

USC Shoah Foundation

The Institute for Visual History and Education

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USC Shoah Foundation Announces Partnership with ProQuest to Increase Access to Visual History Archive

Los Angeles, March 9, 2016 – In the first step of an ambitious multiyear plan to significantly broaden access and meet growing demand for the world’s largest archive of genocide testimony, USC Shoah Foundation - The Institute for Visual History and Education announces a landmark partnership with ProQuest, a technology company that empowers researchers at universities, libraries, schools and knowledge-driven organizations around the world.

Starting immediately, ProQuest will become the exclusive distributor of USC Shoah Foundation’s Visual History Archive to colleges and universities around the world (except China).

Access to the Visual History Archive through ProQuest will no longer require a high-speed Internet2 connection; access will be available via the standard Internet creating a contemporary streaming experience. The two organizations are currently creating a new interface that will be launched in 2017. In the meantime, the current interface will be used for the 2016-2017 school year that will enable the Visual History Archive’s rich, compelling content to be cross-searched with other ProQuest resources, increasing its discoverability and usage with college and university students and researchers around the world.

“To get an idea of what a landmark moment this is for us, consider the fact that as recently as 2002, just four institutions had full access to the Visual History Archive,” said USC Shoah Foundation Executive Director Stephen Smith. “It took us 13 years to get to our current number of 53 subscribing institutions. Now, we are poised to quadruple our current number within two years, and project a 10-fold increase by our 25th Anniversary in 2019. And that is just the beginning.”

The ProQuest agreement is the first of several key announcements the Institute is expected to make in 2016 connected to its Visual History Archive Program that it announced last month. The Visual History Archive Program is a five-year initiative to reimagine how its four main audiences connect to testimonies – colleges and universities, secondary education, communities and organizations. The program is made possible in part through a transformative donation from Lee Liberman, a member of the Institute’s Board of Councilors Executive Committee.

The partnership with ProQuest is also allowing for archival-quality transcripts of all 53,000 testimonies. This massive endeavor will complement the Institute’s indexing methods and further refine the process of searching testimonies for specific points of interest.

Until now it has been prohibitive for the Institute to transcribe its testimonies owing to the scale of the Visual History Archive (the full Archive represents over 112,000 hours of testimony). The ProQuest partnership is enabling the Institute to transcribe the interviews.

Revenue from the partnership will be used to offset the cost of transcripts. The transcription process is expected to take five years and will be undertaken by native-speaking academic research transcriptionists for the 39 languages represented in the Visual History Archive.

The transcripts will not replace the current use of indexed keywords. Instead, they will work together to provide scholars and researchers the best option that suits their needs. The transcripts will appear on the screen as interviewees are talking so there will not be any loss of nuance of expression or paralinguistic cues. And as the Institute’s keywords are tagged to specific minutes of testimony, so too will transcripts be time stamped to exact points within a testimony.

There are numerous benefits to adding transcripts: In addition to providing a new way for people to interact with testimony, transcripts allow for more targeted searches than keywords. Scholars will be able to find many undiscovered commonalities, patterns and themes that lie hidden in the Visual History Archive.

For instance, the Holocaust Geographies Collaborative, a group of seven researchers from five U.S. and two international universities, who have been collaborating for several years, were invited by the Institute’s Center for Advanced Genocide Research to study the use of testimony for their groundbreaking application of geographical methods onto Holocaust research. Looking for how the key geographic concepts of location, scale, resolution, territoriality and the space/place dichotomy are fundamental to an expanded understanding of the genocide, they wanted to find something very specific in the Visual History Archive: bread. How do survivors talk about how bread was obtained, shared, hidden, or stolen during the Holocaust? Was bread a more valued commodity, than, say, soup? What does this reveal about survival strategies? However, the researchers found that “bread” is not a keyword in the Archive. The best keyword to narrow their search was “food,” which is mentioned in tens of thousands of testimonies. Without transcripts, finding survivors talking about “bread” specifically would represent a long and arduous process.

