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Introduction

The World Wide Web and digitisation have become important sites and tools for the history of the Holocaust and its commemoration. The technical possibilities constitute the elements of the turning point that Marianne Hirsch in 2012 referred to as “postmemory’s archival turn”.¹ For History as Public History, they have become essential tools for mobilising a wide array of social and ethnic groups – especially the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated processes of digital mediatisation. Through the example of the Holocaust, the paradigmatic shift in the humanities becomes particularly evident. Memory institutions now use the virtual digital space and its possibilities at a high professional level as a space for self-representation and as a forum for discussions among potentially international, transcultural, and interdisciplinary user groups.

At the same time, it is not always the established institutions of memory and professional ‘entrepreneurs’ of memory politics that fully exploit the technical possibilities and potentials of the internet. Creative and sometimes controversial new ways of narrating the history of the Holocaust, or traditional forms of Holocaust remembrance presented anew through digital media, often originate from individuals or groups not within the sphere of influence of major memorials, museums, and archives. Such ‘private’ presentations have gained particular prominence since the rise of social media. Here it becomes evident: there are new societal intentions and decision-making structures that exceed the capabilities of traditional mass media, as well as new forms and forums of public engagement that function differently, disseminate content differently, activate differently, and not only foster a passive reception but instead thrive on the participation of a broad public. How do these forms of grassroots digital storytelling interact with institutional digital content? What unexpected new audiences can be reached outside of one’s own bubble? And what kinds of spaces emerge when historical sources are situated and located by means of augmented reality?

The digital space as an abstract and boundless archive for mediating the Holocaust was thus at the centre of the first EHRI-AT international conference “Connected Histories. Memories and Narratives of the Holocaust in Digital Space” held from 23 May to 25 May 2022 at the Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue in Vienna, Austria, co-organised by the Department of Contemporary His-

1 Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

tory of the University of Innsbruck and the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI) with the participation of all EHRI-AT partners.² This volume collects some of the inspiring talks given at this conference.³ They indicate profound changes in the mediation of Holocaust history and memory.

As “the era of the witness”⁴ slowly fades, (digitally) mediated modes of remembrance and commemoration are taking over. Holocaust Studies have begun to embrace the possibilities of digital technologies, moreover Holocaust Studies themselves have become a laboratory to experiment with new digital tools and methods reshaping the landscape, ushering in new scenarios where today’s culture of remembrance and Holocaust Education are driven by multimedia and digital advancements.⁵ “Digital Holocaust” is no longer solely perceived as the effort to preserve historical archives and eyewitness accounts and guarantee their “survival” into the digital age. On the contrary Holocaust content and memory are (co-)created, (re-)shaped, (re-)mediated digitally and linked, liked and shared online and/or blended with analogue forms of memory. In the realm of the Holocaust digital culture is multiplying the spaces for creating and experiencing collective memory.⁶ The institutions of memory – museums, memorials, archives, research facilities and the like – and/or institutionalised memory experience a massive shift in the negotiation processes between the past and the present.⁷

2 For more on the conference, consult: International Conference: “#connectedhistories. Memories and Narratives of the Holocaust in Digital Space,” accessed 18 January 2024, <https://www.uibk.ac.at/zeitgeschichte/connectedhistories2022/>; “Program and Recordings of the talks: Programm #connectedhistories,” accessed 18 January 2024, <https://www.uibk.ac.at/zeitgeschichte/connectedhistories2022/programm.html.de>.

3 We would like to thank Alexander Renner for his support with the publication and most valued help with the images in this volume.

4 Annette Wieviorka, *The era of the Witness*, trans. Jared Stark (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press 2006).

