

OHAA On Tape

December 2005

Editor: Suzanne Mulligan

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Hello Everyone!

Well, it's almost Christmas now. Hope you all have a great holiday season. We had our Christmas meeting last week, attended by some members and our committee discussed future events for members.

Thanks to all those who have renewed their membership. I am also very happy to welcome new members:

Dr Leonie Ryder
Ted Chinn

Our President, Lesley Jenkins, has another interesting instalment from her Churchill Fellowship trip on pages 3 and 4. Those who attended her talk on 22 October 2005 had a fascinating insight into what's happening overseas in the oral history field.

On 1 November 2005 I and a few other members attended the Digital StoryTelling public lecture conducted by Daniel Meadows. Professor Meadows showed us some innovative ideas for adapting oral history for use in digital storytelling. Member, Helen Klaebe, then attended a

eight day workshop conducted by Professor Meadows. Her report on this is at pages 5 and 6.

All financial members will have now received their copy of this years Journal. For those who have joined or renewed since that mail out, you should receive your copy of the Journal after Christmas. I was very pleased to see such a high representation of work by Queensland members included in the Journal.

I have included a "Call for Papers" for the International Oral History Conference, 12-16 July 2006 in Sydney. Earlybird registration for the conference will start in February 2006 so please note your calendars. For more information see the Conference website at:

<http://www.une.edu.au/ioha2006/index.html>

I enjoy hearing from you all about what you are doing in the oral history field so that I can share that information with other members. So please, let me now what you are doing.

Suzanne Mulligan
Editor

Calendar of Events – 2006

- Thursday, 23 February **Annual General Meeting** 5.45 pm to 7.30 pm
Incorporating a talk by Helen Klæbe on digital storytelling, with examples “Showing Our Bits”. Lesley Jenkins will tell us about her digital storytelling experiences learned at Berkeley on her Churchill fellowship.
Venue: Central City Library (Lower Ground Level, City Plaza) Cnr Ann, George & Adelaide Sts, Brisbane.
Cost: Gold coin donation.
- Saturday 22 April **Oral History Workshop** 10am – 4pm presented by Lesley Jenkins – venue to be advised.
- 12-16 July International Oral History Conference in Sydney.
- Saturday 3 June **Editing Workshop** presented by Sue Pechey and From Interview to Publication presented by Helen Klæbe. 10am – 4pm – venue to be advised.

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Lesley Jenkins returned from her Churchill Fellowship in Oral History in September. The following article is the second instalment of a series she is writing which chronicles her journey.

New York, New York

I arrived in New York at night, feeling a mixture of anticipation and terror. All those stories of muggers and wrong turns combined in my mind to create my own *Bonfire of the Vanities*. The turbaned gentleman driving my Yellow Cab assured me I was at the right place, even though it looked like any other city block in the dark, and after the usual agony of determining the tip, which I gathered from the driver's growing surliness I got very wrong, I wheeled my bag into the dormitory building. I found a group of students acting as receptionists and before too long I was registered for the Summer Institute in Oral History at Columbia University.

Unfortunately the comprehensive pack of course notes had not arrived before I left Australia and was not awaiting my arrival, but I was pleasantly surprised to find that I had a large room to myself and a share bathroom in the student dormitory.

I met most of my fellow students at a reception held the following evening in the wonderful old apartment of Ron Grele, director emeritus of the Oral History Research Office, and one of the presenters at the Institute. The following morning we began with introductions, which lasted for most of the day, and gave all 25 attendees ample opportunity to introduce themselves, to expand on their work and to outline their hopes for the next 10 days. They were drawn from a range of occupations including nine PhD candidates, five history lecturers/professors, four archive/project managers, five independent practitioners and two unaffiliated novices. Countries represented included: Australia, Pakistan, India, Brazil, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the multicultural mix of the United States. The focus for the Institute was: Living to Tell: Narrating Catastrophe Through Oral History, and some people had come specifically because of this theme. As Mary Marshall Clark, current director of the office, commented in our welcome letter: "The theme not only reflects recent work in oral history, which is increasingly focused on experiences of human suffering in historical contexts, but philosophical and historical thinking across the disciplines."

The morning and afternoon sessions were held in the same large room. Here we gathered around tables joined to create one companionable setting. This was to be our place of instruction for the next eight days, until need for the room determined that we move downstairs and divide, at last, into smaller groups. Invited academics, Columbia University Oral History Research Office staff - past and present, project managers and independent practitioners gave presentations, sometimes as part of a panel and sometimes alone. Sessions generally lasted for several hours before they were opened up for questions, but as the members of the group became more comfortable with each other and the proceedings, questions came whenever people wanted to ask them.

