



# Dialogue: The Newsletter of the Oral History Section

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Society of American Archivists

## FROM THE CHAIR



Doug Boyd, University of Kentucky

Digital technologies have made the professional recording of oral history much more affordable and the methodology is exploding with popularity within libraries, archives, museums, universities, and in both large and small public history organizations. Digital

technologies have transformed the ways we, as archivists, collect, curate and disseminate our oral history collections. OralHistory in the Digital Age [OHDA], a national leadership project funded by the IMLS, has been a multi-year initiative to explore emerging stan-

dards and best practices with regard to all phases of the oral history process and I am honored to have had the opportunity to lead the project which included the following institutional partners: Matrix, Michigan State University's Digital Humanities Center, the Oral History Association, the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky Libraries and the American Folklore Society.

Oral History in the Digital Age (<http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu>) set out to create a conversation about best practices that was fluid and dynamic, adaptable to budgets and institutions of all sizes and scales. The central component of the project is the website where users can access over 70 searchable essays and case studies written by experts and practitioners offering different perspectives on complex issues and topics, a portal to over 200 online best practices documents pertaining to various aspects of oral history and digi-

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## FROM THE CHAIR (continued)

tal technology, several hours of video, including the “Thinking Big” series featuring interviews with leaders in the oral history field. Additionally, there are numerous resources that can be customized for the user, whether a complete beginner who is just trying to get started, to the seasoned archivist looking to discover new and exciting ways of delivering interviews online. Whether the topic is Automatic Speech Recognition, digital preservation, or simply recording an interview, the website will help you navigate and discover resources that will, hopefully, meet your needs.

In addition to the website, the project will be featured as a special forthcoming issue of the Oral History Review academic journal. The project has now moved into the dynamic phase. The immense amount of content currently available will change. For example, since originally writing his essay on oral history and intellectual property, legal expert and oral historian John Neuenschwander revised his essay to adapt to

the ongoing legal case pertaining Boston College and the subpoena of their interviews on the Irish Republican Army. Each time there was a major update to the case, John was able to update his essay. The idea behind OHDA was to create nimble essays that would be easily updated, and therefore, more relevant and useful.

I will be the first to admit that there are gaps that need to be filled, however, the launch of the website indicates a transition into a feedback phase. Please, go the website (<http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu>), put it to the test and let us know where we need to add to the site, and if you are moved to create an essay or write a case study in order to fill one of these gaps, feel free to contact me and we can discuss it further (doug.boyd@uky.edu). I am very proud of what we have accomplished over the course of the OHDA project, but I hope we have created something that will become an ongoing resource for a long time to come. Please stay tuned!

## SPOTLIGHT: Oral History in the Digital Age

### Introducing the Voices of the Greatest Generation to the Internet Generation:

Using World War II Oral History Interviews to Promote Undergraduate Research

Adam Northam and Andrea Weddle  
Texas A&M University-Commerce

The James G. Gee Library Special Collections Department at Texas A&M University-Commerce initiated a World War II oral history project in late 2006 as part of a larger effort to establish a digital collection. Over the course of several years, more than two hundred video oral histories were captured with WWII veterans from the Northeast Texas region. Being a relatively small archives, the amount of new materials coming in quickly exceeded the department’s processing capacity, causing a backlog to develop. In the summer of 2011, the Special Collections Department was approached by a history professor in the A&M-Commerce Honors College looking for a way to introduce his undergraduate students to primary source materials as part of a war and memory course. The backlog of unprocessed WWII oral history interviews immediately stood out as the perfect match for such a project. Working with the professor, Special Collections faculty developed an assignment in which the students were required to write detailed summaries

of an assigned oral history. The summaries were expected to demonstrate the student’s ability to contextualize what they saw and heard, which is why summaries were required as opposed to transcriptions. Knowing the amount of time required to complete a detailed transcription, it was felt that summaries would be more appropriate for this project and would more than meet the needs of the department. The students were given detailed guidelines regarding the necessary elements and formatting requirements. The goal was for the department to be able to use the final summaries in the digital collections with minimal editing. The students were excited to know that their summaries would help make the oral histories more accessible to researchers.

