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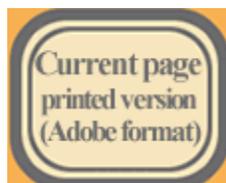


## University to help create 'virtual' Holocaust memorials

**The EU recently awarded €1.5M to support 'MEMORIAL' - an ambitious project designed to enable obscure, fragile and damaged records of the Holocaust to be preserved in 'virtual' memorials and made available for research. The University of Liverpool will be making an important contribution to this project, which should also solve a generic problem faced by many archives around the world.**

The nature of the problem is well illustrated by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the world's biggest repository of Holocaust material. Yad Vashem has 55 million pages of unpublished documents written in dozens of European languages. These range from personal letters, diaries and memoirs to the records of Jewish organisations and legal documentation from proceedings against Nazi war criminals and collaborators.

There is currently no way for Yad Vashem to extract information from paper documents which vary so greatly in type, size and quality, and create a comprehensive electronic equivalent which can be stored, shared, interrogated and linked to related documents. At present, it is only possible to do this with high-quality printed materials like books and journal articles.



The EU's Information Society Technologies Programme awarded the €1.5M grant - the maximum available - to an eight-partner



consortium which aims to overcome the constraints afflicting Yad Vashem and many other archives around the world. Over €0.25M of this will be coming to the University to support research undertaken by the Pattern Recognition & Image Analysis Research Group (PRImA) in the Dept of Computer Science. "The core part of this project is to obtain an accurate electronic version of a paper document, creating an interactive, multi-user electronic document", explains PRImA's leader, Dr Apostolos Antonacopoulos. "This will require developments in scanning techniques and equipment, segmentation of graphical images from textual ones, intelligent character recognition of textual images and background cleaning of 'noise'.

"The aim is to create a 'Digital Document Workbench' facility which can be tested on real documents selected from Nazi concentration camp memorial archives by a team of technical and historical experts. The technology will also be validated via a specially developed publicly-accessible website. Our role, here in Liverpool, will be to research new methodologies and verify them using large-scale, real-life data sets supplied by Holocaust archives."

The project started on 1 February and is scheduled for completion in two and a half years. In an era of rising mistrust between different ethnic and religious groups, the virtual memorials created will provide a valuable resource for educators, illustrating the potential consequences of prejudice. The project is also likely to stimulate the introduction of a new profession - that of 'digital archivist'.

*For more information, contact Apostolos Antonacopoulos on x43695 or at [aa@csc.liv.ac.uk](mailto:aa@csc.liv.ac.uk)*

## Significant commission for IMPACT

**The Treaty of Amsterdam requires the European Commission to consider the health implications of all its policies - but there is currently no accepted methodology for assessing this within the EU. Now, a partnership led by Liverpool's pioneering International Health Impact Assessment Consortium (IMPACT) has won a contract to develop a methodology and a set of tools.**



All policies affect health, and the impact can be positive or negative. For instance, transport policies which make provision for cyclists and pedestrians lead to health 'gains', as do social policies which are inclusive. Conversely, transport policies which increase pollution from cars, or agricultural policies which promote the use of tobacco and dairy fats can damage health.

Systematically identifying the potential health effects of new policies and projects and the distribution of those effects within populations requires appropriate tools. The EU has well-established tools for Environmental Impact Assessment, and uses them to protect the environment and the ecosystem. As yet, the EU has no standard tools which can be used to promote health gains and minimise health risks.

Britain has considerable expertise in health impact assessment (HIA) - and IMPACT is widely recognised as a leader in this field. IMPACT brings together experienced specialists from the University of Liverpool, the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, Liverpool John Moores University and the Liverpool Health Authority. IMPACT members undertake research and development, consultancy and technical assistance, and education and training in HIA.

The EC Directorate for Health & Consumer Protection (SANCO) has now awarded a €462,000 contract to a four-nation partnership, led by IMPACT. Their remit is to review existing HIA methods from around the world and synthesise the best, producing a methodology tailor-made for the European Union, which they will then test on selected European policies. The project started in December 2001 and is scheduled for completion in November 2003.

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