



## FROM THE CHAIR

Joel Minor, Texas State University-San Marcos



We're just around the corner from the annual meeting in Chicago, and the celebration of SAA's 75th anniversary. As you probably know by now, because of Lauren Kata's leadership, oral history is a large part of the anniversary celebration. At last year's annual meeting, a group of us conducted video interviews with longtime SAA leaders, and that activity is happening in Chicago too. In addition, we'll have audio recorders available for conference goers to conduct their own interviews and conversations about archives, SAA and the profession.

There are still opportunities to get involved with these activities, either at Chicago or post-meeting. Volunteers are welcome! As Lauren said recently, "This is a great way, outside of serving on the steering committee, for section members to participate in the section and contribute to a wonderful SAA project." Contact her at [lauren.kata@gmail.com](mailto:lauren.kata@gmail.com) for more details. Of course, as you plan your conference activities, be sure to leave the Friday, 3:30-5:30 slot open for our section meeting. In addition to the usual business stuff and shop talk, we'll have special guests from the Catherine Cook School in Chicago presenting to us on their two-year oral-history project, part of an 8th grade humanities curriculum. See page 3 for more on the project, and page 14 for more on the presentation. It should be an enlightening presentation and discussion. Thanks to Vice Chair Howard Levin for putting this together!

In anticipation of our guests from Catherine Cook School, we decided to make "Teaching Oral History in

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the Classroom” the spotlight of this issue of Dialogue. You will find articles by seasoned instructors of oral history in curriculum and in workshops. Hopefully these articles will provide you some food-for-thought on the subject, especially if you can’t make it to the annual meeting this year.

Lastly, I want to again thank those members who took the time to give their opinion on the question of meeting off-site in Chicago, due to the hospitality workers’ boycott and one-day strike of the Hyatt Regency Hotel. After some deliberation I decided the section should meet in our assigned place in the hotel, but I want to continue to encourage you as individual members and us as a group to show that we are concerned with the situation our professional organization is in this year with its choice of conference hotel.

As I said in my message to our listserv, I believe our main goal should be to help constructively ensure that a similar situation where some members have to choose between labor issues and their professional development, does not happen again. Since such an effort is underway within SAA, I will continue to keep the lines of communication open with those members in order to assist those in our section who are concerned with this issue.

All that said, if a picket line goes up between now and the conference, some of our members won’t be able to attend a meeting at the hotel, in which case I will further pursue an off-site location (we have one in mind, close to the Hyatt). If you have any further questions or comments on this or any other matter related to the section, please feel free to convey them to me via e-mail, [minor@txstate.edu](mailto:minor@txstate.edu), or at the conference. I look forward to seeing you in Chicago!

## SPOTLIGHT: Teaching Oral History in the Classroom

### Oral History: The Future of Education

Submitted by Angela Zusman  
Executive Director, Story Bridges

There is no shortage of challenges facing educators today. As we try to find the right solutions, the question begs to be asked: What is the purpose of education? In my opinion, Martin Luther King Jr. summed it up perfectly when he said, “Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.”

Education, then, is not merely about the accumulation of knowledge. It is a holistic process that fortifies learners with the skills, confidence and values to not only succeed but also to contribute positively to the world around them. To this end, there is no better learning methodology than oral history.

### Oral History is Effective

*“It makes me feel older, more mature. This makes me feel like I am somebody.”*

- Youth interviewer, Telling Their Stories: Oral History Archives Project (OHAP), Mississippi

Oral history participants, often working in teams, conduct research and interviews, document their findings, assess their experiences, and share their learning with others. Through the practice of these steps, students acquire and hone the following skills:

**Social skills:** building and maintaining rapport; setting up meetings; working as a team; communicating with peers and non-peers

**Interview skills:** asking the right questions at the right time; conducting research; listening; staying present and alert to the needs of the moment

**Human skills:** building compassion and empathy, bridging the gap between ages, races, and cultures; creating a sense of community

**Academic skills:** writing; research; critical thinking; communication; transcription; as well as subject matter relating to the project theme

**Creative skills:** personal expression through writing, public speaking, visual art and film-making

**Technology skills:** recording and editing audio and video footage; building and/or utilizing digital interfaces; creating and maintaining databases; scanning imagery; graphic design

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## Teaching Oral History SPOTLIGHT (continued)

Regardless of the subject matter, oral history engages students. The more they engage, the more they care; they more they care, the more they learn. Learning becomes relevant, attractive, fun! Students feel capable of learning. They experience the sweet taste of success.

