maus* (which documents his parents' experiences at Auschwitz) with Holocaust testimony from the Visual History Archive. They are asked how the comic book medium and the medium of filmed testimony make different demands upon their audiences, particularly along the lines of empathy and participation. While students apply theoretical concepts from key media theorists such as McLuhan and Sontag, the most important work is accomplished through students analyzing how a narrative travels from one medium to another and how this adaptation alters the audience's experience of war representation.

Observations

Professor Roxworthy's first-year students found the VHA testimony both moving and informative: "Despite the fact that their generation was practically raised on graphic novels and the comics medium, surprisingly, in their papers, the majority of these students decided that the VHA interviews provoked more empathy and participation than Spiegelman's *Maus* did. Even when they decided that both were participatory and empathy-generating, they generally concluded that the survivor testimony recorded in the VHA more effectively engaged its audience in a mode of participation that activated spectators," she says.

Selected Dissertations

Visual History Archive

Ph.D. Research

| Title | Author | Department/University |
|---|--------------------------------|---|
| "Forced Prostitution: The Competing and Contested Uses of the Concentration Camp Brothel" (2011) | Jessica R. Anderson Hughes | History Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey |
| "A Window on Postwar Warsaw: The Jewish Families of 16 Ujazdowskie Avenue" (2009) | Karen A. Auerbach | Near Eastern and Judaic Studies Brandeis University |
| "At War's End: Allied Forces at Bergen-Belsen" (2012) | Mark Celinscak | Graduate Program in Humanities York University |
| "Women of Birkenau" (2010) | Sarah M. Cushman | History Clark University |
| "Designing a Griotte for the Global Village: Increasing the Evidentiary Value of Oral Histories for use in Digital Libraries." (2011) | Rhonda Thayer Dunn | Computer Science Texas A&M University |
| "We were Called Greenies: Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Canada" (2012) | Adara Goldberg | History Clark University |
| "Is Brotherhood Powerful? Male Mutual Assistance in the Slave Labor Camp of Markstaedt" (2010) | Shawn Gumbleton | History The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill |
| "Information Seeking in Context: Teachers' Content Selection during Lesson Planning using the Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive of Holocaust Survivor Testimonies" (2011) | Kathryn Ann Newton Lawley | Information Studies University of Maryland, College Park |
| "'What Happened After': Meaning-Making in the Lives of Holocaust Survivors." (2011) | Patrick J. Meade | Applied Psychology New York University |
| "Embodied Memory: The Formation of Archived Audiovisual Holocaust Testimony in the United States" (2009) | Noah Shenker | Cinema-Television University of Southern California |
| "A Nation in Peril? Rethinking How Fear Influenced Everyday Life and Politics in the Weimar Republic" (2009) | Russell A. Spinney | History The Pennsylvania State University |
| "Compass, Square and Swastika: Freemasonry in the Third Reich" (2011) | Christopher Campbell Thomas | History Texas A&M University |

Sample Abstract

**Dissertation Abstract: "At War's End: Allied Forces at Bergen-Belsen"*

In his dissertation Mark Celinscak examines the surrender and relief of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in northwest Germany at the end of World War II. While it is well known that Bergen-Belsen was surrendered to the British Army in April 1945, hundreds of Canadians also assisted and encountered the camp through informal visits and authorized tours. The remarkable Canadian efforts at this camp have not been properly acknowledged, studied or documented. Accordingly, this dissertation reveals the considerable Canadian involvement during the surrender and relief of Bergen-Belsen. In addition, it surveys the personal narratives of both British and Canadian military personnel as they responded to the situation at the camp.

