Oral History Recording Toolkit

Introduction:

Oral history is a method of gathering and preserving the voices and memories of people who have personal experiences of events that they wish to share. The events could be globally significant, such as the Second World War, or the recording of everyday life, or a particular activity such as working at a factory.

Oral history differs from history in being a personal record rather than an official record. History uses textual sources and has been through processes of peer review, collaboration and endorsement.

This guide aims to help with approaches to recording oral history in your local community. It has been revised to take account of the new GDPR data protection legislation. (2018).

What is the value of recording oral history?

Oral history recording can be used to tell forgotten stories and help remember practices and events that took place in the past. It also provides a great opportunity to get communities talking to each other.

Understanding the value of the stories recorded:

'Memory may not be as reliable, powerful or objective as many people assume.' (British Psychological Institute)

Memory does not work like a video recorder, allowing us to replay events as they happened. Memory is multi-sensory – it is connected to, and can be triggered by sights, smells, sounds,

conversation and events. Memory is entangled with emotions and our need to rationalise and make sense of events. Memory can be influenced, augmented and changed after the event.

TV, radio, films, photographs, family stories and official sources of history can all influence what we believe our memory of an event is.

Our memory is not a catalogue of facts, it consists of feelings and sensory memory as well as knowledge of an event that happened to us.

An understanding of how memory works is important when recording and using oral history as a source, but it should not lead you to challenge the version of events that you are being told, with the teller.

Your Project – Why, Who, When What, How?

In order to make the interviews focused and to get the best out of them, the project team will need to think about why they want to record, and what the information will be used for.

What will the information gathered be used for?

- Exhibition

- Website

- Publication

- Trail

- Archive collection

- Background information for literary or art project

- Documentary – radio, film, online
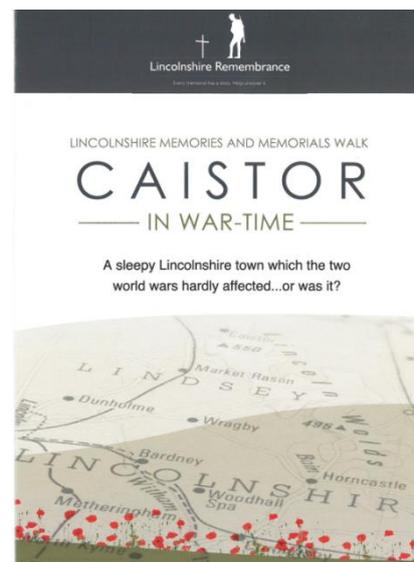
Always aim to create an archive whatever your other outcomes are.

What to record?

The range of topics that could be covered is vast! Try to focus on a theme or a local landmark or something that will resonate with people in the local area.

Examples include:

Personal experience of the Second World War

Memories of working in a local mill or factory

Memories of a football club or cricket club (supporters and players)

School playground games

Who to interview:

This depends on your topic! If your topic has people who are currently participating (for example at a sports club or playing playground games) it may be valid to capture their experiences as well as older members of the community.

Preparing the interviewees

Whoever you decide to interview will need guidance to help them understand what you want from them. It may also help them to have time to think and reflect on their memories – if possible it could be beneficial to arrange a series of short interviews rather than one long one.

They will need to know:

- The purpose of the interviews?

- What are you interested in knowing?

- Ask if they have any artefacts or photographs or documents that help to tell the story?

- Arrangement of a suitable place and time to interview

Are the interviews part of an event? Is there somewhere for people to wait and things for them to look at that are related to the story they are helping to tell

The interviewee's perspective and concerns

Your potential interviewees may need some persuading that they have an interesting story to tell! They may have other concerns too…

- "There isn't much to tell…"

- Worry about how the information could be used

- Editing which causes misrepresentation

- Worry about upsetting family members and others in their community

- Re-traumatisation

Who's story is it?

