

EHRI as a goldmine for genealogists

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When Risa Daitzman Heywood began using EHRI Services in 2023 to research the fate of seven family members of the Horn family of Euskirchen, Germany, during the Holocaust, she did not expect to come across so many details. Risa had been provided with some artifacts and information by the family's descendants and had already used typical genealogy sites to begin her research. EHRI Services were crucial in uncovering new sources and correlating the information she had already uncovered. As a result, Risa could give answers to questions that had long remained unanswered, such as why and how family members had been separated and ended up in different places, and what the exact circumstances were under which family members died, or survived, during the Holocaust. Risa's work aided by the [EHRI Portal](#) also uncovered the existence of photos of a family member: a girl who witnessed her mother die in Stutthof Camp on her 13th birthday and was rescued to survive, and live, in the U.S. Family members that asked Risa to do the research were astonished about Risa's discoveries aided by EHRI services.

*"...Wow! Amazing!
It's all so sad, but
it's just incredible
that there is so
much information
out there."*

Shari Horn Goss,
granddaughter of
survivor Kurt Horn.

As a professional genealogist specialising in Jewish ancestry research and with decades of experience as a researcher, volunteer and speaker in Jewish genealogy, [Risa Daitzman Heywood](#) became aware of the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure in 2019 when searching for relevant online information to prepare for a presentation on finding Holocaust sources she gave at a local genealogy society. Struck by what EHRI is trying to achieve, to provide seamless access to all Holocaust sources, she signed up for the EHRI Newsletter and has been following EHRI ever since. Risa explains how the EHRI Portal and the [EHRI Research Guides](#) have been of value to her work, and how a research project she discovered via EHRI yielded further valuable information for her genealogy research.

Searching the EHRI Portal, Risa found information about documents held by the [Wiener Holocaust Library](#) that related to the Kitchener Camp, a former military camp at Sandwich, Kent that housed male Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany in the late 1930s, information unknown to her and that led her to discovering that Kurt Horn was one of 4,000 mainly Austrian and German adult Jewish men that were accepted for accommodation in the camp during 1939 and had received an arranged passage to the U.S., where he arrived in March 1940. Risa further uncovered valuable information about Jakob Horn, who, after the death of his wife Sara in July 1938, was deported to Theresienstadt on 27 July 1942, where he died on 1 February 1943. Using the [EHRI Research Guide on "Terezín"](#), a resource Risa describes as "amazing, a goldmine for genealogist" and wonderfully helpful to her work, Risa was able to give the family more detailed information about the death of their grandfather; using the maps in the Research Guide, she could pinpoint the building where he died, and with the help of the [Thematic Guide](#), she could ascertain how many people died in his age range and how many died of dysentery. This information helped the family understand what exactly happened to Jakob at the end of his life.



The Horn family from Euskirchen, Germany, courtesy of Jeffrey Horn.



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Risa Daitzman Heywood

Through one of EHRI's [academic conferences](#), Risa also became aware of a project based at the EHRI Partner Yad Vashem, "[Transport to Extinction](#)", a digital database on the deportations of Jews that helped her explain why family members ended up in different locations. Although she regularly uses the Yad Vashem archives and has visited many times, she had not been aware of this important project. It provided her with crucial information for understanding that Arthur Horn, who the family believed was on a transport from Koln to Minsk on 20 July 1942, might have in fact been murdered on 31 July 1942 in Baranovichi. This was further corroborated by an unpublished manuscript by Karny Miroslav that Risa found via the EHRI Portal and that is held by the [Beit Theresienstadt Archives](#). Miroslav's research showed that the train Arthur Horn was supposedly on never arrived in Minsk. As Risa explains, through correlating information she already had with further information she found through EHRI, she could tell the story of what happened to Arthur Horn, where he ended up, and why. A further example of how Risa has used the EHRI Portal is the fate of Inge Horn who was rescued by an U.S. organisation called [Rescue Children](#). Through the EHRI Portal, Risa found out that the Yeshiva University Archives in New York held archival collections on the organisation, including photographs. The family requested the documents and received photos of Inge as a child in a French resettlement camp prior to her passage and resettlement with her uncle's family in the U.S.

Risa explains that although she might have been able to find this information by searching relevant archives directly, it would not have been as efficient and taken much longer. For each of the Horn family members she was asked to research, she was able to find information that was previously unknown. For the family, this was incredibly valuable.

"In most cases, it was through EHRI that I found out about a document or a collection I didn't know about. Although I could have searched individual archives to find that information, EHRI made it much easier and quicker and led me to things that I would not have considered", Risa Daitzman Heywood.

In 2024, Risa proposed a session on EHRI to the annual conference on Jewish genealogy sponsored by the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS), "the flagship educational and networking gathering for Jewish genealogy world-wide" with around 800 attendants. She felt that EHRI's potential in supporting the work of both genealogy professionals and hobbyists should be made better known. Her session was one of 160 hour-long presentations over the 4-day conference. After introducing EHRI services she found useful for genealogists, Risa presented the case study of the Horn family. The feedback she received was overwhelmingly positive with all participants seeing significant value in using EHRI in their work.

EHRI was set up as a European research infrastructure, and as such, the services and activities it offers are primarily developed with academic researchers in mind. That said, Risa is confident that from now on, when being asked to research the genealogy of a family during the Holocaust, consulting the EHRI Portal will be as important to her research as consulting the online catalogues of Yad Vashem and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, even though the EHRI Portal does currently not provide the level of functionalities that she normally looks for. Risa explains that the [EHRI Vocabularies](#) in the EHRI Portal are very helpful for her research, but that the Portal does not allow her to filter research results for repositories or types of sources, which would be of help to her. For the future, Risa sees potential for exchange between academic researchers studying the Holocaust and researchers as herself, who are passionate about uncovering individual stories linked to the Holocaust. The different perspectives each bring can help achieve a common goal: to fully understand the history of the Holocaust as a major European event.



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