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Scholarly Books and Articles

Selected Publications

Title

"Bilder, Gefühle, Erwartungen. (German)." *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft* 37.1 (2011): 72-103

"Wartime Lies and Other Testimonies: Jewish-Christian Relations in Buczacz, 1939–1944." *East European Politics and Societies* 25.3 (2011): 486-511

The Death of the Shtetl. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, December 2009

Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Incorporated, 2010

"Face to Face: American Jews and Holocaust survivors, 1946-1954." *"We Are Here": New Approaches to Jewish Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany*. Eds. Avinoam J Patt and Michael Berkowitz. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010. 136-166

"Ethical Considerations on the Use of Archived Testimonies in Holocaust Research: Beyond the IRB Exemption." *Qualitative Sociology* 34.3 (2011): 415-430

Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany, 1945-1957. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010

"Sexual Abuse of Jewish Women during and after the Holocaust: A Psychological Perspective." *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust*. Eds. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2010. 255-274

A Small Town Near Auschwitz. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945: Volume II. Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 2012

"Audio-Visual Interviews of Gypsy and Jewish Victims of Nazi Genocidal Policy: Reflections on Language, Memory and Narrative Culture." *The Holocaust in History and Memory*. 3 (2010): 41-57

"Regarding the Recording: The Viewer of Video Testimony, the Complexity of Copresence and the Possibility of Tertiary Witnessing." *History & Memory* 25.1 (2013): 111-144.

"Who Killed Lida's Jewish Intelligentsia? A Case Study of Wehrmacht Involvement in the Holocaust's "First Hour"." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 27.1 (2013): 1-29.

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Sample Abstract

*Book Abstract: *The Death of the Shtetl*

In this book, Yehuda Bauer describes the destruction of small Jewish townships, the shtetls, in what was the eastern part of Poland by the Nazis in 1941-1942. Bauer brings together all available documents, testimonies, and scholarship, including previously unpublished material from the Yad Vashem archives, pertaining to nine representative shtetls. In line with his belief that "history is the story of real people in real situations," Bauer tells moving stories about what happened to individual Jews and their communities.

Without creating an effective means to search the 107,000 hours of videotaped testimonies, the full educational potential of the archive could not be realized. To enable students, faculty and researchers at participating institutions to find the people, places, events, and experiences described in the testimonies, the USC Shoah Foundation developed the Visual History Archive, a web-based software application, that provides access to the digitized and fully cataloged and indexed interviews. The Indexing Terms Search screen in the Visual History Archive is pictured above.

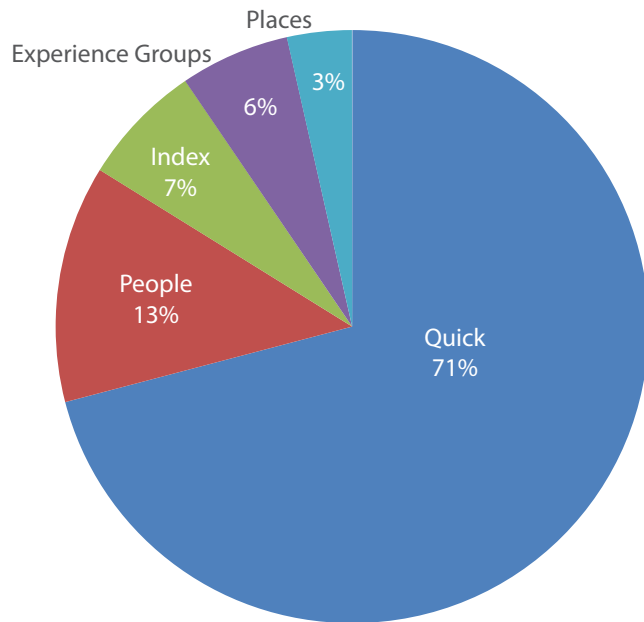
The screenshot shows the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive search interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for 'About Us', 'Search', 'Search History', 'Projects', 'Terms Of Use', 'Help', and 'Contact'. The 'Search' link is highlighted. Below the navigation menu, the USC Shoah Foundation logo and 'Visual History Archive' text are displayed. On the right side, there is a 'Search' button and a 'Testimonies: 0' indicator. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column, titled 'Collections:', lists several collections with radio buttons: 'All' (selected), 'Holocaust/World War II era, 1939-1945' (with a sub-item 'USC Shoah Foundation (51,348)'), and 'Rwandan Tutsi Genocide, 1994' (with sub-items 'Kigali Genocide Memorial (50)' and 'USC Shoah Foundation (15)'). The right column, titled 'Select a collection and enter a search term below', contains a search input field with the placeholder text 'Enter indexing term, names, numbers or interview codes', a 'Search' button, and radio buttons for 'All Words' (selected), 'Any Words', and 'Exact Phrase'. Below this, there is a section titled 'Or use one of the advanced search options below' with four options: 'Experience Groups' (Find testimonies using biographical and interview information.), 'Index' (Find segments of testimonies by searching or browsing indexing terms in the USC Shoah Foundation Thesaurus.), 'People' (Find testimonies of interviewees by name, or find a testimony that refers to a specific person by name.), and 'Places' (Find segments of testimonies about geographic locations by browsing, searching, or zooming in on a Google Map.). Each option has a 'Search' button.

