

OHAA On Tape

December 2004

Editor: Suzanne Mulligan

Email: mulligan@gil.com.au

Hello Everyone!

I guess you're all gearing up for the holiday season. Terry and I have just returned from a holiday at Ballina in the beautiful Northern Rivers area of New South Wales. From Ballina we did day trips around the area – one day up to Byron Bay, another south to Iluka and Yamba, another west to Nimbin and Protestor Falls. It's a wonderful area to explore, particularly after all the rain they've had, the countryside was gloriously green, the beaches spectacular and the rain forests and lookouts breathtaking. All this beauty is only a couple of hours drive away – thoroughly recommended.

We were all very sorry that our planned Reminiscence Workshop did not go ahead because the presenter, Marilyn Roberts, became suddenly ill and was hospitalised only a couple of days before our workshop was due to take place. We all wish Marilyn a speedy recovery and hope that the workshop can be held sometime in 2005.

Our committee has met and planned an interesting program for 2005 which must include early in the New Year our Annual General Meeting that also did not proceed on 13 November. Our AGM is now

planned for 27 February and I hope you will all get along to that. It is being held in conjunction with an Editing Workshop conducted by oral historian, Sue Pechey. There has been much discussion about editing on the Oral History email list. More details about the workshop and the AGM are on page 2 of this newsletter.

Lesley Jenkins is conducting one of her excellent workshops on 2 April 2005 where she will teach you the important basics of oral history.

In October Lesley will share with us the knowledge she will have gained from her Churchill Fellowship. She has an extensive program of oral history events and seminars to attend in Britain and the United States where she will study first hand the latest in oral history practices.

On behalf of the OHAA Committee, I wish you all well for Christmas and hope you will meet some wonderful interviewees for your oral history in 2005.

Suzanne Mulligan
Editor

Calendar of Events – 2005

- 27 February **Transcript & Editing Workshop** 10.00 am-1.00 pm (see Page 3 for details) and **Annual General Meeting** 1.00pm – 1.30pm
Venue: Central City Library (Lower Ground Level, City Plaza) Cnr Ann, George & Adelaide Sts, Brisbane.
- 2 April **Oral History Workshop** 10am – 4pm
(see Page 4 for details)
- June **Oral History Workshop in Toowoomba, conducted by Sue Pechey – details to be confirmed.**
- 22 October **“Downloading the Churchill Fellow – Around the World in 80 days with an Oral Historian”**
Lesley Jenkins will share with us her experiences in the Churchill fellowship
10.00 am to 12.00 pm – morning tea provided, gold coin donation.
Venue: Central City Library (Lower Ground Level, City Plaza) Cnr Ann, George & Adelaide Sts, Brisbane.
- 12 November **Videotaping Oral History** (details to be confirmed) and **Annual General Meeting**

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Oral History Web Sites

A couple of excellent web sites have featured on the Oral History List recently. They are

Baylor University – Institute of Oral History. Oral History Workshop on the Web which includes Introduction to Oral History, Oral History Bibliography and Tips for Family Oral History.

http://www3.baylor.edu/Oral_History/Workshop.htm

The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide on the Smithsonian Centre for Folklife and Cultural Heritage web site.

<http://www.folklife.si.edu/index.html>

Links to these and other oral history web sites can be found on my web site:

<http://www.home.gil.com.au/~mulligan>

Suzanne Mulligan



Transcript and Editing Workshop

The Oral History Association of Australia – Queensland Inc will be conducting a workshop on editing and editing oral history transcripts. The workshop will be facilitated by Sue Pechey an experienced oral historian and editor. The day will cover the following topics:

- . Putting the Voice on the Page
- . Raw transcript
- . First draft—what to take out immediately
- . Punctuation
- . Maintaining the speaking voice
- . Difficulties—non-standard grammar, non-English accents
- . Dealing with anger, tears and antagonism to the interviewer
- . Taking the interviewer off the record
- . Ethics

When: Sunday 27 February 2005
10.00 am – 1.00 pm

Where: Central City Library (Lower Ground Level, City Plaza) Cnr Ann,
George & Adelaide Sts, Brisbane.

