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Lessons from the Treblinka Archive: Transnational Collections and their Implications for Historical Research

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Cover Page Footnote

No one works alone. True to this statement, I owe thanks to many for their assistance in the completion of this work. This article began as a seminar paper in Professor Kathryn Ciancia's course "Transnational Histories of Modern Europe." I thank her and my classmates for many enlightening discussions and the opportunity to challenge my ongoing research in new ways. As always, I thank my advisor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Professor Amos Bitzan. His guidance and example are always greatly appreciated. In completing this work, I also had the support of my colleague Brian North and Professors Christopher Simer of the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and Connie Harris of Dickinson State University. Professors Simer and Harris provided encouragement and constructive critique of an early version of this research presented at the Missouri Valley History Conference in Omaha, Nebraska. Finally, I thank the three anonymous reviewers of this journal and copy editor, Margaret Hogan, for their helpful suggestions and guidance.

LESSONS FROM THE TREBLINKA ARCHIVE: TRANSNATIONAL COLLECTIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Approaching Treblinka today, visitors walk through a pine forest clearing marked by a series of stone slabs representing the rail line that once led to the entrance. The site of what was an extermination camp is now a tranquil and thoughtful memorial located far from any major urban center. The rural serenity and undeniable beauty of its location contributes immensely to its unsettling emotional power. As remembered by the survivor Samuel Willenberg, this same scenery even held the attention of the terrified, starving, and desperate people the Nazis deported to Treblinka: “The cattle cars were close to the trees, touching them. Mothers were lifting up their children, showing them a forest for the first time. There was no forest in the ghetto. You could reach through the window covered with barbed wire and touch the forest for the last time. The way to death. . . .”¹ Willenberg trails off while describing a path that saw as many as 925,000 people—almost exclusively Jews—transported to their murder in carbon monoxide-filled gas chambers.² A black, ashen construction meant to symbolize the pyres used to burn the bodies of the dead now lies near the recently rediscovered location of these rooms.³

Further along what Willenberg called the way to death—moving toward where new arrivals were forced to undress—the memorial includes eleven stone steles inscribed with the names of countries from which victims arrived.⁴ The human tragedy of Treblinka, visitors soon realize, was a crime that touched the whole of continental Europe. True to the enormity of loss at this

¹ Alan Tomlinson, *Treblinka's Last Witness*, DVD (Tomlinson De Onis Productions, 2014).

² Israel Gutman, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 4:1486; Konnilyn G. Feig, *Hitler's Death Camps: The Sanity of Madness* (New York: Holmes and Meir, 1981), 30; Chris Webb and Michal Chocholaty, *The Treblinka Death Camp: History, Biographies, Remembrance* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag, 2014), 193; Witold Chrostowski, *Extermination Camp Treblinka* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004), ix; Yitzhak Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka: The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 392–98; “Permanent Collections: Concentration and Extermination Camps,” Beit Lohamei HaGhetaot—Ghetto Fighters’ House Museum, <http://www.gfh.org.il/eng/?CategoryID=61&ArticleID=77>; “The Holocaust Resource Center—Yad Vashem—Treblinka,” Yad Vashem Museum, http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/resource_center/item.-asp?GATE=Z&list_type=3-0&TYPE_ID=10&title=Treblinka; “Treblinka,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005193>.

³ For information pertaining to in-progress archaeological work at Treblinka by Caroline Sturdy Colls, see Caroline Sturdy Colls and Michael Branthwaite, “Finding Treblinka Exhibition,” Wiener Library—What’s On, <http://www.wienerlibrary.co.uk/Whats-On?item=266>; Caroline Sturdy Colls and Michael Branthwaite, “‘This Is Proof?’ Forensic Evidence and Ambiguous Material Culture at Treblinka Extermination Camp,” *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 20, no. 3 (2018): 430–53; Caroline Sturdy Colls and Michael Branthwaite, *Treblinka: Archaeological Investigations and Artistic Responses* (Stoke-on-Trent, UK: Centre of Archaeology, Staffordshire University, 2016); Caroline Sturdy Colls, *Holocaust Archaeologies: Approaches and Future Directions* (London: Springer, 2015); Caroline Sturdy Colls, “Gone but Not Forgotten: Archaeological Approaches to the Site of the Former Treblinka Extermination Camp in Poland,” *Holocaust Studies and Materials* 3 (March 2013): 253–89; and Alex Nikolic-Dunlop, *Treblinka: Hitler's Killing Machine* (Smithsonian Channel, 2014), <http://www.smithsonianchannel.com/videos/treblinka-hitlers-killing-machine/29275>.

⁴ The eleven steles list Belgium, USSR, Yugoslavia, France, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Germany, Austria, Greece, and Macedonia.

place, each stone inscription, save for one, represents an entire Jewish community destroyed at Treblinka. Only Dr. Janusz Korczak—an orphanage caretaker who knowingly chose to die with his children rather than leave them when given the chance—receives a personally inscribed stone. From the ramp area where people first disembarked at the camp to the farthest reaches of its former extent, over seventeen thousand etched and blank stones now cover the land. Each pays homage to centuries of Jewish life in a city, town, or shtetl brought to an abrupt and horrific end at this place.

In its terrible reign of destruction, the Treblinka extermination camp was the eye of a transnational needle through which so many passed and so few survivors emerged. As the state stones now lining the entrance to the memorial demonstrate, victims arrived from almost every corner of Europe. Today's orderly row of national markers, however, does little to represent the nature of the disjointed and haphazard scattering of fragments that I call the Treblinka archive, or the story of its birth. In addition to the wide dispersion of victim origins, the later flight or emigration of Treblinka's survivor diaspora contributed yet more scope to the geographic dispersion of information. Just as no single country suffered Treblinka's horrors, no one state contains all relevant historical source material today.

Because Nazi leaders paid as little heed to national borders as they did to human life, Treblinka requires geographically wide-ranging research to reconstruct its history. The multinational origins of victims and the later movements of its few survivors scattered far and wide the information and testimonies needed to reconstruct Treblinka's history. The international justice process in the years after World War II—taking place in at least five countries—also created a paper trail that, when combined with memories left behind by survivors, forms the Treblinka archive. From about the mid-1970s until Willenberg—the last known living witness—died in 2016, historians, museum professionals, and others conducted interviews and drafted popular and scholarly works that continually added to this body of sources. Much of the memoir publications and oral history collection initiatives took place surprisingly recently, giving this scattered archive an unexpected youth that is out of character with the increasing temporal distance of the Holocaust.