5 See also Éva Kovács, “Testimonies in the Digital Age – New Challenges in Research, Academia and Archives,” in *Interactions: Explorations of Good Practice in Educational Work with Video Testimonies of Victims of National Socialism*, Education with Testimonies Vol. 4, ed. Werner Dreier, Angelika Laumer and Moritz Wein. (Berlin: Stiftung “Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft,” 2018), 76–92; Marianne Windsperger, “Preserving Lived Contexts. Yizker bikher as Portable Archives from Transgenerational Perspective,” in *Mobile Kulturen und Gesellschaften/Mobile Cultures and Societies*, ed. Alexandra Ganser and Annegret Pelz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht/Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2021), 189–203, accessed 22 January 2024, <https://doi.org/10.14220/9783737012089.189>.

6 See also Eva Pfanzelter, *#URL Holocaust digital. Verhandlungen des Genozids zwischen Public History, Geschichtspolitik und Kommerz* (Innsbruck: iup, 2023), accessed 22 January 2024, https://www.uibk.ac.at/iup/buch_pdfs/10.15203-99106-111-3.pdf.

7 See also Dirk Rupnow, “Zwischen Ignoranz, Missbrauch und Konkurrenz. Zum Stand von Geschichtspolitik, Erinnerungskultur und Holocaust-Gedenken,” *S.I.M.O.N* 9(1) (2022): 109–123.

While this shift has been considered inappropriate for addressing traumatic experiences, perceptions of the digital space in conjunction with the Holocaust have changed significantly over the past decades. To trace some of these changes, lies at the heart of the essays collected in this volume. They indicate a profound generational change, modification in archiving practices, different modes of communication, new ethical standards, and above all, a constant renegotiation and remediation of the history of the Holocaust.

What binds these essays together, is the attempt to better understand the connections between analogue and digital, history and contemporary society, older and younger generations or private and institutionalized memorialization – hence the title of the volume “#connectedhistories”. Also, the authors of this volume see digital technologies as a chance to reach younger generations and to further Holocaust education. Despite controversial discourses on the influence of the digital world on today’s societies, the essays collected here stand for a more positive interpretation of the constant need to enter into conversation with public debates, different opinions and challenging content, since they are part of history education. Still, they also call for watchful activism and careful moderation to counter online hate, antisemitism, antifeminism and racism.

This collected edition begins with a technological deep dive. In their essay “Does it get better with time? Web search consistency and relevance in the visual representation of the Holocaust”, authors Mykola Makhortykh, Aleksandra Urman, Roberto Ulloa, Marya Sydorova and Juhi Kulshrestha make an in-depth analysis of how search engines’ image results shape Holocaust memory. They argue that digital mnemotechnologies such as web search engines play a major role in curating information about the present, but also about historical phenomena. The growing body of research demonstrates that search engines and algorithms play an important role in representing and interpreting the past by selecting and prioritising specific information sources and content items. However, how consistent such representations of historical phenomena remain over time is currently unclear. Search engines are known to revisit their ranking of sources and individual content items related to current events (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic) to reflect potential changes in their relevance; however, there is limited understanding of how changes in relevance apply to historical events, in particular, the ones for which there are well-established institutional practices of representation as in the case of the Holocaust. To advance such understanding, the authors analyse image search results in relation to the Holocaust collected via three Western and non-Western search engines – Bing, Google, and Yandex – in 2020 and 2021. Using a combination of historical and qualitative content analysis, they investigate how the relevance of search outputs to the Holocaust changes over time and how consistent the prioritisation of specific aspects of the Holocaust and sites of Holocaust memorialisation remains.

Mia Berg's contribution focusses on "Participatory memory – historiography – research? Exploring representations of the Holocaust on social media". She analyses how the remediation of the Holocaust in social media repeatedly causes controversial reactions leading up to debates on the (limits of) representations of history and/or the appropriateness of the mediation of the Holocaust on social media, although, lately some social media usage is increasingly seen as a new form of remembrance and documentation practice. The example of the Holocaust illustrates how social media questions mainstream forms of commemoration, how normative boundaries are being (con)tested and re-defined through new formats, subjects, or communication practices. Despite highly contested discourses surrounding social media in recent years Berg argues that social media have led to a "democratisation" of communication and remembrance regarding the Holocaust because of the pluralization of actors and practices. By looking at the platforms Instagram and TikTok she analyses whether and how this "democratisation", understood as a participation in knowledge production in the public sphere, is represented in the context of Holocaust remembrance.

