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Articles of scholars and experts in the field are welcome to be submitted, both in Hebrew and English. Articles should not exceed 4.000 words, including references in standard format / footnotes.

Articles should be sent in WORD format to the editors:

margalit.bejarano@mail.huji.ac.il | j-ronen@zahav.net.il

Submissions are reviewed by the **Remembrance and Research** editors, as well as by external lectors.

Introductory Note

Oral History via personal narratives has been a valuable research tool for the past decade. It has become invaluable to academics in various disciplinary fields, such as contemporary history, anthropology, folklore and social sciences.

There has been a rising interest in Oral History involving the general public as well as researchers. At the same time there are those that question the validity of Oral History as a reliable source especially when relating to controversial issues. Parallel to those debates there has been an increase of projects documenting collective memories of various communities and making these collections accessible to the public.

This fourth issue of *Remembrance and Research* - the bilingual publication of the Israel Oral History Association (ILOHA), is the sole Israeli journal dedicated exclusively to Oral History and concentrates on recent developments in the field. The articles examine the various influences affecting the interview which in turn can affect the reliability, quality and final analysis and interpretation of the oral testimony.

Three relevant aspects are dealt with and brought to the reader's attention:

A) The impact of technological changes on the interview process regarding the role of the participants, the influence of technological changes on the final result of the interview as well as the accessibility of the interviews.
B) The impact of environmental changes such as pandemics and natural disasters as well as global changes which can affect the quality of the interview or even determine if the interview can take place.
C) The ability of the researchers and the general public to access oral history interviews and interpret the full range of the findings.

The articles in both the Hebrew and English sections in this edition, examine the diverse methodologies used when conducting interviews. They examine the importance of the method selected by the interviewer and its influence on the final outcome of the interview. There is a debate among researchers whether or not to share the updated technologies with the interviewees. This dilemma became more acute since 2019 and continues until today. Many interviewees, due to Covid 19 and other worldwide upheavals, were conducted by online Zoom interviews, often with a team and photographers, or telephone recordings instead of in person interviews, all of which have had a decisive influence on the interview's process itself.

A vital issue which engages institutions and researchers worldwide is the debate on the methods used to preserve oral history interviews and their accessibility to scholars and the public at large.
The ongoing development of oral history as an important research tool among the various academic disciplines requires the need of international transcription guidelines which are essential to the professionalization and analysis of the oral history collections. The sign or symbol, for example, which indicates silences and pauses of the interviewee is of vital importance for the analysis and interpretation of the interview taking into account the emotions of the interviewee as well as their impact on the interview's content. How the interviewer responds and interprets the silences or pauses is crucial to the depth analysis of the interview.

Abstracts: The English Section

Remembering and Re-remembering the Family: Interviews with Child Survivors of the Holocaust

Sharon Kangisser Cohen

In their testimonies, child survivors of the Holocaust often describe the ways in which their parents tried to orchestrate the family's survival while at the same time, against all odds, navigating their family towards safety. The child survivors often reflect on their parents' physical and

emotional struggle. They recall critical moments as they give a child's perspective on the adult world during these difficult times. However, from a close reading of interviews given by the same interviewees at different points in time, a pattern emerged whereby the survivors' view and appraisal of their parents' behavior and reactions may have change and with the perspective of time are reinterpreted.

Oral History Goes Digital
Current Trends in Digitization and Archiving Oral History Interviews

Almut Leh

This article examines current trends of digitization which are utilized to archive oral history interviews and using them as a basis for research. As an opening, the fact that oral history interviews are now considered legitimate research data is addressed. After a brief introduction into the archive Deutsches Gedächtnis as a research data repository, the main part deals with two technology-driven projects that have been carried out in Deutsches Gedächtnis and presents thoughts on the implications for interview-based research. The text concludes with a few thoughts on digital hermeneutics.

Contemporary History and Oral Documentation:
Informal Education in Jewish Community Centers of Latin America as a Case Study

Silvia Schenkolewsky-Kroll

The article examines the place of oral history in the study of informal Jewish education in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Chile beginning in 1968 and within, the context of the changes that have taken place with respect to Judaism, Zionism, the State of Israel, as well as the inter-relations between various Diasporas. In addition to the contemporary archival material found in the Archives of World Maccabi, the study is based on oral histories, preserving the methodology that begins at the highest functional level, and continues according to the institutional structures under study. This study consists of 48 interviews with senior officials of key institutions, communal leaders and activists, leaders who

made Aliya and shlihim. The conclusion of the study proves the importance of oral history in the study of contemporary processes, without the need of classical sources of conventional archives.

Book Review

Henry Green & Richard Stursberg, Sephardi Voices: The Untold Expulsion of Jews from Arab Lands, Sephardi Voices Inc.: USA 2021

Margalit Bejarano

The book Sephardi Voices: The Untold Expulsion of Jews from Arab Lands, written by Henry Green and Richard Stursberg offers a basic historical framework for the understanding of the traumatic and dramatic exodus of the Jews from the Middle East and North Africa. It also documents the lives of the emigres in their host countries. The oral testimonies collected for this book were the outcome of the international project, Sephardic Voices, which were collected in order to preserve individual and collective memories for the future while making them easily accessible to academics as well as the general public.

Abstracts: The Hebrew Section

On Silences in General and Particularly on Silences as Means of Expression

Michal Ornan-Ephratt

The term ‘oral-documentation’ describes the documentation not according to its purpose, content or scope but according to its tools. The documentation process, and moreover the analysis of its products, focus on what there is, that which is materialized. By placing silence in its focus, the paper shows that what is present is sometimes only a background, making the left-out figure conspicuous by its absence. Overlooking such absences leaves out vital parts of the document. This being selective may lead to an artificially intervened interpretation.

Examining the silences in oral-documentation will show that just as what is present (for example, words) is not homogenous, so its absence is not uniform: neither in its forms nor in the variety of its meanings. The study is mainly devoted to verbal silence and its relation to speech and other silences. I hope this will make a contribution to those interested in oral-documentation.

Talking silence? on the Silences of Interviewers and Photographers during Oral History Interviews and beyond

Miri Scharf

The Discussion about silences during oral history interviews usually deals with the interviewees' silences and the interviewers' reactions to them. The author of the paper tried to look at the silences from another angle – that of the interviewers' and photographers', observing the common and the different between them. Scharf spoke with eighteen of her colleagues and tried to put in writing what she had learnt from them.

Reliable or Not? Oral History Interviews in the Investigation of the Missing Yemenite Children

Nathan Shifris

In the past, the State of Israel established three committees of inquiry to investigate the Yemeni Children’s Affair, and all of them ruled that most of the missing children died. In recent years, investigation of the matter has been moved to academia, triggering a serious controversy centered on the issue of sources.

On the one hand, those who claim that the babies died advocate reliance first and foremost on the written documentation on which the committees determined there were deaths, while at the same time questioning the validity of more-recent testimonies by families in the third state committee.

On the other hand, those who claim living children were abducted advocate reliance mainly on the evidence, especially that provided by the families. From this viewpoint, there is a suspicion of a systematic

and forced separation of the children from their parents. This group calls into question the documents – full of contradictions – claiming that the children died.

Therefore, this article is devoted to mapping the different types of sources in the affair and to establishing the proper place of each of them in the investigation and clarification of the historical truth.

Whatever it Takes! Oral History Testimonies Reveal Recha Freier's Rescue Operations

Judith Reifen-Ronen

This article reveals the extent of the rescue operations conducted by Recha Freier from Kristallnacht 1938 until the middle of 1941. These covert operations were aimed at saving the lives of Polish Jewry as well as Jewish youth residing in Germany and Austria. Prior to that, Recha Freier who was born in Norden Germany, on October 29, 1892, initiated the Youth Aliya enterprise when on October 12, 1932, the first group of Youth Aliya emigrated to Ben Shemen, Eretz Israel.

When Freier had a confrontation with Eichmann in February 1940 she was forced to escape to Zagreb with her 11 years old daughter Ma'ayan. From Zagreb, Freier initiated one of the most successful rescue operations since the breakout of World War II. Freier's rescue initiatives, as well as her tenacity and determination to rescue Ostjuden are revealed mainly via oral testimonies of her partners in the rescue operations, survivors and Freier's testimonies herself.

Book Review

Nira Bartal, With You When Needed: Historical Perspectives of Israeli Nursing, 1936-2012

Margalit Bejarano

Nira Bartal's book, published in Hebrew, recounts the history of the nursing profession in Israel, focusing on Hadassah Hospital. In addition to intensive research in archives, the book dedicates extensive

attention to the voices of the nurses. As such, it is a fascinating contribution to the integration of oral history in historical writing, giving expression to the memories, versions and opinions of nurses from diverse fields and time periods. The oral histories introduce readers to the central protagonists who shaped the profession of nursing in Israel.

Remembering and Re-remembering the Family:

Interviews with Child Survivors of the Holocaust

Sharon Kangisser Cohen

Since the 1990's with the publication of Debórah Dwork's "Children with a Star, Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe"[1] the experience of child survivors of the Holocaust has become an area of intense scholarly research. Till then their voices had been largely absent from the historical narrative as their post war lives have largely been characterized by silence.[2] For the most part child survivors were generally discouraged from talking about their experiences. They were urged to move on from the horror and work towards rebuilding their lives. The adult community also questioned the validity of children's memories, not always thinking that child survivors would be able to remember the war-time years. Survivors themselves also kept silent in order to adapt and not to appear weak, they too wanted to focus their energies on rebuilding. However, as child survivors began to age, many realized that the past although silenced was not forgotten. There were many factors which encouraged them to begin retelling their past

Dr. Sharon Kangisser Cohen is currently the editor of *Yad Vashem Studies* and the Director of the Diana and Eli Zborowski Centre for the Study of the Aftermath of the Holocaust at Yad Vashem. She was formerly the Academic Director of the Oral History Division at the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

[1] Dwork, D., *Children with a* Star. Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe (Yale University Press, 1993)

[2] Kangisser Cohen, S., *The Silence of Hidden Child Survivors of the Holocaust*, Yad Vashem Studies, vol. 33 (2005)

experiences and sharing their life stories with their loved ones as well as giving testimony to archives around the world.[3]

Child survivors also began to share their war time experiences, as the older generation of survivors passed on, and they were considered as the “last witnesses” and thus felt compelled to give testimony. In their testimonies, child survivors not only recounted what they endured during the war, but also spoke about what it was like to live with their memories and their traumatic past. Many child survivors also devoted effort and time to research their past and locate documents to verify not only where they had been imprisoned or hidden, but in some instances, searched for documentation which verified basic biological information – where they were born, to whom and when. In the following piece I have chosen to focus on one aspect of the child survivors’ experience – how as adults they have rethought their narratives based on new information or a different perspective gained particularly in relation to their relationship with their parents. In their recounting, child survivors of the Holocaust, like other interviewees in oral history projects, try to make sense of their past based on their present circumstances and understanding.

In their testimonies, child survivors of the Holocaust often describe the ways in which their parents tried to orchestrate the family's survival and their attempts against impossible odds to navigate their family to safety. There are also times in their interviews where they reflect on their parents' physical and emotional struggle, important moments as they give a child's perspective on the adult world during these difficult times. However, from a close reading of interviews given by the same interviewees at different points in time, a pattern emerged whereby the survivors' view and appraisal of their parents' behavior and reactions may change and are reinterpreted. In her work, Dalia Ofer has pointed out, that over time, survivor testimonies may absorb new insights and information, particularly regarding family relationships before, during and after the war. This phenomenon can be understood

[3] One of the most important archives is the Kestenberg Child Survivor Archive which is archived at the Oral History Division of the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

through the theories of what scholars have identifies as the "life course perspective to processes of family change". According to Vern and Allen, social science researchers who examine the life course of families over time, they argue, "family is a microsocial group within a macrosocial context, a collection of individuals with a shared history who interact within ever changing social contexts across ever-increasing time and space."[4]

From my reading of child survivor testimonies, a pattern emerged which could be the basis of a larger study – how child survivors' understanding and interpretation of their parents' behavior and reactions changed over time. From an initial analysis, it appears that over the years, child survivors have come to understand their parents differently and particularly become more protective over how they are represented and remembered. This may be due to the fact that survivors understand that after their passing, their interviews will be archived and these representations will remain. The images and understandings will be available and possibly used by others in a variety of different ways. The changes in perspective may relate to new information that was attained at a later stage, challenging their initial assessment giving a different perspective and understanding of the events and circumstances. Furthermore, their revaluation may also be connected to the individuals' cognitive and emotional development over time. The person's life cycle and events also impact on the individuals' understanding and relationship to their past. It is reasonable to assume that the understanding of one's parent's behavior as a young adult would be different to their understanding as an adult.