Through an analysis of Alexander Donat's research for his 1979 book *The Death Camp Treblinka*, I chart the birth of the transnational Treblinka archive, its implications for historical understandings of events at the camp, and the responsibilities—as well as opportunities—these scattered fragments create for archivists charged with their stewardship. Above all else that he achieved, Donat's work contributed new survivor interviews to the Treblinka archive of immense and irreplaceable value. At the same time, however, his inclusion of a list of Treblinka survivors seems to have unintentionally cast a shadow over succeeding research on the camp. Although Donat noted that his attempt to locate the living was “anything but definitive,” his list quickly became a matter of canonical belief, remaining in unchanged and unchallenged use by the Polish state museum and memorial to this day.⁵ In light of Christopher R. Browning's

⁵ Alexander Donat, ed., *The Death Camp Treblinka: A Documentary* (New York: Waldon Press, 1979), 284; “Opór i Powstanie,” Muzeum Walky i Męczeństwa Treblinka (“Resistance and Uprising,” Museum of Struggle and Martyrdom Treblinka), December 13, 2013, <http://www.treblinka-muzeum.eu/index.php/historia/oboz-zaglady/-opor-i-powstanie>.

admonition that Holocaust historians should make use of a “terminal mass” of witness testimonies in order to avoid the pitfalls of human memory, the widely held conclusion that only sixty-eight people survived Treblinka has slowed research on this place almost to a stop.⁶

Donat’s thirty-eight-year-old research is even less definitive now than it was by his own admission in 1979. For reasons that I expand on later, he was unable to locate many survivors and important pieces of the Treblinka puzzle. My own research to date reveals 130 named Treblinka survivors and the possibility that almost 900 more as-yet-unidentified people escaped death at this camp.⁷ In focusing attention on why Donat only located sixty-eight survivors, the story that emerges is not one of a poor historian doing shoddy work but rather of the difficult realities of doing transnational research. The Treblinka archive’s complicated—though by no means singular—creation also demonstrates how historical work on a single place may at times require truly transnational methods. While seeking to understand the body of Treblinka sources and their origins, Donat’s example likewise speaks to the skills, resources, and tools required to deliver meaningful contributions to the historical record. Finally, working from the lessons of the Treblinka archive, the conclusions here offer suggestions for the process of doing cross-border historical research more generally and how this collection has bearing on current discussions in the field of archival science.

The story of the Treblinka archive and its scattered creation has relevance for vibrant and growing bodies of literature on archival provenance, displaced collections, and work on archives in the wake of war and human rights abuses.⁸ The wide dispersion of the Treblinka archive resembles the fate of many collections torn apart by war and the attendant theft of national holdings yet differs in important ways regarding when, where, and by whom the fragments of this archive were created. This article highlights how the transnational body of Treblinka sources also functions as a case study in parallel provenance, provenance as place, and discussions of archival custodianship versus stewardship. The histories of Nazi SS actions at this singular location, those of their victims, and the post-escape lives of survivors contributed to the creation of this collection—so much as it can be called one—and continue to challenge research on Treblinka’s history today.

⁶ Christopher R. Browning, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp* (New York: Norton, 2011), 327.

⁷ Chad S. A. Gibbs, “The Few That Escaped the Fire: Revisiting and Expanding Alexander Donat’s List of Treblinka Survivors,” Northern Illinois University History Graduate Student Conference, DeKalb, November 2017; Chad S. A. Gibbs, “To Sell Your Life at a Higher Price: Social and Spatial Networks of Resistance at Treblinka” (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2016).

⁸ For examples of recent works on provenance, see Chris Hurley, “Part 1: What, If Anything, Is Archival Description?” *Archives and Manuscripts* 33, no. 1 (May 2005): 110–45, and Chris Hurley, “Part 2: When Something Is Not Related to Everything Else,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 33, no. 2 (November 2005): 52–91. For discussion of provenance as place, see Jeannette Allis Bastian, “In a ‘House of Memory’: Discovering the Provenance of Place,” *Archival Issues* 28, no. 1 (2003–4): 9–19. For analysis of displaced archives in the wake of war, see James Lowry, ed., *Displaced Archives* (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2017), and Ricardo L. Punzalan, “Archival Diasporas: A Framework for Understanding the Complexities and Challenges of Dispersed Photographic Collections,” *American Archivist* 77, no. 2 (Fall–Winter 2014): 326–49.

Analysis of Donat's work reveals that the history of the Treblinka extermination camp and its archive are both best understood as transnational. As Chris Bayly points out in an *American Historical Review* conversation, the state-centric connotations of the term "international" fail to "[give] a sense of the movement and interpenetration" that the word "transnational" can achieve.⁹ While the Third Reich's conquest of neighboring countries and its perpetration of genocide were certainly in many respects international historical events, the ways in which this history and its aftermath scattered survivors moves far beyond the valences of international history. Approaching Treblinka's archive as a transnational collection better represents the post-revolt survivor diaspora responsible for much of its creation.

In his book *What Is Global History?* Sebastian Conrad broadly agrees with Bayly and notes that the term "transnational" becomes more fitting when state decisions or state-to-state relations are not the primary drivers of the events in question.¹⁰ The fact that no single country has directed or houses the creation of the whole Treblinka archive makes Bayly's and Conrad's definition of "transnational" more in keeping with this widespread body of sources and fits with Chris Hurley's explanations of the concept of parallel provenance.¹¹ Several states created singular parts of the collection according to their own interests and their particular investments in the history of the Holocaust. Beneath, beside, or transcending these state actions were also those of individuals, nongovernmental, and quasi-governmental organizations adding yet more components to the whole.

