UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

The Sussex Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies
Centre for German-Jewish Studies

Life President
Lord Neuberger of Abbotsbury

Issue 61, November 2025 | Edited by Diana Franklin | ISSN 1265-4837

The Max and Hilde Kochmann Summer School University of Sussex

29 June - 12 July 2025

Founded in 2009, the Max and Hilde Kochmann Summer School for PhD Students in Jewish History and Culture has evolved into a platform for emerging scholars in Jewish and Israel Studies. It is particularly valuable for early-career researchers based at universities without dedicated Jewish Studies programs. The Sussex Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies collaborated with the Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Graz and the European Association of Israel Studies to organise this year's Summer School. Twenty-four doctoral students from ten countries presented their work with topics ranging from 'Jews in India' to the 'Politics of desire in Israel.'

The Peter Summerfield Public Lecture, which took place at the BNJC (Brighton & Hove Jewish Community Centre), was delivered by Lior Sternfeld (Penn State University), who spoke on 'Fatal Attraction: Understanding the Israel–Iran Relationship.' Sternfeld explored the historical alliance between Israel and Iran following the latter's recognition of Israel in 1949, the covert collaborations that persisted even after the 1979 revolution and the evolution of the relationship into one of overt hostility and geopolitical brinkmanship. His talk paid special attention to the period following the events of October 7, 2023.

A roundtable discussion entitled, 'Jews and Muslims in European Urban Spaces,' featuring Lior Sternfeld, Ben Gidley (Birkbeck, University of London), Marcela Menachem Zoufalá (Charles University Prague), Joanna Dyduch and Artur Skorek (both from the University of Krakow), focused on questions of inclusion and intercommunal relations between Jewish and Muslim minorities in Europe, in the light of rising antisemitism and Islamophobia.

The Summer School received overwhelmingly positive feedback. One participant wrote: 'Thank you so much for the personally and academically enriching summer school! It was great.' Another noted: 'I'm grateful for the opportunity to attend. It was very well organized, truly enjoyable and extremely useful for my academic development.' A third added: 'It was a thoroughly enjoyable event, and I really appreciated the opportunity to attend. Thank you to everyone involved!' The next Max and Hilde Kochmann Summer School is planned for 2027, and we are hopeful that by then we will have secured the necessary support for this important initiative.

Ernest Kochmann 1947- 2025

Ernest was the son of Max and Hilde Kochmann who, in 1995, were instrumental in setting up the Centre for German-Jewish Studies.

After Max and Hilde died, Dr Kurt Hellman, a supporter of the Centre, and a close friend of the Kochmanns, suggested that we start a summer school in their memory The Max and Hilde Kochmann Summer School was thus set up in the year 2009 and has become a biennial fixture in the Weidenfeld Institute/Centre for German-Jewish Studies calendar.

Ernest Kochmann and his sister, Irene Shapiro, joined Dr Hellman in supporting the Summer School - dedicated to nurturing PhD researchers studying Jewish and Israel Studies.

Over many years, Ernest never missed the public lecture at the Summer School where he would speak about his parents' legacy and about his and their enthusiasm for our work. Ernest died this year and will be much missed by all of us at the Centre for German-Jewish Studies.

We send our sincere condolences to his wife Gale, his sister Irene, and to the whole family.

Unravelling the Complex Legacies of the 1952 German-Jewish Reparations Agreement **September 2-4, 2025**

Participants of the workshop: *Unravelling the Complex Legacies of the 1952 German-Jewish Reparations Agreement*

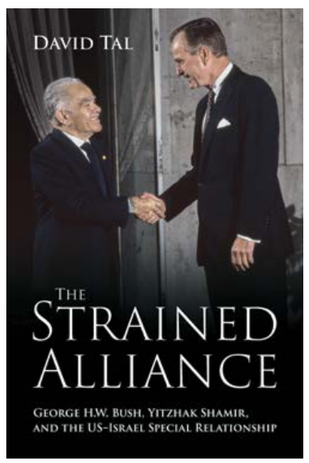
To mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the State of Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany, the Weidenfeld Institute, in collaboration with the Jacob Robinson Institute at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Azrieli Center for Israel Studies at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, convened an international workshop entitled: *Unravelling the Complex Legacies of the 1952 German-Jewish Reparations Agreement*. The event was held in Sde Boker, Israel.