Cost: \$20.00 (members) \$25.00 (non-members)

ENROLMENT ESSENTIAL

Please enrol by making cheques payable to the OHAA-Qld Inc and send to the secretary, Lesley Jenkins at 93 Petersen Street, Wynnum 4178. Mark the cheque on the back Editing Workshop. Email enquiries can be sent to Lesley at recordinghistory@optusnet.com.au

- . If you have a lap top computer bring it along.
- . Morning tea provided. Please bring your own lunch or there are lots of food venues available.



Oral History Training Workshop

Oral history is the recording of memories of people's unique life experiences which complements existing written history and preserves the voices, accents and vocabularies of individuals interviewed. Through oral history we learn about our past from "living history books". Oral historians may undertake community projects, interviewing people about the early days of a local area or interviewing family members about their history. The Oral History Association of Australia promotes and encourages the use of oral history as a valuable addition to the historical record.

The Oral History Association of Australia – Queensland Inc will be conducting an oral history training workshop. Lesley Jenkins, an experienced oral historian, will facilitate the workshop. The day will cover the following aspects of oral history:

- Introduction to oral history – what it is, how it can be used and what can be made from the recordings
- Memory – its reliability, its triggers, its possibilities
- The interview and interviewing techniques – researching, the questionnaire, the venue and ambience
- Tapes, equipment, copyright and ethics
- Making the tapes accessible – indexing, transcribing and logging

When: Saturday 2 April 2005
10am – 4pm

Where: Bulimba Library, cnr Riding Rd & Oxford Street

Cost: \$60.00 (members) \$66 (non-members))

ENROLMENT ESSENTIAL

Please enrol by making cheques payable to the OHAA-Qld Inc and send to Lesley Jenkins at 93 Petersen Street, Wynnum 4178. Email enquiries can be sent to Lesley at recordinghistory@optusnet.com.au

- If you have a working tape recorder please bring it along.
- Morning and afternoon tea provided. Please bring your own lunch.

Hoist on one's own Ums

Sue Pechey

- . I have been teaching oral history techniques for some time now, and there are a lot of people who have heard me say that remaining silent throughout an interview, except when interpolating a question, seems very unnatural. I can live with a few verbal prompts and think that some exchange of information (meaning some information from the interviewer as well as from the informant) is fine—though naturally one does not wish the interviewer's stories to dominate the interview. All very fine!
- . But in the latest project I have taken part in, I have been well and truly hoist on my own methodology. I have been working with Vicki Warden, Regional Museum's Officer in Toowoomba, to interview nine people from Killarney, Warwick and Allora, for a project entitled “People, Places and Pasttimes”—35-45 minute interviews, using my minidisk recorder. Not at all a difficult task, and I met some wonderful people.
- . Then the real crunch—Vicki wanted no more than five or six minutes of each of these interviews, had borrowed an IBM with the relevant software and had a 2-hour workshop on how it all worked. She then gave me a lesson—in 10 minutes or thereabouts. We laboured mightily for about three weeks and everything that could have gone wrong did—ran out of disk space, could not save in the right format for the material to be played on a CD player, as opposed to on a computer, lost part of a couple of interviews by hitting the wrong buttons at the wrong time, even had the printer crack up as Vicki tried desperately to print CD labels. BUT, by far the worst part of the task was taking out all my oh-so-unhelpful non-silent prompts—uhm—uuuuhm—Oh, yes—Wow—Indeed ... and several more. Very tedious it is, trying to catch a nanosecond of sound and extract it without impairing the flow of the main speaker—not to say time-consuming. Never again!
- . And just to prove I can still (or is it, at last) learn by experience, one interview had to be repeated after I had started on my sound-editing career. It has scarcely an Um in all twenty-three minutes. Such a shame about all those interviews I've done over the last 30 years. I have visions of sound editors throughout the centuries cursing the day I first took tape recorder in hand.
- . **Editor's Note** – this story shows that we can all still learn something! Be sure to catch Sue Pechey's Editing Workshop on 27 February 2005.