Each entity or person responsible for the creation of one or more parts of the Treblinka archive can be understood as the originator or holder of provenance for that component of the collection. Singularly, or read only in their current holdings, however, these discrete files provide merely fragmentary clues about the history of the camp. It is only in conversation and comparison with each other that these memoirs, testimonies, trial records, and other documentation can truly contribute to research. The Treblinka survivor diaspora—as scaffolded by recent archival literature—is simultaneously a creator diaspora calling for a particular understanding of the concept of provenance. Working with a collection reminiscent of the issues raised by the Treblinka archive, Jeannette Allis Bastian suggests the replacement of singular creator provenance with provenance as place in her article "In a 'House of Memory.'"¹² Bastian states that "provenance as place implies both a physical community and an imagined community where the act of creation is tied to the actual space as well as to the other creators who have engaged within that space." Calling to mind Hurley's work, she concludes that "the provenance of place suggests multiple levels of provenance."¹³ The Treblinka II extermination camp, in this sense, is

⁹ "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (December 2006): 1442.

¹⁰ Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016), 44–45.

¹¹ Hurley, "Part 1"; Hurley, "Part 2," 52, 85–86.

¹² Bastian, "In a 'House of Memory.'" In the introduction to his recent edited volume, James Lowry expands on the idea of place as provenance in his discussion of "territorial provenance" in reference to displaced collections and the issues they present for researchers and archivists alike. See Lowry, *Displaced Archives*, 3.

¹³ Bastian, "In a 'House of Memory,'" 16.

the place holding one layer of provenance. Individual trial courts, testimony providers, memoir writers, and others are creators with a parallel provenance joined by the state, organization, or other type of holding that participated in the making or later housing of component pieces of the wider archive. Understanding how these pieces of the whole came to exist and the interests each creator had in the history of Treblinka is paramount to the researcher's ability to locate and collate these disparate fragments. This same knowledge, and a willingness to share what collection managers have learned, is of equally great importance for archivists' ability to contextualize and grasp the importance of their part of this wider collection.

In her widely praised book *Along the Archival Grain*, Ann Laura Stoler analyzes the Dutch colonial archive itself as a work of representation and derives lessons for archival research methodologies well beyond her own field. Stoler's text shows that the Dutch imperial archive possesses its own "common sense" that can be revealed by questioning how it was organized, what it contains, and what it does not contain. She adds that archival researchers must understand the "grids of intelligibility" that build and structure the collections they use.¹⁴ Among these are the silences and euphemisms of imperial rule itself that drove the creation of the colonial archive in which Stoler does her work. By drawing attention to the analytic usefulness of what we might today see as the flaws of a collection, she means to demonstrate how an archive is a product of its creators, their agendas, and their biases. *Archival Grain* shows how this foundational knowledge of an archive's inner workings can often help historians learn more about their topics.

Deep subject awareness enables researchers to uncover more by pointing questions back at the forces that gave birth to their archives in the first place. Dutch East Indies governmental collections—and any other archive for that matter—assume certain knowledge on the part of anyone searching their shelves. Institutions or collections such as these are not set up for walk-in traffic or uninitiated, unfocused browsing. In order to navigate a collection, you must know enough about the history in question and how this contributes to the organization of holdings. Only by possessing such an understanding of archival construction and context can the historian develop meaningful research queries and locate the desired files. As an added issue along these same lines, a researcher must know enough about Treblinka and the lives of its survivors to even find many components of the collection or gain clues as to which corner of the world may hold the sources he or she seeks.

Stoler's work reads "along" the grain of the Dutch archive in that she seeks to discover what the organization of the collection tells about what colonial administrators found important.¹⁵ Similarly, reading along the geographic dispersion of Treblinka materials speaks volumes about the afterlives of survivors, the justice process, and what meanings succeeding generations have bestowed on the history of the camp. For Stoler, the order of files on the shelves of the archive tells a story as interesting as that written on any page. In the case of Treblinka, the location in the world, as well as the internal structure of any one holding, similarly reveals truths about persecution, survival, and the process of rebuilding post-Holocaust lives.

¹⁴ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009), 9, 24.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 47, 50.

The bulk of the Treblinka archive—in all its locations—consists of testimonial records left behind by survivors, Polish locals, and former German and Ukrainian guards. Witness statements by survivors and the accused at trial are among the earliest components of the collection, though they are now far outweighed in size and scope by memoirs, transcripts, and video interview recordings.¹⁶ These sources are even more important to historians since SS authorities elected to close the camp in the aftermath of the August 2, 1943, prisoner revolt and attempted to eradicate its every physical trace, leaving little evidence of the built environment.¹⁷ Well before the physical destruction of Treblinka, Nazi leaders also ordered prisoners to construct a safe for official papers that could destroy its contents when triggered.¹⁸ The scant primary documentation these efforts failed to erase covers only the routing of trains to and from the camp. While these records have allowed historians to estimate the number of victims killed at Treblinka by counting the transports, they say nothing of day-to-day existence within the camp's barbed-wire enclosures.¹⁹

Owing to the thorough Nazi attempt to destroy the evidence of their crimes, the Treblinka archive is, in effect, a body of survivor documents and testimonies. Understanding this fact, Donat began his research by scanning the records of two major (and then-recent) West German prosecutions of former Treblinka guards for the names of witnesses and clues as to how he might contact them. He frequently cited and excerpted records of two trials that resulted in convictions for ten former guards.²⁰ The fact that these trials even took place and had any success at all is owed to the existence of survivors and resistance at Treblinka. With no uprising and far fewer living witnesses, West German courts acquitted seven of the only eight Belzec guards ever brought to trial.²¹ Escape and revolt saved the lives of witnesses, made possible some semblance of justice, and gave birth to an archive recording the history of the camp.

¹⁶ The earliest piece of the Treblinka archive is the testimony of Treblinka escapee Abraham Krzepicki, recorded by Rachel Auerbach for Emanuel Ringelblum's Oyneg Shabes archive of the Warsaw Ghetto. See Rachel Auerbach, "In the Fields of Treblinka," in Donat, *Death Camp Treblinka*, 19–74; Emanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*, ed. and trans. Jacob Sloan (New York: Ibooks, 2006); and Ringelblum-Archiv, Robert Moses Shapiro, and Tadeusz Epsztein, eds., *The Warsaw Ghetto Oyneg Shabes-Ringelblum Archive: Catalog and Guide* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 394.

¹⁷ As cited above in note 3, the work of Caroline Sturdy Colls is uncovering more archaeological evidence than expected, but the fact remains that most of the camp infrastructure was erased from the site well before the Nazis evacuated occupied Poland.

¹⁸ Oskar Strawczynski, "Ten Months in Treblinka," in *Escaping Hell in Treblinka* (New York: Yad Vashem Publications, 2007), 166–67.

