

# Digital Holocaust Memory from the Margins: Practices, Places, and Narratives

## Online International Conference June 1-3, 2021

### ABSTRACTS

June 1 | 20:00 - 21:30 (Israel Time)

Keynote speaker

Victoria Grace Walden (University of Sussex)  
Digital Holocaust Memory as Entanglement

Representation has been at the forefront in studies of Holocaust media, creating moral rules for how to portray this complex past (see: Elie Wiesel and Terence Des Pres) to questioning what can be considered an appropriate way to mediate it. Yet, as Lawrence Baron (2005) argued about Holocaust film, it is impossible for any single media production to encapsulate the Holocaust in its entirety in a nuanced manner; every media form has its own conventions and limitations which must be understood as a necessary part of the way they mediate memory. Nevertheless, media continue to play a major role in perpetuating Holocaust memory. In 2005, film was the medium we were all talking about the most, now it is the digital.

Moving away from moral rules of representation, I propose a new way of thinking about the ethics of Holocaust memory. I start by introducing an approach outlined in my previous book *Cinematic Intermedialities and Contemporary Holocaust Memory*, which turns to the inbetweenness of mediated memory encounters, in which analogue and digital 'bodies' come into contact. I then move onto to discuss my more recent development of this idea, which thinks with Karen Barad's work on a post-representational theory of entanglement, to think about digital Holocaust memory in terms of relationality. I argue that memory lies neither simply with the text or the audience/user, and is not simply a dialogue between their different memories, experiences and contexts, but rather it emerges through the spaces in-between and is ever transforming, flowing, and contorting as a never stable co-created essence.

It is when we dismiss or downplay the significance of this co-creation that we risk threatening the continuation of Holocaust memory. Approaches that consider Holocaust memory as didactic - as something that can simply be transmitted to others - risk underappreciating the complexities of what is memory and the ways in which emerging technologies particularly highlight the relationality between being with and ethics. This is not to say that digital technologies have introduced radically participatory forms of culture, but rather that they have drawn attention to the material entanglements always inherent to memory and identity.

*Dr Victoria Grace Walden is a Senior Lecturer in Media Studies in the School of Media, Arts and Humanities and Sussex Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies at the University of Sussex, UK. She is Editor-in-Chief of the Digital Holocaust Memory Platform (<https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/digitalholocaustmemory>), author of *Cinematic Intermedialities and Contemporary Holocaust Memory* (Palgrave, 2019), and editor of two forthcoming volumes *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research* (Palgrave, 2021) and *The Memorial Museum in the Digital Age* (REFRAME). She is lead academic advisor for the Forgotten Voices Foundation, LA, who are creating the first computer game to centralise the Jewish experience of the Holocaust in France, and an advisor for the Imperial War Museums' digital education element of the new Holocaust galleries.*

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# Digital Holocaust Memory from the Margins: Practices, Places, and Narratives

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### ABSTRACTS

June 2 | 16:00 - 17:30 (Israel Time)

#### Embodiment, Witnessing and Social Media

Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann & Tom Divon (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

##### Doing Memory on TikTok: Practices of Reenacting the Holocaust in #POVchallenges

I understand people's emotional reaction to my Holocaust challenge video, but my heart was at the right place. I saw this as a mission to keep those stories alive (...) this is where TikTok becomes relevant." That way, @eve.james\_, a TikTok user, explained her choice to perform a Holocaust victim as part of the platform's latest controversial #POVHolocaust challenge in August 2020. Eva's video was one of hundred thousand clips that transformed TikTok into a repository of generational Holocaust memory. With approximately 800 million users, TikTok is the most popular social media platform heavily used by teenagers.

Our research focuses on specific memory performances on TikTok, the POV (point-of-view). This highly used form of self-documentation enables creators to mediate an unusual first-person account of fictional scenarios, accompanied by conceptual hashtags interconnecting mnemonic user projects. Applying a multimodal analysis, we identified three role-playing narratives through which TikTokers reenacted prosthetic memories: (1) Imaginative Testimony - TikTokers pose as dead Holocaust victims, testifying from heaven after being murdered by Nazis. (2) Punishment in Past & Present - TikTokers act as prisoners in the present who are transferred to concentration camps in the past. (3) Escape to the Future - TikTokers merge the 1930s\40s and 2020 in a complex temporal interplay, in which Holocaust victims get the chance for a momentary escape from the horrifying present (1930\40) to an imagined future (2020). Being accused of "Holocaust trivialization", many deleted the challenges from their profiles. Thus, the public outcry proves the need for further analyzing the logics of memory on TikTok, translated into creative content rewarded by algorithmic amplification. Based also on semi-structured interviews with TikTokers who participated in the challenges, we explore forms of "doing memory" in this new media ecology, and its emotional dimension, which integrate Holocaust memory into the (social media) lives of younger generations.

*Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann. Lecturer for Visual Culture, Film and German Studies in the Department of Communication and Journalism and the European Forum at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Tobias holds a Ph.D. from the Freie Universität Berlin in Film Studies, and teaches, researches, and publishes on cinematic, digital and social media memory of the Holocaust. He is the author of a study on cinematic narrations of the Holocaust and published in journals such as Media, Culture and Society, New Media and Society, and Memory Studies. He is also a consortium member in the Horizon 2020 project "Visual History of the Holocaust: Rethinking Curation in the Digital Age"*

*Tom Divon. Research student in the field of Digital Media, Culture and Communication in the Department of Communication and Journalism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Tom holds a master's degree in Communication and New Media and a bachelor's degree in Communication and journalism, both from the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) at Herzliya. Tom's research and education areas include Memory Studies, Social Media Studies, Visual Arts and Culture Studies, and their interdisciplinary intersections."*

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ABSTRACTS

Lea David (University College Dublin)

A Format or a System Failure? E-Holocaust Memory - The Winners and The Losers

Digitalising Holocaust memory comes with a number of challenges, both in terms of its accessibility and in terms of its content. I utilise here Randall Collins' Interaction Ritual Chains (2004) theory to show the ideological and technological shifts to Holocaust memory reduces the emotional energy that has a potential to shape discursive and symbolic massaging around Holocaust remembrance. The paper will address those two separate, yet interconnected processes – that of the ideological shift where the Holocaust memory moved from remembering a concrete historical event to becoming a measurement of human rights; as well as the technological shift that reduced the on-site face-to-face interaction between various audiences and the structured display of artefacts. As a result, I argue, digitalizing Holocaust memory, though expands its outreach, also comes at a great cost: it threatens to become detached from its meanings, while pushing it into the realm, at best, of ideological lifestyle, and at worst, leisure culture that has a primarily role to entertain rather to function as a form of remembrance or as an educational tool. However, even with the dilute symbolical potential, it continues to serve nationalist rather than human rights worldviews.

*Lea David is an Assistant Professor and Ad Astra Fellow at the School of Sociology, University College Dublin (UCD). She is a comparative historical sociologist with a strong interdisciplinary background in cultural anthropology and history. Lea David held several postdoctoral fellowships such as the Fulbright fellowship, the Rabin fellowship, the Jonathan Shapira fellowship, the Marie Curie Research Fellowship and the VATAT fellowship. Her book (2020) "The Past Can't Heal Us: The Dangers of Mandating Memory in the Name of Human Rights" was published with Cambridge University Press. Her research interests cover memory; nationalism; human rights, ideologies; solidarity; activism; the intersection between the Holocaust and genocide, and conflicts in the former Yugoslav countries and in Israel/Palestine.*

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Katharine Schreyer & Paul Morrow (University of Dayton)

#### Fantasies of Witnessing on TikTok: The Limits of Short-Form Videos for Holocaust Education and Advocacy

Over the past decade, Holocaust scholars and museum professionals have debated the value of social media for teaching and commemorating the Shoah. Whether user-generated or created by institutions, native social media content is marginal in at least two senses. First, such content circulates outside the academic and professional venues in which Holocaust history and pedagogy are traditionally discussed. Second, such content is highly ephemeral - subject to sudden removal or alteration by creators or platform-owners.

This paper advances these debates by analyzing a recent, and controversial, form of social media engagement with the Shoah: user-generated videos circulated on TikTok. Since TikTok is a fairly new platform populated mostly by young people, it is not seen as a venue for serious education or outreach. News of user-generated videos purporting to take the perspective of Holocaust victims, survivors, or witnesses sparked public outrage and spurred swift removal in the fall of 2020, demonstrating just how marginal such content is. However, the lines between such point-of-view (POV) videos and the multi-modal educational experiences offered by Holocaust museums or sites of destruction are not entirely clear. The first aim of this paper is to identify what features these practices have in common and consider which are distinctive - and distinctively worrying about - TikTok.

The second aim of the paper is to ask what legitimate uses TikTok videos might have for increasing public awareness of the Holocaust and aiding human rights advocacy. A comparison between inherently short-form TikTok videos and longer-format digital content (such as podcasts or audio-visual testimonies) shows that TikTok is not an appropriate venue for crafting oral histories or recording the testimony of survivors. But TikTok's facility with montage, capabilities for layering text and visuals, and proprietary modes for "stitching" content from multiple users offer potentially valuable resources for advocacy campaigns.

*Schreyer is an advanced undergraduate studying History and Music at the University of Dayton. She is interested in the ways museums can promote Holocaust awareness and human rights.*

*Morrow is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Dayton with research and teaching interests in Holocaust and genocide studies. His book *Unconscionable Crimes: How Norms Explain and Constrain Mass Atrocities* was published by MIT Press last year. Together, they are researching emerging forms of human rights advocacy.*

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**Gila Oren (Collage of Management Academic Studies)**  
**Offspring's Faces on Facebook**

Today's Social media offers infinite options for individuals to participate in targeted groups that share written and visual content related to their common agenda. This study focuses on 3 Facebook groups of Holocaust survivor's offspring that have created a modern unique platform through which they exchange information and preserve family and community memories. Members take part as proud equals, sharing a mutual understanding. They enjoy a safe dynamic environment in which they not only give voice to their longing and emotions, but also share the opportunity to discuss their memory preservation responsibility.

