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Deliverable 5.2

Launch of Massive Open Online Course

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Abstract (for dissemination)	The DL details the development and launch of the Massive Open Online Course “‘It Must All be Recorded Without a Single Fact Left Out’: The Holocaust through the Perspective of Primary Sources”. The Course was originally created as an Interactive Online Course in EHRI-2 and, by way of becoming a MOOC, was significantly revised and expanded.
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Overview of Images

Image 1: Still from the MOOC

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Image 3: Screenshot from MOOC - Lesson 2 "The Warsaw Ghetto Through the Lens of Diaries"

1. Introduction

In April 2017 the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI) launched the guided online course “It Must All be Recorded Without a Single Fact Left Out’: The Holocaust through the Perspective of Primary Sources.” The course, created by EHRI-partner Yad Vashem (YV) featured original documents (both visual and textual) and interviews with leading scholars and presented various primary sources - photographs, diaries, bureaucratic documents, letters and testimonies - essential for Holocaust research. It introduces the learners to archival work and discusses the critical examination and application of the sources presented and also provides methodological guidance and hands-on tools for their use.

Taking the course was application-based. Throughout the run of EHRI-2, a total of six learning groups took the course, each group ranging in size between 12 and 15 participants. Creating these groups was necessary to enable participants to work through the course material together, engage in discussions with one another and follow the guidance and, in case of questions, reach out to the hosts of the online course, which were members of the E-learning department at Yad Vashem. The course brought together participants from 22 different countries and various professional backgrounds, including researchers, teachers, students, archivists, psychologists, genealogists and others.

Following this success and based on the fact that the course, with its focus on methodological approaches to various sources, is one of its kind, the decision was made to adapt it into a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) consisting of five lessons: the perspective of photographs; the lens of the diary; personal letters written immediately after liberation; testimonies of survivors as primary sources; the use of German bureaucratic sources (see 2.2). This Deliverable details the steps that were undertaken to transform the Guided Online Course into a MOOC until its launch as part of the commemorative activities surrounding Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27, 2024.

2. From Guided Online Course to MOOC

2.1 Creating the MOOC

Aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the internet, MOOCs are video-based courses, accompanied by presentations, educational materials, reading lists, student assignments, discussions and more. They provide learners with discussion forums and comment sections, offering a vibrant and diverse learning community. The courses are featured worldwide on platforms such as Coursera, FutureLearn and edX, among others. MOOCs do not call for entry requirements and are open freely to all who are interested. They have garnered widespread popularity over the past several years. In 2022, Coursera reached over 100 million learners from all over the world and from different economic and cultural backgrounds.¹

The decision to host “The Holocaust through the Perspective of Primary Sources” on the Coursera platform was made early on. It is the most established platform of its type with over

¹ Jeff Maggioncalda: 10 years of learning: Coursera celebrates 100 million global learners and a new Machine Learning Specialization from co-founder Andrew Ng, <https://blog.coursera.org/100-million-learners/>, accessed 01.02.2024.

84 million subscribers. Yad Vashem, the EHRI-Partner mainly responsible for creating and implementing the course, has hosted several MOOCs on the platform already. As a recognized leader in the field of MOOC platforms, Yad Vashem has found Coursera answers its needs in terms of balancing content flexibility with self-contained participant engagement. As with all Coursera courses, enrollment to the course is free of charge, while a participant can select a paid option by which they receive a certificate upon completion of the course, automatically generated by Coursera.

While the structure of both Online Courses and MOOCs share many commonalities regarding their content, the biggest difference is the fact that the latter does not involve manual checking and grading, allowing for potentially far more participants to take part. One of the first tasks was, therefore, to work on the texts of every lesson to turn them into a script for the presenter of the MOOC. This working on and reworking of the text also allowed to revisit the historical materials, documents, and visuals, as well as the interviews conducted with experts in the field. Where additional information was needed, interview requests were sent out to scholars inside and outside the EHRI network. Still, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was often not possible for the colleagues from Yad Vashem to travel and conduct the interviews in person. Instead, freelance videographers were recruited who filmed the interviewees while questions were posed via a video call. Subsequently, the videos were edited for length to fit into the script of the MOOC.

