Interview

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Dóra Pataricza, Interview with Zsuzsanna Toronyi, the Director of the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives

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Zsuzsanna Toronyi is the director of the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives. She studied archival studies, history, Hebrew and Jewish Studies at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest and later museology, and cultural management at the same institution, including her PhD in history in 2016. Zsuzsanna has worked as an archivist and curator at the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives for over 30 years and since 2014, she has been the institution's director. Between 1998 and 2006, she took part of the Hungarian Research Group of Yad Vashem. Currently she is an assistant professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary – University of Jewish Studies (OR-ZSE)[1] and lecturer at the Department of Assyriology and Hebrew Department of Cultural Studies of ELTE. She is the author of several books and curator of numerous temporary and permanent exhibitions.[2]

How would you formulate the importance of the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives?

1 The Országos Rabbiképző – Zsidó Egyetem (shortened as OR-ZSE), Eng. Jewish Theological Seminary – University of Jewish Studies, was established in 1877 as the rabbinical seminary of the *Neolog* movement in Hungary. This institution is one of the world's oldest training grounds for non-orthodox rabbis and cantors. Since the 1990s, it has expanded its offerings, attaining university status in 2000.

2 https://hu.linkedin.com/in/toronyi-zsuzsanna-b0251937.

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We possess Europe's most comprehensive preserved Jewish community archive. For instance, the Pest[3] Jewish community has practically all records from its establishment in the late 1700s to the present day available. The same holds for the central organisation, the MIOI (*Magyarországi Izraeliták Országos Irodája* Eng. National Office of the Hungarian Israelites), a crucial collection of documents representing the *Neolog* – the 19th-century movement within Judaism in Hungary that sought to modernise and reform traditional Jewish practices and beliefs – national organisation, excluding the orthodox communities. At the same time, our museum stands as one of the most poignant Holocaust memorials in Hungary, Europe, and even the world, as it encompasses a mass grave in the Jewish Museum's garden. The garden of the building complex, a space planned by architects László Vágó and Ferenc Faragó in 1932, was intended to be an open park – a symbolic place of peaceful coexistence between Jews and non-Jews. Hence, the Museum can be only understood through the memory of the mass graves. Two generations after the construction of the Dohány Street Synagogue (1859) – a symbol of Jewish pride – the grandchildren of its builders find their final resting places in the same synagogue's mass graves, and it is profoundly moving for every visitor. My narrative voice of this tragic transformation of spaces is an essential part of our exhibition, and every visitor must pass through this emotionally charged experience.[4]

What is your academic background, and what motivated you to become involved with this institution and its mission?

I have been working at the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archive for 30 years. My primary mission has been to ensure that this museum is organised and accessible to everyone. It is worth noting that there are few museums in Hungary where the entire collection is available online. Such a collection would not be justified if it were just treasures locked in acid-free boxes, cared for by the same curator for 20 years and then by another curator for 20 more years. We currently have a digitisation project, and almost a million pages are accessible online. Researchers can access our materials without meeting us, although we enjoy encountering them. Before COVID, we regularly organised an event called the "Salon" for our researchers towards the end of the year. I invited all our researchers to come together. These researchers might not have met each other before, but it was certain that they shared common interests. It was essential for them to communicate with each other. It is like a *shidduch* [Jewish matchmaking] because the archivist has to facilitate not only the encounter between the documents and the researchers but also sometimes between

3 On November 17, 1873, the official establishment of Budapest took place through the merger of the three adjacent cities of Pest, Buda, and Óbuda.

4 Toronyi, Zsuzsanna. "The Story of a Budapest Garden." *Images* 7, no. 1 (2013): 56–70. doi:10.1163/18718000-12340025.

the researchers, which can lead to new ideas. Just as Jewish culture is discursive, Jewish collections must also interact discursively with their environment. In doing so, conversation and communication become the keys to everything.