Students were given a due date for the submission of rough drafts. The drafts were reviewed and returned with notes for revision. When appropriate, students were directed to additional resources that could help them contextualize and better understand the content of the interview, such as military histories and census records.

The final summaries were submitted to Special Collections faculty and the students were graded based on a rubric developed by the professor. An additional paper was required as part of the assignment describ-

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## Oral History in the Digital Age SPOTLIGHT (continued)

ing the student's overall experience working with oral histories and other primary sources, which was submitted to their professor.

The project has proven beneficial to everyone involved. The Special Collections faculty received much needed assistance working through an extensive oral history backlog, and the students had an opportunity to interact with primary sources early in their academic careers. The project produced approximately sixty summaries which are now part of the digital item's metadata. Their professor was pleased with the results and is planning additional oral history projects with the department for upcoming semesters. An unexpected outcome of this project has been an increased undergraduate research presence in the Special Collections Department. Undergraduates are building on their experience with this project to pursue research opportunities in the form of honors theses, conference proposals, and articles.

### **Kentucky Oral History Commission and Pass the Word**

Heather Fox

Kentucky Historical Society

Since its establishment in 1976, the Kentucky Oral History Commission (KOHC) has supported the creation of oral history recordings statewide through grant programs, equipment loans, and general technical assistance. In 1991 the Commission committed itself to facilitating access to the growing oral history collections at institutions across the state by publishing *The Guide to Kentucky Oral History*. The Guide identified over 25,000 interviews at 41 repositories and copies of the guide were distributed to libraries and archives throughout the state.

In 2001, the Commission brought the Guide into the digital age by providing the content as a searchable online database that expanded access beyond the printed version. Developed in-house, however, the online guide proved to be unsustainable over the long term. Keeping up with collections and contact information for 47 repositories and maintaining a homegrown system through personnel changes resulted in a site that was useful in many ways but dif-

ficult to update and repair.

In the fall of 2011, with the generous support of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Kentucky Historical Society Foundation, the KOHC embarked on a project to update the Guide and take advantage of technological developments that have occurred over the last decade. The KOHC has now completed the first phase of the statewide oral history resource called *Pass the Word*.

Since receiving the grant, staff has worked on gathering an advisory board, surveying repositories across the state and working with a web developer to build the site, which is slated to launch at the end of July. In addition to updating collections information, the survey identified over 30 new repositories as potential contributors to this exciting new version of the Guide.

Built on the open source platform Drupal, *Pass the Word* empowers librarians, archivists and curators to administer collections information remotely. Through authenticated user accounts, participating repositories will be able to create new collections and items, link to products resulting from their oral history collections, and create and manage user accounts for other individuals within their institutions such as interns or volunteers.

On the front end, the site provides a one-stop shop for searching oral history collections statewide. Records direct users back to the owner of the collections through links and logos. The site also includes regularly updated oral history news, a scrolling "featured collections" section and an area that highlights newly added collections.

The second phase of the two-year project will primarily consist of statewide outreach to the contributing repositories. KOHC staff will conduct training sessions and assist repositories with ingesting legacy data. This website corrects the former limitation on the printed guide and original database. As such, *Pass the Word* represents the next phase in KOHC's commitment to facilitating access to Kentucky oral history collections in the digital age.

## Oral History in the Digital Age SPOTLIGHT (continued)

### Voices of the Violet Crown: Neighbors Creating Community in Central Austin, Texas

Susan Burneson

[Voices of the Violet Crown](#)

What began as inkjet-printed displays staple-gunned to heavy plywood walls in 2003 now is a multi-faceted community history project with its roots in Central Austin. Among other elements, it includes a website and blog called "Voices of the Violet Crown: Neighbors Creating Community in Central Austin, Texas."

The project grew out of a grassroots fund-raising effort by two neighborhoods, Brentwood and Crestview, to help a local artist create a 120-foot-long mosaic wall. A small group of us neighbors created the now-annual Violet Crown Festival. The heart of it was the Community Tent, which we designed so that people of all ages could experience a stronger sense of place through community and history displays. ([More info about the Community Tent](#))



Mosaic Wall by artist Jean Graham

Brentwood and Crestview, established around 1950 as early Austin suburbs, are near the population center of Austin today. Like other evolving urban areas, they face the challenge of how to sustain a sense of community, with original residents passing away; younger families taking their place; and increasing development, traffic, and crime.

