

Country Name	CZECH REPUBLIC
Existing Projects	Yes, the Documentation Centre of Property Transfers of Cultural Assets of World War II Victims conducts provenance research. (http://www.centrum.usd.cas.cz/index.php) See below for information on the Jewish Museum in Prague.
Known Objects	Yes
<i>Information taken from looted cultural property databases</i>	<p>1) <u>Source</u>: Database of Works of Art from the Property of Victims of the Holocaust: http://www.restitution-art.cz</p> <p>2) <u>Source</u>: Jirasek, Pavel. "Partnership for Restitution of Jewish Cultural Property in the Czech Republic: Principle and Reality". <i>Museum International</i>, no. 224, Vol. 56, No. 4, 2004, p 52.</p> <p>3) <u>Source</u>: Email exchange with Renata Kostalova on 15 August 2008.</p> <p>The Database of Works of Art from Property of Victims of the Holocaust holds approximately 3,000 looted works, including Jewish ritual objects. A brief survey of the database shows that probably more than 380 religious objects are held in Czech museums. These objects can generally be divided into: Torahs (~ 7), breast shields for the Torah (~ 1), Tas, shield for the Torah scroll (~ 3), Machzorim (~ 114), Hebrew manuscripts (~ 37), Hebrew incunabula (~ 6), Megilas (~ 3), Haftarah (~ 1), Hagaddoth (~ 4), Sidurim (~7), Shulchan Aruch (~ 1), "Bible" or "Biblia Hebraica" (~4), and ~ 197 other predominantly religious texts such as Seder tfilot, prayerbooks, etc.</p> <p>In addition, the database lists 42 manuscripts that were originally placed in the Jewish seminary in Wroclaw and were deposited in the National Library of the Czech Republic. These have since been restituted to Wroclaw. Similarly, in December 2004, 40 manuscripts and incunabula stemming from the Saraval Collection were identified in the National Library and were subsequently restituted to Poland.</p> <p>4) <u>Source</u>: Braunová, Andrea. "Origin of the Book Collection of the Library of the Jewish Museum in Prague." <i>Judaica Bohemiae</i> 36 (2000 [2001]).</p> <p>5) <u>Source</u>: Bušek, Michal. "Identifying Owners of Books Held by the Jewish Museum in Prague." <i>The Future of the Lost Cultural Heritage</i> pp. 104–12.</p> <p>6) <u>Source</u>: Bušek, Michal. "Identifying Owners of Books Held by the Jewish</p>

	<p>Museum in Prague”. <i>Vitalizing Memory. International Perspectives on Provenance Research</i>. Washington: American Association of Museums, 2005, pp 138-142.</p> <p>7) <u>Source</u>: Kennedy, Patricia Grimsted. “Sudeten Crossroads for Europe’s Displaced Books. The ‘Mysterious Twilight’ of the RSHA Amt VII Library and the Fate of A Million Victims of War.” Prepared for publication in the conference proceedings based on a shorter presentation at the international conference in Liberec organized by the Documentation Centre of Property Transfers of Cultural Assets of WW II. Victims, 24–26 October 2007.</p> <p>8) <u>Source</u>: Jewish Museum: “Preliminary Report for the Holocaust Era Assets Conference” (http://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/avice25.htm)</p> <p>The Jewish Museum in Prague database as of November 2007 had 5,677 owners identified in book markings in 33,973 out of approximately 80,000 volumes examined. In addition, work is under way to examine an estimated 34,000 additional unprocessed volumes. As part of the Museum’s continuous research efforts, war-time inventories and postwar catalogues are being digitized. According to the Museum’s “Preliminary Report for the Holocaust Era Assets Conference” (http://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/avice25.htm) the Museum currently does not have any registered institutional claims but is working on one individual claim for artworks involving 46 prints and drawings by Hella Guth.</p> <p>9) <u>Source</u>: The Central Registry of Information on Looted Cultural Property 1933-1945; www.lootedart.com, last accessed on 15 October 2008. The Central Registry of Information on Looted Cultural Property 1933-1945 provides information on cultural and religious objects found in the Czech database.</p>
<p><i>Information taken from publications</i></p>	<p>1) <u>Source</u>: Veselská, Magda. “The Selling Off of Items from the Collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague after the Second World War, with Particular Focus on the Sale of Torah Scrolls in 1963-1964”. <i>Judaica Bohemiae</i> 42 (2006).</p> <p>2) <u>Source</u>: Yavnai, Elisabeth. “Jewish Cultural Property and Its Postwar Recovery”. <i>Confiscation of Jewish Property in Europe, 1933-1945</i>. One Day Symposium at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 22 March 2001, p 129.</p> <p>3) <u>Source</u>: Bušek, Michal. “Identifying Owners of Books Held by the Jewish</p>