¹⁹ Peter Hayes, "Deportation Transports of Jews: Concentration and Death Camps and/or the East" (unpublished, June 2017), copy in possession of the author; Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka*, 392–97. See also Sara Berger, *Experten der Vernichtung: Das T4-Reinhardt-Netzwerk in den Lagern Belzec, Sobibor, und Treblinka* (Experts of Extermination: The T4-Reinhardt-Network in the Camps Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka), 2nd edition (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2014).

²⁰ Donat, *Death Camp Treblinka*, 295–316.

²¹ Michael S. Bryant, *Eyewitness to Genocide: The Operation Reinhardt Death Camp Trials, 1955–1966* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2014), 20, 122.

Donat's research also took advantage of material and witness statements from the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal in addition to information presented in the prosecution of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem.²² While the tribunal and Eichmann records were widely disseminated and easily available at a distance, it appears that Donat acquired records of the West German Treblinka trials with the assistance of Adalbert Rückerl, an author and investigator of Nazi crimes.²³ Furthermore, Donat may have personally visited the Central Office of the State Justice Administrations for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes in Ludwigsburg, West Germany.

The Central Office in Ludwigsburg remains an important resource for all historians interested in any aspect of Holocaust history. This institution is open to research and—at first glance—appears to be a comprehensive repository of all files relevant to Third Reich prosecutions. For reasons that are reminiscent of Stoler's process of learning what the Dutch colonial administration designed their archive to tell, however, the Central Office does not hold all German prosecution records. The mission of this branch of the German Federal Archive is to assist prosecutors actively engaged in the investigation of former regime figures. As such, its mandate only requires that all files relevant to final judgments by a court be transferred to Ludwigsburg.²⁴ A German *Urteil*, or court ruling, contains an explanation of how and why the court came to its judgment.²⁵ This file and all documentation used to arrive at its decision are transferred to the Central Office, but matters that did not contribute to the outcome remain in the *Landesarchiv*, or state archive, of the region in which the trial was held. While this difference might seem trivial at first, it has important impacts on what can and cannot be found in Ludwigsburg.

Because he did not visit the regional holding for the courthouse in which Treblinka guards were tried, Donat never discovered survivors Zenon Golaszewski and Ignac Litwak. Both men gave evidence during the investigations, but their files never went to Ludwigsburg because they were not used in the final judgments.²⁶ In research for her 2013 book *Experten der Vernichtung* (Experts of Extermination), Sara Berger understood this aspect of the archival system and explored the regional Duisburg Branch of the North Rhine-Westphalia State Archive, though

²² Donat, *Death Camp Treblinka*, 284.

²³ Adalbert Rückerl, *The Investigation of Nazi Crimes, 1945–1978: A Documentation*, trans. Derek Rutter (Heidelberg: C. F. Mueller, 1979).

²⁴ Melanie Wehr et al., “Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen: B 162 (Teilfindbuch),” *Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen (Central Office of the State Justice Administrations: B162 [Finding Aid Book]*, Central Office of the State Justice Administrations for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes), 2012.

²⁵ Donat excerpts long sections of both rulings; see Donat, *Death Camp Treblinka*, 296–316.

²⁶ Zenon Golaszewski, Trial of Kurt Franz et al., Investigative Interview of Survivor-Witness Zenon Golaszewski, Transcript, December 9, 1965, *Gerichte Rep.* 388, Nr. 781, Band 32c, pp. 276–80, Duisburg Branch, State Archives of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany; Ignac Litwak, Trial of Kurt Franz et al., Investigative Interview of Survivor-Witness Ignac Litwak, Transcript, December 9, 1964, *Gerichte Rep.* 388, Nr. 781, Band 32c, pp. 281–83.

because her focus was on the lives and social networks of German guards she did not search for records of unknown survivors.²⁷ As a local German academic, however, she had easier access to German archives and a better understanding of their practices. Berger's work demonstrates a keen awareness of the Ludwigsburg collection's true purpose and how that impacts its holdings. In my own work at the Central Office, I saw this reality in action when I was unable to view one of the forty-one listed boxes of Treblinka materials because it had been sent to a *Staatsanwaltschaft*, or prosecutor's office, to aid in the preparation of new charges.²⁸

More recent scholars focused on the study of Nazi extermination camp trials seem to have also been unaware of the full implications of German archival procedures. Michael S. Bryant did not use the Duisburg archive in research for his 2014 book, *Eyewitness to Genocide: The Operation Reinhard Death Camp Trials, 1955–1966*.²⁹ Both Bryant and Donat, as much as any researchers, had to make decisions on costs, time, and what Lara Putnam has termed the “deep dive” in the “sure win” archive versus the probing trip to a risky possibility.³⁰ Berger, conducting her research as a graduate student resident in western Germany, could affordably take the train to Duisburg and roll the dice on what she might find there. Donat, as an independent researcher on a shoe-string budget, and Bryant, an American professor with limited time for archival travel, faced the possibility of getting to Duisburg only to realize they had wasted their time. Taking this chance was even less likely since they could be reasonably sure that much of what they might want to read would certainly be in Ludwigsburg. In the end, Berger's risk paid off in the discovery that the Duisburg archive holds 287 boxes of Treblinka-relevant documentation as opposed to the 41 containers at Ludwigsburg.³¹

In addition to the issues of procedural knowledge within certain collections and the time and funds required for travel, Donat's work in the 1970s also simply came before many parts of the Treblinka archive were created. Several more trials and similar legal proceedings took place in the years after his publication. Donat could hardly have predicted that the United States would find, denaturalize, and deport the former guards Feodor Fedorenko, Liudas Kairys, and a man believed to be Ivan, or John, Demjanjuk for lying about their wartime activities on applications

²⁷ Berger, *Experten der Vernichtung*, 435.

²⁸ Unfortunately, so far, I do not know if this means there was another Treblinka trial or investigation at some time around my 2015 visit to the Central Office.

²⁹ Bryant, *Eyewitness to Genocide*.

³⁰ Lara Putnam, “The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast,” *American Historical Review* 121, no. 2 (April 2016): 377–402.