On The Nose...

Lesley Jenkins

I only have to come into my bedroom to know whether a certain person has left their work boots alongside the bed. It is both unpleasant and pleasant as it reminds me that he has been down to our boat again - and it is hot and sweaty down there - but it also floods me with other sweeter memories of him. Now I wouldn't suggest that someone gets out their husband's boots in order to facilitate recall in an oral history interview, but it's probably not a bad idea.

Researchers have recently found that memories triggered by odours are more emotional than memories triggered by other cues. Simon Chu of the University of Liverpool started working on memory and odour because of his grandmother's stories about Chinese culture. His grandmother and other relatives and friends would tell stories as they passed around a small pot of spice or incense. When they wanted to remember the story in as much detail as possible they would pass the pot back to that person. Chu says "It kind of fits with a lot of anecdotal evidence on how smells can be really good reminders of past experiences". In an experiment he conducted 42 volunteers told their life stories and were then tested to see whether odours such as coffee and cinnamon could help them remember more details in the story. It could.

Source: SMH 16-17 May

News about Smells

- Everyone has his or her unique odour identity or smell fingerprint.
- No two people smell the same odour the same way – a rose may smell sweeter to some.
- The average human is able to recognise about 10,000 different odours.
- Our sense of taste is greatly influenced by our sense of smell.
- Your sense of smell is least acute in the morning.
- Dogs have about 200 million olfactory receptors – 20 times the number for humans
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Source: www.senseofsmell.org

Hmong Community Project, 2004-2008
Sandra Hodgson

A long-mooted oral history project with the Hmong people in Far North Queensland is finally under way. After consulting people experienced in cultural research with this community and getting enthusiastic feedback, I wrote a letter to Mr Cher Yang, the current president of the Pawg Tswj Rau Xyoo or Hmong Advisory Committee, Innisfail. In that letter I proposed:

For a trained Oral Historian (myself, Sandra Hodgson) to assist the North Queensland Hmong community, based in Innisfail, to develop an Oral History Project. The aim of the Project would be to assist the community in maintaining language, religion and other cultural traditions, and to help the community pass these values on.

The Hmong community accepted this proposal and a project sub-committee has been formed. It will exist for the three years we are allowing for this very complicated cultural retrieval and recording endeavour.

At a meeting between the sub-committee leaders, Mr Sao Lee and Mr Cher Yang, and myself as project facilitator, it was decided that we would research and write a bi-lingual book. It should contain a short history of the Hmong from as far back as their origins, probably in Mongolia, to the diaspora from the 1970s out of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.

This history will preface the most important part of the book, a detailed statement of the rules to be followed in order to be Hmong, and an explanation of why those rules should be followed in terms of other consequences.

The next step is for the community leaders ask the shamans or healers to become involved. Only the shamans have the authoritative knowledge of the rules and rituals so important for this community's cultural identity and physical continuity.

The Hmong exiled in French Guiana have provided a written reference to guide the worldwide community in the proper and therefore safe ceremonials for marriages and funerals. Every aspect of Hmong life is similarly governed, as it is accompanied at every point by spirits. If these are offended then bad luck, sickness or death will surely follow. The community leaders are anxious to record the correct ways before they are modified by vague memory or worse, forgotten: the consequences of which may be dire.

The community leaders are also concerned to inform the wider community about why things must be done certain ways and why some things are never done. Schools, hospitals, non-Hmong partners are all at the interface of some interesting cultural collisions. For different reasons, both older and younger Hmong have missed the opportunity to learn the relatively recently invented written form of their language. A bilingual book could be a useful Hmong literacy tool. CDs are being considered in addition to a printed publication, for older non-literate people, and because some information is regarded as for the eyes of certain clans only.

So you see, fellow oral historians, what an interesting position I find myself in. My dear old lefty liberal values, my sixties feminist reflexes will have to be fenced off while I help the (all male) project committee write a sort of catechism. Post 9/11 the old verities have taken a battering, anyway. The Hmong past has always been dangerous, yet traditional culture is still valued. If it can sustain the community into an even more dangerous future, I'm here to help.

