

Oral History Association of Australia

On Tape

Volume 8, No.1

Editor: Karen L. Barrett

April, 2008

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Letter from the Editor

Hello Everyone!

Welcome to the first of what I hope will be many Newsletters with yours truly at the helm. Once again, many thanks for all the hard work that Suzanne Mulligan has done. I hope I can live up to the standard Suzanne set as Editor for the past 7 years.

You may notice some changes in the look of the Newsletter, particularly with regard to logos. Over the next couple of months, the Committee will be looking at revising the logo for the Newsletter as well as developing branding for the branch. It is hoped that the 2007 Conference logo, will play a role in that branding.

In addition, we plan to utilise the webpage developed for the Conference into our own OHAA (QLD) website. I have grand plans in mind but these may not come to fruition. Suffice to say it will at least have information about the branch, its role, contact details for Committee members and probably the latest newsletter available. Should you have any ideas with regard to these logos, and/or know of any budding graphic/web design artists, please let me know.

Orders for DVD's of the Conference continue to be received, which is great news. For those of you, who did not attend the conference and are interested in obtaining a copy, please contact either myself or Suzanne Mulligan mulligan@gil.com.au. We can send you the order form to complete.

Our President has successfully negotiated a price of \$800.00 with Studio Solutions for the Fostex FR2-LE, provided there were five people involved with a bulk purchase at this price. Suzanne canvassed members but there has been no response. The company has agreed to extend the offer so please contact Suzanne if you are interested in this offer. I don't believe a better deal can be obtained elsewhere.

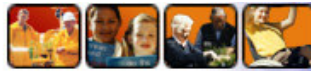
We've had such a strong demand for our Oral History workshop that a second one was run on 5th April. That's good news for oral history. Our newest member Sue Reid attended the March Workshop shortly after joining. Welcome Sue!

As always, feel free to email me with suggestions, submissions and so on at any time; if it doesn't make one Newsletter it will make the next. When attending workshops, conferences or seminars, please keep the Newsletter in mind....maybe even write down some thoughts while they're still fresh in your mind. So that we don't have more than one article from the same workshop, etc please let me know as soon as you can what you would like to write about so I can tell others whether it is already being done. I'm happy to run two articles from the same workshop (etc.) if they are opposing views.

Finally, thank you to all the contributors for this issue of the Newsletter. Without you, it would just be a series of blank pages.

Karen L. Barrett
Editor
Email: karenlbarrett@bigpond.com

News



Gambling Community Benefit Fund

Grant for Recording Equipment

On behalf of the Queensland Branch Committee, I am very pleased to announce to members that the OHAA (Qld Inc.) application for funds to purchase recording equipment has been successful.

We are very grateful to the Gambling Community Benefit Fund for providing our Association with \$4,273.00 to purchase a digital voice recorder and a digital video camera for the benefit of our members.

When the money is transferred to our account, we will purchase the equipment. The Committee is yet to consider the conditions and rates for lending out the equipment, as well as the insurance aspects. We have been in touch with our interstate colleagues to enquire how they handle the lending out of their equipment and we will use this information to make a decision on how best to serve our members in Queensland.

As intended, this is an opportunity for members to use “state of the art” equipment to record their

oral histories without the expense of purchasing the equipment themselves. It will be available to community group members as well as individual members.

The Committee is very grateful for the support provided by The State Library of Queensland for our grant application and encourages all members who will be using the new equipment to deposit a copy of their recordings with the Library.

The Committee also gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the following who provided letters of support for our application:

Suzanne Gibson
Redland Shire Council
Pam Willis Burden, The Douglas Shire
Historical Society Inc.

You will be further advised when the equipment has been purchased – hopefully before the end of April 2008.

Suzanne Mulligan
Secretary

Bulk Purchase: Fostex FR2-LE

Our President has successfully negotiated a price of \$800.00 with Studio Solutions for the Fostex FR2-LE, provided there were five people involved with a bulk purchase at this price. Suzanne Mulligan canvassed members but there has been no response forthcoming. The company has agreed to extend the offer so please contact Suzanne if you are interested in this offer; I don't believe a better deal can be obtained elsewhere.

Job Opportunity

The State Library has advertised a full-time position for Oral History and Digital Storytelling Co-ordinator. Applications closed Monday 7 April. This is great news for Oral History and Queensland oral historians.

As the Oral History and Digital Storytelling Coordinator you will coordinate an active oral history and digital storytelling program in Heritage Collections and across the State Library. You will be responsible for the development and management of the oral history and digital storytelling collections of the State Library as well as supporting community participation through training and loan of equipment. You will also build relationships with external stakeholders and oral history practitioners to share knowledge, develop standards for best practice and participate in leading research and development initiatives.

Conferences, Seminars and Workshops

Conferences



The International Oral History Association in collaboration with the University of Guadalajara and the Mexican Oral History Association (AMHO) will hold the 15th International Oral History Conference in Guadalajara, Mexico from 23 to 26 September 2008.

SUB THEMES

- Contributions of Oral History to the understanding of the 20th Century.
- Time in Memory: Lived experience; what is remembered and what is forgotten.
- Spaces of Memory: Community, the local, the global and everyday life.
- Ecology and Disasters: Environmental themes, natural heritage, cultural resources.
- Memory and Politics: Experiences of political participation; NGOs, political groups, political agency and individuals.
- Family and Generations.
- Migrations: Diasporas, international and local migratory movements, networks, borderlands, religious migration, the human capital of immigrants.
- Sharing and Transmitting Faith: Religious traditions.
- Oral Tradition.
- Theory and Method in Oral History.
- Memories of Violence and War: Justice, trauma and memory, survivors, civil rights and human rights.
- Memories of the Body: Dance, tattoos, dramatizations and the emotions.
- Work: Experiences, conceptions and modalities of work.
- Health: Illnesses, healing, myths, the handicapped, elderly and retired people.
- Gender.
- The Teaching of Oral History: Experiences in formal and informal education.
- Archiving Memory: The interview as a source for social research, multiple readings of interviews, publication and dissemination of oral history, audio archives, audiovisual media, access and questioning.
- Museums and Oral History.
- Oral History and the Visual Image.
- Legal and Ethical Issues in Oral History.