³¹ I located the investigative testimonies of Golaszewski and Litwak during one week of research at Duisburg. On this short, probing trip, I could only get a glimpse of how much was there; I have not yet had the opportunity to see what else this collection may yield in terms of other survivors or information on Treblinka history in general. For a comparison of the sizes of these holdings, see Bundesarchiv Ludwigsburg/Außenstelle Ludwigsburg, Germany, Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Verbrechen, catalogue, B162, files 3817–48, and Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen, Abteilung Rheinland (State Archives of North Rhine–Westphalia, Rhineland Section), Duisburg, Germany, catalogue, Gerichte Rep. 388, files 741–97, 195–96, 799–900, 1491–93, 231–77, 380–414.

for U.S. citizenship.³² In the trial of Fedorenko, six former Treblinka inmates testified against the defendant including one of the few known female survivors, Sonia Grabinska-Lewkowicz.³³ Her testimony in a Florida District Court also confirmed that Donat incorrectly listed a third female survivor by counting her under both her married and birth names. To his credit—despite the timing of his research, his knowledge of German archival procedures, and his scant resources—this is the only mistaken inclusion in Donat’s book.

In addition to working with trial resources, Donat completed research at Yad Vashem, the Israeli state Holocaust memorial and archive, and the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. His book acknowledges, however, that most of the materials at Yad Vashem were at the time photocopies of materials he viewed in Poland, rather than new sources. Well after Donat’s publication, the collection of Holocaust documentation and video testimonies exploded worldwide, greatly expanding available source materials. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) began collecting in 1994—before it even opened—while the even more recent advent of the Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews is revitalizing the assembly of Holocaust history in Warsaw.³⁴ Alongside these museums, the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive (VHA) now stands as the largest single repository of video interviews, containing over fifty thousand Holocaust testimonies.³⁵ In addition to the Treblinka-relevant materials in these collections, still more interviews are held by several other institutions in the United States and worldwide.³⁶ Research in the Shoah Foundation VHA reveals five more

³² For additional information on the trials that have taken place since Donat’s work and the greatly expanded secondary literature derived from these proceedings, see *United States v. Fedorenko*, 597 F. 2d 946 (Court of Appeals, 5th Circuit 1979); Lawrence Douglas, *The Right Wrong Man: John Demjanjuk and the Last Great Nazi War Crimes Trial* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016); Asher Felix Landau, *The State of Israel v. Ivan (John) Demjanjuk*, no. 373/86 (District Court of Jerusalem April 18, 1988); Tom Teicholz, *The Trial of Ivan the Terrible: State of Israel vs. John Demjanjuk* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990); and “U.S. Court Orders Denaturalization of Illinois Man Found to Have Taken Part in Massacre at Nazi Slave Labor Camp,” U.S. Federal Court Release no.145, April 10, 1997, <https://www.justice.gov/archive/opa/pr/1997/April97/145crm.htm>.

³³ Sonia Lewkowicz (AKA Sonia Grabinska or Gabowski-Letkowitz or -Lewkowicz), Treblinka Survivor—Testimony—Selected Extracts: Fedorenko Trial Fort Lauderdale, 1978, <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/survivor/sonialewkowicz.html>; Donat, *Death Camp Treblinka*, 287, 288. Nevins also confirms that Sonia Lewkowicz and Sonia Grabinska-Lewkowicz are the same person; see Michael A. Nevins, *Dubrowa: Memorial to a Shtetl (Dabrowa Bialostocka, Poland)* (Spring Valley, N.Y.: JewishGen, 2010), http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Dabrowa_Bialostocka/Dabrowa_Bialostocka.html#TOC. For full testimonial record, see *United States v. Fedorenko*, 597 F. 2d, transcribed courtroom testimony, volumes 1–12.

³⁴ Joan Ringelheim et al., “United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Oral History Interview Guidelines,” USHMM, 1998, <http://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20121003-oral-history-interview-guide.pdf>; “They Survived the Holocaust. The Survivors’ Accounts,” Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews, <http://www.polin.pl/en/they-survived-the-holocaust-the-survivors-accounts>; “Research and Publications,” Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews, <http://www.polin.pl/en/research-and-publications>.

³⁵ “About the Institute,” University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive (VHA), <https://sfi.usc.edu/about/history>.

³⁶ “Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies,” Yale University Library, <http://web.library.yale.edu/testimonies>; “Permanent Collections: Concentration and Extermination Camps,” Beit Lohamei HaGhetaot—Ghetto Fighters’ House Museum; “Voices of the Holocaust Project,” Voices of the Holocaust, Paul V. Galvin Library, Illinois Institute of Technology, <http://voices.iit.edu/>; “Music and the Holocaust,” World ORT: Educating for Life, <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/>; “Herder-Institut für Historische Ostmitteleuropa—forschung—Institut Der

survivors Donat never managed to locate, while scans of the USHMM collection have uncovered at least another four so far.³⁷

These museums and oral history collections add importance to the transnational definition of the Treblinka archive. While Yad Vashem is supported by the Israeli government, the USHMM and Polin are both quasi-governmental organizations drawing part of their funding from the state and a near equal share from private donations. The university-based oral history archives are similarly funded by both private investment and state support through the schools at which they are housed. Yale University's private status makes its Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies—a collection of over 4,400 interviews conducted from 1979 to present—an exception to this generalization. The Shoah Foundation, meanwhile, has enviable private donor support in addition to its partnership with the University of Southern California, though costs to gain unlimited access to this collection remain prohibitively high. Although the Shoah Foundation is creating new programs and partnerships to address this issue, at current only around sixty universities worldwide have full access to the video testimonies of the VHA.³⁸

Users conduct searches of the online or digitized oral history collections with the assistance of computer keyword queries. While this works well for better-known locations or straightforward questions, current technology can cause problems for the searchability of these holdings. Knowledge of keyword metadata input by archivists and volunteer interviewers is one new grain of intelligibility for collections such as these. Mistakes or misunderstandings in the process of entering terms for each interview add to the pains of finding the desired testimonies. Since the Treblinka II extermination camp was near the Treblinka I forced labor camp, some testimonies encoded under Treblinka I could hold information relevant to the history of the adjacent death camp.³⁹ To locate these witnesses' potential additional pieces of the historical puzzle, however,

Leibniz-Gemeinschaft" (Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe—Institute of the Leibniz Association), <https://www.herder-institut.de/startseite.html>; David P. Boder, "David P. Boder Interviews Benjamin Piskorz; September 1, 1946; Tradate, Italy: Voices of the Holocaust Project," trans. David P. Boder, 2009, *Voices of the Holocaust*, http://voices.iit.edu/interview?doc=piskorzB&display=-piskorzB_en.