Being a woman in this role, surprisingly, only included advantages, particularly in addressing heritage conservation, ensuring the museum and the archive actively engage in the discursive dialogue essential for preserving Jewish culture and its collections within their environment.

I ended up in this institute because when rabbi György Landeszmann, the director of the archive, left for Canada, it became clear that someone needed to take over. Initially, I started as a volunteer in the library of the OR-ZSE because, at that time, a batch of books returned from Prague, which had been transported there on Eichmann's initiative in 1944. In the early 1990s, we managed to arrange these books, some 2643 volumes to be exact, on proper shelves in the library. However, they needed to be catalogued, and as a student archivist, I volunteered to participate in this work. Since childhood, I aspired to become an archivist – I cannot explain this, and I think it is impossible to do so. But that was very much my desire, as I am intrigued by creativity and history, and on the other hand, I appreciate structured thinking and archives, which inherently represent the contemporary administrative system. So, I am a born archivist. I also pursued Jewish studies at Eötvös Loránd University, providing me with some knowledge to describe and catalogue these books. In addition, this allowed me to become familiar with archival materials. In 1993, at the time when György left, the Jewish Museum was robbed,[5] resulting in the tragic death of its director, Ilona Benochofszky.

In 1993, Róbert Turán was appointed as the director. His brother, Tamás Turán, had been one of my professors at the university, so there were many coincidences and connections. Ultimately, in 1994, we managed to transfer all the archival documents from OR-ZSE to the museum. It seemed "logistically" and organizationally simpler than running a one-person archive since the museum had a financial department and the necessary logistical infrastructure, so we started operating there. While we had to get to know and organize this completely chaotic archival material, Hungary adopted restitution laws around the same time. This legal development was closely connected to the archives, as restitution laws involve the compensation for people unlawfully deprived of their lives or liberty for political reasons, as well as settling ownership relations, and at least partial compensation for properties unjustly taken away by the state. All claims needed to be proven with the help of archival documents. In essence, these laws aim to rectify situations where someone has acquired property or funds unjustly from another, compelling them to restore it to the rightful owner to prevent unjust enrichment or the retention of an

5 Last of Stolen Budapest Art Recovered in Romanian Capital - Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

undeserved gain. Thus, my career as an archivist began with issuing certificates for restitution in an immense quantity – a challenging and heart-wrenching task. On the other hand, providing such certificates based on an entirely unorganised set of documents in a large amount was very demanding.

I am, however, a professionally trained archivist, which is crucial because there was a specific Master's Degree archival studies program at Eötvös Loránd University's Faculty of Humanities. With the resurgence of interest in ecclesiastical collections following the political shifts in the 1990s, it became a prerequisite – considering that a significant portion of Hungary's cultural heritage is housed in ecclesiastical collections – that individuals working with these documents should be trained, professionally accredited experts. Although I can read Latin-language diplomas from the Middle Ages, I do not necessarily need that skill; I need the methodology for structuring the documents.

Can you provide an overview of the history and significance of the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archive in Budapest in relation to Central and Eastern Europe and, specifically, the Holocaust?

The archival collection of our museum emerged as part of the museum itself. In 1909, a group of intellectuals, Ferenc Mezey, Dr. Bertalan Fabó, József Bánóczy, Dr. Bertalan Kohlbach, Bernát Mandl and Dr. Miksa Weisz, founded the museum to preserve the memory of seemingly vanishing traditions shared by all other Jewish museums. This era marked a significant period of secularisation, during which modernising Jews, felt both nostalgia[6] and fear of losing their ancestral heritage. The initial items primarily consisted of ceremonial objects, yet an intriguing relationship unfolded as documents too began to arrive. These documents aimed to prove the longstanding presence of Jews in Hungary and shed light on the economic, legal, and other aspects of their situation. There is a fascinating dynamic within this context: when Jews faced financial challenges, they were more inclined to donate paper as gifts rather than silver. Simultaneously, in these times, Jews did their best to demonstrate that an integrated Jewish community had long resided in Hungary.