As the Institute progressed I realized that many of my fellow participants had much to offer and even though little had been organized to facilitate our interaction, such as the provision of morning tea, I sought them out to find out more about their work. I ended up eating out most nights with one or other of them and this proved to be one of my great delights during my stay in the Big Apple. Dr Furrukh Kahn from Pakistan continues to work on the oral narratives of Pakistani women's experiences of the Partition of India in 1947. He showed a short but harrowing film and also discussed his problems in making it. He stated in his written introduction to fellow students: "...On so many occasions in civil, ethnic or religious conflicts, women bore a significant brunt of the violence and brutality directed by members, mostly men, of warring communities. The stories of women do find a place in the meta-narrative, but are rarely used as more than illustrative examples of the violence and the wrongs of the 'Other'". He was given a lot of encouragement from the group to continue his work, even though funding is so minimal in his country. He also received some practical advice from fellow student, Rob Katz, an independent filmmaker.

The Institute featured 25 sessions and a handful of these ran concurrently. One of the early sessions included *A History of Oral History from American and Italian Perspectives* by Ron Grele and Alessandro Portelli. This history covered the philosophical development of oral history in the United Kingdom and the United States and included a cursory note on the early oral history collecting of Finland. Italian universities do not support the collection of oral history and there are no oral history associations to support community projects, so we heard about Alessandro's pioneering work and that of his fellow academic, Luissa Passerini. Little was made of the development of an oral history movement supported by associations, its advocacy role in the face of criticism, or that most oral history work takes place outside the Academy not within it. It also seemed odd to me to omit discussion about the impact of technology on the growth of oral history. This has enabled the introduction of smaller and cheaper machines, which in turn has encouraged a diverse range of affiliated, and non-affiliated practitioners to participate. This has produced a number of outcomes worthy of discussion in a talk about the *History of Oral History*.

Mary Marshall Clark spoke with sensitivity on the *Challenges of Documenting Catastrophe through Oral History*, which gave insights into the 9/11 oral history collection at the University. Discussions of this project became a focus of many of the presentations and it was interesting to note that all the interviews were done with people who had self-nominated for participation. Interviews were also conducted over many visits and a number of interviewees retold their stories in a shorter filmed version. The interviews followed the life story model and were 20 hours plus in length. Interviewers were experienced and contracted to undertake the work, which was usually about 10 interviews per interviewer. 400 interviews were conducted and Mary Marshall elaborated on the features many of the interviews had in common. In summary:

- they were explanatory stories;
- they featured secular religiosity e.g. “I was meant to be late that day”;
- interviewees had a need to tell their stories (they felt free to tell the worst imaginable without being labeled as having a ‘post traumatic stress disorder’);
- there were less questions and more silences in the interviews;
- interviewees were able to elaborate on what it meant to survive and to be part of the process of commemoration.

Gerry Albarelli was a contract oral historian on the 9/11 Project and he spoke at a session entitled *Fieldwork after Catastrophe*. It was obvious that he had thought deeply about what oral history is and can do, and about the differences between oral history and journalism, especially since 9/11 has been one of the most documented events in history. Some of the points he made and that resonated with me were:

- oral history tends to gain meaning over time;
- oral history makes an attempt to slow down the telling;
- the telling is for the future and journalism is for the present;
- oral historians have to take the time that journalists don’t have;
- oral history is interested in where the local story intersects with the larger story.

Gerry also conducted a mock interview with Captain Jay Swithers who was a paramedic at the Twin Towers site. This did not work as an example of ‘how to do it’ but it was riveting as a powerful piece of storytelling. Jay needed no sensitive handling or guiding questions. Gerry was so confident of Jay’s ability to ‘perform’ that he didn’t interrupt his flow by even looking at him!

Staying on the theme of catastrophe, we heard from Alessandro Portelli on *Memories from Above and Memories from Below: The Oral History of the Bombardments in Roma* and Jessica Wiederhorn on interviewing for the Shoah Foundation Oral History Collection, the AIDS Pandemic, Rwanda, and from fellow students Selma Kapidzic and Lara Nettlefield on the *War Crimes Documentation through Methodology of Oral History Project* in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These presentations were offset with sessions on *Organizing and Developing Community Oral History Projects* and *Writing for Publication* conducted by the energetic and informative Linda Shopes and others. Steve Rowlands talked about recording and creating *Aural History Documentaries* and we had the privilege of listening to excerpts from his elegant programs featuring jazz greats.