In his important work, psychologist Hans Keilson[5] argued that child survivors went through three phases of trauma, the last relating to the immediate post-war period where the survivors were confronted

[4] Bengtson, Vern L., and Katherine R. Allen. "The life course perspective applied to families over time." *Sourcebook of family theories and methods*. (Springer, Boston, MA, 2009. Pg.470)

[5] Keilson, Hans, et al. *Sequential traumatization in children: A clinical and statistical follow-up study on the fate of the Jewish war orphans in the Netherlands*. (Magnes Press, 1992).

with their personal loss. During the war, many families were separated, and not always were aware of the fate of one another. Furthermore, for very young children, the experiences of others were not always known; the extent of the murder and destruction only became apparent after liberation. In the immediate post war period the enormity of the devastation kept rapidly unfolding, a process that for some continued for many years and sometimes decades. An example of which is child survivor Rina Qwint, who as a four-year-old in 1939, had very little knowledge of the fate of her family from whom she was separated, and only was able to discover her own biological identity and the fate of her family as an older woman. From the 1980's, almost 40 years after the war began, Rina began collecting information regarding her own story and those of her loved ones, a process that has continued till today. Whilst for some survivors like Rina, the journey to learn the fate of their loved ones could take time, for some others, they were never able to ascertain the details of their families' fates. Therefore, survivors' testimonies could change over time as their understanding shifted. Furthermore, the dynamic engagement with memories of their parents and reflections on their behavior represents an emotional interaction with their parents even after they are no longer alive.

As part of my research on early and later testimonies, I came across an interview with Janine Binder (later Oberottman) who was born in 1925 in Lwow, Poland. With the outbreak of the war, Janine and her family were put into the ghetto. She and her father worked as forced laborers and she eventually managed to procure false identity papers. She escaped the ghetto and spent time working on a farm posing as an Aryan woman. She was arrested and was imprisoned as a forced laborer in a factory near Stuttgart. She was liberated by French troops near Stuttgart. In 1946, she was interviewed in France in 1946 by psychologist David Boder. She had also given more interviews to the USC Shoah Foundation in 1995 and then to the United Sates Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2004.[6] During this later interview she expresses

[6] Janine Oberrotman., Oral History | Accession Number: 2004.116 | RG Number: RG-50.562.0004 USHMM archives/

a critical stance towards her fathers' behavior in relation to the increasing hunger that the family felt in the ghetto

Q: *how were you eating, what were you eating?*

JO: *You know what? I don't remember. I didn't know what [we] were eating. Don't know how we got our food. I…but we ate very little, and we were hungry forever…I don't know, my father should have been smarter enough, but we …we didn't…we should have sold our furniture first, but we didn't do that. Instead we sold everything else. If we had some gold that we didn't give away, then we sold that first. And this is something you don't sell, this is something that you sew into the lining of your clothes, right? But we didn't do that."*[7]

In Binder's early testimony to Boder, she does not give a detailed account of this as she did later on, however she describes the situation without personalizing it.

Yes, there were indeed. But everything was very expensive and we could not work. We had no money. And before we came to the ghetto, the Germans robbed us of all our things. And mostly one lived only from it ... from the things that one would sell...[8]

This part of her testimony was analyzed in my book "Testimony and Time"[9] in which I analyzed earlier and later testimonies given by the same individual. As part of my feeling of ethical responsibility to the interviews, I approached each interviewee with a draft of what I intended to publish. I was concerned that they would "see" what I had written before it was published, which would also give them an opportunity to respond. Thus, before publication, I contacted Janine who showed an overwhelming interest in my work and was eager to review what I had written. For the most part she was happy with the way I had represented her and her story, however it was the quote

[7] Janine Oberrotman, (USHMM archives pg. 83)

[8] Janine Binder

[9] Cohen, Sharon Kangisser. *Testimony and time: Holocaust survivors remember.* (Yad Vashem, 2014)

above that troubled her. In a phone conversation we had she revealed to me that she was upset that this is how she remembered her father, and that it would be the lasting memory of him for *generations to come.* In a follow up email to me she wrote:

> *I was delighted to speak with you. My commentary about my father makes me feel guilty. Today I don't blame neither him or my mother for anything. I know that both of my parents did their utmost to protect me. Had that not been for my father's employment, and my mother's pushing me out of the ghetto, among the other close calls, I would not have survived. My father was caught carrying a sack of potatoes on his back for us to eat in the ghetto, so we wouldn't starve and that was when they took him to the Janowska camp where he was killed. (email from 6/11/201)*

In searching amongst the different interviews Janine had given, her interview in 1995 with the USC Shoah Foundation did mention her father's death. In the interview she recalls:

> *At that time, I wasn't working with him, so he came alone. And he was carrying a bag of potatoes when he was arrested. And it was s uch a heartbreak for me*
> *to know that my father was bringing back potatoes to his family, and he was taken*.[10]

It is also interesting, and one could argue part of the narrative structure of her memories, that her father's capture is connected to her initial criticism – procuring food and feeding the family.

This interaction gave me a different perspective on the nature of oral history and survivor testimony in particular. First, it reinforced the idea that the interview is one instance of telling and could not totally represent the individuals' relationship to the past over time. What was new to me was the feelings survivors had when reading what they had said previously. For Janine, the way she expressed herself and her feelings towards her father were difficult for her to read, and she needed

[10] Janine Oberrotman USC interview 1190., march 1995

to qualify and explain his actions, so that would not feel guilty for how she portrayed him. Survivors when approached to give their testimony may not always realize that their words will be published. In their minds their interviews a medium to give witness; but they may not think about the ways in which the interviews which are archived will be used and made public. Once Janine is confronted with the possibility that her attitudes and reflections will be made public, she becomes ambivalent and protective. Whilst interviewees who agree to participate in oral history research *know* that their interviews will be used; they may not always fully know what that might feel like for them or how they will react when that happens.[11] Furthermore, this case demonstrated that not all interviews are the same with regards to the events they report. In her different testimonies, her father's death is explained differently. In her interview with the USC video history archive she recounts how her father was taken smuggling food, yet in her interview with Boder she explains that: *But meanwhile my father did not work* [tears in her voice] *and his "paper" was not good, and once he was taken to the lager*.

Another interesting testimony that I examined is that of Sally Wasserman (Salusia Goldblum). Sally was born in Katowicze in 1935. In 1939 their town was occupied by the Germans, and the family fled to Będzin, where a ghetto was soon established. Sally and her family were imprisoned in the Dabrowa Górnicza ghetto. On the eve of the ghetto liquidation, she was rescued by Mr. Mikołaj Turkin, by profession a teacher, who worked in the ghetto reading electricity meters. After meeting and gaining consent from her mother he smuggled Sally out of the ghetto and hid her in his apartment with himself and his wife for the duration of the war. Sally recalls in her numerous interviews and presentations to groups, how her mother, Tola, prepared her the night before her departure and tied a package to her waist. The package contained a letter to be sent to her sister Ange (Broda) Kracier in Toronto with a packet of family photographs. Sally never saw her mother or brother Wolf again; they were both murdered in Auschwitz-

[11] After giving their interviews, all of my interviewees are required to sign a release form in which they are asked to give permission for their interviews to be archived, quoted in research and made accessible.

Birkenau in August. Sally left the ghetto in July 1943. At the end of the War, she ended up at a Jewish orphanage in Gliwice from where, in 1947, she was taken to Canada.

In her interview with the Polin Museum in May 2014[12] she recalls the moment when she left the ghetto and saw her mother and brother for the last time. She recalls her mothers' instructions.

> *When they open the gate, go... But don't go in the direction they'll tell you to go. Always go in the opposite direction. Don't turn around. You'll meet Mr. Turkin, he will be waiting for you. And when they resettle us, he will bring you to our place'. She didn't kiss me goodbye; she told me not to turn around, not to wave, not to do anything.*
>
> *'Just go', she said. Mum was holding my brother by his hand. The sun was shining, it was very hot. That was the last time I saw my mother and my brother. They had to go to Sosnowiec on foot. They waited three days before they got on the train to Auschwitz, where they were taken directly to gas chambers and killed*.[13]

Sally left the ghetto with a package strapped to her body containing a letter that her mother had written to her sister in Canada. This letter was only discovered by Sally decades later at her insistence. Sally's aunt had not shown her the letter and indeed the relationship between the two was very difficult. Sally for most part of her life missed her rescuers and this was only exacerbated by the difficult relationship she had with her aunt. One of the issues that finding this letter resolved for Sally was her feelings towards her mother. In her many interviews Sally always recounts how upset she was with her mother over the separation. For her it seemed that she had chosen her brother over her, even though she became aware of their horrific fate. In the mind of a young child, having been separated from her rescuers and being taken to Canada to live with an aunt who she had a difficult relationship with,

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12 https://www.polin.pl/en/news/2016/01/21/they-will-make-soap-out-f-you-sally-wasser-mans-account. Accessed on 10/02/2019

13 Ibid.

her longing for her mother and grief of not being with her caused her many feelings of bitterness. It was only after she found her mother's letter in which she described her own pain in separating with Sally, that she began to understand and interpret her mothers' behavior and choice. Decades after, decades of longing, her relationship shifted and her mother's actions were viewed differently.

> *My mum wrote this letter to her sister. She was writing from the ghetto in Dąbrowa. Her sister had gone to Canada some time before the war:*
>
> *My dear sister and brother-in-law:*
>
> *…I was able to leave Sheindele with Mr. Turkin. I met Mr. Turkin only a few months ago. I tell you, he and his wife are very decent people. They took Sheindele under their care with love. Andje and Wowtzie, you should know this when you hear some news about my child from Mr. Turkin. You should be good parents to her, and you should take care of her with love like a mother's. I am writing this letter to you during the last days of my life. I have been with Volvele and with Nadilen. We are expecting death any minute and we know what kind of death to expect. My dearest, I have been without Itzik already for three years. I manage to feed myself and my children from my work. I work in a shop ten hours a day, and after coming back from work, I do more work privately. That's how I have managed to sustain us for four years, and the end is bitter and tragic. But thank God, I know Mr. Turkin. He is an angel, and I do not have nice enough words to describe him and his wife.* ***From the whole family, you will have only my child Sheindele. I hope she will remain alive. I am sure that Mr. Turkin and his wife will care for and save my child.*** *My dearest, I am not in a position to reward Mr. Turkin. Please see that he is rewarded handsomely. You should believe every word Mr. Turkin tells you. You should reward him nicely because my child will remain with you. I know I am sure because I can already see the Angel of Death before me. I don't believe even a miracle can help us now. It cannot happen. You should know, Volvele, Nadilen and I are the last sacrificial victims…*

My dear ones, I write this letter with blood instead of ink. I am confused. The only thing that makes it easier on my heart is knowing that Sheindele will survive. I know that she is in good hands with good people…[14]

The way individuals relate to their past at different times in their lives can be understood through qualitative research. In terms of these interviewees it could be argued that external events – particularly information gleaned after the war - have altered their perspective on their parents' reactions and behaviors. During the Shoah, children would have probably expected that their parents would be able to care and provide for them and had little understanding of the extent of their parents' powerlessness. Only with time and perspective, with also the knowledge of the Shoah and the unbearable circumstances which adults tried to protect their children and help them in the impossible mission to survive, could the childhood feelings of disappointment and in some cases, feelings of betrayal could be worked through and replaced with empathy. After reading her mother's final letter, Sally understood her mothers' deep pain at the separation and perhaps most significantly she had done her utmost to fulfill her duty as a parent. During the Shoah, parents' realization that they were unable to protect their children from their impending doom indicated their abject powerlessness and impotence in fulfilling their basic parental duty. However, in giving her up and placing her in the care of the Turkin family, Sally's mother had managed to guarantee her survival. Sally's feeling of abandonment may have been exacerbated by her difficult relationship with her aunt and that she was taken from her beloved rescuers. Her young adult years were difficult and her feelings of loneliness and unhappiness could have been projected onto her feelings about her mother, who because of her "choice" condemned Sally to a difficult life, one in which she felt alone and abandoned.