### Oral History is Practical

*"I thought history was boring, but that's because I always had to read books. When I hear it, it becomes so interesting and I want to hear more, do research. A lot of kids are like that."*

– Youth participant, youTHink, California

Oral history can be practiced in almost any classroom, for students of all ages, and can support the teaching of any subject. It is effective for visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners, and both introverts and extroverts can find a place for themselves within the process. It does not require extensive training or equipment. The methodology is clear and flexible enough to fit within the structures of most school curricula. In short, oral history can be implemented by almost anyone, anywhere, about any subject.

### Oral History is Meaningful

*"If you don't connect with other people, you don't fully experience life. You're missing out on 90% of what the world is... Your relationship with other people is what shapes the world."*

– Youth interviewer, Fusing Identities Oral History Project, Colorado

Since humans became humans, we have been connecting to one another, building community, sharing joys and sorrows, and passing on traditions and values through oral history. Both the process itself and the resulting product – historical data – have a value beyond the scope of the project itself. In sharing and listening to stories, the gap between ages, races, nationalities, religions and cultures is bridged. In reflecting upon the experience, knowledge crystallizes into wisdom.

This is the purpose of education.

Angela Zusman is an oral and personal historian who has documented hundreds of individual, family and community histories. She is the author of *Story Bridges: A Guide to Conducting Intergenerational Oral History Projects*, published by Left Coast Press --<http://www.leftcoastpress.com/book.php?id=313> She is the founder and Executive Director of Story Bridges, a non-profit whose mission is to help schools, organizations and communities bridge the gap between ages, races and cultures by harnessing the power of stories: [www.story-bridges.org](http://www.story-bridges.org)

### Catherine Cook School Perspectives: An Oral History Initiative

Submitted by David Harris  
Middle School Humanities Teacher  
Catherine Cook School, Chicago, IL

The Catherine Cook School is a pre-K through 8th grade private independent school in the historic Old Town neighborhood of Chicago. Two years ago, under the direction of 8th grade Humanities teacher David Harris, the school undertook a digital oral history project in which students interviewed 13 Vietnam veterans over the course of two years beginning in 2010. The interviews gave voice to veterans who for the most part had never shared their stories with anyone before sitting down with Catherine Cook School students.



Catherine Cook School students interview James Ross in Lynwood, Illinois on May 18, 2011. Mr. Ross served in the Army in Vietnam from 1965-1967.

"I had always done oral history as a part of my curriculum, but I thought that taking it further and doing more with the stories was something that was important to do," says David Harris, who has taught

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## Teaching Oral History SPOTLIGHT (continued)

at Catherine Cook for three years. After attending a week-long workshop run by Howard Levin at the Urban School in San Francisco, Mr. Harris returned to Chicago excited to do an oral history project of his own. With the backing of the school's administrators and the help of technology teacher Justin Sheehan, they embarked on what would prove to be one of the most powerful teaching experiences Mr. Harris has had since he entered education in 1993. The interviews have become an essential part of the 8th grade Humanities curriculum at the school and have enabled students to hear first-hand the incredible stories of 13 men who experienced the war in very different yet profound ways.

The veterans willingly shared their stories of pain, terror, courage and rejection. The interviewees came from a variety of backgrounds and served in all branches of the military, and included retired Major



Retired Major General James Mukoyama, Jr. shows one of his artifacts to Catherine Cook School students during his interview in Glenview, Illinois on February 11, 2011. Major Mukoyama served as an infantry company commander in the 9th division during the Vietnam War.

General James Mukoyama, who was the first Asian American in the history of the United States to head an army division, Sherrod Taylor who served in the Air Force and later was nominated for the Georgia Supreme Court, and Mr. Paul Cartwright, uncle to Mr. Harris, who is a retired teacher and recipient of a Bronze Star for heroism in combat.

In preparation for the interviews students studied the Vietnam War in depth and did research papers on key aspects and events of the war while preparing for

the interviews themselves. With Mr. Sheehan they prepared mini documentaries on the research that they had completed. All of this more than prepared them for the actual interviews themselves. A final compilation of all of the interviews was prepared and presented to students, parents, administrators and the veterans at a dinner at the end of the 2010 and 2011 school years. The next step will be to have the interviews edited and placed on the school's website so that teachers, students and others will have access to these incredible stories.

The digital oral history project will move on to another theme for the next two school years and students will interview individuals involved in the civil rights movement in Chicago during the 1960's. This ongoing project will provide future generations with a depth of understanding of what life was like in one of the most tumultuous periods in U.S. history. Dr. Pam Pifer, Lower School Principal at Catherine Cook and attendee at the oral history dinner stated that the veterans were deeply moved and grateful for the opportunity to tell their stories and that the oral history project "is an authentic learning experience with lasting significance that demanded our student's best efforts."