Jean Graham, the [mosaic wall](#) artist, and I share an interest in neighborhood history and in visiting with original residents. Over five years, she and hundreds of neighbors created the amazing wall, featuring many local stories and historical references. My husband and I focused on gathering, preserving, and sharing the stories of our neighbors in a variety of other ways.

From the first simple displays at the 2003 festival, our project has grown to include oral history interviews and transcriptions, two films, feature articles, a history booklet, and our website and blog, launched in July 2011. We received the Mary Faye Barnes Award for Excellence in Community History Projects from the Texas Oral History Association in 2009 ([Information about the award on the TOHA website](#)).

Our neighborhood is neither historic nor prominent, but we discovered neighbors, most of them well into their 80s, who were eager to share their stories with us. It also was important to them that we share their stories with the wider community, so their stories would not be lost. It was not enough that we simply give DVD copies of their interview to them and to the Austin History Center. (Before we began interviewing, we consulted with a media lawyer, who provided us with release forms; having the signed forms enabled us to donate DVD copies of all of our interviews to the Austin History Center.) Our neighbors inspired us to find many ways to "move beyond the interview," a concept we learned about at the Oral History Association annual meeting in 2009 ([More about moving beyond the interview](#)).

Our project is comparatively small and has been minimally funded, and our aim is to manage it in a professional, efficient way. While my husband, Rob, and I are not professional oral historians, we bring a variety of usable skills to the project. A producer of several independent films, Rob shot our two films and oral history interviews using a JVC HD 100, Lowell three-point lighting, and wireless lavalier microphones. (Today, he uses a tapeless digital video camera, which eliminates the cost of DV tapes and also saves time, since digitizing is no longer needed.)

Rob edited the films and video clips using Apple Final Cut Pro on an Apple Mac Pro. He generated MP3 audio files for logging and transcribing interviews.

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## Oral History in the Digital Age SPOTLIGHT (continued)

We had funds for only a handful of our interviews to be professionally transcribed. We have logged all the others, indicating subjects and times, which has helped us locate video clips for our films and the website.



Susan and Rob Burneson

I am primarily a history researcher and professional genealogist. I conduct research online and at local repositories, including the Austin History Center and the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History. As a journalist, I have experience in interviewing, writing, and editing. For print design projects (publications, displays), I use Adobe InDesign and Photoshop on an Apple Mac Mini. Basic web skills and occasional consultations with a web designer have enabled me to set up and maintain our site using the Wordpress template Weaver 2.0.

We established the website so that we could share more of what we have gathered since 2003 through our project. Just as the Community Tent at the Violet Crown Festival included community and history, our website, too, reflects our belief that community is a continuum of past, present, and future. We feature neighborhood history and stories gleaned from oral history interviews, as well as community links and news. And, just as neighbors worked together on the mosaic wall, our website reflects our belief that being a good neighbor is a creative process.

We have faced and overcome many challenges in the nine years of our project. We welcome new opportunities to continue learning from and sharing our experience with other oral historians.

### Lebanese in North Carolina Project: The Community As (Digital) Archive

Caroline O. Muglia  
North Carolina University

In 2010, nearly a decade after the events of September 11th struck the country, Lebanese immigrant and businessman Moise Khayrallah decided to act locally on the national feeling of unrest among the diverse Arab community in the country. An active member of the community in North Carolina, Moise began listening to the stories of the local Lebanese. In an effort to preserve those stories as well as to publicize and educate a state-wide public, the Lebanese in North Carolina Project was born. After extensive research, it became clear that the community of 15,000 proved the richest and most dynamic source of history--becoming an archive. In the past two years, the Project has accomplished several major goals all of which centralize over 70 oral histories provided by the community and rely on technology to make this history accessible.