Research on the second generation of Holocaust survivors began in the 1960s, with a widespread discussion on the transition of traumas and posttraumatic symptoms from first generation survivors to their offspring.

Studies identified characteristics of the second generations being committed to a heritage they cannot fully comprehend. A responsibility they absorb either by over-exposure or through the protective blanket of silence also referred to as "The Conspiracy of Silence". Accordingly, the second generation was aware of their parents' experiences during the Holocaust but had little, if any, ability to put it into words. Nevertheless they were referred to as 'memorial candles' for those who did not survive.

Widespread, insightful research on children of Holocaust survivors is still being conducted. Furthermore, the democratization offered by social networks and the countless possibilities of expression through technology offer a new dynamic platform for contemporary memory, discourse, and research. This paper examines the process of authentic, voluntary, non-directive sharing of information, thoughts and emotions shared by the second-generation on Facebook groups. The study uses content analysis as well as netnography methods, where the researcher is also part of the community being studied.

*Gila Oren, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer, Head of Marketing Studies, and a faculty member, School of Business Administration at the College of Management. Oren serves as an official Yad Vashem guide in Poland, including for IDF and security-forces delegations. Heritage Sites Visitation Experience was the topic of her PhD dissertation, where she focused on visits to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. Oren's main fields of interest are the meeting points between management and heritage, as well as the visitation experience at heritage sites. She is currently involved in Second Generation research, examining perceptions of the Holocaust and commemoration.*

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June 2 | 18:00 - 19:30 (Israel Time)

#### The Covid-19 Crisis and the Digital Response

Liat Steir-Livny (Sapir Academic College and The Open University)

Covid-19 and Holocaust Representations in Israeli Media and Social Media

The Holocaust was and remains a central trauma in Israel's national consciousness. The memory of the trauma has not faded over the years; on the contrary, Holocaust representations and the public discourse on the Holocaust have only grown stronger in recent decades. Research indicates that the Holocaust memory has a very powerful presence in Israel and is a cross-generational defining trait of the Jewish population. Scholars claim that the Israeli media, educational and cultural arenas as well as public discourse in Israel frame the Holocaust as a current, ongoing local trauma rather than an event that ended decades ago in another place (Ofer, 2010; Meyers, Neiger, and Zandberg, 2014).

Based on this scholarly work and surveys which indicate that in the Jewish Israeli population, the Holocaust is considered a central event affecting daily life, this talk will discuss how the Covid-19 pandemic is associated with the Holocaust on Israeli media and social media in a way that confirms its deep grasp on the Israeli Jews. It will discuss the ways Israeli politicians have dealt with the pandemic through Holocaust associations, the ways Jewish Israelis have transformed their daily lives during Covid-19 through Holocaust icons in serious and in black humor representations and the way anti-vaxxers are using Holocaust related concepts to express their denial of the benefits of Covid-19 immunization, which began in Israel in December 2020.

*Liat Steir-Livny is an Associate Professor in the Department of Cultural Studies, Creation and Production at Sapir College, and a tutor and course coordinator for the Cultural Studies MA program and the Department of Literature, Language, and the Arts at the Open University of Israel. Her research focuses on the changing commemoration of the Holocaust in Israel from the 1940s until the present. She has authored numerous articles and five books. In 2019 she won The Young Scholar Award given jointly by the Association for Israel Studies (AIS) and the Israel Institute.*

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Aya Yadlin-Segal (Hadassah Academic College) & Avi Marciano (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)

#### COVID-19 Surveillance in Israel as a Non-Commemorative Site of Holocaust Remembrance

As part of its efforts to tackle the spread of COVID-19, the Israel Security Agency (ISA, or the Shin Bet) has been authorized, under Israeli Defence Emergency Regulations, to track citizens' mobile phone geolocations. Through this act of surveillance, Israel became the only country worldwide to use its security branches to resolve a civic, medical crisis. This case became a fertile ground for multiple stakeholders negotiating the image and role of digital technologies within socio-political exigencies. One important arena in which these discussions took place was Israeli news outlets.

A thematic analysis of 155 items from four leading news websites (Ynet, Ha'aretz, Walla, and Mako) revealed competing frames that legitimized or criticized ISA mobile phone surveillance. One of these frames employed the memory of the Holocaust as an interpretive locus for unpacking surveillance practices and their potential outcomes. As such, remembering the past became a practice found at the margins of reporting on the COVID-19 ISA surveillance as it unfolded. Performed through unintentional practices, we conceptualize journalistic coverage of surveillance during the pandemic as a non-commemorative collective memory, where non-intentional commemorative practices led to the re-reading and negotiation of the past through current events and lenses (Schudson, 1997, 2014).