MASTER CLASSES: Several Master Classes and workshops on Oral History will be offered before the Conference by internationally renowned scholars and specialists in Oral History.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS: Continuing the precedent set in Sydney, Special Interest Groups sessions will be scheduled so that participants can get to know one another, establish contacts and exchange resources and ideas.

For more information see -
<http://www.congresoioha2008.cucsh.udg.mx/eng/indexENG.htm>

<http://www.ohaa-wa.com.au>

ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

W.A. BRANCH (Inc.)

ABN 11 814 143 273

P.O. Box 1065, NEDLANDS WA 6009

**ANNOUNCING THE
ANNUAL BRANCH CONFERENCE 2008
SATURDAY 19th and Sunday 20th JULY 2008
With Beginners and Advanced Workshops Monday 21st July**

ORAL HISTORIES: revealing hidden histories

Oral Histories provide an opportunity for people to tell their history in their own words. Topics that have been denied or hidden can be recorded and made public to set the historical record straight. This conference provides an opportunity to debate and discuss the pros and cons of creating, storing, publishing and broadcasting spoken histories from different eras, countries and cultures.

Notre Dame University Campus
Broome, Western Australia

The conference will combine keynote speakers, with a series of panel discussions where three speakers presenting for 20 minutes each. Conference Convenor, Dr Mary Anne Jebb at maryanne@allbrookjebb.com.au or post to PO Box 809 Fremantle WA 6959. Contact Dr Mary Anne Jebb or Jan McCahon Marshall jmccahon@vicpark.wa.gov.au for information and registration forms.

Broad topics include:

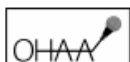
Proof, Evidence and Oral History
Editing and Publishing Oral Histories: To print or not to print
Telling Stories to Strangers: Ownership and Ethics in Oral History
Broadcasting Oral Histories
Kimberley Histories (2 Panels)
Oral History Archives and Databases: For everyone to hear for ever?

A sample of speakers who have agreed to participate at this conference include:
Professor Anna Haebich, Mark Bin Barker, A/Prof Lenore Layman, Dr Elaine Rabbitt,
Bill Bunbury, Professor Valda Blundell

Student accommodation will be available at the Notre Dame University Broome Campus. Complete information will be available on the registration form

A welcome cocktail party will be hosted by the Broome Shire Council Friday 18 July

This conference is sponsored by the Notre Dame University, Broome,
Broome Shire Council





Oral History Association of Australia
National Conference

17–20 September 2009 Launceston Tasmania
(Note change of dates)

Call for papers

The Tasmanian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia invites proposals for presentations on the theme:

Islands of Memory: Navigating Personal and Public History

Sub-themes include:

- navigating truth and memory
- navigating through generations
- navigating new technologies

We encourage proposals from people who have worked with oral history in a wide range of environments such as family history and community projects, museums, heritage agencies, academic institutions, radio and television, law courts and performing arts.

Proposals (maximum 200 words) are invited for individual papers, thematic panels, workshops and performances.

CLOSING DATE FOR PROPOSALS: 31 OCTOBER 2008

Proposals should be sent to:

Jill Cassidy
President OHAA (Tas) Inc
Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery
PO Box 403
Launceston Tasmania Australia 7250

Jill.Cassidy@qvmag.tas.gov.au

Seminars



STATE LIBRARY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The State Library of New South Wales and the Oral History Association of Australia (NSW) Inc. invite you to attend

ORAL HISTORY'S ROLE IN THE 'SORRY' STORY FOR THE STOLEN GENERATIONS – and a practical seminar

To be held on Saturday 3 May 2008 in the METCALFE AUDITORIUM,
Macquarie Street Wing, State Library of New South Wales, Macquarie Street, Sydney

10.00 for 10.30am Registration (entrance by Macquarie St Wing)

10.30 - 12:30pm **Session 1** – Frank Heimans was an interviewer for the National Library of Australia's oral history project for the Stolen Generations. He will share the stories he recorded together with his own experiences in performing this sensitive and historically important task.

12.30 – 1.15 pm Lunch

1.15 – 4.45 pm **Session 2** – Rosemary Block, Curator, Oral History, will teach the practice and technique of oral history (includes coffee break).

***The afternoon seminar
program will include***

introduction to oral history
nature and reliability of memory
interviewing techniques
equipment
documentation
ethical issues, ownership and copyright
transcription and logging
listening to tape excerpts

Inquiries to Rosemary Block, State Library of New South Wales (02) 9273 1697

REGISTRATION FEES	----- ✕ -----		
	Morning session only	\$18	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Afternoon session only	\$18	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Morning or afternoon session with lunch	\$30	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Full day OHAA members (includes lunch)	\$38	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Full day Library Friends (with lunch)	\$42	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Full day Non-members (includes lunch)	\$48	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please mail registration to OHAA, c/- Oral History Program, State Library of New South Wales, Macquarie Street, Sydney 2000.

OR book by credit card through State Library Bookings - Phone: (02) 9273 1770 **OR** Email: bookings@sl.nsw.gov.au

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ Telephone _____ Fax _____

Number attending _____ Please find enclosed \$ _____ in payment for _____ half day **or** _____ full day

of Oral History Seminar. Please make cheques payable to OHAA (NSW) Inc. (ABN 73 605 987 834. Not registered for GST)



STATE LIBRARY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The State Library of New South Wales and the Oral History Association of Australia (NSW) Inc. invite you to attend

a special workshop

DIGITAL RECORDING EQUIPMENT – a hands-on experience

To be held on Saturday 21 June 2008 in the COLES ROOM and the SUMITOMO ROOM,
from 10.00am to 1.00pm on Level 3
Macquarie Street Wing, State Library of New South Wales, Macquarie Street, Sydney

You are invited to

bring your own equipment for individual advice on how to use it
(if it's not the Edirol R-09 please advise in advance)

or

come and practise on the Edirol R-09 which is the OHAA's recorder of choice
and/or

be taught how to set up your pc or laptop to do logging and/or transcribing

**All under the eye and with the advice of our experts,
Peter Rubinstein, Frank Heimans and John Hockney**

TEA, COFFEE AND ENCOURAGEMENT AVAILABLE ALL MORNING!

Inquiries to Rosemary Block, State Library of New South Wales (02) 9273 1697

✂ -----

REGISTRATION FEES

OHAA members	\$30	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-members	\$40	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please mail registration to OHAA, c/- Oral History Program, State Library of New South Wales, Macquarie Street, Sydney 2000.

