Google launches online 'Cultural Institute' chronicling 20th century

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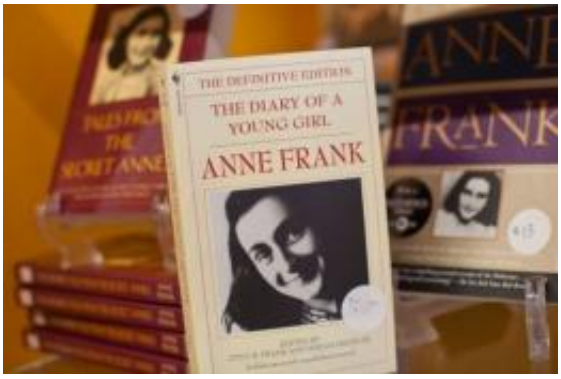

Google on Wednesday launched its online "Cultural Institute", a digital visual archive of landmark 20th century events and personalities, created in cooperation with 17 museums and institutes from across the globe. The archives focus on legends like Anne Frank, the young Jewish-Dutch Holocaust victim whose famous diary chronicled her plight.

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The archives focus on legends like Anne Frank, the young Jewish-Dutch Holocaust victim whose famous diary chronicled her plight; South African freedom icon Nelson Mandela; as well as lesser-known heroes like Jan Karski, a Polish anti-Nazi partisan who brought the Allies early eye-witness testimony of the Holocaust.

Six million archive photographs, documents, texts and films provided by museums including the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Poland, Israel's Yad Vashem World Centre for Holocaust Research or the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory can be accessed at the Google Cultural Institute at www.google.com/culturalinstitute.

"We want to bring all of the cutting-edge technologies that we have—the services, the products, mapping—to the cultural sector," Google's Mark Yoshitaka told journalists in the Polish capital Warsaw at the Wednesday launch.

With an initial collection of 42 online themes, the archive is set to expand significantly in the coming years, he said.

"It's a fantastic tool, which lets us cross geographic borders, provide access to museum collection around the clock in several languages. It's a real revolution," said Robert Kostro director of the Museum of Polish History.

"Today, we must use all technologies at our disposal to preserve memory," Piotr Cywinski, director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum said at the launch.

Google's virtual Cultural Institute comes on the heels of the Google Art Project allowing Internet users to explore fine art from around the world with thousands of artworks photographed in extremely high resolution.

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