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## Archiving Atrocity

The International Tracing Service and Holocaust Research with Suzanne Brown-Fleming

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54 minutes, 48 seconds

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[Holocaust Living History Workshop](#)

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Time      Transcription

00:00      [uctv / University of California Television / www.uctv.tv]

00:12      [Read Write Think Dream / The Library UC San Diego Channel /  
www.uctv.tv/library-channel]

00:15      Brian Schottlaender: As I was thinking about tonight's event um, I was reflecting on the fact that one of my favorite meetings - and, and I don't often use the word favorite together with meeting - one of my favorite meetings um, takes place in the spring every year and that is a meeting in which my colleagues Deborah Hertz, and Susanne Hillman, and I get together to brainstorm the program for the coming year for the Holocaust Living History Workshop. And in the spring of last year, we all got together to have that meeting, as we do, and I came to the meeting particularly eager to talk about a book that had just been published by Roman and Littlefield in February of 2016 entitled *Nazi Persecution and Post-War Repercussions*. The book's author, Suzanne Brown-Fleming, who is with us tonight, supplied the book with a subtitle, as one does, that particularly spoke to me as a librarian and that subtitle is *The International Tracing Service Archive and Holocaust Research*. At the risk of seeming colloquial about it, she had me at the word archive. As some of you may know, the International Tracing Service Archive is one of the world's largest Holocaust-related archival repositories which, every year, helps thousands of people find out more about the fates of victims who suffered at the hands of the Nazis. It is located in Bad Arolsen, Germany, and holds literally millions of documents that enrich our understanding of the many forms of persecution that transpired during the Nazi regime, and the continuing repercussions of those persecutions. Drawing on a selection of recently available documents from the Archive, Suzanne has been able to provide new insights into the decision-making processes employed in genocidal settings, the factors that drive such decision-making, and its far-reaching consequences. The sources that she assembled and contextualized in her book reflect the full range of behaviors and roles that victims, their oppressors, beneficiaries, and post-war aid organizations played beginning in 1933, through World War II, and the Holocaust, to the present. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming.

03:10      Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: So, you have heard a few times the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen, Germany was, until 2007, the largest closed Holocaust-related collection in the world. It was inscribed recently into United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, or UNESCO, memory of the world register, and the size and scope of this collection staggers the imagination. In sheer numbers, tens of millions of documents. ITS captured the Nazi and axis attempts to remake all of Europe under the fascist juggernaut and the terrible decades-long aftermath for families institutions and nations. Documents at ITS relate to millions of people subject to incarceration, forced labor,

displacement, or death as a result of World War II, their persecutors, witnesses, and accomplices, and the countries and agencies who addressed their needs at war's end. The ITS holdings are organized to focus on the perspective of victims and survivors of the Holocaust, both Jews, and non-Jews. Consider this description by Paul Shapiro, the principal driver in opening the ITS. He writes the ITS documents represent a rare case of archives gathered in a single location that span chronologically from the moment Adolf Hitler's National Socialist Party rose to power in Germany in 1933, through the years of Nazi domination and mass persecution of Jews and other targeted groups on the European continent, through the years when both Jewish and non-Jewish survivors of persecution, as well as many perpetrators, passing through hundreds of displaced persons facilities sought immigration, resettlement, and the opportunity to reconstruct new lives in post-war, post-Holocaust era. And they continue right up into our own day through millions of inquiries that sought and provided important information submitted to the ITS by survivors, governments, and other individuals, and institutions. End of quote.

05:33 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: So broadly speaking, how do you try to describe millions and millions of pages of archives? Very broadly speaking, the ITS holds four categories of material, original material located only at ITS, copies of documentation for which the originals might no longer exist and therefore only located at ITS, third, materials for which original copies are located at ITS and copies have subsequently become available in other archives, and fourth, copies of material that do exist elsewhere. It's impossible at this point to identify all material in the first two categories or to estimate the percentage of materials unique to the ITS collection. But using currently available tools, we can make a beginning in identifying that material which exists only and uniquely at ITS. However, I have to say as a researcher, there's great utility in having co-located copies of other relevant collections. A large portion of the ITS holdings have been digitally scanned and currently, the scan portions of the ITS holdings are organized into distinct units, and we're going to run through those units to try to give you a sense of what you might find. The history of opening this collection in 2007 and the withdrawal of the International Committee of the Red Cross in 2012 as administrator of this archive, is very compelling but not the focus of this evening of my presentation. Today, the ITS in Bad Arolsen is under the directorship of Floriane Hohenberg and its working guidelines are defined by an International Commission, or the IC, that consists of 11 member states. Those are Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Great Britain, and the United States.