- Always aim for eye witness/ first-hand accounts

Beware of recited histories – there can be some valuable information but they are not the same as eye witness accounts

HOW:

The interview

Be clear about the purpose of the interviews and what you hope to achieve

- Do background research

- Plan where to do the interview

- Making sure your interviewee is happy and comfortable

- Consider and practice your question techniques

- Do complete the Paperwork

Interview Questions:

- Ask 'open' rather than 'closed' questions

- Use plain words and avoid suggesting the answers

- Maintain eye-contact and show active listening

- Clarify odd words, technical terms or things you are not sure about

- Don't interrupt the flow of conversation

- Respect opinions – even if you don't agree

Be aware of tiredness – you can arrange to continue the interview at another time, this may help your interviewee to think of things they had forgotten.

Open questions – questions that encourage a full answer Where, when, what, why, who, where, how, tell me about…

Closed Questions – questions that encourage a yes or no answer can be useful to confirm facts, but can make an interview very hard work or very short!

Be careful of value loaded questions: 'It must have been awful working at the factory, what can you remember of that time?'

Recording the interview

- Sound recorders

- Audio –Visual

You will need: Batteries / power supply / recorder / microphone / Paperwork /Notes / pen and paper / ID / address of venue

There are many types of recording equipment available now

Some examples:

Sound recorder

Camera with video and sound recording facility

Video recorder

Ipad and microphone

Check and re-check that equipment is working and recording and sound levels are clear

Recording the interview

Setting up the interview space:

Sound only interviews-

Use a uni-directional microphone to reduce unwanted background noise.

Soft furnishings – curtains, rugs etc help to reduce echo

Listen to background noises and reduce them if possible: clocks ticking, fans, boilers, mowers etc.

Audio -Visual interviews:

Is the background pleasing? – Is there anything that the interviewee would prefer not to have filmed – e.g. things of great value or photos of other family members, or is the focus on a fire exit sign?

Check lighting – natural light is preferable

Think about the types of camera shot you will use and plan cutaway shots

Some of the artefacts and the photos that the interviewee has provided could be inserted at appropriate moments to illustrate the interview, and provide convenient cutaways. A view of hands, or of the interviewer might provide others. .

 Where will the interviews take place?

A lot of oral history interviews take place in the interviewee's home. This can help the interviewee feel more relaxed and may provide a quiet environment to record in.

> **Your safety:**
>
> - Tell friends or colleagues where you are going to be
>
> - Tell friends or colleagues who you will be with
>
> - Carry ID with you
>
> - Take someone with you to support you
>
> - Do not interview a minor or vulnerable person on your own
>
> - If the interviewee is under the influence of alcohol or drugs stop the interview
>
> - If you have concerns about the venue for meeting suggest an alternative
>
> - Dress appropriately
>
> - Plan your transport arrangements
>
> **Never record information about crimes that are still to be processed through the criminal justice system**

Alternatively arrange an event at a venue where people can drop in for coffee, view some artefacts related to the topic and where you can interview (preferably in a separate room where you can control the environment). When young people are the interviewers this is the safest option.

After the interview:

If you have permission:

- Take a photograph of the interviewee
- Take photographs of any artefacts and scan the documents they brought to the interview

- **Complete participation agreement and copyright assignment forms (See section on GDPR and sample forms at the end of this document)**

- Create a short summary of the interview to accompany the forms

   Thank your interviewee for their time and explain what will happen next.

Your work is not over yet!

   Still to do:

- Transcript

- Editing

- Archiving

- Sharing

   When you have a finished product, I think it is courtesy to share this with your history givers to make sure they are happy with it. If possible can you offer them a copy for their family?
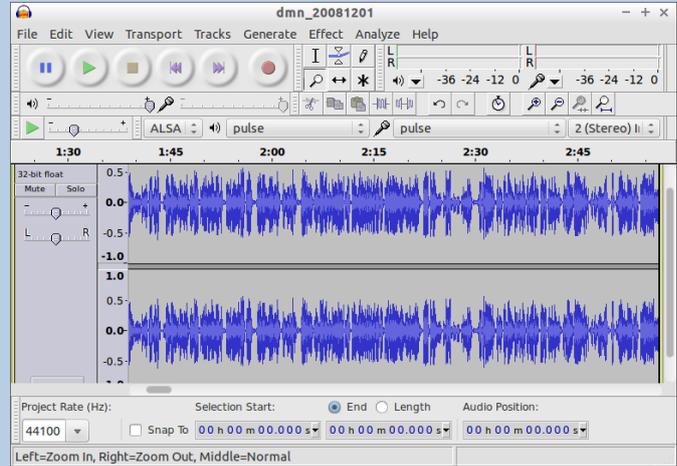
Editing

Make a master copy before you start editing

Sound Files:

- Use 'Audacity' to edit: aim to remove long silences, hissing and coughing

Audio visual:

•iMovie (Apple computers – basic)

•Movie Maker (PC – basic)

•Avid (professional)

•Final Cut Express or Pro (both)

•Premiere (both)

Make a rough cut and then use a professional editor if you have a budget which allows this.