Another example is the recent conference organized by the Center for Advanced Genocide Research that focused on the use of music as a tool of resistance during episodes of genocide and mass violence. While the terms “performing arts,” “cultural activities,” and “musical recitals” are all indexed in the Visual History Archive, specific musical works are not. Transcriptions would have supported researchers in discovering important connections to the theme of the conference and identifying common patterns with perhaps the same pieces of music or songs being used in very different locations and contexts to foster or express resistance.

Also, transcriptions provide another layer of media protection that will ensure the preservation of the invaluable testimonies for perpetuity.

“The implications from a genocide studies standpoint are enormous,” said Wolf Gruner, director of the Center for Advanced Genocide Research. “It means that hundreds if not thousands of researchers will soon benefit from the availability of transcripts in the Visual History Archive, yet also of cross-finding other historical sources via the ProQuest interface, offering totally new ways of accessing the testimonies that will allow for significant and, I assume, even surprising contributions to our understanding of the Holocaust and other genocides and massacres, including those in Rwanda, Armenia, and Nanjing.”

Gruner added, “The Visual History Archive Program as a whole also creates new opportunities for hundreds of thousands of students who will, for the first time, be able to connect at their universities with the testimonies of the Visual History Archive for their studies and research.”

One of three leading information-content companies for colleges and universities, ProQuest is the best choice for USC Shoah Foundation, said Sam Gustman, the Institute’s chief technology officer.

“Nowhere in the world is there a company with wider reach, proven longevity and a better reputation for good stewardship and dissemination of such vast amounts of information,” he said. “In ProQuest, customers have a galaxy of documentation at their fingertips, and yet are able to seek and find information with granular precision.”

The company’s agreement with the Institute will initially pertain exclusively to colleges and universities, but eligibility over time will extend to museums and K-12 schools.

The inclusion of the Visual History Archive into ProQuest’s portfolio marks their first foray into adding a video archive into their offerings, a huge milestone for the world’s premier cross-disciplinary research tool for colleges and universities.

“This partnership is a research milestone on many levels,” said Andy Snyder, ProQuest Chairman. “The most important is that these life stories will be accessible to more historians, more students, and more educators than ever before. We’re deeply honored to play a role in sharing this incredibly powerful, unique and essential content and to support the work of USC Shoah Foundation.”

Founded in 1938 as University Microfilms, Ann Arbor Michigan-based ProQuest is renowned for enabling researchers of all kinds to explore more than six centuries of the world’s knowledge – from

newspapers and dissertations to diaries and ancient texts to an extraordinary range of academic, trade, and popular journals. Expert digitization and indexing enables the content to be searched precisely and powerfully, often leading researchers to inspiring and unexpected insights. A staple in virtually every major university library, ProQuest content is made accessible via user-centered platforms that are designed to boost researcher productivity and generate better results. It brings together dozens of the world's most highly used historical documents databases to create the largest single academic research resource available today. In addition to archiving thousands of academic journals as well as historical newspapers, ProQuest's general-reference database includes news, market information, dissertations, books, and podcasts. The reach of this meta-database is vast and deep; for instance, ProQuest users can find articles from the New York Times from as early as 1851.

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About USC Shoah Foundation

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 genocides, a compelling voice for education and action. The Institute's current collection of more than 53,000 eyewitness testimonies contained within its Visual History Archive preserves history as told by the people who lived it, and lived through it. Housed at the University of Southern California, within the Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, the Institute works with partners around the world to advance scholarship and research, to provide resources and online tools for educators, and to disseminate the testimonies for educational purposes. sfi.usc.edu.

About ProQuest

About ProQuest (<http://www.proquest.com>)

ProQuest connects people with vetted, reliable information. Key to serious research, the company's products are a gateway to the world's knowledge including dissertations, governmental and cultural archives, news, historical collections, and ebooks. ProQuest technologies serve users across the critical points in research, helping them discover, access, share, create, and manage information.

The company's cloud-based technologies offer flexible solutions for librarians, students, and researchers through the ProQuest®, Bowker®, Coutts® information services, Dialog®, Ex Libris®, ebrary®, EBL™, and SIPX® businesses – and notable research tools such as the Summon® discovery service, the RefWorks® citation and document management platform, MyiLibrary® ebook platform, the Pivot® research development tool, and the Intota™ library services platform. The company is headquartered in Ann Arbor, Michigan, with offices around the world.