



## Deliverable D3.5

### Concept: VHH i-docs

Lead-beneficiary	<i>HUJI</i>
Work Package No. and Title	<i>WP3 Curation of engagement levels of digital assets</i>
Work Package Leader	<i>HUJI</i>
Relevant Task	<i>Task 3.1 Development of curational framework</i>
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Dissemination Level	<i>Public</i>
Due Date	<i>M24 (2020-12)</i>
Version (No., Date)	<i>V1.5, 2020-12-30</i>



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## 1. Introduction

During the last decade, new forms of interactive documentary filmmaking (i-doc) introduced innovative approaches of multifaceted and engaging encounters with complex realities. Broadly defined as “any project that starts with an intention to document the ‘real’ and that uses digital interactive technology to realize this intention”,<sup>1</sup> the i-doc concept is largely platform agnostic and flexible. It focuses on “the intersection between digital interactive technology and documentary practice”, with special emphasis on participation and co-creation.<sup>2</sup>

To date, Holocaust historiography and memory did not yet adopt such narrative and technological techniques effectively.<sup>3</sup> Only few interactive documentary projects deal with the memories of the Holocaust and World War II. An innovative forerunner in this regard is *The Sand Mine* (2016),<sup>4</sup> a digital project that documents and commemorates the killing of 127 Italian forced laborers by German armed forces in April 1945 in Brandenburg, Germany. The online application allows users to navigate through audiovisual materials, which combine real-life documentary with animated scenes. By combining past and present, memory and history, users can travel through time and learn about the historical events and their afterlife on different linear and non-linear pathways.

Other digital projects are usually not considered as i-docs, although they also engage with documentary materials in interactive ways. An example from the context of Holocaust memory would be the virtual tour *The Liberation* (2020), developed by the German public broadcasting station Bayerischer Rundfunk in collaboration with the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial (VHH Consortium member SBG).<sup>5</sup> The online tour allows users to superimpose historical photographs from the period of the camp’s liberation over pictures of the current site. Complemented by audio recordings that provide historical information and contain reports of liberators, journalists and survivors, the memorial becomes an interactive projection screen for multimodal engagement with the different temporal layers of the place. Users navigate on a linear path, and gradually superimpose historical sources by scrolling through the tour. This brief description, however, demonstrates that we can regard projects such as *The Liberation* also as i-docs in light of the above-mentioned definition.

With its innovative strategies in digitizing and curating historical visual records of atrocity sites and the liberation of the concentration camps, the project Visual History of the Holocaust: Rethinking Curation in the Digital Age (VHH) aims to create interactive

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Aston and Sandra Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary: Setting the Field.” *Studies in Documentary Film* 6:2, 125–139. Here: 125. doi:10.1386/sdf.6.2.125\_1.

<sup>2</sup> “What is an ‘i-doc?’” <http://i-docs.org/about-interactive-documentary-idocs/> (24.12.2020).

<sup>3</sup> An innovative attempt to explore narrative possibilities of interactive digital technologies, and to develop new narrative forms related to the memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust is the project SPUR.lab. <https://www.spurlab.de/en/> (24.12.2020).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.imidoc.net/en/> (24.12.2020).

<sup>5</sup> <https://diebefreiung.br.de/en/> (24.12.2020).

pathways through digital collections. It offers access to the visual history of the Holocaust through participation, collaboration and community building. Creating a multi-layered, dynamic, interactive, and participative experience of space and time leads to multifaceted forms of engaging with the historical material through digital storytelling. In the conceptualization and development of the Visual History of the Holocaust Media Management and Search Infrastructure (VHH-MMSI), we employ contemporary methods for creating such deep user engagement and compelling learning experiences to encourage active co-creation and collaborative production of meaning in a digital environment by means of expanded documentary practices and digital tools.

As museums become hybrid spaces where digital information co-exists with tangible artefacts, the classical museum experience (i.e., at a memorial site) is increasingly augmented with interactive layers of contextual data. Storytelling in this context becomes a process of navigating diverse layers of meaning that extend from the public space of the memorial site and/or museum into the private spaces of consumption and continues after the museum visit ends through social media and other digital practices. “Audiences” and “visitors” become “users of digital interfaces”, “participants” and “co-creators”, having ongoing experiences through engaging with digitized materials and actively contributing content themselves.