Unfortunately, the long and grueling conference format did not allow for embedding the theory with participatory, practical or facilitator led enquiry, or with field trips to some of the places in New York under discussion, such as Chinatown or the 9/11 site. These I visited with a friend I made at the Institute, along with a visit we made to StoryCorps.

StoryCorps is a national project, supported by donations and corporate sponsorship, to instruct and inspire people to record one another’s stories in sound. The recording takes place in a sound booth, which looks like Dr Who’s ‘Tardis’ and is located in a corner of Grand Central Station; just across from the shoe shine seats. There is one smoky window that allows visitors to have a look at what is taking place within. A technician operates the sound equipment and this ensures a perfect recording and he also helps the interviewer and interviewee if they get stuck. Sessions are booked for 40 minutes, however, back-to-back slots allow for an 80-minute recording. Inside the booth the light is dim, the seats comfortable, and it looks like a small lounge room as a vase of flowers sits on the table. When I was there a granddaughter was interviewing her grandmother and at the end of the session, which cost \$10, they received an audio CD of the interview. Upon completion they signed a form giving their permission for a copy to be added to the StoryCorps Archive, housed at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. This permission also allows for excerpts to be selected and played on WNYC (New York Public Radio) and NPR (National Public Radio).

To Be Continued.....

Digital Storytelling: Where next?

Helen Klaebe

A Reflective Creative Masterclass with UK digital storytelling legend, Daniel Meadows,¹ was held at QUT's Creative Industries Precinct in early November. The event was sponsored by the Institute of Creative Industries and Innovation (iCi),² in conjunction with support from the Australian Research Council.

ICI is a research institute for excellence based in creative industries and innovation systems. It is a collaborative enterprise, involving research staff from the faculties of: Built Environment and Engineering, Business, Creative Industries, Education, Information Technology, Law and QUT Carseldine.

Twenty-five academics from across these faculties took part in the eight-day workshop, starting with a public lecture on November 1, which was attended by some of our OHAA (Qld) members.

For those members who have not seen any digital stories, Meadows describes them as. "Short, personal, multimedia tales, told from the heart. Made on the kitchen table they have an aesthetic all their own which I think of as "scrapbook television."

Like a true oral historian, I asked a few of those attending what they got out of the workshop to give you a snapshot of the event.

Professor Hartley³:

"We offered the Daniel Meadows masterclass to researchers and staff from across QUT's creative and performing arts disciplines, to test and stretch the digital storytelling form. The personal narrative and 'scrapbook aesthetic' are very powerful. Daniel is the top international exponent of that form. So we explored its possibilities with him by making ten new digital stories. But we also wanted to ask what might be next for digital storytelling itself. Some participants wanted to stretch the *storytelling* component - by 'telling stories' the way our grandmothers warned us not to (i.e. by telling a whopper with a straight face). Others wanted to extend the *digital* component by exploring how digital stories might be produced for broadcasting on broadband, TV or mobile platforms. The masterclass also taught us a lot about the importance of group dynamics, bringing together staff from the executive dean to postgraduate students, and from varied disciplinary backgrounds, who rarely get time together to work on a common project. It was a blast."

Professor Philip Neilsen⁴:

"I am now also convinced that the primary and most exciting task of DST is in the realm of citizen media – community story-telling – allowing for the possibility of therapeutic agency, the connection of individual, personal history to 'official'

¹ Daniel Meadows is the Creative Director, Capture Wales BBC Digital Storytelling and information about his work can be found at : <http://www.photobus.co.uk/>, <http://bbc.co.uk/capturewales/>, and <http://bbc.co.uk/digitalstorytelling/>

² <http://www.ici.qut.edu.au/contact.php>

³ ARC Federation Fellow Research Director, Creative Industries and Innovation, Queensland University of Technology

⁴ Head of Creative Writing and Cultural Studies, Queensland University of Technology

larger history, and allowing space for the affirmation of (no matter to what degree illusory), a coherent sense of personal identity.”

Craig Bolland⁵:

“As a writer, I'm interested in the way emerging media forms are opening up new and democratic avenues for artistic expression. The workshop was a fascinating opportunity to watch small teams help each other put together what were often very personal accounts. What I found particularly interesting was how ambient the process was in the final product, how the community-relationships built in the workshop became intrinsic parts of the final stories.”