### Teaching Oral History: Workshops & Demonstrations

Submitted by Jo Blatti

Over the years, I've participated in many different oral history presentations in regional and national meetings. Two related watchwords have guided whatever presentations I've prepared. One, articulated by Ron Grele, former director of the Columbia University Oral History Research Office, is don't talk about oral history; always bring a sample and integrate it into the proceedings. The second is always to try to find a way to bring participants' experiences and concerns front and center, whether that's the question and answer period of a conference session or the structure of a workshop; practitioners are generally trying to learn from one another.

The May 2011 workshop offered at the Society of Southwest Archivists annual meeting in Little Rock

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## Teaching Oral History SPOTLIGHT (continued)

offers a case in point. That particular meeting focused on introductory and intermediate level oral history practice. We started out with the participants themselves – their projects, their concerns, and then moved to oral history as a field, keeping workshop participants' projects always in the forefront. The group as a whole was very good, also very diverse, working on quite different projects, presenting distinctive challenges: institutional memory at an archives, plans for an oral history within a scientific community, continuing work on a multi-cultural community history project, interviews with recent Latino migrants, preparations for documenting life in company mining town, biographical interviewing with artists.

The oral history sample I brought from a recent community project in north Arkansas with related project management data provided one "information bank" for continuing reference. Workshop participants' projects provided another on-going set of touchstones for real-life problem solving throughout the day. Participants had opportunities to connect overall perspectives about oral history theory & practice and practical techniques such as construction of an interview outline engaging their particular project goals. Many of the handouts – sample releases, bibliographies and the like- were designed to encourage exchange among the group about their experiences and build networks for everyone. Group members also had opportunities to look over the digital equipment provided by the Butler Center and the workshop leaders and consider options for their projects--an ever-present concern as hardware and accompanying software evolve at a fast pace.

My goal in structuring workshops is to demonstrate that there is no abstract right answer out there in the atmosphere. Instead, there's probably a couple of really good strategies for any given oral history project. What are the tools to recognize the best choices, produce and implement the best plans, and in the end, to create fine work?

My compliments to all the participants in the Little Rock workshop--I hope to hear more about work in progress--and to Jajuan Johnson who joined me in presenting visual oral history strategies.

## Organizing Laboratory Experiences for Students of Oral History

Submitted by Ronald C. Brown, Oral Historian  
Texas State University - San Marcos

Interest and use of oral history has increased dramatically in the past several decades. The reasons for its popularity are: growing interest in community (or local) history, NPR programs that feature interviews between friends or family members, and the opportunity that oral history provides to broaden our understanding of the recent past. Additionally, fewer Americans keep diaries or write traditional letters. Precisely how the current revolution in various forms of social networking and rapid shifts in traditional news coverage will affect this interest in oral reminiscences is now unclear, but they may further interest in oral history. The challenge of "doing" and "using" oral recollections or evidence has created generations of oral historians. In the 19th and early 20th century historians and folklorists began to gather information about people and their experiences that might not otherwise be available. This is both the lure and the challenge of the oral interview.

Introducing students and interested citizens to the issues and opportunities of collecting oral history is a principle challenge that will separate successful experiences from frustration and failure. Over the years I have adopted the "laboratory" model as the most effective way to increase the possibilities for success. Many aspiring interviewers believe that they are set to launch an interview session armed only with a recording device and a personal contact. I initially send inexperienced interviewers to such standard works as *Oral History for Texans* or the writings of Willa Baum. Such reading establishes the broader context for oral history projects, but, once established, the challenge is to prepare for the interviews, and this is where the laboratory model is most valuable. I often relate that when practicing oral history and oral interviewing, "everything that can go wrong, will go wrong!" While a truism, the reality can be discouraging or even devastating, when the interviewee is a loved one, a long time friend, or a valued colleague.

The laboratory environment permits each interviewer to become familiar with her or his equipment. The modern digital recorder seems less susceptible to

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## Teaching Oral History SPOTLIGHT (continued)

error, but batteries still fail, the microphone is too far from the interviewee, the chiming grandfather clock smothers all other sounds, a nearby purring cat or agitated dog disrupt sound, or a thousand similar interruptions disrupt the session. Creating a simulated interview, even with me, and careful planning for interruptions or disruptions can make the interviewers sensitive to the interview environment. You can modulate your voice, encourage a friend to interrupt your session with a cell phone call, leave a door open, or turn on a Chopin sonata. In a laboratory environment, the interviewers are forced to recognize the disruptions that ensue. Similarly, after discussing interviewing strategies, the subject can respond with “yes” and “no” answers forcing the interviewers to alter their strategies. After a few minutes of such discourse, you can ask the aspirants to replay their recordings and discuss the results of the process. Are their recording devices too far from their subject? What can be done to minimize or eliminate disruptions—close the door, turn off the radio, encourage others to allow the interviewee to answer the question, and see where they might want to clarify either questions or answers.