OR book by credit card through State Library Bookings - Phone: (02) 9273 1770 **OR** Email: bookings@sl.nsw.gov.au

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ Telephone _____ Fax _____

Number attending _____ Please find enclosed \$ _____ in payment.

of Oral History Seminar. Please make cheques payable to OHAA (NSW) Inc. (ABN 73 605 987 834. Not registered for GST)

Numbers will be limited. Please book early!

Reviews

March Oral History Training Workshop

Suzanne Mulligan



Lesley Jenkins (left) addresses the group.

Our first workshop for the year held in March and run by Lesley Jenkins, was so well attended we had to run a second workshop a few weeks later, which is already booked out. This situation bodes well for the status of oral history here in Queensland and we hope to run more workshops later in the year.

We are also encouraged by the variety of people who attended the workshop, both members of OHAA and non-members. We had a professional writer and editor, students, a group from Charleville interviewing locals on their knowledge of the river system, members of the Australian Lebanese Society keen to build that society's

history, members of the Embroiderers Guild who will interview elderly members on the Guild's history and a representative from a regional history group.

After introductions all round, Lesley began by outlining the history of oral history. She discussed the work of Australia's first major oral historian, Hazel de Berg, whose collection is housed in the National Library. Lesley told the group about the major points of oral history, in particular the requirement to do as much research as possible before the interview, and to have a preliminary interview if possible to flesh out the main issues to be covered by the recorded interview.

Lesley played examples of interviews, including examples of 'how not to interview' – which broke all the 'rules'. The group enjoyed seeing and hearing these examples that illustrated many of the points Lesley made.

There was some practical work when the workshop was broken up into smaller groups so they could practise interviewing. This was enjoyable and a great learning experience for everyone as they each subjected themselves to the interviewing process. We listened to some of the interviews and provided feedback. The group also broke up to workshop some ethical scenarios which promoted some interesting discussions.



Anne Monsour, Darren Smith, Gabrielle Said and Sue Reid practise interview

The day was packed full of information and time just flew by. Everyone enjoyed the day and provided some positive feedback, such as – "overall – very good;" "informative;" "it was a great day;" "important topics covered;" "informality but informative;" and "DVD presentations were extremely interesting."

Participants will now be better equipped to go out and collect their oral histories, and we look forward to hearing about their projects in the future.

The Forgotten Children

by David Hill



This book, subtitled - *Fairbridge Farm School and Its Betrayal of Australia's Child Migrants*, tells the story of British children brought out to Australia to live and work on a farm near Orange in New South Wales.

David Hill spoke about his book at the Brisbane Writers' Festival in September 2007 shortly before our National Oral History Conference. Sue Pechey and I were fortunate to speak to him before his presentation and he generously gave our conference a mention while discussing the importance of oral history testimony to his book. David conducted about forty audiotaped interviews with former Fairbridge children. During this process David realised that while much had been written about Fairbridge, the stories of the children themselves had never been told so he decided to write a book from their perspective.

The Fairbridge Farm School was one of several similar schools around Australia. As with many of these schemes, it was founded with the good intent of give impoverished British children opportunities for a better life in Australia. The

concept, first proposed by Kingsley Fairbridge in 1908, was designed to solve two problems for the British Empire – how to open up the lands of the colonies with 'white stock' and how to deal with increasing child poverty. Boys would become "farmers" and girls would become "farmers' wives". Not all the children were orphans. Parents were persuaded to hand over guardianship of their children till age 21, and if they changed their minds, it was virtually impossible to get them back. The first group arrived at Fairbridge in 1938.

In the 1950s as numbers declined, the One Parent Scheme was introduced and this is the scheme under which David Hill and his two brothers came out. David was 12, older than most of the children were when they arrived. His mother later joined him so the family was reunited. Therefore, David's experience is not typical of many of the Fairbridge children.

Len Cowne was among the first group of 28 boys arriving in 1938 to the newly established "village". Electricity was not yet connected and he said it was like "stepping back a century or so." The cottages had dormitories housing about 15 children with a matron's quarters at one end. The village had a large communal dining hall seating over 300 children. There were kitchens, a school, hospital, principal's house, staff residences, garages, laundry, workshops, chapel, vegetable gardens, orchards, dairy, poultry farm, piggery, slaughterhouse, and shearing sheds.

Life on the farm was strictly regimented with the first bell sounding at 6.00 am for the children to get up, shower, dress and begin work. "All children between four and fourteen were assigned work around the village or farm before breakfast every day except Sunday."¹ Some "cottage mothers" were often cruel to their charges. Laurie Reid arrived as a 7 year-old in 1950 and recalls crying for his mother. The cottage mother responded 'I'll give you something to bloody well cry about.' And he was strapped. Laurie, like many of the other children, soon learned to keep his emotions to himself and grow up quickly.

¹ p.51

Some of the stories the former Fairbridge children tell about conditions there are extraordinary. Daphne Brown recalls that toilet paper was rationed – four rolls per month for 15 children. When they ran out “we

used to use any magazines or anything we had. It was quite horrific.”² David Eva recalls some appalling evening meals prepared by his cottage mother including a mutton ‘soup’ they had to reheat covered in maggots. Food waste was not tolerated and the pig bins were checked to ensure ‘good food’ was not thrown out. If it was found, it was retrieved from the pig bin and the children forced to eat it.

Some of the Fairbridge children also suffered sexual abuse. Vivian Bingham arrived at Fairbridge in 1959 aged four and was first sexually abused aged five. She remembers those awful lonely days “I missed my mother ... I felt scared and lonely.”³ When she wet the bed the cottage mother “put my head down the toilet and flushed the chain.”⁴ Vivian’s treatment was investigated the NSW Child Welfare Department but the report remained secret and restricted for more than 40 years. Vivian’s pain and distress are captured in her words “Whenever I was flogged, whenever I got hurt, I used to think, ‘Where’s Mum?’ So I could run to Mum. And my mum wasn’t there ... I couldn’t run to Mum.”⁵

Fairbridge ran its own school as well as sending some children to Molong Central School and Orange High School. The children were not encouraged educationally and Fairbridge blamed the poor education results on the children being ‘retarded’. Fairbridge failed to deliver on its promise of a good education mainly due to emotional deprivation and this left many of the children to face the world with a poor education.