The Visual History Archive allows users to conduct searches using an extensive controlled vocabulary of 62,000 geographic and experiential indexing terms, about 1.2 million names of people mentioned in the testimonies or recorded in pre-interview questionnaires, and biographical information for each interviewee, including city and country of birth; religious identity; places of incarceration (e.g., camps and ghettos); hiding, flight, or resistance details; etc.

Quick Fact

Similar to the index of a book, the USC Shoah Foundation's indexing terms point directly to digital time codes (one-minute segments), instead of pages, within the testimonies where specific people, places, events, and experiences are discussed.

Percentage of Searches by Type



The Visual History Archive interface allows users to navigate through the archive using 5 different search methods: Quick Search, Experience Groups Search, Index Search, People Search, and Places Search. Each method facilitates research of the testimonies' cataloguing and indexing data in different ways. This page highlights select search statistics from 2013.

Indexing Terms Search—Top 20 Indexing Terms Searched

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Theresienstadt (Czechoslovakia : Ghetto) | 11. Auschwitz (Poland : Concentration Camp)(generic) |
| 2. ghetto cultural activities | 12. Berlin (Prussia, Germany) |
| 3. school antisemitism | 13. family life |
| 4. musical recitals | 14. Germany 1933 (January 31) - 1939 (August 31) |
| 5. survivor guilt | 15. humor |
| 6. camp sexual assaults | 16. camp racial medical experiments |
| 7. numerus clausus | 17. Dachau (Germany : Concentration Camp) |
| 8. Auschwitz II-Birkenau (Poland : Death Camp) | 18. November Pogrom (Nov 9-10, 1938) |
| 9. ghetto adaptation methods | 19. camp cultural activities |
| 10. Karwin (Czechoslovakia : Concentration Camp) | 20. camp medical experiments |