I always insist that my prospective interviewers “transcribe” a portion of the actual interview. This causes them to ask questions about how a transcription would denote the existence of a spouse, an old friend, an interrupting colleague, or ambient noise that makes the interview hard to “hear and transcribe.” As a practitioner, think about your most abysmal sessions, and then devise ways to simulate the situation in the laboratory session.

Spend another preliminary session debriefing the experiences. What could have been done to improve the recording session? If your students didn’t bring in free-standing microphones, demonstrate how microphone placement can simultaneously clarify responses and minimize ambient noise. Suggest ways that the interviewer and interviewee can create simple protocols for handling interruptions. If a neighbor comes to your door or your phone rings, I’ll stop the recording. If there is a real emergency, we would agree to reschedule the session for another time. Create that sensitivity to the environment, the interviewee, and the unexpected interruptions in any session so as to preserve an interview. Most importantly, encourage the prospective interviewers to critique their own performances and their collective transcriptions.

Nothing illustrates the struggles for accurate transcriptions more clearly than exchanging several pages of transcriptions drawing upon the same interview, but transcribed by several or a class of colleagues. You can return to the original recordings and assess whether the interviewers misconstrued statements or slipped into careless transcriptions because they didn’t struggle with the original recording. Participating in a collective debriefing of a shared experience is an excellent way to move from carelessness or presumed certainty, to caution, sensitivity, and redundant review.

While oral historians often employ persistent questioning, careful preparation and occasional spontaneity, the laboratory model can encourage novice practitioners to develop their own checklists and protocols, which can lead to successful interviews and transcriptions. Laboratory simulations can expose the frustrations, the unintentional oversights by the interviewer, and interviews that do not match the expectations of the inexperienced interviewer. Furthermore, the imperative to do one’s own transcription can make interviewers more sensitive and perceptive when conducting an actual interview.

### Oral History Workshops and the Woes of Technology

Submitted by Fred Calabretta  
Curator of Collections & Oral Historian  
Mystic Seaport Museum, CT

Since 1998 I have had the pleasure of presenting SAA-sponsored oral history workshops in about 20 different states. I will be adding another state to this list in October with a planned workshop in Bismarck, North Dakota (see p. 15 for more details). The process of preparing for and teaching these workshops requires a lot of effort but I greatly enjoy them. They always result in a positive experience for me because I am very enthusiastic about the value of the oral history process. I also feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to promote oral history in a small way.

The workshops do bring a number of challenges. Without question, the greatest of these is the constantly changing world of audio technology for both recording and preservation. For a number of years,

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## Teaching Oral History SPOTLIGHT (continued)

the standard formats used by oral historians and sound archivists were audio cassettes for capturing oral histories and ¼" open reel tape to preserve them. With the introduction of compact discs and then DAT tape in the 1980s, the audio world was digitized and turned upside down. Oral historians were confronted with a constantly changing succession of digital recording format options.

This relentlessly evolving technology has brought many advantages to oral historians and lots of money to electronics manufacturers and distributors. It also brought headaches to teachers of oral history workshops! It no longer remained a simple matter to recommend the best formats for individuals new to the oral history process.

Since the beginning of the digital era there have always been a number of digital formats available. These ongoing technological changes have created another challenge; the necessity of facing that ominous force of evil known as format obsolescence. It has become increasingly difficult for me – and for new interviewers and oral history project managers – to determine which format will be around the longest.

Digital sound recordings, as with all digital assets, require active management. It is no longer wise to place a recording in a secure storage environment and consider it safe for the long term. Although some types of media are more secure than others, no digital format can be considered permanent. All digital recordings will have to be periodically migrated to newer media and/or hard drives, and then to whatever format emerges in the future. CDs may last for several decades but the equipment to play them will eventually go out of production. If you think about it, when is the last time you saw a working floppy disk drive or 8 track tape player? That is format obsolescence.

Right now, probably the best choice for field recording is a solid state digital recorder that records uncompressed audio (WAV format) to a SD-HC memory card. This will undoubtedly change and I will continue to complain about changing audio technology. But prior to each workshop, I'll continue to do my technology homework. It is something all of us in the oral history field need to do so we can make the best possible equipment decisions.

