

Abstract

Centropa Presentation by Ed Serotta and Fabian Ruehle, April 15, 2011

Jewish witness to a European century: using advanced technologies to preserve Jewish memory

Part I History of Centropa – Founding; Who we are, what we do

-Mission: To document how Jews lived in the 20th century, not just how they died; focus on Jewish life before, during and after the Holocaust in Central and Eastern Europe

-Who: International group of historians, filmmakers and interviewers, with its headquarter in Vienna, Austria; country offices in Washington DC and Budapest

-Interviews were audiotaped; respondents were asked to share their old family photos; Centropa did not use video during the interviews

-From 1999-2010, Centropa conducted interviews with more than 1,250 Jewish Holocaust survivors from 15 countries; we collected & digitized 22,500 photos

Part II Centropa on the web

-On www.centropa.org, we created an online keyworded database, “Jewish Witness to a European Century”, filled with family stories (most of them in English) and photos, all interlinked

-Production of “Library of Rescued Memories”, a collection of short and captivating biographical films based on the personal stories and photos of selected interviews: Movies act as digital bridge back to a world destroyed for younger generations

Part III Centropa as a 21st Century history teaching tool

-Goal: to create a teacher-driven program that innovates Holocaust education by including 20th Century European-Jewish History, and by combining personal stories with modern technology

-Pilot teachers from Europe, North America, and Israel helped create an educational program by adding teaching materials to our films and database: free online study guides and lesson plans

-Continuous feedback by classroom teachers to improve Centropa’s educational program; for example, Centropa organizes regional & international seminars to bring together educators from more than a dozen countries who share best-practice models

-Centropa connects teachers and students to Jewish history and with each other; the interactive Border Jumping website allows schools to share Centropa-inspired projects by uploading videos, photos, and other documents