Archiving

- Create a master file to preserve the original recording
- Create and use a copy rather than the master file: files compress and degrade each time they are opened
- Create a catalogue of the recordings
- Keep permission paperwork and transcriptions with the catalogue
- Digital files will still become obsolete and need regular review
- Store a master sound file as a.wav file (Record at a minimum of 44.1khz 16 bit)
- Make a back-up of your files on a hard drive or on DVD.
- Archival quality DVDs can be purchased
- Do you have somewhere to deposit your recordings?

Suggested Transcription Conventions:

• Do not change any identifying details in the initial stages of transcription; type names and place names as heard unless otherwise requested.

• Each line represents a line of speech, and in the case of a one-on-one interview, the interviewer will be indicated using bold typeface.

• Phonetic details are included where relevant to the analysis (or if requested); otherwise spelling is normalised.

The following conventions are suggested:

.   End of intonation, falling intonation

,   End of intonation, fall-rise intonation

?   End of intonation, rising intonation

!   End of intonation, rising intonation

Underline Emphatic stress, increased volume

-        Self interruption, break in word or unit of speech

[pause] pause of more than a 0.5 second

[laughter] Expressions of emotions other than words

[overlapping + time stamp] talking over each other

[+Time stamp] inaudible

reported speech or thought

(The Routledge Guide to Interviewing: Oral History, Social Enquiry and Investigation. By **Sean McConville** and **Anna Bryson**)

GDPR:

GDPR is a new regulation designed to strengthen and combine the existing data protection for all individuals within the European Union (EU). The primary aim is to protect EU citizens from privacy and data breaches in an increasingly data-driven world. It came into effect on 25 May 2018. The new UK Data Protection Act 2018 embraces GDPR.

Who does GDPR apply to?

GDPR applies to any organisation, individual or group which collects personal data. This includes oral history projects, charities, community organisations, youth groups, libraries, museums, archives, educational organisations etc., but also individual researchers, whether salaried, self-employed or voluntary. They are all deemed to be 'data controllers'.

There are six principles:

- The personal data should be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to individuals
- The data should be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes. Further processing for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes is considered compatible with the initial purposes
- The data collected should be relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes
- The data should be accurate and, where appropriate, kept up to date
- The data should be retained and stored in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed. But personal data may be stored for longer periods if it will be processed solely for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes
- The data should be processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate technical or organisational measures.

This information is from https://www.ohs.org.uk/advice/data-protection/

Oral History Resources:

The Routledge Guide to Interviewing: Oral History, Social Enquiry and Investigation

By **Sean McConville**, **Anna Bryson**

The Oral History Society http://www.ohs.org.uk/

East Midlands Oral History Archive: https://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/

British Library National Sound Library: https://www.bl.uk/collection-guides/oral-history

Heritage Lottery Fund Good Practice Guide – Oral History: https://www.hlf.org.uk/oral-history

https://www.hlf.org.uk/digital-technology-heritage-projects

https://www.healthwriterhub.com/6-handy-voice-recorder-apps-for-your-expert-interviews/

https://delta.ncsu.edu/knowledgebase/recording-professional-quality-videos-with-ipad/

Oral History Project Grants

Heritage Lottery Fund – Our Heritage £5,000 - £50,000 / Young Roots £5,000 - £25,000 for projects which involve young people

Awards for All - Between £300 - £10,000 for heritage and community activities

Lincolnshire Funding Portal: https://www.idoxopen4community.co.uk/lincolnshire/

Lincolnshire Community and Voluntary Service and VCS: http://www.lincolnshirecvs.org.uk/

To apply for funding you need to be a constituted group with a bank account –

another organisation such as your parish council may be willing to host your project

Oral History Participation Agreement

You have been invited to take part in an oral history project recording _____ The purpose of this form is to explain how the recorded interview which you agree to undertake with the _____ will be archived. When you sign this form you are agreeing to take part in the interview and allowing us to store and make use of your personal data now and in the future in order to administer and archive your interview.