07:45 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: The German Federal Archive or Bundesarchiv is an institutional partner today and ITS has provided copies of these scanned documents to designated institutions within these International Commission states. And to date, they are accessible at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

in Washington, at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, at the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw, at the Luxembourg Documentation and Research Center, at the Belgian and French National Archives, and at the Wiener Library in London. And therefore, if you want to use them, you can do so in Washington, Warsaw, Paris, Jerusalem, Brussels, London, or Bad Arolsen. Now the history and original mandate of the ITS is as a tracing service and not an archive, and this meant that documents were organized according to their utility in clarifying individual fates, rather than by so-called provenance, or origin of the document. And so, they're filed basically chronologically, by the date they were received in Bad Arolsen. Existing search tools and finding guides do not yet consist of strong descriptions, but this is changing, and very rapidly changing. And when you can access online the descriptions, even though they're rudimentary, you see that they're organized by so-called pertinence principle.

09:19 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: So I'm going to talk about different aspects of the archive, and one of the most well-known is this massive so-called Central Name Index or CNI and this is basically the main card catalog for name searches. So for select collections tracing service staff recorded the names of individual victims contained in newly arrived collections on small cards, similar in size to a modern 3x5 index card, or sometimes - and it's fascinating to see these - they used existing cards generated by German or Axis authorities during the war. So-called CNI cards are a starting point for locating further information about an individual. As a next step, the user must then find the document from which the ITS staff created that card, and this means that the Central Name Index is not comprehensive to every single individual who appears in the ITS holdings. So if you are looking for someone and you don't find them in the Central Name Index, it doesn't mean they're not in the collection. In some cases, a tracing service staff created entirely separate card files, attached to particular collections, and in many collections, victims' names are not carded at all. So let me just show you a few examples of what one can find in this so-called Central Name Index. ITS staff created this card for one Vladislaus Razym. This CNI, Central Name Index reference card, points us to a particular digital archival sub-unit 1.2.2.1, list materials for group prisons and persecution. And within this particular sub-unit, 1.2.2.1 researchers can search for the original so-called Formblatt Listen or post-war archival survey forms, and that's where one would find the name of Vladislaus Razym.

11:34 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: This is one such form so-called Formblatt list. So why was this Central Name Index, CNI card, created in the first place? In March 1990, the Bavarian Red Cross in Bamberg, Germany turned over to the ITS 11 original letters addressed to Razym while he was incarcerated in the small fortress of Theresienstadt, and subsequently, according to further ITS documentation in Dresden and Bautzen. He must have kept these letters with him during his incarceration in Ebrach Prison in Bamberg, which was his last place of

imprisonment before he was liberated on May 20th, 1945. This letter was one document found in the attic of a dwelling on Judenstrasse 15, Bamberg. An important clue in signifying that Razym was probably Jewish, and remained in Bamberg at least temporarily after liberation. It is a letter from someone named Zdena to her beloved Vlada. And she writes to him, I don't go to the dance hall and while there are young boys there, that doesn't mean anything. I wait until you return and then we'll go together. I'm only waiting for you, you know, she writes. And in the letter, she begs him for a photograph that she might keep, and this drawing is his portrait created in Bautzen prison by himself, by another prisoner, we don't know. Note the signature and date under the drawing. December 19, 1944, Bautzen.