"Digital Holocaust memory: A study of Italian Holocaust museums and their social media users" is in the focus of Stefania Manca's and Silvia Guetta's essay. In this chapter the two authors delve into the complex interplay between national and transnational Holocaust memory, as represented on the social media profiles of four Italian Holocaust museums and memorials. Through a combination of semi-structured interviews with museum staff and a survey administered to users, they tried to gain insight into both the communication policies and social media strategies employed by these institutions, as well as the motivations of their online followers. Their findings suggest that social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, are a crucial means of promoting historical information and museum activities to a wider audience. Users place a high value on accuracy of information, express a desire to better understand historical facts and empathise with victims. However, they also note that limited resources can pose significant challenges to effectively implementing digital strategies, and that direct user interaction with museum staff is relatively infrequent. Despite these challenges, Manca and Guetta underline the importance of social media in fostering engagement with Holocaust memory, both on a national and transnational level. By better understanding the motivations of users and the strategies employed by museum staff, it is argued, museums and memorials can work towards creating more effective and impactful digital representations of the Holocaust for generations to come.

Anna Carolina Viana, Bárbara Deoti and Maria Visconti look at historians as influencers in Brazil. In their article "The historian influencer: Mediating and transmitting Holocaust memory on social media in Brazil" they present the chal-

allenges and possibilities of mediating and transmitting Holocaust Memory on social media in Brazil, based on their experience as coordinators and content creators in the Brazilian Center for Nazism and Holocaust Studies (NEPAT), an independent female-led initiative of historians. NEPAT was created in 2019 following the need to open space for academic dialogue in Brazil in the fields of Nazism and Holocaust Studies, as well as to produce accessible content covering such topics on social media – virtual space is especially important in this case because of the spatial distance to the sites of the events of the Holocaust. Since 2020, the initiative has also been creating a podcast called *Desnazificando* (Denazifying), which is, to this date, the only podcast exclusively about these themes in Brazilian Portuguese. The scientific dissemination project on social media is an essential part of the public-facing activity, founded on values the initiative is committed to uphold. In recent years, also in Brazil the Holocaust Studies field has dedicated more attention to the digital world, as digital media have become a valuable platform for disseminating scholarly research, producing memorial and educational initiatives, and reaching a broader audience. In this new and flourishing landscape, however, researchers must critically examine the research practices now shaping Holocaust memory and education and reflect on how researchers and educational institutions create digital outputs to reach their intended audiences. Working with social media implies diving into the scope of marketing, community management, quantitative data analysis, and content strategy. Based on the theoretical outlook of both Digital History and Media Studies, Viana, Deoti and Visconti dedicate special attention to the interactions between users and digital interfaces, as well as the participatory culture fostered by social media networks. This chapter therefore is methodological work of self-reflexivity, using NEPAT's Instagram production as primary source materials for analysis.

The essay by Anja Ballis also deals with the challenges of social media and especially with TikTok. Her contribution “The media network of memory: Sharing Holocaust stories on TikTok and collaborative writing of ‘Memory Books’” focuses on the storytelling aspects of social media. She identifies a clear media change during the COVID-19 pandemic where a tendency towards online remembrance on social media can be observed. Since many institutions were temporarily closed, some survivors began (re)telling their life-stories on social media, especially on TikTok, where they were often supported by family members. In this manner, Ballis argues, Holocaust survivors achieved agency in (re)telling their story on their own accord and in their own way, thus no longer being dependent on mainstream institutions of Holocaust memory. To support her arguments, the author uses the examples of two Holocaust survivors, Lily Ebert and Gidon Lev, who have become quite popular “online survivors”. Ballis argues that the social media activities of the two Holocaust survivors show similarities and differences that

reveal how memory is shaped and multiplied in digital space. Their media network of memory, consisting of media coverage, social media activities and printed memoirs sheds light on the processes of creating and constructing (online) memory. The discussion on the extent to which print media and its structure influence online storytelling – and vice versa – contributes to considerations on shaping memory by different agents and on taking action against forgetting the crimes of the Holocaust.