## ORAL HISTORY NEWS

### POSITIVELY NINETY:

#### Oral Histories of Lively Nonagenarians

Submitted by Connie Springer, M.L.S.

A sadness and sense of loss that I experienced in my elderly mother's last years inspired me to create an oral history project interviewing active people in their nineties.

My mother was there in body but mentally unreachable. Visiting her in the nursing home where she lived, I saw dozens of other elderly people with the same vacant stares. I wondered if we were all destined to end up like this if we lived long enough.

After my mother's death at 85, I wrote a cover story for a local magazine about an optimistic and caring ninety-year old who was an avid gardener. Amazed at her vitality, I wanted to interview other nonagenarians who lived life to the fullest.



Florence Wesley, the cover girl of the project, wearing a Mardi Gras mask she had made earlier that day.

The award of a Cincinnati Artist's Grant to help with funding was the impetus to begin the oral history project. I traveled all over Cincinnati and to Boston, Detroit, and Washington, D.C. to connect with 28 spirited nonagenarians, most of whom I met through networking with friends and acquaintances.

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## ORAL HISTORY NEWS (continued)

Not since library school when I'd interviewed three women photographers for an Oral History class had I embarked on such painstakingly detailed interviews. In only three cases did I actually use a tape recorder. With three to five hours of interviewing for each of the 28 individuals, the idea of having to transcribe so much oral recording was daunting. Instead I took copious notes of each session.



Janet Kalven, writer and social activist



Gordon Maham, a nonagenarian peace activist

I learned not only about their meaningful pasts but also about how they lived day to day, their philosophy of life, and what they looked forward to in the future.

I created a list of "20 Personality Traits of Lively Nonagenarians" culled from approaches to life that the interviewees had in common. These included being flexible and adaptable to new situations, having a

sense of humor, never turning down an invitation, regularly exercising body and mind, and being interested in what's going on around you.

I wove the narratives I wrote about each person and the color photo portraits I took into an exhibit called POSITIVELY NINETY: Interviews with Lively Nonagenarians. The exhibit was well received and over a two-year period traveled to seven venues Cincinnati-wide.

Exhibit-goers repeatedly asked me, "Where's the book?" In 2010 I self-published POSITIVELY NINETY, comprising the interviews and photos. Except for adding a foreword, preface, introduction, brief statement from lively nonagenarian Pete Seeger, and acknowledgements, the book mimics the exhibit exactly. POSITIVELY NINETY may be previewed and ordered online at <http://www.blurb.com/bookstore/detail/1785463#>.

I still occasionally run into one or another of my oral history subjects. At a recent 4th of July parade I saw two of my nonagenarian interviewees in the crowd of celebrants – a perfect reminder as we age to never lose touch with the outside world.

### Ames Lab Oral History Project

Submitted by Tanya Zanish-Belcher  
Special Collections Department,  
Iowa State University Library

The Special Collections Department (Iowa State University Library) recently completed the Ames Atomic Research Oral History Project. This project, overseen by independent scholar Sue Futrell, collected a series of interviews with former workers at the Lab and in some cases their family members and associates. Those interviewed included scientists, secretaries, lab technicians, physical plant workers, former students, and anyone who was involved in some way during the early days of atomic research.

The Ames Laboratory began as a chemical research and development program at Iowa State College (University) to assist the World War II Manhattan Project. The program developed an entirely new technology for the conversion of uranium ore to high-purity uranium metal and then used that technology to

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## ORAL HISTORY NEWS (continued)

produce more than 2 million pounds by the end of the war. In 1947, the United States Atomic Energy Commission officially established the Ames Laboratory as a National Laboratory. It is currently a United States Department of Energy research facility operated by Iowa State University. The Laboratory and University share facilities, functions, graduate students, and faculty/principle investigators. After World War II, the Ames Laboratory specialized in rare metals and methods of achieving chemical transformation without the production of toxic waste. The Laboratory has expanded its scope beyond materials research, including research in photosynthesis, hazardous waste analysis, computer programming, quasicrystals, and nontraditional materials.



“Little Ankeny,”— a temporary building left over from World War II, housed uranium production on the Iowa State campus from January 1943 until the end of the war. During that time, two million pounds (one thousand tons) of pure uranium metal was made there.