Lucy Montgomery⁶:

I am researching the role of copyright in the development of China's film and music industries. I am also involved in a project that involves digital storytelling and a school in a remote village in China. The workshop was a great chance for me to learn more about the process of digital storytelling, to experiment with different kinds of stories and to think about the ways the technique might be applied to my work in China.

Christine Peacock⁷:

Digital storytelling, in my experience, is as old as the hills, laden with basic, intrinsic human values that are conveyed in many forms. It is basically an emotional historical social record. Formalising the story telling form creates a situation that can be both interesting and hazardous. The stories become measured against the form. The stories then become subject to judgement and argument, revealing inconsistencies, contradictions and hypocrisies in both the form, the content of the stories and the story tellers themselves.

The stories produced at the workshop can be analysed in this way and therefore layers of external information become added to what is, or was originally, simply an emotional, historical, social record. It was the aspect of form, and also the production processes adopted by the workshop participants, that I found most interesting, given the fact that I have participated in the recording of community stories on video and still image for over twenty years.”

Whatever your opinion is of digital storytelling, it is a subject we will no doubt be discussing within the oral history field a lot more in the future. A few papers were presented at our International conference in Italy, 2004 and I'm sure there will be further debate in Sydney 2006. Meanwhile, I continue to collect both traditional oral histories, as well as create digital stories for the Kelvin Grove Urban Village *Sharing stories* History Project and will continue in 2006 to research the benefits of each for a community project such as ours.⁸

⁵ Associate Lecturer for Creative Writing and Cultural Studies, Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland University of Technology

⁶ Doctoral Candidate, Researcher, Creative Industries Research and Applications Centre, Queensland University of Technology. Lucy's topic is about the copyright laws of China in relation to the film and music industry.

⁷ Associate Lecturer for Indigenous Perspectives, Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland University of Technology: Director, UniiKup Productions and the Colourised Festival.

⁸ The Kelvin Grove Urban Village *Sharing stories* History Project is a joint initiative of the Qld Department of Housing and QUT. Our website is: www.kgurbanvillage.com.au/sharing

first person: international digital storytelling conference

Friday 3 February - Sunday 5 February 2006

The Australian Centre for the Moving Image is proud to present **First Person: International Digital Storytelling Conference**.

First Person will showcase Digital Storytelling as a new cinema of personal portrait, engage with story as an interactive practice and investigate the use of technology to share meaningful stories as a global community.

First Person draws on the success of the inaugural Digital Storytelling conference hosted by the BBC in Wales in 2003. The Australian Centre for the Moving Image is Australia's premier engine for screen and digital culture industries, and as the national centre for Digital Storytelling, has recorded hundreds of stories through hands-on workshop programs.

The conference presents three thematic areas that explore Digital Storytelling as a new cinema of personal portrait, examines story as an interactive practice, and investigate the potential uses of technology to share meaningful stories on a global scale. The conference thematics are:

Broadcast convergence: new forms of storytelling

Storytelling and the digital generation

Democratization and documentation of voice

Selected important global projects and case studies will be used to explore these powerful thematics. Discussion panels and a range of workshops will be held, including a **Digital Storytelling Master Class** run by the Center for Digital Storytelling and ACMI.

who should register?

First Person will encourage a broad range of participation from across sectors, and will offer inspiration to anyone interested in exploring the powerful potential of storytelling. The conference is essential for Digital Storytelling practitioners, media artists, and academics in media, games and cultural studies. It will also be of interest to telecommunications providers and those interested in Digital Storytelling as a communication and educational tool. Community development practitioners, those involved in the oral history and museum industries, and representatives from the health sector, too, will find this conference enlightening.

The conference opens on Friday 3 February, 6pm and closes on Sunday 5 February, 5.30pm. Registration will be open from 2pm on Friday 3 February.

conference keynote

John O'Neal

CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST, PLAYWRIGHT, ACTOR AND DIRECTOR (USA)

Democracy and Voice

Media and storytelling can play a significant role in teaching people to appreciate the roots of democracy from a perspective of multiculturalism. New democracies develop from grassroots aspirations and struggles. Storytelling has the capacity to raise people's awareness and respect for human rights and justice. A democratic civilization needs to ensure a voice for those who are not often heard. Keynote Session: Friday 3 February, 6pm

plenary session

'First Person'

First person is a view from within; whether we understand it as a literary or cinematic point of view or as the perspective of a games character in a computer game, genre, the subject and the observer often cannot be distinguished. As creative and technological exploration continues, our meaning of 'first person' and our relationship to it also evolves. Plenary Session: Saturday 4 February, 9am

conference thematics and workshops

THEME ONE

Broadcast convergence: new forms of storytelling

Television and the Internet will most likely converge in the next few years, which, along with video gaming, presents opportunities for interesting developments in storytelling. Digital Storytelling, games practices and new forms of distribution such as narrowcasting and podcasting all assist in the exploration of new forms of narrative and the development of new relationships between audiences and content providers.