- 13:15 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: So the scanned portions of the ITS holdings are organized into several main sub-units, and a large portion - but not all - have been scanned. And so, I'm just going to show you one or two examples from some of the main archival sub-units. Subunit one, you see here - incarceration and persecution - includes collections that relate to camps, ghettos, and prisons of various types and the Nazi or Axis agencies that ran them. Now many aspects of the incarceration and persecution process, including surveillance, arrest, detention, and deportation can be traced in these collections. Let us look at the Dachau registry office card for Saulim Goldberg. When Dachau was liberated in April 1945, prisoners working in the camp's registration office hid the original records from camp authorities to save them from destruction. In August 1946, all documents were transferred to the Central Tracing Bureau, predecessor of the ITS. And there is a wealth of information on this card - prisoner category, previous and current prisoner number, and block assignment, date, and place of birth, religion, occupation, and transfer and death dates. In aggregate, scholars might carry out a statistical analysis of the prisoner population by nationality, occupation, age, or fate, and changes in the camps administration and policies as evidenced by changes in cards like this over time.
- 14:57 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: Paul Shapiro has written about the many myths surrounding the ITS collection and one is that it consists only of lists of names. Another is that ITS collections have greatest relevance to what happened in Western Europe and are weaker the further East in Europe one looks. He argues that both require qualification and this hand-drawn illustration of the camp infirmary in Vapniakra, part of Romanian-administered Transnistria from 1941 to 44, and today in southwest Ukraine very movingly illustrates. Arthur Kessler, the former camp doctor, donated his notebooks, which include these drawings, to the ITS in the 1970s.
- 15:49 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: Sub-unit 2 has a long Germanic name, registration of foreign persons and German persecutees through authorities, insurance companies, and, firms 1939-47. This is a strong primary source base for study of

labor camps operating outside the aegis of the SS camp complex, usually operated by private companies, or municipalities, and in many cases utilizing Jewish slave laborers, or so-called eastern workers, or Ostarbeiter, prisoners of war, civilian contractors. And it contains records of other relevant administrative bodies, for example, local or regional labor offices, German labor front, Deutscharbeits front offices, and records of hospitals, health insurance companies, police, and other institutions that regulated different aspects of foreign labor in Germany - including millions of registration cards, employee record books, and individual correspondence relating to forced labor. Many documents in this sub-unit were produced in response to a November 1945 Allied control council order issued to local German authorities to obtain nominal roles by nationalities of prisoners of war, forcibly evicted persons, workmen, and refugees who've resided temporarily or permanently in occupied territory, or were in transit and a list of institutions in which they worked in Germany. And so, German organizations ranging from German municipalities and industry to clergy, to butchers, and bakers, and candlestick makers - literally had to supply Allied authorities in all four occupation zones with detailed lists of the foreign and meant foreigners, and members of previously persecuted groups that they had employed. And together these records yield a detailed picture of the nature and implementation of forced labor, both Jewish and predominantly non-Jewish in Nazi and Axis-dominated Europe.

17:54 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: This is a list of foreign nationals who worked for one Louis Topel, wooden house and barracks construction in Viermunden, Germany. Digital images in the ITS almost always include a front and a back page. That's good to know, and this is the back page. When the ITS received a new collection tracing service staff created an inventory sheet detailing where the collection came from, on what date, and other details. In this case, former laborer Wladimir Talaschok of Slavuta Ukraine, highlighted in yellow in the document, submitted a single page to ITS in 1994. And here the trail goes cold and we do not know why Mr. Talaschok only submit the submitted this one page, or when, or why the original document was created. And let me give you a second example. I, I find her portrait very compelling. This is an example also from sub-unit 2 on forced labor. This is Lena Iwansowa, born in 1922 in the village of Skiwecze - what is today about seven miles north of the larger town of Smotryce, in current day Ukraine. She's single, ethnic Ukrainian, Greek, Catholic, and employed in Germany as a maid or Haushilferin. Number 2856 is her identity card number and the patch you see OST means Ostarbeiter or civilian worker from the East. And just one final example from this forced labor section of the archive. I had mentioned Allied orders. In October 1945, the Allies issued an order and German military grave services asked that all mayors across Germany, all Bürgermeisters, register the graves of Allied nationals in Germany on a specific grave register form. And this is a drawing of the grave of a French prisoner of war named Devaux, who was killed

in an air attack in the German village of Oberbernbach, which was attached to a grave register form and we have no concrete information of why the mayor of that town would have included this illustration.