With our concepts for digital curation (see deliverables D2.5 Report on digital curation of popular culture content, M24, D3.1 Definition of Engagement Levels, Usage Modes, and User Types, M12, and D3.2 Mind Map Visualizing Multimodal Curating, M12), we reach beyond current technology-orientated models for managing digital collections. We combine these principles methodologically with principles developed in museum curatorship, and with innovative approaches in interactive storytelling and database-driven narratives. Those allow for personalized transformative uses offering new possibilities for tackling complex historical, societal and political issues with multiple points of view, which also extend traditional documentary practices. This allows to interact with digital collections in responsive ways that encourage collaboration and participation of researchers and the broader public.

These defining characteristics and conceptual approaches that constitute the basis of the VHH project correspond in manifold ways to the definition of i-docs mentioned above. Therefore, this deliverable intends to conceptualize the VHH-MMSI as an interactive documentary. For that purpose, we discuss in a first step i-doc theories and concepts in order to identify especially those elements that emphasize the open, dynamic and collaborative character of this multimodal approach. A main point of difference, however, is that the VHH project aims at engaging with social and historical reality in a reflexive, not in an immersive way. Hence, our main question in this context is, whether the i-doc concept is also applicable to large online repositories of archival footage and related documents that stimulate user participation through actively searching, annotating, editing and narrativizing historical sources.

In order to better understand the analogies and potential intersections between the i-doc model and the VHH-MMSI, we will in a second step analyze existing i-docs and related

digital projects, and identify specific technological, stylistic and narrative features that are characteristic for interactive storytelling. Based on our findings, we compare in a third step the VHH-MMSI to the characteristic elements of i-docs. Thereby, we offer a conceptualization of the VHH-MMSI as an interactive approach to document Nazi atrocities and the liberation of the concentration camps. Our collection of historical visual records thus enables engaging and participatory forms of exploring and constructing the visual history of the Holocaust.

Relation to other deliverables:

- D2.5 Report on Digital Curation of Popular Culture Content (M24): methodological and curatorial concepts emphasizing relationality in visual culture and digital technology
- D3.1 Definition of Engagement Levels, Usage Modes, and User Types (M12): outline of digital curation as well as explanation of features and use cases that inform about the structure of the VHH-MMSI
- D3.2 Mindmap Visualizing Multimodal Curating (M12): visualization of features and use cases
- D5.1 Requirements Document (M8): information about the key features of the VHH-MMSI

## 2. Theories and concepts

A basic definition understands i-docs as “a form of nonfiction narrative that uses action and choice, immersion and enacted perception as ways to construct the real, rather than to represent it.”<sup>6</sup> A central element of i-docs is interactivity.<sup>7</sup> Interactivity however, as Judith Aston and Sandra Gaudenzi remind us, does not simply mean interacting with particular digital features, but describes specific forms of engagement.

It is, “the means through which the user is positioned within the artefact itself, demanding him, or her, to play an active role in the negotiation of the ‘reality’ being conveyed through the i-doc.”<sup>8</sup> This definition also offers an alternative to Aston’s and Gaudenzi’s initial claim that “immersion” is characteristic for i-docs.<sup>9</sup> The idea of being “positioned within the artefact” in a way that enables a dialogic and responsive “negotiation of the ‘reality’” is moving far beyond the mode of immersion towards a combined emotional, cognitive, and reflexive approach to engage with visual documents and evidence, and to some extent even create new content.<sup>10</sup>

User engagement in i-docs relies on four modes of interaction, which Gaudenzi has defined as *conversational* (the positioning of the user in ‘conversation’ with technology), *hypertext* (users explore by clicking different options), *participative* (by actively involving users), and *experiential* (the integration of digital technology and physical space).<sup>11</sup> Ideally, users can independently navigate within the structure of an i-doc on different pathways that also allow them to skip particular parts and materials.<sup>12</sup>

There are several elements, which researchers attribute to the i-doc format. Interactive documentaries are characterized by complexity, non-linearity and polyphony.<sup>13</sup> They establish dynamic and data-driven narratives that are based on facts and intersect

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<sup>6</sup> Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary”, 125.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Pat Aufderheide (2015) “Interactive Documentaries: Navigation and Design.” *Journal of Film and Video* 67: 3-4, 69–78. Here: 69. doi:10.5406/jfilmvideo.67.3-4.0069.