It is also arguable in the context of survivors' aging, or viewing the release of their stories to the wider public through publications, that they are more inclined to leave an uncomplicated image. This was

[14] Sally Wasserman, (Photograph #:: 29659.USHMM)

evident in Janine's interview and became apparent in my many conversations with one survivor who I have interviewed repeatedly. During our conversations he revealed a complicated relationship to his father. However, he did not want these feelings to be published; he was particularly concerned regarding how his sister would feel once she read his words. One of the interesting points that was raised in my discussion with this particular survivor is that over the years he realized that his memories of his father and his behavior were borne in the context of a cruel and sadistic world which may have distorted the image of his father and the relationship they had.

Conclusion

The interviews of child survivors of the Holocaust are indeed powerful and painful recollections of the most vulnerable victims of Nazism. They also reinforce the suffering of an entire community and reflect the oft role reversal of parents and children during these times. The child survivor remembers the suffering of the adult world and in this sense places him/her as a central witness to the experiences of adults during the Holocaust. These documents are not only essential in their portrayal of the past but also reflect how individuals negotiated and dealt with their past, particularly the memory of lost loved ones. Survivors of the Shoah were compelled to recount their experiences so that the fate of the murdered would be heard and remembered. The impulse to tell motivated many as they felt the burden of memory throughout their lives. However, while these tellers were also giving testimony to a historical event, they were also talking about and remembering their closest and dearest. In their interviews they are not only reflecting on their relationships but also struggling to find the most appropriate way to remember and commemorate them. The possible tension that could exist between memorializing the victims and yet an honest account of their relationships may be fraught. As survivors age and become increasingly aware that their accounts will outlive them and be used by others, it is natural that there would be an anxiety regarding how their words will be interpreted and used. For Janine, seeing her words in print, she is concerned that her criticism of her father's behavior will be the lasting memory of him and this is truly upsetting for

her. She wants the record changed; she wants to reclaim him and his actions. Survivors of the Holocaust undoubtedly feel a concern on the use and interpretation of their words and the memories that they have struggled to live with. One of the main intentions of this article is to sensitize researchers and scholars to their concerns and on a more general level, to emphasize that the interview is a snapshot of a particular telling, containing particular perspectives and outlook which may be different in another interview and at a different moment in time.

Oral History Goes Digital

Current Trends in Digitization and Archiving Oral History Interviews [1]

Almut Leh

1. Introduction

Oral history as both a method and a source of historiography, is particularly affected by digitization. Recording the interview, transcription, analysis and the archiving of the interview is characterised by the increased use of digital techniques and tools.

In addition, new questions often arise when we employ secondary analysis, i.e. the re-interpretation of previously conducted and archived interviews.

My following contribution reflects on current trends and effects of digitization on the archiving and researching utilizing oral history interviews. My thoughts are based on the German-language oral history archive Deutsches Gedächtnis (German Memory) and on my past experiences with technology-driven projects.

As an opening, I will address the fact that oral history interviews are now considered legitimate research data. Then I will briefly introduce the archive Deutsches Gedächtnis as a research data repository. The main part will then deal with two IT[2] projects that we

Almut Leh, Dr. phil., is managing director of the Institute for History and Biography at the FernUniversität Hagen, since 1994 director of the archive "Deutsches Gedächtnis"; editor and publisher of "BIOS".

[1] The paper is based on a presentation given at the Oral History Workshop of the Leo Baeck Institute Jerusalem, the Oral History Division of the Harman Research Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University Jerusalem and Israel Oral History Association on January 27, 2022. The presentation style was largely retained.

[2] An IT (Information Technology) project can be any type of project that deals with IT infrastructure, information systems, or computer technology.

have carried out in Deutsches Gedächtnis I will briefly present these to you and based on them, develop my thoughts on the implications for interview-based research. I will conclude with a few thoughts on digital hermeneutics.

2. Oral History interviews as research data

Perhaps I must emphasize that in Germany, unlike in many other countries, oral history has not had an easy standing. Outside the university, i.e. in grassroots initiatives, oral history was highly valued, especially in the 1980s. However, regarding historical scholarship, the oral history interview was considered an inferior source. It was seen as subjective, not generalisable and suspect, due to the fact that the historian himself was seen as a co-producer of the co-source, which he then evaluates in his research.[3]

In the meantime, this attitude has changed. Today, interviews are used as legitimate sources in contemporary historical research. However, they are often used purely illustratively. The very potential of the oral history interview is usually not exploited. Biographical interviews provide access to the experiences of the interviewees and allow to investigate the significance of subjective experience for history. Currently, we are witnessing another change in the valuation of oral history. This is happening when we discuss research data. "Data is the new oil" - this also applies to scientific research. Research data is considered valuable, not only as a tool to validate results on the basis of the data, but also to be able to reuse this data. The fact that this data is digitally available has made the reuse easier and attractive.

In fact, it is not at all easy to compare research data, which originates in the natural sciences and to research data in the humanities. The main focus of research data is utilizing data that is generated in the research process, so called intermediary data. In the natural and technical sciences, it is a matter of data obtained through measurements and experiments. Preserving this kind of data for further research is obviously useful. But does this also apply to excerpts,

[3] See for example Alexander von Plato: Oral History als Erfahrungswissenschaft. Zum Stand der „mündlichen Geschichte“ in Deutschland. In: BIOS 4 (1991) pp. 97-119.

annotations and transcriptions, notes, commentaries and bibliographies, as they are generated in research processes in the humanities? What can be considered as research data in the historical sciences?

When it comes to research data, oral history interviews receive a lot of attention.[4] If one understands research data as that which is generated in the research process, then oral history interviews are intermediary data par excellence. Oral history interviews are produced in the research process by the researchers together with the researched. Oral history interviews are not only undisputed research data, they are also particularly valuable research data. Firstly, in terms of economics, because the collection of such interviews, including transcription and annotation, requires a great deal of time and money. But they are also valuable in an idealistic sense because the interviews cannot be repeated, the interviewees have either died or would perhaps remember things differently today. And finally, they are valuable above all because they are highly exciting for subsequent use, for secondary analyses. The narrative life history interview format produces memories and narratives that can be used as sources for many, often unforeseeable questions beyond primary research.

That oral history interviews are often and have long been preserved for future use. It is in my estimation, due to the close connection between historiography and archiving. Historians, in their role as users, are experienced in archival practice. Accordingly, it was obvious to the pioneers of oral history in Germany that they would need to archive their interviews and thus make their research results verifiable and their interviews available for secondary use. This was recognized in the late 1970s and early 1980s when the first projects were recorded and led to the establishment of a method which would enable the long-term preservation of the interviews for future use.

[4] See in more detail: Linde Apel , Almut Leh and Cord Pagenstecher: Oral History im digitalen Wandel. Interviews als Forschungsdaten, in: Linde Apel (Ed.): Erinnern, erzählen, Geschichte schreiben. Oral History im 21. Jahrhundert, 2023.

3. The Archive German Memory as research data repository and digital memory store

The archive German Memory was initiated precisely in this context. This archive is part of the Institute for History and Biography at the FernUniversität in Hagen.[5] The institute is a research institution with a focus on oral history and biographical research, whose beginnings date back to the 1970s. All interviews conducted in the past decades of the Institute are archived in the "German Memory".[6] In this respect, the archive is the research data repository of the research institute.

Currently, the archive offers 3,000 interviews from over one hundred research projects. The interview collection is supplemented by autobiographies, diaries and letter collections. The archive is therefore what is today called a memory institution, institutions that represent the cultural memory of a community as an ideal whole. Moreover, the German Memory Archives is to be addressed as a memory institution in a direct sense, insofar as the autobiographical narratives archived here are themselves memories.

Since the interviews in the German Memory Archives were collected in the 1970s, a large portion are archived on analogue audio and video recordings. In order to preserve the interviews in the long term, almost all of them have been transformed into digital formats, making the German Memory Archive an almost entirely digital memory.[7] This circumstance has far-reaching consequences.

On the one hand, the digital representations of the analogue interviews favour their dissemination and visibility. On the other hand, as digital data, the interviews have become machine readable. And this has a considerable impact on the organisation of the work processes in the archive. This circumstance is socially explosive because collective

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5 https://www.fernuni-hagen.de/geschichteundbiographie/index.shtml

6 https://www.fernuni-hagen.de/geschichteundbiographie/deutschesgedaechtnis/index.shtml

7 The sentence plays with the double meaning of memory in German. An archive is referred to as a memory institution, as the memory of a nation or a group. And this memory is now digital

remembrance is delegated to algorithms largely unnoticed and unreflective, in other words: collective memory becomes the object of computing instructions.[8]

The digital interview collections in our archive are not only of interest to humanities and cultural studies scholars, but also to computer scientists. For computer science, our qualitative, audio-visual interviews are unstructured, multimodal data, and in a quantity that is quite suitable for training neural networks. Through the digitization of the collections, artificial intelligence has found its way into the now digital German Memory.

In the following, I would like to take a critical look at how the process of transforming interviews into data changes the results of the interview and what the consequences are for producing knowledge. In doing so, I refer to my experiences in the archive Deutsches Gedächtnis and technology-driven research projects of recent years.

4. IT-projects on language technology and knowledge management

Over the past five years, we have conducted a speech technology research project together with the Fraunhofer Institute for Intelligent Analysis and Information Systems (IAIS) with the aim of improving automatic speech recognition.[9] Why improve it? One may ask, why improve it? But what works well in a conversation with Siri, Alexa etc. cannot be transferred to include oral history interviews. Here we must deal with unclear, often dialectal pronunciation, overlapping speaker changes, suboptimal audio recordings and the consequences of magnetic tapes that were digitized too late.

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[8] See also; Almut Leh: “The answer is 42” – When algorithms take over digital memory. Experiences with artificial intelligence in the archive “Deutsches Gedächtnis” (in publication).

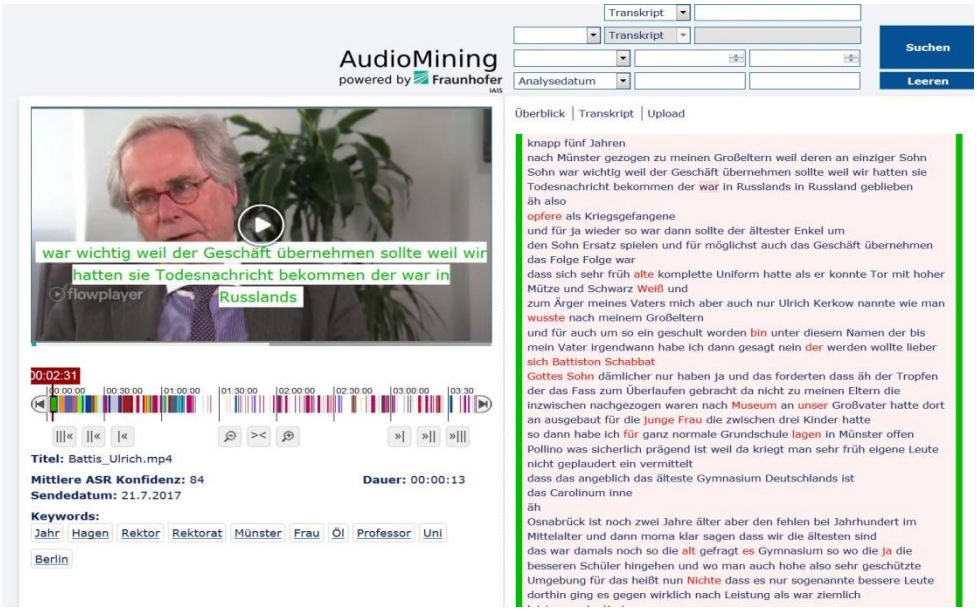
[9] See for the project results: Almut Leh, Joachim Köhler, Michael Gref und Nikolaus Himmelmann: "Speech analytics in research based on qualitative interviews. Experiences from KA3", in: *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture* Vol. 7, 14, 2018. http://doi.org/10.18146/2213-0969.2018.jethc158

At the beginning of the project, the error rate of automatic speech recognition was up to 55 percent, depending on the quality of the recording. After five years of research, the average word error rate was 25 percent.[10] That still sounds like a lot, but in practice it is already very useful. On the one hand, there is a wide range behind this value. While older recordings in particular produce very high error rates, the error rate for new, technically well-recorded interviews is less than 10 percent. On the other hand, not all errors are significant when it comes to understanding meaning.

