

Access to the Visual History Archive

Overview & Roadmap

About the Archive

The USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive allows users to search through and view more than 52,000 video testimonies of survivors and witnesses of genocide.

Initially a repository of Holocaust testimony, the Visual History Archive has expanded to include testimonies from the [Armenian Genocide](#) that coincided with World War I, the [1937 Nanjing Massacre in China](#), and the [1994 Rwandan Tutsi Genocide](#).

Also being added to the Archive are collections of Holocaust testimonies recorded and owned by other organizations, such as [Jewish Family and Children's Services \(JFCS\) Holocaust Center](#).

The interviews have been conducted in 61 countries and 39 languages. Each collection adds context for the others, providing multiple pathways to learn from the eyewitnesses of history across time, locations, cultures and sociopolitical circumstances.

Additional collections will be added as we continue to work with partners globally

For more information about the archive and the USC Shoah Foundation, please visit our website at <http://sfi.usc.edu/>. For subject guides on content in the archive, please visit <http://libguides.usc.edu/vha>.

Access via Internet2

Access to the entire Archive is enabled through Internet2, a private broadband research network in the United States, or equivalent networks for institutions outside the United States. The entire Visual History Archive is currently available electronically at 51 institutions in 13 countries including Australia, Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. For a complete list of institutions with access to the entire Visual History Archive, visit the USC Shoah Foundation's website at <http://sfi.usc.edu/locator>.

Students, faculty and researchers at participating universities access the archive through a browser-based interface (the Visual History Archive or VHA) that communicates with servers at USC via Internet2. The web servers and database servers exist at USC, along with the main video archive, while a designated video server of at least 4 TB is needed locally at the connecting institution to act as a video "cache" to stream video to the search interface. Testimony videos are in H.264/MPEG-4 format with an average size of over 1 GB and stream at 1 mbps. Access to the browser-based interface is limited by IP address ranges at each connecting institution. For reference, a basic diagram of the Visual History Archive access system is attached at the end of this document.

Users are able to search more than 60,000 experiential and geographic indexing terms to find relevant video in the archive. The web-based search tool (called the Visual History Archive or VHA) allows users to identify both whole testimonies of relevance as well as specific segments within testimonies that relate to their area of interest. For more details on how research in the archive works, see the Archive User Manual on the USC Shoah Foundation's website at http://sfi.usc.edu/what_is_the_vha.

To date, educators have used the archive to incorporate testimonies in nearly 500 university courses across many disciplines, including anthropology, business, film, history, law, linguistics, sociology, and psychology. A detailed list of courses can be found on the USC Shoah Foundation's website at http://sfi.usc.edu/teach_and_learn/for_educators/course_development.

Costs

The annual subscription fee to access the Visual History Archive is \$15,000 USD per institution. This fee helps cover the costs the USC Shoah Foundation incurs in offering this service, maintaining and updating the digital archive, and developing more robust search tools. Each institution needs to consider local costs that may include service and maintenance of the local cache (designated video server) and interfacing with faculty and students for content-related assistance.

Local Technical Requirements

- Institution must be connected to Internet2 or the equivalent network in the country in which it is located with 100 mbps bandwidth
- Institution must set up a designated video server that should have a Gigabit Ethernet connection as close to the Internet2 peer as possible to minimize local bandwidth issues. The local video server (cache) must be at least 4 TB to store a subset of the digital video files in the Visual History Archive. The average digital size of a testimony is over 1 GB. Our experience has shown that a larger local video cache provides a better user experience since more videos are available for immediate viewing.
- User desktops have at least 10 mbps switched connectivity to the cache to play the video
- Institution must have high-speed Internet access
- Institution must set up the Visual History Media System (VHMS) on the cache. For basic cache operation, the following is required:
 - Linux operating system
 - Open SSH with the PSC HPN performance patches installed
 - Apache HTTP server

Preliminary Local Speed Test

Over Internet2 (or equivalent network), there could be a 10% to 80% drop in actual bit-rate between an institution and USC. USC Shoah Foundation requires a 100 mbps connection to Internet2 (or equivalent network) so that a 30 mbps actual bit-rate can be achieved, which would be considered a viable connection to the archive. USC Shoah Foundation has set up a test site to ascertain an institution's actual bit-rate to the archive. This test should be run from a computer which will have the equivalent network connectivity as the institution's designated video cache server. This will most likely be a Gigabit Ethernet connection to a local network.