<sup>8</sup> Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary”, 126.

<sup>9</sup> Also John V. and Jackie O. Pavlik emphasize “immersiveness” and observe the emergence of more immersive modes that resemble the structure of a non-fiction play. Cf. John V. Pavlik and Jackie O. Pavlik (2017) “Understanding Quality in Digital Storytelling: A Theoretically Based Analysis of the Interactive Documentary.” *Digital Transformation in Journalism and News Media*, 381–396. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-27786-8\_28.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Siobhan O’Flynn (2012) “Documentary’s Metamorphic Form: Webdoc, Interactive, Transmedia, Participatory and Beyond.” *Studies in Documentary Film* 6:2, 141–157. doi: 10.1386/sdf.6.2.141\_1

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary”, 126.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Charles Forceville (2017) “Interactive Documentary and Its Limited Opportunities to Persuade.” *Discourse, Context & Media* 20, 218–226. doi:10.1016/j.dcm.2017.06.004.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary”, 65.

documentary sources with digital storytelling modes.<sup>14</sup> For that purpose they utilize mixed media modalities<sup>15</sup> and multiple media.<sup>16</sup>

These narrative structures offer “multiple pathways” that “provide a range of perspectives”.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, i-docs provide a design strategy for the multi-dimensional distribution of content.<sup>18</sup> However, they require “participation and co-collaboration” across different platforms.<sup>19</sup>

Correspondingly, a central aspect of the i-doc format is digital storytelling. Although no model-type exists, for Siobhan O’Flynn an evolving and processual narrative is characteristic for i-docs.<sup>20</sup> According to Maggie B. Stogner, the 21<sup>st</sup> century digital media have significantly changed ways of conceptualizing and structuring cultural narratives. This had also an effect on the modes of storytelling: “Across media, storytelling is evolving from passive and observational to interactive and participatory”.<sup>21</sup> User-centric technologies offer new self-directed forms of constructing narratives from non-linear and fragmented content:

<u>THEN</u>	<u>NOW</u>
Expert-centric	User-centric
Top-down	Distributed
Passive	Participatory
Observational	Interactive/Experiential
On-site	Off-site/Mobile
Local	Global
Individual	Social
Serious (Education)	Playful (Edutainment)
Text	Visual
Linear	Non-chronological
Continuous	Fragmented
Real-time	Asynchronous

**Fig. 1: Transformation of storytelling in the digital age.**  
**From: Maggie B. Stogner (2013) Searching for Aristotle in the Digital Age: Creating Cultural Narrative with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Media Technologies.**  
**The International Journals of New Media, Technology and the Arts 8, p. 4.**

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Pavlik and Pavlik (2017) “Understanding Quality in Digital Storytelling.”

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Pavlik and Pavlik (2017) “Understanding Quality in Digital Storytelling”.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary.”

<sup>17</sup> Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary”, 128.

<sup>18</sup> O’Flynn (2012) “Documentary’s Metamorphic Form.”

<sup>19</sup> Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary”, 129.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. O’Flynn (2012) “Documentary’s Metamorphic Form.”

<sup>21</sup> Maggie B. Stogner (2013) “Searching for Aristotle in the Digital Age: Creating Cultural Narrative with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Media Technologies.” *The International Journals of New Media, Technology and the Arts* 8, 3.