THEME TWO

Storytelling and the digital generation

Digital Storytelling is an extraordinary communication and education tool that incorporates multimodal learning, providing many pedagogical benefits. The development of Digital Storytelling globally in the areas of education and training is significant, with the case studies selected here having their focus on school and community education crossovers.

THEME THREE

Democratization and documentation of voice

Collecting and distributing personal narratives can assist in building a democratic society based on shared understanding and respect. Digital storytelling ensures a democratized voice, and provides a mechanism for transformative self or social awareness.

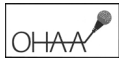
Digital Storytelling Master Class

Monday 6 February - Wednesday 8 February

The Digital Storytelling Master Class is an opportunity for those who are media makers or digital storytelling practitioners to work with one of the founders of Digital Storytelling, Joe Lambert.

For more information and registration see:

http://www.acmi.net.au/first_person.jsp



'ORAL HISTORY AND ITS CHALLENGE(R)S'

CALL FOR PAPERS

Contributions are invited from Australia and overseas for publication in the *OHAA Journal No. 28, 2006* on themes that:

- (a) deal with the range of ethical, methodological, legal and technology challenges being met in the practice, collection and usage of oral history both in Australia and abroad; and
- (b) provide critiques/analysis of strategies and protocols in projects, the perceived value and meanings attributed by oral historians to their work, or the way in which projects and agencies handle their involvement.

Contributions of the following will be considered:

Papers dealing substantially with issues and themes, ranging from 3,500 to 5,000 words.

Reports: Concise reports of projects, up to a maximum of 2,000 words. These could include summary detail of aspects such as project goals, sponsors or research projects, who interviewed and by whom, the number and length of interviews, funding issues, how material is to be used and where archived.

Reviews of books, films, videos etc., from 500 to 1,000 words.

Photographs, drawings and other illustrations are particularly welcome, and may be accepted for any of the above categories of contribution.

Peer review option

Beginning with this issue, the OHAA offers contributors the option of anonymous peer review for papers of 3,500 to 5,000 words that deal substantially with the themes relevant to the title of the Journal. Earlier deadlines will apply for papers that are to be referred (*see below*). The OHAA reserves the right to reject any papers offered on this basis, return them to authors for revisions/additions indicated by referees for resubmission after revision, or publish as submitted.

However, substantial papers of 3,500 to 5,000 words will also be considered for publication without being refereed if contributors so desire. A later deadline will apply to such offers (*see below*).

Deadlines

Papers for peer review: **31 January 2006.**

Other papers, reports or reviews: **30 March 2006.**

All contributions must conform to the **style guide**, which can be obtained from the editor.

Enquiries and submissions to:

Mr Francis Good
Editor, OHAA Journal
GPO Box 462
DARWIN NT 0801

Email: editor-ohaa@digisurf.net.au

Tel: (Bus hrs): 08 8924 7651

(After hrs): 08 8927 4747

NOTE: The 2006 *OHAA Journal* will be issued in time for the IOHA/OHAA Conference in Sydney, July 2006 (see www.une.edu.au/ioha2006). Papers accepted for the conference may also be offered by authors for publication in the *Journal* if they address the themes for this issue, but only if they are separately submitted by authors to the *Journal* editor by the due date.



Oral History Association of Australia (OHAA)

ABN 16 832 377 060

Membership of the OHAA includes a subscription to the Journal of the Association, published annually. There are branches of the Association in all Australian States. Northern Territory members are attached to the SA Branch and ACT members to NSW. Branches hold regular meetings, run workshops and publish regular newsletters, and also provide a friendly and informative forum for those interested in oral history from any perspective.

Membership Fees (1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006) (please tick the appropriate box)

Individuals **\$35** ☐

Institutions **\$55** ☐

Students, Pensioners, unemployed **\$25** ☐

Household **\$45** ☐

I wish to join OHAA (please tick) ☐

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