Specifically, we show how invoking the collective memory of the Holocaust became a journalistic tool for unpacking (and specifically those related to digital media), enhancing the value of current events and stressing their weight where a national collective persona is imagined in times of a global crisis.

Schudson, M. (1997). Lives, laws, and language: Commemorative versus non-commemorative forms of effective public memory. *The Communication Review*, 2(1), 3-17.

Schudson, M. (2014). Journalism as a vehicle of non-commemorative cultural memory. In B. Zelizer & K. Tenenboim-Weinblatt (Eds.), *Journalism and memory* (pp. 85-96).

Palgrave Macmillan.

*Aya Yadlin-Segal is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Politics and Communication at Hadassah Academic College. Her research critically explores the role online media platforms play in processes of identity construction and cultural negotiations in global contexts.*

*Avi Marciano is a Lecturer in the Department of Communication at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. His research focuses on social, political, and ethical aspects of surveillance, with particular attention to the use of biometrics in Israel.*

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## ABSTRACTS

Anat Bratman-Elhalel (Ghetto Fighters' House)

**We Assembled Here at Home: Challenges of Holding a Virtual Remembrance Event**

The annual Holocaust Remembrance Day assembly is one of the hallmarks of the Ghetto Fighters' House museum. It is a tradition that has gone on almost uninterrupted since the founding of the museum in 1949. Taking place at the museum's open-air theater, entrance is free. Thousands of spectators, young and old, from near and far, gather to watch a stage performance whose program was determined decades ago, when the poet Chaim Gouri was invited to write the pageant script. Several variations in both form and content have been made since, but certain elements remain unchanged. The assembly is public, and the audience has an important role in it. Up until the mid-1990s, the assembly opened with the words ""Let the people remember"".

The Covid-19 pandemic forced us, like numerous other cultural institutions, to think ""outside the box"" and alter our museum activities. However, we could not fathom the thought of cancelling our annual assembly. Instead, we decided to hold it in an unfamiliar, virtual format. The choice to use digital media and the inability to gather in-person led to further changes, some of which may remain even after the crisis is over. The transition to a virtual format (live on television and on Facebook) brought much greater exposure: approximately 220,000 viewers, compared to a few thousands. Yet something in the sense of intimacy and ""togetherness"" was lost. Moreover, the increased exposure led to changes in content and structure. Yet another element to explore further is the level of audience engagement: did the electronic transmission damage it, or did it actually make the audience more emotionally involved? In this paper, I will discuss the differences between the two formats, their advantages and disadvantages, and the consequences of these changes on collective memory, which the assembly strives to represent as an agent

*Anat Bratman-Elhalel is working at the GFH Archives as a senior archivist since 2007. Director of GFH Archives for the last 10 years. Leader of the accessibility and content digitization project which contributes to the exposure and accessibility of the archive through technological tools and means. In charge of archive facilitation for scholars and students; coordinator of joint projects and collaborations with various Holocaust archives and institutions; A member of the Museum's new exhibitions team. Anat holds a BA in Psychology and Hebrew Literature and an MA in Cultural Studies. Her thesis focused on the formation of Holocaust commemoration ceremonies in Kibbutz Lohamei Hagetaot.*

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Mduduzi Ntuli, Catherine Boyd & Rene Pozniak (Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre - JHGC)

**Practices and challenges in digital Holocaust & genocide education: the case study of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC)**

Practices and challenges in digital Holocaust & genocide education: the case study of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC). The Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre's digital presence before the pandemic was limited to its social media and website. However, in April 2020 after the lockdown was enforced in South Africa, there was an urgent need to transform to online teaching and many opportunities were created to expand the Centre's digital presence locally and internationally. This online approach presented new ways of engagement as well as some challenges for the education JHGC team. It allowed the Centre to connect, partner and work with a wide network of institutions, experts in the fields of Holocaust, genocide and human rights education and to increase its audiences. During 2020, the JHGC reached over 30 000 people in 29 countries through weekly podcasts, webinars, digital education resources, online educational programs locally and internationally, virtual tours of its permanent exhibition and more.

According to Spaul "South Africa is today the most unequal country in the world" (2019, P.1). Inequality always existed in the country's education system, but this was exacerbated during the pandemic. The Centre's digital transition for example could not cater for all schools and groups as many lack access to the internet, computers or affordable data. This 'digital divide' between schools and populations who have access to online learning and those who don't, has the potential to increase inequality even further. The JHGC had to find innovative ways of working in this space.

This paper will focus on some of these challenges and how the JHGC adapted to them. It will also discuss the many opportunities explored by the Centre to enhance Holocaust and genocide education and how those can be of benefit also in the post pandemic future.