When David Hill’s mother migrated to Australia and visited her sons at Fairbridge, she was shaken by the scene in the main dining hall as she observed 200 children marching in “largely barefoot, dressed in rough clothing and with terrible haircuts, then...sitting along wooden benches, eating bread and porridge on a lino-

topped table from steel bowls and plates.” She was distressed, mumbling words to the effect of ‘What have I done? It’s like something out of *Oliver Twist*.’⁶

The final chapter of the book gives a summary of many of the former Fairbridge children’s experiences and how those experiences shaped their later lives. For many of David Hill’s interviewees, this was the first time they had told their story because “I never had anyone to speak to about this.”⁷ For many the emotional deprivation they experienced made later relationships difficult, particularly with their own children. For example, Gwen Miller said her own children missed out because “I didn’t know how to show them that I loved them...I didn’t kiss them and cuddle them enough as they were growing up.”⁸

David Hill’s book has given a voice to the people who suffered because of well-meaning institutions who ignored the evidence of neglect and emotional deprivation at Fairbridge. As well as the oral history testimony of the former “inmates”, David has researched the archives of all the institutions involved, in Australia and Britain. Much of the material uncovered is being revealed for the first time. He found evidence of cover ups and reports illustrating the shortcomings of Fairbridge that were ignored, some for political reasons. This is an important work and demonstrates the value of oral history in telling a story that might otherwise have remained untold.

Reviewed by Suzanne Mulligan

² p.77

³ p.157

⁴ p.158

⁵ p.185

⁶ p.233

⁷ p.292

⁸ p.293

Projects

Don't Forget the Can Opener

Patricia Merlehan

Approximately three years ago when attempting to obtain some information on Trans Australia Airlines (TAA) during the 1950's in Queensland, I contacted the Oxley Library to find what was there. It was minimal. With an Associate Diploma - Library Science done as a mature age student during the 70's; other skills gained along the way and the fact that I had spent 8-1/2 years with TAA mid fifties into the sixties I felt reasonably competent about undertaking the project.

The Library was most helpful. I filled out their project application form giving my project description and detailed reasons for undertaking it. 2006 would have been the 60th Anniversary of Trans Australia Airlines and the 40th year of 'Wings Away' the Association formed of ex Air Hostess employees. I proposed that the copyright would be with 'Wings Away'. The other point was that members who had been part of the 'early days' were dying and history was going with them. The application was approved and I was duly lent 'high definition' recording equipment and given tapes to use. I approached current members of Wings Away who had worked out of Brisbane for their co-operation and launched into the project.

The first tape didn't go too badly. The member who talked with me was very relaxed and had a good memory for many things that had gone on. However, after that it became difficult. I found it hard to believe that most of these women, well into their seventies now with odd ones in their eighties, who had been trained to use microphones and were more than capable of talking for half an hour or more became such difficult people when asked to speak INTO the microphone. Their voices became softer; the microphone got waved round anywhere but in front of them and the subject matter very quickly got lost.

I had arthritis when I started but in the intervening period it has become worse. After several disastrous interviews I gave up - not my normal way of doing things - and returned what I had done plus the recording equipment and unused tapes to the Library.

Perhaps, I was too close to the women I wanted to interview? Perhaps, someone removed would have had more success in eliciting stories of the early days of TAA in Queensland? I still feel very strongly that it is 'history being lost'.

Editors Note

Did this spark your interest as a potential project? If it did, Patricia would be more than happy to act as some sort of assistant in the project and is happy to be contacted - patty.mc@bigpond.com

Press Release

403 St Georges Road
North Fitzroy
Victoria 3068
Telephone: 03 9489 1716
Facsimile: 03 9489 5318
Email: bpepper@blackpepperpublishing.com
ABN: 15 093 255 586
www.blackpepperpublishing.com



SHELTER: An Oral History of Marjorie Oke Rooming House for Women

By Rhonda Wilson

There is a big red brick house in Station St in Fairfield, Victoria. It used to be owned by MacPherson Robertson who made his fame and fortune in chocolates. It is strange that a house built on so much sweet sugar and cocoa would over time house so much sadness and pain.

This oral history of Marjorie Oke Rooming House for Women shines a light on individual lives but also shows us society's changing attitudes between the 1950s and the present, from a time when single women had their newborn babies taken away from them for adoption to a time when even the most marginalized women are offered support and shelter in a comfortable rooming house.

This subtle social history tells the lives of the people. It is precious because it truly paints a picture of the times we live in: the traditions, the culture. It fosters respect for the way people speak: the rhythms, the

colloquialisms, the turns of phrase that characterise a particular people at a particular time.

An actor, theatre director and teacher, Rhonda Wilson's earlier oral history, *Good Talk, The Extraordinary Lives Of Ten Ordinary Australian Women*, was nominated for the Victorian Premier's Prize in Australian Studies.

***Shelter* can be purchased post free directly from the Black Pepper website**

To find out more about Rhonda Wilson, *Shelter* and other Black Pepper titles go to www.blackpepperpublishing.com

ISBN: 978 1 876044 52 7
RRP: \$27.95

KU librarian reaches out to gay Kansans for untold stories

By Sarah Henning
March 31, 2008

Tami Albin was always very careful. The 11-year-old didn't go to the library with friends. She never wrote down the call numbers of the books she was looking up. She dodged well-meaning librarians whenever possible.

She trolled the aisles, constantly in a state of childhood fear of anyone knowing she might be up to something.

She was reading anything from the tiny shelf labeled "HQ76.5."

"Of course, librarians want to be helpful and would ask me if I needed help, and I'd run and hide," says Albin, now 38 and a librarian in her own right at Kansas University's Anschutz Library. "It was one of those things where it's like a deer caught in the headlights. It's like — blink, blink — oh my God, you know what I'm doing! I've been exposed! And you run off, you scamper away."

What she was doing was exploring the feelings she had felt from age 6 — that she was different. Armed with vocabulary created from insults slung her way across the playground, she dove into books in the HQ76.5 section — the call numbers of the gay and lesbian books. Sitting alone with her finds, she read, gleaning whatever information was available.