The workshop focused on the Luxembourg Agreement of September 10, 1952 - signed by the Federal Republic of Germany, the State of Israel and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany. This landmark accord was an unprecedented attempt in the history of international diplomacy to provide restitution and reparations for the crimes of the Holocaust. While at the time the agreement was recognized as a significant milestone in postwar international relations, its broader historical and political consequences have often been overlooked or marginalised in scholarly and public discourse.

Bringing together 22 leading scholars from Israel, Germany, the UK, the United States, South Korea and India, the workshop aimed to reassess the legacy of the reparations agreement from a comparative and global perspective. Discussions focused on the agreement's immediate and long-term impact on Israeli society, West German politics and memory culture, and the evolving field of Holocaust reparations. Participants explored how the Luxembourg Agreement helped to shape emerging frameworks of transitional and reparative justice and the ways in which it influenced other compensation efforts across the globe. Panels considered comparative cases from post-colonial India, wartime Korea and the United States, demonstrating how the German-Israeli example reverberated across other contexts dealing with mass violence, displacement and historical redress.

Several presentations revisited the moral and political controversies surrounding the negotiations, including opposition within Israel, ambivalence within West Germany and the role of the Jewish Claims Conference in mediating between national and diasporic interests. Other papers examined the cultural and emotional dimensions of restitution - especially the uneasy relationship between financial compensation, memory and accountability.

The workshop offered new insights into the complex interplay between law, memory and politics in the aftermath of atrocity. In doing so, it highlighted the continued relevance of the reparations model - as a contested and evolving tool for addressing injustice in the 21st century.



Yitzhak Shamir with George Bush

Publications:

We congratulate David Tal on the publication of his new book: The Strained Alliance: George H. W. Bush, Yitzhak Shamir, and the US–Israel Special Relationship - **https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/strained-alliance/D6DC287894282E50D58520A6D6A14182**

When George H. W. Bush ascended to the American presidency in 1989, one of the more urgent relationships that he was faced with building was that with Israel's Yitzhak Shamir. Drawing on newly declassified materials from American and Israeli state and non-state archives. From the peace process to loan guarantees, from military aid to emotional diplomacy, *The Strained Alliance* uncovers the debates, conflicts and strategic decisions that shaped this period between 1989–1992. In doing so, David Tal challenges the traditional perception that US-Israel relations were dominated by policy disagreements, highlighting the broader foundation of collaboration that endured behind the scenes.

New Bader Philanthropies PhD student - Yael Roberts

Research Summary

My research project *Beyond Borders: A Hasidic Search for Jewish Belonging,* examines 19th-century Hasidic texts as a way of rethinking Jewish identity in our contemporary moment. Through a close reading of Rabbi Mordechai Joseph Leiner's Mei Hashiloach, I will trace the motif of g'vul (border) in this book, as both a literal geographical marker and as a metaphor for spiritual and ethical boundaries. I aim to read Hasidic thought in conversation with the contemporaneous rise of Zionism, and make it relevant for Diasporism today outside Ultra-Orthodoxy. Alongside this textual analysis, I will create a body of practice-based research in the form of large-scale monoprints. The artworks will visualise these questions about the motif of g'vul as a way of visualising new homeland(s) for the contemporary Jewish Diaspora. My research is both historical and constructive; it seeks to recover marginalized Hasidic ideas and to make them relevant to Jewish belonging today.

Note of Thanks

I wish to express my gratitude to the trustees of Bader Philanthropies for supporting my research through this scholarship. Originally from St. Louis, Missouri, I have lived in London for the past decade where I have worked as a freelance artist and Jewish educator. My journey into this research is shaped by this past decade of work as well as by my orthodox upbringing. As the great-grandchild of Holocaust survivors and immigrants, my research is deeply personal and seeks to re-imagine Jewish belonging beyond borders, both geographical and conceptual.

New DAAD lecturer, Dr Fabian Weber

The Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies / Centre for German-Jewish Studies is delighted to welcome Fabian Weber, who joined the University of Sussex in September 2025 as the new Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) lecturer.