In fact, automatic speech recognition is a great benefit for the archiving of oral history interviews, especially when it comes to retrieving interviews that may be relevant to certain research questions in the context of secondary analysis. Finding potentially relevant interviews in archive collections is one of the most difficult tasks, and at the same time, indispensable if archiving is to be meaningful. But how do you locate the interviews that are most relevant to a research question? An important retrieval tool is the full-text search for certain terms. According to the current state of technology, the basis of the full-text search are transcripts, text files.

Automatic speech recognition now enables not only the automatic production of transcripts, but also retrieval directly in the audio signal. The Fraunhofer Institute's so called audio mining system offers a media view in which the media are played back with subtitles. Parallel to listening or watching, one can read the transcript or download the transcript.

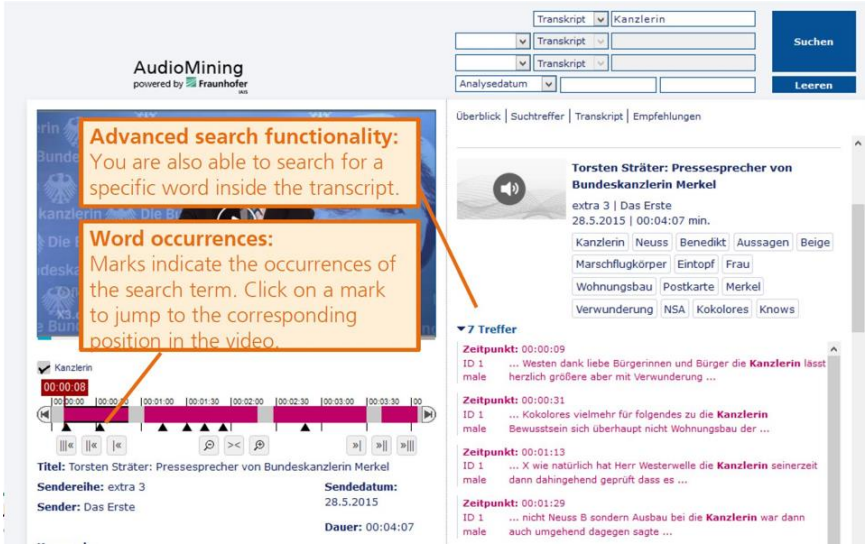
[10] Michael Gref, Christoph Schmidt, Sven Behnke and Joachim Köhler, " Two-staged acoustic modeling adaption for robust speech recognition by the example of German oral history interviews". In: *2019 IEEE International Conference on Multimedia and Expo*, pp. 796–801.



Screenshot of the audio mining application. On the right the automatically generated transcript. Top left: media playback with subtitles. Below: colour-coded speaker changes and automatically generated keywords. Top right: input mask for search operations.

One can search for terms or word sequences in free text which are then displayed in context in a hit list. When one selects a hit, it enables jumping directly to the relevant part of the audio or video with an ability to listen to the sequence. In addition, keywords are automatically generated for individual interviews, which provide an initial orientation regarding the content.

For identifying potentially relevant interviews, this technology is very helpful. Even in a well-managed archive such as the Deutsches Gedächtnis, about one third of the interviews are not transcribed. With the help of audio mining, these non-transcribed interviews can be included in the search process.



Fraunhofer Institute's (IAIS) audio mining application.

I also see a value in the synchronous presentation of text and audio or video recording in form of subtitles. Until now interviews in research practice were mostly reduced to text. Now prosody, facial expressions and gestures can also be analysed, which is of particular importance when it comes to interviews conducted by others. Another benefit: With technical support, we will be able to include a significantly larger number of interviews in a study, which will make new questions possible. Oral history studies have usually worked with around 30 interviews. Not least because it was difficult to handle more information. With computer support, big data analyses of oral history interviews are conceivable and are already being carried out in some cases.

Another project is concerned with making the interviews available online. With the progress of digitization, the users' demand for the transmission of transcripts, audio and video files via the Internet has become louder and more urgent. Technically, this is indeed no problem. And what could be more obvious than making oral history interviews accessible in an online archive? However, legal aspects related to the protection of respondents' data and privacy are a big issue here.

Together with colleagues at the Freie Universität Berlin and other partners, we are currently developing such an online service. The project is called Oral-History.Digital.[11] The goal is to provide a digital information infrastructure, a central access point that will allow researchers to search online for a variety of interview collections and to listen directly to the selected interviews, annotate them and download the results.

It is already becoming apparent in the current project that it can be a great success. The interest from institutions that store oral history interviews and want to use the archive and research environment offered by Oral-History.Digital is huge and exceeds our expectations. And in terms of research, Oral-History.Digital will make the use of oral history interviews even more attractive.

Especially for secondary analyses, it is attractive to access many interview collections from different online archives via a central access point and to be able to listen to or watch interviews conveniently online. The slogan is: data ready to use.

If one wants to examine how people in the East and West looked at the other Germany before reunification, one needs interviews that were conducted before 1989. If one wants to examine the history of National Socialism and the Second World War, one would need to access interviews with people who, for the most part, are no longer alive. Accordingly, interviews conducted in the past and accessible in archives become important. An obstacle for such secondary analysis of interviews is usually that the interpretation is very time-consuming. In this respect,

For the past several years we have seen the transformation of oral historical sources into audio-visual research data. As an interview archive, we have no choice but to follow this path. And I do so with conviction, because I believe it makes sense to help shape this process. Archiving and research can and will benefit from the digital possibilities.

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[11] https://www.oral-history.digital/

As I am responsible for the archive Deutsches Gedächtnis I actively seek cooperation with colleagues from the field of information technology. However, helping to shape the process also means keeping a critical eye on the implications of digitization. In doing so, I see heuristic, epistemological and ethical implications.

5. Digitization and biographical research - curse and blessing

Heuristics in historical science means determining and finding sources that are suitable for answering and addressing the research question at hand. Digitization and the internet have radically changed this process. Of course, this also applies to biographical interviews. Today, it is easy to discover that 3,000 oral history interviews are available for research in the Deutsches Gedächtnis archive. This is undoubtedly a positive development. It becomes problematic when the further search is limited to what is digitally accessible. What is available online seems to be ready to use. What can only be accessed by visiting the archive remains out of sight. Digitization leads to a distortion in the competition for attention. It is easy to imagine how this produces exclusion mechanisms and attention filters that co-determine research processes. And it does so in such a way that the selection of sources is guided not by what contributes most promisingly to addressing a question. The decisive factor is, what can be conveniently used. My concern is that those interviews that are not digitize will be forgotten and searches will increasingly follow the rules of the Internet, where one primarily finds what others have already found. Therefore, the hit list becomes a ranking list in which the interviews with the most "clicks" and "likes" are at the top.

Our archive portal Oral-History.Digital is undoubtedly a better way of accessing material. I find it worrisome that a visit to the archive on the internet comes without any expert advice is, in my opinion, a worrying side effect. In fact, the archivist as an expert has an important role. Based on my experience, it is often only in a dialogue between the researcher and the archivist that good search strategies develop that can lead to the identification of relevant interviews. It needs the archivist’s knowledge how to use the available retrieval tools; -metadata

and full-text search. In the online archive, instead of advice and dialogue, there are prefabricated indexes that are oriented to the expected research queries. This leaves little room for creativity and explorative imagination, which leads to the epistemological implications that also radiate to ethical aspects.

Thanks to time aligned transcripts, we have the synchronous display of audio or video and transcript. Thus, we can easily extend our interpretation from printed text to speech in sound and image. At the same time, this technology offers the possibility to immediately check the relevance of the hits by jumping to the exact spot in the interview. If the sequence found does not match the search, the hit is discarded. And on it goes to the next hit in the list. Respectful treatment of those who have made themselves available for a life history interview and have revealed their memories unprotected looks different.

This becomes more apparent when biographical interviews become training data for improving speech recognition. Here, any content, any meaning is completely disregarded. Here it is solely about the property of machine readability, one of the most important properties of digital data. Machine readability allows us to ultimately compare everything with everything else. The term "war widow's son" no longer stands for a generation specific biographical experience or for the offer of a self-interpretation. The term is merely the occasion for the question of how to teach compound nouns to the language model. The interviewees probably did not imagine that they would become the object of scientific exploitation interests in this way when they agreed to the archiving of their interview.

But back to the search algorithm and the hit evaluation. Not only ethically, but also with a view to research, such selective access, limited to snippets, is problematic, because it almost completely misses the insight potential of biographical interviews. The analysis of interviews is seldom about facts that could be expressed in a short sentence. It is almost always about larger contexts such as the layering of experience in the biographical course or the constitution of meaning through the narrative. Dimensions that cannot be drawn by snippets but need to be based on the entire interview.

Oral history as a research method is a profoundly inductive procedure in which the research process is characterized by a high degree of openness. For this very reason, the interviews are conducted in such a way that they open a narrative space for the interviewee, which he or she can fill according to his or her own criteria of relevance and follow the traces of his or her memory unhindered. The analysis is about discovering these traces and making them the key to interpretation. Short interview sequences are no access to this dimension.

Another aspect: When searching with the help of full text search or keywords, the unspoken gets lost. We all know that the interviewee can speak intensively about things without putting them into words. Finding such topics nevertheless might be possible with a word field analysis. But what about all that which is not verbalized? What is kept quiet can sometimes be more important than what is reported in detail. In fact, it is often the breaks and gaps in a narrative that provide the key to understanding meaning. One can only find them if the entire interview is analysed and close attention is paid to what is not said.

According to my observation, secondary analysis of oral history interviews is in danger of using the biographical narratives as a repository from which to pry out the quotes that fit the results obtained from other sources. This tendency has always existed, but electronic tools reinforce this practice. This goes so far as to adapt the research questions to the search engine's answer options, with the result that the research can hardly produce any new outcomes. The interviews end up confirming what fits the thesis. Measured against the potential of the interview as source, this is an incredible flattening and limited.

Computer programs can dramatically increase this reduction in knowledge, namely when artificial intelligence comes into play. In machine learning, problematic phenomena known as algorithmic bias occurs time and again. Learning algorithms amplify the patterns they detect in training data. Examples of this are numerous. If an algorithm that is supposed to pre-sort applications is trained with the successful applications of past years, there is a high probability that the criterion "male" will be qualified as a characteristic of a successful applicant. The

system will therefore preferentially suggest male applicants. Learning algorithms tend to reinforce the status quo. The philosopher and science journalist Manuela Lenzen has described this beautifully:

> No algorithm is smart enough to understand that certain choices are discriminatory to certain populations. And no algorithm is smart enough to understand that we want a future that is different from the past.[12]

I'm afraid that algorithms' cleverness isn't far off when it comes to discerning meaning and significance in biographical narratives either, when the goal is not to point to the same thing over and over again, but to discern change.