Zaytoun family, 1914

Between 1880 and 1914 over 360,000 left Lebanon for the Americas. A third of these immigrants came to the United States. Some left to escape difficult family circumstances. Few were escaping political repression, while others simply sailed away seeking adventure. However, the great majority emigrated because of an economic crisis gripping the country. Global prices of silk, the major export of the country and the source of livelihood for most Lebanese, was in a tailspin leaving many teetering at the edge of poverty. So, first in tens, then hundreds and then by the thousands they boarded steamboats for the

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## Oral History in the Digital Age SPOTLIGHT (continued)

United States, Brazil, Argentina and Central America. Decades later at the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1974, over 1 million Lebanese emigrated to escape the violence of their country. Today, North Carolina is home to generations of Lebanese-Americans and this project is the first to highlight their long history in the American South.

The Lebanese in North Carolina Project includes four bi-lingual cultural projects intended to promote and contextualize the oral histories. A digital library, paired with a WordPress blog, YouTube channel and social media, houses official documents, photographs, letters, family trees and other ephemera as well as home movies and oral histories. In March 2012, the full-length documentary set to air on PBS, *Cedars in the Pines*, premiered to over 700 North Carolinians and chronicled the 130-year transmigrational history of Lebanese to the state as well as highlighting their long-standing contributions. Set to unveil in 2014, the Project is working with the North Carolina Museum of History on an interactive physical and virtual museum exhibition using the digitized oral histories accessed through iPad kiosks as guides to the history of the community. In 2015, the Project will release an educational curriculum with resources for teachers and facilitators on the Arab history of North Carolina. Using digital media, the Project will centralize the oral histories as the basis for understanding the experiences of the Lebanese in North Carolina.

The stories provided by the Lebanese community have weathered transmigration, war, loss and reinvention. They are durable testimonies rooted in family, home and work detailing successes and tribulations. The Lebanese in North Carolina Project seeks to preserve the voices of the Lebanese-Arabs in the state, using the stories only they could tell as a tool for education. (<http://nclebanese.org/home>)

### **“Oral History in the Digital Age” Special Issue (Coming Soon) of The Oral History Review**

Troy Reeves  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

As of January 1, 2012, the editorship of the Oral History Review changed hands. After six years at the University of North Dakota, the editorial office—or, more accurately, offices—have moved to the University of San Francisco under editor Kathy Nasstrom and to a new managing editor’s office at the University of Wisconsin-Madison under Troy Reeves. Rounding out the new editorial team are Doug Boyd (as the new digital initiatives editor), John Wolford (who is continuing as book review editor), and Jennifer Abraham Cramer (who is continuing as media review editor). The newest member of the editorial team is Glenn Whitman who is developing a yearly pedagogy section for the journal. This new team has added another layer of focus: working with authors to develop multimedia articles and reviews. In our upcoming issue (Volume 39, Issue 2), we worked with authors on simple multimedia enhancements, such as embedding or linking out to audio and video excerpts. Also, we have offered the first article where the author’s argument unfolds in sound as well as text. For that piece the online version will serve as the only way to read and hear it. We feel this type of article represents the future of online scholarship in oral history; we relish the opportunity to use this piece as a springboard for discussion regarding digital scholarship and eventual online-only access to the OHR.

Building on that success, the next issue (Volume 40, Issue 1) will be titled, “Oral History in the Digital Age.” Boyd will guest edit this issue, drawing on material he and dozens of others compiled and created for the multi-year IMLS grant of the same name. For a look at the OHDA website, just launched this summer, point your browser here: <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/>.

One last note: the new editorial team seeks, welcomes, and encourages your input. Let us know your ideas for the journal and submit your work for publication. Contact information for the editors, as well as submissions guidelines, are available online at the Oral History Review’s website (<http://ohr.oxfordjournals.org>).

### **Voices of Labor, Waste, and Transformation**

Robin Nagle  
Draper Program, New York University

New York's Department of Sanitation provides a fundamentally important service to more than eight million city residents every day. The men and women of the DSNY have a unique perspective on the rhythms and particulars of New York, but neither the significance of their work nor their insights get much attention.

Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island received New York's municipal garbage for more than fifty years. It was despised for just as long. Now it's at the center of the city's most ambitious park plan since Central Park was created in the 1850s. Staten Island is the city's "forgotten" borough, however, so neither the history nor the potential of the site are well known.