*Catherine Boyd is the Education Manager at the JHGC and has been working in the Centre for the past 5 years. She holds Honours degree in History of Art from the University of Witwatersrand and a diploma in Graphic Design from the Cape Peninsular University of Technology.*

*Mduduzi Ntuli is an Education Officer at the JHGC for over 2 years. Mr Ntuli, holds an Honour's and Master's degree in Gender studies from UKZN, previously before joining the JHGC he worked for the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre for 5 years as an Education Officer.*

*Rene Pozniak is an Education Specialist at the JHGC since 2014. She holds a BA degree from the University of the Witwatersrand in Law and Communications, as well as a Para Legal Diploma (USA) and an education diploma in Jewish Studies (RSA).*

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June 3 | 16:00 - 17:30

#### Visualising the Holocaust in a Digital Age

Laura Leo Dressel (Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna)

Mapping the Unapproachable. An Analysis of Digital Mapping Practices for Memory Spaces in Europe.

Traumatic places (“traumatische Orte”) are marked, according to Aleida Assmann, by “the impossibility of telling their stories” (Assmann 1999: p. 329). A memory site is for her, in reference to Walter Benjamin, an auratic place where “the unapproachable distance of the past can be experienced” (Assmann 1999: p. 338). My suspicion, which will need further verification, is that digital maps are used in the context of Holocaust Memory as presumably neutral and objective representations of the concerned places of trauma. As critical cartographers argue since the late 1980’s however, the pretended neutrality and objectivity of the map are hiding the actual (ideological) preconceptions that precede its production (cf. Harley 1989). Digital maps hide their preconceptions on an additional level, as they rely on software which, according to Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, covers the ideology embedded in the machine (cf. Chun 2005: p. 43). Besides their remarkable ability to mask preconceptions, there are multiple potentials for the use of digital maps in Memorial Sites. Inter alia they make possible virtual tours, they can be interconnected with other types of media and they are dynamic, which means that movement in time can be visualized. I am interested in digital maps in a broader sense as a way of conceiving a memorial space, which means that I include Augmented Reality Apps and digitally accessible audio walks in my understanding of mapping. Inspired by Jeremy Crampton’s idea that mapping is not only to be analyzed critically but can itself be a practice of critique (cf. Crampton 2010), I would like to find out how a critical practice – aware of its preconceptions – could look like in the field of Holocaust Memory. Given my background as an artist, I am especially interested in the role that artistic approaches can play in that context.

*Laura Leo Dressel studied Film at Université de Bordeaux and Concordia University, Montreal, as well as Timebased Media at Kunstuniversität Linz. They are working in the field of Holocaust Memory as educator (at the Mauthausen Memorial and the House of History Austria), artist and researcher. In Linz Laura Leo Dressel produced the audio walk steingeschichten. Since 2020 they are part of the research center at the Mauthausen Memorial as supervisor of the virtual Room of Names, a digital participatory memory project. In 2021 they will start a Doctorate in Philosophy on Digital Mapping at the akademie der bildenden künste, Vienna.*

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Lital Henig & Shir Ventura (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

#### Migrating Images of the Holocaust in the Digital Age: a Visual Walkthrough Method for Digital Image Analysis

From online archives to video games, Holocaust related imagery has migrated to digital media. This migration also impacts practices of digital analysis, as the digitised images of the Holocaust behave differently than analogue ones. Working in the context of cinema, Ebbrecht (2010) argues that “migrating images” are disconnected from their original context, transferred into visual tropes, and function as “memory cues” (91). The digital context adds another level of complication because digital images are, as Manovich explains, “modular” (2001). Digital Holocaust imagery thus appears in a modular context, sometimes relating to other images of the Holocaust and sometimes not, sometimes presented as whole and sometimes in part. Consequently, these images form new visual memories of the Holocaust and constitute new visual relations between digitised assets, which require new methods for their analysis.

We offer a visual walkthrough method for analyzing digital images. It consists of two approaches for visual analysis: the single image approach and the multiple image approach. The former regards various images as modular components composed into a single image that relates to the Holocaust, while the latter attends to visual relations established between sequences of allegedly independent images that are actually co-dependent for identifying their visual relations with Holocaust-related images. We demonstrate the method with a visual analysis of Holocaust related video games and historical footage that we examine in the research project Visual History of The Holocaust: Rethinking Curation in The Digital Age (2022). Overall, The visual walkthrough method deals with the modularisation of images, and enable the forming of a new network of visual relations between contemporary and historic, digital and digitised, images of the Holocaust.

Ebbrecht, T. (2010). Migrating images: Iconic Images of the Holocaust and The Representation of war in popular film. *Shofar*, 28(4): 86-103.

Manovich, L. (2002). *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press, pp. 49-64.

