



Oral History Association of Australia

On Tape

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Letter from the Editor

Hello Everyone!

Phew! Talk about a busy couple of months. The Heritage Centre here is finally finished (with a great oral history component) and open to the public. YAY! The first attempt at an official opening had a slight hiccup but we finally made it. Of course, just like a pregnancy this is when the hard work begins.....it's all about Promotion, Promotion, Promotion. I'm hoping things will be slightly calmer by the time next Newsletter is due.

If you have any comments to make about the Newsletter, please send them directly to "The Editor, On Tape", at karenbarrett@bigpond.com - I promise I don't bite and have rather thick skin. The Newsletter is only as good as its last edition, so comments, critiques or recommendations are very welcome. I would love the opportunity to listen to your thoughts or concerns. And if, heaven forbid, you just want to prod me then I can handle that too. Having said that, I apologise to anybody disadvantaged by the lateness of the Newsletter. With a laptop meltdown and the need to get this out ASAP, the Newsletter is bare bones, and not much more than the few submissions received.

I would also like to say I don't know how Suzanne managed it, but I'll keep trying. I suspect she might be Wonder Woman in disguise and we've all been working next to a superhero. Certainly she's deserving of great praise for her tenure as the Editor, if you get a chance please drop her a line to thank her for her service to the Association.

The Committee is still looking at the revision of the logo for the Newsletter as well as developing branding for the branch, but as you can imagine these things take time. It would be nice to have the new logos last well into the future.

The plan to utilise the webpage developed for the Conference into our own OHAA (QLD) website is still in development. My grand plans are

suffering from lack of time but are progressing slightly faster than this Newsletter does. Once again if you have any ideas with regard to these logos, and/or know/are a budding graphic/web design artist, please let me know. One thing I do want to make sure is that site is dial-up friendly. My biggest peeve when companies re-design is that their sites become graphic hungry and take forever to load. Eventually I'd love to have some kind of forum available on the site where you can drop on by and post a question to the membership and get an answer quickly.....as I said grand plans.

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 me or Suzanne Mulligan mulligan@gil.com.au. We can send you the order form to complete.

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.

I'm particularly interested in knowing if anyone has plans in attending the International Conference in Mexico later in the year.

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: karenbarrett@bigpond.com

News

SLQ Appoints Oral History and Digital Storytelling Co-ordinator

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, The State Library advertised a full-time position for Oral History and Digital Storytelling Co-ordinator. Since then Gavin Bannerman has been appointed

As the Oral History and Digital Storytelling Coordinator Gavin's role will coordinate an active oral history and digital storytelling program in Heritage Collections and across the State Library. He 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. He 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.

Previously to this role Gavin was the Outreach Librarian, Client Services & Collections, State Library of Queensland. As part of building relationships, Gavin is looking forward to attending the next Association meeting later this month.

New methods of payment for OHAA membership fees

We're firmly entrenched in the digital age; the Association wants to offer more than one method of paying for membership fees. The methods approved by the Treasurer and Committee are:

1. Members paying via direct deposit a la Internet banking from their own account with an e-mail sent direct to the treasurer confirming transfer.
2. Members paying via direct deposit into the account, by way of going in to a Bank of Qld branch and making a deposit to the account. Again, notification to the treasurer of the transfer is mandatory, otherwise there will be no way of knowing who did the deposit...
3. Members paying via cheque.

The banking details are:

Bank of Queensland

BSB 124001

Account number 20355175

Account Name: Oral History Association of Australia Qld Division Inc

These methods are the only ways that ensure the Association does not pay some sort of fee. Again, please notify the association of the payment. If we find the trend is for people to not notify the Association, the Committee will revisit their decision.

Thank you

Maxine Kendall

Treasurer, OHAA Qld Div

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>



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

Projects

Pine Rivers District Oral History Video Program Continues

Leith Barter

During early 2000, the 'Eyes of the Residents' program, which involves digitally video-recording oral history interviews, was instigated in the Pine Rivers Shire by Leith Barter, a local historian and the Shire's Local Studies Librarian. Leith has been fortunate enough to receive ongoing funding to capture video-recorded interviews with present and former residents of the Shire. To date, some 83 interviews have been recorded as a result of this program. To achieve higher quality results than would be possible by using Council-owned equipment, Leith works in partnership with Bluegum Media, a local video production company based in Lawnton.

Although we had always presumed that the oral history program would have great value as an end in itself with respect to the creation of a library of oral history DVDs, we had underestimated the importance of the interviews as a source of raw material for films and audiovisual displays in our Pine Rivers Heritage Museum located in Old Petrie Town. To date, two films have been created in DVD format which have been distributed widely in the local area: *Two Centuries: a History of the Pine Rivers Shire* (2002) and *Pine Valley Timber* (2005). Both these films drew very heavily on the library of completed interviews.

The most recent production, which was launched on Friday 28 March 2008, the 83rd DVD in the series, is a compilation of interviews with present and former local residents who witnessed the Camp Mountain train crash in 1947. This work was carried out recently in partnership with the Samford District Historical Museum Society. After the 60th anniversary of the disaster was commemorated last year, it came to our attention that many local residents who had first-hand knowledge of the crash were passing away and that we had a fast diminishing opportunity to record the remaining memories of an event in Queensland history which is still the subject of widespread interest.