Last year, a group of New York University students teamed up with the Sanitation Department and with the Department of Parks to launch a digital oral history project focusing on the unrecognized mission of the DSNY and the unacknowledged history of Staten Island's park-in-progress. The students' efforts were organized through a semester-long class that investigated the practical elements of oral history research, considered various theoretical questions within oral history debates, looked at the logistics of solid waste management, and wrestled with the challenges of creating a born-digital archive.

The DSNY/Freshkills Oral History Archive (<http://www.dsnyoralthistoryarchive.org/>) made its debut in May of 2011. It is intended as a repository of workers' stories, of urban growth and change, and of New York's political and physical transformation. Among the voices in the first set of interviews were several sanitation workers, a Sanitation Department nurse, the administrator of Freshkills Park, and a Staten Island resident whose childhood home was on land that the city claimed for the landfill. More interviews were added this past spring, when a new group of students stepped into the project. The DSNY/Freshkills Oral History Archive will eventually become a collection of many voices documenting the essential labors and legacies of waste.

### **UW-Madison Campus Voices**

Troy Reeves  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Archives, in this day and age, have as many responsibilities as in the past: gathering, preserving, and providing access to historical documents. On top of that, this modern, digital era has almost required us to post rich archival material, such as photos, documents, and a/v recordings in ways anyone anywhere can access them.

For the last two-plus years, the University of Wisconsin-Madison Oral History Program—a part of the UW-Madison Archives—has made this effort by putting both the full audio and transcripts (through the UW Digital Collections Center), as well as audio clips (via iTunesU albums), podcasts, and a mini-movies, online. We have coined this effort UW—Madison Campus Voices, an effort to capture, present, and preserve some of the strongest historical stories and memories of UW—Madison, through the people who lived them.

We have created and web published on five topics within Campus Voices. These topics range from post-World War II housing issues and solutions, to UW-Madison Women in Science and Engineering, to the Sterling Hall Bombing of August 1970. We invite everyone to see and hear our material by going to our Campus Voices webpage at: <http://archives.library.wisc.edu/oral-history/campusvoices.html>.

And we welcome comments. Those can be directed to Troy Reeves, UW-Madison Oral History Program Head, at [treeves@library.wisc.edu](mailto:treeves@library.wisc.edu) or 608-890-1899.

### **Veterans of Southeast Louisiana: An Oral History**

Neil Guilbeau  
Ellender Memorial Library  
Nicholls State University

"You finally fall asleep and when you wake up the next morning and see where you're at... it was unbelievable."

Jody Foret of Houma, La. recounts his first impression of the Arabian Desert just off the border of Kuwait. A

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## ORAL HISTORY NEWS (continued)

private in the U.S. Marine Corps at nineteen years of age, Foret was about to experience combat for the first time after being deployed to the Persian Gulf region in January, 1991. His personal account of his unit's mission to push Saddam Hussein's troops out of Kuwait more than twenty years ago is worthy of being heard. A considerable number of books and movies have been produced on the first Gulf War, but listening to a veteran speak out about his personal experience in a candid interview trumps even Hollywood's best efforts to define the impact of war on an individual. As a result, few people today fully understand the phenomenon of war other than those who have actually experienced it.



Jody Foret, U.S. Marine Corps (Desert Storm, 1991)  
(Courtesy of Archives & Special Collections, Nicholls State University, Thibodaux, La.)

In an effort to document and preserve firsthand historical accounts of the U.S. military, the Archives and Special Collections at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, La began building an oral history collection in September 2010 entitled, "Veterans of Southeast Louisiana." This process involves interviewing veterans who reside in the southeast region of Louisiana extending from St. Bernard Parish to St. Mary Parish. In addition to recording the interviews, the Archives copies and preserves photographs, telegrams, correspondence, and other documents related to their time of service. The men and women interviewed for this project have served in the various military branches from World War II to Iraq. Some served during peacetime while others survived the ordeal of combat, but all have a story to tell.

The Archives has amassed thus far over eighty-five in-

terviews including thirty-five who served in WWII, nine in Korea, thirteen in Vietnam, and nine in Iraq. Interviewees include ten women: three who served in the Army Nurse Corps, one in the Women's Army Corps, two in the U.S. Marine Corps, two in the U.S. Army, two in the U.S. Air Force, and one civilian who served as the chief clerk for the Houma draft board during WWII.