Now, Albin is making sure Kansans who believe they might be or who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer (GLBTIQ) know they aren't misfits. She's proving it by interviewing people in Kansas' GLBTIQ community for an oral history collection called "Under the Rainbow: Oral Histories of GLBTIQ People in Kansas."

The project, funded by a two-year new faculty research grant, is seven months in, and Albin already has crisscrossed the state to interview 20 people, ranging in age from 25 to 80. And she's got people lined up, waiting to tell their stories.

"Initially, it was like, if I can get 20 people to be interviewed, that'll be great, because I didn't know how many people would want to be interviewed," Albin says of her initial goal. "I could just stop the project, but I won't because so many people want to talk to me. I have easily another 85 people who still want to talk to me."

Ready to share

Bruce McKinney is one of those who wanted to be interviewed.

McKinney has been a voice in Wichita's gay community for 35 years, when he came to the city to study education at Wichita State University. He formed the first gay group at WSU, but then ended up leaving the school empty-handed because of his pride.

His advisers, worried about a movement toward keeping gays from teaching, told him his senior year that because he was so outspoken about his homosexuality he would not be recommended for a teaching certificate.

"What good is a teaching degree without a certificate?" he says. "I was devastated."

He was devastated but determined to be a voice for the gay community. These days, McKinney is on the boards of the Wichita Pride and Kansas Equality Coalition. He provided Albin with a window into the late '70s in Wichita.

"I told her about the events in 1977, '78. That's when Wichita went through the effort of getting the civil rights ordinance to include gay and lesbian people, and then on May 9, 1978, (Wichita was one) of five cities to repeal (it)," he says. "And we lost it at a 5-1 vote, which was pretty devastating to the community. It forever warped our sensibility about who we were. People left town. Kansas did not want us here, and many of the leaders left."

Anchored by a good job and family, McKinney stayed and fought. And now he's making sure Albin records every last bit of that time.

"I've always wanted to remember what happened 30 years ago because it was so horrible and we need to remember that," he says. "It was not holocaust, but in our little tiny community in little Wichita, Kansas, it had a big impact."

Speaking for more than 70,000

Albin says that her videotaped interviews are across the board. She has subjects who knew they were gay anywhere from age 3 to after they were married and had children. She has talked to people who went through programs to "fix" them.

Albin says it's a history not many people know about, which is part of the reason she took on the project. She was tired of the Midwest being viewed as a place devoid of a GLBTIQ community.

"(It) caused me to think, if it's really, really that bad in Kansas, why do people stay?" she says. "My partner said to me, 'You could do an oral history on this, and you could call it 'Under the Rainbow.' So, it was like, you're right, I could do that."

Getting the history down

Albin plans to squeeze in as many interviews as she can in addition to her job as the undergraduate

instruction and outreach librarian and women's studies subject specialist at Anschutz.

She hopes to get the first transcripts of her interviews up in September on KU's ScholarWorks Web site, a digital repository. The site will be home to the oral collection and means that the address will be stable and easily located by a keyword search in Google.

The all-access pass to the information is especially important to Albin, who knows that the Internet plays a huge role for those wanting information about being gay. She doesn't want anyone to miss out on the history and stories of the GLBTIQ community in Kansas.

"A lot of gay kids commit suicide because they don't understand what's going on," Albin says. "And if you have access to information to understand that, then you know you're OK, you're OK with what you're feeling, it's not the end of the world.

"I think that can save a life."

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Papers

Telling Their Stories: Student Production and Delivery of Digital Video Interviews via the Internet

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Howard LEVIN

Director of Technology
The Urban School of San Francisco
1563 Page Street
San Francisco, California 94117
USA
hlevin@urbanschool.org
415-626-2919

Project Website: www.tellingstories.org
Sub-Themes: Memory and Trauma, Archiving Memory, and Teaching and Learning.

Abstract

Modern digital production and editing tools now make it possible for students to contribute with meaningful and immediately useful research previously reserved to professionals. This is a case study of one American high school—The Urban School of San Francisco¹—where students conduct professional-style interviews in the homes of elders who suffered trauma as youngsters in the course of key 20th century historical events. Working in teams of three, students in “Telling Their Stories: Oral History Archives Project”—an elective history class—prepare background research and interview questions. They travel to each subject's home, set up a professional-style mobile digital video studio, and complete a two-hour interview.

¹ The Urban School of San Francisco, located in the heart of the city's historic Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, is a progressive American independent high school that strives to instill a passion for learning among its 295 students. The school is considered a regional and national pioneer in several areas including its innovative block schedule, a renowned service learning program, narrative evaluation system, and fully integrated 1:1 student laptop program. More information at <<http://www.urbanschool.org>>.

Students then transcribe each interview into a full-text transcript using the digital video files transferred to their personal laptops. Students edit the digital files into hundreds of mini-movies directly corresponding to the text. The result of their work is a public Internet site containing the interviews, complete with full-text, video and audio. Telling Their Stories: Oral History Archives Project www.tellingstories.org currently contains over 50 hours of interviews with 18 subjects.² Current topics include: survivors and refugees of the European Holocaust, American soldiers who helped liberate Nazi concentration camps, and Americans of Japanese descent who were interned during World War II. This paper explores the Telling Their Stories (TTS) model by examining the process and efficacy of publishing student conducted oral histories using digital video and web-based technologies. The author's hope is that this information will inspire teachers and oral historians to copy and adapt these practices leading to additional oral histories published on the Internet by students.

Author's Note – The project, “Telling Their Stories: Oral History Archives Project,” was chosen for the 2004 Leading Edge Award for outstanding use of technology by the National Association of Independent schools.³

Project Background

The original inspiration for the project came from the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation (VHF), a Steven Spielberg-funded project through which more than 50,000 Holocaust survivors throughout the world have been interviewed.⁴ Of particular interest is the VHF's groundbreaking use of digital technologies that provides keyword search and access to

² *Telling Their Stories: Oral History Archives Project*. The Urban School of San Francisco. 21 Feb. 2006 <<http://www.tellingstories.org>>.

³ *Leading Edge Program*. The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). 21 Feb. 2006 <<http://www.nais.org>>.