Museum in Prague". *Vitalizing Memory. International Perspectives on Provenance Research*. Washington: American Association of Museums, 2005, pp 138-142.

4) Source:

Grimsted, Patricia Kennedy. "Sudeten Crossroads for Europe's Displaced Books. The 'Mysterious Twilight' of the RSHA Amt VII Library and the Fate of A Million Victims of War." Prepared for publication in the conference proceedings based on a shorter presentation at the international conference in Liberec organized by the Documentation Centre of Property Transfers of Cultural Assets of WW II. Victims, 24-26 October 2007.

5) Source:

Herman, Dana. *Hashavat Avedah: A History of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc.* Department of History, McGill University, Montreal, October 2008.

Prior to World War II, the library of the Jewish Community of Prague consisted mainly of traditional literature from Jewish communities. These collections included rabbinical writings, prayerbooks, fiction, but also non-fiction. After the war, parts of the library of Prague's Jewish Community as well as a large portion of Theresienstadt's ghetto library were incorporated into the Jewish Museums' library.

In the Theresienstadt/Terezin collection were also several looted Judaica pieces and books. About 1,800 Torah scrolls from liquidated Jewish communities in Bohemia and Moravia reached the so-called Central Jewish Museum in Prague during the war, while books from Terezin were deposited there after the war.

Aside from Torah scrolls, estimates suggest that a quarter million books also ended the war in Theresienstadt. However, as many as half of the books had to be destroyed due to "bacterial contamination," because there were no facilities for fumigation and disinfection immediately after the war. Those books that survived the disinfection process were consequently moved to Prague and specifically to the Jewish Museum: this shipment included 28,245 volumes catalogued by the so-called *Talmudkommando*.

The Terezin collection was originally comprised of numerous collections stemming from the Rabbinical seminaries in Berlin or Wroclaw and others, the Warburg Library of Hamburg, German-Jewish private libraries from Prague and Brno, the libraries of the Haksharot, and, for example, the mobile library of the Association of Prussian County Communities. During its existence, the ghetto library contained a designated Hebrew Room with 10,000 volumes of Hebraica reserved

for scholarly study. In total more than 200,000 books passed through the Terezin library until 1945, and about 100,000 were transferred from Terezin to the Jewish Museum.

In addition to the Terezin collection, some of the looted books later to be found in the Bohemian castles of Silesia were amassed by the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*-RSHA (Amt VII). Of these grand book collections, an estimated 65,000 books were claimed by Czech government officials, despite the fact that “the materials did not necessarily originate in Czechoslovakia. Custody of the assets was given to the National and University Library of Prague.” Shmuel Hugo Bergmann, who had witnessed the sorting by Czech archivists in Mimon Castle, one of the Bohemian castles with war loot, later recalled how some of the books were labelled as having originated from Poland, Holland or Hungary.

[Please note that the collections found in Mimon Castle, looted by the RSHA, included (1) the library of the Berlin Jewish Community, (2) the library of the Jewish Seminary of Breslau, (3) the library of the Central Verein of Berlin, (4) a news library created by the Nazis using the Seligmann collection, (5) a Jewish library that contained almost 50,000 books on every topic except those of Jewish nature, (6) a large collection of Jewish newspapers in Hebrew and other languages, (7) more than 50 boxes of booklets, (8) 25 boxes of Hebrew manuscripts (9) thousands of books and other archival materials that could not be identified.]

Other books found in these depositories carried identifying Hebrew or Yiddish stamps not understood by the local archivists. As for Polish books, the Polish government soon sent representatives to demand back all books of Polish origin, Jewish- and non-Jewish alike.

