Case Study

CROWLEY

HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL
ANDOVER-HARVARD THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY

JUST THE FACTS

CLIENT
Harvard Divinity School
Andover-Harvard Theological Library

PROJECT
Digitized Records of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

STATISTICS
- 268 boxes of records
- 238,000 documents (hand-written correspondence, onion-skin typed reports, telegrams)
- 3,000 photographs

SOLUTION
- 300 dpi color uncompressed TIFF (print materials)
- 400 dpi color uncompressed TIFF (photos)
- JPEG 2000 with metadata (print materials)
- 35mm archival microfilm postscan output

EQUIPMENT/SOFTWARE
- Zeutschel Omniscan 10000 TT A2 color scanner
- Zeutschel OS 12000 CG color/grayscale scanner
- Zeutschel OmniScan OS 12 software
- Zeutschel OP500 ArchiveWriter
- AGFA microfilm

Preserving Holocaust History through Global Partnership

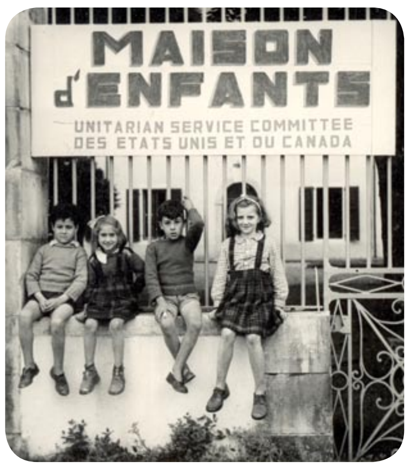
Digitized Records of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

"At the time, our manuscripts and archives department had one staff person – me."

– Fran O'Donnell, Curator of Manuscripts and Archives Andover-Harvard Theological Library

The Opportunity

In July 2006, Fran O'Donnell and the Andover-Harvard Theological Library (AHTL) received a letter from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (the Museum) asking to explore the possibility of digitizing and microfilming the records of the Unitarian and Universalist Service Committees archived at Harvard Divinity School. The Museum, along with the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (CDJC), France, was prepared to fund the digitization and microfilming efforts in order to make them available to scholars, researchers and the public free of charge.



Home for children, St. Goin, France

Photo courtesy of the Andover-Harvard Theological Library

Lack of staff, sheer volume—the collection held nearly **300,000 documents** and **3,000 photographs**—and legalities were but a few issues that required careful consideration. Ultimately, O'Donnell and the AHTL deemed the opportunity viable and the detailed planning and action began.

The Collection

The Unitarian and Universalist Service Committees worked tirelessly during and after WWII to assist Jews and non-Jews fleeing war-torn Europe. The groups established hospitals, orphanages and food/clothing distribution centers in France, England, Germany, Portugal and other countries; helped émigrés navigate red tape in order to gain residence and employment in the United States; set up a central location index service to help re-connect friends and relatives; and later established medical missions all over the world.

The AHTL is the official archive for the records of the now-combined Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). The digitization project includes selections from **31 collections** and consisted of **268 boxes of archival material**—hand-written correspondence, onion-skin typed documents, telegrams and photographs dating from 1938 to 1967—and sheds light on the efforts of the organization, the volunteer staff and the lives of the refugees touched by UUSC.

The final scanned records are divided into five general categories:

- Executive director records
- General administration records
- Fundraising and publicity records
- Case files
- Special initiatives

Challenges and Solutions

Primary considerations included:

Staffing: Shortly after the decision to proceed was made, the AHTL archives gained a staff position. The two archivists were then joined by two other library staff members and a representative from Harvard's Office of Information Systems, who joined as technical advisor. Relatively new to a digitization project of this size, the "brave little band," as O'Donnell called them, forged ahead.

Legalities: In order to draw a clear line for the chain of command, among other reasons, Harvard's Office of General Counsel drew up two agreements: a collaboration agreement between Harvard Divinity School and the Museum and a services agreement between Harvard Divinity School and The Crowley Company. Additionally, there was some initial concern about privacy and copyright issues in the records, since they are not yet public domain. It was deemed that the historical significance of the files outweighed privacy concerns but that the AHTL would respect the objections of any record or copyright claimant as a courtesy.