⁴ *Survivors of the Shoah: Visual History Foundation*. University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Institute. 21 Feb. 2006 <<http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/vhi/>>.

specific sections of over 120,000 hours of interviews. Telling Their Stories (TTS) opens opportunities for new applications of the VHF concept. Whereas the VHF project involves a sophisticated keyword coding system, TTS involves full-text transcription. Whereas VHF is only viewable at a handful of museums and research centers, TTS interviews are available via the Internet. And finally, whereas VHF is a massive multi-continent professional undertaking, TTS is a model for local schools and universities.

The author first conceived of the course in 1992 while teaching high school history at the Overlake School in Redmond, WA. Using more traditional methods and tools of oral history, students conducted interviews of Holocaust survivors and transcribed interviews using a basic word processor. The process did not reach potential due in great part to the cumbersome nature of the tools used: the time devoted to working with analog tapes did not provide the educational benefit for students and the resulting products lacked the sophistication necessary for wider distribution.

Nearly 10 years later, using the phenomenal advances in Internet, digital video and editing technologies, the current TTS course began in the spring of 2002. The author teamed with veteran history teacher, Deborah Dent-Samake, who received oral history training from the Charles Morrissey Oral History Workshop.⁵ Dent-Samake leads the daily course and the author facilitates the more technical aspects of the project. During the first year, students interviewed five Holocaust survivors. One year later a new group of students conducted follow-up interviews with the same five survivors, as well as adding a sixth subject. This pattern of a two-year cycle of interview and re-interview of the same subjects has worked well to enhance the depth of interviews. The first year students conduct essential research including a pre-interview, and develop a chronological overview with their subject. The second year students study the previous year's interviews to construct cumulative questions that often delve further into the subjects' story. The course continues to explore 20th century history topics best studied using primary source, live oral history using this two-stage interview cycle.

⁵ *Charles Morrissey Oral History Workshops*, Union Institute & University. July 2005
<<http://www.tui.edu/current/conferences/oral>>.

Efficacy of Student Interviews

The key to this and similar projects is the real-world contribution of student work to an audience that transcends the school community. Student work can provide valuable primary source material for students and researchers throughout the world. They are crossing the boundary of "learner" to "contributor." Their work has real meaning beyond the classroom. Students are not merely modeling and practicing techniques used by professionals; they are completing purposeful and meaningful work to be used by others throughout the world. The author refers to this concept as "Authentic Doing."

Authentic Doing tasks can take multiple directions such as providing new research, data-collection, and community service. Authentic Doing is NOT simulating the work of professionals; Authentic Doing involves completing and distributing the work of professionals. The results provide service and contribution far beyond the classroom. A class mock-debate may be a great way to engage student thinking and generate higher levels of motivation, however, this is not an Authentic Doing task. Interviewing candidates and posting these unique sets of questions and answers on a public website prior to an election is Authentic Doing.

Elements of Authentic Doing

1. Work provides a service to a community beyond the classroom (other classes within the school, the school, the district, the local community, city, county, region, state, country, world).
2. Product is unique and provides real utility to the broader community, i.e., the product is not a repeat of previously existing projects, but rather provides something new.
3. The project is age appropriate. Given the goal to publish work relevant and usable to a wider audience, the tasks required should not over-reach their capability.
4. The product is age independent. The benefactor groups (readers, viewers, recipients) transcend the specific age of the student producers.

The TTS model of conducting and publishing oral histories is a prime example of an Authentic Doing project that helps educators achieve a goal that previously was deemed unreachable, i.e., engaging students in real-world tasks that

authentically contribute to the research knowledge pool. This is due in part to new opportunities afforded by breakthroughs in digital media and Internet technology. Modern technology provides the tools to finally enable students to be both learners and meaningful contributors through what is arguably a paradigm shift in the processes of oral history collection, processing and distribution to a global audience. The previous constraints afforded by physical tools, financial supports, and access to regional, national and international publishing apparatus have all but evaporated given today's access to inexpensive sophisticated tools and ubiquitous access to the Internet. The cost and complexity of past publishing systems served to prevent even the conception of worldwide publishing of student interviews. Today, those constraints are gone.

The question remains, however, about the efficacy and appropriateness of engaging students in Authentic Doing tasks leading to worldwide publication. A complete answer is beyond the scope of this paper; however, consider the comments of former students in a TTS course when asked to respond to the following question: "As someone who experienced the project, what would you say to historians and high school history teachers who would argue that high school students are not sophisticated enough to conduct interviews for world-wide publishing?"⁶

High school students are perfect for oral history...they are figuring out who they are. In a culture where their appearances are evaluated but their true voices aren't heard, learning how to really listen to another person's story provides not only a sense of connection, but has the potential to foster a feeling of being worth it, of mattering enough to be told. Interviewing gave me a sense of responsibility—that's how oral storytelling works throughout history—a passing on of an important story. We were the ones to receive it, and we're the ones to keep it. It teaches us that individuals' stories do matter, that each person matters.⁷

⁶ "Telling Their Stories: Oral History Archive Project, A Survey of Impact." Survey completed by 18 students from the past four years of TTS courses. The Urban School of San Francisco. 23 Feb. 2006.

⁷ "KRB '03" (former student of the 2003 *Telling Their Stories* course), survey response, "Telling Their Stories: Oral History Archive Project, A Survey of

They have made a colossal error in judgment. If students are interested in the topic and are willing to take the time to find answers to worthy questions, they are qualified to connect with survivors.⁸

All 18 responding students commented in a similar manner, all expressing confidence in their preparation and subsequent contributions. Several comments urged skeptics to simply look at the work on the website.

Unlike traditional oral history projects which focus almost solely on extracting and documenting personal stories for the benefit of others, the TTS model adds an equally important layer of importance, that being the impact on the interviewers, in this case high school students. Says Kenneth Kann, a TTS volunteer and experienced oral historian:

It is remarkable that something like this could emerge out of a high school history class. This is the best conceived oral history class I have seen. I cannot imagine a more valuable educational experience for students.⁹

The author does not argue that high school students, regardless of their preparation, can conduct interviews with equal sophistication of professionally trained oral historians. However, given the variety of unique factors about oral history, engaging students in a TTS project is an ideal opportunity to both enhance the learning process and the body of work. First, unlike the presumption of publishing analytical work of students, the TTS model focuses solely on the collection and distribution of data, i.e., oral testimonies. The work of analysis is reserved for professionals and remains a private—though appropriate—function within the classroom. Thus the work is age appropriate, but the content is age

Impact." The Urban School of San Francisco. 23 Feb. 2006.

