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Printed in the United States of America
DIGIBAECK:
500 YEARS OF GERMAN-JEWISH HISTORY ONLINE

A transcript of the DigiBaeck Launch event, October 16, 2012
At the Center for Jewish History, New York, NY

On October 16, 2012, Leo Baeck Institute launched “DigiBaeck”, a pioneering effort that put 3.5 million pages of primary source materials about the history of German-speaking Jewry online. The treasures in DigiBaeck range from personal papers and photographs of luminaries like Albert Einstein and Moses Mendelssohn to letters, diaries, recipes, and other ephemera chronicling ordinary life.

To complete this monumental effort, Leo Baeck Institute partnered with Internet Archive, a non-profit digital library that offers permanent storage of and free public access to digitized materials, including websites, music, moving images, and nearly three million public-domain books.

What follows is a transcript of the launch event held at LBI in October 2012. The transcript has been minimally edited for clarity. A full video of the launch event is available at:

lbi.org/digibaeck/launch
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INTRODUCTION
by Carol Kahn Strauss,
Executive Director, Leo Baeck Institute

Good morning. Let me welcome you...I'm Carol Strauss, the director of Leo Baeck Institute, and it is really a wonderful opportunity to welcome all of you. Today’s event is the “DigiBaeck Launch”; it should be called the “enormous thanks to Bernie Blum launch”, because without the guidance, encouragement, and engagement of our past president it wouldn't be happening. Having said that, let me add just a few things, the first of which is that our guiding principle has been that history is never unimportant. LBI was founded in 1955 at a time when Central European Jewry had been destroyed. The founders were committed to salvaging as much original documentation as possible, to tell the story of hundreds of years of productive life. The poet Paul Valéry once said that "Great events are great only for little minds; for more attentive minds it's the unnoticed, continual events that count." We, therefore, made the decision to digitize all the material in our archives, not just the so-called "important" collections, but all collections. Since every generation gives new meaning to the past in the context of the present, LBI chose not to pre-determine what will matter most. Therefore, everything will be accessible.

I'd also like to mention the difficulty of digitizing material such as ours. It has become routine to digitize documents, books, journals, and periodicals, but not so routine when the document is a flimsy piece of paper, lightly written in pencil on both sides, with censors' marks. When the material is not formatted—no contrast, no margins—a lot of trial and error is involved in getting it right. As a businessman, Bernie recognized that the challenge of a start-up requires a lot of false starts, and he was willing to see us through, so we were able to pioneer methods now available to others.

The library and archives of our organization bear witness to virtually every aspect of German Jewish experience in the last 500 years. These documents, entrusted to us by families, individuals, and organizations, are the collective memory of Central European Jewry, and today this history is widely available through DigiBaeck. The materials in the archive offer insight into very contemporary themes: racism, discrimination, emancipation, assimilation, integration; plus religious scholarship, commercial life, the Holocaust, restitution, contribution to the arts and sciences. It is a history that documents the everyday lives of men, women, and children through photographs, recipes, diaries, and also through the papers of Nobel Prize winners. DigiBaeck provides full online access to primary-source materials encompassing five centuries of Jewish life in Central Europe.
Now it is my honor to introduce Brewster Kahle. As the founder of Internet Archive, which is probably the largest digital library in the world, he has been working to provide universal access to all knowledge for more than twenty-five years. We are very proud that Internet Archive is LBI's digitization partner for DigiBaeck. Thank you, Brewster.
Thank you Carol. Thank you to the Leo Baeck Institute. Thank you Bernie. This has been a real honor to work on this project. I started and now run an organization that's trying to build, as Carol said, universal access to all knowledge. The opportunity to make all things published—all books, music, video, lectures, webpages, software—available to anyone is within our grasp. Technologically it's doable; cost-wise it's doable; and it's even legally permissible, because we live in a time that really is in favor of open-access to materials.

What sets the Leo Baeck Institute project apart for us is that it's a mass digitization of archives, and usually when archives are beginning to come online, they take just the cream of the crop, the greatest hits, if you will, and photograph those and put them on a website, as a way of introducing people and trying to get them into the physical archives. This project went further, to go deep into the archives, to try to digitize the whole thing, and make it available, understandable, on the net, and this is a real first. So I'm going to give a broad context of how this project fits in, mostly from the published works angle, because that's where most of the work has gone on.

I'm going to argue that we actually can cost-effectively make everything available online. I'll give an idea of how we're dealing with the cost issues, the technical issues, and the law issues. We see ourselves in a tradition of physical libraries, like the Boston Public Library, built by some of the most property-oriented capitalists ever, but they carved above the door, "Free To The People". That is how Carnegie put it, and in Boston it was "Free To All." So the idea of making everything available for free is within the tradition of libraries and archives. I'm going to go over text, music, and video, to give a general idea of how you can go about this. If you're going for texts, the Library Of Congress is by far the largest library in the world. It's got about 26 to 28 million books. And a book, if you had it in Microsoft Word, is about a megabyte. So 28 million megabytes—it goes mega, giga, tera—is about 26 terabytes. And with current hard drives, that's seven of them. So in one shopping cart in Best Buy, for less than what we pay in rent in a month, you could have the disk storage to store all of the words in the Library of Congress.

Something has changed. Something pretty interesting has happened. And people are starting to get used to accessing books, not just new books, but older books, online, and they are starting to look like books on screens. We've also tried to
bring them to people who don't have screens by going and printing them out again, making a digital Bookmobile, so a Bookmobile this size would have one million books in it, and it's a print-on-demand system. We have some in India; this is the launch of a Bookmobile we did in Alexandria, Egypt; a kid helped make a book; and it's the first book this kid has ever owned. It's about a buck a book. For a buck, you can download, print and bind a book, and kids can walk away with a book and own it. At a buck a book you can give books away. So we think this is an interesting approach. We also did it in Uganda. But right now there are all sorts of reading devices. Our job is to get these materials to anybody, anywhere, with any kind of service. One of my favorites is a device for the blind and dyslexic. It reads to you. It sounds a little bit like a robot, but we've taken the books, run them through optical character recognition, and made them available for free downloading for the blind and dyslexic. And you can do it, because of copyright laws, all the way to current books, even up to Harry Potter. When we made this available with a couple million books, it multiplied the number of books available to that community by a factor of five or ten.

So how do you come to do printed books? (And we'll spend more time on the archives in a minute.) We designed our own book scanner, which takes these professional-grade digital cameras, and museum-grade lighting, to do really good photographs of books, raising and lowering glass with a foot pedal to flatten the page to get a really good image. This is what a scanning center at the Internet Archive looks like, and now we're in eight countries, thirty-two libraries, digitizing about a thousand books a day. And we do microfilm and the rest. We're also digitizing Balinese material, which is completely fun. We really wanted to go and take a whole language, everything written in a language, and make it available online. And I went and made an offer to Greece, and Iceland, and they said, "Oh, that's very interesting. No." Greece was sort of busy. But the Balinese said "Great, let's do that." It's a more constrained literature, and it's all written on palm leaves. But we've now digitized it, and made it available freely, and I guess they just don't have as many lawyers going and finding reasons to not do things, so now their literature is online and we're trying to figure out how to transliterate it so that the young people of Bali will continue to speak Balinese in a time when Indonesian is being promoted by the government, and young folks are trying to learn English. We have a lot of scanning centers, and it's going very well. We have about three million books that are available, 250,000 modern books, and lots for lending.