Conversion Bureau Selection: The unexpected funding, volume and importance of the archives allowed for the outsourcing of the digitization and microfilming operations. The Crowley Company was recommended by the Museum based on past work with a sister collection. "Our in-house capabilities at the time did not extend to the wide variety of formats found in the UUSC collections," states O'Donnell. "Crowley was able to offer us technology, expertise, experience and reasonable pricing. The staff was easy to work with, which was essential to the success of this project."

Storage and Access: After discussion, it was agreed that AHTL would receive their own copies of the images to be stored in Harvard's Digital Repository Service (DRS), the storage, preservation and retrieval system for Harvard libraries' digital collections. Images could be viewed over the AHTL website, which the Museum would link to from their website.

The Digitization

Two years after the initial inquiry, the records were ready for digitization and the first shipments reached The Crowley Company in September 2008.

Preparation: Once the collections to be scanned were identified by the Museum representatives, much of the preparation was performed by AHTL. Three Harvard Divinity School students were hired to de-staple and flatten records, as well as to flag duplicate records with "skip" markers so that an image was not digitized twice. The material was in generally good condition with some pieces beginning to fade or decay—quite typical of an archival collection. Staff members also prepared hundreds of target sheets for microfilming and edited finding aids, which were then encoded in Encoded Archival Description (EAD) and added to Harvard's Online Archival Search Information System (OASIS).

Crowley's use of Zeutschel book scanners ensured optimal image quality and gentle handling of the UUSC archives.

Transportation: Covered by insurance, periodic shipments of approximately 70 Hollinger boxes each were sent to Crowley via a professional art moving company and returned in the same manner. Digitized files were sent to AHTL on hard drive via an international carrier.

Initial test batch: Critical to the success of the project was a test batch, included in the first shipment. These testers included a range of materials and sizes found across the collection. "This turned out to be a very valuable step," notes O'Donnell. "It allowed us to view the items in Harvard's system before proceeding with the entire project and to make tweaks prior to the scanning of the full collection. It was particularly important in helping to determine whether OCR was worth pursuing. Finding that it wasn't early on increased the manpower and cost efficiency of the project." From Crowley's standpoint, a test batch "always helps to clarify the details on any project with a diversity of media," says vice president, Pat Crowley. "It allows the client to see the quality of the end product while it still makes economic sense on both sides to make alterations to the process as needed."

Scanning: Once the records were received, they were manually registered in Crowley's manifest system and distributed to scan specialists operating **Zeutschel 10000** and **12000-series** book scanners. These high-end scanners, which accommodate oversize materials and are gentler on archival papers than a document scanner, produce reproduction-quality digital images. The scans were then placed in the appropriate directories, named according to AHTL requirements and made available for quality control inspection. Once deemed proper, the files were placed on hard drives and delivered. Upon receipt, the images were subject to a thorough quality inspection by AHTL.

Deliverables: Although reporting to AHTL, The Crowley Company was tasked with providing two sets of deliverables: uncompressed TIFF files to the Museum and derivative JPEG2000 files, which are less expensive to store and which provide more flexibility for Harvard's delivery system, to AHTL.

Archive writing: The last of the digital scanning was completed in 2010 and the final step to completion is the archive writing of the digital files to microfilm. This practice is again gaining popularity in the archive sectors as it ensures that the scan of the original is preserved in a medium proven to last up to 500 years. As technology evolves and access to digital files changes constantly, microfilm provides an unequalled level of access security.

Fran O'Donnell sums up the UUSC project: "The opportunity to make these collections available on such a wide scale and to preserve these very valuable records, some fading and crumbling, was too good to pass up. Working with Harvard staff, representatives from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and The Crowley Company, we created a team that ultimately created digital access to important Holocaust diaspora archives for scholars and individuals around the world."

About The Crowley Company

Incorporated in 1980, The Crowley Company is a leading digital and analog film technologies company headquartered in Frederick, Maryland with manufacturing divisions (Mekel, Extek and HF Processor brands) in San Dimas, California. With over 100 employees, The Crowley Company provides an extensive number of digital document and film conversion services to the publishing, commercial, government and archive sectors. It also manufactures, sells and services high-speed microfilm, microfiche, aperture card and paper scanners, microfilm duplicators, film processors, micrographics equipment, book/large-format scanners and 16/35mm archive writers.

For more information:

www.thecrowleycompany.com

www.newenglandarchivists.org/pdfs/NEA_Newsletter_October_2010.pdf

www.hds.harvard.edu/news/article_archive/ahtl_holocaust.html

http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2010/03/witnesses-to-history/

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