After your interview we will ask you to complete an Oral History Recording Agreement to confirm the terms under which your interview will be accessible.

About the project:

Who we are: _____ **The purpose of the project:** _____

Your personal data
New data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation [GDPR] which came into effect on 25 May 2018, and its implementing legislation, the Data Protection Act 2018) has changed the way in which we inform you about how your personal data is stored and processed, and how you can get access to it. For information about how we will use your personal data please see the privacy statement below.

Information contained within the interview itself will be processed and added to our collection of interviews. Where sensitive personal data is included in the interview it is deemed as being collected and archived in the public interest. If the information would be likely to cause harm or distress to a person it will remain part of the archive, but will not be available for public access.
.
Privacy:
The personal information we hold about you may include:
- Title
- First name
- Surname
- Postal address
- Telephone number
- Photograph
- Email address
- Age
- Date of birth
- Gender
- Details relating to your education
- Details relating to your work
- Details about your ethnicity (for equality monitoring purposes)
- Details about disability or illness (for the purpose of aiding accessibility)

The information will be collected directly from you with your permission. Your personal information will be kept securely and will not be shared with third parties without

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your agreement. We may use some of this information anonymised for statistical analysis of data which is asked for by our funders.

We will keep your details on record as part of the archive. If it is decided that it is no longer necessary to hold your personal details, the information will be securely deleted.

You may request a copy of your personal information, ask for it to be corrected or ask for it to be deleted. You will need to provide proof of your identity to view the information in order for it not to be disclosed to an imposter.

What we will do with your personal data
The data contained within this form will be held securely and not shared with anyone, unless the project is obligated to do so for legal purposes, such as evidencing ownership or demonstrating a valid agreement. The information contained within the interview itself will be made available (subject to your agreement) through _____ We aim to keep this data in perpetuity, so as to preserve the oral history of the United Kingdom and inform the research of future generations.

You can request partial or complete closure of your interview to public access using the Oral History Recording Agreement which you will complete after your interview has been completed. You can request a copy of the personal data we hold about you at any time.

Your agreement to take part
This Agreement is made between _____
and you ("the Interviewee", "I"):

Your name:…………………………………………………………………………………

Your address:………………………………………………………………………………

Date: : …………………………………………………………………………………

Declaration
I hereby agree to take part in an interview _____
and am fully aware that the content of this interview will be publicly available, subject to any closure or other restrictions that I might request when the interview has been completed.
By or on behalf of the Interviewee:
Signed:
....

Name in block capitals: ....Date: …………………

Contact Details for the History Group:

**Two copies of form required – one for the participant and one for the archive.
Action completed by:**

Signed: _____

Name Printed: _____

ORAL HISTORY RECORDING AGREEMENT

Interviewer Details:	Name: (Block Capitals)		
Interviewee Details:	Current Name: Birth surname if different from current:		Age/ DOB
Address:			
		Postcode:	
Phone:		Email:	
Date of Interview		Location:	

Copyright Assignment and consent for use of recordings:
The purpose of this assignment and consent is to enable _____ to retain and use the recorded recollections of individuals constituting a literary work as defined by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

I _____ as present owner of the copyright of the contributor content (i.e. words spoken during the interview/ photographs) assign the copyright to _____. I understand that this will not affect my moral right to be identified as the author in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.   I understand that no payment is due to me for this assignment and consent. In assigning my copyright, I understand that I am giving to _____ the right to use and make available the content in the following ways:

- Reproduction in publications, exhibitions, electronic format or articles.
- Copies for use in non-profit making research and publications.
- For digitisation.
- For use on _____ Website.
- For use in education projects.

If you do not wish to assign your copyright to _____, or you wish to limit public access to all or part of your contribution for a period of years, please state these conditions here:
………
………
………
………

Do you wish your name to be stated as part of the publication of the interview ? YES / NO

Interviewee Signature:	Date:
Interviewer Signature	Date:

Two copies of document required one for the participant and one for the archive.