So the way we've dealt with copyright laws for modern books is we lend them. If you're in one of the libraries that have joined the lending program, take Boston Public Library, for instance—there are now a thousand libraries that are doing this lending program—you can borrow a digitized book. We've
taken in-copyright books and digitized them, and now we lend them to one person at a time. So it's only available to one person at a time, and if you've checked it out, then nobody else can have it for two weeks. Then somebody else can get it. It's sort of being, kind of, well, library-like. And this has stuck, at least people haven't gotten too mad at us for doing this, and it's now propagating quite well. The idea of lending books where we've either purchased the ebook or digitized a physical book is working quite well. Boston Public Library, for instance, has digitized this book from 1994 about Mayflower ancestors. Genealogists love the public library system, so we've been digitizing a lot of this material to make it available via lending. If you go to openlibrary.org, please try it out. It's a mechanism for trying to give a younger generation access to the 20th century. The 20th century is locked up with copyright. And it's an important century to remember, and it's really not very available to my children. My children look to things that are on screens—if it's not online, it's as if it doesn't exist. If it's not on Facebook, or Wikipedia, they're just too busy to go to a library. I'm a librarian; they have a librarian father, and they still won't go to a library! I think we have to go and bring the books to them, and try to find a way through the copyright wars.

Sound recordings are the same kind of thing. It takes a few more shopping carts in Best Buy to go and record all of this, but it's quite doable. It's quite a litigious area, putting all the CDs on line, and we haven't figured out how to do that without getting people mad, so we've found people that do want to have materials available. We've done concert recordings, where the bands are OK with it, and we've now got all sorts of other collections online as well. We have over a million audio recordings. The idea at the Internet Archive is that we offer free hosting forever. People can go put things on the Internet Archive as cultural materials and we preserve them for free. And this is capable of being done even within a small budget like ours based on technologies that make it possible to scale up to millions of recordings.

Moving images, things like Hollywood films, are fairly well used. We only have about thousand public domain ones, but the moving images that we've found are a lot of propaganda films, educational films, training films, that have been digitized mostly in the 20th century, or uploaded in the 21st century, and these are widely used. Remember in junior high school when there was a substitute teacher and they'd wheel in the film projector, and they'd show you one of these boring films with a guy with a flat-top? We have those films. And they're amazingly popular. People download them, and make them into new things, or maybe they use them for video wallpaper. I think it's just this generation trying to understand the 20th century through moving images. I don't know why they're popular, but they are, so we're bringing it to them. Lectures, and the like. We're doing a lot more film scanners, and really starting to work on home movies, 8 and 16 millimeter home
movies. We've also been recording television, since the year 2000, 20 channels of television, 24 hours a day, DVD quality. Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Iraqi, Al-Jazeera, BBC, CNN, ABC, Fox, and we've made some exhibits available, on 9/11, and as of just a few weeks ago, we've started lending television news. We put everything up since the year 2009. That's 300,000 news programs in the United States. We want to make everyone into a Jon Stewart research department. So you can go and find out what did this candidate, or what did some pundit say about something in the past and then come up with your own ideas of what's going on. This is something that we've again made available via lending and so far everybody's stayed calm in terms of the rights issues. The idea of having all moving images online is quite doable. We have now 500,000 things up on the Internet Archive, all available for free.

Sometimes the government gets a little overzealous in wanting to know what people are doing in these libraries, what they're reading and writing. As part of the Patriot Act they made it so they could demand information from information providers with a gag order, so you could never say that they'd even ever been there. We got one of these things demanding information about patrons' use of the Internet Archive from the FBI, and we asked our lawyers "What can we do?" And they said, "Well, you can't even tell your board that this ever happened. The only thing you can do to push back—there's no court—is to sue the United States Government." So we sued the United States Government. And we won. We were one of only three groups that have ever pushed back publicly against these letters demanding information, and there have been 500,000 of them. Most American companies are just going along with whatever the government asks for, but libraries have a tradition of pushing back and protecting reader privacy, which we think is important.

Software—there are 50,000 titles. We're probably most famous for archiving the World Wide Web. We try to take a snapshot of every web page, on every website, every two months, and we have done this since 1996. Users make use of this to see old websites—dorky old websites like MIT's back in 1996, which makes you feel better about your web design, when this is what MIT's looked like. But there's a role for some of this, to go and preserve this, because the government, in that Orwellian way, wants to change the past. So this is a page, a press release, from the government—the "Mission Accomplished" press release. A day later it was changed from "President Bush Announces Combat Operations Have Ended" to "Major Combat Operations Have Ended," and they made no notice that they changed a past press release.

What this project has moved forward into is rare books and letters. And this is, again, new for us, and new in terms of doing it at the scale that LBI has really pioneered. And it's done with some of the same ideas and some of the same
technology of basically taking photographs of these materials and then trying to
index them in such a way that people will actually find them. It's certainly better
than microfilm in terms of making it easily accessible, but we still have a long
way to go, and some of the work by Facebook and others, to bring
contextualization and make it so you can use these things I think is another
great step. We'll hear more about how these things are digitized, but it's
basically with cameras and careful processes.

The next big thing that's coming up in our world is personal digital archives, so
not only our digital archives of the stuff that is in our basements, and not just
the hard drives of our photographs that are sitting around from those years, but
also the things that are on Flickr, YouTube, or our Twitter feeds. How do we go
and bring that together? Because those companies come and go. We've archived
GeoCities, which went down. Yahoo Videos went down, Google Videos went
down, Fortune City went down, and on and on and on. Mobile Me was a
product by Apple, the richest company in the world. They just said, "Oh boy,
did you have some of your memories on there? It's not in our business plan.
Delete it." So we've gone out and proactively archived these, and how do you
go and make these generally available?

So, universal access to all knowledge I think could be one of the great
achievements of human kind. It could rank with the Library of Alexandria in
the ancient days, or the man on the moon. The idea of doing something that
is a real gift, that celebrates the openness, as well as the technology, of our
era is doable, and it's wonderful to be working with this fine institution to
see if we can extend this not just from published works but to archives in
general. Thank you very much.
Digitization of LBI collections at Internet Archive’s Princeton Scanning Center

Internet Archive BookMobile
archive.org

Print your own book
BookMobile
1,000,000 books inside
One dollar per book

Internet Archive’s mobile book-printing facility

www.mit.edu as captured by Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine on May 19, 1997
INTRODUCTION TO DIGI BAECK
By Bernard Blum,
Board Member and Former President, Leo Baeck Institute

Brewster Kahle has given us a broad perspective of the history and future of storing and retrieving knowledge. I’d like to fit DigiBaeck into that framework. For books and other printed media, the revolution that Brewster describes is rapidly being completed. Digitization has become the norm. Digitizing an entire archive—nearly 4,000 feet of archival boxes stacked end to end—presented us with a host of new challenges.

