

**In a move that will reimagine the way people use and broadly expand access to the world's largest archive of genocide testimony, USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education has announced its Visual History Archive Program.**

### Changing the World Through Testimony

As the steward of the world's largest collection of testimony from Holocaust and genocide survivors, USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education has long used its Visual History Archive for education, research and action. Since first using Internet2 in 2002 to make the Archive available at Rice University, Yale University, and University of Southern California, the number of subscribing institutions has grown to 79 around the world. But limitations posed by technology and other factors have put constraints on the rate at which the Institute can increase the number of institutions that have access.

To overcome this challenge and keep pace with rising demand, the Institute launched the Visual History Archive Program in early 2016, an ambitious initiative to significantly broaden its audience for the Visual History Archive, which contains 55,000 audiovisual testimonies from witnesses and survivors of the Holocaust and other genocides, including the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda, the 1937 Nanjing Massacre, the Guatemalan Genocide of the early 1980s, The Armenian Genocide of 1915 and the Cambodian Genocide of the 1970s.

Made possible by major donations from Lee Liberman, a member of the Institute's Board of Councilors Executive Committee, and the Koret Foundation, whose board president, Anita Friedman, also sits on the Institute's Board of Councilors, the wide-



ranging, five-year plan seeks to reimagine how its four main audiences connect to testimonies – colleges and universities, secondary education, communities, and organizations.

The goal is to maximize access and optimize use, increasing research and education, while continuing to be respectful of the unique nature of the content.

“Twenty years ago, when we began collecting testimonies, we did not foresee a time where making them accessible via the Internet would be a possibility. This was a time before Google, YouTube, and Facebook, when Americans with Internet access spent fewer than 30 minutes a month on the Web.”

*Stephen Smith, executive director  
USC Shoah Foundation*

### Innovating Research Through Testimony

The first step of the Visual History Archive Program will widen viewership at colleges and universities. It consists of a landmark agreement announced in March 2016 between the Institute and ProQuest, a technology company that brings together

dozens of the world's most highly used historical documents databases to create the largest single academic research resource available today.

As per the compact, ProQuest – whose meta-database is a staple in virtually every major university library – has become the exclusive distributor of USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive to colleges and universities around the world (except China). This means that access to the Visual History Archive will no longer require a high-speed Internet2 connection; access will instead be available through ProQuest via the standard Internet, providing a contemporary streaming experience.

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“The Visual History Archive is of enormous value to the world of academia. From providing new insights on how the ‘Forgotten Holocaust’ unfolded in modern Ukraine, to helping neuroscientists understand how gratitude is mapped in the brain, the Visual History Archive is a priceless academic resource that will benefit not only historians, but researchers of many disciplines for generations to come.”

*Wolf Gruner, director,  
USC Shoah Foundation  
Center for Advanced Genocide Research*

It is expected that the ProQuest agreement will boost the number of Archive subscribers from the current 75 institutions worldwide to more than 200 within two years and at least 500 by the Institute's 25th Anniversary in 2019.

Another transformational feature of the ProQuest partnership is how it will enable the production of archival-quality transcripts for all 54,000 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, which contains over 114,000 hours of testimony.

The transcription process is expected to take five years and will be undertaken by native-speaking academic research transcriptionists for the 41 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.

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

ProQuest's database contains 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.

### **Developing Voice Through Testimony**

Still to come for the Visual History Archive Program are as-yet unannounced strategic partnerships with other companies and institutions to expand access to other audience groups, including middle and high schools, individuals from interested communities, governments, and non-governmental organizations.