- 20:22 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: Sub-unit 3 registration and files of displaced persons, children, and missing individuals is the massive, massive body of administrative paperwork to cope with millions of so-called displaced persons, or DPs when World War II ended. Former concentration camp inmates, forced laborers, prisoners of war, those in hiding, and those who had fled from Communist Europe to Nazi Germany could be counted among them. ITS holdings consist of materials generated by the international organizations tasked with caring for these displaced persons, including those of the UNRRA, United Nations Rehabilitation Rehabilitation and Relocation Agency, the IRO the International Refugee Organization, the International Red Cross, the Inter-Government Committee for European Migration or ICEM, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and also of religious or national bodies like the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Joint, the Jewish Vocational Education Organization, ORT, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, HIAS, the Jewish Agency for Israel, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, NCWC, and many others. One cannot write a complete history of displaced persons without using the ITS collections. Now upon arrival at a displaced persons facility, Allied expeditionary forces authorities issued each displaced person a standardized two-sided registration card called a DP 2 card. So millions of scans of these so-called DP 2 cards are now part of the ITS holdings, and DP 2 cards provide many personal details about refugees that typically include, place of birth, name, date of birth, occupation, country of origin, and religion. This is what a DP 2 card looks like. One might conduct an aggregated study of DP 2 cards analyzing gender, nationality, religion, age, and desired destination if a DP 2 card is available.
- 22:44 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: Sub-unit 3 also contains millions of so-called care and maintenance welfare forms, or CM 1 forms generated in displaced persons facilities in Austria, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. These so-called CM 1 forms are detailed by a graphical and personal history information forms completed by post-war refugees to request and receive support as a displaced person. And the information provided to the IRO had to demonstrate that individuals fell within their mandate of so-called displaced persons. So for each DP, displaced persons, International Tracing Service staff would create an envelope that looked like this to hold the documents of that so-called CM 1 care and maintenance form. And this is a CM 1 form for one Mendel Mann. These CM 1 forms can be very extensive consisting not only of the required forms but sometimes of photographs. And here we have a case where there is a photograph in the CM 1 file. And also, sometimes included, are handwritten detailed accounts, testimonies essentially, of DP's wartime experiences, and this too was the case in the in the CM 1 file of Polish-Jewish Mendel Mann.

24:11 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: In addition to getting a full picture of displaced persons, scholars might also study the social and cultural attitudes of the officers who interviewed each DP. I was struck and touched by this document, filled out by an International Committee for European Migration ICEM case worker. Poor, old, sick woman, writes the case worker about 75-year-old ethnic German Lena Geisler, originally from Czechoslovakia. In other instances, caseworkers and intake officers could be far less kind determining the ability to emigrate or find employment on the basis of a bad haircut - yes, there is a real case like that - or for example, the existence of an illegitimate child. And finally, sub-unit 3 also contains documents of the child search tracing branch, correspondence sent and received in the context of the search for missing children. They include field and monthly reports by staff that dealt with the ever-changing child search branch, the tasks of the institution, and its results. So for scholars seeking to do new work on the Holocaust, these records might be used to study and detail policies concerning and the fates of both Jewish and non-Jewish children.

25:35 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: Sub-unit 4 has gotten a lot of attention over the years, special Nazi organizations and actions because it consists of the files of the institution of the Lebensborn, so-called fount of life program. Comparatively speaking this is a small collection. Taken together, the so-called Lebensborn files consist only of 47,000 scans of documents, some are original and some are copies. The Lebensborn was established in 1935 within the SS Race and Resettlement office and charged every Nazi SS man to produce at least four children, whether in or out of wedlock. These children were to be born in Lebensborn homes, where their mothers were also to reside. Lebensborn provided birth documents, and basic support, and recruited adoptive parents. By 1944 a total of 13 homes were maintained in which approximately 11,000 children were born. After the beginning of the Russian campaign in 1941, European children, especially Polish children deemed to be of good blood, were taken from their parents, evaluated by the Lebensborn, and passed on to adoptive German parents. The number of children affected is estimated to be between several thousand, and 200,000, and few Lebensborn records have survived. Those in ITS reflect the multiple roles of Gregor Ebner among other things, medical director of the Lebensborn facility Hochland, in the village of Steinhöring, near Munich. American forces had captured that facility and the documentation there-in and first used these files in Nuremberg Successor, Successor Trial Number 8, and then sent them to the American military government's Berlin document center, and then they came to Bad Arolsen in 1948. This 1939 document, which bears a facsimile signature of Heinrich Himmler, concerns the guardianship of children born out of wedlock to SS soldiers. And here is a 1938 memorandum requesting that Ebner provide a list of toys needed in the Lebensborn facility Hochland, in Steinhöring.