We knew it was important to overcome those challenges because we have such a large and unique collection here. Our archives contain original material from many luminaries I’m sure you’re familiar with, for example, from Moses Mendelssohn, the enlightenment philosopher who believed that Jews could engage with the wider German culture while retaining their Judaism, to those who flourished in the German-Jewish symbiosis he helped create, such as Albert Einstein, who is undoubtedly the most famous of the extraordinary number of German-speaking Jews who were at the vanguard of the natural sciences in the 20th century.

Equally important, however, are the documents of the daily lives of people—doctors, merchants, lawyers, artists, housewives, social workers, civil servants. They and their descendants preserved their letters, business records, photographs, report-cards, IDs, etc…not just because of a natural sentimental attachment to the ephemera of one’s own life and one’s ancestors’ lives, but because it was extraordinary that they existed at all. Entrusted to Leo Baeck Institute by refugees from Nazi Germany and their descendants, these papers represent the material evidence of a culture and a past that a brutal regime tried to violently extinguish. But they are also an untapped reservoir of primary source material for social history. Whether you are interested in the development of the textile industry in 19th century Silesia, or ladies’ fashion in Weimar Germany, or the development of the advertising business in early 20th century Berlin, or 19th century recipes for Lebkuchen, you will find it in LBI Archives.

We knew that making this material available to a wider audience was crucial, but first there was the question of getting the information out of those boxes and into digital images. To illustrate these challenges briefly, imagine how you would make a useful image of a piece of oil skin with writing on both sides, which was the standard for air mail in the middle of the twentieth century. We worked very closely with Internet Archive to develop techniques and standards for digitizing the nearly infinite variety of media found in the LBI archives.
Second, there was the question of how anyone would find anything useful in an online album of about 3.5 million images. Organizing and describing the information in our archives has been the work of decades, and DigiBaeck’s project staff has been working since 2007 to tie these descriptions to the digital images. These descriptions, “Finding Aids” adhere to standard created by the Library of Congress for Archives. Volunteers—many who escaped Germany themselves as youngsters—have also been crucial in this process, for example decoding the now obsolete “Sütterlin” script used in Germany until the early 20th century.

What does it take to get this done? When we started this project in 2007, we won the support of Internet Archive, who were eager to expand into the field of archives. A team of five people was assembled to handle the physical and digital flow of documents and to marry the finding aids to the digital images. In five years, we have digitized nearly everything in the LBI archives, which amounts to about 3.5 million images. We were able to save a great deal of time by digitizing the considerable portion of the archives that had been microfilmed directly from the films. The estimated project cost is 2.5 million dollars.

The success of DigiBaeck is the result of the skills and effort of the leaders, Frank Mecklenburg, Director of the Archives, Molly Hazelton, DigiBaeck Project Manager and David Bearman of Archimuse, our valuable consultant since inception. Equally important is the work of a dedicated staff at Leo Baeck Institute.

I hope that you will all log on to www.lbi.org/digibaek to explore for yourself. When you do, I think you will find that, despite the painstaking work we’ve done cataloging and organizing the material, the magnitude of information at your fingertips is surpassed only by the magnitude of the mysteries it contains. This is as it should be. Making sense of this material—finding answers to the many questions it poses and painting a full picture of the past that the sources can only outline in faint traces—is the essence of historical inquiry.

We have opened the door. You are invited in.
VIDEO TOUR OF INTERNET ARCHIVE’S
PRINCETON SCANNING CENTER

Pre-recorded video presentation by Robert Miller,
Global Director of Books, Internet Archive

MILLER: Good morning, I’m Robert Miller, Global Director of Books for the Internet Archive, and I’m here at the Princeton Scanning Center, where a lot of great material is being digitized for Leo Baeck Institute. I’d like to introduce you to several of my team members, and then do a demonstration of how the materials in print end up in digital form.

First, I’d like to introduce you to Stacey, my site coordinator. Stacey, what can you show us from Leo Baeck Institute?

STACEY: I have some file formats here that we digitize each month, about fifteen linear feet. This collection has a wide gamut of materials inside, as you can see. These materials are organized in New York at the LBI, then brought to our scanning center in New Jersey.

MILLER: Next, I’ll introduce you to Celeste, one of our camera operators.

CELESTE: When it comes to the actual shooting of the material, we first look through the folder to see how many items there are and determine whether there's anything unusual. For example, we found a transparent piece of paper which would not show up on the black shooting surface, so we had to cut another piece of paper to size to lay beneath it. Then we determine the largest size item in the folder, which in this case is about 28 inches long, and we raise the camera height to adjust for the specific size. We also adhere to strict preservation standards while handling the material. For example, we use small metal spatulas to turn pages to avoid pinching them with bare fingers.

MILLER: After the images are captured by Celeste, they are processed by our computers in San Francisco. It takes about twelve hours to finish processing them, but before we do this there's one other step, which Jenna will explain.

JENNA: After the items are shot, we build the EAD finding tool, which connects all of the folders from that particular collection. It's like an index that helps you find everything in the collection at one URL. Right now we are looking at the Ludwig Newman collection. This collection contains multiple folders, each of which is hyperlinked from the finding aid, which also describes the contents. Let’s say a user wants to look at these patent documents. The link in the finding aid opens a digital folder that contains the images of items from the physical folder, and the user can leaf through them online as if he had the physical materials on his desk.
EXPLORING DIGIBAECK
By Dr. Frank Mecklenburg,
Chief Archivist and Director of Research, Leo Baeck Institute

See pages 19 – 20 for selected screenshots from this presentation.

Brewster gave you a broad view of the history of libraries and archives, and Bernie explained how DigiBaeck fits into the framework provided by Brewster. I’ll give you a sense of the LBI’s collections, describing the astounding variety of media. Our time limits allow us only a few examples, and I hope you’ll be encouraged to do your own search and exploration. You can search by names, geographic location, or an academic concept and see where it leads you.

DigiBaeck holds a variety of collections, including the archives, the library, and also the art collections of LBI. Since 1955, we have amassed over 4,000 linear feet of archival collections, which are organized into approximately 10,000 individual collections, more than 2,500 unpublished manuscripts, and 40,000 photographs, reaching from the 18th century to the 21st century in a broad variety of paper formats, onionskin, parchment, handwritten, typed, printed, some graphic materials, in ink, pencil, etcetera.

The main user groups that we serve are academic scholars, family researchers, and, of course, the general public.