I'm conscious of the great privilege I am being given with such access to this ancient, and from my point of view extremely exotic, culture. I share (in a less life and death way) the leaders' anxiety at the inevitable erosion of traditional cultural values, the loss of language and religion. I intend at the least to help them make the fullest possible record of what essentials can be captured and recorded in 2005-2008.

I'd like to hear from anyone who can pass on wisdom to apply at such a cultural crossroads. Thanks to OHAA for its offer to auspice possible future grants for this project.

CALL FOR PAPERS

OHAA JOURNAL No. 27, 2005 “Talking communities, talking families”

(A) **Papers** ranging from 3,500 to 5,000 words are invited on the following themes:

- **Heritage and arts projects**—including relative emphases on community participation and heritage preservation goals
- **Local history studies**—including work initiated by local governments, libraries and historical societies
- **Family histories**—work arising from personal interest, contributing to broader research topics, or family-commissioned
- **Life histories**—including long life-history interviews, always of great family value whether part of a family project or otherwise
- **Cultural and ethnic groups**—community based projects, identities, empowerment
- **Agencies and institutions**—including churches, labour unions, specific occupations or professions
- **Oral history in schools and tertiary education contexts**—whether having primarily pedagogic, or historical research-oriented goals, or arising from mixed interests.

Aspects which could be explored within these themes include:

- Engagement with ideas about the role of oral history in community and family histories and projects
The relative value and meaning of oral history records and other sources
- Oral history processes in different contexts—e.g. artistic or educational projects, relationships to sponsors’ interests, historical research requirements, culturally proactive agendas
- The genesis of projects, particularly the aims and interests of people proposing and carrying out projects, who the stake holders are and their relationship to outcomes
- Funding, and logistical considerations—how addressed, and their impact on the process and the final product
- Recording issues encountered, particularly issues with digital technology (either audio and/or audio-visual), transcription and audio archiving
- Ethical, moral and legal aspects encountered—solutions, difficulties and methodological implications

- The relationship between original oral records and the material presented in publications, exhibitions or broadcasts, in particular questions of ownership, authority and interpretation
- Maintenance of endangered cultural memory and identity—particularly oral history documentation of lost or disappearing communities or particular social groupings

(B) **Short reports** of approximately up to 600 words on any projects are also invited, whether on community or family themes or other topics. These could include summary detail of the project goals, sponsors or research projects, who interviewed and by whom, how many interviews and how long, funding issues, how material is to be used, and where archived.

(C) **Long project reports** up to 2,500 words, on any projects are also invited, whether on community or family themes or other topics. In addition to content such as in (B) above, these could also include extracts of interviews, and some summary discussion on issues and outcomes—such as ethics, ownership and access, relationship between aspirations or motivations of participants and the nature of the project, or any of the issues suggested in (A) above.

(D) **Reviews** of publications, films, videos etc., from 500 to 750 words, are also invited. Photographs and other images are particularly welcome. Written work must be in the required format—all intending contributors will need to **contact the editor for a style guide**.

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF FINAL SUBMISSIONS: 30 APRIL 2005

Send proposals (200 words), or completed work to:
Mr Francis Good
Editor, OHAA Journal No. 27, 2005
GPO Box 462
DARWIN NT 0801 AUSTRALIA
Tel: (home): 08-8927-4747;
(business): 08-8924-7651;
(mobile) 04088-377-35.
(Overseas: +61-8-8927-4747; +61-8-8924-7651; or
+61-4088-377-35)
E-mail: francisgood@mail2me.com.au



Call for Papers

XIVth International Oral History Conference Sydney, Australia, 12-16 July 2006

Dancing with memory: oral history and its audiences

CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers are invited from around the world for contributions to the XIVth International Oral History Conference hosted by the International Oral History Association in collaboration with the Oral History Association of Australia, State Library of New South Wales, University of Technology Sydney, and University of New England.