Fabian is an historian specializing in modern German and Jewish history. He completed his PhD in 2020 at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, which was published under the title: *Projections on Zionism: Non-Jewish Perceptions of Zionism in Germany, 1897 -1933 (Projektionen auf den Zionismus. Nichtjüdische Wahrnehmungen des Zionismus im Deutschen Reich 1897–1933).* Since the Jewish national movement served as a screen for diverse desires, hostilities and projections, this study focuses on three distinct debates: examining colonial publicists, antisemitic agitators and Protestant Christian actors in their engagement with Zionism.

Fabian has held positions at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich and at the University of the German Armed Forces in Munich (Universität der Bundeswehr München). He is a member of the editorial board of the Münchner Beiträge für jüdische Geschichte und Kultur (Munich Journal of Jewish History and Culture).

His habilitation project, entitled: *Compassion Mobilized: Antisemitism, Racism, and the Politics of Animal Welfare in Germany, 1945–2002* examines political, legal and public debates on shechita (the Jewish method of ritual slaughter) in West Germany and in the United Kingdom. This study will be completed in 2026.

Fabian also conducts research in the field of far-right studies. In 2023, he was a Manfred Lahnstein Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Haifa, where he investigated the complex relationship between Jews and the so-called 'New Right.' His findings were published in Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte under the title: *Armin Mohler, die Neue Rechte und der Antisemitismus, 1950–1995.*

Fabian writes: *I am delighted to be joining Sussex to teach European history, where I will draw on my expertise in German and Jewish history. I consider it highly valuable to bring different perspectives into dialogue and to connect them in my teaching and research. As my current research project also bridges British and German contexts, I hope to contribute to a deeper comparative understanding of these two countries-particularly relevant in these times of populism and political polarization.*

From Suitcase to Archive: Refugee Archives and German-Jewish Memory **15-16 September 2025**

Held at the University of Sussex, the second Isaacsohn and André Families Workshop brought together scholars, archivists and students for two days of interdisciplinary exchange centred on the legacy of refugee archives within German-Jewish history. Entitled *From Suitcase to Archive: Refugee Archives and German-Jewish Memory,* the event explored how personal materials carried by Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution have become foundational sources for understanding the complexities of migration, memory and identity.

The workshop focused on four archives: the German-Jewish Family Archive at Sussex, the Yekkes Archive in Haifa, the Wiener Holocaust Library in London and the Leo Baeck Institute in Jerusalem. Each of these collections originated through efforts by individuals and families, preserving a broad range of materials including diaries, letters, photographs and memoirs. As workshop discussions demonstrated, these 'archives from below' offer unique windows into lived experience, communal memory and transnational connections.

On the first day participants were introduced to the history, ethos and collection strategies of each archive. This was followed by the keynote address from Professor Guy Miron (Open University of Israel) on 'Diasporic Memory: Materials, Agents, Narratives.' Miron's reflections highlighted the dynamic trajectories of memory - from private belongings to institutional archives - and the affective and political stakes of their preservation.

On the second day, case studies examined how these archives are used in research. Topics ranged from 'Jewish refugees in sub-Saharan Africa', to 'family letters as historical sources', to the 'ethics of creative engagement with refugee narratives'. The final panel explored migration and return, with a focus on the evolving relationships between former refugees and Germany, as well as the recent war in Israel.

The workshop underscored the value of collaboration between archives and academic researchers and pointed towards future initiatives in digitization, public engagement and comparative research. Above all, it affirmed the ongoing relevance of refugee archives as powerful sites of memory, testimony and historical inquiry.

Ensuring a sustainable future for Holocaust memory in the digital age
Landecker Digital Memory Lab update

The Landecker Digital Memory Lab hosted the Connective Holocaust Commemoration Expo 2025 at Sussex in June, welcoming 180 participants from the heritage, digital and creative sectors as well as artists, educators, academics, students and funders from 30 countries to explore digital Holocaust memory through hands-on sessions, as well as roundtables and keynotes.

To watch video recordings from the Expo: https://www.digitalmemorylab.com/events

Professor Sasha Roseneil, Vice-Chancellor commented: 'It was a fantastic event – a huge organisational feat, and a very important event to have at Sussex.'

The Lab launched 'Digital Memory Dialogues' (https://digitalmemorydialogues.com), an innovative publication in which experts from different disciplines respond to a provocation. The first series focused on gaming. Dialogues II will be on AI, in November 2025.