*Lital Henig is a PhD candidate at the Department of Communication, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She holds a MA in Communication and a BA in Art History and Communication, both from the Hebrew University. Her Ph.D. dissertation is titled “Composite Memory: A Memory Work of The Holocaust in The Digital Age”, supervised by Dr. Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann and Prof. Amit Pinchevski. Lital’s areas of interest include visual arts, memory and media studies. She currently serves as a researcher in the Hebrew University’s research team of the EU-funded project “Visual History of the Holocaust: Rethinking Curation in the Digital Age.*

*Shir Ventura is an MA candidate at the Department of History and the Mandel MA Honors Program at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She holds a bachelor’s degree in art history and history from the Hebrew University as well. She currently serves as a research assistant in the Hebrew University’s research team of the EU-funded project “Visual History of the Holocaust: Rethinking Curation in the Digital Age*



## ABSTRACTS

Noga Stiassny (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Teaching with Digital Exhibitions: The Gas Chamber and the VHH-MMSI

"The gas chambers are implicated in the memory of the Holocaust. But how much do we really know about the history of this notorious "modern" apparatus of mass execution, invented years before Hitler was born and still in use as late as 1999 (Christianson 2010)? Focusing on artistic representations of the Nazi gas chambers – some very provocative – created through the years by leading artists, the paper uses this challenging icon of Holocaust memory as the thematic and visual skeleton of a digital exhibition, which may potentially be curated with the assistance of the innovative technology offered by the Horizon 2020 'Visual History of the Holocaust' project's Media Management and Search Infrastructure (VHH-MMSI).

Using the VHH-MMSI as a digital "contact zone" (Clifford 1997; Gere 1997) that enables that past to be digitally curated and displayed – a term that already points to screens and user interface experience (Richter 2011 [2007]) – the paper links the selected representations to historical, political, and socio-cultural sources and contexts, while examining the critical role of both artworks and digital curatorial praxis in forming, constructing, and producing multi-layered 'entry points' to facilitate engagement with the Holocaust. In so doing, the paper demonstrates the ability of artworks to constitute a discursive realm for Holocaust memory, and of digital curatorial praxis to critically produce connections that generate evolving and dynamic meanings (von Bismark 2011 [2007]: 19; Richter 2011 [2007]: 44). This exposes the digital exhibition as a new means of teaching (Kieth 2021) and mediating the memory of the Holocaust to young students, thereby highlighting the contribution of this communicative medium to the visual memory of the Holocaust in what will soon be a digital era with no remaining survivors.

*Noga Stiassny is a postdoctoral research fellow at the DAAD Center for German Studies, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and a member of the Horizon 2020 EU-funded research project "Visual History of the Holocaust: Rethinking Curation in the Digital Age" (2019-2022). She holds a PhD from the Department of Art History at the Hamburg University, and is a former Guest Researcher at the Amsterdam School for Heritage, Memory and Material Culture of the University of Amsterdam (AHM) (2018-2019). Her research interests are art history, visual history, heritage, memory, and Jewish culture, with a particular focus on landscape.*

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# Digital Holocaust Memory from the Margins: Practices, Places, and Narratives

## Online International Conference June 1-3, 2021

### ABSTRACTS

Henry (Hank) Greenspan (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor)

Please Don't Hug the Hologram: The Resistant Claims of the Incarnate in the "Digital Age."

At a conference I attended a few years ago, a distinguished scholar noted that the only difference between watching a video testimony and hearing a survivor directly was "geography"—being in front of a screen versus across from a living person. What the scholar left out is relationships—in which everything else is grounded. Embodied and sustained conversations with survivors have been the core of my own work for almost fifty years.

This talk enumerates why such relationships are irreplaceable in practice. Obviously, there can be no follow-up meetings with a recording. And it is almost always within later meetings that survivors reflect on their choices in testimonial recounting: why they retell some memories and not others; why they participate in some archival projects and eschew others; how they have shaped their accounts in response to different contexts, listeners, and circumstances; how they assess what versions of their accounts "work" for various purposes; their views on why they speak at all and whether they think it matters, views that often radically differ from popular assumptions. It is also only in actual conversation that survivors themselves discover both forgotten memories and, most typically, the significance of what they endured. As a student of mine said about video testimonies: "'Survivors can't learn anything new and, therefore, neither can we.'

We cannot go back. But work grounded in sustained collaboration with living survivors that has been done can still deeply inform what digital archives do and do not contain and can and cannot convey. Knowing that keenly, there are a number of strategies one can employ to get closer to embodied dialogue—all of which depend on enhanced "'natural,'" rather than artificial, integrity, attentiveness, and intelligence. Perhaps that "'old school'" stuff has become especially "'marginal'" in our time.

