

Access to the USC Shoah Foundation Institute's Visual History Archive via Internet2

The Institute's Visual History Archive at the University of Southern California (USC) contains nearly 52,000 video testimonies collected in 32 languages and 56 countries. One-hundred-twenty thousand hours of video occupy 200 terabytes of storage on servers at USC. The Institute interviewed Jewish survivors, homosexual survivors, Jehovah's Witness survivors, liberators and liberation witnesses, political prisoners, rescuers and aid providers, Roma and Sinti survivors (Gypsy), survivors of Eugenics policies, and war crimes trials participants.

In 2002, the Institute received funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the National Science Foundation, and the Library Services and Technology Act to pilot the delivery of the Visual History Archive to faculty, students, and the general public. The pilot enabled access to the archive at the University of Southern California, Yale University, and Rice University. In 2003, University of Michigan joined the other universities as a part of the pilot.

After successful completion of the pilot, the USC Shoah Foundation Institute is collaborating with additional institutions to provide access to the Visual History Archive around the world. As of June 2007, the following universities are connected to the Visual History Archive: Duke University, Florida Atlantic University, Freie Universität Berlin [Germany], Monash University [Australia], North Carolina State University, Rice University, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. More universities are subscribing, and the list continues to grow.

Visual History Archive via Internet2

Internet2 is a separate, high-quality network capable of higher security and more effective data transmission than the Internet. It was created to promote research and communication between more than 200 universities and research institutions in the United States, and between institutions connected worldwide to similar networks. For more information, please go to <http://www.internet2.edu/>.

Institutions connected to Internet2, or an equivalent network in the country in which they are located, may collaborate with the USC Shoah Foundation Institute to access the entire Visual History Archive. Connection via Internet2 ensures efficient and optimal access to nearly 52,000 testimonies – the complete archive to date.

Students, educators, and researchers will be able to search more than 50,000 experiential and geographic indexing terms to find relevant video in the archive. The web-based tool allows users to identify both whole testimonies of relevance as well as specific segments within the testimony that relate to their area of interest. The tool also allows searching by biographical data including gender, city and country of birth, religious affiliation(s), and by names of all people – interviewees, as well as the names they reference.

To date, educators have used the archive to incorporate testimonies into 45 university courses across many disciplines, including anthropology, business, film, history, law, linguistics, sociology, and psychology. Between January and April 2007, more than 3,500 user sessions were logged by nearly 450 unique users.

Local Technical Requirements

- Institution must be connected to Internet2 or the equivalent network in the country in which it is located.
- 100 mbps connectivity to Internet2 or equivalent network required
- Institution must set up a designated video server which should have a Gigabit Ethernet connection as close to the Internet2 peer as possible to minimize local bandwidth issues
- Institution must have set up a designated video server (cache) of at least 1 TB to store a subset of the digital video files in the Visual History Archive. The average digital size of a testimony is 4 GB
- 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 performance patches installed
 - SAMBA or native Windows SMB (VHA caches only)
 - Perl 5.8.0 or above
- For monitoring and tuning cache performance:
 - Bandwidth Test Controller (BWCTL)
 - Web100 TCP Tuning
 - It is recommended that a version of Linux that does auto-tuning is used, for example, 2.4.26, 2.6.6, or above. Internet-2 recommends 2.6.12 as some kernels after 2.6.12 have some TCP/IP bugs

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. The Institute 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. The Institute 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 click on this link and hit the "start" button to run the test: <http://vhi-vhms.usc.edu:5050>

Budget

The annual subscription fee to access the Visual History Archive is \$15,000 USD per institution. This fee covers USC Shoah Foundation Institute's costs incurred to maintain the connection and service of the digital archival system. 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.

Contact

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