Stogner distinguishes three areas of user-centric technologies that are also applicable to i-docs.<sup>22</sup> The *participatory* mode describes user generated and curated digital content. The *collective* mode “engages disparate participants across time and space, yet still forms a collective community.”<sup>23</sup> The *mobile* mode relies on technologies that offer mobile access to data and information, which—according to Stogner—are “fundamentally changing the storytelling experience, enabling users to access contextual content on demand”.<sup>24</sup>

Recent research about i-docs has emphasized the importance of an open concept that is primarily characterized by “a constantly evolving set of forms and practices”.<sup>25</sup> In a similar way Aston and Gaudenzi argue that “the most interesting work in i-docs often arises when genre is transcended and boundaries are blurred.”<sup>26</sup> This allows to apply the concept also to digital projects that interactively explore factual documents, which were previously not seen as i-docs. In that sense, Aston and Stefano Odorico define i-docs as “digital platforms that represent, synthesise and bring together the majority of cinematic forms, strategies and performances that are dedicated to bridging the gap between spaces of vision, interaction and action.”<sup>27</sup>

This allows us to understand the VHH-MMSI in terms of the i-doc format in order to explore new possibilities of user engagement and co-creation. By comparing the digital infrastructure, which the VHH-MMSI provides for exploring, viewing, annotating, editing and relating historical visual records and other documents and media, with other digital applications and formats, we hope to gain new insights into curatorial principles that will intensify user engagement and offer new innovative modes of digital storytelling.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Aufderheide (2015) “Interactive Documentaries”, 70.

<sup>23</sup> Stogner (2013) “Searching for Aristotle in the Digital Age”, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Stogner (2013) “Searching for Aristotle in the Digital Age”, 8.

<sup>25</sup> Judith Aston and Stefano Odorico (2018) “The Poetics and Politics of Polyphony: Towards a Research Method for Interactive Documentary”. *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* 15, 63–93. Here: p. 65. doi:10.33178/alpha.

<sup>26</sup> Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary”, 128.

<sup>27</sup> Aston and Odorico (2018) “The Poetics and Politics of Polyphony”, 70.



### 3. Forms of engagement

In order to derive these insights not only from critically reviewing the conceptual framework of interactive documentaries, we also analyzed a broad variety of digital infrastructures that rely on factual documents as basic data. We included in this analysis not only formats that are explicitly categorized as i-docs but also other digital and web-based documentary formats.

This survey of different digital applications helps to identify specific features, which intensify the engagement with the documentary subjects, themes and materials. The selected examples are either explicitly labelled as i-docs or can be considered as digital platforms that resemble i-docs or utilize elements that are also characteristic for the i-doc format.

The interactive documentary *Gaza/Sderot* (2008) is one of the most referred to examples in i-doc literature.<sup>28</sup> Separated through the border between Gaza and Israel, short video clips shot by two cameras enable a virtual audiovisual dialogue. A specific interface makes it possible for users to discover the story through a map, a timeline and keywords. Additionally, they can leave comments under each video and share them, thereby turning the platform into a public sphere. In doing so, the application “create[s] a meaningful and engaging experience for the user.”<sup>29</sup> An important feature in *Gaza/Sderot* is the *split screen* technique that allows users to relate experiences from the two sides of the Israeli-Gazan border through comparing video clips side-by-side. Another central feature is the *timeline* that offers a particular pathway through the documentary material. This is complemented by the interactive *map* that enables the spatial arrangement of the individual stories.<sup>30</sup>

As described in the introduction of this deliverable, *The Liberation* also offers an innovative spatial, temporal and comparative approach through digital storytelling. Historical photographs from the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp can be superimposed on the current memorial site. Thereby, users can relate past and present, and connect historical documents with specific places. This is predefined in the web-application but based on geo-location data in an additional augmented reality application that can be used on-site.

Combining geo-location data and mapping technologies, web projects such as *Stolpersteine Brandenburg* (2020) combine a searchable online database with interactive elements.<sup>31</sup> The digital database includes a map of the German State of Brandenburg

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<sup>28</sup> <http://gaza-sderot.arte.tv/> (24.12.2020). Cf. Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary”, 130; Aston and Odorico (2018) “The Poetics and Politics of Polyphony”, 70; detailed: Forceville (2017) “Interactive Documentary,” 2-3, 5-7; O’Flynn (2012) “Documentary’s Metamorphic Form,” 143; and in context of webdoc; Kate Nash (2012) “Modes of interactivity: analysing the webdoc.” *Media, Culture & Society* 34:2, 95-210. Here: 198. doi: 10.1177/0163443711430758.