Soon also American Jewish and non-Jewish organizations claimed parts of the library holdings. In late 1946, for example, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Organization (AJDC) brought some 2,000 books found in the Mimon Castle to Austria for distribution in DP camps. Negotiations between Czech authorities and the AJDC continued and by 1951, the organization had successfully claimed 34,900 books, while UNRRA had received 65,115 books. However, it is unclear if these books originated from the Mimon castle or from the Theresienstadt library.

After the JCR was founded (for more information on the JCR, please see Part A) in 1947, negotiations were launched to gain custody over these book collections. (At the same time, the JCR also distributed books to the Czech Republic, specifically to the Jewish Museum.)

Nonetheless, even before the official establishment of the JCR, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem emerged in negotiations with the Council of Jewish Communities in Bohemia, which included the Jewish Museum and which acted as trustees for books stemming from the Theresienstadt library, to gain part of the collection for the University. In the end, about 50,000 books were transferred to the Hebrew University, consisting of the most “valuable for the cultural, religious and educational work in Palestine.” (Please note that other estimates of books transferred to the Hebrew University are as high as 70,000. The discrepancies in numbers stem from the fact that some shipments took place in secret, and even some valuable manuscripts were hidden in boxes between other books without inclusion in the inventories. Another issue evolved around books that did not go to the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem but were sold to book dealers in Jerusalem.) These books originated either from the Theresienstadt library or one of the three castles that contained looted books after the war: Mimon, Novy Perkstejn, and Houska.

In addition, Prague’s National Library (*Clementinum*) also received looted books that were found in the castles mentioned above. Some of these Hebraic and Judaic books were inadequately catalogued but can be traced back to books stemming from the Warsaw library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau, the library of the Rabbinical Seminary in Budapest, as well as books from Jewish communities in Germany and of Olomouc. Grimsted notes that “this is a good example of Jewish books from within the Czech Republic brought to Prague, or possibly Teresienstadt, during the German occupation and that ended up in the National Library rather than the Jewish Museum...(These cases) underscore the need for further provenance research on Judaica and Hebraica in the Clementinum.”

According to Andrea Braunova and Michal Bušek, the estimates are as high as a total of 158,000 books that were removed from the Jewish museum collections by 1950. While most book collections, as noted above, went to Jewish relief organizations or the Hebrew University, some books were returned to their original owners or handed over to the National Recovery Foundation, which dealt with enemy property. Moreover, a major intervention regarding the collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague took place in the first five years after the end of World War II. At that time several thousands of necessary ritual items and prayer books were provided to the approximately 50 re-established Jewish communities and minyanim in Bohemia and Moravia (with a few exceptions in Slovakia). Some of these items were subsequently returned to the Museum due to the closing of Jewish communities, while other items remain spread all over the world.

In 1994 all holdings of the former State Jewish Museum including the

	<p>library were transferred to the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic, which subsequently donated them to the Jewish Museum operating as a private institution under the Federation of Jewish Communities of Bohemia and Moravia and Jewish Community of Prague with the Ministry of Culture represented in its bodies as well. Several years later provenance research commenced into that library as well as into the original holdings of the JCM (The Jewish Central Museum). As of 2007, of the approximately 100,000 books in possession of the library, around 80,000 had already been checked (with the collection of the former JCM amounting to approximately 46,000 books.) Part of the ongoing research carried out by the Jewish Museum also focuses on Torah scrolls of the former State Jewish Museum which were sold off in 1964 to foreign trade companies such as Artia. These scrolls are now partially located at the Czech Memorial Scrolls Centre at the Westminster Synagogue.</p> <p><i>See also United Kingdom.</i></p> <p>5) <u>Source</u>: “Czech Book Maps History of Jewish Items in Museum Collections.” http://www.ceskenoviny.cz.</p> <p>In addition to the Jewish Museum, the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague has also conducted provenance research on its Jewish collections, which presumably came from Jews deported to concentration camps during World War II. Results of this provenance research are published in the book <i>Returns of Memory</i>. The project was prepared by the Documentation Centre of Property Transfers of Cultural Assets of World War II Victims and the Contemporary History Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences.</p> <p><i>Please see section on Russian Federation for Jewish archival holdings at the RGVA archive.</i></p>
<i>other</i>	
Historical Commission	<p>In October 1998, the Czech Republic formed a Joint Working Commission, the “Commission for Holocaust Era Property Issues in the Czech Republic,” that was chaired by Pavel Rychetsky, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Republic. The objective of the Commission was to mitigate property injustices inflicted on Holocaust victims.</p>
Notes	
Selected Bibliography	<p>→ Please note that the general literature may also contain information on the specific country.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Braunova, Andrea. “Origin of the Jewish Museum Library Holdings: Origin of the Jewish Museum in Prague”. <i>Newsletter of the Jewish Museum in</i>