Josefine Honke's essay "#Connectedmemories: Non-persecuted German witnesses of National Socialism on YouTube" deals with another influential social media platform: YouTube. While it seems to be primarily a place for quick entertainment, historical content on the video portal has become quite popular. Honke argues that YouTube has cultural significance for memorial culture because the videos shown here are a vital component of global memory networks and should therefore receive more attention in research and teaching. Beyond some of the most watched videos focusing on easy entertainment or preparing students for their exams, other YouTube videos and channels have been mostly neglected in memory studies and unjustly so. To support her arguments, the author examines two online videos with non-persecuted German witnesses who talk about the time of National Socialism in Germany. They establish YouTube as memory media where witnesses follow specific modes of representation, and representational aesthetics and mobilised narratives of the past primarily centre on the victims. Honke also discusses the possibilities of connecting memories of on, for example, a municipal level to bring different memories together and engage in both local and national memorialisation. To conclude she argues that YouTube as a global memory network needs to be considered as a "fluid mnemonic space" (Matthew Boswell and Antony Rowland) that constantly changes. They offer opportunities but also challenges to current memory discourses. One of the outstanding features of digital memory media is, so Honke, the engagement of mostly younger generations and their confrontation with the past.

The chapter "Rendering forgotten places of NS terror visible. Art, research, participation, and digital technologies as an assemblage in the project 'Making Traces Readable in the NS Forced Labour Camp Ruggendorf/Pulkau'" by Edith Blaschitz, Heidemarie Uhl(†), Georg Vogt, Rosa Andraschek, Martin Krenn and Wolfgang Gasser focus on an Austrian "NS victim site". The essay draws from the understanding that NS forced labour camps and camp-like facilities used for the internment of prisoners of war or civilian forced labourers are hardly visible today. In fact, most of these former labour camp sites are no longer known, as they can be found neither in scholarly nor in local history publications. This means that these sites of forced labour are usually right in the middle of our everyday spaces – with a few exceptions where such sites were turned into memorials or somehow marked with

mementos. The search for new anchor points for reference and confrontation, as well as new formats of dissemination and involvement is characteristic in dealing with such difficult memorial spaces. Against the background of the question of how to address forgotten camp sites in everyday spaces and how digital technologies can support this effort, the project “Making Traces Readable in the NS Forced Labour Camp Roggendorf/Pulkau” was developed and implemented in Lower Austria. The chapter discusses the concept that was elaborated as a combination of the physical location with artistic and specialist approaches, participatory remembrance work, and digital technologies. This connection between the place, different actors and digital technologies can be referred to as an “assemblage” wherein heterogeneous components form a social fabric through collaborative processes and their relationship to one another and create a new space.