⁸ "HL '07" (former student of the 2005 *Telling Their Stories* course). Survey response, "Telling Their Stories: Oral History Archive Project, A Survey of Impact." The Urban School of San Francisco. 23 Feb. 2006.

⁹ Kenneth Kann, oral historian and author of *Comrades and Chicken Ranchers: The Story of a California Jewish Community*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). Written TTS evaluation, 23 March 2003.

independent. Second, the TTS model centers on the urgency of collecting stories of elders who witnessed key historic events. Given the enormous numbers of aging witnesses to events such as the Holocaust, students can play a vital role in capturing stories that soon will be lost. The project provides meaningful work and the collected stories provide new material for use by others.

The TTS Course

The TTS course is divided into relatively equal sections: 1/4 background history, 1/4 research and preparation, 1/4 interview skills, and 1/4 post production.

Topic Choice and Interview Subjects

The primary desire of the TTS project is to enhance the existing body of work to support a wide range of users from school-age children to history researchers. Among the first tasks is choosing an appropriate topic that balances compelling subject matter, availability of interviewees in the geographic region, and contribution to the broader curriculum. The TTS model centers on capturing the stories of elders who experienced trauma during mid-20th century historical events. Although this can obviously be adapted to the widest range of topics spanning from the arts to sciences by interviewing significant contributors to various professions, there is a powerful impact of engaging students in interviews with subjects who experienced trauma in their youth. For example, most of the Holocaust survivors and Japanese internees were of similar age to the interviewing students at the time of their ordeals and often this emotional connection appears within the interview. Note this segment from Max Garcia, an Auschwitz survivor, as he turns to address the interviewers:

The Jewish edicts come into play, and I go into hiding after my sister has been picked up in December of 1942. She had just turned sixteen. Who is sixteen here? (Several students raise their hands). She had just turned sixteen on the 24th of November, and she was gassed in Auschwitz on the 10th of December. I just want you to think about that for a minute—all of you who are sixteen.¹⁰

¹⁰ Max R. Garcia, *Telling Their Stories: Oral History Archives Project*. The Urban School of San Francisco. 9 May 2002 <

Both the student and the subject share this impact when they discuss experiences during a relatively similar age. Consider this comment from a former student:

It is sometimes even beneficial to be young because it enables you to compare your current life-style with theirs at a similar age and find differences that make their experience unique.¹¹

The elders themselves feel quite comfortable telling their stories to teenagers and all have been open to second interviews.

Background History

The background history phase focuses on developing quick breadth and depth of historical content. The corresponding curriculum focuses on developing familiarity with key events leading up to the primary topic. Students construct timelines, complete a series of background readings, and explore previous oral histories. Inherent in the process is a pedagogical struggle of breadth over depth of understanding of content. The entire set of activities—from background research to the interview to the final editing of tape and transcripts—supports student learning. In fact, the interview method employed, adapted from the Shoah Foundation's training models,¹² emphasizes a more subtle questioning style designed to help pull stories of personal experience without the need for extensive historical training.

Interview Research

Following the background history stage, students are assigned an interview subject. They work in production teams of three throughout the remainder of the process. Students first conduct a non-taped pre-interview questionnaire using a common form developed for each year's topic. In most cases the pre-interview is a live, face-to-face opportunity to gather important background information as well as to develop rapport between

http://www.tellingstories.org/holocaust/max/max_fram eset.html>, page 6.

¹¹ "HL '07" (former student of the 2005 *Telling Their Stories* course), survey response, "Telling Their Stories: Oral History Archive Project A Survey of Impact." The Urban School of San Francisco. 23 Feb. 2006.

¹² The author attended 4 days of training hosted by the VHF. June 1996
<<http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/vhi/>>.

the subject and the student team. The pre-interview takes approximately one hour. In some cases this occurs via phone and is often augmented with email correspondence. Beyond the obvious benefit of recording personal data in advance of the formal interview, the most important survey section is the development of the subject's personal timeline. This provides the student team with a plethora of follow-up research opportunities. In fact, the elder subjects often take this opportunity to direct students to additional material in the form of books, articles and films. In some cases the subjects provide students with their own written testimonies. Using the experiences of the pre-interview, the questionnaire, and earlier background studies, students collaborate on further research and question development leading up to the day of their scheduled interview.

The Interview

The TTS model uses a simplified mobile studio that can be set-up in approximately 15 minutes. Lighting involves the use of a single 1000 watt bulb within a 16"x22" dome box, and a white-board reflector. The subject wears a high quality lavalier microphone connected directly to a digital video camera using standard miniDV tapes. The voice of the interviewers is picked up by the subject's microphone. This simplifies the need for sound mixing since the audio portion of the interview questions is edited out of the final movie segments. Three tripod stands hold the light, reflector and camera. A back-up camera, microphone and light bulb are also included in the mobile studio.¹³

Following the interview, the videotapes are imported to large-capacity external hard drives using Apple iMovie.¹⁴ Given the low cost of digital storage (approx. \$5 per hour of tape), these digital files remain as permanent storage and the miniDV tape version becomes the archival back-up. The files stored on the digital drives are transferred to larger capacity drives as the cost per hour continues to drop in the years ahead, thus

building a simple means of file duplicity and transfer to more advanced archival digital media as it's developed in the future.

After compressing the captured digital video into small QuickTime files using Discreet Cleaner,¹⁵ each 2-hour interview is transferred to student computers. Students then transcribe their assigned segments using Listen & Type,¹⁶ one of many audio transcription programs available as shareware. Students on average spend approximately five minutes for each minute of transcription during this "rough transcription" phase, much of which can be completed as homework. Students use a style guide developed for TTS projects to maintain consistency among the many student transcribers.¹⁷ Among the most difficult tasks students face is determining sentence and paragraph breaks within oral speech. This becomes a critical task since each paragraph will later be matched with a corresponding movie file. Students follow several additional editing steps to "clean" the transcriptions within their production teams.