Therefore, our archival collection evolves as an integral part of the museum, consisting primarily of documents that differ from the typical records found in archives, namely administratively received documents arranged in archival order. Instead, our documents hold symbolic significance and could even be featured in exhibitions. Examples include settlement permits, marriage contracts, lease agreements, and the privileges of the first communities – not just any communities, but primarily those that demonstrate the integrated and harmonious existence of the

6 Cohen, Richard I. "Nostalgia and 'Return to the Ghetto': A Cultural Phenomenon in Western and Central Europe," in Tobias G. Natter, ed., Rabbis, Students, Talmud Scholars: Paintings of the Viennese Artist Isidor Kaufmann, 1853–1921 (Vienna: Jewish Museum of Vienna, 1995), 42–94.

Hungarian Jewish community within Hungarian society. This narrative is slightly twisted by the fact that the museum's founders originate from the western region of Hungary, where the influence of the *Haskalah* [the intellectual movement of Jewish enlightenment in the 18–19th c.] is stronger. Consequently, our documents from eastern Hungary are nearly nonexistent. This is partly due to coincidence and deliberate collecting intent since the founders aimed to showcase and preserve a past that reflects the spirit characteristic of the communities in the West – communities with which they had closer ties.

In the 1940s, prior to the Holocaust, planned visits organised by György Balázs, Ernő Naményi and Fülöp Grünwald, the leaders and employees of the Hungarian Jewish Museum to historically significant communities were initiated to uncover old synagogue records. Some communities, like Keszthely and Zsámbék, willingly contributed materials to the museum during that time. However, Orthodox communities, wary of the *Neolog* institutional framework of the museum, did not cooperate, leading to a loss of valuable documents during the Holocaust. Some of these documents were taken by discerned collectors in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s; some of these have recently appeared in auctions, causing significant uproar and discussions in our profession. Currently, there is an ongoing process aimed at the retrieval of these documents. Efforts to assess the remaining documents took place in 1945 and 1956. Subsequently, Sándor Scheiber (1913–1985), a Hungarian rabbi and eminent Jewish scholar, undertook initiatives from 1950 until he died in 1985. During this period, he served as the director of the OR-ZSE and organised attempts to collect materials from rural communities by sending out his students.

However, in the immediate post-war time, there was no organized archive yet, as the archive belonged to the museum, so the collection of documents was not treated as an archive in the true sense. This means they lacked archival order and archival structural organisation, and for a long time, they ended up in the Jewish Museum as objects. This situation essentially came to an end when the relationship between Scheiber and Ilona Benoschofsky (1913–1997, the museum director after 1964) deteriorated significantly. Due to personal conflicts, the relationship between Scheiber and the museum also became worse, causing them to start keeping archival documents separately in the building of the OR-ZSE. As these documents originate from the collections conducted in rural areas by the students of the institution, they also managed to collect other items such as Torah ark curtains, furniture, and anything connected to dying or diminishing communities. Consequently, a substantial collection emerged there, comprising documents and various artefacts.

Finally, in 1972, the Jewish Archive was officially established. This was primarily driven by cultural and political reasons. At that time, there was a certain opening within the Hungarian cultural administration towards ecclesiastical collections, coinciding with the establishment of the Lutheran Museum. From this point onward,

the Jewish Archive became part of the Hungarian archival system, which is strictly regulated by the state. The Jewish Archives was led by György Landeszman, who had limited capacity to focus on the archive as a rabbi by profession. Following the political changes, it was only in the 1990s, that there was an opportunity to address this situation. In 1994, the museum and the archive merged organizationally, resulting in the fact that from then on, the historical documents preserved in the museum, and everything stored in the archive could be managed within a single institutional structure.

What were the challenges to merge the archive with a museum?

