



Media release

Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft

Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for History and Society

## **Digital Curation: Visual History of the Holocaust**

**A groundbreaking international research project will utilize digital technologies to analyze and re-interpret filmic representations of the Holocaust.**

*Vienna, August 2, 2018.* How do you digitally curate filmic records that bear witness to the darkest chapter in recent European history? The Holocaust has been a central reference point for European history and a 'negative founding myth' of European integration. Now that digital technologies and the internet have profoundly transformed our concepts of history and visual evidence the question of its representation becomes more pertinent. A consortium consisting of 13 Austrian, German, Israeli and French research institutions, museums, memorial sites and technology developers together with American partners will develop models and applications to respond to this challenge.

"Visual History of the Holocaust: Rethinking Curation in the Digital Age" is coordinated by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for History and Society (Vienna), in close collaboration with the Austrian Film Museum (Vienna). It will explore the potentials as well as the limitations of digital technologies in the ongoing effort to preserve, analyze and communicate historical evidence of the Holocaust, and in particular audiovisual records.

The project focuses on filmic records produced by Allied forces and relating to the discovery of Nazi concentration camps and other atrocity sites. Although these films only capture a certain aspect of the Holocaust, some of their images have become canonical. Due to the scarcity of visual records a few images, often presented out of context, have shaped our collective imaginary of the Holocaust. In the course of the project these historical films, which currently are dispersed across archival institutions in the US, Great Britain, Russia and other former Soviet Republics, will be aggregated, digitized, analyzed and annotated. The resulting digital repository will allow researchers to dynamically link film images with photographs, text-based documents and oral histories, as well as with images from subsequent filmic representations of the Holocaust.

"Visual History of the Holocaust" will make groundbreaking use of existing and emerging technologies, including advanced digitization, automated analysis of images and text, time-based annotation and location-based services. It is an aim of the project to establish new contexts of meaning to be explored in history, film and media studies, cultural studies and computer science. Based on this technology-enabled research new communication strategies will be developed for

memorials, museums and educational institutions. The project is supported by a number of memorial institutions, three of them being part of the consortium: Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site, Mauthausen Memorial, and Bergen-Belsen Memorial.

“The visual representation of the Holocaust has been a contested issue for artists, historians, educators and curators for decades” says Dr. Ingo Zechner, Coordinator of the project and Director of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for History and Society. “In an age of apparently endless possibilities to alter and manipulate digital images, questions of authenticity and appropriate use of technology become even more relevant. While we deal with specific films and historical events we raise more general questions on what ‘digital curation’ entails,” Dr. Zechner says.

“Visual History of the Holocaust: Rethinking Curation in the Digital Age“ was awarded €5 million in funding through the European Union’s Horizon 2020 program. The project was ranked first in a competitive field of 37 proposals. It will commence in January 2019 and run for four years.

“The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for History and Society has had a strong focus on Visual History for years. Visual History is a relatively recent discipline within the cultural studies that is distinguished by an interdisciplinary approach and fosters dialogue with society. The new project on the Visual History of the Holocaust is an important contribution to contemporary history and its communication, rethinking key questions with the tools of current and upcoming digital technologies”, states Claudia Lingner, General Manager of the Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft. “The Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft pursues a specific strategy to acquire international research funding. This Horizon 2020 project is a successful result of this strategy.”

#### Project consortium:

Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for History and Society (AT), Coordinator

Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (FR)

Deutsches Filminstitut (DE)

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (IL)

Justus Liebig University Giessen (DE)

Mauthausen Memorial (AT)

max.recall information systems GmbH (AT)

Austrian Film Museum (AT)

rtd services OG (AT)

Stiftung Bayerische Gedenkstätten – Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site (DE)

Stiftung niedersächsische Gedenkstätten – Bergen-Belsen Memorial (DE)

TU Wien (AT)

University of Bremen (DE)

Associated Partners:

National Archives and Records Administration (USA)

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USA)

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**Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft**

The Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft (LBG) is a research institution with a thematic focus on medicine, life sciences and the humanities, and is specifically targeting new research topics in Austria. Together with academic and implementing partners, the LBG is currently running 19 institutes and develops and tests new forms of collaboration between science and non-scientific actors such as companies, the public sector and civil society. Socially relevant challenges, to which research can contribute, are to be recognized at an early stage and taken up. The LBG Open Innovation in Science Center, which unlocks the potential of open innovation for science, and the LBG Career Center, which supports 200 pre- and postdocs, as well as two new research groups on mental health are part of the LBG. The LBG employs 550 people.