Leo Baeck Institute is committed to an open content policy. The LBI makes its intentions to provide open and free access to its holdings known to collection donors, and this is clearly stated in each deed of gift. LBI staff seeks to acquire rights for the LBI to publish online at the time of gift, and in the case of specific materials that are identified as sensitive, LBI seeks to limit the period of closure and execute agreements that set a date for their being opened.

How do we get to DigiBaeck? How can we search? First of course, through the webpage of the Leo Baeck Institute, but also through the Internet Archive and the Center for Jewish History website. The Center for Jewish History actually provides the technical basis on which we have been building DigiBaeck and hosting a significant portion of our digital assets.

The path to most collections is through the finding aid, which describes the contents of each collection down to the level of individual folders. Here is an example of an EAD electronic finding aid for the Franz Rosenzweig Collection. I happen to know that this collection contains Rosenzweig’s ordination certificate, so if we scroll down, we can see the folder that contains the certificate. When you click on that folder, you get directly to
the document itself. At the bottom of the certificate is the signature of Leo Baeck. Within the same folder, we also find a transliteration of the certificate into Latin Script.

Of particular interest is a collection of notebooks by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, only recently added to the collections. In 1925, Buber and Rosenzweig started on a new translation of the Hebrew Bible into German, and these notebooks contain their notes and carbon copies of their work, which they sent to one another for further editing. Many of our collections document the experiences of Jews during World War I, and we are approaching the 100th anniversary of the start of the war in 1914. Dr. Bernard Bardach was a field doctor in the Austrian Army throughout the entire war from 1914 until 1918. Here you see a portrait of him from the LBI art collection. His collection also contains the handwritten diaries he kept during the war, and we also have a translation into English that was done by volunteers. It is available online with the original document. The collection also contains more than 900 photos that Bardach took and collected throughout the whole campaign plus a detailed map of the Eastern front.

How can we find this map in DigiBaek? When we search for “map world war” we get 41 results. The first one is actually a map of the Western Front, but further down in the list, we find a map of the Eastern Front, a survey map of the Austro–Hungarian–Russian Theater of War. The image was captured in high resolution, and we have the ability to zoom in to greater detail.

When researchers want to get to the material they also have to agree to the copyright and fair use conditions, and when you click on the "continue" button, you are then free to browse through the photos in the collection.

There are many community collections in the archive. Here is an example of a Berlin marriage register from the mid 19th century. It is a hard-to-read photocopy; the original was destroyed. With the help of volunteers, it was possible to create a transliteration of the entries in a spreadsheet, which we will soon make available online. This is an excellent example of the types of materials in DigiBaek that are of great interest to family researchers.

The archives contain many collections of writers, such as the Austrian novelist and journalist Joseph Roth. Roth was a widely-read author in the 1920s and 1930s, whose work has recently been republished in new translations. His most famous book is *Radetzymarsch*, about the decline of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Here, we see the first page of the original manuscript with his notations and edits. The collection also contains the score of Johann Strauss' "Radetzky March."
The link from the search results leads to the Finding Aid for the Franz Rosenzweig collection, which describes the contents of each folder.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROS 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>PhD Degree</td>
<td>1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROS 1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Photos</td>
<td>1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROS 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ordination Certificate</td>
<td>1922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Ordination Certificate - Photocopy</td>
<td>1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Simon, Ernst: &quot;Judische Bildungsmöglichkeiten in Frankfurt&quot;</td>
<td>1921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Toast at the Wedding of Eva Sommer and Viktor Ehrenberg</td>
<td>1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Tramer, Hans: &quot;Franz Rosenzweig, Entwicklung und Leben&quot;</td>
<td>undate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Series II: Writings, undated, 1905-1945.**

This series is in German and Hebrew.

2.6 linear feet

Arrangement:
Topical,

Subseries 1: Diaries
Subseries 2: Lectures and papers
Subseries 3: Memorabilia

The digital images of each folder in the collection can be accessed through hyperlinks.

Franz Rosenzweig, (1886 – 1929)

The digitized ordination certificate of Franz Rosenzweig, signed by Leo Baeck.
Other luminaries are also represented. The photo collection holds several hundred pictures of Albert Einstein, here on his beloved sailing boat on the Wannsee in Berlin. Here is a picture that you may not have seen before of Albert Einstein fishing. For a few years, Einstein enjoyed his country house in Caputh near Berlin. The guest book, now in the Einstein collection at LBI, has an entry by the famous chemist and first president of Israel, Chaim Weizmann, and a watercolor by the artist Hermann Struck with the view from the terrace of the house in 1931. Einstein left for a lecture tour to the United States in 1932 and never returned to Caputh.

Hermann Struck, seen here as a young artist in Berlin, published his seminal work, *The Art of Etching*, in 1908. Struck became the teacher of major artists, among them Marc Chagall, Lovis Corinth and Max Liebermann. His 1908 book can be found on the Internet Archive website. LBI’s holdings include over 400 print works of Struck’s; for instance, an *ex libris* with a view of Jerusalem and a portrait of the banker Jacob Schiff.

The archives contain many collections of business and industrial leaders. Here for instance is the collection of the Pinkus Family, major textile and linen manufacturers in upper Silesia. The factory in Neustadt, Upper Silesia (now Poland), was one of the largest producers of fine linens in the world. Max Pinkus became a partner in the firm S. Fränkel when he married Auguste Fränkel, the daughter of the owner. Their son Max Pinkus was director of the company until 1926. Their daughter Hedwig married the doctor Paul Ehrlich, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1908. In 1934, the German writer Gerhart Hauptmann gave the eulogy for Max Pinkus despite the Nazi ban on events attended by Jewish and non-Jews.

In DigiBaecck, there are also many valuable and rare books from the LBI Library Collections. Here is a title from 1788, *Should Jews Serve in the Military?* And one of the oldest books in the LBI Library is *Augenspiegel*. In 1509, Dr. Johannes Reuchlin wrote this pamphlet defending the right of Jews to print Hebrew books in response to a proposal to ban Jews from publishing in Hebrew by Johannes Pfefferkorn, a Christian theologian who had converted from Judaism. Only a few decades after the invention of the printing press this fundamental argument was published in the German language so that not only scholars with knowledge of Latin would be able to inform themselves. A wider public refuted the view that Jews had no right to publish.

And now I will take a few questions.

QUESTION: "Given the digitalization of material, is it just as useful for you to receive a copy instead of the original?"
MECKLENBURG: The more important point is that original materials are better preserved in the archives than anywhere else. We have a temperature- and humidity-controlled environment. Furthermore, although we make everything available in copy, there are various circumstances in which access to the original is indispensable, such as exhibitions and other special scholarly inquiries.

QUESTION: "Is a memoir useful if one crosses out names to respect privacy?"

MECKLENBURG: There are two different aspects to this, the personal aspect and also a general historical aspect. The wider social story told in memoirs is not so much dependent on the individual and the individual's identity. Memoirs are a very valuable source of social history, and actually memoirs are the most frequently requested type of archival material that we have.