One central addition to the previous online course was to include more information on the mission and vision of the EHRI project, so learners could familiarise themselves with the Research Infrastructure. For this, an interview was conducted with Karel Berkhoff (NIOD), the co-director of EHRI, which was included in the chapter “Introduction to the Course”.

Another important task involved gathering copyrights and permissions for the usage of all the materials presented in the MOOC. For a course with an emphasis on archival material and different sets of sources from many different institutions, it was of great importance to be granted permission to present them in a virtual environment. This also included striving to receive copies and replicas of the material in the best quality available. The success of this endeavour confirmed the merits of EHRI’s connectivity: most archives that held material relevant for the MOOC are either part of the EHRI consortium or had experience in cooperating with the infrastructure in the past (e.g. by contributing collection descriptions to the EHRI Portal).

Once all copyright questions were clarified and expert interviews were carried out, the filming of the presenter, Sandra Rosenfeld, who eventually guides the learners through lessons and assignments, started. As a member of the E-learning department of Yad Vashem as well as a member of EHRI, Sandra Rosenfeld was already involved in the creation and implementation of the guided online course the MOOC is based upon. After all video materials were gathered and the editing was complete, an introductory slide was added to all the video clips, which made them recognizable as part of MOOC. In addition, they all received a watermarked EHRI logo in the left-hand corner.

After the necessary material was gathered and the overall structure and order of the MOOC were established, all videos were uploaded (in Full HD resolution, 1920x1080; 25FPS) to the Coursera platform and the MOOC, pending standard Coursera review. Subsequently, logins were provided to colleagues in the Work Package to have a chance to explore the MOOC and to provide feedback.

2.2 Content of the MOOC



Image 1: Still from the MOOC

The following provides an overview of the topics addressed in the MOOC.

"It Must All Be Recorded Without a Single Fact Left Out": The Holocaust through the Perspective of Primary Sources

The MOOC, with the help of leading scholars in the field of Holocaust studies, explores various kinds of primary sources available to us when studying and researching the Holocaust. These include diaries, photographs, German bureaucratic documents, letters written immediately after liberation, and postwar testimonies. The MOOC introduces each of these source groups, maps their limitations, and presents critical approaches that need to be applied when using them. It consists of an introduction and five lessons, which are briefly described below.

Preface: Welcome to the Course

The introduction to the MOOC offers information on the overall structure and discussion guidelines of the course and already includes some introductory remarks on the different sources available for Holocaust research. It also provides a brief introduction to EHRI. An interview with Karel Berkhoff summarizes EHRI's goal of providing better access to archival material and supporting Holocaust research, education and commemoration worldwide.



Image 2: Still from the MOOC with presenter Sandra Rosenfeld

Lesson 1: Introduction to the Course and Primary Sources

In this first lesson, the importance of primary sources in Holocaust research is introduced, including a presentation of some of the main issues within this domain. It includes an overview of the course as a whole, including its structure and guidelines, as well as an introduction to EHRI, its mission and vision. Participants are invited to write about themselves. This gives them the opportunity to learn who they will be studying with.

An overview is provided on primary sources from the Holocaust period as well as after, including primarily German and Jewish sources, and laying out considerations to be made in approaching this material - what would be left undocumented or documentation that would otherwise be lost, vastly differing perspectives and motives in documentation, and the backgrounds for, and types of, these differing materials. Many types of documents will be considered: Jewish archives; photographs - both Jewish and German; German "situation reports" as well as property, Einsatzgruppen and deportation reports; personal diaries; early postwar letters and testimony.