Proposals may be for a conference paper, a thematic panel or a workshop session. Offers to convene a Special Interest Group Session are also sought. (See details below*)

Proposals will be evaluated according to their oral history focus, relevance to the conference theme and sub-themes, methodological and theoretical significance, and sound scholarship.

Conference theme: ‘Dancing with memory: oral history and its audiences’.

Much of the research and reflective work in this field over the years has focused on those who carry out oral histories and the process of interviewing itself. But what has been the effect of telling stories largely through the sound medium over the last 40 years? As we move to a new age of digital storytelling which strengthens the visual elements, it seems timely to ask: who listens and how? Oral history is one of the ways in which people share memories and how people hear and respond to them is partly shaped by the contexts of their telling and listening.

The conference theme invites presentations which investigate that ‘dance with memory’ which occurs between the speaker and the listener, and between the performer or product and their audiences. We therefore encourage people who have worked with oral history in a wide range of environments such as museums, heritage agencies, academic institutions, law courts, radio and television, performing arts, community projects all of which express a relationship to the past through a particular cultural medium.

The conference theme also invites reflective analysis of the ways in which, through past and current projects, ‘dancing with memory’ involves both pleasure and pain – for the subject, the interviewer and the audience – and the ways in which awareness of particular audiences shapes the focus and conceptual framework of individual projects.

We encourage proposals which explore indigenous lives, and we envisage that some sessions will focus specifically on comparative indigenous perspectives and experiences.

Conference sub-themes offer an opportunity to tease out some of these issues as well as to extend discussion to include ongoing concerns within oral history scholarship and practice.

Sub-themes:

- **archiving memory** –methodological sessions which focus on interviews as evidence of the past for future researchers; reuse of interviews; electronic media and access; publishing oral history in written texts
- **fire and water** – environmental issues, natural heritage, disasters

- **healing memories** – oral history in health work, aged care, disability.
- **island stories** - island nations and nations of islands; their stories and connections; sea passages and borders.
- **memory and community** - where oral history has been central to the recreation of community in particular locations or used to document disappeared or lost communities.
- **memory and trauma** – in cases involving human rights, justice or restitution where oral history has been utilized as testimony, surviving war, surviving terrorism
- **places and buildings** – lost places, localities, heritage issues and debates
- **pleasures of memory**– where the focus is on oral history as a sensuous engagement with the voice; relationship to seeing (still and moving image), touch (material culture and museums), performance (theatre and music) ; emotion and experience.
- **political pasts** – government agencies and corporate memory, politics, politicians
- **remembering the land** – particularly where oral history has been central to land claims or ownership of particular sites, and where oral history is used to map spatial histories
- **sharing/passing on beliefs** - religious traditions, oral traditions,
- **stories in translation** - diasporas, cross-cultural dialogue
- **talking to ourselves** – history of oral history, oral history as an international movement, 10th anniversary of IOHA
- **teaching and learning** - where the audience is cross generational and oral history makes an intervention in passing on cultural heritage either through formal schooling or informal family or community traditions

If you are interested, please send us a single page proposal including an outline of your paper and the following details:

- **name (with your family name in CAPITAL letters)**
- **affiliation**
- **postal address**
- **email address**
- **phone and fax numbers**
- **relevant sub-theme**
- **whether an individual paper, a thematic panel, or a workshop proposal***
- **suggestions for Special Interest Groups***

Proposals (and subsequent papers) must be written in English or Spanish. Presenters will be required to send their final paper in English or Spanish, with a summary in the other language. We strongly recommend that translations are done by professional translators. If none are available please notify the Association at ioha@uts.edu.au

Papers should, as much as possible, allow the conference audiences to hear the voices of narrators.

***NOTE:**

Individual papers – these will be grouped by the conference organizers into panels or workshops with papers which have a similar focus

Thematic panels – proposals for a thematic panel should contain no more than four presenters, preferably representing different countries

Workshops – workshop proposals should identify an issue or focus for a workshop, propose a structure and workshop leader/s.