The merge of the two institutions thus began; however, the preservation of provenance (indicating the origin of each item) was of utmost importance since it holds historical or source value. While the source value of the documents is evident, we attempted to integrate the two collections into a unified system. Developing this system proved challenging because the Hungarian archival system is well-structured and regulated but fundamentally designed for state administrative records. At that time, I was the only archivist in this institution for nearly 15 years, and my expertise stemmed primarily from administrative records in this Hungarian archival system. We had to create a system similar to a quasi-Darwinian structure, in which the hierarchy of fonds in various levels could be established. Collaborating with historian Dr. Kinga Frojimovics, who had been working with me in the museum for a year before she made *aliyah* and became the director of the Hungarian Section in Yad Vashem Archives (Jerusalem, Israel), we developed a framework based on existing documents and knowledge of contemporary Jewish community history. Unlike typical archives, where organised documents are acquired, our approach involved individually examining arbitrarily collected and stored documents, creating a system that is based on the content of each document. This bottom-up process makes filling the system a more extensive task than the reverse approach.

However, our result has been achieved through deep reading, as practically every document in our archive has some description. After mostly completing this, we discovered approximately a thousand boxes of very important documents previously hidden in the attic of the Dohány Street Synagogue. Additionally, we are in the process of examining a highly contaminated set of documents found in a so-far unvisited part of the cellar of the headquarters of the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities (MAZSIHISZ). These findings will not only add nuance to the number of documents but, in many cases, will also require refinement of the structure. This is an immense amount of material, the disinfection of which is currently ongoing.

Consequently, we had to fine-tune the archival system because we realised there were many institutions or organisations about which we only had theoretical knowledge before, but we did not know if their archival materials were accessible

anywhere. Hence, the goals of establishing a structure of the entire Jewish Archive, which follows the original administrative structure of the Jewish communities, has been accomplished, and it fits into the international standards.

At the same time, since the organisation of the documents of our archive started later, we can work with more recent standards and technology. So, in the 1990s, our institute used methods like microfilming and simply recorded descriptions on catalogue cards. Now, with the capability to immediately digitise documents, the workflow and the creation of structures have become much easier. There is yet another significant addition to our collection: in the 1950s, during one of the anti-Zionist anti-Jewish show-trials,[7] a substantial part of the records found at the headquarter of the community was seized as an appendix or evidence related to the investigation. This material was transferred from the ÁVH (*Államvédelmi Hatóság*, Eng. State Security Authority) to the Ministry of Interior, and subsequently, to the National Archives. Among these documents were records of organisations such as the Joint (JDC), the World Jewish Congress, MIOI, and the Pest Israelite Community, along with a few typed correspondences in Yiddish with the central office of Joint. The archivists from the National Archives asked for my assistance in deciphering the content, and once I identified the nature of the documents, we promptly requested that this material be returned to the Jewish Archive. This case is one of the few *in rem* restitution cases in Hungary. Over six years, (1994–2000) these 50 boxes (5.6 linear metres) of documents were returned to our archive. This is significant not only because we reclaimed material through a restitution process, but also because it includes institutions like that of the World Jewish Congress and the Joint, and their activity in Hungary, the records of which would not have been preserved otherwise.

Can you please briefly present the Holocaust-related documents in the archive and how they ended up there? How does the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archive make artefacts, documents, and testimonies related to the Holocaust in Hungary accessible?

The Hungarian Jewish Museum never closed its doors. While in the 1930s, after Hitler's rise to power, Germany saw the closure and cessation of operations of many museums – many of which were looted by the Nazi regime – the Budapest Jewish Museum played a vital role in preserving Jewish heritage. In 1942, in the threatening atmosphere, the collection's valuable items with market value were concealed in the cellar of the Hungarian National Museum with the assistance of Gabriella Tápay-Szabó and Magda Oberschall, two museologists. At that time, the

7 Novák, Attila. *Ideológia és önazonosság: Az 1953-as budapesti cionista per [Ideology and identity: the 1953 Budapest Zionist trial]*. Budapest: Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága, 2020.