28:01 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: Sub-unit 5, only two more to go, consists of trial-related documentation and scans of documents concerning the Allied



investigations of so-called death marches. I had mentioned before, the October 1945 Allied and German military grave service issue order, issued to all mayors across Germany to register the graves of Allied nationals in Germany on these specific grave register forms, and in 1946 the Central Tracing Bureau - later the ITS - inaugurated a project to identify burial places of the victims of death marches during the last months of the War and actually published their first findings, which are now part of the ITS collection. It was a project carried out over four years and finishing in 1951, and as a result, we have three volumes and thousands of pages of investigative records about death marches from Buchenwald, Dachau, Mittelbau-Dora, Flossenburg, Neuengamme, Sachsenhausen, some of their satellite camps, and documents about hundreds of cemeteries and mass graves, all part of ITS holdings. I'm showing you this famous map of Sobibór, the death camp Sobibór, in Poland, created by SS officer Erich Bauer for the 1965 Hagen trial, which is well known to Holocaust scholars as an example of the material that, as I mentioned, is available in other archives and also available digitally in ITS. And I chose it also to contrast to a map that is original to ITS and exists only in Bad Arolsen. This is also a map of Sobibór created by members of the ITS staff in February 1950 as part of this documenting the death marches project. And it's one of many original maps to be found in ITS.

30:06 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: This is a testimony that we find hundreds and hundreds of in ITS, from a German resident of a small town called Heilbronn-Böckingen, and Herr Gessinger was his name, describing a death march through his town in early April 1945. And when we asked, he testifies in this document quote, we were told the prisoners were from Neckarelz, a subcamp of Natzweiler, put to work in arms manufacture. The prisoners were in a completely depleted state, end quote. And then he describes in the document here, efforts by German onlookers - in his words - to provide food, cigarettes, and clothing, and then the open murder of prisoners who collapsed by German guards. Sixteen, he witnessed, were murdered in all. So scholars who were studying the still discussed question of what Germans knew and when they knew it, would do well to examine these testimonies that cover late 1944, early and spring 1945, where German, German nationals witnessed and saw with their own eyes death marches, and prisoners being marched back into Germany. As we briefly saw, Allied authorities had to record when foreign nationals were buried and therefore, every German village and town had to submit a report. And this is a hand-drawn map of a Jewish cemetery in the small village of Hoppstädten-Weiersbach, where five unknown Russians and five Poles, presumably forced laborers, or prisoners of war are also buried there. We do not know the cause of death, or why they were buried in the Jewish cemetery instead of the town's Christian cemetery, which was usually the case.

32:03 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: And the last sub-unit that I'll talk about contains the administrative records of predecessor organizations, the child tracing branch, and

the case files in search for missing individuals and children. And these are called, so-called tracing and documentation or TD files. This is a massive, massive portion of the ITS collection. These files contain incoming and outgoing correspondence with victims of Nazi persecution, family members, and governmental organizations. And so scholars studying the Holocaust awareness and memory, which is a very popular topic, might look at these so-called tracing and documentation, TD, files to determine patterns of who was asking when they were asking, and why they were asking. I'm going to finish with one case, one example of a tracing and documentation file for Harry and Theresia Müller, German Jews from Upper Silesia. While their four children managed to emigrate, despite repeated efforts, they did not. They were murdered in Auschwitz in October 1944. And after the war, their family members attempted to learn of their fate, and apply for restitution. This is Theresia Müller's tracing and documentation outer file folder, created by tracing service staff, and all inquiries made about her over the years are listed on this front file folder. And in this final slide, we have a 1958 request from two Hamburg-based lawyers on behalf of Liselotte Miller, one of their daughters. For restitution purposes, Liselotte Miller needed a death certificate for both her parents, and ITS provided photocopies of the transport list from Theresienstadt, the camp Theresienstadt, to Auschwitz dated October 28, 1944. Theresia Müller listed as number 1066, among thousands of others transported on that single day, is listed as a housewife, Haushalt, and Harry Müller, her husband, given the number 1067 is listed, is listed as a doctor.