Please copy and paste this link and hit the "start" button to run the test: <http://vhi-portal.usc.edu/vhispeed/>.

Process for Connecting (Roadmap)

The main steps in the process of connecting to the Visual History Archive are outlined below. Many steps can overlap and occur concurrently and do not have to follow the order below strictly.

1. Decision by Institution to connect to the archive is confirmed with the USC Shoah Foundation.

2. Institution's technology group should review the technology requirements shown above to assess viability and local technology costs.
3. Institution to determine technology and content support (most often a librarian) point persons for USC Shoah Foundation to contact on an ongoing basis.
4. USC Shoah Foundation will provide contact information for relevant USC ITS staff, who will then email more detailed documentation to Institution's technology group on video server configuration; the Visual History Media System (VHMS), which manages video storage and streaming locally, as well as video transfers from USC; and the Visual History Archive (VHA) user interface through which research is conducted.
5. Institution's technology group should perform a preliminary local speed test as indicated above and send the results to USC ITS staff. USC ITS staff can advise on rectifying any initial bandwidth issues between Institution and USC.
6. USC Shoah Foundation will send additional documentation to the designated content support person (most often a librarian): VHA application user guide, graphic identity manual and communications kit, and copyright FAQs.
7. A license agreement must be put in place between USC Shoah Foundation and Institution:
 - USC Shoah Foundation to email Institution a standard license agreement for review.
 - Institution will need to provide appropriate contact information to incorporate in license.
 - USC Shoah Foundation and Institution will need to agree on a start date for the initial subscription to the archive, which will be incorporated in license.
 - Once Institution approves agreement, 2 original copies must be signed by both parties.
8. USC Shoah Foundation will email an invoice to Institution for payment (\$15,000 yearly subscription). The official subscription will start on the first of the next month after the VHA becomes fully accessible.
9. Institution should determine size of local video server [Minimum 4 TB]:
 - Size of cache may be determined by Institution's needs (e.g., large enough to hold all videos for interviews conducted in a specific country and/or state, or other criteria);
 - Experience shows that a larger cache improves the user experience since more testimony videos are immediately viewable.
10. Institution's technology group should set up and configure a permanent video server of at least 4 TB per the technical requirements above and documentation and instructions provided by Shoah Foundation technology staff.

11. Institution's technology group needs to provide USC ITS staff with IP addresses for:
 - the designated video server (cache) at the Institution;
 - all computers from which students, staff, faculty, and other authorized users will research the archive through the Visual History Archive (VHA) application. Typically the IP address ranges for the entire university network are included for access to the VHA application, allowing research of the archive campus-wide.
12. A full test of the VHA should be completed:
 - USC will transfer video files to Institution's video cache;
 - Institution should confirm videos play properly in the VHA application and also request one or more videos from within the application to confirm automatic transfers of videos from USC.
13. Institution should create contextual web page(s) for the VHA to help guide students and professors to it and to post useful info for potential users (often within library electronic resource/database pages). Institution should give the USC Shoah Foundation an opportunity to review web page content on the VHA prior to posting. As an example, the USC Libraries' resource page for the VHA is at <http://libguides.usc.edu/vha>.
14. USC will pre-load a selection of testimony videos onto Institution's local video cache based on Institution's input.
15. License Agreement must be approved and signed by both parties and invoice paid by Institution before public access is provided.
16. USC Shoah Foundation to provide online training on VHA and VHMS applications, and on content and history of archive. Onsite training can be provided if requested but costs must be borne by the Institution.
17. Institution should announce the availability of the VHA—this might include an internal announcement, a public event, or press release. Institution should allow the USC Shoah Foundation's Director of Communications an opportunity to review public announcements on the VHA prior to release.

Contact

For further information please contact Douglas Ballman, Manager of External Relations—Online Archive, at the USC Shoah Foundation either via e-mail at dougb@usc.edu or by phone at (213) 740-6046.

Visual History Archive (VHA) Access System

