

Preserving the Legacy: The Viktor Frankl Archives in Vienna

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How it all began ...

When Viktor Frankl returned to Vienna after being liberated from the concentration camp in 1945, one of the first things he did after he settled in his flat in Mariannengasse 1 was to try to recover tangible memories of his former life in Vienna (1905–1942). From friends and relatives he received a few of the remaining possessions from his parents – among them a handwritten recipe from his mother, and pencils from his father.

He also was able to recover some of his early writings from the 1920s and 1930s. This marked the modest beginning of what was to become the Viktor Frankl Archives in Vienna. From then on until his death in September 1997, Frankl kept copies of most of his documents, manuscripts, correspondence, audio recordings, photographs, films, and other memorabilia in his private archives. Today, the Viktor Frankl Archives consist of more than 100.000 files which are still stored in their original place in the Archives' room in the Franks' flat.

Structure and Organisation

According to the categories of material we have on stock, the Archives are organized in two basic units: The Media and the Written Archives.

1. The Media Archives

The Media Archives, headed by Alexander Vesely, cover a large collection of audio and video tapes and photographs. These items – some of the tapes date back to the early 1950s, while some of the photographs are over 120 years old – have to be preserved before time takes its toll. Hence they are currently being digitized and meticulously restored with the help of modern computer technology. Besides restoring, preserving and digitizing, the second main task of the Media Archives is to handle photo and film requests from the media. Alexander Vesely is a licensed psychotherapist (logotherapy and existential analysis) and works as a filmmaker; he also specializes in producing video films and clips on Viktor Frankl's life and work.

2. The Written Archives

The second Archives department covers all written documents, manuscripts, correspondence, and other memorabilia. This department of the Archives, the so-called Schriftenarchiv (Written Archives), is headed by Dr. Eleonore Frankl and the present author.

It covers two main areas: firstly and foremostly, the work and life of Viktor Frankl, and secondly, the international history of logotherapy and existential analysis from its early days to present times. In this article, we will focus on the first area, especially since in the early days of logotherapy it was Viktor and his

wife Eleonore Frankl who, along with a few pioneers in almost every corner of the world were themselves the very motor of the history of logotherapy and existential analysis.

Still, the process of collecting is going on, though nowadays it has become considerably more difficult to keep track of all that is being published about logotherapy and existential analysis. While from the viewpoint of the archivist it is somewhat lamentable that it seems almost impossible to get hold of everything that is published in our field, it also is a sign of the maturation, growth, and spreading of logotherapy. Still, this article provides us with the opportunity to assure you that we are very interested in your ongoing activities and publications. Our work can only be as good as the input we receive, and if we want to keep track of logotherapy's unfolding history, we depend on the information of those who make it.

Besides the documentation of current developments and the contemporary history of logotherapy, the primary task of the Archives is to preserve and research the writings, letters and private documents of Viktor Frankl. For the remainder of this article, we will inform you about this aspect of our work and give you some insight into what has been happening in the past few years.

Ongoing Work at the Archives: What Archivists do

Archivists are interested in the past, but their work is directed towards the future. In general, there are three main functions of the Archives. The first is to make sure that the original materials are preserved unaltered. The second is to make sure that as many people as possible know just what those originals are and where to find them; the third is to provide the logotherapeutic community with the results of our work in the form of publications and books.

1. Indexing and Cataloging

When archeologists investigate ancient shipwrecks the first thing they look for are the ships' inventories and cargo lists. They carry the information what to look for in the first place; they outline the supplies and the equipment carried on board. Hence indexing the files is the first main task we have to work on – and with about hundred thousand pages of handwritten manuscripts, and print originals, and hundreds of hours of audio tape, and dozens of hours of film and video, this becomes real work. All of these items and files need to be cataloged according to content, time and place and according to who was the photographer, transcriber, and source. Often this information is no longer available and our detective work begins.

To sum up, the first important step of our work is to index all the files. As of today, about 50% of the Written Archives have been entered into a database. And since 1999, the Written Archives have their own website with online access to a searchable database. Researchers from all over the world can conduct an online search of what we have on stock. Of course, access to the personal files is restricted.

2. Preserving the Originals

Once a file is cataloged, the next important step is to secure its preservation. One of the problems with most paper is that it contains acids that cause it to self-destruct. Regular manuscript pages may last only a little more than seventy to eighty years before they become dry, brittle and finally crumble to dust. This is especially true for post-war paper – yet one of the most productive phases in the literary work of Viktor Frankl falls exactly in the time period between 1945 and 1955 when the quality of paper was extremely poor.

The process of preservation is expensive and time-consuming, and our resources are limited. However, a while ago we succeeded in restoring and securing one of the hallmark documents of logotherapy – namely the only surviving copy of the 200-pages-typscript of the 1940/42 version of “Ärztliche Seelsorge” (The

Doctor and the Soul) which was carefully de-acidified and encapsulated in an alkaline buffer by Marie Kastner, a professional Viennese book restorer and friend who generously donated her time and work for free.

Other important archive items are currently being marked and booked for future preservation. Meanwhile we image scan the documents and letters in order to preserve at least the content of the more endangered documents.