QUESTION: "Are all assets available on DigiBaecck and Internet Archive?"

MECKLENBURG: Yes, the goal is to make everything available, to make everything open, and to have it reside in both places. Of course Leo Baeck Institute will keep collecting, so the process is an ongoing one. Thank you.
AN OBSERVATION AND APPRECIATION

By Rabbi Dr. Ronald Sobel
President, Leo Baeck Institute

In addition to the miracle of the human thumb, even more so it is the highly developed capacity of the brain to remember, and subsequently the ability to communicate that which is remembered that distinguishes us from all other living species on this planet.

To remember: As far back as the biblical period, the creators of earliest Judaism, later followed by the architects of rabbinic Judaism, insisted upon Zachor, "Remember."

To remember: The imperative to remember became indigenous to the heart and soul of the Jewish experience in its earliest history and has remained so for the last 25 centuries. It is no different for the Leo Baeck Institute. From its beginnings in 1955, it has been, and will forever remain, the mission of the Institute not only to remember the great contributions of German-speaking Jewry to the canon of Western civilization and to the development of modern Jewish thought, culture and civilization but to communicate it as universally and effectively as possible. With the remarkable technology of digitization, we are now able to communicate the memory as it has never heretofore been possible.

Even though Bernard Blum specifically asked me not to single him out, he will have to forgive me for doing otherwise. It was Bernard's vision, insistence, and generosity that made DigiBaeck possible and thus the ability to tell the story as it never could have been told before. We thank you, Bernie, and do so with gratitude from the bottom of our hearts.
DREIFUS: Good morning. My name is Claudia Dreifus, and I write interviews about the lives of scientists for the *New York Times* and teach at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. I'm also the American-born granddaughter of Emmy and Benno Willdorf, who once lived at 89 Kantstrasse in Berlin, from 1918 through 1939. When my grandparents closed the door on their sprawling Kantstrasse apartment to leave for America in October of 1939, they closed the door forever on their history, their language, their possessions, their very specific way of being Jewish, and most importantly, on seventeen close relatives who were to die in Riga and Auschwitz. Though my grandfather died shortly after the emigration, my grandmother went on to live for another 35 years in New York. Truth be told, she never quite recovered from what she lost.

There are many cultural similarities between Germany and the United States, and West End Avenue has many echoes of Kantstrasse, but the manners, the values, the food, the humor, all that is different. So every day in New York, beautiful and wondrous as it was, she mourned the loss of her German-Jewish world, which she always described to me as extremely cultured, pious, intellectual, charitable, and orderly; in her view, it was an especially evolved way of being in a community. Whether it was quite that perfect, I can't say. I was relieved to discover, the first time I went to Berlin, that the streets were dirty, and that people did litter. But I do think that my grandmother would be just incredibly astonished to discover that a technology she couldn't have imagined is helping to recover and maintain aspects of that disappeared world.

Sitting here today, none of us will even be able to know what DigiBaec will be able to do. That's how it is with new technologies, we can't imagine their power. But that's what we're here this morning to examine. And, may I say, to celebrate. So thank you, Carol Kahn Strauss and Frank Mecklenburg, and to
everyone from Leo Baeck Institute, for creating this small miracle with your foresight and your political sagacity. And I am very proud personally that DigiBaeck will have my own papers, as part of their new collection on the contributions of the children of German Jewish refugees in America, which is really the next chapter of the story.

Today, we're going to ask what DigiBaeck will do, and how it negates some of Hitler's darkest intentions, and exactly what the dimensions of this innovation are. To help us prognosticate, we have some distinguished users of this revolutionary new thing, whatever it is. Let me introduce them.

First, we have Michael Glickman, who is the chief operating officer of the Center for Jewish History. He is not a historian; he is this rare thing: a fundraiser who loves fundraising, and he's in charge of these buildings with this vast Jewish collection.

Deborah Hertz holds the Herman Wouk Chair of Modern Jewish Studies at the University of California in San Diego, where she teaches undergraduates Holocaust history. She's the author of multiple scholarly works, and Leo Baeck Institute members probably know her for her 2007 volume, How Jews Became Germans.

Doctor Rolf Kinne is a molecular biologist of great distinction, a science historian, and a member of the German Academy of Sciences. In his spare time, he started researching the fate of Jewish families who escaped Nazism from his town, Dortmund.

Given time constraints, I'm going to ask the panelists for quick, one-minute, lightning-round answers to questions. You don't have to answer each question if you don't feel it's proper, but I will be a bit of a dictator about maintaining time constraints.

So let's begin with an obvious question. How do you see yourselves, each of you, as using DigiBaeck?

GLICKMAN: I think what it does is open a portal into a world that most young people don't know about, and so DigiBaeck and an institution like this give people an opportunity to experience something that they otherwise wouldn't know about, and I think that has a transformative effect.

HERTZ: My wonderful experiences using DigiBaeck brought to mind memories of the Indecks Research Deck which some of us used in the 1970s. When we read memoirs, we would take notes by hand, and use long plastic needles to punch holes in a coded system at the top of the cards. Later, when
we were writing up our research, the cards punched in a certain hole would fall out, and then we would have the notes on the sort of event or individual needed for that paragraph of our text. Now we are so far past the Indecks Research Deck! Not only can we return again and again to our primary sources, we can also discover memoirs and historical personalities which we did not even know about.

As an example, a recent tour through DigiBaeck uncovered Frida Duvel, a socialist Jewish woman born in 1884, who belonged to several feminist organizations. I had never heard of her, yet she will now figure prominently in my new study of political Jewish women from the late nineteenth century. The fantastic cataloguing of Digi-Baeck vastly expands our primary source material.

KINNE: Well, since I'm the only German voice in this panel, I just would like to digress a little bit and express the gratitude of a German that DigiBaeck now makes accessible very important periods of German history. I think that's a point one can stress again and again. I'm very grateful to all the people who did that. Especially important is that it shows not only the most modern history, but also the very ancient and very important roots. As natural scientists, we have a problem. We usually only publish results in very abstract words, without any personal mention at all about how we got there, what we feel about it, and so on. I hope and I know from my work that in DigiBaeck, you find the personalities of scientists and not only science, and that's very important. Scientists are also human beings; they all live in a community and they are all members of a society, and I'm looking forward to finding all this in addition to the scientific papers that are online.

DREIFUS: Let me read you a letter that DigiBaeck received, one of the first after going online, because it's going to tell you a lot about another use. It's from someone named Shannon Green, and she wrote: "Just wanted to say thank you for this wonderful archive. I saw a note about it in the New York Times, and as a former German Studies major, and the granddaughter of a German Jew, I did a quick search of my grandfather, Hans Martin Frank, and came across a fantastic photo from the archive of the Mosse family." (It's not her own family.) "After my grandfather and his family left Germany in the early 1930s, there were very few photos that survived, so it was meaningful to find a photo of him as a carefree young man. He died in 1981, when I was 3, and so I never got to know him."