Students then use Apple's QuickTime Pro to create the hundreds of approximately one-minute "movie" files. This moves rather quickly since the students have already determined where to make the paragraph breaks; the movie cuts simply mirror these same segments.¹⁸ Students learn the subtleties of avoiding awkward movie cuts (not at closed eyes or in mid-motion). They also tend to find transcription errors in the process of reviewing the audio-visual record. Students then paste their transcribed text into blank Macromedia Dreamweaver¹⁹ files and hyperlink each segment of text to its corresponding QuickTime movie. Individual laptops facilitate the process since many of the more time-consuming tasks are completed as homework.

¹³ Refer to project website for more detailed descriptions of equipment used. *Telling Their Stories: Oral History Archives Project*. The Urban School of San Francisco. 21 Feb. 2006 <<http://www.tellingstories.org/about>>, "Production Guides"

¹⁴ *iMovie HD 6*. Apple Computer. 21 Feb. 2006 <www.apple.com/ilife/imovie>.

¹⁵ *Autodesk Cleaner*. Autodesk. 21 Feb. 2006 <www.autodesk.com/cleaner>.

¹⁶ *Listen&Type 2.1.1*. Nattaworks. 21 Feb. 2006 <www.nattaworks.com>

¹⁷ *Style Guide, Telling Their Stories: Oral History Archives Project*. The Urban School of San Francisco. 21 Feb. 2006 <www.tellingstories.org/about/technical/style_guide.html>.

¹⁸ *Quicktime Pro*. Apple Computer. 21 Feb. 2006 <www.apple.com/quicktime/pro/mac.html>.

¹⁹ *Macromedia Dreamweaver 8*. Adobe. 21 Feb. 2006 <www.macromedia.com/software/dreamweaver>.

Once all the text is transcribed and checked multiple times by student teams, adult volunteers are recruited for a final round of careful proof “listening and reading.” They maneuver through an entire testimony, clicking each paragraph and comparing one more time the written text to the spoken word. They make corrections and record notes of difficult passages or words for later review. These mostly parent volunteers, some with past oral history background, appreciate both the project and their ability to contribute. The school librarian, Carolyn Karis, assists Dent-Samake and the author in the final task of checking and correcting any remaining unresolved text problems.

Technology Integration Processes

The TTS course is a model of integrating technology into the curriculum—the guiding principle for computer use at The Urban School and elsewhere. The technology tools enhance collaboration among and between the students, the teams, and the instructors. Individual student laptops are used for all aspects of production.²⁰ Students use online directions for the various steps with very little direct instruction. The project team approach helps facilitate this; they seek each other's help when directions are confusing. Students access their work and post reflective journal entries online using FirstClass online communication software.²¹ They access assignments, keep track of the complicated production schedule, submit homework, collaborate in their project teams, and access the work of previous years' students all online. They learn to set-up the mobile studio and operate the professional camera, lights and microphones. Their work—published on the Internet—is made possible by this infusion of technology. However, the most significant elements of the course remain rooted in the historical study and student contribution. In this way, technology is infused and integrated, and therefore it remains simply a tool in the process.

Summary

Telling Their Stories: Oral History Archives Project is intended to provide teachers, professors, oral historians and community oral history organizers with a model for inspiring student

conducted and published oral histories. Following an “Authentic Doing” project method which directly engages students in real-world production of material with meaning far beyond the classroom, the TTS model results in capturing and publishing vitally important personal histories for use throughout the world. In addition, the TTS model promotes a “Read, Watch, Listen” approach to the presentation of oral histories using simple multimedia tools that embrace the value of stories when presented in both transcript and parallel video via the Internet.

Howard Levin serves as Director of Technology at The Urban School of San Francisco, the first high school in San Francisco to adopt an individual student laptop program. He taught high school history and served as department chair of history at the Overlake School in Redmond, WA. He is author of articles published in ISTE's "Learning and Leading with Technology." He is a frequent presenter at national and international conferences including: Ed-Media 2005 in Montreal, National Association of Independent Schools, National Association for Computers in Education, and The Laptop Institute in Memphis. He was also a volunteer interviewer for the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History program, a Steven Spielberg-funded project that interviewed more than 50,000 Holocaust survivors throughout the world.

More information at: www.howardlevin.com

Editor's note: Permission to re-produce obtained.

²⁰ Apple iBook. Apple Computer. 21 Feb. 2006 <www.apple.com/ibook>.

²¹ FirstClass 8.1. OpenText Corporation. 21 Feb. 2006 www.firstclass.com.

Web Sites

Vermont Folklife Center Archive: Field Research Guides. In an effort to provide useful information to fieldworkers, students, community scholars, and others interested in cultural documentation, ethnography and oral history, the Vermont Folklife Center archive provides online access to a series of research guides:
<http://www.vermontfolklifecenter.org/archive/archive-fieldguides.html>

Living Stories: a UK site where you can read and hear the stories of people telling their stories of haemophilia and HIV
<http://www.livingstories.org.uk/>

When History gets Personal: Post-War Britain is about to come dramatically to life in a major TV history by Andrew Marr. The Magazine is teaming up with him to compile a users' history - written, photographed and filmed by you. Andrew explains why personal history matters.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/6658705.stm>

Columbia University Libraries: Oral History Research Office shows a number of interesting oral history projects that are underway.
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/oral/>

The Washington University School of Medicine Oral History Project is an ongoing series of recorded interviews and transcripts dating from 1959. The project was envisioned to capture and preserve first person accounts and reflections on the history of the medical school, medical practice in St. Louis, and developments in the field of medicine. Interview subjects include faculty, staff and alumni of the School of Medicine, as well as family members, friends and others associated with Washington University. Users can listen to audio recordings or read transcripts of the interviews, and view images of the oral history subjects.
<http://beckerexhibits.wustl.edu/oral/index.html>

StoryCorps: the conversation of a lifetime. Our mission is to honour and celebrate one another's lives through listening. Since 2003, almost 30,000 everyday people have shared life stories with family and friends in our StoryBooths. Each conversation is recorded on a free CD to share, and is preserved at the Library of Congress. Millions listen to our broadcasts on public radio and the web. StoryCorps is the largest oral history project of its kind.
<http://www.storycorps.net/>

Digital Audio Best Practices has a guide for those undertaking converting their analogue collections to digital. Although it's a North American site, most of the information will help us.
http://www.cdphheritage.org/digital/audio/documents/cdp_dabpv2_1.pdf

MemoryArchive: a site where people can submit their own stories.
<http://www.memoryarchive.org/en/MemoryArchive>