collection comprised 3800 items, totalling more than 5000 pieces. However, the archival documents remained at the premises of the museum throughout, and they didn't suffer significant damage, except for a few symbolically important documents, such as e.g. a certificate from the early 13th century placed in the bank vault of the Downtown Savings Bank (*Belvárosi Takarékpénztár*) by museum staff – these were looted and disappeared forever.[8] Even during the Holocaust, the museum continuously utilised its archive to issue certificates as a response to anti-Jewish laws, affirming Hungarian citizenship. Furthermore, the documentation of the Hungarian Holocaust began as early as 1942 because the museum staff, Ernő Munkácsi, Fülöp Grünwald, and Ernő Naményi were intuitive enough to start documenting the contemporary world. They collected decrees, papers, petitions, posters – methods of collection that were not common back then. All of these are still kept at the archive. Additionally, the Jewish communities in Hungary themselves sought the involvement of the museum. One of the most touching pieces is a list of names sent by a forced labour service unit to the museum: their names were written down, enclosed in an unfinished wooden frame accessible to them in the forced labour service. The accompanying letter stated that they were men in forced labour in the Carpathians, knowing that they would perish, but they wished to preserve their names in memory, hence sending the list of their names to the Jewish Museum. The museum's latest publication[9] explores how the Jewish Museum, originally established to collect ceremonial objects and preserve Jewish culture, transformed into a so-called "memory museum."[10]

The Jewish staff of the Jewish Museum also experienced the threat of deportation and forced labour service, prompting them to develop a profound interest in comprehending both their documents and those belonging to their fellow victims. In this pursuit, they collected everything available – photos, documents, clothing. In the immediate postwar period, the World Jewish Congress supported the endeavour to collect contemporary documents, testimonies and records on the victims of the Shoah and during this period, Ilona Benochofsky, working alongside historian Elek Karsai (1922–1986), began compiling the source collection titled "*Vádirat a nácizmus ellen*" (Indictment against Nazism). They gathered everything accessible, including participating in recording the personal stories of the survivors for DEGOB (*Deportáltakat Gondozó Országos Bizottság*, Eng. National

8 Kádár, Gábor and Zoltán Vági. *Self-Financing Genocide: The Gold Train, the Becher Case and the Wealth of Hungarian Jews*. Budapest: Central European University Press (2004).

9 Farkas, Zsófia ed. *Szemtanúk/Eyewitnesses*. Budapest: Magyar Zsidó Múzeum és Levéltár (2023), Hungarian and English.

10 This is a new concept introduced by Susan Sontag much later, in the 1980s, to define emerging Jewish museums, Holocaust museums, and trauma museums.

Committee for Attending Deportees), aiming to collect and record personal experiences on the Holocaust.[11] The original shorthand copies of these minutes became part of the museum's collection, most probably thanks to Ilona Benoschofsky.[12]

The Jewish communities in Hungary also produced and maintained records. Through the minutes of the Jewish Council, the main administrative body of Jewish representation set up by the German authorities in spring 1944, the requests received by the housing office, and the registered documents of the religious communities, the process of the Holocaust can be unveiled. It helps reveal what issues and problems were prevalent among Hungary's Jewish population, especially in Budapest, including matters such as housing, food, and the fundamental challenges of survival and daily life. By now, it is crucial for us to know when a particular document entered the collection, as it is a significant aspect of evaluating these historical sources. The biggest problem regarding the collection is the uncertainty around the provenance; in many cases, it has been intentionally deleted in the 1960s most probably for political reasons.

Can you share some examples of the most significant artefacts or documents in your collection that relate to the Holocaust?