That's going to be one of the uses of DigiBaeck.

So, Dr. Kinne, one of the things you alluded to is that this is a missing piece of German history. DigiBaeck is not only about the Holocaust and about the immigration. How does it put back the totality?
KINNE: The totality of German history, I think that's exactly the point. A lot of emphasis is placed on the Holocaust, and suffering, but we also have to be very proud of the contribution of German Jews, or Germans, during that time. Actually, my wife, who had Jewish roots, wanted to study German-Jewish history in 1961, and there were almost no documents available in Berlin, or Germany, for that matter. But now you can do that and I think it's very important, not only for people like me, but also for young Germans, who can now see their history in all the different aspects and not only with one focus.

DREIFUS: So you're saying it puts back the missing pieces.

KINNE: That's exactly right.

DREIFUS: Dr. Hertz, you're a Holocaust scholar. How does this broad collection, which is about so much more than only the Holocaust, change the way we can look at that terrible moment?

HERTZ: When I first got into this field it was through Hannah Arendt and Rahel Varnhagen. I was motivated to study the eighteenth-century Jewish salons so that I could avoid anything remotely connected with the Holocaust. I found hope and inspiration from immersion in an epoch where at least a handful of Jews and Christians in Germany enjoyed fruitful cultural and social exchanges.

However, in the classroom I have often been called upon to focus on the Nazi era, and here I see yet another wonderful use for DigiBaeck. At the University of California at San Diego I have created an ongoing community and pedagogy project called the Holocaust Living History Workshop. We bring local Holocaust refugees and survivors onto campus, and we encourage professors to utilize the 52,000 video archives in the Visual History Archive assembled by the Shoah Foundation nearby at the University of Southern California. While the undergraduate students often adore watching the interviews, for me the absence of written documentation and traditional historical sources has been troubling.

Thanks to DigiBaeck, I will now be able to provide the students with unpublished memoirs in addition to historical monographs, published memoirs, and the video interviews.

DREIFUS: Michael Glickman, and perhaps maybe everyone here on the panel, let me ask an impolitic question. There are a lot of myths about what German Jewry was, and I think maybe in other sectors of the American Jewish community the myths suggest that maybe German Jews did not seek to escape, that they were too involved in their Germanness to see Nazism for what it was. How does DigiBaeck change these perceptions?
GLICKMAN: Well I think as Carol and Bernie alluded to earlier, this is an archive of material for the individual, and I think this humanizes it. It opens up a portal into the personal letters, and the photographs, and the family albums, and the stories. I think it takes the individual experience and it puts it at the forefront for any of the users, regardless of who they are, to be able to experience that. That changes it dramatically.

DREIFUS: But what about these misperceptions?

GLICKMAN: I think over time, they change as the user base continues to develop, and I think Deborah Hertz can speak more to this through the interaction she has with her students, but I think as people are gaining more access to information the dynamic ultimately will change.

HERTZ: Yet another virtue of DigiBaeck is that the availability of memoirs will help us move beyond Jewish intellectual history. For instance, critics of the “German-Jewish symbiosis” now look to social history to gain a precise understanding of the limits to social integration in German Jewish history. Gershom Scholem first advanced such critiques in the 1960s, and I was spellbound when I came upon his description of the so-called symbiosis as a “myth.” By the time I read Scholem I had been carefully reading the LBI Yearbooks for years, after I first discovered them on the shelves of the Judaica room on the Givat Ram campus of the Hebrew University. The first Yearbooks from the late fifties are full of articles whose titles include the term “German-Jewish symbiosis” and illustrate the symbiosis in the lives and works of various famous intellectuals. This sort of intellectual history of German Jewry is a treasure, which I have often used in my research and my teaching.

But as time has passed, more of us are seeking to uncover the social and the women’s and the political history of German Jewry. For these purposes DigiBaeck will prove quite extraordinary, I am sure. For instance, if I want students to contrast German and Russian family life, I can now guide them to find primary records of marriage documents. From the early days of research in women’s history, the guiding notion has been that study of women will bring us to a “hidden” history of emotions, behaviors, norms and practices which were never before accessible to historians. But it was difficult if not impossible for students to be able to view the relevant primary sources so as to explore this hidden history that on their own terms.

Many of us first learned about the research and teaching benefits of memoirs thanks to the work of Dr. Monika Richarz, who labored for years in the archives of the LBI choosing the top memoirs for her three-volume collection of memoirs, now available in German, English, and Hebrew. But DigiBaeck is
Monika Richarz times ten thousand! One of the great benefits of this vast internet archive of memoirs is that we can truly transform how we can teach social history of German Jewry.

DREIFUS: Dr. Kinne, how do ordinary Germans these days get to see what is there, or what isn't there?

KINNE: I think we have the same tendency as everywhere, that you move from the leaders to the people, to the individuals. And I think Germans are realizing, as are young people everywhere, that it's very important to know what the individuals said, what they did, and what their role in their community was. You don't find that usually. But now you can find it. And you see that it is very similar to your own experience; if you have children, you go to the PTA, if you have a church, you go to service, and that's never really recorded. But now it's recorded and you can find it, and I think this will change the myth, and I hope that we are getting to a really balanced view of what happened.

DREIFUS: Well, that said, the collection is in a way anthropological as well as literary, political, historical. The fact that you can go back for hundreds of years and see how people lived, does that then move scholarship off the trauma and onto…life? What do you think?

HERTZ: I do think, after years of teaching the Holocaust, that many undergraduate students are motivated by a kind of obsessive, almost pornographic desire to gaze at the sheer horror of it all. At the same time, it would seem that students and the wider public are also craving a chance to authentically grieve and mourn for the victims of the Nazi system. After decades of teaching Holocaust in the classrooms of various institutions, it is clear that there has been a vast expansion of the target audience for such classes.

At SUNY Binghamton in the 1980s, many of those in my Holocaust classes seemed to be related, and they would freely speak of "we." Now this topic attracts a far wider range of students. I expect that DigiBaeck will be a crucial way for interested members of other religious, ethnic and national groups to examine the detailed history of German Jewry. For instance, historians of Vietnam at my university have told me "we are interested in our Diaspora, and we want to remember and record and analyze and publicize our history as well as German Jews have remembered their history."

Indeed, it is the groundwork done over the decades by the Leo Baeck Institute that prepared the way for the astonishing memorial culture of contemporary Germany. When you visit Jewish museums and research centers in eastern Europe, in Riga or Vilnius or Budapest, one often hears the wish that their
facilities, their funding, their infrastructure was on a par with the institutions across Germany. DigiBaeck will be another wonderful portal for research and pedagogy on German Jewry, not just in American classrooms, but also in research spaces across Europe and in Israel.

So in that sense, I think DigiBaeck won't simply serve students and German students and Israeli students and family researchers. DigiBaeck will, thus, not only help make "private history" available to the scholarly and the public gaze, but provide a model and a tool for how other ethnic groups, other religious groups, and other national can create public history museums, memorials, and libraries.