³⁷ Sol Rosenberg, interview, March 9, 1996, 10098-2, USC Shoah Foundation VHA, <http://vhaonline.usc.edu/viewingPage.aspx?testimonyID=12886&returnIndex=0>; Fred Kort, interview, March 29, 1995, VHA, <http://vhaonline.usc.edu/viewingPage?testimonyID=1454&returnIndex=0>; Linda Penn, testimony, January 11, 1998, VHA Interview Code 38042, USHMM/USC Shoah Foundation VHA, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/vha38042>; Zeldia Gordon, interview, March 6, 1984, RG-50.005*0018, USHMM, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn503605>; "USC Shoah Foundation Institute Testimony of Vivian Chakin—Collections Search—United States Holocaust Memorial Museum," USHMM, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/vha7457>; Isadore Helfing, extracts from USHMM interview, September 3, 1992, Holocaust Education and Archive Research Team, <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/survivor/helfing.html>; Isadore Helfing, interview, December 3, 1983, Permanent Collection, USHMM, <http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn503616>; David Lieberman, interview, July 10, 1990, Permanent Collection, USHMM, <http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn504626>; Morton Mattel, interview, July 29, 1981, Permanent Collection, USHMM, <http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn520413>; Abraham Kolski, interview, March 29, 1990, Permanent Collection, USHMM, <http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn504607>.

³⁸ "About the Visual History Archive," USC Shoah Foundation, <https://sfi.usc.edu/vha/about>.

³⁹ In his memoir, Saul Kuperhand recalls the August 2, 1943, Treblinka II revolt that he witnessed from inside Treblinka I. His memories make it clear that Treblinka I testimonies may have much more to reveal about the history of Treblinka II. My future research will seek to cover further testimonies from this local camp in light of

researchers would need to know this aspect of the history, as Stoler points out, and to take the time to side-glance Treblinka I testimonies in a manner reminiscent of Putnam's suggestions.

The wide postwar dispersion of survivors helps to explain how their interviews ended up in so many different collections. When Claude Lanzmann traveled to Poland in the 1970s to record segments of his film *Shoah*, he found only one Treblinka survivor still living there.⁴⁰ Donat conducted interviews with or wrote to those he located in Israel, Canada, and the United States. The later lives of these survivors and other factors added to the archives in each of these countries. Chil Berkowicz—who later changed his name to Charles Burke—lived out the remainder of his days in the Tidewater region of Virginia. He left behind a recollection of his experiences in a local memorial book with a limited print run published by his Jewish community organization.⁴¹ As is the case with many others, Burke apparently did not decide or desire to recall his experiences so soon after the Holocaust as when Donat was doing his work. Most of the memoirs published by survivors did not in fact reach readers until the 1980s or later. At least sixteen people who escaped Treblinka chose to write books about their experiences only after Donat published his own.⁴² Merely six of these witnesses appear on Donat's list.

Video history interviews, memoir publications, and other types of sources raise the issue of research language knowledge in the compilation and understanding of transnational historical works or finding aids. The VHA alone contains testimonies recorded in sixty-two countries and forty-one languages.⁴³ The memoir of Symcha Poliakiewicz is but one example of a source

Kuperhand's example. For his recollections of revolt escapees passing his location and German efforts to recapture prisoners in the wake of the uprising, see Miriam Kuperhand and Saul Kuperhand, *Shadows of Treblinka* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

⁴⁰ Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah: The Complete Text of the Acclaimed Holocaust Film*, 2nd edition (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995); Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah*, DVD (Criterion Collection, 1985).

⁴¹ "Charles Burke—Chil Berkowicz," in *Tidewater Federation Memorial Book*, ed. Elena Barr Baum (N.p.: Tidewater Federation, n.d.), 42–45.

⁴² Ibid.; Richard Chardkoff, *Sol's Story: A Triumph of the Human Spirit* (Nashville: Cold Tree Press, 2002); Nick Del Calzo, Renee Rockford, and Linda J. Raper, eds., *The Triumphant Spirit: Portraits and Stories of Holocaust Survivors, Their Messages of Hope and Compassion* (Denver: Triumphant Spirit, 1997); Richard Glazar, *Trap with a Green Fence: Survival in Treblinka* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1995); Richard Glazar, *Die Falle mit dem Grünen Zaun: Überleben in Treblinka* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1992); Martin Gray, *For Those I Loved*, ed. Max Gallo, 35th anniversary expanded edition (Charlottesville, Va.: Hampton Roads, 2006); Kuperhand and Kuperhand, *Shadows of Treblinka*; Ya'akov Müller, "Eyewitness Testimony 47. The Uprising in Treblinka," in *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution*, ed. Isaiah Trunk (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 262–68; Marian Platkiewicz, "A Revolt in Hell," in *Plotzk (Plock): A History of an Ancient Jewish Community in Poland*, ed. Eliahu Eisenberg (Tel Aviv: Hamenora Publishing House, n.d.), www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/plock/plo76.html; Chil Rajchman, *The Last Jew of Treblinka: A Survivor's Memory, 1942–1943*, trans. Solon Beinfeld (New York: Pegasus Books, 2011); Hershl Sperling, "Treblinka—Eye-Witness Report," in *Treblinka Survivor: The Life and Death of Hershl Sperling*, ed. Mark S. Smith (Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: History Press, 2010), 243–52; Frank Stiffel, *The Tale of the Ring: A Kaddish* (Wainscott, N.Y.: Pushcart, 1994); Strawczynski, "Ten Months in Treblinka"; Eddie Weinstein, *17 Days in Treblinka: Daring to Resist, and Refusing to Die*, 4th edition (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009); Samuel Willenberg, *Revolt in Treblinka* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 1984); Samuel Willenberg, "I Survived Treblinka," in Donat, *Death Camp Treblinka*, 189–213.

⁴³ "About the Visual History Archive," USC Shoah Foundation VHA.

possibly kept from Donat because he lacked the research language skills. Poliakiewicz published his Yiddish-language memoir of the Holocaust and surviving Treblinka through a press in Buenos Aires in 1948.⁴⁴ Although available well before release of Donat's book, not having achieved a wide dissemination, this source did not come to his attention. It is clear from his citations and bibliography that Donat either read or had access to translations of English, Polish, German, and Hebrew documents and testimonies. There is no conclusive indication, however, that he had access to Russian or Ukrainian sources. Donat's personal memoir, *The Holocaust Kingdom*, proves that he had some capacity in Yiddish.⁴⁵ However, *The Death Camp Treblinka* does not demonstrate that he read or located sources in the language.