6. Perspectives for digital hermeneutics

In conclusion the transformation of interviews into machine readable data emphasizes structural similarity and provides the ability for comparisons. Computer programs are trained on patterns. What does not fit into the pattern is weeded out. For the hermeneutic understanding of the biographical construction of meaning, however, it is precisely what falls through the pattern that can be important. I am not denying that computational analyses can also lead to insights relevant to historical science. In fact, I'm very curious about it. The challenge, however, in my view, is to design a computer assisted procedures in such a way that they do not hinder or even prevent the characteristics of historical research, inductive procedure and hermeneutic understanding, but rather support them.

Both historians and computer scientists, can profit from this process for their own profession. Historians by attempting to bind their intuitive approach to rules; computer scientists by allowing for vagueness. For historians, the exciting question is: How can hermeneutic processes be better modelled - and thus verified? For computer scientists, the challenge and at the same time the opportunity is to make learning systems more flexible. Maybe algorithms can do

[12] Manuela Lenzen, *Künstliche Intelligenz*. München 2020, p. 53.

hermeneutics after all. And perhaps artificial intelligence opens spaces for creativity and curiosity.

I would like to conclude with a famous quote from the novel “The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy", published by Douglas Adams in 1979.[13]

In this novel, there is a super-computer with the beautiful name "Deep Thought" that is supposed to calculate the answer to the "big question about life, the universe and everything". It takes him 7.5 million years to do this and then reveals to the breathlessly listening crowd: "The answer to the big question about life, the universe and everything is ... 42!". The disappointment of the audience is enormous, but "Deep Thought" explains unmoved that this unsatisfactory answer is explained by the fact that the beings who asked him this question never really knew what their question actually was. But that was not a problem. If given enough time, he could also calculate the correct question with a new version of himself, the answer to which is 42.

I would like to advocate that we do not base our questions on the possibilities of a machine. We should be careful not to let the machine tell us what the questions are by only asking questions that the machine can answer. The limits of research should be determined by thinking, not by what is possible through machines.

[13] Douglas Adams: The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, London 1979.

Contemporary History and Oral Documentation:

Informal Education in Jewish Community Centers of Latin America as a Case Study *

Silvia Schenkolewski-Kroll

Introduction

Developments in contemporary historiography have led to the study of processes and events without waiting for the "historical perspective" that was expected in earlier periods. Moreover, the interdisciplinary character of some of these studies has brought about a change in the paradigm relating to the sources needed for such research.[1]

Archives in their classical form are no longer the basic primary source. This is due not only to the non-accessibility to the archival material, but also because the creating body is unwilling to make the relevant documentation available to the public and to increasing use of electronic records, such as e-mail, which are not always saved. Moreover, for some time after the creation of the documentation it cannot be accessed because it is still not organized professionally in a manner that makes it available to users. Thus we are faced with the disadvantage of inaccessible background that can explain openly visible processes.[2]

Dr. Silvia Schenkolewski-Kroll, senior lecturer (retired), Department of Information Science, Bar Ilan University. Researcher InterPARES Trust AI, University of British Columbia, Vancouver Canada. Researcher of Archival Science and Latin American Jewry.

* Translated and edited by Yohai Goel

1 Yehoshua Arieli , *Historiyah u-Meta Historiyah* , Mossad Bialik: Jerusalem 2003.

2 See below, n. 7.

In addition to classical publications of the organization or institution that they are studying, such as books, pamphlets, reports, etc., researchers have at their disposal its websites and their feedback. Under such circumstances, oral documentation plays a threefold role: (1) depending on the specific circumstances - it replaces to some extent the lack of archival materials; (2) it elaborates upon and explains the overt sources such as information on the Internet; and (3) it supplies information and knowledge not provided by any of the other sources.[3]

The case study through which I shall try to present the role of oral documentation is a project researching informal education in Jewish community centers in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Chile over the past four decades. The project conducted by The Liwerant Center of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem,[4] is called "Ideological Zionist Transnationalism: Theoretical Aspects and their Implementation in Informal Jewish Education in Latin America since 1968." Its objective is to study informal Jewish education in community centers in those four countries in light of the changes that took place during the period under study in Zionism as a transnational ideology and its effect on such education, both in relation to Judaism, Zionism, and the State of Israel, but also concerning the interrelationships of these diasporas. The study takes into account the communal and socio-political contexts of the Jewish community in each country.[5]

Oral Documentation, Archives and the History of the Living Present

Since we are dealing with a study that is basically historical, with emphasis on the development of ideas and their application, but which

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[3] Jean-Pierre Wallot and Normand Fortier, "Archival Science and Oral Sources," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge: London and New York 1998, 365–78 ;Ellen D. Swain, "Oral History in the Archives: Its Documentary Role in the Twenty-first Century," *American Archivist* 66 (2003): 139–58 ; James E. Fogerty, "Filling the Gap: Oral History in the Archives," *American Archivist* 46 (1983): 148–57.

[4] The Liwerant Center for the Study of Latin America, Spain, Portugal and Their Jewish Communities at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem operated in the years 2009-2015.

[5] http://www.liwerantcenter.huji.ac.il/research-projects/research-fellowships/ (accessed July 2019)

relates to a very recent period that is part of the unfolding present, we have to confront what is defined as "contemporary history" or "history of the living present" - history of the past and present of living persons. The historian and archivist Anne Pérotin-Dumon researched this topic in relation to events in Chile during the seventies and eighties of the twentieth century, comparing them to similar cases in Argentina, Peru, and Guatemala, following the example of studies of "history of the living present" in Germany, France, and Spain, among other countries.[6] All the cases noted and analyzed by Pérotin-Dumon were traumatic events that left indelible scars on the collective and the individual. However, the epistemology and methodology involved in writing such histories also includes elements suitable for description and analysis of contemporary socio-historical phenomena that are not traumatic, whose objectives and results are positive, as is the case of informal education in the Jewish community centers.

I shall repeat here Pérotin-Dumon's citing of Pierre Nora's *Realms of Memory* who, under that heading, includes texts, places, institutions, buildings, commemoration of events, and all the other elements that provide a foundation for the collective memory.[7] It may be claimed that oral documentation can stand alone, but at the same time it makes a bilateral contribution to all the elements noted, by supplementing their testimony or leading to it.

Archives, a basic element in traditional historiography, play a somewhat different role in contemporary history. In this case we are *not* faced with an archival process of the life cycle of the record in which the researcher is provided with documents that have undergone professional appraisal and are stored for perpetuity after a lengthy period as classified material. Rather, we have documentation that is still in an intermediate stage in an institutional archive or that has

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[6] Anne Pérotin-Dumon, "El pasado vivo de Chile en el Año del Informe sobre la tortura," *Nuevo Mundo*, *Mundos Nuevos,* 2005, 1130 http://nuevomundo.revues.org/954; id., "Liminar. Verdad y memoria: escribir la historia de nuestro tiempo," http://www.historiadelpasadovivo.cl/es.resultado (accessed)

[7] Pérotin-Dumon , "El pasado vivo," 12 ; Pierre Nora, *Rethinking France = Les lieux de la mémoire*, vol. 2: *Space*, trans. Mary Trouille, University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London: 2006.

accumulated as documentary material in an ad hoc archive created to contain documentation on a specific subject. When referring to contemporary history, then, there is a problem of limited access to such documentation, primarily in order to ensure individual privacy or institutional interests. Access may be speedier in the case of ad hoc archives because of the actuality of the subject matter, as with "archives of memory."[8]

As for the role of the archivist as an intermediate between the materials and the users, and as one who influences the accessibility of such materials, we can quote archival theoretician Terry Cook who points to the role of the archivist as being both partner to and initiator of the collective memory: "Community is the key concept, then, of the fourth archival paradigm now coming into view, a democratizing of archives suitable for the social ethos, communication patterns, and community requirements of the digital age."[9] The other three paradigms—evidence, memory, and identity—are also relevant to the topic under discussion.

With the exception of ad hoc archives, like those created to document dark periods in the history of nations, such as that of the military regime in Argentina (1976–1983),[10] all the other elements are suitable for the contemporary history of institutions and organizations. These are those that have just been cited from Pierre Nora, with the addition of oral documentation and archives, taking into account the limitations noted earlier. The bottom line of this introductory statement is that I shall now try to describe the methodology by which one can study the contemporary history of community centers engaged in informal Jewish education of youth.

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[8] Angelika Menne-Haritz, "Access: the Reformulation of an Archival Paradigm," *Archival Science* 1 (2001) 57–82; for "archives of memory" see, for instance, Museo de la memoria y los derechos humanos— Archivo de la memoria en Chile , http://www.museodelamemoria.cl ; Archivo General de la Memoria, http://anm.derhuman.jus.gov.ar (both accessed Jan. 31, 2015).

[9] Terry Cook, "Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms," *Archival Science*, Published online: June 28, 2012, p. 22. (accessed Jan. 31, 2015)

[10] See above n. 7.

Archival Sources at our Disposal

The sources at our disposal are in the historical archives of the Macabi World Union,[11] the Yosef Yekutieli Macabi Sports Archives,[12] housed in the Macabiah Village in Israel, that contain documentation of organizations affiliated with the world movement, especially up to the 1990s, including their publications. The documentation includes correspondence, minutes, reports about the community centers by emissaries of the Macabi World Union, and correspondence of the Macabi federations in the individual countries with the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization. Archival material for more recent periods is unavailable because none has been deposited in the archives of the Macabi World Union. This makes all the more important the interviews conducted, whether in Israel or abroad, with senior persons, both past and present, in the various organizations. Also important are the printed materials received for this study from the organizations themselves. In addition, the overall picture may be supplemented by accessing the websites and other electronic data of or about the organizations studied. In relation to these, it should be noted that in many cases it is impossible to conduct retrospective searches because of the high frequency of change undergone by the electronic data, the deletion of such data, or the technical inability of the user to access it.[13]

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11 In this article Macabi is spelled with one C, as written in Spanish (editor's note)

12 http://www.macabi.org/museum (accessed Feb. 1, 2015).

13 Hebraica, *Crónica de una creación permanente, 1926 – 2001*, Buenos Aires2001; Sociedad Hebraica Argentina, *85 años, 1926 – 2011, Crece junto a vos,* Memoria y Balance 2010 –2011, Buenos Aires 2011; *70 Aniversario Club Náutico Hacoaj: Un sueño, una pasión, una realidad*, Buenos Aires 2005; Hacoaj, Memoria y Balance 2010–2011; Club Náutico Hacoaj, *Estatuto Social*, Buenos Aires 2009; Associação Brasileira "A Hebraica" de São Paulo, *50 Anos de História, 1953– 2003*, São Paulo 2003; Derej, *Guía de la Comunidad Israelita del Uruguay*, Montevideo 2006; Estadio Israelita Macabi, *Libro de Oro de Chile en los XIX Juegos Maccabeos*, Santiago 2013; www.hebraica.org.ar ; http://www.hacoaj.org.ar; Organización Hebrea Argentina Macabi, http://macabi.com.ar ;

http://hebraica.org.br/portal/historia; http://www.eim.cl; Asociación Hebraica y Macabi de Uruguay , http://www.hebraicamacabi.com; Federación Argentina de Centros Comunitarios Macabeos, http://www.faccma.org (all accessed Feb. 1, 2015); Estadio Israelita Macabi Santiago, http://www.eim.cl (accessed Feb. 15, 2015).

Another archival source that was intended to serve as a basis for such a study is the fonds[14] of various relevant departments of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency, especially the Youth and Hehalutz Department.[15] Due to bureaucratic circumstances, including the non-deposit of documentation in the Central Zionist Archives, there is no access to materials dealing with informal education in community centers, in general, including those that are the subject of this study. In addition, relevant documentation in the archives of the Joint Distribution Committee,[16] an organization whose influence is evident in community centers, is also presently inaccessible because the materials lack arrangement and description. As a result, I have been led to engage in a study that is to some extent distant from classical historical studies which are based on analysis and interpretation of documentation that has been declassified. Thus, to a great extent my study combined materials which from the outset were accessible to the public and could be analyzed and interpreted, together with oral documentation in which there is ongoing interaction between the person interviewed and the interviewer.[17] As noted, following the practices of contemporary history, I have attempted to create a structural framework that can also serve as a historical basis for additional studies conducted with the methodology of the behavioral sciences.

