

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MONUMENTS

A JOINT PROJECT OF THE
CENTER FOR JEWISH ART, HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM
MILLER CENTER/FELDENKREIS PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
INTERNATIONAL SURVEY OF JEWISH MONUMENTS



UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
THE SUE AND LEONARD MILLER
CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY
JUDAIC STUDIES



THE GEORGE FELDENKREIS
PROGRAM IN JUDAIC STUDIES
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI



How to Document a Holocaust Memorial Monument

Mapping

Use Google maps to find the coordinates for the monument. These may differ slightly from a street address, especially if the HMM is in a park, cemetery, campus, or other area that is undifferentiated on the map. Move the pin on the map to as precise a location of the HMM before right clicking to get the coordinates. You can then copy the coordinates onto the survey form.

Address

Give the street address for the HMM, and if the legal address is different give that, too. If the address does not clearly indicate the location, include a brief prose description (i.e. on the south side of the building; 50 feet/meters up a path from the sidewalk; etc.)

Setting

Be sure to note the overall setting of the HMM, and the relationship of the HMM to its surroundings.

On the form indicate from the list provided the general setting of the HMM. If you think the listed settings are not specific enough, add information in the history or description narratives. If you think a new "setting" needs to be added to the list, please suggest this.

Begin your verbal description by "zooming out" to situate the HMM for the reader. Photos should include - whenever possible - long and wide views of approaches, and views from all angles. Sometimes the HMM might be part of a group of monuments, or relate to specific landscape features, buildings, or markers. These relationships should be made clear.

Type

We have tried to list general and specific types of HMMs, but sometimes it is hard to categorize an HMM as a specific type, or as just one type. Begin by considering the larger or central aspect of the HMM and see if one of the listed types applies.

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On the form, indicate from the list provided the type of the HMM. If you think the listed types are not specific enough, add information in the history or description narratives. If you think a new “type” needs to be added to the list, please suggest this.

Please note, an HMM may be listed under several types. The written description should provide more detailed and specific information.

History

This section can include general background on the circumstances – including a Holocaust-era event – that lies behind the creation of the HMM, but a detailed description of the event is not required. More important is to collect as much specific information about the history of the planning, making, use, and maintenance of the HMM. This information may not be evident or available at a site visit – but can only be added later through research.

When searching online for information on the history of an HMM, especially a recent one, be sure to search in the local language as well as English, Hebrew, or others. Local media often cover the dedications of HMMs and provide useful information.

Please mention in the history section who initiated an HMM, who financed it, when it was unveiled and name dignitaries attending the unveiling ceremony (if available).

When known, indicate any specific commemorative days when the HMM is the scene of memorial activities or other events, and what types of ceremonies are regularly scheduled (memorial marches, vigils, recitation of victims’ names, etc).

Known cases of vandalism also should be mentioned in a separate paragraph. When possible indicate the date, the extent of damage, and the response.

When specific information originates from a specific source, please reference this source in parentheses with a number of page (when the source is a printed book or article) and include it into Bibliography (see below). Similarly, if information comes from an informant – the artist, sponsor, caretaker, etc. – indicate the name of the source and the date of the interview or other personal communication (letter, social media, email, etc.).

Description

The description should be as detailed as possible. Some information will be gathered on site, but good descriptions can be written from a full a set of photos.

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Begin by considering the broad context of the HMM, and then describe its parts (if it is multi-part) collectively, and then individually. Always start from the large aspects of the HMM and move to the small. If different parts are of different materials, be sure to mention this. It is better to have too much description than too little.

The description should mostly avoid interpretation or comparison, but sometimes – such as when describing symbols – it is useful to suggest possible interpretation or meaning, or to compare with other examples.

In most cases photos will be available to help understand the HMM, but when writing a description, it is still valuable to describe what is in the photos, and clarify many things that are often hard to determine from a photo – scale, orientation and direction, materials, color, texture, etc.

Inscriptions

It is important that all inscriptions be clearly photographed, and that most inscriptions are fully transcribed in their original language and script and translated into English. Transcription and translation can be done from photos, so it is important that ALL inscriptions be methodically and clearly photographed and labeled, and that larger views are included to clearly locate each inscription location. This is especially important when there are multiple panels, such as groups of quotes, or continuous lists of victims.

If inscriptions are hard to read – due to erosion, vegetation, vandalism, or other reasons, every effort should be made to photograph these clearly, and to make on site notes if these will help. As described below, photography from different angles and in different light can help make a faint inscription legible.

At this stage of the project, long lists of victims, and lists of donors are not always being transcribed, but they should be clearly photographed.

Look carefully at all sides, edges and even beneath an HMM for inscriptions. Often the name of the artist and/or maker can be hard to spot.

Materials

Be as specific as possible, but sometimes without being a specialist it is hard to know exactly the type of stone, metal, or plastic used. Common stones in HMMs are marble, granite, and limestone, but there are many others. Common metals are bronze, iron, and aluminum. Sometimes the type or source of stone is important to the meaning of the monument and should

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be noted. If reused materials are incorporated into the HMM – especially from ruined Jewish buildings or cemeteries – this should be clearly indicated, and an effort made to identify the source of the “spolia.”

Materials of minor elements such as fasteners and screws do not have to be listed.

When in doubt, use a general term (stone, metal, ceramic, glass, etc.). You can also indicate uncertainly be using a question mark (aluminum? Jerusalem limestone?). Discussion of materials can also be put in the description sections.

Measurements

Bring a measuring tape or stick to on-site visits. Whenever possible take measurement of the HMM size. We recommend a stiff metal retracting tape or a stiff wooden or metal folding measuring rod.

If you do not have a standard measuring device, you can obtain approximate measurements by pacing the site, using your foot and/or forearm length, or by using an object (an umbrella, notebook, etc) the measurement of which can be taken later. For example, if you know the distance of your standard pace is 80 cms, you can approximate the length of a large area by walking and counting your paces. If you know your shoe size, you can measure the base of an HMM by walking its edges toe to heel, toe to heel. Similarly, vertical measurements can be done with your forearm, if you know the length.

Be sure in your notes to indicate the type of measurement – feet/inches, meters/cms, or a custom measurement.

Important measurements for plaques and stele are the height and width, and for plaques, the distance from the ground. Important measurements for free-standing and 3-dimensional monuments are the width and length of the HMM footprint, including any enclosure and base, and the HMM height.

Limited time, a difficult location, or other circumstances can prevent full measurements. Sometimes it is difficult to obtain exact measurements of the height and depth of an HMM. A stiff measuring tape or stick can allow on person to obtain measurements of some hard-to-reach areas.

Of course, if measured drawings already exist for an HMM, we try to obtain these for the database.

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Bibliography

This list should include all sources used for the history and description. In time we would like to collect substantial bibliographies of a wide variety of source types, including documents, press accounts, histories, etc.

Works judged to be of broad interest for the materials they cover, or their approach, are included in the database general bibliography. Other very specific sources – online news accounts, etc. – may only be listed in the bibliography of the HMM entry to which they refer.

Do not include multiple sources about a Holocaust-era event – unless these sources make reference to the HMM. For example, an entry on an HMM in the former Warsaw Ghetto does not need to include a long bibliography about the Warsaw Ghetto.