	<p><i>Prague</i> Nr. 3, 4, 1999.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Borák, Mečislav. “Verspätete Gerechtigkeit. Die Restitution von enteignetem Kulturgut in Tschechien.“ <i>Osteuropa, Kunst und Konflikt. Kriegsfolgen und Kooperationsfelder in Europa</i> 56. Jahrgang, Heft 1-2, Januar/Februar 2006, pp 247-262. ▪ “Court Stands Up for Holocaust Victim Heir – Server”. <i>The Prague Daily Monitor</i> 12 March 2007. ▪ Jancik, Drahomir. <i>Jewish gold and other precious metals, precious stones, and objects made of such materials, situation in the Czech lands in the years 1939-1945: unlawful infringement of property rights and its scope: subsequent fate of the Jewish assets affected by this infringement report by a team of experts created by the Joint Task Force Based Decision no. 773 of the Czech government of November 25, 1998</i>. Sefer, Terezin Initiative Institute, Prague, 2001. ▪ Jelinek, Yeshayahu. “Restitution of Jewish Property in the Czech and Slovak Republics: an Interim Report”. <i>East European Jewish Affairs</i> vol. 24, no. 2, 1994, pp 73-87. ▪ Jirásek, Pavel. “Partnership for Restitution of Jewish Cultural Property in the Czech Republic: Principle and Reality”. <i>Museum International</i> No.224, Vol. 56, Nr.4, 2004, pp 46-52. ▪ Potthast, Jan Björn. <i>Das jüdische Zentralmuseum der SS in Prag. Gegnerforschung und Völkermord im Nationalsozialismus</i>. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag 2002. ▪ Rupnow, Dirk. <i>Täter Gedächtnis Opfer: Das “Jüdische Zentralmuseum” in Prag, 1942-1945</i>. Vienna: Picus, 2000. ▪ Rupnow, Dirk. “The Jewish Central Museum in Prague and Holocaust Memory in the Third Reich”. <i>Holocaust & Genocide Studies</i> 16, Spring 2002, pp 23-53. ▪ Tatzkow, Monika. Hinz, Hans-Joachim. “Bürger, Opfer und die historische Gerechtigkeit. Das Schicksal jüdischer Kunstsammler in Breslau“. <i>Osteuropa, Kunst und Konflikt. Kriegsfolgen und Kooperationsfelder in Europa</i> 56. Jahrgang, Heft 1-2, Januar/Februar 2006, pp 155-172. ▪ Veselská, Magda. “The Selling Off of Items from the Collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague after the Second World War, with Particular Focus on the Sale of Torah Scrolls in 1963-1964”. <i>Judaica Bohemiae</i> 42 (2006), pp 179-232. ▪ Zivny, Ladislav J. “Czechoslovak Libraries during the War and After”. <i>Library Journal</i> 15 June 1946, pp 877-78.
<p>List of Experts</p>	<p>→The general contact list of experts in the field may be relevant for the specific country.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leo Pavlat, Director, Jewish Museum Prague ▪ Michaela Sidenberg, Curator of Visual Arts, Jewish Museum in Prague ▪ Pavel Jirasek, Researcher, Documentation Centre for Property Transfers of Cultural Assets of WWII ▪ Helena Krejčova, Director, Documentation Centre for Property Transfers of Cultural Assets of WWII ▪ Tomas Kraus, Executive Director, Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic ▪ Bedrich Nosek, Head, Institute of Jewish Studies, Faculty of Hussite Theology, Charles University, Czech Republic ▪ Lena Novotna, Faculty Member, Institute of Jewish Studies, Faculty of Hussite Theology, Charles University, Czech Republic