*Henry (Hank) Greenspan, Emeritus at the University of Michigan, is a psychologist, oral historian, and playwright who has been interviewing, teaching about, and writing about Holocaust and other genocide survivors since the 1970s—now almost fifty years. He is the author of On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Beyond Testimony, now in its second and expanded edition, and, with Ari Rubin, Reflections: Auschwitz, Memory, and a Life Recreated. His plays have been performed on National Public Radio in the U.S. and staged at more than 300 venues worldwide.*

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## ABSTRACTS

June 3 | 18:00 - 19:30 (Israel Time)

Archiving Online: Digitalising Holocaust Documents and Images

Gregory Toth (The Wiener Holocaust Library)

Building a Path for Digital Discovery: Transforming The Wiener Holocaust Library for the 21st Century

In 2020, I worked on an ambitious Digital Transformation Project that my institution plans to pursue over the next five years. My aim was to transform one of the most significant collections of original documentation of the Holocaust to meet the increasingly digital needs of the 21st century, especially due to the impact of the COVID pandemic.

The digitalisation at the Library began over two decades ago when we began computerising our records to enable online search of our catalogue. Since then, we have made enormous strides, most recently through creating a small in-house digitisation studio and redeveloping our server infrastructure to enable high standards of digital preservation. Nevertheless, by far the larger part of our unique collections remain not digitalised, often because they are not yet catalogued, or because they need conservation or preservation work to be carried out prior to digitisation.

Therefore, I realised that our digitalisation project must rely on four strands of activities. The first of these is scaling up our digitisation activities, which will allow us to make a far greater number of collections available online. The second will see us implementing an innovative way to present our collections through a new discovery system. The third strand of activity will ensure that the material we put online is truly accessible; to achieve this we will need to enhance our catalogue records, so they are more discoverable. The fourth strand will look after the most fragile collections using conservation and preservation techniques. None of these strands of activity can be successful without the others. In my paper I would like to share how these four strands of activities relate to each other and why a smaller institution like mine faces multiple challenges when it comes to build a path to digital discovery.

*Greg Toth is the Head of Collections at The Wiener Holocaust Library, London. He is responsible for the management and development of the Library's analogue and digital collections, including setting and maintaining collection management policies and procedures, and establishing best practices and efficient workflows.*

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# Digital Holocaust Memory from the Margins: Practices, Places, and Narratives

## Online International Conference June 1-3, 2021

### ABSTRACTS

**Sarah Valente (University of Texas at Dallas)**

#### **Holocaust Podcast: A New Platform for Teaching and Remembrance**

I will discuss the development of the Ackerman Center Podcast, which I created to foster a sense of closeness with the local community when we had to quickly pivot to the new online reality due to social distancing measures of the pandemic. The podcast centers around Holocaust-related topics and provides an engaging programming to advance the Center's message of "teaching the past, changing the future."

I will detail how my co-host, Dr. Nils Roemer, the director of the Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies and dean of the School of Arts & Humanities at the University of Texas at Dallas, and I have developed a successful podcast, now in its second season. I will touch on the mechanics of creating and producing the podcast, as well as its programming. To illustrate, I will discuss the choices of episodes, such as the first ones which were centered on Holocaust representation in film, by discussing the historical considerations, moral dilemmas of the PBS series *World on Fire*. Through our social media presence, we gained new friends, who we featured in our special series, "New Connections," where we meet with directors of Holocaust centers and museums around the world to learn and discuss about their work. In another of our special podcast series, "Portraits of World War II" we featured three longtime University of Texas at Dallas professors who had a first-hand experience with World War II, who reflected on their memories, as well as how they all ended up in the Dallas area, where each has made invaluable contributions to their respective academic fields and to the lives of thousands of students. I will conclude by discussing how using this new platform has allowed us to connect and engage with students, colleagues, and the community at large, in over twenty countries.

*Dr. Sarah Valente is visiting assistant professor at the Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Texas at Dallas. She teaches courses on Jewish and Latin American history, literature, and cultural memory. Her fields of interest include Holocaust Studies, Translation Studies, and Human Rights in South America. She has presented her research at several conferences around the U.S., U.K., and Israel. Dr. Valente is the creator, producer, and host of several podcasts including the Ackerman Center Podcast, where she explores Holocaust-related topics during the time of our new shared virtual realities.*

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## ABSTRACTS

Orit Miller Katav (Ariel University)

### The Eichmann and Demjanjuk trials as presented in Israeli Museums

In 1950 the Knesset enacted the law to prosecute the Nazis and their aides. In 1960, Eichmann was captured and brought to trial in Israel. In 1986, the United States extradited to Israel John Ivan Demjanjuk, who was suspected of being "Ivan the terrible". This work will examine the coverage, display and commemoration of the two sentences in digital exhibitions at museums and the Knesset of Israel that deal with the commemoration and study of the Holocaust. The choice of how the trial is displayed in its many details on the sites represents the position of the museum and the tone that the curators want to play. There is a significant difference between the trial sentences of both war criminals. Eichmann's trial ended with his execution, while Demjanjuk's trial ended in acquittal due to doubt and his departure from Israel as a free man.

The Eichmann trial has an impressive mention and display at the three museum sites: Yad Vashem, Massuha and the Ghetto Fighters' House, and the Demjanjuk trial is displayed only at the Yad Vashem Museum. The Knesset website presents the two sentences, although not equally. This work provides complete overview of the existing and the missing in the online display. The main conclusion that emerges from the lack of coverage of the Demjanjuk trial on museum sites is the desire to "forget its existence."