- 34:25 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: To conclude, there are few if any newly available archives more important for the study of the Holocaust and its decades-long aftermath in the 21st century than the International Tracing Service Archive. I hope this presentation has given you a small taste of what's there, piqued your interests. If your students, there are many many dissertations, papers, theses to be written from these papers. If you are a survivor, or from a family with survivors, I hope that if you have not written to one of the repositories to ask if there's documentation on your family, that you will do so because there probably is in this massive file. And I think most of all, we see that from the ITS that this is an archive about people, and the Holocaust is something that happened to real people that we must never forget. Thank you.
- 35:29 Speaker 1: Thank you very much for your very important work that you're doing and uh, you mentioned Dachau a number of times and my father helped liberate Dachau as an American soldier and my understanding is that the records of, of those American soldiers were in Washington or some, Virginia and they burn they were burned in an accident or something. So I'm wondering if this ITS Archive has any data, any records about the liberators of the camps?
- 36:08 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: It's a great question and in fact, there are some very interesting original documents in ITS where American liberating soldiers were

interviewed immediately after the war, within that first or second year. And those testimonies are in ITS and I think maybe even Dachau was one of the camps. So I'm happy to send you, give you my email and I'll put you in touch with some colleagues of mine who can double-check that for you.

- 36:40 Speaker 2: As a student who is majored in computer science and history I think um, this uh, database is very uh, interested, interesting. So I wonder if there is any um uh electronization of this so that all data can be um get into the computer not by an image but in some kind of table so that people can um, search the thing easier and um, and the computer can generate a relationship network with the um, people, with the names and uh, relation. So is there anything like that?
- 37:22 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: Yeah it's um I, I'm I am on the US delegation for the International Commission and your question is absolutely the right one. Basically, there's so many historically uh, quirky things about ITS. The, the database that one uses now to navigate the digital documents is called OuSArchiv. And it was essentially created by a man named Uwe Osenberg in Germany and it's the, it's the digital access that all the copyholders are using because that's what was in place in 2007 when the digital copies first became available. And now the International Commission, and the ITS itself, is very actively looking for a better digital system so that the, so the coding that you're talking about can happen in an easier way, that it, the archive, can be placed online and be searchable online. So, all of these things are underway. Right now, you have to write one of the digital copyholders and it's still fairly complex. However, in the future, I would say within the next five to seven years, there is going to be a new database system that, that that runs. And, and one more thing, I'm dying for computer scientists and non-historians to get involved in this research because there's so much interesting statistical analysis and big data projects that could come from these archives that, you know as a historian, I'm not good at, but I'm sure that others are. So I hope that others, like yourself, remain interested and, and keep in touch.
- 39:05 Speaker 3: I have a question uh, about ITS and, and Russia. What sort of relations, and communication exist and how did it come about that, that Russia doesn't appear to be involved?
- 39:21 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: Um, there is a whole very fascinating Cold War history to the ITS Archive and the role of the International Red Cross in managing it. Originally in 1955, the management and authority over ITS was to be transferred to then West Germany the Federal Republic, and for political reasons that didn't happen. And then, the International Red Cross, for 50 years, was the - or more - ended up being the kind of stand-in with this International Commission. For Cold War reasons Russia was never asked to be one of the member countries. It's a bit of a sticky point today because Russian uh forced, forced um laborers were rampant all over Germany. And, for not just family research, but also

reparations reasons, any kind of documentation of victims Poland and east of Poland is very important. And it's, it's a sticking point that those countries, other than Poland, have not had membership on the IC.

- 40:35 Deborah Hertz: Um, first of all, thank you very, very much. It's great to have a talk that focuses on primary sources. It's like a historian's history talk. So I have a question about Israel, and I start with this anecdote that Tom Segev talks about where there's Israeli radio in the [19]50s and [19]60s would constantly read the names of people, and then you'd find someone through that way or Yad Vashem. That has, you know, I think, a page per uh, per victim of the Holocaust. Could you go into a little bit more about why this archive was not publicly available for so many years? And would so many efforts that were being done in Israel or New York City, or somewhere else, have been unnecessary if the archive had been more accessible?
- 41:19 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: Um, I would like my colleague, Paul Shapiro, to write the tell-all one day. He um, he really, for 10 years, fought the diplomatic battle with the other International Commission member countries, who really resisted the, the opening - including Israel actually - for the the first few years. Um, it's interesting with with Yad Vashem, who are wonderful colleagues of ours, and we work to closely with them and those who manage their digital copy. Partial copies of ITS were actually made available to Yad Vashem in the 1950s and, and were part of their, the collection at Yad Vashem. So um, for that reason it's said that Israel had a less vested interest in pushing for the opening of ITS than did some of the other countries. As to whether it would have made research and, and restitution cases and, and family histories easier, absolutely. It should have been open long before it was and I think the ITS of today is very aware of that, and really making up for lost time and, and doing really good work, and modernizing. Even searching the documents it's very because they're so massive it's, even had they been open, there's still the issue we're struggling with, that the young man mentioned, about how do you search an archive that's millions and millions of pages? And what's the best digital system? So I'm not sure it would have been a total cure-all but it, there are many families who the survivors and the families died before ever having access to information about where some of their family member's last resting places and, and those things are just criminal. I think the *60 Minutes* piece really points out how critical it was to have access to this archive.
- 43:18 Speaker 5: Thank you very much for your talk. And I also want to thank you for the book that you wrote that was mentioned in the introduction, and the examples that you use in your book are very moving. And I, you know they're not just statistics and so forth. Um, I have used the ITS and I have gotten a very quick answer and I've gone through several layers of of questions. My question is, would I find more things if I would actually go to the archive?