The derailment of a special train (E91) at Camp Mountain on Labour Day, Monday 5 May 1947, caused the deaths of 14 passengers, the fireman of the train and the driver who died the next day in hospital. To date, the Camp Mountain train crash still remains Queensland's worst rail disaster. The special train had been chartered by the Customs and Excise Social Club to transport Departmental employees and their families to Closeburn; such rail excursions to the area had become very popular during the 1930s and 1940s. This particular outing began at Central Station early in the morning. After stopping at Brunswick Street and

Mitchelton, the train clambered slowly to the top of the Camp Mountain Knob. Then, on its descent, the train gathered speed very quickly and crashed with the subsequent loss of 16 lives and injuries to some 38 others. A Court of Enquiry found that excessive speed had caused the locomotive tender to overturn.

Although the Camp Mountain train crash has been the subject of a great deal of attention during recent years, particularly from Brisbane television stations, we wanted to ensure that the impressions of our local residents were recorded in greater detail than is provided by the short 'journalistic' impressions which appear in television productions. The value of the compilation of nine interviews has been greatly enhanced by the addition of commentary by Greg Hallam, the renowned Queensland Rail Historian. In order to respect the integrity of the original interviews, very little editing has been carried out and it is not our intention to distribute the DVD commercially. As well as being archived in the Strathpine Library's Local Studies Collection, copies have been made available to the Samford District Historical Museum, local historical societies, Queensland Rail and the John Oxley Library.

Although the Pine Rivers Shire Council recently amalgamated with our neighbouring Caboolture Shire Council and the Redcliffe City Council to form the Moreton Bay Regional Council, the third largest local government authority in Queensland, the integrity of the Pine Rivers District remains. It is hoped that funding will be maintained to allow the 'Eyes of the Residents' program to continue to record the reminiscences of our senior citizens in a tangible form that will be of great value to future generations.

Centenary of Parks Oral History Project - Wrangling "product" from Oral History

Suzanne Gibson

In January this year I was contracted to record and produce a series of oral history interviews to commemorate 100 years of National Parks in Queensland. The aim of the project was to record the recollections of 15 former and current National Parks and Wildlife Service officers, but also to produce two audio products. The first was an audio installation for a display in the Queensland Museum; the second is a 50 minute audio documentary.

The project is funded by the Queensland Government, through the Environmental Protection Agency.

In my experience, multiple outcome projects can be a real trap. As well as recording comprehensive oral history interviews, you also have to have to also ensure that you record the material you need for the other products. If not, you end up having to piece together a narrative from the length and breadth of your oral history interviews, which can be an extremely time consuming task. I also believe that stories told as part of an oral history interview do not necessarily make the best audio for a museum display or

audio documentary. They have quite different audiences and require different treatments in the interview process. For a public display piece you may need dig for opinion, anecdote or commentary that makes great listening, but is not strictly the preserve of a straight oral history interview. In some cases, I record two interviews with the same person, so I can direct the interviewee in ways that would otherwise disrupt the oral history interview. So in my mind, an oral history and an oral history based audio product are two quite distinct tasks.

The problem is that your client does not really understand this. Everyone understands what an oral history is, but few understand how that material actually becomes a program or an audio installation. They don't understand that a production takes shape in the research process, and that through the research process you identify material you have to record as part of, or in addition to, the oral history interview.

In the context of the Centenary of Parks project, my clients had a concept in mind for the museum display, based on an old Rangers camp. Their

idea for the documentary was an overview of the development of National Parks. They had a list of people they wanted me to interview and were very keen for me to get started. There was a tight deadline for the museum installation, which was shortened further by a request that I work in parallel with a video crew, who needed a longer editing time. The short story was there was some pressure applied to 'just get going' and start interviewing, so everyone could start editing – i.e. define the product in the edit room, not through the research process.

To the credit of the EPA, and thanks to a robust tender document in which I outlined a staged approach to the project, I was able to hold everyone back while I pre-interviewed, read and googled. The process proved invaluable, as it always does. In this case, through the research and pre-interviews it became apparent that the list of interviewees did not actually contain any current or former park rangers, and that no-one on the list actually remembered the period that the museum display was going to represent. This would not have been a problem for a straight oral history project, but it is a big problem when you're expected to produce an audio installation set amidst a historic Rangers camp!

But as a result of the research process, it was possible to identify broader themes that would work, identify people who remembered the real old timers and also propose a couple of former rangers who could be added to the interviewee list. This could happen before any travel budgets, itineraries or interviews were set in concrete. I was also able to think through the documentary, and propose an outline for it, which could be presented to the client and received a sign-off from them, prior to any recording.

For me this is an important safeguard as a contractor. If you rush through this process without gaining input, direction or consent from your client, you can be left high and dry if they decide they don't like the finished product – or they change their mind along the way. In my mind, it is best to bring a client into the research and what you have found out, how you are thinking it will inform your audio product, and

ensure they agree with the line/angle/ thematic approach you are planning to take.