KINNE: I think that's a very important aspect. We shouldn't forget to emphasize the global reach of the internet and of DigiBaeck. It's moving out of German, Jewish, or just one country; it's going global. There are a lot of countries where they have similar problems, as was pointed out, with immigration, adaptation, assimilation, and so on. Take Germany and the Turkish people; we have all these questions coming up again. The global aspect I think is very important, and this can help a lot to get a real sense of what happened, why it happened, and how we can prevent it.

GLICKMAN: I think you're going to see the further democratization of material, and so in a building like this, in an institution where Leo Baeck sits side-by-side with institutions that are bringing together materials from other communities, you can offer comparative study. A researcher can see what happened in Vilnius at the same time they're looking at what happened in Berlin, and so on. The floodgate opens.

DREIFUS: And of course there's a lot of overlap; we forget that there's overlap. There was a lot of the rest of European Jewry in Berlin, from the end of World War One on, and certainly earlier. And where do these places intersect? Now we can find out.

GLICKMAN: I think DigiBaeck serves as a model in that the physical walls of an institution get broken down. People from all over the world, every walk of life, have the ability to get into this material and use it. I think if it continues to expand in this footprint, you'll see within this institution, within Leo Baeck itself, within this particular portal, and if we could continue to talk about what's next, I think you'll see this broad evolution of how people are accessing this and then using it for their own purposes, whether it's research, scholarship, family history, or just the pursuit of information and knowledge.
HERTZ: I’d like to put in a plea for the genealogy buffs to post lost diaries, correspondence collections, pictures, and family trees on the DigiBaecK platform, so as to enrich the work of scholars and teachers across the United States and beyond.

KINNE: Last but not least, I would like to put in a plea for librarians, and people who establish archives, because in my experience there is a big tendency, as soon as the material is online, to wonder about the future role of librarians. We have to make sure we maintain people who are so sophisticated, knowledgeable, and can guide us in ways that the internet can't. Thank you, Dr. Mecklenburg, for your work, I think it's incredible and it should be cultivated.

DREIFUS: So now all we can say is the future remains open, and we'll be astonished with what we see. So I thank you all for taking the time this morning.
The 2010 Paternal Report: The Life of Gordon Felton
by Nicholas Felton,
Graphic Designer and Founder, Daytum.com

See pages 35 – 36 for selected screenshots from this presentation.

Thank you so much for inviting me here today to share my work, and thanks to all the previous presenters for showing me the connection that my work has to the work of this Institute.

As Carol said, I'm a graphic designer. I consider myself an information designer, so the materials I like to work with most are data. Over the past five or seven years, the data I have had the best access to is that of my own life. So, in 2005, I started making these personal histories that I called "annual reports." This is the first printed one I made; typically they live online as well. The idea here is to look at my daily routines and to capture them in a quantitative way, and then at the end of the year to tally all these up, to figure out how many cups of coffee I drank, how many restaurants I went to, how these things break down. On this page you can see a travel history. This includes how much of my time was spent in Manhattan versus Brooklyn versus other boroughs; and music, what I was listening to. This is all tied to a progression in our society of greater access to data and greater questions about what we do with it all. My thrust has been to find the narrative here and find the value in communicating individual stories.

So that was one of the earliest annual reports; this is the latest one I've produced, which tries to push everything to the max. So over the course of 2010 and 2011, I was trying to figure out every single place I went to, not just the restaurants but what percentage of my life was spent in delis, and how does this overlap with my friends and family. So this was the idea for 2010.

In 2010 my father passed away at the age of 81, and for me this was the key event in 2010. What I didn't want to do was create a document about how his death affected me. I didn't think that was the story I wanted to tell, and I didn't think it preserved my father's memory in a worthwhile way. So, I'm going to show you how in 2010 I adapted the methodology of my personal annual reports to talk about his life and for me to learn and explore my father. I'd just like to show a little video of him talking for a minute. This is about his experience in Berlin when he was told he could no longer go to school because his father was Jewish.

GORDON FELTON [on-screen]: Many people had very bad experiences even when we were still in Germany. But as children the only thing that ever affected me was the fact that I wasn't allowed to go to school. I was nine when I had to leave school, but it wasn't like some great painful disaster. Not having to go to
school wasn't that hard to deal with. And I remember my very best little friend Hans, I would meet him out of school and the other kids never made a remark about, "You Jew," or anything - I was the lucky bastard who didn't have to go to school as far as they were concerned!

NICHOLAS FELTON: So my sister and I knew that my father had a fascinating life story, and we would hear about it plenty, but we did a poor job of documenting it. We filmed him a couple times and asked him questions, but it was not as if we'd cast his entire story to video or asked him to write it down. So these were the things we knew about him: that he was born in 1929 in Berlin, that he was part of the Kindertransport evacuation to England when he was ten; his father unfortunately perished in a concentration camp. And then afterwards he became an elevator mechanic and travelled the world extensively. Perhaps this was just part of feeling uprooted, but he saw more of the world than I expect I'll ever see.

There are also these gaps in his narrative. His brother used to tease him that he was a part of the CIA or something - because he travelled so extensively, he was in all these places at interesting times, or coups would happen as soon as he left the country, so we just consider him lucky. These are some of the gaps that I didn't understand about his history, and so when he passed away, my sister and I started clearing out his house, and I just kept finding more and more of his personal material. Things like his passports, his calendars that spanned thirty years, thousands of slides and postcards, and I realized that there was enough here to tell his story. So I had this hunch that if I could capture every location I could find in his papers, perhaps I could recreate his trail or his experience in the world. This is the cover of the 2010 “Paternal Report”, as I called it, and here are some of the pages. I'm going to go into some of the process of how I single-handedly did some of the work that Leo Baeck Institute has been doing, which is to make sense of all these primary-source documents, and then what you can do when you have all the information, not just the cream of it, but everything.

This is a look at the contents. Basically you have a little pie chart for every year. The size of the pie chart shows how much material was available, and then the breakdown shows whether it was in the form of slides, or calendars, or other ephemera, but you can kind of see there are periods where there is actually no material, at the beginning of his life, say in the ’30s. Then he starts recording plenty until the ’70s. I feel like there's a gap that happens right after that big orange pie chart, and I believe that's when my mother took over and became the family archivist. And then after their divorce, of course, he starts keeping records again.
So, I had 25 different types of sources. These charts on the right are actually quite interesting. They show a breakdown by year of how much material I had, or by decade, and you can see that it follows perfectly the age of the documents so as you travel back in time you have fewer and fewer direct sources to rely on.

Here are some of the documents that I pulled from. These are some of the older ones: his original German birth certificate, his first apprentice agreement in England when he was in his teens, his marriage license. He cooperated a lot in this process by making meticulous notes at different times in his life, for instance when he just decided to write down the periods at which he worked for different employers, or the different places he lived over the decades. This shows, from 1953 onwards, all the different cities that he lived in.