Iris Groschek and Nicole Steng question and discuss “Social media at memorial sites: Are we sure this is a good idea? Considerations and experiences on the use of social media by two German concentration camp memorial sites”. In this chapter, the authors share considerations and experiences from their own use of social media, particularly online live tours and TikTok videos at the Dachau and Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial sites. This offers practical insights into potentially integrating digital and non-digital memory forms. Additionally, it emphasises the challenge memorials encounter in balancing the delivery of factual information for remembrance and commemoration, while navigating the “unanchored” quality of social media posts and other online formats. Groschek and Steng argue that the examples from the two Concentration Camp Memorials show that digital innovations hold many possibilities for memorial sites. Here, digital and analog realms complement each other almost effortlessly. Yet, one misconception persists: the belief that digital visitors require less attention than those physically present. However, digital visitors display just as much interest as those on-site at the memorial. Also, the close interweaving of online and analogue content creates new approaches to learn about the history of National Socialist persecution, which can certainly help to improve awareness of knowledge and scope for action within society as a whole. This requires not only an appreciative attitude on the part of the memorial sites for new – or differently to address – target groups, but also an open-mindedness for challenging formats. Memorial sites need educational concepts in which digitality does not mean the replacement of paper but is understood as a completely new educational opportunity. They need their own technical know-how and a genuine interest in innovation. In order to remain relevant for the next generation, memorial institutions will have to invest more time and energy in their own, but also user-generated content and co-creation formats, in order to become influencers in the digital world.

The influence of Holocaust survivors in Nebraska is discussed by Beth S. Dotan in “The impact of Nebraska’s collective memory of the Holocaust via digital exploration”. The cross-disciplinary project (political science, history and digital humanities disciplines) Dotan analyses is the platform “The Nebraska Stories of Humanity: Holocaust Survivors & WWII Veterans, Network & Educational Portal”. The site is filled with digitised materials collected locally, including documents, photos and keepsakes from survivor and veteran families, alongside news articles, testimonies, geographical data and primary resources. By spotlighting distinctive regional stories through a fully transcribed and easily navigable collection, it enhances accessibility and amplifies the narrative of survivors and liberator memories and contributions. One of the educational objectives of the site is to facilitate users’ comprehension of the breakdown of democracy in pre-World War Two Europe and to showcase the resilience of individuals. The site enables visitors to contemplate the immense challenges people faced when adapting to unforeseen circumstances and trauma, and how they confronted new conditions for survival. The Nebraska Stories of Humanity portal sheds light on the experiences and trajectories of these journeys by revealing documents that provide evidence of the erosion of democratic structures and showcasing personal collections that symbolise hope for the future. The website, with its multifaceted nature, can integrate into critical educational theories and utilize multidirectional memory to link Holocaust pedagogy with state educational standards. Dotan argues that while the goals of the project are to bring together disparate materials from outside collections, families and local resources, the outcome has been much more than the simple gathering of items. Linking the transcribed, digitized artifacts to substantiate testimony metadata creates newly evolving narratives with vast educational and research implications.

In “Follow for more spookiness’: The dybbuk box, networked digital Holocaust memory and interactive narrative on social media”, Archie Wolfman investigates a totally different, albeit equally fascinating subject. He retraces the digital fragments of the “dybbuk box” narrative. The “dybbuk box” originates in Jewish folklore and is based on the narrative that the soul of a deceased person can take over and possess a living being. Apparently, in 2001, an antique dealer in Portland, Oregon, named Kevin Mannis, bought a wine cabinet referred to as the “dybbuk box” from a Holocaust survivor. Shortly after Mannis encountered a series of unfortunate events and supernatural occurrences, he sold the box on eBay in 2003. Since then, it has changed hands multiple times. Its sale has sparked an array of responses, including numerous blog entries, news articles, books, episodes on paranormal reality television, numerous horror films from Hollywood to Malayalam- and Hindi-language films, a phone app, a fantasy genre card game, YouTube videos, Tumblr posts, Reddit threads, Twitter (X) comments, TikTok uploads and responses, and, continuing to the present day, countless imitative eBay

and Etsy listings. All accounts regarding the dybbuk box from its various owners link supernatural occurrences and similar incidents to the dybbuk that supposedly haunts, curses, or possesses the box, even though Mannis in 2021 confessed that the story was fiction. Regardless of the authenticity of the initial story, the box's interactive online narrative persists in evolving and spreading. In this chapter, Wolfman examines various instances of the dybbuk box's digital representations across diverse social media platforms like Reddit, TikTok and YouTube. He argues that exploring Holocaust memory within these platforms also reflects shifts in commemoration across generations. Members of "Generation Z" (or Gen Z)⁸ shape their identities and form communities by engaging in online spaces – responding, liking, following, criticising, reposting, remixing. Their involvement in digital culture is more interactive, foundational, and self-aware compared to earlier generations.