Methodology of Research

In the present case study—informal education in community centers—in order to meet the demands of high-quality research the oral documentation strategy had to follow the hierarchical structure of the organization studied, as would have been the case if it was conducted

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14 The entire body of records of an organization.

15 Silvia Schenkolewski-Kroll, "Changes in the Transnational Relationship of the World Zionist Organization and Latin American Jewry: Informal Education 1968–2006," *Judaica Latinoamericana* 7 (2013): 465–85.

16 http://archives.jdc.org (accessed Feb. 2, 2015).

17 Alessandro Portelli, "Oral History as Genre," in Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson (eds.), *Narrative and Genre*, Routledge: London and New York 1998, 28–32; id., "What Makes Oral History Different," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge: "On Oral History Interviewing," in ibid., 107–13. London and New York 1998, 63–74; Charles T. Morrissey, "On Oral History Interviewing," in ibid., 107–13.

on the basis of conventional fonds.[18] The first interviews planned were with senior officials, then with the professional level, to be complemented—to the extent possible—by interviewing persons receiving the services provided. In the case of the first two, the policy makers and the providers of services, it was necessary to draft questionnaires appropriate to each specific case. As for those receiving informal education, a uniform questionnaire could be used, one that is appropriate for each organization in question.

Analysis of the interviews, whether together with other sources noted earlier or as the sole source of information, while comparing them with other interviews, can lead to a result that is in accord with the practices of what is defined as "contemporary history."[19] I have in my possession forty-eight interviews, six of which were conducted in Israel and the rest in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and Chile, and one solely by e-mail. I interviewed senior officials in the Youth and Hehalutz Department and the Communication Center of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency, directors of the Macabi World Union, past and present leading officials in the Sociedad Hebraica Argentina (SHA), Hakoah, and Macabi in Buenos Aires and their counterparts in Hebraica-Macabi in Montevideo, Hebraica São Paulo, and Estadio Israelita-Macabi, Chile. In order to present a comparative analysis of these interviews, in all four countries I also interviewed persons involved in informal education, but outside the community centers. All interviews were conducted in 2011, 2012, and 2014.

Interviewers from Israel and Archival Sources

Let me begin from the general and move to the particular while comparing the interviews with other materials noted earlier and

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[18] The intention is that when one accesses conventional fonds, this is done by going from top to bottom in order to understand the materials in the archives in the context of the flow from policy making to implementation. See Wendy M. Duff and Catherine A. Johnson, "Accidentally Found on Purpose: Information-Seeking Behavior of Historians in Archives," *The Library Quarterly* 72 (2002): 472–500; Richard H. Lytle, "Intellectual Access to Archives, II: Report of an Experiment Comparing Provenance and Content Indexing Methods of Subject Retrieval," *American Archivist* 43 (1980): 191–207.

[19] See notes. 5 and 7.

attempting to maintain the personal and institutional hierarchies. Of the six conducted in Israel, which serve as a background and framework for the efforts in Latin America, two of the interviews, in addition to the personal insights of the interviewees, came instead of perusal of archival material of the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization that is inaccessible under present conditions. I refer to Mordechai Bar-On, head of the Youth and Hehalutz Department in the years following the Six-Day War (1967),[20] and Avraham Argov, Head of the Information Department.[21]

Two more interviewees, from among the leadership of the Macabi World Union, supplemented information found in the archives of that organization and lent a contemporary and personal touch to written materials that may exist but are not accessible to the researcher in the archives. The persons in question are Carlos Tapiero, Director General of the Macabi World Union, and Dr. David Kornfeld, who headed that organization's Education Department.[22]

The other two interviewees in Israel are of a different category. Tata Furmansky and Adolfo Finkelstein,[23] both of whom immigrated to Israel from Argentina in the 1970s, had filled key positions in Macabi Buenos Aires, and upon their arrival in Israel held central positions in the directorate of the Macabi World Union relating to activity in Latin America, including missions to those countries. Finkelstein possesses extensive personal archives documenting his activity in Latin America, which he placed at my disposal. Thus in his interview, unlike that of Furmansky, I had a good basis on which to formulate my questions.

In the case of persons interviewed who were active solely in community centers in Latin America, for the reasons outlined earlier it was impossible to access the archives of the organizations in which they were active as preparation for the interviews. Thus,

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20 Interviews with Mordechai Bar-On, Nov.14, 2012, Nov. 19, 2012.

21 Interview with Avraham Argov, June 26, 2011.

22 http://www.maccabi.org, interview with David Kornfeld, May 30, 2011; interview with Carlos Tapiero, Aug. 11, 2011.

23 Interview with Tata Furmansky, July 21, 2011; interview with Adolfo Finkelstein, June 23, 2011.

correspondence with the Macabi World Union and the conventional and electronic publications at my disposal had to fill the gap, as much as possible.

Argentina

The organization with the greatest number of interviewees was the SHA.[24] The senior persons interviewed were David Fleisher,[25] SHA chairman during the 1960s and 1970s, and Alberto Senderey,[26] its director-general during the period of the military junta. Both revealed facts about the situation of the SHA that perhaps do not appear in any written documentation of that period. Senderey was responsible for the great change in the concept of the community center, and his clarifications about its background and activities manifest and complement the archival material of the Joint Distribution Committee. This organization overwhelmingly influenced the change in concept, and served to explain the result one can see in the openly available documentation of the SHA. All this refers to the recent past, and is also relevant for the second decade of the twenty-first century.

As for the present period, personal interviews were undoubtedly the primary source. Those with the director of education for children and youth, Jessica Rozenblum,[27] and the director of physical education, Alberto Kaplan Krep,[28] were not only the source for up-to-date information about SHA activities. Thanks to the questionnaire prepared in advance, I was enlightened about the influence of the informal education provided by the SHA on a list of topics such as: graduates of the school for instructors; whether youth and older people return to the SHA or not after completing their role in the organization; relations with non-Jewish sport clubs in Argentina and social and sportive relationships with non-Jewish sportsmen and women; cases of

[24] Silvia Schenkolewski-Kroll, "Informal Jewish Education: Argentina's Hebraica Society," in Margalit Bejarano et al. (eds.), *Jews and Jewish Identities in Latin America*, Academic Studies Press: Boston 2017, 73–90.

[25] Interview with David Fleisher, Nov. 1, 2011.

[26] Electronic interviews with Alberto Senderey, July 3, 2012, July 10, 2012.

[27] Interviews with Jessica Rozenblum, Nov. 1, 2011, Nov. 14, 2011.

[28] Interview with Alberto Kaplan Krep, Nov.14, 2011.

antisemitism, and more.[29] These two levels of interviewees—senior officials of the past who served in a period that overlaps the beginning of the one under study and contemporary officials—enable us not only to complement and analyze what is missing in the written documentation, as is done in classical oral documentation, but also to create a data infrastructure that can be corroborated by further sociological-anthropological research.

Interviewing took a slightly different form in relation to the Hakoah Maritime Club (Club Náutico Hacoaj).[30] Though I only spoke with the director, Ariel Jenik,[31] the interview also included his life story, especially important being the fact that ever since his schooldays and throughout all his adult life he has been a member of the club. This fact provided a unique outlook on what transpired in Hakoah in the past from the perspective of a young member or recipient of services, with the addition of insights on the earlier period from a contemporary viewpoint. As for the present, the interview did not deviate from questions and answers relating to other community centers, except for relating to the unique status of Hakoah as the only Jewish maritime club anywhere in the world outside of Israel. Unlike in other cases, I did not have at my disposal any publications of Hakoah prior to the interview to prepare myself for it, but I did have access to them after the interview, enabling me to enhance some of the details and verify dates.

The last community center which I visited in Argentina was that of Macabi Buenos Aires.[32] As noted earlier, I had previously interviewed, in Israel, two former leading members of that organization.[33] In Buenos Aires I interviewed Monica Levine,[34] the pedagogic director of the community center. She, too, had been a member of Macabi Buenos Aires when she was a young girl. Her career

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[29] See above n. 22.

[30] See above n. 12.

[31] Interview with Ariel Jenik, Nov. 22, 2011.

[32] Silvia Schenkolewski-Kroll, “Transnacionalismo y educación judía no formal: el caso de Macabi Buenos Aires,” *Judaica Latinoamericana* 8 (2017): 531–46.

[33] See above n. 21.

[34] Interview with Monica Levine, Nov. 24, 2011.

as a teacher and educational advisor in the formal Jewish educational framework steered the interview to the relationship between formal and informal education and how they complement each other. This interview, particularly coming after those conducted in the other two community centers, enabled comparison of the three.

I conducted two additional interviews. The first was with Claudio Lerer,[35] a prominent member of the Brith Ahim center in Lanús, a city in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area. It added another comparative dimension: the operation of a community center providing services for a Jewish community whose members are of a lower socio-economic status than those mentioned previously, some of them even severe poverty cases. A second interview was with Ines Gruber-Levine,[36] active in FACCMA (Federación Argentina de Centros Comunitarios Macabeos), the umbrella organization of Jewish community centers in Argentina, who related her experiences in the past as a tennis player representing Macabi, and of anti-Semitic cries by fans in the stands.

In order to supplement information and get an overview and comparative perspective on the status of informal education in Buenos Aires, I conducted two more interviews in FACCMA: one with Fabio Fridman, the director general,[37] and the other with Enrique Grinberg,[38] the director of the Youth Department of the World Zionist Organization in Buenos Aires. These interviews provided a more exact indication of the role of these three biggest community centers in that city within the communal framework, in contrast to other Jewish informal education frameworks. Grinberg reported on the condition of the traditional youth movements in relation to their prospective target audience and their plans, in contrast to those of the community centers. They also threw light on the relationships of the community centers with the society that surrounds them.

[35] Interview with Claudio Lerer, Nov. 1, 2011.

[36] Interview Ines Gruber-Levine, Nov. 1, 2011.

[37] Interview with Fabio Fridman, Nov. 1, 2011.

[38] Interview with Enrique Grinberg, Dec. 5, 2011.

Brazil

Hebraica São Paulo[39] can be compared to the SHA in Buenos Aires. I conducted three interviews compatible with the three levels of personnel in the organization: the director-general, Gaby Milevsky,[40] Marcia Eisen,[41] who heads the "After School" program, and Lucy,[42] an instructor in the center who started out as a young member and advanced through all the stages until becoming an instructor. In the case of Hebraica São Paulo, too, I was able to consult materials deposited in the archives of the Maccabi World Union that included documentation and publications.[43] As in the case of the community centers in Buenos Aires, Gaby Milevsky detailed and emphasized the changes his organization underwent over the years, its unique status, and its attitude towards Zionism and Israel. What stood out in this interview was the transnational motif, which is the central feature of the research project,[44] since he himself came to São Paulo from Argentina at the urging of the Joint Distribution Committee. Other frameworks of Jewish informal education exist in São Paulo, such as youth movements and religious institutions.[45]

Uruguay

Since most of the elements in the oral documentation, as well as the relativity of oral documentation to other sources of information, were similar in additional interviews that I conducted in Montevideo and Rio de Janeiro[46] (of course, to a lesser degree, depending on the size of each organization and the extent of its activity), I shall only note what is special in Uruguay: that a youth movement operates within the Hebraica-Macabi community center. The reasons for this unique phenomenon were explained in interviews with the center's director-

[39] See above n. 12.

[40] Interview with Gaby Milevsky, Sept. 6, 2012.

[41] Interview with Marcia Eisen, Sept. 6, 2012.

[42] Interview with Lucy [family name unknown], Sept. 6, 2012.

[43] See above n. 10.

[44] See above n. 4.

[45] Interview with Alberto Minkewitz, Sept. 6, 2012.

[46] Interview with Cynthia Griner, director of Macabi Rio de Janeiro, Sept. 11, 2012.

general, Uriel Rosenfeld,[47] and a veteran official, Enrique Lichtenstein:[48] the fact that Uruguay's Jewish community is small and gradually diminishing. I assumed that a visit to the pedagogic center that provides educational materials for both formal and informal Jewish education would be enlightening as to the character of such education. My interview with its director, Gabriela Fleiss,[49] confirmed my assumption.

