

Intrator-Miriam-20050308080004

To: Julie L. Sigall
Associate Register for Policy & International Affairs

Date: 03/08/2005

From: Miriam Intrator
Title: Photo Archivist / Collections Registrar
Org: Leo Baeck Institute

Comment:

At the Leo Baeck Institute we receive many thousands of photographs as part of the archival donations which are constantly coming in. As a result, our photograph collection is always growing in both size and richness. However, quite often these photos do not come with much, if any, identifying or copyright information. Many appear to be printed copies of photos, in which case we generally have no idea who the original photographer or photo holder was. The majority of photographs we receive do not have the crucial stamp on the verso which would indicate to us where to direct researchers for usage permission. The photographs are a very highly used part of the collections. Regular requests for images for use in publications, films and exhibitions stream in and, in certain cases, cannot proceed as the copyright situation is too murky and we do not want to take risks. This is extremely frustrating for us and especially for the requestor who is absolutely willing to do the research, pay the fees, and credit as necessary in order to have use of an image. We certainly have important photographs, we would like to provide as much access and as much information to our researchers as possible. In the next year we expect to go live with an online public catalog, which will likely make this problem of identifying and clearing copyright even more prominent than it already is. In cases where we simply have no information at all, and cannot find anything, it is truly the researcher, the academic, the historian, the artist, the public, who lose out on an opportunity to view an archival item which may very well be unique and important.