

Exploring refugee data

Hands-on workshop on refugees and digital humanities

[Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences](#)
[European Holocaust Research Infrastructure](#)

Prague, 12-13 November 2018

Deadline for submission of abstracts: July 31, 2018

What new insights can digital humanities offer to the history of refugeedom in order provide better understanding of trajectories of refugees and their interaction with state and non-state actors? How can computer-driven analysis, using small and big data approaches, help us learn more about refugee agency and decisions? This hands-on workshop will engage historians, social scientists and experts in digital humanities in conversation and experimentation about digital methodologies and forced displacement.

Perceived, described and depicted as a multitude, a crowd or even a “wave,” refugees tend to be grouped together and ascribed common, often negative and dehumanising, characteristics – be it in public discourse or administrative language. States, but also aid organizations, aim to control and administer, sort and categorize refugees. To counter such hegemonic views, historians and social scientists have explored refugee agency and representations and provided critical accounts of such classifications.

Yet, reconstructing refugee trajectories, decisions and interactions from below is confronted with a number of methodological and source-related challenges related to their mobility and specific circumstances of flight. Researchers face bringing together information from dispersed, diverse and multilingual sources of various creators. The focus on refugee agency foregrounds the question of integration of individual decisions and actions into the broader structural frameworks (as state refugee policies, etc.).

Nazi-era refugees provide an excellent case study not only due to the significance and size of this group, but also due to the availability of extensive and diverse data sets in form of digitized archival collections, oral history archives and name documentation projects. Therefore, a large volume of data is available for evaluating digital approaches to refugee history which can provide new views reaching beyond the established narratives often shaped by governments and aid organizations. Taking Nazi-era refugees as a departure, the workshop wishes to examine methods and possibilities of digital historiography of forced displacement, and in a broader sense of digital methods, of capturing human mobility in history.

Furthermore, the workshop aims to help bridge the gap between disciplines and resources: whereas historians, archivists and social scientists collect and analyse data, they often are not able to apply

the methods and tools of digital humanities. It invites multidisciplinary approaches – for instance – from history, migration studies, historical geography, oral history and digital humanities.

We wish to explore, from the perspective of digital humanities, methodologies, standards and models to trace the movement and interaction of individuals and groups in space and time, to extract information from large, diverse and multilingual archival sources, analysis of historical networks driving refugee migration, spatial studies, linguistic analysis of documents and testimonies and other approaches. We are interested in testing how building visualisations of refugee experience can advance the research process.

We welcome proposals for full papers and work-in-progress presentations discussing refugee sources and data, research questions and/or digital methodologies. The contributions can report on relevant ongoing projects and best practice. The workshop language is English.

The workshop will include hands-on data sessions (an exchange of data and ideas, partnering especially between historians and digital humanists). Researchers can bring their own data on refugees and work together with other experts to find the best methodologies and technical approaches to fully explore their data. The organizers will help establish links across the disciplines and may work with the participants to that purpose prior to the workshop.

The workshop is organized by the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences in cooperation with the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI), which aims to improve access to Holocaust-related collections and supports Holocaust research.

Abstracts of up to 300 words along with short CV should be directed to Michal Frankl, frankl@mua.cas.cz by **July 31, 2018**. Applicants will be notified by August 15.

The Masaryk Institute and the EHRI project will be able to provide financial assistance to a limited number number of presenters, with preference for early career researchers.