In documenting this important primary resource, the Archives has chosen to undertake the task by recording interviews on digital video. Although using this technology creates additional challenges from properly staging the area for the interview to storing large, unwieldy digital files, the added dimension of video can pay big dividends. Watching an individual on screen animated, emotional, or deliberate as he or she relives a traumatic experience is powerful and real. Looking away occasionally with a wry smile, Foret recalled those thoughts that plagued him for a week while waiting for orders to attack the enemy's front lines, "I had to accept the fact that I was gonna die."

The Archives & Special Collections at Nicholls State University continues to work with veterans on this project, creating access to the past for our community.

### Oral Historians Abroad

Heidi Morrison

University of Wisconsin, La Crosse

A group of ten university students traveled to Egypt in May 2012 to spend three weeks participating in an oral history field school. Professor Heidi Morrison, of the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse, organized the trip as she is a specialist in modern Middle East history and oral history. The students conducted arranged interviews with Egyptians about the February 2011 Revolution.

While in Egypt, the students engaged in daily class reading about oral history and the modern history of Egypt. Students also toured the entire country and conducted service learning at a local animal shelter. Students are currently working on public history projects to share with their home communities what they learned from the Egyptian people about revolution, democracy, and social justice. A unique part of this program was that students got to move beyond hearing news about Egypt as filtered by the US media, and instead got to hear personal journeys and life stories about living through revolutionary change from

the people themselves. Students' use of oral history was a way technique adopted to get at the common person's experience and also to improve American students listening skills, particularly in regards to a part of the world that is so often misunderstood. Students are archiving their interviews on the University on the Square digital reserves website hosted by the American University of Cairo (<http://www.aucegypt.edu/onthesquare/Pages/ots.aspx>).

## Minnesota Immigrant Oral Histories Online

James E. Fogerty  
Minnesota Historical Society

Becoming Minnesotan, an online resource for teachers and students, is now a reality. Developed by the Minnesota Historical Society with a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), this new curriculum debuted in May, 2011, and includes a variety of information and tools for use in schools across the state and beyond. Working with teams of history and social studies teachers, and with representatives from each of the immigrant groups represented, project staff developed lessons, teaching aids, and related resources suitable for use in a variety of classroom settings. The main website for teachers and students ([www.mnhs.org/immigration](http://www.mnhs.org/immigration)) includes

both audio and transcript excerpts from oral history interviews grouped into subject areas developed by the teacher advisors to suit classroom needs and the teaching standards required by both state and federal guidelines. The teaching units also include photographs, timelines, maps, podcasts, a role playing guide, and links to websites offering additional information on each immigrant group – all approved by the community representatives.

The oral history interviews featured on the website are those from multiple projects conducted over the past fifteen years by the Society in cooperation with the Asian Indian, Tibetan, Hmong, Cambodian (Khmer), and Somali communities. The website allows the addition of many more interviews from ongoing projects such as those currently underway with the Latino, Vietnamese, Korean, Lao, and Filipino communities in Minnesota. As interviews in those projects are completed, interview excerpts, photographs and related information are prepared for addition to the curriculum later this year.

To facilitate wider use of individual interviews, a related website ([www.mnhs.org/ioh](http://www.mnhs.org/ioh)) has been developed to offer full text access to each interview. For further information on this project and its products contact James E. Fogerty ([james.fogerty@mnhs.org](mailto:james.fogerty@mnhs.org))

## ORAL HISTORY SECTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

### 2012 Election Results



#### Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect: Cecilia L. Salvatore

Cecilia L. Salvatore. C.A., MLS, Ph.D (University of Texas at Austin, 2000), coordinates and teaches in the Archival and Cultural Heritage Studies Program at Dominican University's Graduate School of Library and Information Science (River Forest, Illinois). She previ-

ously coordinated and taught in the Archives Studies Program at Emporia State University. She first began conducting oral history interviews when she was the Pacific Collections Librarian/Curator at the Micronesian Area Research Center (MARC) at the University of Guam. Through a Guam Humanities Council grant project, she conducted oral history interviews of indigenous elderly based on MARC's historical photo collection. She recognized then the importance of oral history interviews and the preservation of these interviews, especially as they focus on those who have been marginalized in history and whose stories have been missing from history books. She continues to work and consult on oral history projects in the Pacific Islands. She enjoys sharing the exciting developments in oral history interview methods, standards, and technology with diverse, marginalized communities. At Dominican University, she introduced two new courses on cultural heritage resources and services, which include oral history interviews and preservation