In the final chapter, Anna Menyhért engages in "Digital trauma processing in social media groups: Transgenerational Holocaust trauma on Facebook". This contribution studies the impact of digital and social media on transgenerational trauma processing, examining how different Facebook groups, public or closed, influence the ways in which people communicate about a collective historical trauma. It touches upon the issue of research ethics in connection with the handling of sensitive data in social media research. It examines two Hungarian Facebook groups on Holocaust memory, and a book, compiled as a collection of posts from the group "The Holocaust and My Family". The author analyses and compares two Hungarian groups, "The Holocaust and My Family" and "The Descendants of the Victims and Survivors of the Holocaust", looking at why these groups are especially suitable for facilitating historical trauma processing. She shows how the concepts of trauma and trauma processing itself are changing in the digital age, related to how the practice of sharing posts and comments on social media gains more importance and thus counteracts the element of silence, which was considered the most important element of trauma on several levels. Menyhért argues that the methods of remembering and practices related to memory have evolved due to the digital environment acting as a mediating platform. Online communities like blogs and social media groups offer an entirely new space for both individual and collective processing of trauma. As such, the emergence of the concept of digital memories can be identified wherein the perception of trauma changed within cultural trauma studies. Compared to the established notion of

⁸ In this context, see also "Die Generation Z und die NS-Geschichte: hohe Sensibilität und unheimliche Faszination. Qualitative und quantitative Studie. Arolsen Archives/Rheingold Institut, 2022," accessed 18 January 2024, <https://arolsen-archives.org/lernen-mitwirken/studie-gen-z-ns-zeit/>.

trauma as unchangeable, unspeakable, and impossible to represent or mediate, trauma in the digital era is viewed as multifaceted, represented in various ways, diverse and shared within the digital realm.

Through the digital turn in Holocaust Studies the “era of the witness” has turned into the “era of the user” (Hogervorst, 2020)⁹ that is characterised by ubiquity, relationality, new possibilities of combining information through reconfiguration and the active role of the user in the storytelling. The importance of user involvement, of empathy and emotional identification in the digital age is also highlighted in the large-scale study on the Generation Z conducted by Arolsen Archives. In order to know more about the user, the “black box” in Holocaust Education and Public History – that was addressed in several discussions during the conference – needs to be opened through collecting data on users and documenting their experiences. We want to close this volume with questions that were addressed during the conference and in the contributions of this volume:

What about the audiences of social media channels, digital projects, crowd-sourcing campaigns? Do the researchers know their audiences, what can they learn from their experiences and what happens when content reaches unexpected audiences? What happens when users become researchers themselves? What can we learn from the digital literacy of the Generation Z? How are digital developments transforming our way of understanding archives? What happens through the remediation of archival content? What is gained and what is lost? How do we approach a virtual space where fact and fiction merges – where we are confronted with augmented realities? How democratic were these changes, and to what extent did they ultimately reinforce old hierarchical structures, as well as cultural, regional, and other inequalities in global knowledge production?

The European Holocaust Research Infrastructure EHRI has already addressed many of these challenges and questions since its founding as a project in 2010 and has become a digital infrastructure that enables the exchange and networking of Holocaust historians, archivists, digital experts, data scientists and users with all kinds of backgrounds and expertise. EHRI provides an infrastructure and laboratory where conversations on technical possibilities and data restrictions are initiated, where new methodologies can be tested and where interdisciplinary exchange happens.

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9 Susan Hogervorst, “The era of the user. Testimonies in the digital age,” *Rethinking History* 24(2) (2020): 169–183, accessed 18 January 2024, DOI: 10.1080/13642529.2020.1757333.

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