43:49 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: That's that's a very good question too. ITS in Germany, in Bad Arolsen, does have a set of non-scanned, non-digital material, that's only available there. And it's not a case of ITS trying to hide this material, it's, and they're actually trying to scan. It's about fifth, of the whole collection about 85% is digitized and available to the, in the different copy holder locations, and 15% is not scanned and only accessible in [Bad] Arolsen. And they're working to rectify that, but there are important materials you can only find there. Dan Stone just wrote a great article in *Dapim* where he used some of these non-inventory, NINV, non-scan material. So it is worth a trip there, and the the head of research there, uh Henning Borggräfe, he's, he's new, he's he's young, he's really good and, and they're eager to have researchers come and experience Bad Arolsen, and see the town a little bit. And, and you feel the context differently there. So it's worth it. If you can do it in your research travels, it's very much worth it.

45:04 Speaker 6: Uh so, my question would be, when working with the archives what was probably the most interesting thing that you found about the whole collection? Whether it be horrific or hope in humanity, or in just in general, what did you find just wow?

Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: Well, I'll tell you - and JJ knows knows the story a little bit - my mother is German. I'm of German descent and, and spent most of summers, every summer in a little town um, called Lahnstein. It's near Koblenz. It's in the Rhineland area of Germany and so, it's a town that I thought I knew everything about. I knew every corner, knew every building, you know, knew every small business, knew the people. And um, when I was researching this book, and this it was the summer of, I think it was summer 2013, my uncle had, was passing of cancer, and I was going back to Lahnstein. And, and I was in the middle of trying to write this book, and I just - in the keyword search - I put in the name of Lahnstein. Hundreds and hundreds of digital documents popped up, and I was shocked because this is a town of 15,000 people. It's not a big place. And I thought wow, okay, I actually didn't know a lot about the history of my mother's hometown under National Socialism, and the first thing I clicked, and I, I'm sorry I don't have a picture of it in this PowerPoint slide. I opened one of those maps that, that all mayors had to uh, show maps of graves of non um, of victims. And there was a a map, a cemetery map with, in the corner of the map in different color codes for Polish, Russian and Italian, um forced laborers who died in Lahnstein and then were buried in the Christian cemetery.

47:02 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: I noticed that the name of the street on the left-hand side of the map was Allerheiligenbergstrasse and I thought oh that's the that's interesting because that's the same as the street that, that goes up to the church my parents were married in. And then I looked again and I realized that's where my grandmother's buried. That's the cemetery I go to every year and I had to be thousands of, across an ocean, looking at my digital screen in Washington to see

this map and realize that a cemetery that I visit every year, my whole life, actually also has small mass graves of forced laborers that I just walked past for about 45 years before actually understanding what happened there. So that was, then I did, I ended up doing a chapter on my mother's hometown actually in the book because then, I kept on looking. And turns out, in this town of 15,000 people which was mostly Catholic, there were, there was a forced labor camp, for Jews specifically, on German soil, which is very unusual, in the old mining, mining concern at the edge of town. That's where Lahnstein Jews, and others from, other Jews from surrounding towns, were shoved for a year before being deported east. Right there in town. Uh, several major businesses, and small businesses, and bakers that still exist today using Italian, and Russian, and Polish forced laborers. The the chapel where my aunt was married was a prisoner of war camp during, run by monks still, during during the war. There was a displaced persons camp after the war. There were several types of prisons and the townspeople were really vicious. I mean, some of the testimonies of everyday Lahnsteiners saying that they saw a Ukrainian forced laborer who had snuck out, and was trying to steal potatoes from their garden patch and calling the, writing the local SS guards, go pick them up. He's trying to steal my potatoes. And just really petty, petty stuff on, on streets. These are streets I know. These are streets I've walked on my whole life. So it's just strange to see ah, they're trying to pick up this, this Lithuanian forced labor on this street where now my cousin lives there, and it's... So that was the that chapter was, was the, was a big deal.

