

SURVIVORS OF THE SHOAH VISUAL HISTORY FOUNDATION HOST THE "1939" CLUB

(1997)

On November 16, 1997, The "1939" Club, along with the Lodzer Organization, were guests of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation at their Universal City facility. Almost 200 members attended the event. The members were first treated to a fascinating tour of the facilities, followed by a reception and a discussion with Dr. Michael Berenbaum, CEO. Daisy Miller organized the event.

The Foundation was founded by Steven Spielberg. The goal of the Foundation is to videotape eyewitness accounts of the Holocaust and develop the most comprehensive on-line multi-media archive of survivor testimonies ever assembled.

Under the guidance of leading Holocaust scholars and oral historians, the Foundation has established an effective protocol for creating an historically valuable archive. Particular emphasis has been placed on training interviewers, electronically cataloguing testimonies, and collecting as many varied survivor experiences as possible while there is still time.

Conducted in the language most comfortable for the survivor, interviews are taped in the survivor's home (unless another location is requested) using broadcast quality Betacam SP video equipment. The interviews focus on experiences before, during, and after the Holocaust. Relatives are invited to appear on camera for the final moments of the interview.

A highly trained staff of cataloguers closely examines each testimony tape. Cataloguers prepare an index of identifying keywords and key phrases to ensure easy retrieval of testimony information. The protocol for this important step includes traditional cataloguing methods using Library of Congress subject heading to create MARC Records, as well as the pioneering work of new indexing methodology developed by the Shoah Foundation.

A multilingual interviewer resources team reviews interviews and provides valuable feedback to inter-viewers, ensuring that the quality of the interviews is maintained and continues to be refined. In addition, the production department reviews the quality of the tapes themselves, ensuring that the highest standards of videography are maintained.

During 1998, the archive of testimonies will be made available via secure computer networks to the five initial repositories. Soon thereafter, the archive will be available to additional repositories throughout the world. The actual collection will be housed and maintained in Los Angeles.

The Foundation is working closely with the repositories to develop methods of accessing the system that are tailored to each institution. For example, a children's museum would see a simplified user-friendly screen, while a university interface would display the most detailed research data. In addition to the on-line multimedia database, the Foundation's pursuing other educational outlets, including documentaries, books and CD-ROM applications for schools.

The Foundation has a staff of over 240, complemented by over 3,600 volunteers worldwide. To date, 36,765 interviews have been conducted in 29 languages in 48 countries.