Please also complete the summary of interview overleaf.

Actions completed by: _____

Summary (to be completed after the interview):	
Time periods discussed:	
Locations mentioned:	
Topics covered:	

How to use the Tascam recorder for voice recording– Quick guide

1. **First start up** – slide off the rear cover to insert 2 x AA batteries, then after replacing the cover hold down the HOME Key until the recorder switches on.
2. **Set date and time** using the +/- keys to change settings and the << / >> keys to move to next item to set. Press the centre key > to confirm the settings and move to the home screen.
3. **Setting the recording level** – from the home screen press the RECORD button once – this will show the recording levels without actually recording (the record light will flash). If the peak light flashes the recording level is too high and will cause distortion. You can adjust the recording level in several ways:
   a. Think about where the recorder is positioned, moving it slightly and tilting the recorder could help with this (try placing it on the tripod)
   b. Use the QUICK menu to set auto level: quick / level cntrl / auto level
   c. Set the level manually (You can only set the level manually if level control menu is set to off)– a level meter indicates the optimum recording levels …………………▼………………. Press the RECORD button once to check recording levels (recording light will flash) if the peak light comes on you will need to adjust the level by pressing the << button. (Or >> button to increase level if it is too low).

   Use the HOME key to exit recording standby

4. **Recording** – Press the RECORD button to start recording standby – to start recording press RECORD button again. (Record light is constant). If you wish to pause recording press the RECORD button once, and then press RECORD to resume recording. The HOME button will cease the recording and create the file.

To copy files from the TASCAM DR-05 to a PC

1. Boot up the computer PC or laptop
2. Connect the USB cable to the computer and the micro USB end of the cable to the port on the right hand side of the Tascam recorder.
3. Press the Home key on the TASCAM to switch on the recorder.
4. A message will appear on the TASCAM screen

'USB Select': -Bus Power / -Storage
Use the +/- keys on the TASCAM to select 'STORAGE' and then press the centre arrow key to confirm.

5. A new message will appear on the TASCAM screen ' USB connected'
6. On the computer screen an Autoplay box should pop up and you can use your mouse to select the option ' Open folder to view files'
7. Your screen will change to show the Computer Folders and on the other half of the screen the TASCAM folders and files. You will probably just see a 'Music' Folder, a Utility' folder and a system file on the DR-05 side of the screen. The files you have recorded will be in the 'Music' folder.
8. Double Click on 'Music' folder to get a full list of files. The files will all start DR000-, but if you look at the date as well it will help you to identify the files.
9. To copy the files to your computer simply drag the file across and drop it in the required folder. For example if you want to copy a file from your TASCAM to the Desktop, move the mouse to point at the file you require hold down the left mouse button and drag the file across to the Desktop icon and drop it when you are hovering over the icon. (A little box might appear saying 'Copy to…(Folder name)
10. When you move to the computer folder you should be able to click on the file and it will open into a sound playing box. E.g. if it is on your desktop you should be able to point at the file, click on it and it will start to play.
11. When you have finished copying files to your computer make sure you find the 'safely remove hardware' icon (usually at RH bottom part of your screen) and click on that to complete the process.
12. You can now start to work on your files – it is useful to provide a written summary of what the file contains (a full transcript usually takes a long time to produce and is not often read). If you wish to edit your files to remove coughs or long silences you can use the freeware 'Audacity' (see other sheet). Ultimately the sound file will need to be transferred to an Archive quality DVD (Cath Pike can supply this).

To Delete Files from the TASCAM Recorder

1. With the recorder switched on click on the Menu button and with +/- keys move to the 'Browse' option. Press centre arrow key to confirm.
2. You will now be looking at a list of files, again you can move up and down with the +/- keys When you have highlighted the file you wish to delete press the Quick button which will bring a small pop up menu which start 'INFO' With the +/- keys move down to 'DELETE' and press centre arrow key to confirm.
3. This will bring up a box 'File Delete' showing the file name and asking are you sure you want to delete? Press Centre Arrow key to confirm or Home Button to escape this option.
4. You can also delete the current file by pressing the QUICk button from the home screen again it will bring up a pop up menu in which the first option is DELETE. Use the centre Arrow key to select or the Home key to escape.