Mapping the Holocaust: Using GIS in Oral History

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Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive

- Over 200 audio and video-taped oral history interviews collected over 20 years
- CA. 650 hours of recorded histories
- Physical holdings include actual audio and video of each interview as well as, bound transcripts of each interview
- Available through inter-library loan
Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive

- Digital Archive
- http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/
- Audio and transcript of each interview is posted to the website.
- Currently there are 41 interviews posted. Since July 2003—690,000 hits, averaging 2,240 per day.
Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive

Challenges:

• Accurate transcripts, proper names, place names
• Transcribers are volunteers. Transcripts have to be read through several times and all names have to be verified.
Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor
Oral History Archive

Challenges:

Quality of Audio

Geographic Changes

Confusion of Interviewee
Methodology

- Turned to GIS to help solve these issues
- Combined GIS with traditional tools:
  - Paper Maps, Atlases and Gazetteers
  - *Where Once We Walked: A Guide to the Jewish Communities Destroyed in the Holocaust*, lists thousands of cities, towns, villages and shtetls and provides alternate spellings, latitude and longitude
  - *Das Nationalsozialistische Lagersystem*, lists camps and ghettos associated with the Holocaust. Provides brief descriptions, history and locations. Also classifies each location by camp type.
Methodology

- Identify (Latitude and Longitude)
- Name (Polish, Ukrainian, Czech, Hungarian)
- Classify (Concentration Camp, Forced Labor Camp, Ghetto, Extermination Camp, etc….)
Results

• Since 2000, Voice/Vision has identified over 200 Holocaust related sites
• Provided important spatial data accompanying each interview
• Data shows relationships between camps, distances traveled and movement of survivors.
Abraham Pasternak
Challenges:

- Base map circa, 1942
- Consistency
- Accuracy
Benefits

• Shows spatial distribution of camps and survivors
• Allows students to view and measure distances traveled
• **Serves as an indexing tool for the digital archive**