Lesson 2: The Warsaw Ghetto through the Lens of Diaries

In this second lesson, Holocaust diaries are introduced as historical sources. Jews of all ages and backgrounds kept diaries during the Holocaust. Writing in most European languages including Yiddish, and in Hebrew, they recorded their experiences, whether in ghettos, in hiding, in forests and in camps. The diaries that are known today are likely only a small portion of what was actually written. They offer a unique contemporaneous glance into the individual experience, their perceptions, actions and reactions.

The lesson focuses on questions such as: How do we use Holocaust diaries as historical sources? There are various types of Holocaust diaries and also specific issues and questions that have to be addressed when using them. The lesson focuses on two diaries written and created in the Warsaw Ghetto - one by Adam Czerniakow, head of the Judenrat, and the other by Emanuel Ringelblum, historian and community figure, as well as head and organiser

of the Oyneg Shabes archives. Both diaries were written by leading figures of the ghetto but from different, and to a certain extent opposing, perspectives.

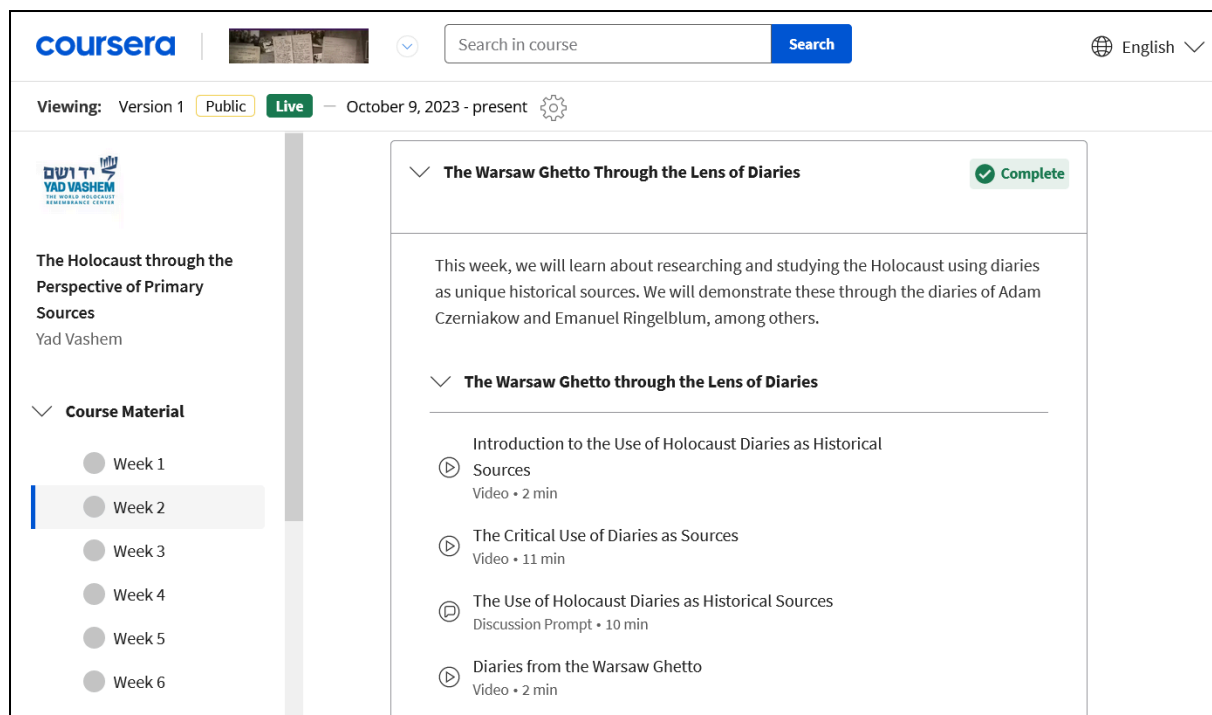


Image 3: Screenshot from MOOC - Lesson 2 “The Warsaw Ghetto Through the Lens of Diaries”