3. Research and Publications

The first two activities of the Archives are going on almost unnoticed by the logotherapeutic community. However, it is our mission not only to preserve (1 and 2), but also to make accessible Viktor Frankl's published and unpublished works. During his lifetime, Viktor Frankl published no less than 32 books and about 600 articles, interviews and commentaries on current topics in psychiatry, psychology, and philosophy. While these are impressive figures, in the next few years, the list of Frankl's publications will continue to grow.

In 2005, four new books have been published by or in collaboration with the Archives: Dr. Gabriele Vesely-Frankl, the daughter of Viktor Frankl, edited an annotated anthology of his early writings (1923-1942). This book enables researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the early development of Frankl's work before his deportation to Theresienstadt in 1942 and is a valuable source for the study of the historical roots of logotherapy and Frankl's early psychiatric and neurological research.

The manuscript of the second new book was resting on the bookshelves of the archives for more than 20 years until a number of coincidences led to its discovery, and finally publication, in 2005. This book, called "Gottsuche und Sinnfrage" (Religious Quest and the Search for Meaning) dates back to August 1984 and consists of a transcribed conversation between renowned Jewish philosopher of religion Pinchas Lapidé and Viktor Frankl.

One of the major publication projects related to the Archives is the 12-volume Edition of the Collected Works of Viktor Frankl, edited by the present author, Karlheinz Biller (University of Kiel), and Eugenio Fizzotti (Salesiana University, Rome). Its volumes are being published on a semi-annual basis, each being complete in itself, and each partly containing either texts which have not been available to the general public for decades, or altogether unpublished documents from the Archives. The first volume of the Edition of the Collected Works contains the classic "Man's Search for Meaning" (in the German original), published alongside Frankl's letters and poems after his liberation and return to Vienna (1945-1949).

Volume 2 (summer 2006) will cover Frankl's theatre play "Synchronisation in Birkenwald" and his psychological and philosophical articles, papers and interviews on the tragic triad in the context of World War II and the concentration camps. Just recently, we discovered yet another unpublished book manuscript from 1948; this will likely be the content of volume 5 or 6 of the Collected Works. Volume 3 and 4 will be cover Frankl's writings on clinical psychiatry and psychology.

Besides the major book publications, the second public service of the Archives is to conduct and facilitate research about special topics and historical studies in logotherapy and existential analysis. We regularly receive requests from researchers and students from all over the world – sometimes too many to handle in an appropriate time frame. Hence requests should always be accompanied by a good dose of patience, a clear statement of purpose and also should carry as much information as possible about the project itself and the academic or institutional affiliation and the project leader.

4. Provenance and Archival History

Another aspect of our work is to document the history of how archive materials have been preserved over the years. In the archival trade this is called provenance and archival history and is examined very carefully by academics and collectors. This presentation will hopefully contribute to the process, though there is

still a long way to go in this area. An important first step was taken in April 2005. Since then, the Viktor Frankl Archives are listed on the Archives Portal of the United Nations' educational, scientific and cultural organisation (UNESCO).

The Future of Logotherapy's History

Currently, work in the Archives focuses on the first three tasks mentioned above. During the next few years, the indexing phase should be over and emphasis will be shifted to the tasks of preservation, research and publication. One plan is to digitize all of the primary sources on logotherapy and its history (i.e. all published and unpublished writings of Viktor Frankl) in order to make them available to the worldwide logotherapeutic and scientific communities.

Also, logotherapists have to be made aware of the importance of keeping records of their activities. We should keep in mind that after only 8 years since Viktor Frankl's death, we still live in the pioneering days of logotherapy. A renewed awareness of the historical perspective of the current initiatives of the worldwide logotherapy societies and institutes as shapers of the field's future should make us aware of our responsibility not only towards the future but also towards the past.

While the Viktor Frankl Archives set an example as the central institution for recording and preserving the lifework of Viktor Frankl, they encourage similar initiatives in their efforts to create national logotherapy archives that will perpetuate the efforts of its pioneers and friends.

How to contact the Archives:

Website of the Archives: <http://www.viktorfrankl.org/e/archivE.html>

Email address: alex.batt@nexta.at

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Recent publications drawing on material from the Archives:

- Frankl, Viktor E. und Lapide, Pinchas (2005). *Gottsuche und Sinnfrage. Ein Gespräch.* Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus
- Frankl, Viktor E. (2005). *Frühe Schriften.* Herausgegeben und kommentiert von Gabriele Vesely-Frankl. Wien: Maudrich.
- Frankl, Viktor E. (2005). *Gesammelte Werke, Band 1: ...trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen. Und ausgewählte Briefe (1945–1949).* Herausgegeben von Alexander Batthyany, Karlheinz Biller und Eugenio Fizzotti. Wien: Böhlau.
- Frankl, Viktor E. (2006). *Gesammelte Werke, Band 2: Synchronisation in Birkenwald. Und Texte zur Psychologie und Psychiatrie des Konzentrationslagers und des Krieges (1945–1997).* Herausgegeben von Alexander Batthyany, Karlheinz Biller und Eugenio Fizzotti. Wien: Böhlau.
- Frankl, Eleonore; Alexander Batthyany; Juliane Pezold; Alexander Vesely. (2005). *Viktor E. Frankl, Wien IX. Erlebnisse und Begegnungen in der Mariannengasse.* Innsbruck: Tyrolia