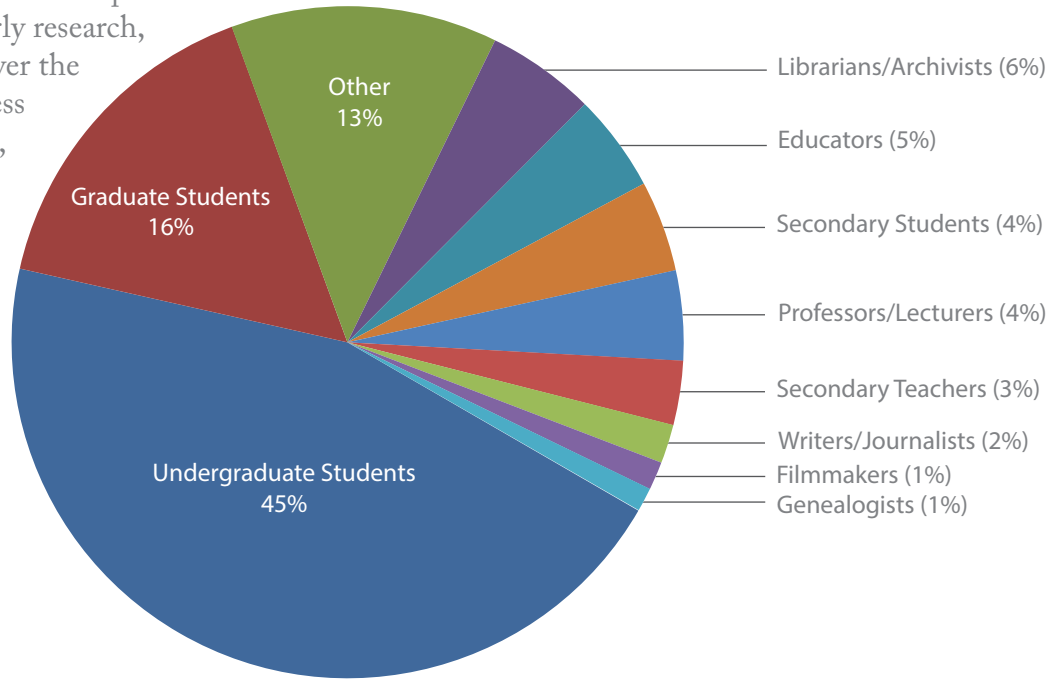
Quick Facts

- 6.4 million segment and testimony search results were saved by researchers in their Visual History Archive projects since 2002.
- 580,000 views of testimonies were made by Visual History Archive researchers in the last five years.
- 289,000 searches were conducted by Visual History Archive researchers in the last two years.

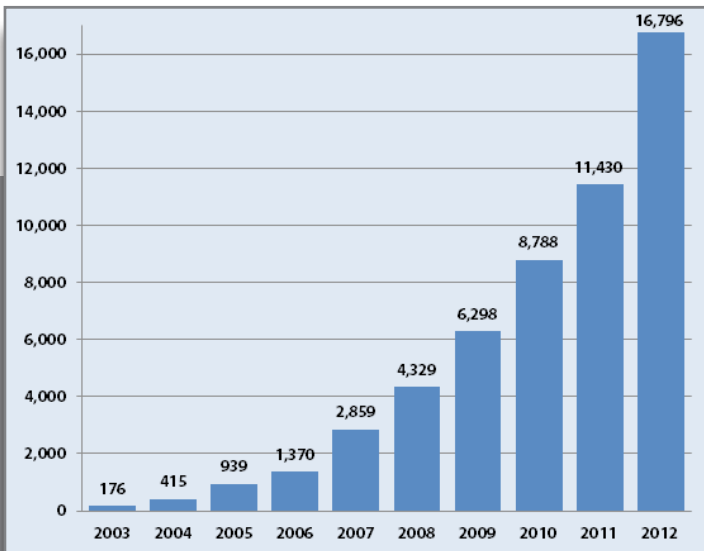
Visual History Archive Usage Statistics

Breakdown of Users

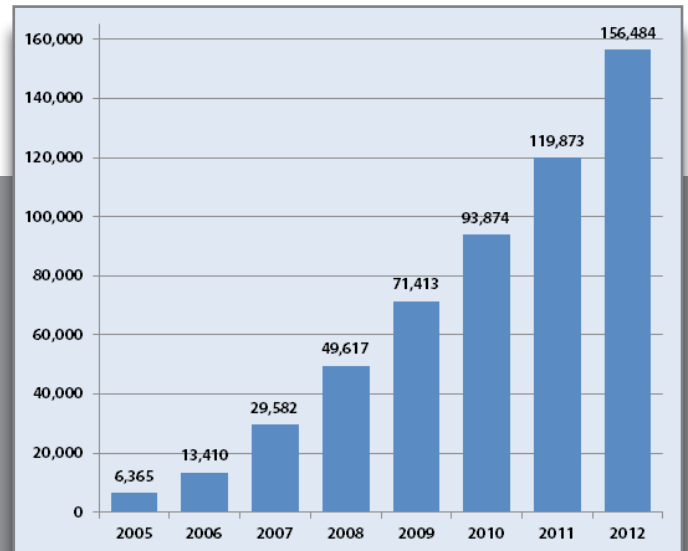
University students represent the largest group of people using the Visual History Archive but many others access the archive as an important tool for teaching, scholarly research, and personal interest. Over the past several years, as access to the archive has grown, users and usage has quickly increased.



Cumulative Number of VHA Users
2003 – 2012



Cumulative Number of Logins
2005 – 2012





Our Mission

To overcome prejudice, intolerance, and bigotry—and the suffering they cause—through the educational use of the USC Shoah Foundation's visual history testimonies

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