15 interviews have been completed and are being transcribed:

<http://www.lib.iastate.edu/arch/rgrp/17-1-5.html>

Audio portions of the interviews are also available here:

<http://itunes.apple.com/itunes-u/special-collections-oral-history/id436838452#ls=1>

## The University of Maryland Welcomes the Papers of Noted Oral Historian Martha J. Ross

Submitted by Kerry Schork  
Hornbake Library  
University of Maryland, College Park

The Special Collections at the University of Maryland, College Park is pleased to announce the recent acquisition of the Martha J. Ross Papers. Martha Ross was a leading figure in the development of the field of oral history as well as an educator. During her professional career she was a founding member and president of the Oral History Association of the Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR) from 1978-1979 as well as president of the Oral History Association (OHA) from 1984-1985. She provided oral history services and guidance to organizations such as the Washington Press Club Foundation, National Park Service, Society of American Archivists, among others. Martha Ross was also a professor at George Washington University and the University of Maryland, College Park; where she taught courses on oral history. The currently unprocessed collection is comprised of oral history course materials, oral history transcripts and audio recordings, publications from professional organizations, and personal research materials. Her papers shed light on the development and activities of national and regional oral history associations including workshops, newsletters, and member activities. The oral histories contained within this collection are particularly significant in documenting the perspectives of local residents in Maryland, especially Prince George's County, as most of the oral histories conducted by Martha Ross as well as her students have focused on this geographic area. In addition, Ross's course materials document the early development of oral history education. The staff of Special Collections believes that the Martha J. Ross Papers will prove to be highly useful to those researching oral history. Researchers interested in using the collection should contact Elizabeth Novara, curator of Historical Manuscripts, [enovara@umd.edu](mailto:enovara@umd.edu).

## PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE

### The Oral Historian and the Transcriptionist:

#### Tips for a Happy Relationship

Submitted by Laura Krulikowski, MA, MLS  
The Harold S. Orendorff Music Library  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

As I read about all of the exciting oral history projects taking place across the country, the transcriptionist in me is well-aware and astounded by the extraordinary number of hours being spent at the keyboard transcribing the recordings. The preservation of the interviews is priceless, but in an attempt to relieve the frustrations of transcriptionists everywhere, here are a few tips for making your transcriptionist love you and your interviews.

#### #1 Check recordings for volume and clarity early in the interview

Devices record at different volumes and pick up background noise differently. If the interviewee is coming through loud and clear to you, it does not mean that the recorder is picking up the audio with the same clarity.

#### #2 Pre-write questions to avoid multiple re-phrasings/re-wordings before the interviewee answers

Concise questions seem to be easier for interviewees to answer because long, rambling explanations with questions peppered throughout are cause for extensive explanation when the interviewee could have been recounting a memory.

#### #3 The interviewer should not become the interviewee.

I know and love the excitement of an interview in which the interviewee is willing to share extensive insight on the topic at hand (and sometimes, something completely off topic), but the point of the interview is to learn about the interviewee, not for the interviewer to recall or compare personal experiences. While the personal stories of the interviewer may awaken memories for the interviewee, there are more appropriate times and places for comparison.

#### #4 Translate and clarify

If the interviewee is a non-native English speaker or refers to foreign languages, dialects, regions, cities, etc. and the transcriptionist is not familiar with the interviewee's native language or country, the interviewer should take notes during the interview or ask for translations or spellings to minimize mistakes and misunderstandings during transcription.

#### #5 Be realistic about time

Check with your transcriptionist for turn-around estimates. Often, the transcriptionist may want to listen to a recording before making an estimate because the clarity of the recording/interviewee may dictate how long it will take to create the transcript. Turn-around time may also depend on whether the transcriptionist is volunteering the time and talent to create a transcript or if payment is involved.

#### #6 Use preferred formats or allow time for transcriptionists to change recording formats

Depending upon a transcriptionist's available equipment or preferred methods of transcription, a specific format (CD, cassette tape, microcassette tape, digital file) may be requested.

#### #7 Communicate desired level of detail

Should the "ahhs, oohs, and umms" be omitted? Should the "yeah" and "nah" be changed to "yes" and "no?" Should interruptions or explanations of the process be included? Should local colloquialisms or slang be explained? Transcriptionists employ different standards in producing their transcripts- especially if they are freelancing.

Finally, and most importantly, communicate with your transcriptionist as well as you do with your interviewees about what you want in a transcript and what you can do to help to produce the most accurate transcript and your transcriptionist will love you.

## ORAL HISTORY SECTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

### 2011 Election Results

The Oral History Section wishes to congratulate the newest members of our Steering Committee! In our second online section election which ran from July 25-August 8th, the following candidates were elected.