We had just published a book titled "Eyewitnesses". When I took over the museum's leadership, I prioritised cataloguing everything and making it accessible online. As a result, my colleagues had to go through the whole collection in the museum. This revealed something that we had not known before, namely that our collection is the best source for a collection of visual testimonies, alongside written testimonies like those recorded by DEGOB. The "Eyewitnesses" volume emphasises that having a vast collection of visual memories created by artists (e.g. Ervin Abádi, Ilka Gedő and Mária Turán Hacker) depicting life in, e.g. the Auschwitz women's camp, is crucial. While these were unique works appearing sporadically as illustrations, we could not grasp the scale of this entire phenomenon without being organised systematically. It became clear that there was an incredible wave of influence, and every artist who had been an artist before the war, in some way, drew the horrors of the Holocaust. My colleague, art historian Zsófia Farkas, asserts that everyone recorded the tragedy in a different style than they had used before. However, these serve as historical sources of tremendous importance for us because

11 Horváth, Rita. *A Magyarországi Zsidók Deportáltakat Gondozó Országos Bizottsága (DEGOB) története [The history of the National Committee for Attending Deportees].* Vol. 1. MAKOR Magyar Zsidó Levéltári Füzetek. Budapest: Budapest Fővárosi Levéltár Nyomdája, 1997; Szabó, Alexandra M. "The Discovery of an Unknown Holocaust Testimony: The DEGOB Protocol of a Spouse." *Eastern European Holocaust Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2023, 589–606. DOI: 10.1515/eehs-2022-0028.

12 Toronyi, Zsuzsanna*: A múltat végképp eltörölni… [Erasing the past forever] Targum* 1, 2022. 133–151. DOI: 10.56664/targum.2022.1.8.

they immediately sketched what could not be photographed, serving as eyewitnesses without photos. I believe this volume holds significant importance in the history of science or memory, and luckily, it could be published in both Hungarian and English.

Nevertheless, I work to minimize the Holocaust's impact on our museum, focussing on presenting Jewish culture in Hungary without solely emphasising victimhood. When it comes to commemorating the Holocaust, we plan to coordinate the eightieth anniversary in 2024 with the Holocaust Memorial Center in Páva Street.

The Hungarian Holocaust's historical significance, encompassing diverse sources and attracting international attention, led to our museum's collaboration in 2010 with Judaica Europeana and subsequent partnerships, allowing digitization with support from institutions like the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum for preservation and integration into the global academic circulation via platforms such as European Holocaust Research Infrastructure and Yerusha project.

Could you discuss any challenges or controversies your institution has faced in presenting the Holocaust's history in Hungary and how you have addressed these issues?

We are part of the environment where these discussions occur, so obviously, we cannot avoid it. However, we are not the focal point of these discussions, considering that in Hungary, an institution is designated explicitly for this, namely the Holocaust Documentation Center in Páva Street. This also means that when looking at the big picture, we are, to some extent, exempted from the obligation to narrate the historical narrative of the Holocaust. I believe there is a kind of institutional division of tasks here, where the Jewish Museum is not tasked with the responsibility that the National Museum or the Holocaust Documentation Center must fulfil, which is the communication of the Holocaust narrative. Our role in this context is to present the trauma of the Holocaust from the perspective of Jewish life experience, culture and Jewish values. It involves depicting how Jewish communities received and reacted to such a massive trauma.

We are also a memory museum, as our collection has evolved to become one over the years since the 1940s.[13] However, we are not the leading platform for presenting the history of the Holocaust. We have many other tasks that cannot be expected to be solved by our partner institutions. I have participated in the construction of the Holocaust Museum on Páva Street in Budapest, and our collection contents are also involved in these narratives since we have a vast collection. This topic tears open deep emotional wounds. It is not just a historical issue, not just a

13 Toronyi, Zsuzsanna. *"Múzeum vagy mauzóleum?: A holokauszt emlékezete és dokumentációja a Magyar Zsidó Múzeum és Levéltár gyűjteményeiben." [Museum or Mausoleum? Holocaust Memory and Documentation in the Collections of the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives]* Farkas, Zsófia (ed.). Szemtanúk [Eyewitnesses]. Budapest: Magyar Zsidó Múzeum és Levéltár, 2023.

tragic chapter in Hungary's history; there are people in society for whom this memory is closely tied to their family heritage, and it cannot be discussed neutrally.