<sup>29</sup> Aston and Odorico (2018) “The Poetics and Politics of Polyphony,” 130.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Aston and Odorico (2018) “The Poetics and Politics of Polyphony”, 130.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.stolpersteine-brandenburg.de/> (24.12.2020).

displaying GPS-linked stumbling blocks and offering photographs and biographies of Holocaust victims or survivors. Through the search engine multiple variables can be looked up, which makes investigating historical stories much easier and offers the possibility for private as well as academic research. Users are invited to inform about additional stumbling blocks or create biographies that are then being revised and uploaded by the website's administrators.

Many other i-docs and online applications rely on maps as its main principle of maintaining access and organizing data. An additional example would be the *Virtual Salon* (2019), which offers users the ability to navigate through a virtual map of Jerusalem and enter some of the city's cultural institutions (i.e., galleries and museums).<sup>32</sup> The web-based application also contained monumental artworks by young artists augmenting the city's urban space with their creations. The interactive map is an example of both nonlinear structure and interactivity and arouses the question whether or not any virtual map or exhibition is, in fact, an i-doc.

Correspondingly, the project *Mapping the Republic of Letters* uses digital mapping techniques for curating digitized documents.<sup>33</sup> With its interactive visualizations of historical data, it provokes thinking of mapping as a central feature of digital curation and storytelling.

Mapping also relates to navigating in the sense of strolling or walking. This is the basic principle of the i-doc *Jerusalem, we are here* (2016), an interactive digital walking tour that searches for Palestinian traces and heritage in a West-Jerusalem neighborhood.<sup>34</sup> Users can participate in three virtual tours, watch related videos, listen to testimonies and receive information from the guides. The interactive element is a map of Jerusalem, in which users can not only navigate to specific streets and houses, but also add and upload information about former owners and the history of specific places.

While *Jerusalem, we are here* navigates through the urban space of the city in order to trace particular temporal layers, *The Sand Mine* follows the path of a timeline, starting with a specific event: a massacre of Italian forced laborers in a small town in Brandenburg, Germany. That way, users can travel through time by navigating through audiovisual materials including video testimonies and animated scenes. In doing so they move on a non-specified and non-linear path from the historical events to their manifestation in collective memory.

Video testimonies are an important element of i-docs. Correspondingly, i-docs and online platforms offer engaging access to videotaped testimonies for users. The web-based documentary *The Space We Hold* (2017) offers access to witness testimonies of three women who were sexually abused by the Imperial Japanese Army during World War II.<sup>35</sup> Integrating photographs, video clips and interviews, users encounter the stories of the

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.virtual-salon.com/> (24.12.2020).

<sup>33</sup> <http://republicofletters.stanford.edu/publications/index.html> (24.12.2020).

<sup>34</sup> <https://jerusalemwearehere.com> (24.12.2020).

<sup>35</sup> <http://spacewehold.nfb.ca/> (24.12.2020).

women and listen to their reports. Through choices how to process and navigate through the story and the possibility to interact with comments, users are positioned not only as listeners but as active witnesses of the portrayed witness.

This approach also informs the digital online-infrastructure *IWitness* provided by the USC Shoah Foundation for engagement with digitized testimonies of Holocaust survivors, liberators and other victims of genocidal violence.<sup>36</sup> The platform offers a variety of—mainly educational—pathways through the digital testimony archive that include interactive response opportunities as well as the possibility to create new content through an online video editing software. Correspondingly, Wulf Kansteiner emphasized that the platform in a unique way hands “over editorial power over cultural memory to teachers and high school students.”<sup>37</sup> Although not an interactive documentary but a combined online archive and educational tool, *IWitness* offers significant interactive elements for engaging with the history of the Holocaust through visual media and historical documentation.