#### **Vice Chair/Chair Elect: Doug Boyd**

*As oral history methodology grows increasingly popular and as digital technologies for recording, curating, and disseminating oral histories rapidly change, it is paramount that the oral history and archival communities continue to actively engage and the Oral History Section*

*of SAA plays a critical role in that dialogue. The Oral History Section has done an excellent job of keeping oral history at the forefront of archival discussion and I am honored to be a member of this team once more.*

Doug Boyd Ph.D. serves as the Director of the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky Libraries and is a recognized national leader regarding oral history, archives and digital technologies. He is currently managing the IMLS grant project Oral History in the Digital Age establishing current best practices for collecting, curating and disseminating oral histories. The grant is directed by MATRIX at Michigan State University and partners the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian, the Oral History Association and the American Folklore Society. Additionally, Boyd led the team that envisioned, designed and implemented the open source OHMS system that synchronizes text with audio and video online. His recent publications include "Achieving the Promise of Oral History in a Digital Age," a chapter in *The Oxford Handbook to Oral History* (Oxford University Press), and he is the author of the book *Crawfish Bottom: Recovering a Lost Kentucky Community* published in July 2011 by the University Press of Kentucky. He recently produced the documentary *Quest for the Perfect Bourbon: Voices of Buffalo Trace Distillery*.

Doug regularly teaches both archives and oral history courses for the University of Kentucky's School of Library and Information Science. Previously, he managed the Digital Program for the University of Alabama Libraries, served as the Director of the Kentucky Oral History Commission and prior to that worked as the Senior Archivist for the oral history collection at the Kentucky Historical Society. Doug served on the SAA Oral History Section Steering Committee in 2008 and is currently serving on the Oral History Association's executive council. Doug Boyd received his Ph.D. and M.A. degrees in Folklore from Indiana University and his B.A. degree in History from Denison University in Granville, Ohio.

#### **Steering Committee: Morna Gerrard**



*In my capacity as the Women's Collection Archivist at the Georgia State University Library, I manage two oral history projects, the Georgia Women's Movement Oral History Project, and the Activist Women Oral History Project. I have made presentations about these projects at the Society of American Archivists conference (2005) and the Oral History Association Conference (2008). I was on the Local Arrangements Committee for the 2010 Oral History Association Conference, and in 2011, was named the winner of MAC's Margaret Cross Norton Award for my Archival Issues article, "Hear them Roar: Challenge and Collaborations in Putting the Georgia Women's Movement Oral History Project on the Web."*

*I consider oral history to be a vital tool for documenting the human experience, as it not only provides an unauthorized, personal perspective, and takes us behind the official history of events and institutions, but it also gives us an intimate look into the lives of the ordinary, and of the under-documented. This is an exciting time to be an oral historian, as well as a professional who man-*

*continued on next page*

## ORAL HISTORY SECTION ANNOUNCEMENTS (continued)

ages oral history projects. In a time when technology is shifting rapidly and demands for greater access are up against increasingly restricted budgets, it is important that our colleagues collaborate by voicing concerns, sharing ideas and heralding successes. Being a member of SAA's Oral History Section provides the forum and community for all of that, and has never been more crucial. I am honored to serve the Section on its Steering Committee.

### Steering Committee: Bert Lyons

My first attempt at oral history was for the Southern Foodways Alliance (SFA) in 2005. SFA was collecting gumbo histories from native New Orleanians. I wanted to add my grandmother's story to the pot. I had been working for four years before that as



archivist for the Alan Lomax Collection in New York. I understood the value of the spoken word and the value of oral history through Lomax's work; I had not understood it through my own work until this attempt to document my grandmother's memories. The experience was invaluable to me personally and professionally. In general, since 2002, my work as an archivist has been steeped in collections of oral history, folklore, and other forms of intangible cultural heritage, such as ritual, song, and spoken word. I value the work of the Oral History Section because it is situated as an alternative voice for the validity of oral documentation and human memory in a Society that stems from a tradition of written documentation and physical evidence. Not only do I applaud the Section's willingness to develop projects to involve SAA members and fellow archivists as oral historians, but I am excited to be a part of an SAA Section that reminds its colleagues that not all that is valuable is written, and not all that is valuable will be written: history is spoken by the people who live it.

I am a Certified Archivist as of 2010. I work as Folklife Specialist and Digital Assets Manager with the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, where I support archival projects such as the Vet-

eran's History Project, StoryCorps, America Works, and many other oral historical and folklore projects in the collections of the Library.

Previously I served seven years as Archivist at the Alan Lomax Archive (Association for Cultural Equity) in New York and two years as Media-Preservation Specialist at the University of Kansas Libraries. I am a member of the Society of American Archivists (appointee to the Membership Committee and chair of the Recorded Sound Roundtable), the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives, and the American Association of Museums. Over the past seven years I have published articles regularly on archival principles and practices and I present research at professional and academic conferences, such as the Society of American Archivists, the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives, and the Society for Ethnomusicology. I received my Master's degree in Museum Studies and American Studies from the University of Kansas. I am honored to serve as a steering committee member of the Oral History Section of the Society of American Archivists.