Chile

The last country in which I conducted interviews was Chile which, like Uruguay, has only a small Jewish community. As in other cases, with the exception of Buenos Aires, there is one central community center, Estadio Israelita Macabi Santiago.[50] Like in Montevideo, the Macabi Hatzair youth movement carries on its activities in the Estadio, but formally is not an integral part of the community center. There are also other frameworks offering informal Jewish education, such as Círculo Israelita de Santiago[51] that is affiliated with the Conservative Movement and a unique one, "Tzeirei Ami," a framework for informal education of Santiago's Jewish school, Instituto Hebreo Dr. Chaim Weizmann.[52]

As with other countries, documentation for Chile deposited in the archives of the Maccabi World Union only covers up to the 1990s. Like in Buenos Aires and São Paulo, in the case of the Estadio I interviewed three generations of persons active in the institution, which this time covered the period from its establishment in the 1950s until the present. Of the founding generation I interviewed the incumbent president, Marcos Kaplun,[53] its past president, Salo Rezepka,[54] and Freddy

[47] Interview with Uriel Rosenfeld, Sept. 12, 2011.

[48] Interview with Enrique Lichtenstein, Nov. 29, 2011.

[49] Interview with Gabriela Fleiss, Nov. 30, 2011.

[50] See above n. 12.

[51] See its website, http://www.cis.cl/historia.htm (accessed Feb. 15, 2015).

[52] See its website, http://www.institutohebreo.cl (accessed Feb. 15, 2015).

[53] Interview with Marcos Kaplun, Nov. 21, 2014.

[54] Interview with Salo Rezepka, Nov. 27, 2014.

Katz,[55] who in the 1970s reorganized Macabi Hatzair within the community center. Second-generation interviewees were Analia Stuttman[56] and Mauricio Cohn,[57] both of whom were members of Macabi Hatzair and were active in the community center. Stuttman directed its educational and cultural activities for nine years (1988–1977) while Cohn is presently the sport director of the Estadio, who aims to inculcate Judaism and Zionism through sport. Perla Lerman,[58] who represents the third generation, is a student who directs Macabi Hatzair's leadership courses. The final interviewee, Alvaro Rosenblutt,[59] can be classified as being between generations, and he exemplifies the transnational aspect of Macabi. Since the beginning of the present century, he represents Chile at the world Macabiahs in Israel and those held in Latin America, and organizes the contingents that represent Chile at these events. It would seem that the interviews conducted which focused on the Estadio Israelita Macabi Santiago and Macabi Hatzair cover all aspects of these organizations. Comparison of the information and data supplied by the persons interviewed will provide a true perspective on informal education in the major community center of Chilean Jewry.[60]

Conclusion

Without going into great detail of the research project and the interviews conducted, I have tried to show the changed relationship—depending on circumstances and the times—between conventional and electronic documentation and oral documentation in the case of contemporary history. This is due to objective factors, since we are dealing with the history of living persons. Oral documentation is more central for such research than other sources at the disposal of the researcher. Oral documentation can explain and enhance upon what is

[55] Interview with Freddy Katz, Nov. 26, 2014.

[56] Interview with Analia Stuttman, Nov. 27, 2014.

[57] Interview with Mauricio Cohn, Nov. 21, 2014.

[58] Interview with Perla Lerman, Nov. 27, 2014.

[59] Interview with Alvaro Rosenblutt, Dec. 1, 2014.

[60] For technical reasons, it was impossible to interview representatives of other frameworks of informal education, even for the purpose of comparison. See above notes 49 and 50.

included in openly available sources, and also inform us about issues and events that are still in inaccessible sources, over and above the main value of the oral documentation itself.

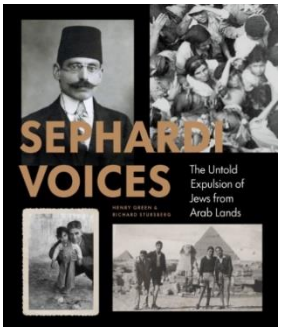
Should we seek greater chronological correlation between public accessibility of written or other documentation in archives and oral documentation? Is this the role of the archivist, as the person responsible for the collective memory of a specific society? I am unable to supply answers to these questions, or to others that arise from this subject—judicial issues, such as openness versus individual privacy, among others. I can sum up by declaring that when evaluating the sources at their disposal, contemporary history presents a challenge to researchers over and above the challenges of traditional historiography, with oral documentation playing a central role.

Sephardi Voices

Henry Green & Richard Stursberg, *Sephardi Voices: The Untold Expulsion of Jews from Arab Lands*, Sephardi Voices Inc.: USA 2021

Margalit Bejarano

Until recently studies on Jews from MENA (Middle East and North Africa) were limited to geographical units: They focused on the history of Jews in specific countries, on the mass migration to Israel and its impact on the development of Israeli society, on North African Jews in France, or on the place of Sephardim as "minorities within minorities" in the United States. Only recently, with the emergence of studies on transnationalism, scholars started to pay more attention to the study of Jews in MENA homelands and compared their acclimation in various host-countries...



The book *Sephardi Voices: The Untold Expulsion of Jews from Arab Lands* offers a basic framework for the understanding of the links between the historical background of the Jews in each of these MENA countries. The book examines, the impact of Israeli independence as well as the Middle East conflict which led to the traumatic and dramatic exodus of the Jews from their host countries and chronicles the experiences of individuals in their new countries.

Margalit Bejarano is a researcher at the Avraham Harman Research Center of Contemporary Jewry and at the Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She published extensively on Cuban Jewry, Sephardim in Latin America, Cuban and Latino Jews in Miami, and oral history.

Oral history is one of the major sources for the study of the history of MENA Jews and their displacement. For more than 15 years Dr. Henry A. Green, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Miami, has been working on an international project *Sephardi Voices*

(SV) which has recorded and preserved testimonies of Jews from Moslem countries, with the objective of giving voice to Sephardim/ Mizrahim throughout the world:[1]

Sephardi Voices is an audio-visual history project that seeks to document and preserve the testimonies of Jews displaced from North Africa and the Middle East in the wake of the spread of Zionism, the establishment of the State of Israel (1948), and the rise of nationalist movements and nation states. It gives voice to the nearly 850,000 Jews that were confronted by issues of human rights, many of whom lost their citizenship and became refugees. […]

Only with such an undertaking will scholars and policy makers be able to address the big picture questions regarding exile and identity, "otherness" and marginality and explore and scrutinise the Sephardi experience within the broad context of Refugee and Migration Studies.[2]

Aimed at the general audience, the book introduces the reader into the world of the Jews from MENA through an impressive collection of illustrations, that includes historical pictures and documents as well as interesting photos taken from family albums. It is also accompanied by portraits of persons that were interviewed for the SV project together with short quotations from their testimonies, offering a visual representation of collective and individual memories.

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[1] The project started in 2005 under the name *The Forgotten Exodus*, and was later changed to Sephardi Voices, using the word Sephardi as a general term for Jews from MENA.

[2] Mission Statement of Sephardi Voices in the US.

The Zargar family, including Shahverdi Zargar (seated, center), jeweller to the king of Persia, Turkmenistan, c. 1908

Courtesy of Lina Samimy, Sephardi Voices Collection

The book is divided into five chapters, each dedicated to a different time period. The first gives a short survey of the history of the Hebrews in ancient times whose origins in MENA countries can be traced back to Babylon and Persia as mentioned in early Biblical and Talmudic sources. The book then refers to the status of Jews under early Christian and then Moslem rule.in their host countries. It emphasizes that the status of the Jews was that of second-class citizens under Muslim protection, and examines the different circumstances in which they lived during various time periods and in various North African and Middle East countries. Special attention is given to the experience of the Jews under Ottoman rule, and to the rise of Zionism – simultaneously with Arab Nationalism. The authors, Green and Stursburg refer to the cultural similarities between the Jewish and the Arab populations in their respective countries, but also to the irreconcilable ideological conflicts between them.

French Protectorat identity card for for Abraham Meghira, born 1888, Safi Morocco

Courtesy of Edmond Elbaz, Sephardi Voices Collection

The second chapter deals with MENA Jews between 1918 and 1945, defining them by the controversial term "Arab Jews". Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the region was dominated by colonial powers that granted Jews emancipation, facilitated their cultural integration into the colonial society and were triggers of modernity and secularism. On the other hand, the progress among Jews provoked conflicts with the Muslim Arabs, who were disappointed for not gaining independence within the framework of the growing nationalism in their respective countries., The authors then trace the beginnings of the conflict between Arabs and Jews which contributed to the latter's exodus, but also refer to the different circumstances in each country, illustrating the historical description with excerpts of personal reminiscences.

F Ezra Zamir-Belbel (right), poses with his friends (one is Jewish, one Christian, and one Muslim) in Giza, Egypt, 1945. Courtesy of Levana Zamir, Sephardi Voices Collection

Several of the interviewees describe their childhood and refer to that period as an idyllic past, in which many Jews prospered economically, and in countries like Egypt, Iraq and Algeria, were able to climb the social ladder, and were even accepted in high political circles. Other interviewees in Yemen and Iran recalled their suffering from severe discrimination, while others were victims of violent attacks in Morocco. Special attention is given to the *Farhud* – a pogrom led by pro-Nazi forces in Iraq (1941) in which 200 Jews were killed and many others were wounded, girls and women were raped, and Jewish

property was looted. Referring to the imprint of the *Farhud* on the collective memory of Iraqi Jews Abdullah Dangoor said: "*It ended after two days, but it remained in the mind of all Jews.*" (p. 48)

Nazi propaganda in the Arab world incited against the Jews, but also presented Britain as an imperial power that threatened Arab independence. The book presents Muslim officials who supported the Nazis, especially the Mufti of Jerusalem who legitimized and encouraged violence against Jews. During WWII the French colonies in North Africa came under the control of the Vichy government and the Jews were persecuted. The story of Channah Ankri Sitbon from Tunisia illustrates the situation of Jews who were taken as prisoners by the Germans: "*They took all the men and put them in jail and left the wives and children alone. They tortured them. They hung my dad from a tree and whipped him*" (p. 45). Moshe Labi, from Libya which was under the control of Fascist Italy at the time, recalls:

> *There was a pogrom in Benghazi taking place in the streets. We were children inside the house. We barricaded the doors… My father was taken to the concentration camp. We were suffering from malnutrition. (p.45)*

On the other hand, the book mentions some important Muslim political figures that tried to protect their Jewish communities.

Chapter three describes the beginning of the exodus from Arab countries (1948-1967), portraying MENA Jews as victims of Israel's War of Independence.

During Israel's struggle for independence, anti-Israel and anti-Jewish feelings grew stronger in different Muslim countries. The Arab League was founded in March 1945 with the objective of coordinating resistance to the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Three years later the Arab League decided to declare the Jews in their own countries as enemies. The first pogrom broke out in Aleppo immediately following the UN decision on the partition of Palestine, with severe casualties and the destruction of the Jewish quarter which motivated a

mass flight of Jews. Toufik Kassab recalled: "[the Arabs] *burned all of our synagogues, the biggest of which was 2,500 years old*". (p. 54)

With the Proclamation of the State of Israel all the Jews in Egypt were declared Zionists and Communists. Hundreds were arrested and their property confiscated. The Jews of Iraq suffered from violent attacks, many were arrested and charged with supporting Israel; Shafiq Ades, the richest Jew, was hanged in the public square. Jews were in a much better situation in Morocco and Iran, since they were protected by the king and the Shah respectively.

The authors refer to the emergence of the Palestinian refugee problem during Israel's War of Independence:

> *…Palestinian Arabs left their houses and villages. Some were pushed out by the Jewish forces; others simply fled to safety to avoid the fighting. Still others, encouraged by the Arab League, took flight of their own accord. Roughly 725,000 Palestinians became refugees… in what became known as the Nakba. (p. 58)*[3]

As a parallel, they describe the fate of the Jews in Arab countries following the war. They lost their place in their respective countries, being suspected as Zionists and fifth columnists. Their exodus started in 1949 – some fled, others were expelled or were coerced into leaving. Their life in the countries in which they had lived for hundreds, and even thousands of years came to an end.

