

FAU, LEAH to open archive of Holocaust survivor testimonies

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CITY EDITOR

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Two Boca institutions are joining forces to make certain the recorded testimonies of Holocaust survivors are not forgotten.

Florida Atlantic University is working with the Boca Raton-based League for Educational Awareness of the Holocaust (LEAH) to assure that students, faculty, staff and the community in general have access to video testimonies of Holocaust survivors.

The university, also based in Boca Raton, is linking with the University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation Institute's Visual History Archive. The program is being underwritten by LEAH, a nonsectarian not-for-profit organization whose mission is to raise awareness and funds to support and encourage education efforts for children to help eliminate prejudice and hatred using lessons learned from the Holocaust and other genocides, including Darfur, Rwanda and Bosnia.

FAU currently has a selection of 300 testimonies from throughout the world immediately available to viewers. Through LEAH's underwriting, the university plans to install the hardware necessary to store a larger number of testimonies, allowing access to more than 3,400 Florida Holocaust survivor and witness testimonies and others from around the world.

"Florida Atlantic University is truly honored to

partner with the USC Shoah Foundation Institute and LEAH," said FAU President Frank T. Brogan. "The testimonies found within the Institute's Visual History Archive are an invaluable tool not only for the university, but for those in the general community who would like to gain additional knowledge of the firsthand testimonies offered through the archive."

'Tremendous impact'

He added: "We are grateful that LEAH recognized the tremendous impact the accessibility of the archive will have on our community, and thus gifted FAU with the generous underwriting to support this significant program."

Accessing the Visual History Archive requires users to be physically present on an FAU campus. Using a computer connected to the university's Internet servers, a user can conduct a variety of searches using a hierarchical thesaurus that includes more than 50,000 geographical and experiential keywords, as well as the names of every person mentioned in the testimonies and biographical information for each interviewee.

Users can view testimonies already available on the FAU cache or request that testimonies be uploaded from the USC Shoah Foundation Institute's archive. All requests are filled within 24 to 48 hours.

Users can access the local Visual History Ar-

chive site at designated computers located in FAU libraries on all FAU campuses. A special LEAH Fund has been established to underwrite the purchase of equipment, computers and furniture to create a Holocaust Information and Instructional Center in the FAU libraries, salaries for a Visual Archive Specialist and a K-12 Curriculum Specialist, licensing fees and subscription costs associated with the acquisition and maintenance of testimonials.

The USC Shoah Foundation Institute grew out of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, founded by film director Steven Spielberg to document the experiences of survivors and other witnesses of the Holocaust.

The Institute currently provides licensed access to its entire archive via Internet2 to 10 universities worldwide, including FAU. Internet2 is a separate, high-quality network capable of higher security and more effective data transmission than the Internet.

Personal stories

"Through the use of video, personal stories of life before, during, and after the Holocaust have been preserved without sacrificing the nuance and emotion that give these experiences power," said Professor Douglas Greenberg, executive director of the Shoah Foundation Institute.

The complete USC Shoah Foundation Institute

Visual History Archive includes nearly 52,000 video testimonies of Holocaust survivors and other witnesses in 32 languages and from 56 countries. The vast majority of the interviews—about 90 percent—are with Jewish survivors of Nazi persecution.

However, political prisoners, Roma and Sinti (Gypsy) survivors, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, survivors of eugenics policies, as well as liberators and liberation witnesses, rescuers, and aid providers, are also represented in the archive.

"We are very excited about being an instrumental part of this vital project," said LEAH President Robert Alrod. "By underwriting this comprehensive archive of Florida Holocaust survivors and the technology to maintain and access them will significantly increase the community outreach education that LEAH has sought to intensify since its inception more than a decade ago. The impact will be exponential, and we are proud and grateful to be partnering with FAU in this mind-broadening and enlightening opportunity."

For more information, contact Dr. William Miller, director of FAU Libraries, at 561-297-3760.

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