49:29 Speaker 7: Um the, for, very few people, I would say, are aware of the existence of this incredible uh, treasure trove of documentation. But even for those who do, who are aware, I think there is a general misperception that the entire collection of the, of all the concentration camps archives, are there, when in fact, a number of them were destroyed. So I have two questions. One is um, what is the per percentage uh, that the ITS has, of the entirety of all the archives, including what, the destroyed one? And what would be the size of the ITS today if all of them had been preserved?

50:17 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: You know I, I'm not sure that we are able to answer your question because there are so many small collections that sort of were dumped in Bad Arolsen and are now, the camp collections are all digitized and if you go into the the ausar key with a special digital search system there's a list of something like 42 or 43 categories of of camps. Scholars haven't yet gone literally digital image to digital image and clicked through all of those records. So um, they've started for some of the bigger camps. There's a lot of Buchenwald and Dachau and Flossenbürg stuff, but there's also, there are a lot of records of smaller camps where I, I think it's going to take us 10 or 20 years to, to click through and be able to really answer that, that question. And it's a good question.

- 51:16 Brian Schottlaender: So um, I just wanted to respond to your saying you look forward to the day when computer scientists engage with this trove and extend a small bit of hope to you in that regard. So information scientists in my profession and myself included, have spent the better part of the last 20 years developing digital databases of this sort. And I have to say, that when it comes to making data truly machine-readable, to your point, columnar data that's typed - like the piece of paper behind you - is a whole lot easier to make machine-readable than a whole lot of other kind of data. So there's definitely hope on, on that front if, if you can engage with the right people and, and I would suggest you're in a position to actually do that.
- 52:09 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: Yeah the uh, the International um, Floriane Hohenberg, the director of ITS today is um, basically doing the entertaining bids from, from different companies and, and is going to bring to the International Commission proposals to, to do uh, this. What's the software called? The recognition, yeah optical, yes. [optical character recognition] Uh so this is, we're on that path. It's, it's a little sort of misleading to have done the 10 years ago *60 Minutes* piece in that things are very different there today. But I like the way that piece captures the human factor so well. So I couldn't resist.
- 52:52 Speaker 8: If, if one were to want to find out, follow, look for information on a relative how would one start? Where would, what's step one? Where would you go and is there some document or that kind of gives you possible step by steps or follow-up through that?
- 53:15 Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming: So at most of the digital copy holders there's a a quick one-page form that you can fill out and then you submit that request electronically and staff of that digital copy holding institution will do the research for families. And I think the response time at the Holocaust Museum, we try, if it's a survivor writing or a direct descendant of a survivor, to give an answer within one month or two months at the most. Um, but lucky for you here I am. So I'll give you my email. You can skip the one or two months too.
- 53:55 Susanne Hillman: Please join me to thank uh, Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming for a fantastic talk.
- 54:02 [Archiving Atrocity: The International Tracing Service and Holocaust Research / April 12, 2017]
- 54:09 [Featuring, Suzanne Brown-Fleming, Ph.D. / Directo, Visiting Scholar Programs of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies United States Holocaust Museum]

Archiving Atrocity: The International Tracing Service and Holocaust Research (2017)  
Holocaust Living History Workshop

- 54:14 [Presented by / The Holocaust Living History Workshop / Deborah Hertz, Director, The Jewish Studies Program, UC San Diego / Susanne Hillman, Program Coordinator, The Holocaust Living History Workshop]
- 54:20 [UC San Diego Library / The Audrey Geisel University Librarian, Brian E.C. Schottlaender / Director of Communications and Outreach, Dolores Davies]
- 54:24 [UCTV / Producer, Shannon Bradley / Camera Operators, Matt Alioto, Marci Betts / Editor, Mike Weber]
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