Lesson 3: The Lodz Ghetto through the Perspective of Photographs

Since the early days of photography, photographs have provided a glimpse of a particular moment in time. Thus, they became a means of documenting and were seen as an important source of evidence. However, when analysing photographs, one needs to keep in mind that they can only capture that specific moment in a sequence of events and that they are not just a reflection of reality, but also an interpretation of it. Photographers can aspire to present a scene with authenticity; but they subjectively choose the time, frame and space of the image they are shooting. They may focus on certain subjects to present a specific worldview or moral position; they may omit certain elements. A photograph may also be retouched or cropped. Photographs can therefore certainly serve as documentation, but they must be evaluated and put into context to understand them properly. This of course applies also to Holocaust photography. Certain photographs have become icons of the Holocaust, for example, the boy surrendering in the Warsaw Ghetto with his hands raised as a German soldier with a rifle stands next to him. These frozen images have become fixed in our collective visual memories, acquiring symbolic overtones. In assessing the use of these images as tools in documenting and commemorating the Holocaust, and as historical sources, one must address several questions. Some of these are already familiar to us from our analysis of the use of diaries as primary sources; others are unique to photography. For instance, who is the photographer? Who was the intended audience? Was the photograph staged? Why was the photograph taken? How was it found? What does the photograph portray? And, concerning the Holocaust in particular: How do photos taken by Jewish photographers in the ghettos differ from those taken by perpetrators? Does it matter who took the photo or just what appears in the image?

These questions are discussed in this lesson in depth through the case studies of two photographers active in the Lodz Ghetto – Walter Genewein, a Nazi official, and Mendel Grossman, a Jewish photographer incarcerated in the ghetto. The lesson examines how the different photographs can be utilized when researching and learning about the ghetto and the life and events that took place within it. The focus will be on the advantages and disadvantages of using photographs as primary sources, how to interpret them, and how to place photographs in their historical context.

Lesson 4: The Holocaust Through German Bureaucratic Sources

German bureaucracy played an imperative role in the drafting and implementation of the Holocaust, as the philosopher and sociologist Zygmunt Bauman explains:

"[...] there is hardly any doubt that the space extending between the idea [of 'finding a solution' to the 'Jewish problem'] and its execution was filled wall-to-wall with bureaucratic action [...] Its fingerprints are all over the Holocaust history, for everyone to see. True, bureaucracy did not hatch the fear of racial contamination and the obsession with racial hygiene. For that it needed visionaries, as bureaucracy picks up where visionaries stop. But bureaucracy made the Holocaust."²

Whether the motives of each cog in the elaborate mechanism of German bureaucracy were ideological or pragmatic ultimately did not matter, as the outcome of these bureaucrats' actions was clear - the systematic destruction of millions of Jews. The vast network of bureaucracy involved in the destruction process consisted of numerous ministries, agencies, and organizations. As with any bureaucratic structure, this network generated a large quantity of written materials. While many of these were deliberately destroyed during the war, to not leave evidence, a large number of documents survived.

This lesson will introduce four German bureaucratic source types related to specific aspects and stages of the Holocaust: Situation Reports (Lageberichte); documents on the confiscation of Jewish property; Einsatzgruppen reports; and documents on the deportation process. The analysis of these source types will provide a non-exhaustive but representative overview of actions and measures taken by the Nazi German bureaucracy against the Jews. It will also serve to illustrate the wide-scale involvement of individuals in the "Final Solution", in both the public and private spheres.

Lesson 5: Personal Letters Written Immediately After Liberation

In the immediate period following their liberation, many survivors relied on letter writing as a means to share news, and to trace and reconnect with family, friends, and acquaintances. These letters present their readers with a unique perspective on the experiences of the survivors and the way they chose to relate to them at this early stage.

Over the years, many of these letters found their way to archives around the world, leaving the realm of the personal and becoming publicly accessible. Though some of these letters had been used by researchers, no attempt had been made to view them as constituting a corpus in and of itself. This changed in 2016 when Holocaust researchers lael Nidam-Orvieto and Robert Rozett compiled an anthology of 86 "first letters" found at the Yad Vashem Archives. Spanning time (1943 - 1946), language, and place, the anthology offers researchers a means through which to embark on an exploration of the unique corpus of "first letters."

