

The Atlas of Holocaust Literature



Introduction

The Atlas of Holocaust Literature, a digital map of the Warsaw Ghetto based on selected testimonies, is an example of fruitful interdisciplinary cooperation between researchers from different domains: digital humanities, Holocaust studies and cartography.

Keywords

Holocaust studies, digital humanities, cartography, open access, scholarly communication

Summary

The [Atlas of Holocaust Literature](#), currently available only in Polish, is one of the scholarly digital collections on the [New Panorama of Polish Literature platform](#), created and developed in the Institute of Literary Research, Polish Academy of Sciences (IBL PAN). The work started as an IBL PAN project and was also supported in 2019 by a local cultural heritage grant from the City of Warsaw Culture Bureau (*Cultural heritage and contemporary identity* programme). The team is currently applying for funding to support further development of the project. Digital collections published on the platform are created by combining scholarly knowledge, digital narrative structures and carefully selected visual material – prepared by a graphic designer or obtained from Cultural Heritage Institutions such as museums and libraries.

As the [list of Atlas contributors and their roles shows](#), the work on the Atlas required significant interdisciplinary cooperation, linking specific areas of expertise to provide a thematic, dynamic, digital map. The team of researchers worked with selected Holocaust testimonies from the Warsaw Ghetto from the Ringelblum Archive to extract almost a thousand spatial units (addresses, routes, areas) and to link them with people and events. A digital humanities team took care of the technical side by establishing the ontology of the project (types of entities in the database and links between them) as well as the modes of data visualisation on the platform. The graphic designer and cartographer worked on the visual side of the project and particularly on the spatial representation of the collected material. All of these activities required close cooperation and knowledge exchange between the teams involved.

For most of the project the teams met and worked separately, with PI and the digital humanities team coordinating the work and “translating” specific issues and concepts between them. This type of cooperation was dubbed a hybrid model for managing digital humanities projects (Tabak, 2017). It entails that each project has three main roles relevant to its key areas: digital aspects, humanities aspects and the interdisciplinary interaction between the two. Thus, digital humanists need to possess some competence in different disciplinary areas involved in the project to be able to serve as a bridge between the communities



and to ensure the mutual understanding. The hybrid model of interdisciplinary cooperation is a pragmatic and realistic choice for larger teams where individual project members require only a certain level of understanding of the work of others in order to perform their own tasks.

Furthermore, the project is a good example of cross-sectoral cooperation between humanities researchers and Cultural Heritage Institutions. It shows how tangible cultural heritage, like photographs or handwritten testimonies, can be contextualised and situated in time and space by researchers. Thus, the result could be also treated as a cultural heritage collection, on the one hand, and a research tool for Holocaust scholars, on the other.

Further Resources

- [Atlas of Holocaust Literature](#) (Polish only)
- [Atlas of Holocaust Literature research team overview](#)
- Video presentation: [Atlas of Holocaust Literature | New Panorama of Polish Literature's digital collection - YouTube](#)
- Tabak, Edin. 2017. 'A Hybrid Model for Managing DH Projects'. *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 011 (1). <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/11/1/000284/000284.html>.