I think that since we started planning this interview in September, the ongoing situation in Israel right now makes it impossible for this kind of European discourse on the Holocaust to continue. The socio-political contours of how we talk about the Holocaust and how we will commemorate the 80th anniversary will be different. We did not see this when we planned this discussion or began preparing for the 80th anniversary last summer. In other words, it will require something different in this context, in this environment, than it would have required if the tragedy had not happened in Israel.

How have recent developments in academia, technology, or social attitudes influenced the work of the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archive in commemorating the Holocaust in Eastern Europe?

I am a technology enthusiast, and I believe, anyone who falls behind in this field, even for a day, becomes old-fashioned forever. I find our current era to be remarkably interesting in many aspects, especially due to digital media and the transmission of digital content, which also carries enormous responsibility, as we know that social media can have harmful effects, as seen in the current Israeli developments, such as amplifying misinformation, fuelling polarisation, contributing to the spread of biased narratives, disseminating unverified information, promoting one-sided perspectives, and even inciting violence. Nevertheless, we must make effective use of it. We aim to engage with our communities, thinking of them as a source community – those from whom we received objects, possibly passed down from their grandparents. We feel a responsibility to keep them in our circle, assisting them in experiencing their Jewish identity. Naturally, we must also provide those who do not know us or have no personal connection with us with realistic, authentic, and museum-based information about this culture.

We use various channels for this purpose: our visually stunning Instagram features recognizable content from the Jewish Museum, while Facebook is utilised for more text-heavy stories. Our weekly newsletter, delivered to over a thousand proactive subscribers, has become a crucial cultural reference point, addressing societal hot topics while maintaining our fundamental role as a Jewish cultural institution preserving and passing on our heritage to the next generation.

At the same time, I am not particularly fond of monitors in the museum because I believe in slow culture. I think visitors who come to a museum seek tranquillity, peace, silence, and proximity to culture and artefacts. However, archival content can be very interesting this way, and digital media and art should primarily be used for mass data visualisation. One of my favourites, a true archival genre, has been accomplished: we mapped and visualised statistical survey data related to Jews in

Hungary. By projecting these onto a map, we published them, making history visible. Trends that would usually require extensive calculations or reading studies are immediately apparent. In this new era of science history, mass data visualisation or data utilisation offers numerous new possibilities. It no longer requires spending long hours in archives and then sifting through them for additional insights. The *tachles* [Yidd. point, bottomline] of the era related to the processing of this data has arrived, so it is an incredible and promising period, although that also presents new challenges for archives. Digital-born documents, such as emails and others, need to be preserved in this way, requiring long-term thinking on how to keep them readable amidst technological changes. This has been one of the most critical issues for archives in the last twenty years.

Lastly, can you share any personal experiences or stories that have deeply affected you in your role as the director of this museum and archive (and how they have shaped your perspective on the Holocaust in Eastern Europe)?

There was an incident a couple of years ago, where young individuals urinated on the synagogue in Budapest, and evidence of this was captured by security cameras, leading to legal proceedings against them on charges of committing an antisemitic crime. As part of the legal process, at their lawyer's request, these three students visited our institution. I guided them through our premises and engaged in a conversation with them for over two hours. It was a challenging dialogue, considering their initial contact with our sacred building. Despite the difficulty of such discussions, this experience remained very positive for me. They bid farewell and expressed their willingness to bring their classmates to our institution. They discovered content and learnt about topics they had never encountered before, leading to a significant shift in their understanding. Certainly, they would never repeat such an act, and I believe museums and anyone involved in informal Jewish education should make this role widely accessible. Those representing the Jewish community must communicate in a way that fosters such shifts in the mindset of those they engage with. I am confident that if antisemitic sentiments emerge in the surroundings of these three individuals, they will be the first ones to intervene and put a stop to it.