Performances - segments (of no more than 30 minutes) from oral history based performances

Special Interest Groups - There will be network sessions for Special Interest Groups to meet, establish contacts, share resources and ideas. Convenors will be required to organize each Special Interest Group. Suggestions and offers are invited.

<p>Master classes - There will also be some oral history master classes or workshops available before the conference and led by internationally recognized oral history scholars and practitioners.</p>
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DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS FOR SYDNEY IOH CONFERENCE: 30 MAY 2005

Other deadlines:

By 30 September 2005: acceptance or rejection of proposals

By 28 February 2006: receipt of papers for publication on conference CD-Rom

SCHOLARSHIPS

The International Oral History Association has a Scholarships Fund to provide financial assistance to attend the conference, particularly for participants from developing countries. Guidelines are available on the IOHA website (<http://www.ioha.fgv.br>). To be eligible for a Scholarship you must, in the first instance, have a paper or other proposal accepted. Please consult the IOHA website for details.

SEND PROPOSALS TO:

Email: IOHA@uts.edu.au

Mail: Paula Hamilton
Faculty of Humanities
University of Technology Sydney
PO Box 123
Broadway NSW 2007
Australia.

ENQUIRIES TO:

Africa: Sean Field - sean@humanities.uct.ac.za

Asia: Gunhan Danisman - danisman@boun.edu.tr

Europe: Pilar Dominguez - pdprats@dch.ulpgc.es (Spanish)
Parita Mukta - p.mukta@warwick.ac.uk (English)

Latin America: Antonio Montenegro - antoniomontenegro@hotmail.com

North America: Funso Afolayan - fsa@christa.unh.edu

Oceania: Paula Hamilton - IOHA@uts.edu.au

Conference website

From early 2005, there will be a link to the conference website from the website of the International Oral History Association: <http://www.ioha.fgv.br/>

ONE PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS?

by Dave Webb

There is a saying 'a picture is worth a thousand words', or something like that. In the world of the Oral Historian, those words have always been the tools of the trade. Words can convey sadness at some distant loss, happiness surrounding major events in one's life, a manner of speech particular to a country, state or region. All there for the recording - until quite recently in the scheme of things.

With the advent of the home video recorder, a steady picture can convey that sadness, right down to perhaps a tear in the eye or the elderly face that breaks into the biggest wrinkly smile on recounting a happy time. Memories that come flooding in like a long forgotten tide can be captured on two very complementary mediums, sound and vision.

OK, it's easy to get all enthusiastic about this but we need to remember that just as it's important to prepare for an audio recording, it's even more important when video is involved. Just as with an audio tape, if you can't properly hear the result the product is useless. Think, then, what a video version would be like if it was shot as a home movie - the funniest versions we see on TV are just a small example. They last maybe two minutes, and the commentary distracts us from the jiggling, swaying camera work. Oral History interviews may be of rather long duration, and work like that mentioned above would be unwatchable - and unusable.

So, down to business. At the initial interview we are warned to check for air conditioners, chiming clocks, house animals, traffic etc, all the things that can have a detrimental effect on sound quality. Add to this the need to check for light sources that may adversely impact on picture quality (windows, open doors, artificial light sources that may flare, to name a few), find a comfortable setting that will complement the subject (stay away from dark colours that soak up ambient light) and some other technical considerations such as proximity to power points, if required, and the task at the initial interview becomes sometimes a little less basic.

Look for a position where there is plenty of natural light but which allows the camera to be placed at an angle to the light source. If working outdoors, remember your subject may look fine in the sun but when the sun moves your hapless subject may squint, shade his/her eyes, or worse still insist on moving. Not a good thing if continuity of background is important.

How you scout your recording location will, to a certain extent, save you time and embarrassment when setting up to record the interview. Remember that sound quality is equally important as picture quality. Don't compromise one for the other.

Besides your camera and sound equipment, one thing that is often overlooked is the camera tripod. Make sure you have a good quality, light, stable tripod with a smooth pan and tilt head. Also examine the base of the camera and be sure the tripod has a wide platform to accommodate the camera base. Narrow platforms and wide cameras cause instability. If recording an interview don't be tempted to hand-hold the camera. Staying rock steady over a long period of time is well nigh impossible. Each time a lens adjustment needs to be made the camera will move.