The interaction with testimonies through searching, listening and responding as well as the interrelation of different documentary materials are crucial elements of i-docs and infrastructures for searching historical documents alike. Several techniques and media ranging from videos to photographs and testimonies and including interactive maps and timelines as well as split screen and superimposition, turn interactive documentary formats into digital forms of engagement with past events.

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<sup>36</sup> <https://iwitness.usc.edu/sfi/> (24.12.2020).

<sup>37</sup> Wulf Kansteiner (2017) “The Holocaust in the 21st Century: Digital anxiety, cosmopolitanism on steroids, and never again genocide without memory.” In: Andrew Hoskins (ed.) *Digital Memory Studies: Media Past in Transition*. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 110–140. Here: 121.

#### 4. The VHH-MMSI as i-doc

Aston and Gaudenzi suggest understanding i-docs as “database-driven documentaries.”<sup>38</sup> This particular framing can help to better understand the analogies—and maybe even analogousness—that interrelates the concept of i-docs with the configuration of the VHH-MMSI. Similarly, Steve Anderson describes the database and the search engine as “primary mechanisms for organizing and disseminating information within digital networks”, which “enable nonlinear accessing and combining of information.”<sup>39</sup> With this, he does not only describe the principles of the VHH-MMSI but also outlines the preconditions for digital storytelling.

The following table compares general characteristics of the i-doc format with the conceptualization of the VHH-MMSI for the purpose of identifying analogies and overlaps as well as deviations:

	<b>Interactive Documentary (i-doc)</b>	<b>VHH-MMSI</b>
FORMAT	<p>There is no general template or model-type for i-docs. It is mainly a form for the multi-dimensional distribution of content by digital means.</p> <p>Characteristic for i-docs are dynamic narratives or non-linear data-driven story structures with an open, evolving and processual narrative. Stories can evolve over time according to user preferences and media forms.<sup>40</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• multi-dimensional</li> <li>• data- and metadata-driven</li> <li>• query-based</li> <li>• non-linear arrangements</li> <li>• advanced storytelling</li> </ul>
INFRASTRUCTURE	<p>Interactive documentaries are structured databases. The format has a high technical adaptability with the potential of (digital) interaction. This is enhanced through the interface and user-experience friendly design.<sup>41</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• digital archive and library</li> <li>• adaptable and personalized interface based on Engagement Levels and Usage Modes</li> <li>• collaboration between human intellect and AI</li> <li>• pre-curated and self-curated environments</li> </ul>
CONTENT	<p>Interactive documentaries are nonfictional and aim for the documentation of the “real”. They can</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the past and its traces in the present</li> <li>• documentation of the “real”</li> </ul>

<sup>38</sup> Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary”, p. 129.

<sup>39</sup> Steve Anderson (2014) “Past Indiscretions: Digital Archives and Recombinant History.” In: Marsha Kinder and Tara McPherson (eds.) *Transmedia Frictions: The Digital, the Arts, and the Humanities*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 100–114. Here: 100-101. doi:10.1525/j.ctt6wqc2f.10.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Pavlik and Pavlik (2017) “Understanding Quality in Digital Storytelling”; O’Flynn (2012) “Documentary’s Metamorphic Form.”

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary.”

	<p>also focus on historical or commemorative topics.</p> <p>Such historical i-docs bridge between the present state of the users and the past, and thus interconnect past and present.<sup>42</sup></p>	<p>through media assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nonfictional images and how they inform fictional images</li> <li>• migrating images</li> </ul>
<b>MEDIA</b>	<p>Interactive documentaries utilize multiple media and heterogeneous media resources. They aim towards making documentary material easily accessible.<sup>43</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• filmic documents in relation to other document types</li> <li>• media objects in relation to pre-curated and user-generated metadata</li> <li>• making time-based media accessible through media-specific features, data through metadata, history through media assets</li> </ul>
<b>FEATURES</b>	<p>Many i-docs use specific features for arranging content in various forms such as split screen, maps, timelines etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• viewing, annotating, mapping, searching, filtering, comparing, relating</li> <li>• map, timeline, split screen, playlist, data visualization, grouping</li> <li>• comparative analysis</li> </ul>
<b>USER EXPERIENCE</b>	<p>Dominant is a first-person user perspective. Users interact within a story as protagonists in the roles of observers, co-authors or contributors. Users have the freedom to access content via different paths of navigation, as well as to skip material.</p> <p>Navigation invokes the form of a game. More immersive and participatory models are emerging, in which the users experience the events by making decisions as if being a character in a non-fiction play.<sup>44</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interaction with the past through media assets</li> <li>• interaction with media assets through technology</li> <li>• non-immersive media experience</li> <li>• explorative experience</li> <li>• role of researcher, co-curator, creator</li> </ul>
<b>ENGAGEMENT FORMS</b>	<p>In i-docs, meaning is generated through individual interaction, which requires user agency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participatory modes: interaction with media assets, tools and other users</li> </ul>