Intensive development of the flagship product, the 'Digital Memory Database' continues. This global resource enables access to multimedia Holocaust memory content collected over many years of fieldwork, including video walk-throughs and interviews with the 'memory makers' of today. The official launch will take place early in 2026.

In April 'Sustainable Digital Futures for Holocaust Memory and Education: Recommendations for Funders and Policymakers' was published with the United Nations.

In May, at the invitation of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Prof. Richardson-Walden presented a paper entitled: 'AI Representation and Reception: AI and the Future of Holocaust Research and Memory' at a closed workshop and at a public symposium at the University of Washington.

At the Zekelman Holocaust Centre in Detroit, Research Fellow Dr Kate Marrison delivered the keynote speech, entitled: 'The Future of the Past: Holocaust Memory in the Digital Age.'

As part of the annual Memory Studies Association Conference, Kate Marrison hosted a workshop entitled: Playing with Memory in Prague: Holocaust Computer Games. By showcasing three computer games set within the context of the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia and its aftermath, Attentat 1942 (2017), Svoboda: Liberation (2021) and Train to Sachsenhausen (2022), participants were encouraged to reflect on memory discourse at the local, national and regional level and, more widely on the possibilities for digital innovation through games.

Visiting Research Fellow, Dr Stefania Manca (Italian National Research Council) spoke on 'Digital Learning Ecologies of Holocaust memory' at a hybrid seminar hosted by the Lab.

To find out more about the Lab's achievements, read their first annual report: https://www.digitalmemorylab.com/annual_report_2024-2025. Stay up to date with their work by reading their weekly blog: www.digitalmemorylab/blog, Sign up to their mailing list: www.digitalmemorylab.com/contact or email landeckerdigitalmemorylab@sussex.ac.uk.

Holocaust Memorial Day **Wednesday 4 February 2026**

11:00-14:45 - Bridging Generations

Two short films followed by a discussion with Judy Ironside MBE and Dr Kate Marrison.

Testimony from Holocaust Survivor, Malka Levine.

Malka was nearly three when the German invaders forced her family into the Jewish ghetto in Volodymyr-Volynski. Malka's father was shot in the first pogrom, but before he died, he begged her mother Rivka to 'save the children'.

We are most grateful to The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) who are generously supporting this event.

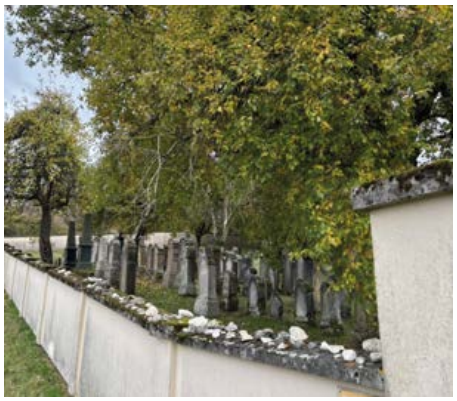
Booking is essential as places are limited. https://alumni.sussex.ac.uk/hmd-booking

Jewish Cemeteries in Franconia

The 'Jewish Cemeteries in Franconia' project was launched on October 22, 2025 in the Coburg State Library. Participants in the project include the Upper Franconia district, the Chair of Jewish Studies at the University of Bamberg, epigraphists, and local volunteers, Dietmar Stadter from Aufseß and Peter Friedmann from Marloffstein.

A report on the Aufseß Jewish Cemetery is one of the first three Jewish cemeteries in Franconia to be published, with detailed descriptions, including images of its gravestones and transcriptions of the Hebrew inscriptions. As part of this project, Diana Franklin, your editor, and her brother David Loewi were invited to visit the Aufseß Jewish Cemetery where they saw four graves of ancestors of their grandmother, Else Fleischer. They both found the experience affecting particularly as this is an initiative devised by the members of the local community wishing to mark the loss of their former Jewish fellow-citizens. Immense gratitude goes to Gaby Schuller who has worked tirelessly to commemorate what she emphasises was an important part of the diverse community of Coburg and the surrounding area.

https://jf-franken.de



Aufseß cemetery

For further information or to join the Friends of the Weidenfeld Institute/ Centre for German-Jewish Studies, please contact: Diana Franklin, Manager, Sussex Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies, University of Sussex, Falmer BN1 9QN UK. E: d.franklin@sussex.ac.uk