I had some letters, this one was from his sister. One of the interesting pieces from this that I pulled out was that when this was written, I think in the ’50s, his primary object of desire was a Wollensak 1515 stereo tape recorder that she was trying to get for him in New York.

This is a list of films where he had marked off the ones that he had seen. All these different pieces helped me re-create his personality after he had passed.

I came to really respect that fact that a receipt is an amazing marker of time and space. So even though these things are typically crumpled up and thrown away, when I found a receipt from, say, 1989 that's in Surrey, England, I know that this is another marker on the map where I can place him.

This is one of the spreads after he's come to England. I'm trying to create an overview of the places he's lived, showing a picture of him at that time, and then filling in with little bits of detail like what his first job was, how many air raids happened on the town etc. I think it was Grimsby where he was living at this time. On the other side is an analysis of the school reports that he had from Grimsby Junior Technical College, so I can track his grades over time. He was a pretty good student, except his English tanked in the last semester he was there.

I had thirty years of calendars; these are some examples. I digitized the entire thing, and there were notes in here about travel. When he was travelling he kept pretty extensive notes about the different places that he went or who he saw, even down to the weather sometimes, so I could look back and figure out it was wet and cold, or it was a delightful day. This is more typical of his calendars, showing his day-to-day activity. It probably looks a lot like ours, where you're just marking the social events in a calendar. From these I was able to make meta-stories. When I took all his calendars from the 1980s, and I start categorizing the events, I could see that this decade tells the story of him retiring from work.
A page from Nicholas Felton’s “Personal Annual Report” in 2009 depicting his time spent in different places in New York City.

The materials Nicholas Felton’s father Gordon left after his passing in 2010, which formed the basis of Nicholas’ data visualization project in honor of his father.

A graphical overview of the materials above, organized by type, year, and amount.
A page from the 2010 “Paternal Report” focused on Gordon Felton’s earliest years in Berlin and his family background

A page from the 2010 “Paternal Report” detailing Gordon Felton’s life during the 1980’s
and spending more time with his children and travelling, which matches up with my memory of his involvement in my childhood.

Postcards were another really rich source of information. I had two types: I had blank ones that he'd collected as well as ones that had been sent to him, and these extended all the way back to the fifties. These are blanks ones, where I assumed this was a location he had visited and had collected the postcard himself; versus ones he'd received, which tell the story of where he lived since the 1950s. With that I could put together something like this. This is a map of the Bay Area in the 1960s; it's every place that he lived and it's just superimposed on top of all the locations I extrapolated from his material that he went. So if you zoom out, this mesh starts to show a picture of the Bay Area in the detail that he experienced it.

The passports were a treasure trove. These go back fifty years as well, and were always an object of fascination for me, but there are challenges here as well. I had to find online tools for translating Greek to figure out where these locations were. I also had to get good at effectively solving CAPTCHAs, looking through all these superimposed stamps and figuring out what's going on in the different levels.

As I said, he had about 3,000 slides, and these had all sorts of context. To me, this is very understandable, this is my parents, this is the house that I was born in; there are these globally-familiar photos or images, so I know this is the Parthenon. There are also photos that have lost context. For instance, I can presume that this is an American train, but maybe it's in Canada. I can't really solve this problem.

Because of the amazing time we live in, however, I can start to decipher the photos, and pull out the metadata. Thankfully he shot on film, and when these were scanned they were scanned at very high resolution, and I could put on my CSI hat and start snooping through them for clues. This one has a little bit of type here, and when you zoom in, I could see that this said "Salinas Rodeo," so I could put this on a map.

This square seemed to be in Europe, and there was another detail on this truck that said "Dijon," so with the beauty of Google Image Search, I typed in “Dijon, France,” and I found the square. This is a photo from Google Images, and that's a detail from his photo. Mystery solved.

Another great thing is that as more and more text is online and searchable, something like this photograph of a grave marker, which ten years ago would've been impossible to find, is quickly identified. I just type in the type on the gravestone and Wikipedia tells me whose gravestone this is and where it is.
I was also able to crowdsourced some problems, including this photo. I wasn't sure if it was in China, or Japan, or Taiwan, but I posted it and about forty or fifty other photos to Flickr and asked people over Twitter if they would weigh in and help me. Someone identified three of these different aspects of the photo, including a Taiwanese flag, and this mountaintop. Through Flickr, the photo was identified as an old temple that was used in the ’60s as a youth hostel in Taiwan.

So, with all of this information, I was able to put together what I consider an atlas of his travels. You can see that this does match my hunch. In parts of the world it recreates the outlines of continents. You can see Asia appearing there, you can see Europe, and you can see most of North and South America pulling out of this mesh. So this was his understanding of the world. And then I could do little quantitative tricks on this and figure out what proportion are eastern and western hemisphere, what was the highest altitudes that he visited, the southernmost point, and even the average of all these points, which puts him somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, which I think is kind of where his heart resided.

At the end, I could create an index. This was just a listing of things, like all the museums he'd gone to, or all the movies he'd watched, and when I presented this to his friends at a memorial we had the following year, it was amazing how many 70 and 80-year-olds could pick up this document and immediately home in on their connection with my father. They could find their wedding in this index, or a restaurant they used to love to go to. To me it was amazing that without any explanation they immediately understood this document, even in its tiny text and encrypted diagrams.

And the last thing, that is actually my favorite part of this document, was this scroll that I found in his desk, that had his name on it, and the date 1976, and when I opened this up, it was an EKG of his, from the year before I was born. For me, this sort of wrapped up the entire project, because this was a graph—quantitative data—but of the most personal kind that I can imagine. This is his heartbeat, encoded for posterity. So this goes into his ’70s page, where I talk about his passports, and extrapolate that he had a beard for six months based on the photos that I found of him. Thank you very much.
Since its founding in 1955, the Leo Baeck Institute has become the premier research library and archive devoted exclusively to documenting the history of German-speaking Jewry. In the aftermath of World War Two, with the annihilation of European Jewry almost complete, some of the leading intellectuals who were forced out of Germany and Austria were determined to preserve the shattered remains of their devastated heritage. They sought to collect as much material as they could to provide future generations with authentic evidence of this rich and varied past. The founders included Martin Buber, Max Grunewald, Hannah Arendt and Robert Weltsch. They made Rabbi Leo Baeck, the last leader of the Jewish community in Germany under the Nazis, its first president and named the Institute in his honor, to signify the ideals of modern, cultured, assimilated German-Jewry.

LBI offices were created in each of the great outposts of the exiled community; London, Jerusalem, and New York, with New York as the home of the Institute’s unparalleled library and archival collections. In September 2001, LBI New York opened a branch of its archives at the new Jewish Museum in Berlin. This marks the first time that this extraordinary array of materials is available in Europe. It is both symbolically and in fact a very significant development in the continuity of this legacy shared by Germans and Jews.

The remarkable holdings of the Institute reflect a heritage of triumphs and tragedies that must never be forgotten.

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