In this case, with a Government client, I wanted to be sure they understood that there was a strong element of critique that was emerging the pre-interviews. While I knew the oral histories were to be a full and frank account of each interviewees experiences, observations and recollections, what about the audio documentary? It wasn't a broadcast commission, but a product commissioned by the client for their own distribution. Were they prepared to have criticism of current policy, for instance? Again the research process helped me identify this as a potential issue, bring it to the attention of the client and obtain instruction from them.

Apologies if I am stating the bleeding obvious, but I know it is tempting to cut corners, especially with a deadline or client bearing down on you. I hope this will be a small reminder of why we shouldn't.

On a lighter note, I have loved this project. Through it I have met an inspirational group of people who have devoted their careers to the protection of Queensland's National Parks estate. Almost all of them have, at some stage, come under personal pressure to do something, or allow something, they regarded as contrary to the law and the spirit of national parks. All have held out, some at great personal cost. In an age when blaming the bureaucrat is par for the course, it has been a refreshing and enlightening experience to be reminded of what a fantastic job a good bureaucrat does, for us, behind the scenes.

The oral history interviews, with transcripts, will be archived in the State Library of Queensland. The museum installation was received with great delight, and sounded gorgeous, thanks to incredible bird calls and location recordings provided to me by Syd Curtis – former Forestry and QPWS employee, lyrebird expert and nature recordist extraordinaire. I am about to start pulling together the documentary, and am hoping I remembered to record everything I was supposed to, just like I planned. And pigs might fly.

Press

Vietnam Veterans Recording War Tales

Akron Beacon Journal - Akron,OH,USA

The Cantigny First Division Oral History Project is being funded through the Chicago- based McCormick Tribune Foundation with support from the staff

<http://www.ohio.com/lifestyle/25954714.html>

Losing A Friend At The Counter 'Betty Schnackenberg,' 72, ...

Hoboken Reporter - Hoboken,NJ,USA

In an oral history documented by the Hoboken Historical Museum in 2001, Silvani remembered riding in the dumbwaiter as a child and her father's insistence ...

http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?BRD=1291&dept_id=523585&newsid=19872134&PAG=461&rfi=9

Documenting The Undocumented

Peter Orner Relates Vivid Life Stories of Immigrant Workers

Houston Chronicle - United States

Underground America is part of a series of oral history projects Dave Eggers is publishing under his McSweeney's imprint. They include oral histories of exonerated prisoners and Katrina survivors.

<http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/life/books/reviews/5906197.htm>

World War II Museum in New Orleans Has New Mission

Dallas Morning News - Dallas,TX,USA

The oral history program remains a major project of the museum. "We have three or four historians who travel, and we videotape in [high-definition]...

http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/fea/travel/thisweek/stories/DN-nolamuseum_0720tra.ART.State.Edition1.4da50c3.html

John Roebling: 100 Years Later, Museum Celebrates Revolutionary...

The Trentonian - Trenton,NJ,USA

Broken into six sections, the museum will feature an oral history film featuring former workers, a section about the community of Roebling, artifacts and ...

http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=19861949&BRD=1697&PAG=461&dept_id=44551&rfi=6

A New Chapter for a Legacy

Lynchburg News and Advance - Lynchburg,VA,USA

Pace, Rainville and Pace's cousin, Annette Anderson, will also be conducting an oral history project throughout the weekend, collecting stories from the...

http://www.newsadvance.com/lna/lifestyles/features/article/a_new_chapter_for_a_legacy/6714/

Oral History Promises New Look At Kennedy

Boston Globe - United States

The recorded conversations -- which have never been made public -- are the heart of an ambitious oral history project by the University of Virginia's Miller ...

http://www.boston.com/news/local/connecticut/articles/2008/07/19/oral_history_promises_new_look_at_kennedy

Polk Radio Station to Preserve History

Statesman Journal - Salem,OR,USA

The Monmouth-Independence Community Foundation awarded KPIE a \$2300 grant for an oral history project for the Heritage Museum in Independence. ...

<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080719/NEWS/807190332/1001/NEWS>

Pet Peeves

Recently I had a conversation with someone not in the oral history industry though obviously Media savvy, in regard to Oral Histories that form part of the Main Roads Heritage Collections.

Basically the query went something like this:

Media Savvy person: "I'm going through the oral history of XY, it's awful long, have you ever thought of condensing it?"

flabbergasted, but managing to suppress that

Me: "Well no. Obviously if you want to navigate it quickly you could read the transcript but the idea behind providing the full oral history is that I might remove from the history the one thing which you would have found useful."

It's not the first time I've come across this, and I seem to remember one of the speakers (possibly for the ABC) mentioning that in our digital age of now, now **NOW** it's becoming commonplace to want to shorten things. My question to the members is have you encountered something like this before and how did you manage to resolve it?

The other question I have, what pet peeves do you have when it comes to the oral history "industry"?

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.cdpheritage.org/digital/audio/documents/cdp_dabpv2_1.pdf

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