Hand-held cameras work with distance shots but are not suitable for medium to close-up work. These shots tend to exaggerate any tiny hand or arm movement.

How pieces are shot depend on whether editing is available post-production. If no editing is available, and must be done at the time, have a range of camera shots you can use to add variety. An explanation of several terms here is necessary because it is often useful to pan and *tilt SLOWLY*. Fast, jerky, movements in an interview situation are not acceptable.

PAN: follow an object from left to right (pan right) or right to left (pan left).

TILT: follow an object as it rises and falls.

Know your camera very well, practise slowly panning and tilting and how to refocus quickly if your subject suddenly moves out of focus.

Framing and picture composition are much the same thing. If a picture pleases, does not jar in any way, it is a well-composed picture. Though there are no rules, it is accepted that if the eyes are roughly two-thirds of the way up the screen, the result is more pleasing than the alternatives.

Similarly, a perfectly symmetrical picture is normally boring. It is more pleasing to have the subject slightly off centre, with some other object (flowers, books etc.) complementing the composition. Landscapes are a good example of this.

A dead-centre subject can be boring but an edge-of-frame subject can be really upsetting, when the final composition is complemented by a subsidiary subject (another person).

Background and foreground are important in composition because they can increase the feeling of depth. A foreground table lamp in a lounge, a foreground tree branch or shrub used in an establishing shot can be useful in terms of depth and composition.

Backgrounds also enhance depth, but care must be taken so that the main subject and background do not compromise each other. An example of poor composition is if the viewer gets the impression that something (perhaps an indoor plant) is growing out of the subject's head.

While it is not possible to illustrate the range of camera shot sizes for the human body here, these are some of the standard shots. Use them with care and only use them when necessary to capture a moment in time. Remember also that when a camera moves it moves for two reasons, either to approach an object of interest, or move away from same and to follow an action like walking down a corridor.

The most commonly accepted camera shot sizes are as follows:

Close-up - the head and neck only.

Medium close-up - the head and shoulders only.

Mid shot - the head and torso cutting just below the waist.

Medium long shot - the head, body and legs cutting just below the knee.

Long shot - the entire body.

In addition:

Big close-up - a very tight shot of the head or part of the head (remember that tear in the eye)

Wide shot - the body is relatively small in the frame.

This then is a fairly simplistic overview of the process. Done well, video can enhance even the simplest project because if items of interest are grouped within arms reach of the subject camera movement to capture the item will not need to be too severe. The possibilities are almost endless but, don't forget the Oral History interview is the reason you are there, not to show off your creative skills with the camera! The interview is everything. There may not be a second chance.

You also have to remember that the standard release form may not cover the release of the image. Just to be sure check that your release form covers all forms of media, right down to the internet if necessary.

Go to it. Learn all you can about this new toy by attending the Oral History Seminars when they are advertised, gain new skills and above all - have fun.

Dave Webb has been around television and radio in one way and another most of his working life. He grew up with the old battery radio that dominated the kitchen and became completely enthralled when the first video cameras came into use.

During the 1970s he worked in video centres in his spare time, teaching other interested people how the new beast worked and what it could do. Video production was one of his passions during that time and is something he has carried with him into retirement.

Dave now spends his time in community radio as both a Board Member and interviewer/producer. He is also actively involved in Oral History projects recording the history of Whyalla and Iron Knob. He claims that video cameras are not now his favourite toy because he can't keep them still. But production is still one of his loves.

He has been a member of the Oral History Association of Australia (SA Branch) for some years and was the Minute Secretary to the Committee for several years (travelling up from Whyalla to Adelaide especially for meetings!) until retiring from the position in recent months.

Reproduced from the Autumn 2004 edition of *Word of Mouth*, the Newsletter of the South Australian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia.