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary”; Forceville (2017) “Interactive Documentary.”

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary.”

<sup>44</sup> Pavlik and Pavlik (2017) “Understanding Quality in Digital Storytelling”; Insook Choi (2010) “From Tradition to Emerging Practice: A Hybrid Computational Production Model for Interactive Documentary.” *Entertainment Computing* 1:3-4, 105–117. doi:10.1016/j.entcom.2010.03.001; Forceville (2017) “Interactive Documentary”; Aufderheide (2015) “Interactive Documentaries.”

	<p>Users engage with the documentary materials and to some extent create new content, which influences the narrative. They thereby can become producers of new content and participate in advanced storytelling.<sup>45</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• various usage modes: viewing, annotating and collaborating</li> <li>• different Engagement Levels: basic, advanced, on-site</li> <li>• users as co-creators of content</li> <li>• curation in action</li> </ul>
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These reciprocal analogies are particularly noticeable regarding the interaction with historical sources, an aspect that is vital for the VHH project. In the following we further explore how i-docs and respectively the VHH-MMSI offer access to historical visual records and related documents, establish relations and offer possibilities for data-driven advanced storytelling.

#### 4.1. Navigating through historical sources

Understanding i-docs as “roads where journeys take place”,<sup>46</sup> the VHH-MMSI indeed provides the necessary infrastructure to navigate factual evidence from Nazi atrocities and the liberation of the concentration camps, which users can then actively explore and interactively engage with through a variety of features. The multimodal character of the VHH platform even intensifies this experience. The different kinds of media assets, which users can explore and interrelate, turn the navigating experience also into a multimodal and therefore into a multisensual experience. This corresponds to Aston’s and Odorico’s idea of i-docs as “‘crossroads’ of many kinds of media experiences”.<sup>47</sup>

Aston and Odorico especially point out that “maps are often present in i-docs”.<sup>48</sup> This is also true for the VHH-MMSI as maps and mapping functions are an instrumental feature for exploring, relating and curating the visual evidence of Nazi atrocities. This also correlates with Stogner’s notion of *participatory* narration.

#### 4.2. Establishing relations

Aston and Odorico use the concept of “relational aesthetics” in order to describe site-specific experiences by the help of digital means. The VHH project understands engagement with the visual history of the Holocaust as an approach based on establishing a complex net of relations: between images, between sources, between sites and historical documentation, between visual media, texts and voices, between different temporalities, between users and the digitized materials, between different institutions and stakeholder

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary”; Choi (2010) “From Tradition to Emerging Practice”; O’Flynn (2012) “Documentary’s Metamorphic Form.”

<sup>46</sup> Aston and Odorico (2018) “The Poetics and Politics of Polyphony”, 69.

<sup>47</sup> Aston and Odorico (2018) “The Poetics and Politics of Polyphony”, 80.

<sup>48</sup> Aston and Odorico (2018) “The Poetics and Politics of Polyphony”, 79.

groups, and between different individual users. Therein, the VHH-MMSI also responds to Stogner’s concept of *collective* narration.