Donat's primary concerns were the history of what went on inside Treblinka and tracing survivor lives thereafter in the quest to record their stories. Had he interested himself in the prehistories of victims more broadly, the language problem would have only grown more severe. As the stones at the gates of Treblinka indicate today, those deported to the camp may have spoken Russian, Polish, French, German, Czech, Slovak, Greek, Bulgarian, Macedonian, and a number of other languages in use in the former Yugoslav state. All this was in addition to Yiddish, Ladino, and probably more. The overwhelming majority of Treblinka's Eastern European Jewish victims would have been Yiddish speakers, but accessing records of their lives and the conditions that surrounded them in their states of origin would still require some capacity for the local majority languages. This issue alone may well be why no historian has yet attempted to tell a unified story of all the communities lost at Treblinka.

When viewed with knowledge of their evolution, the same eleven national stones at the entrance to today's memorial help represent the transnationality of this single place and how even this has changed over time. When constructed in 1964, the monument included only ten state stones with that of Macedonia not installed until 2009.⁴⁶ The placement of this marker means that the commemoration of Treblinka's victims now includes mention of two states that no longer exist—Yugoslavia and the USSR—as well as one that did not appear on any map when the camp was in operation. As the survivors of Treblinka have moved beyond borders, so too has its memory and commemoration. Much like the ever-widening dispersion of the Treblinka archive among the new homes of the survivor diaspora, changes to the memorial help illustrate how the history of a single place can require truly transnational reach.

⁴⁴ Symcha Poliakiewicz, *A tog in treblinka: Khronik fun a yiddish lebn* (One Day in Treblinka: Chronicle of a Jewish Life) (Buenos Aires: Industria Argentina—Tsentral-farband fun poylishe yidn in argentine [Central Union of Polish Jews in Argentina], 1948).

⁴⁵ Alexander Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom: A Memoir* (Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1999).

⁴⁶ Marek Kucia, "Holocaust Memorials in Central and Eastern Europe: Communist Legacies, Transnational Influences and National Developments," Intergovernmental Research Institution, European Network for Remembrance and Solidarity, April 20, 2017, <http://www.enrs.eu/en/news/47-articles/1746-holocaust-memorials-in-central-and-eastern-europe-communist-legacies-transnational-influences-and-national-developments>; "Historical Injustice against Jews from Macedonia Corrected," Holocaust Fund Macedonia, October 2, 2009, <http://holocaustfund.org/?p=1223&lang=en>.

Alexander Donat's pioneering research helped uncover the worldwide connections of Treblinka survivors and began the process of collecting their histories. Thirty-eight years later, this work continues. New technologies and a greater focus on the history of the Holocaust in general aid it in some ways while also presenting new dilemmas with which succeeding researchers and archivists must grapple. Witold Chrostowski's 2004 book *Extermination Camp Treblinka* exemplifies contention with these issues.⁴⁷ Working in the internet age, Chrostowski located a great deal more information than Donat had at his fingertips, but Chrostowski also seems to have lacked the travel and access funding to view many components of the archive.⁴⁸

Although Donat would have certainly found internet resources and digitized archive keyword searches revolutionary, he too would have fast learned that these tools are not yet cures for the difficulties of transnational research in their current forms. Chrostowski worked from the knowledge gathered by Donat but had neither the ability to access digital collections with high cost barriers nor the funding or time to visit the USHMM, Yad Vashem, and other physical collections. Conducting his research as a graduate student in Poland, however, Chrostowski's work displays the same sort of local knowledge Berger's *Experten der Vernichtung* achieves with German sources. Tracing the difficult intricacies of transnational research that emerge in an analysis of Donat's work and that of later historians is not intended as an attack on their abilities. Revealing these difficulties instead demonstrates how Chrostowski's and Berger's contributions move as intellectual descendants from those of Donat like generational steps forward in the process of broadening Treblinka research and source collection.

In the same *American Historical Review* conversation in which Christopher Bayly participated, Isabel Hofmeyr commented on the problematic nature of research travel for scholars from certain states and the increased costs associated with the desire to make transnational research a new norm.⁴⁹ While pushing historical research to be more transnational hopefully should result in work that better demonstrates the connections of places and people across time and space, this trend nonetheless raises issues that are not easily addressed. Attempts to trace the postwar lives of the Treblinka survivor diaspora and gather fragments of the archive they created highlights the myriad language skills, resources, and time such work requires. These issues present the saddening possibility that the transnational turn may make the subject matter of historical works more inclusive while simultaneously rendering such research all but impossible for historians without the necessary funds to take part.⁵⁰

Possible solutions to the issues raised by transnational research and diaspora collections are not simple, but at least a few hold promise. Cross-border collaboration by research groups and

⁴⁷ Chrostowski, *Extermination Camp Treblinka*.

⁴⁸ Chrostowski's bibliography shows extensive online research but no archival travel beyond his native Poland and neighboring Germany; see *ibid.*, 117–19.

⁴⁹ "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," 1450–51.

⁵⁰ For additional exploration of cost barriers and the difficulties of transnational research, see Nancy L. Green, "The Trials of Transnationalism: It's Not as Easy as It Looks," *Journal of Modern History* 89 (December 2017): 872–73.

consortia of archives and historians could help link widely separated collections and bring together individuals working on related topics. Still, for projects like these to proliferate, the academy will need to decide how far it wants to take novel methods and how willing it is to make the system of scholar advancement and funding open to the products of group work and attempts to innovate. Likewise, individual archives around the world holding related subject matter will need to decide how closely they are willing to cooperate.

