

Holocaust Living History Workshop Brings Together UCSD Students and Survivors

Visual History Archive at UC San Diego Libraries Includes Personal Stories of More Than 50,000 Survivors

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An archive of 52,000 digital oral histories recorded by Holocaust survivors and other witnesses is playing a central role in a Holocaust Living History Workshop, a program that has brought together UC San Diego students, San Diego Holocaust survivors, and their children.

A reception to celebrate the work of the students and San Diego Holocaust survivors, who have been working together under the auspices of the workshop for the last 4 months, will be held May 27 from 4 to 5:30 p.m. in the Seuss Room in the UC San Diego Geisel Library. The reception will feature presentations from students on what they learned by participating in the Holocaust Living History Workshop, a joint effort of the UC San Diego Judaic Studies Program and the UC San Diego Libraries.

UC San Diego Libraries are one of only two university libraries on the West Coast to have access to the USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, founded by film maker Steven Spielberg to document the stories of Holocaust survivors for his movie, "Schindler's List." In 1994, Spielberg established the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, a non-profit organization, to collect and preserve more than 50,000 firsthand accounts of survivors and other witnesses of the Holocaust. In January 2006, the Foundation became the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education.

"When UC San Diego Libraries first licensed this archive, we were viewing this as an outstanding resource for academic research by faculty and students," said Elliot Kanter, Judaic Studies Librarian at UC San Diego Libraries. "But, it became clear to us after examining the archive that it could be a powerful tool for discovering family history and preserving memories for survivors, their families, and members of the community."

According to Deborah Hertz, a professor of history at UC San Diego who holds the Herman Wouk Chair in Modern Jewish Studies, starting the workshop was a way to expand the usefulness and impact of the archive by bringing local survivors and UCSD students together. In February, the Holocaust Living History Workshop was established to provide a forum for students to familiarize themselves with the archive and begin conducting research while meeting with survivors and their families.

"From a story-telling perspective, oral and visual histories can pack a powerful emotional punch," said Hertz. "We thought that using that power to educate our students combined with individuals who had first-hand experiences and knowledge about the Holocaust, would enrich our students' experiences and understanding of an important historical event."

Amy Edwards, program manager for the Holocaust Living History Workshop, said the goal of the workshop is to teach the history of the Holocaust through two methods of face-to-face contact, both with Holocaust survivors and their children and through the Visual History Archive. Student volunteers have received special training on how to search through the testimonies in the massive archive, and then teach survivors and their families-

from multiple generations-how to use the database. These families can then use the archive to conduct their own searches in order to learn about other people, and in some cases relatives, who had similar Holocaust experiences.

The Visual History Archive, which includes the testimonies of Holocaust survivors from 40,000 specific geographic locations in languages ranging from Bulgarian and Greek to Japanese and Spanish, can be accessed by members of the public from any PC computer on the UC San Diego campus, added Edwards.

"There are four main methods of searching through the archive, allowing for a wide variety of scholarly and roots investigation," said Edwards. "The chosen video interview can then be requested and watched all at once or at different times, at any terminal on the UC San Diego campus. Testimonies can be stored, with notes, in a folder within the Web site of the Visual History Archive. Survivors and their families, working with our students, are helping to preserve the memory of the Holocaust for younger generations."

For more information about UC San Diego's Holocaust Living History Workshop, please contact Amy Edwards at judaicstudies@ucsd.edu or 619.534.7661.

With nearly 3.5 million print and digital resources in its collections, the UC San Diego Libraries are the largest academic library system south of Los Angeles. Comprising nine distinct libraries ranging from arts and oceanography to biomedicine and special collections, the UCSD Libraries rank in the top 25 U.S. public libraries among the members of the prestigious Association of Research Libraries.

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