EDITING CONFUSION

Francis Good

Karen Vigmostad wrote: 'When she repeated a sentence she would get this dreamy look in her eyes like the speaking of the words drew her back to the time and place of her memory. To cut this from the transcript would have taken the life and character right out of the transcript. No one who knows her would even recognize her.' Clearly repetitions like this should be included in the absence of sound reasons not to, but the more I work on transcript, the more faith I have in the sound recording and read transcript with a bit of a squint.

Although we might have concerns that 'heavy' changes distance the informant if overused, what do the repetitions referred to by Karen actually convey to those who don't know her interviewee, and who have no access to a sound or audio-visual recording of the interview, and only the printed version? Not much more connection to the informant's character than if they were not included, I suspect. Is it valid to assume that the impression felt by listeners to the sound recording will also be amenable to readers of transcript who do not have access to sound or vision, if only we 'honour' the exact form of words used?

When the text without sound or vision is meant for the wider public domain there is often a real need for some 'creative writing' to help convey some of the depth of the original expression that is simply inscrutable to readers. I admire the works of Australian author Bill Rosser, who repeats his informants' recorded words faithfully, but narrates much of the body language, activity and feelings of the people present, which he recorded meticulously in a notebook at the time of recording.

This aspect becomes increasingly critical (and less simplistic) the more distance there is between a speaker's usage and 'standard' language forms, especially where interviewees use culture-specific language, or for whom the language of interview is not a first language. In one book I contributed to we included verbatim transcript of Australian aboriginal English usage in the left column (very difficult for most readers to follow) and standard English transliteration in the right - I believe it underlined the eloquence of the former, rather than baffling or aiding misinterpretation.

Certainly though, editorial changes in a transcript compiled for archival research purposes and meant as the authorised text version of a sound recording are fraught with ethical dilemmas if we are to be honest brokers of our informants' voices. The orality of interviews is a rich vein for scholarly consideration too, and all-inclusive verbatim accuracy in such work is essential. But is it ever really achievable in an absolute sense? In archival transcripts, I strive to maintain close faith to the original, but 'light' editing is still nearly always essential in some degree. I agree with Sandy Polishuk: 'No one speaks in written language so we need some compromise here. The trick is maintaining the voice while editing for readability, keeping the quirks, the syntax and expressions that distinguish the speaker (etc.)'. There is verbatim and verbatim.

Written text can never fully represent all of the meaning that is conveyed in the prosody of live speech -- in fact, excessive inclusion of verbal 'noise' may result in readers misconstruing impressions of the speaker. The listener simply absorbs much static uncritically, or comfortably contextualises it with facial expressions, voice inflection, tone etc. etc. Some editing for readability can also be seen as keeping a different kind of faith with the original -- it can more closely convey the speaker's intentions, or give a more appropriate impression of the speaker than a page littered with ums, ahs, broken sentences and so on. As Sandy implies, it's a matter of judgement.

The imperative to minimise the editorial presence in archival oral records is something that distinguishes oral history from much journalism -- the important thing is that we agree on the basic ethic. But frankly, given the distance that at times can occur between voice and its textual representation, there are real dangers in taking anybody's transcript at face value, regardless of 'editing' policy -- all transcript is artefact, and the bald words without the human affect invite all kinds of interpretation by the reader, and who is to say how close that gets to reality? I strive for inclusive accuracy, but my (archival) transcripts bear a detailed 'Note to reader' which includes the warning that users should listen to the original sound recording, at least in part and particularly for any aspect that is critical for the reader; and I include a short attempt at explaining the principles used to interpret words from sound to print.

On a different note, there are often important facts, clarifications etc. that are included after clearing transcripts with informants, adding value, and still very authentic. On this score though, if any transcript content differs strongly in factual matter or meaning to the sound recording, there is a case for including a note on the recording label that the transcript is the 'authorised' version, and requiring that the recording be used only with reference to the transcript. Also, keeping earlier draft transcripts that differ from the cleared version should require interviewee approval.

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Editor's Note – There has been a lot of discussion on the Oral History Lists on this subject and Francis has given us a valuable and practical summary.



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