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## ORAL HISTORY SECTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

as a core component. This summer, she is an instructor at The HistoryMakers: the Nation's Largest African American Video Oral History Collection, for its IMLS-funded Fellowship, Mentoring, Training and Placement Institute. She is a member of SAA, ALA, the Oral History Association, and the Pacific Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA).

### Steering Committee: Rachel Telford



My first exposure to oral history was an assignment for a college history class focused on women in 20th century America. I interviewed a family friend about her experience as an immigrant in the 1970s, and despite having known her for more than a decade, I learned a great deal about her life. But I hadn't received much guidance on how to conduct an interview, and I failed to broach the subjects I truly wanted to ask about. Although I probably got a decent grade, it really was not a successful interview.

Now, as a Program Specialist with the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress, I have the opportunity to work with oral histories conducted by donors from around the country. Our collections come from professionals with years of experience, passionate volunteers, and students who may be just as much in need of guidance as I once was. In working with these collections, I have come to appreciate the rich cultural importance and research value of oral histories, as well as the need for education, outreach, and collaboration, to ensure that interviewers have the tools they need to preserve their subject's history, and that those histories are available to all who seek to learn from them.

My work at VHP covers everything from description and access to donor relations and exhibition curation, with many special projects in between. Currently, I am working on a pilot project to evaluate the feasibility of using video-chat applications, such as Skype, to conduct oral history interviews remotely.

I received my MLS with a specialization in Archives, Records and Information Management from the University of Maryland, and my BA in History from the University of California, Davis. I have been a member of SAA since 2005, and I would be honored to serve the Oral History Section on its Steering Committee.

### Steering Committee: Jackie Couture



Oral history is an important tool to fill in the gaps of the written record by providing researchers with an inside look into the people, places and events of history. Its role in giving a voice to the under-documented is especially important to have a more complete historical record for the future. I am currently working on an oral history project documenting the citizen activism relating to nerve gas incineration at the Blue Grass Army Depot. This oral history record is providing insights into the thought processes behind the actions taken by the activists that the written record cannot provide.

In my position as Digital Projects Archivist at Eastern Kentucky University, I have worked extensively with oral history to preserve our collections and to make them more accessible to researchers. Over the past ten years we have inventoried the entire collection, adding subject headings and detailed information about each interview. More recently we have been digitizing the interviews and paper transcripts to preserve and to provide better access to collections. I have presented on oral history at the Best Practices Exchange and will be presenting at the Kentucky Library Association fall meeting.

Besides managing oral history collections, I recently spearheaded the initiative to revive the Oral History Center at ECU and will serve as co-director of that facility. The center will officially open in October when it will be dedicated and named after William Berge.

## ORAL HISTORY SECTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

August 2012

### **SAA Annual Meeting, San Diego, 2012 SESSION 704 - Oral History in Kentucky: Collaborative Initiatives in Preservation and Accessibility**

Aug 11, 2012

Jackie Couture (Chair)  
Eastern Kentucky University  
Oral History Digitization and Accessibility: Perspectives  
from a Small Shop

Heather Fox, MSLS  
The Filson Historical Society  
Pass the Word: Providing Access to Kentucky's Oral  
History Collections

Dr. Doug Boyd, PhD  
University of Kentucky  
The Haiti Memory Project: Enhancing Access to Bi-  
Lingual Interviews Online

Deborah M Whalen (Commentator)  
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State-Funded Grants: The Lifeline for Our Oral History  
Program

October 2012

Description

When it comes to preserving and providing access to oral history interviews, a collaborative spirit in Kentucky has resulted in the sharing of ideas, resources, and exciting initiatives. This session explores oral history collaborations within Kentucky, focusing on the Kentucky Historical Society's Pass the Word grant project; perspectives from a small archives on state grants, digitization, and collection management; and enhanced access to multi-lingual oral histories online with the Oral History Metadata Synchronizer (OHMS).