In doing so, the VHH-MMSI—likewise the i-doc as defined by Aston and Odorico—provides a digital space for creating “a dynamic net of temporal relationships” that include “modifications, alternations and interventions” by the users through the help of selecting, editing, annotating and curating digital visual materials.<sup>49</sup>

### 4.3. From digital curation to advanced storytelling

A central characteristic of the VHH-MMSI is that it enables a multi-perspective approach to the visual history of the Holocaust. Through exploring and relating visual, textual and oral sources, users are able to correlate different perspectives and voices.<sup>50</sup> The split screen is a crucial feature for this form of comparative building of relations in both infrastructures, i-docs and the VHH-MMSI. Furthermore, the dynamic and non-linear story structure of i-docs correlates with the curatorial principles of the VHH project. Finally, the VHH-MMSI encourages forms of engagement that are based on exploring and relating content. This explorative mode is also typical for many i-docs and informs their processual narratives.

Within four different types of Engagement Scenarios (see deliverables D3.1 Definition of Engagement Levels, Usage Modes, and User Types, M12, and D3.2 Mind Map Visualizing Multimodal Curating, M12), the VHH-MMSI offers access to the history of the Holocaust and the liberation of the concentration camps through encounters with visual evidence from that period. Offering different user roles as well as different engagement levels, the platform interrelates past and present, and initiates processes of building historical narratives through searching and aligning historical sources and documents. In addition to remote online engagement, the VHH project also aims to expand the experience of historical atrocity sites in their present shape by offering on-site access to related films and documents. Such forms or augmentation also correspond Stogner’s *mobile* narration.

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<sup>49</sup> Aston and Odorico (2018) “The Poetics and Politics of Polyphony”, 70.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Aston and Odorico (2018) “The Poetics and Politics of Polyphony”, 72.



## 5. Conclusion

Conceptualizing the VHH-MMSI as an interactive documentary offers the possibility to approach the curatorial principles of the VHH project—and especially its emphasis on relational curation—from the perspective of digital narration and advanced storytelling. That way, the importance of user agency as well as the significance of data-driven storytelling—and with it the agency of the documents and sources as well as of the technology—comes to the fore. This change of perspective also corresponds to a significant transformation of the documentary genre, which Aston and Odorico describe as the “shift from the representational paradigm to an experiential paradigm”.<sup>51</sup> This is also applicable to the VHH-MMSI.

Part of this experiential paradigm is interactivity, which the VHH project translated into the concept of engagement (see deliverables D3.1 Definition of Engagement Levels, Usage Modes, and User Types, M12, and D3.2 Mind Map Visualizing Multimodal Curating, M12). Actually, the VHH-MMSI corresponds to all four modes of interaction proposed by Gaudenzi for understanding i-docs.<sup>52</sup> It is *conversational* because it enables navigation through the platform with the help of search functions. It conforms to the logics of *hypertext* in offering an exploratory space through linking different but related media assets. Furthermore, it is *participatory* by nature, because it fosters co-creation through annotation and adding content via Private Workspaces. Especially through the On-site Engagement Level, the VHH-MMSI also answers to Gaudenzi’s definition of the *experiential* mode. Based on geo-location data users can also access the repository from physical sites and learn about the different time layers of these places. By relating visual sources and related information to a specific location, the VHH-MMSI intensifies and broadens the users’ experience of the place. In Gaudenzi’s words, it “creates an experience that challenges their senses and their enacted perception of the world.”<sup>53</sup>

This perfectly describes the concept of user engagement, which effectively shapes the VHH project. Our notion of engagement combines participatory elements with practices of co-creation, non-immersive exploration of historical sources by means of technology with the possibility of establishing new relations that are the basis of curatorial projects and new narrative media products. Similarly, Anderson asks how digital historiography can be conceptualized as “recombinant history”.<sup>54</sup> Such an approach, based on accessible data and metadata allows for active participation in a relational construction of historical narratives. This results in an intense engagement with historical visual sources and related documents and testimonies.

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<sup>51</sup> Aston and Odorico (2018) “The Poetics and Politics of Polyphony”, 73.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary”, 126.

<sup>53</sup> Aston and Gaudenzi (2012) “Interactive Documentary”, 128.

<sup>54</sup> Anderson (2014) “Past Indiscretions”, 107.



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