



NEW DIMENSIONS IN TESTIMONY SM USC Shoah Foundation

TECHNOLOGY IN SERVICE TO HUMANITY

USC Shoah Foundation is developing New Dimensions in Testimony, a collection of interactive biographies that enable people to have a conversation with pre-recorded video images of Holocaust survivors and other witnesses to genocide.

The pioneering project integrates advanced filming techniques, specialized display technologies, and next-generation natural language processing to provide an intimate experience with these eyewitnesses to history.

THE INTERACTION FEELS CONVERSATIONAL

During the interview process, the survivor sits in the middle of a light stage beneath a half dome latticed with lights and more than 100 video cameras. Each subject answers as many as 2,000 questions that cover a vast range of subjects.

Using natural-language technology, the program matches questions with the survivor's most relevant response. Over time, the exhibit "learns" and the relevancy rate and speed of the survivor's responses improves.

In the near future, visualization techniques in development will display the survivor in three dimensions – no 3D glasses required – to provide an experience that will simulate face-to-face interaction.

GO BEYOND THE TEXTBOOK

Words such as "hologram" and "avatar" fail to accurately describe New Dimensions in Testimony. We avoid using these terms because to date there is no such thing as a hologram, and "avatar" implies that the image is animated or is somehow unreal. These are real images of real people giving real answers.

New Dimensions in Testimony is especially useful to students. Asking questions of a survivor allows students to be active participants in their learning and develop important communication and critical-thinking skills.

New Dimensions in Testimony will eventually be available at selected museums and learning institutions around the world to enhance USC Shoah Foundation's mission of keeping voices of the Holocaust and other genocides alive for education and action.

Collaborating within the project are Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, with technology by USC Institute for Creative Technologies, and concept by Conscience Display. Funding for New Dimensions in Testimony was provided in part by Pears Foundation; Louis F. Smith, Melinda Goldrich and Andrea Cayton/Goldrich Family Foundation in honor of Jona Goldrich; and Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center. Also partnering on the project is CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center.