# ORAL HISTORY CALENDAR

## September 2012

**The Samuel Proctor Oral History Program's 5th Annual Mississippi Freedom Project Tour and Speaker Series Presents: "Lessons and Legacies of Civil Rights Leader Fannie Lou Hamer"**  
September 19, Delta State University

During the week of September 18 through September 23, the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program (SPOHP) at UF will return to the Mississippi Delta to continue research on the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi with veteran Civil Rights activists and leading scholars of the Mississippi Freedom Movement. SPOHP will bring a research team of UF graduate and undergraduate students to continue our collaboration with the Sunflower County Civil Rights Organization and conduct oral history interviews in the historic Mississippi Delta region. The research team will focus on exploring the movement's origins and researching its impact, as well as documenting contemporary legacies in a region that gave birth to one of the most vibrant social movements in American history. This year marks the fifth anniversary of SPOHP's Mississippi Delta research trip.

## October 2012

The 46th Annual Meeting of the Oral History Association  
October 10-14, Cleveland, Ohio  
The 46th Annual Meeting of the Oral History Association will be held in Cleveland, Ohio October 10-14, 2012. October 10th workshops include: Introduction to Oral History; Oral History and Digital Preservation; Digital Interpretation & Tools; Oral History and the Law; and Beyond the Interview: Using Oral Histories in Film. Cost: Members \$40; Non-members \$50. October 13th workshops include: Transformed by the Power of the Story: The Voice of Witness Teacher's Guide to Oral History, Cost \$25; and Oral History THATCamp, Cost \$10. Additional information is available at: [www.oralhistory.org](http://www.oralhistory.org) and online registration for the conference is available at: <http://a3.acteva.com/orderbooking/go/oha2012>.

Introduction to Digital Audio Field Recording Workshop  
Wednesday, October 24, 8:00 am - Noon, Vermont Folklife Center  
This workshop will provide a general introduction to current and next-generation digital field recording options for practicing folklorists. It will include an examination of a wide variety of digital formats and a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of each. We will discuss the computer's role in interfacing with digital field recording equipment, examine a variety of hardware and software options, discuss budgetary needs for relevant equipment, and emphasize the formulation and implementation of a future technology plan for ethnographic digital audio research collections.

Details: [https://afsnet.site-ym.com/store/view\\_product.asp?id=1182330](https://afsnet.site-ym.com/store/view_product.asp?id=1182330)

## Preparing and Preserving Digital Folklife Fieldwork Materials Workshop

Wednesday, October 24, 1:00 - 5:00 PM, Vermont Folklife Center

This workshop will provide an introduction to current archival best practices for the preservation of multimedia digital resources created by ethnographic fieldworkers. The workshop will provide guidelines to insure the accessibility and longevity of the research collections of researchers who are working without the support of professional archivists, be they independent folklorists, academic researchers, graduate students, or public folklorists in institutional environments. The workshop leaders will discuss the fundamentals of digital preservation, with a special consideration of the demands of digital multimedia materials. Topics will include best practices for processing materials for access and long-term digital preservation, as well as analog to digital conversion basics, file formats, digital storage options, and lifecycle management. Participants will examine the technological needs for appropriately processing digital audio, still images, and moving images for archival and preservation purposes.



# Oral History Section

<http://www2.archivists.org/groups/sections/ohs>



SOCIETY OF  
American  
Archivists

## Purpose of the SAA Oral History Section

The Oral History Section of the Society of American Archivists is composed of members of the Society and others who are interested in or are actively engaged in conducting oral history interviews and/or teach oral history methodology. The Oral History Section provides a forum for news, for discussion of issues and developments, and for establishing and maintaining communication and cooperation with other professional organizations.

Read the rest of the Section's [By-laws](#)

## Steering Committee Members 2011-2012

### Section Chair

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### Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect

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### Immediate Past Chair

Joel Minor  
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### Member (term 2010-2012)

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### Newsletter Editor/Ex-officio Member

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### Project Leader for 75th Anniversary Oral History Project (term 2009-2012)

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New leadership assumes office at the close of the annual meeting of the section.



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