The authors describe the exodus of the Jewish refugees, using personal testimonies. The airlift from Yemen, known as *The Magic Carpet* is mentioned by Mary Judah-Jacob Josielewski from Aden as she recalls the death of close relatives: "My brother went to the roof and they shot him… And so she [my mother] opened the window and said 'why did you kill my son?' so they shot her too" (p. 60).

The book describes with some length the story of the famous Israeli politician and diplomat Shlomo Hillel. Hillel was born in Baghdad

[3] In 1948 there were 946,000 Jews living in Arab countries, see p. 49.

and migrated to Palestine where he joined a kibbutz and became active in the *Haganah* and later in the *Mossad le-Aliyah B* – the underground that smuggled endangered Jews in Arab countries to Palestine under the British mandate. Hillel was also very active in the illegal migration of Iraqi Jews at risk both before and during the War of Independence. Following international criticism, in 1950. the Iraqi government allowed the legal emigration of its Jews. Israel organized *Operation Ezra and Nehemiah* in which 100,000 Jews were airlifted from Iraq, leaving only 6,000, thus bringing to an end the Babylonian community that had existed for 3,000 years.

Until 1956 nearly half of the MENA Jews fled to Israel, France and North America. The authors describe the fate of those who remained, using excerpts of their testimonies. Following the 1952 revolution in Egypt, under the inspiration of the Muslim Brotherhood, Cairo Jews were attacked by the mob and their property destroyed. Juliette Akouka Glasser remembers:

> *I still have nightmares [from] during the revolution in 1952. …there were fires everywhere, And I remember the Arab, the Muslim, the Egyptian walking in the streets, holding big knives, saying, 'We're going to kill the Jews … And we would hide in the basement. Turn all the lights off. Just shivering from fear (pp. 70-71).*

The authors refer to the impact of the political changes in Egypt on the deterioration of the situation of the Jews, especially under Gamal Abdel Nasser. Following the Suez Crisis (1956) all the Jews were declared as Zionists and enemies of the state resulting in the imprisonment of hundreds., David Shama, who came from an affluent family, with good connections in the high society, remembers that as a child he received a puppy from King Farouk. The Suez War, however, was a turning point in his life:

> *My father received a call to come down to the precinct. Our chauffeur drove him there and waited in front of the station, but my father never came out; …he was accused of being a spy for the British government and Israel. … He was sentenced to be killed by a firing squad" (pp. 72-73).*

Thousands of Jews fled Egypt after the 1956 crisis or following the Six-Day War. By 1968 the ancient Egyptian Jewish communities ceased to exist.

Among the countries described by the authors are the new independent states of North Africa. In Tunisia Jews were discriminated against, were pushed out of business and public life and many were imprisoned. As a consequence half of them migrated to Israel, and the rest to France.

In Algeria, Jews were granted French citizenship in 1870, and enjoyed a privileged status with respect to the Muslim population. Algeria's long and cruel war of independence (1954-1962) was accompanied by acts of terror on all sides which were involved in the conflict. After independence the local French inhabitants, fearing reprisals, migrated to France. Most of the Algerian Jews, who had identified with the French, settled in France; the rest migrated to Israel. Referring to the question of identity and circumstances, Charles Diaine explained:

> *For sure [Algeria] was our country for generations and generations…. It's only by chance that we became French. If the French had not come in 1830, we would have remained Jews of Algeria… and what it produced was war and so many crimes and deaths that reconciliation was impossible between the Algerians and the Arabs".* (p. 82)

In Morocco the situation of the Jews remained relatively stable after independence (1956). The Sultan tried to prevent the exodus of the Jews, but the Mossad organized a clandestine migration of approximately 35,000. In 1961 King Hassan II reached a secret agreement with the Israeli government that paid $100 for each emigrant. 100,000 Jews left the country to Israel, France and Canada.

The fourth chapter, "The Exodus Continues 1967-1980" deals with the impact of the Six Day War on the Jews that remained in the Arab countries. . Jimmy Beaudis from Tangier recalls:

> *It was probably the first time in my life that I felt my Jewish identity and anti-Semitism. It was in June 1967. I was at school; it was second grade… All of a sudden, the Six-Day War breaks out…a few kids from my class, seven years old, came at noon, came at me saying, 'we are going to kill you because you're a Jew, you're a Zionist'* (p. 86).

The authors refer to the statement of the World Islamic Congress (Jordan, September 1967), as a background to the policy against the Jews living in Islamic countries:

> *Jews living in Arab countries do not appreciate the kindness and protection that Muslims have granted them over the centuries. The Congress proclaims that the Jews who live in Arab states and who have contact with Zionist circles or the state of Israel do not deserve the [Islamic] protection…Islamic governments must treat them as enemy combatants. In the same way, Islamic peoples must individually and collectively boycott them and treat them as mortal enemies.*[4]

In Iraq, the return of the Ba'ath party to power (1968) led to the repression of the remaining 5,000 Jews. Pretending to have uncovered a Zionist spy network, the government imprisoned 16 Jews - seven died under torture and nine were executed. According to Edwin Shuker:

> *Torture by Saddam Hussein and his henchmen [*was*] what they did. I don't know any other place that had such sophistication, such cruelty, and such sadism as the Ba'ath Party had from 1968 to 2003* (p. 91).

Shuker described the illegal escape of his family as a traumatic experience, fearful that their forged identity would be discovered. Like other Iraqi Jews they fled via Kurdistan to Iran, leaving all their property behind them. Having gone through a similar experience Lisette

[4] https://www.sixdaywar.co.uk/world_islamic_conference_september_1967.htm (accessed July 3, 2022).

Shashoua added: "*The trauma never leaves you. You're always careful, always scared. It was terrifying, horrifying*." (p. 93)

The book describes the pogrom in Tripoli (Libya) following the Six-Day War as "a vast wave of killing and looting". Hamos Guetta described how his mother succeeded to pick up her children from school during a demonstration:

> *A miracle happened. A policeman waves us through… for the first time I saw my parents crying and in the distance I could see the houses of Jews that were burning. My parents had lived through the pogroms of 1945 and 1948. They bear the signs of scars*. (p. 95)

Guetta's family was able to leave: "*They put us on a bus to go to the airport. I see the Arabs around the bus. I feel each one as an enemy that could stab me. It has happened to others*" (p. 95). The Jews who remained were later permitted to leave, but all their property and bank accounts were confiscated and the traces of Jewish life, dating from the Roman Empire, were erased.

Syrian Jews were not allowed to leave the country, and they suffered from severe restrictions which limited their education, work opportunities and property, as well as their contacts with the outside world; they became "prisoners in their own country… subject to harassment, imprisonment, torture and execution." (pp. 93, 97). Gabrielle Elia Tawfik's father was the man of contact for young Syrian Jews that succeeded to escape to Lebanon:

> *When these boys arrived in Beirut, he would arrange for them to get through the southern border with Israel. In the summer of 1971, somebody told my father he was being followed through the streets. A week later, he was picked up outside his office in Beirut. The Syrians grabbed and kidnapped him and took him to Syria. … The Syrians denied his existence… For twenty-five years I could not even utter his name. (p. 94)*

Only in 1991 President Hafez al-Assad allowed the 4,000 Jews that remained in.Syria to leave the country, under the condition that they will not emigrate to Israel

For many years Lebanon had served as a transit station for Jews fleeing from Syria, but though life was relatively safe, the country had its own antisemitism, as manifested in the childhood memories of Edy Cohen Halala:

> *I am a Jew and as a Jew, I am guilty. And what is my fault? I have two main charges. First, for the Christians, you, you Eddie, killed Jesus. And Muslims would say to me 'you stole Palestine'.* (p. 99)

In 1985 Edy's father was kidnapped by an organization that demanded the liberation of hundreds of prisoners in Israel, but the Israeli government refused to negotiate with terrorists and he was shot.

The Jews of Iran were relatively safe under the Shah, despite the rooted antisemitism among the Iranian population. Following the revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini the government implemented an anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish policy, like in the rest of the Muslim countries. The number of Iranian Jews declined from 90,000 (1979) to less than 15,000.

The fifth chapter, called "Today and Tomorrow" follows MENA Jews to their host-countries in Israel, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Canada and the United States. They had lost all their properties, did not receive any reparations, and had to start life over from nothing.

The major destination of the Jews from Arab countries was Israel that absorbed 600,000 new immigrants in its early years of statehood. The authors do not conceal the discrimination, prejudices and ignorance that characterized the absorption of the Sephardim-Mizrahim, who were received with a patronizing attitude by the dominating Ashkenazi sectors. They cite the testimony of the writer Eli Amir, who was born in Baghdad:

> *The landing in Israel was a terrible time, because immediately we were called Arab Jews. Because we were fleeing from the Arabs, and now we are the Arabs. And they didn't understand anything about Arab culture, for them it was an enemy's culture…and they didn't even teach people about us in school. We were nothing. We didn't exist on the Jewish people's map and we became no ones.* (pp. 107-108).

Saleh El Kuwaity (bottom center), is considered the founder of modern Iraqi music. The brothers Saleh and Daoud (bottom left) formed a small orchestra

Courtesy of Shlomo El-Kevity

Another bitter description of the cultural gap between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim is that of Shlomo El-Kevity, whose father was one of the founders of modern music in Iraq:

> *They were all British educated, they all arrived with suits and ties in a British style, and when they arrived in Israel, it was claimed that they were bringing disease with them and they were sprayed with DDT…I felt the pain this artist had…a man, a Jew who received a golden watch from the Iraqi king, and now he had to humiliate himself here*. (pp. 109-110)

The absorption of MENA Jews in Western Europe and the Americas was easier, since the host countries were rich with a relatively small number of refugees in comparison to the general population.

North African Jews who migrated to France and Canada spoke French, and Libyans who migrated to Italy spoke Italian.

The authors compare the situation of the Jewish refugees from MENA to that of the Palestinian refugees. While the former found a new home in their host-countries, with the exception of Jordan, the displaced Arab Palestinians were not well received by the neighboring countries and were denied citizenship. They remained in the refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza dependent on the support of UNRWA.[5]

The comparison between the fate of the Palestinian and Jewish refugees serves as a basis for the political agenda of SV: to expose the similarities between these two groups both of whom were displaced and dislocated, and to present the case of the Jewish refugees from Arab countries - their material losses and the individual and collective traumas, in the international arena.

The authors point out that the identity of the country of origin, its language and culture, as well as the personal ties with Arab neighbors, are an integral part of the Jews' lives. They present some success stories of Sephardi Jews who contributed to the cultural, economic and political life of their new countries. Likewise, they refer to the impact of the Jewish exodus on the countries of origin, that lost important business sectors, professionals and prominent artists and intellectuals.

Calling for the retrieval of memory and reconciliation, the book presents the case of Morocco that tried to amend its past attitude toward the Jews. King Muhammad VI appointed an ambassador to help the peace process in the Middle East (2006), transformed the Mellah into a tourist center and agreed to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

The book ends with a portrait gallery of interviewees, a list of recommended reading/viewing and a glossary.

[5] United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

In conclusion, Sephardi Voices fills a gap in the knowledge of the common reader on the life of the Jews in Muslim countries, on their exodus and on their life in their new host countries. The testimonies cited in the book reflect the profound trauma that accompanied, and still accompany them, as well as the problems of their multi-identities.

The book suggests new subjects for the study of the history of MENA Jews in a comparative dimension: between homelands, between host-lands and between Palestinians and Jews. Among the issues that need further study I would include the definition of terms related to that study, such as Sephardic and Arab Jews. In this review I used the term MENA Jews as being more inclusive. .

The most important contribution of this book is drawing our attention to *Sephardi Voices* - the international project for the collection of life stories, pictures and objects, for the preservation of individual and collective memories for the future. Like other oral history projects time is of the essence: Chronicling life stories should be recorded as soon as possible, before they disappear into oblivion.