*Orit Miller Katav: I teach a variety of courses at the Middle East Studies Department. My Post-Doctoral thesis, was titled U.S.-Mediated Talks, Overtures, and Agreements between Israel, Jordan, and the PLO 1977-1991. My Ph.D. thesis was about U.S. – Israeli – Jordanian Relations under the Military Administration in the Occupied Territories 1967-1974. I completed my Master's degree in Political Science and Middle East History at Bar Ilan University. This year I will graduate the Weiss Livnat International M.A. Program in Haifa University for Holocaust commemoration and education in digital age. I also write an opinion Column in Maariv.*

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## ABSTRACTS

Eliyana Adler (Penn State University)

### Disseminating Local Holocaust Memory: Crowd-Sourced Translations of Memorial Books

For decades, the wealth of information contained in the hundreds of yizkor-bikher produced after the Holocaust was available mainly to the small groups of survivors and refugees who put the memorial volumes together. Occasionally, historians would use these works, but often reluctantly, given their amateur authorship and vague editorial policies. In recent decades, an active community of Jewish genealogists has dedicated impressive resources towards physical—and especially on-line—translations of these works. This paper will explore the process and outcome of this important development in popular digital practices of Holocaust memory.

Although the primary stated goal of most all of the yizkor-bikher is to serve as surrogate gravestones for the murdered Jews of each of the towns, in fact their permit expanded beyond this initial purpose. The volumes typically contain hundreds of pages dedicated to the prewar period in addition to the accounts of the local unfolding of the Holocaust. Yet, at least from my preliminary research, the on-line translation projects tend to prioritize the material describing the wartime struggles of the Jewish communities.

Why are contemporary readers more interested in the Holocaust than in the vibrant communities that predated it? Who decides what is to be translated and in what order? How are translators chosen and vetted? How are these on-line translations being used? Based on close examination of the Jewish Gen Yizkor Book Project site, analysis of the quality and fidelity of translations compared to the originals, and interviews with translators, volunteers, and users of the site, I hope to begin to answer these questions. This project is part of a larger study of the history of yizkor-bikher, from their origins to contemporary practices.

*Eliyana Adler is Associate Professor of History and Jewish Studies at Penn State University, where she teaches and studies Jewish life in Eastern Europe. Her publications include Survival on the Margins: Polish Jewish Refugees in the Wartime Soviet Union (Harvard UP, 2020), In Her Hands: The Education of Jewish Girls in Tsarist Russia (Wayne State UP, 2011), several co-edited volumes, and numerous scholarly articles. Currently, she is exploring the history of memorial books.*

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## ABSTRACTS

June 3 | 19:45 - 21:00 (Israel Time)

### Round Table - Digital Holocaust Memory from the Margins: Practices, Places, and Narratives

**Jackie Feldman (Head of the Rabb Center, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)**

*Jackie Feldman is an associate professor of anthropology at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and head of the Rabb Center for Holocaust Studies. His research interests are pilgrimage and tourism, anthropology of religion, Holocaust memory, ethnographic writing, heritagization and comparative study of museums. His current research project, funded by the Israel Science Foundation is "Memorial, museum, smartphone: Transmitting Holocaust memory in a digital generation".*

**Norma Musih (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)**

*Dr. Norma Musih is a researcher of visual culture and digital media. Musih holds a Ph.D. from Indiana University and is currently a post-doctoral researcher in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev working on the intersection of images, memory, and digital media with Prof. Jackie Feldman.*

**Noam Tirosh (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)**

*Noam Tirosh, Ph.D., is a lecturer in the Department of Communication Studies at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. His research focuses on the relationship between memory and media and their relation with democracy, justice, and human rights. He is the author of a score of journal articles and book chapters covering topics ranging from the European Right to be Forgotten to the memory rights of the Palestinian minority in Israel, refugees and asylum seekers, and Jews deported from Arab countries. He is the recipient of the 2017 outstanding book of the year award of the Israel Communication Association for his book (Written together with Prof. Amit Schejter): *A Justice-Based Approach for New Media Policy: in the Paths of Righteousness*.*

**Roni Mikel Arieli (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev ; Hebrew University of Jerusalem)**

*Dr. Roni Mikel Arieli is a cultural historian, interested in the intersections between Holocaust memory, contemporary Jewish history, and human rights. She is currently a post-doctoral fellow at the Department of Communication Studies at Ben Gurion University where she is working on the project "Remembering the Six Million on Zoom: Holocaust Education and Commemoration in a Digital-Only World," together with and under the supervision of Dr. Noam Tirosh and Prof. Jackie Feldman. Mikel Arieli is also a Research Fellow at the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem with the support of the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, where she is working on her research project "Jewish Deportees in Mauritius (1940-1945): A History from the Margins."*

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