What is the Holocaust Literature Research Institute?
The Holocaust Literature Research Institute was established in 1996 at The University of Western Ontario by French professor Alain Goldschläger to preserve Holocaust survivor memoirs. With more than 4,000 volumes in 26 languages, this collection of Holocaust stories and witness accounts is the third largest in the world behind the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and the 7,000 amassed by the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Authority in Israel. Since its inception, many scholars have come to Western to use this collection in an effort to further their understanding of the Holocaust.

How did the Institute Start?
In 1988, when Alain Goldschläger was involved with the second prosecution of Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel, he realized that survivor memoirs were not systematically collected—the bibliographies of texts related to the Holocaust referenced the same books and a true bibliography of testimonies did not really exist. Goldschläger found that although there was an abundance of writings on the Holocaust, few published eye-witness testimonies were held in libraries. Many libraries had books printed by large publishing houses but not many that were printed at the author’s expense or by small presses, making them much harder to find. Since few libraries housed published memoirs because of their subjective nature and questionable reliability, Goldschläger decided to establish an annotated bibliography of these writings to facilitate future research efforts and prevent the testimonies from disappearing completely. Goldschläger, who is also the Ontario Region Co-Chair of the League for Human Rights, hopes these stories can help us shape a more positive future.

The Collection
By contacting small presses and second-hand bookstores, Goldschläger began collecting published Holocaust testimonials, starting the institute once he had collected 600 volumes. Although the Institute’s members still work to expand the annotated bibliography, their focus has shifted to preserving personal stories of the Holocaust by searching for, collecting and analyzing survivor narratives and witness accounts. More recently, he has been exploring the Internet for these testimonies.

Goldschläger and his graduate students have successfully compiled a catalogued and annotated bibliography of survivor testimonials and accounts, building an online database with more than 3,600 entries, searchable by 25 categories. This bibliography is a work-in-progress and includes texts that may be primarily philosophical, psychological or religious by nature but are considered testimonies since they express deep, personal survivor experiences. Goldschläger and his research assistants have been very inclusive in terms of what may be considered a testimony. By analyzing the collection, they have defined five periods of writings, each of which has its own criteria.

The Institute collects testimonials in any language, trying to provide English and French translations whenever possible. They have accounts in 26 languages, including Polish, Japanese, French and Chinese. There are books written by Australian Jews, some in Yiddish written in 1946 in Buenos Aires and others written and published by clandestine presses in 1942 and 1943. In addition to this work, Goldschläger and his assistants create a typology for testimonials, develop educational programs and provide resources and research support.

For more information, please visit: www.hlri.ca/