² Zygmunt Bauman: *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Cambridge 1989, p. 105.

This lesson will introduce this corpus, examining the letters' importance to Holocaust research and studies, the motives of their writers, and their main themes. Two letters from different periods and regions will also be analyzed in-depth. These will show how the letters present information and confirmation of historical events, and how they provide a unique glimpse into the inner world of the survivors and their perception of their past, present, and future.

Lesson 6: Testimonies of Survivors as Primary Sources

Testimonies can be related in different frameworks and for a variety of reasons - judicial processes, memorial projects, to name just a few. They can be collected and recorded in oral and written form, thus making them accessible to those who wish to investigate their content. This lesson will deal with testimonies given by Holocaust survivors. It will discuss early testimonies, those submitted closer to the events themselves, as well as later ones. It will also raise questions and arguments regarding the use of testimonies as historical sources, their importance and the invaluable perspective they can provide, particularly concerning topics for which other source types do not exist.

3. Launch and next steps

The completion as well as the launch of the MOOC had to be postponed a number of times due to external factors, starting with the long-lasting effects of the pandemic, the devastating attack on Israel on October 7 and its consequences, as well as extra requirements on behalf of Coursera for Yad Vashem hosting an EHRI MOOC on its platform. Eventually, in early January of 2024, Yad Vashem announced that the MOOC was ready to be released. This opened up the possibility to link the release date to Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27.

On January 25, the following statement was released on the EHRI homepage:

“EHRI Massive Open Online Course | “It Must All Be Recorded Without a Single Fact Left Out” - The Holocaust through the Perspective of Primary Sources

On the occasion of the 79th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January 2024, EHRI has launched its first Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) ““It Must All be Recorded Without a Single Fact Left Out” - The Holocaust through the Perspective of Primary Sources”, created by our EHRI-Partner Yad Vashem. The MOOC discusses the critical examination of the sources presented and provides methodological guidance as well hands-on tools for their use. It features interviews with leading scholars and presents various primary sources - photographs, diaries, bureaucratic documents, letters, and testimonies - essential for Holocaust research. Bringing together participants from a variety of fields - historians, educators, researchers, archivists, psychologists, genealogists and others, from over 15 countries - the MOOC consists of an introduction and five lessons: the perspective of photographs; the lens of the diary; personal letters written immediately after liberation; testimonies of survivors as primary sources; the use of German bureaucratic sources.

This EHRI MOOC is aimed at a broad user base - from people generally interested in the topic to researchers and lecturers who teach on various aspects of the Holocaust.

The course will allow users to engage with one another in discussion forums and comment sections, creating a vibrant and diverse learning community.

The MOOC is hosted on the Coursera Platform and free of charge*. Follow this link to find out more about the MOOC and start your first lesson today: www.coursera.org/learn/holocaust-primary-sources.

For course content questions, contact Yad Vashem via the contact form.

*Please note that certification on Coursera involves a fee.”³

The announcement was accompanied by links to a trailer for the MOOC (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVIYtfZQaig>) as well as three short clips from expert interviews included into the MOOC (Iael Nidam-Orvieto: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DX2ifMYuNjY>; Yaakov Borut: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crhPqAETjHo&t=56s>; Frank Bajohr: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBin4V/k3jGo&t=1s>).

Already in the days prior to the announcement, the EHRI Social Media Team had shared the information on Basecamp, the platform for EHRI-internal communication. The team encouraged all partners within the EHRI consortium to share information and advertisements about the MOOC on their institutional websites and Social Media platforms.

In the subsequent weeks, additional newsletters and websites were identified, which will help to spread the information and will ensure a steadily growing number of learners start taking the MOOC. A first overview of the number of users and feedback will be available at the end of EHRI-3, via *D5.4 Evaluation of the ongoing Massive Open Online Course*.

³ <https://www.ehri-project.eu/ehri-massive-open-online-course-mooc>