Thinking back to the memorial's state stones highlights the need for and potential of cross-border cooperation in research and archival stewardship. If similar steles were to be carved representing countries holding some part of this scattered collection, they would include Argentina, Australia, Canada, Germany, Israel, Macedonia, the United States, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Uruguay, and possibly others yet unknown. The creation of most materials in the Treblinka archive as outlined above demonstrates that they do currently reside in their states of creation and original provenance. The American and Israeli collections of oral and video testimonies particularly illustrate how these documents—as the files of a survivor diaspora at home in new states—truly are voices making up integral parts of the heritage of these nations. As such, I do not propose that repatriation of the Treblinka archive to any one place is either necessary or appropriate. Recognition of the fragmentary nature of these holdings by each institution, however, and a willingness of archivists to recast themselves as stewards of Treblinka history as opposed to custodians of discrete record sets does seem fitting.

In his discussion of the issues inherent with work on “Archival Diasporas,” Ricardo Punzalan suggests “institutional collaboration” and the “linking of related materials” as fruitful solutions.⁵¹ Ultimately, this consideration again returns to how archivists think of the provenance of these records. In addition to Hurley's concept of parallel provenance and Bastian's ideas on place as provenance, Michelle Caswell contributes her understanding of what she calls community-based provenance.⁵² For Caswell—a scholar intimately aware of the archival aftereffects of mass violence—archivists should rethink “provenance as it applies to records of human rights abuses to include survivors [and descendants] as key stakeholders,” while recasting archivists' own role from that of custodian “to one of stewardship (in which archivists steward records on behalf of communities).”⁵³ In his article “Ethnicity as Provenance,” Joel Wurl concurs with Caswell, adding that “stewardship recognizes the futility of referring to a repository's holdings as anything more than a selection of potentially useful sources,” as is obviously the case with any single Treblinka-related holding. “The goals of stewardship,” Wurl continues, “are preservation and access to information, wherever it might be physically held.”⁵⁴ The digital age, as we have

⁵¹ Punzalan, “Archival Diasporas,” 328.

⁵² Michelle Caswell, “Rethinking Inalienability: Trusting Nongovernmental Archives in Transitional Societies,” *American Archivist* 76, no. 1 (Spring–Summer 2013): 130.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 115. For additional examples of Caswell's work on archives and human rights, see Michelle Caswell, “Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse: Lessons from Community Archives,” *Archival Science* 14, nos. 3–4 (October 2014): 307–22, and “Defining Human Rights Archives: Introduction to the Special Double Issue on Archives and Human Rights,” *Archival Science* 14, nos. 3–4 (October 2014): 207–13.

⁵⁴ Joel Wurl, “Ethnicity as Provenance: In Search of Values and Principles for Documenting the Immigrant Experience,” *Archival Issues* 29, no. 1 (2005): 72.

seen in the improved searchability and usability of the above profiled collections, is thankfully providing innovative new solutions to challenges such as these.

In their article “The Taste of ‘Data Soup’ and the Creation of a Pipeline for Transnational Historical Research,” authors Jennifer Edmond, Natasa Bulatovic, and Alexander O’Connor not only display but embody advancements in transnational research with useful cues and technological tools for archivists.⁵⁵ These authors show how the “Collaborative European [sic] Digital Archival Research Infrastructure” (CENDARI) project links several archival collections under a unified search and digital access program. In the field of Holocaust studies, the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI) is actively pursuing similar goals.

The EHRI network currently links metadata for widely scattered archival holdings and hosts a wide array of relationship-building programs for researchers and archivists. This collaboration to date includes twenty-four full partner institutions located in seventeen countries.⁵⁶ Many, though not all, of the major individual collections mentioned or cited in this research are linked with EHRI. Although I note some of the flaws in keyword metadata searches above, I do believe the ability to conduct these across a worldwide digital network of similar topic archives is revolutionary. Stoler’s work and exploration of the individual Treblinka holdings make clear the state-driven nature of many archival collections and how important it is to understand the original intent of their creators. Edmond and colleagues point to a possible path beyond these issues by demonstrating the CENDARI system’s ability to break out of the national frame and enable searches in several archives and libraries across state borders, as does the EHRI. In its most hopeful contributions, the CENDARI system also works to compensate for language differences and encourages researchers to contribute metadata tagging while collaborating on the interpretation of holdings in digital space.⁵⁷ The emergence of search systems like CENDARI and EHRI could ideally enable an improved form of digital side-glance, connecting relevant archives containing collections with demonstrable parallel provenance. Such systems may make it possible for historians to compare holdings and make stronger, better-educated decisions on where to do deep dives as well as enable archivists to create enhanced collaborative finding aids with reach well beyond the walls of any one institution.⁵⁸

The proliferation of Holocaust museums, education centers, and local resource collections demands that we strengthen and expand networks like the EHRI to counteract a possible

⁵⁵ Jennifer Edmond, Natasa Bulatovic, and Alexander O’Connor, “The Taste of ‘Data Soup’ and the Creation of a Pipeline for Transnational Historical Research,” *Journal of the Japanese Association for Digital Humanities* 1 (n.d.): 107–22.

⁵⁶ “EHRI Partners,” European Holocaust Research Infrastructure, June 2015, <https://www.ehri-project.eu/ehri-partners>.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 112–15, 118. For additional work in the field of archival science supporting such collaboration, see Anne J. Gilliland, “Networking Records in Their Diaspora: A Reconceptualisation of ‘Displaced Records’ in a Postnational World,” and Douglas Cox, “Revisiting the Law and Politics of Compromise,” both in Lowry, *Displaced Archives*, 180, 181, 183, 209–10.

⁵⁸ The EHRI has so far produced two such “Research Guides”; see “EHRI—Research Guides,” European Holocaust Research Infrastructure, 2015, <https://portal.ehri-project.eu/guides>.

atomization of efforts that the otherwise positive addition of new infrastructure could produce. Regardless of how widespread collaborative initiatives such as CENDARI and the EHRI become in the future, however, the academy should take pains to reward the type of research done by Donat, Berger, Chrostowski, and others. The historical profession must recognize how works such as these contribute a generational advancement of knowledge that each successive attempt updates and expands. Transnational histories working from diffused archives like that left behind by the Treblinka survivor diaspora necessitate an understanding of success that allows researchers to contribute what their time and resources make possible in their professional circumstances. Collaborative projects networking historians, archivists, and sources across national spaces offer possible answers to the transnational research dilemma and the responsibilities of stewardship over collections invested with complex parallel provenances as well as weighty emotional and historical significance. Indeed, this sort of teamwork and use of technology may be the only way to bring together the skills and local knowledge necessary to produce a unified history of the multilingual, multinational, and geographically dispersed communities destroyed at Treblinka.