### Oral History Section Activities @ SAA 2011

Submitted by Lauren Kata, SAA Oral History Section Project Leader for 75th Anniversary Oral History Project

#### **This Archival Life: Celebrating 75 Years of SAA Stories**

**(Wed. afternoon to Sat. morning, Grand Foyer)**

It's easy to participate:

- 1) Check out a portable recording device (which involves some paperwork).
- 2) Record a friend's or colleague's story or tell your own.
- 3) Have fun!
- 4) Return the recording device.

For more information, and/or to learn more about how you can participate, contact Lauren at [lauren.kata@gmail.com](mailto:lauren.kata@gmail.com).

## ORAL HISTORY SECTION ANNOUNCEMENTS (continued)

### **SAA Oral History Project: Video Leadership Series**

In addition to supplementing the official record, this project seeks to honor women and men who have contributed to the shaping of SAA as leaders in the Society, and in the profession. Now in its second year, the Oral History Section's video interviewing project continues, with multiple interviews scheduled to take place onsite at SAA 2011. Participants include interviewees nominated by SAA Sections and Round Tables, including but not limited to SAA past presidents, and experienced volunteer interviewers from the OH Section.

The video interviews and their transcripts will be deposited in the SAA Archives at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Excerpts of interviews will be shared with members during Annual Meetings, on YouTube, and in other SAA spaces.

As most SAA projects are, this is a volunteer-driven effort. If you are interested in contributing as a volunteer (e.g., to recommend interviewees, conduct interviews, transcribe, edit video), please contact Lauren at [lauren.kata@gmail.com](mailto:lauren.kata@gmail.com).

## ORAL HISTORY CALENDAR

### AUGUST 2011

#### **Pre-conference Workshop #1212: Designing Archives-Produced Podcasts**

**Aug 22, 2011 - 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM**  
HYATT REGENCY CHICAGO

Seats Available - Attendance is limited to 26.

Instructor:  
David Dunaway  
Distinguished Professor of Radio and Documentary  
Studies at San Francisco State University

Registration cost ranges from \$189 to \$289  
[Visit the SAA conference website for details.](#)

Would you like more public awareness for your archives? Learn how to design and arrange audio segments for radio or the Internet! Public radio and podcasts can increase your exposure – particularly for oral history and sound archives. In this workshop you'll follow a case study of an NEH-funded series, from designing, interviewing, editing, scripting, and producing through to distribution. Working from transcriptions and a book-CD set (included in your workshop fee), you'll design and script a short podcast – and then you'll start preparing a podcast from your own archives. Handouts include information on the latest audio editing/production software and digital recording equipment.

During this workshop you'll:

- Learn how to design and organize archives-based radio or podcasts for broadcast or 'net;
- Find out about the stages of producing and distributing audio and radio; and
- Hear, and collect information (and audio samples) on, archives-based productions.

Who should attend? Archivists and others who work in oral history archives or sound archives, or who use interviews in their work at an intermediate or advanced level. Archives managers and public relations and outreach professionals will also find this workshop useful.

You should be familiar with public-community radio programming and have an interest in outreach. This is not a workshop on digital audio production. Note: Participants must bring their own headphones and either a portable CD/DVD player or a laptop with a CD/DVD drive.

# ORAL HISTORY CALENDAR

**AUGUST 2011**

## **PROFESSIONAL POSTER: Mining Oral History for Enhanced Access**

**Aug 25, 2011 - 9:30 AM - 10:00 AM**

Event Location: Grand Foyer

**Speakers:**

Theresa J. Perkins, Miami University

Becky Yoose, Miami University

**Description:**

Oral history collections provide a wealth of information, yet current practices in resource description provide only a limited level of access and discovery. This poster describes an experimental project at Miami University Libraries using open source software and services to create enhanced access to our Oral History collection. A method of batch processing transcripts using OpenCalais, a Web service that automates the creation of metadata using natural language processing and machine learning together with Drupal (an open source content management system) is illustrated and the results of a preliminary analysis comparing machine- and human-generated metadata is presented.

## **SESSION 102 - Celebrating Studs: Activism and Oral History in the Ar- chives (Sex, Race, Class, and Human Rights)**

**Aug 25, 2011 - 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM**

Event Location: Grand A

**Speakers:**

Lucinda Manning (Chair)

Consulting Archivist/Records Manager

Jane LaTour

Associate Editor, Public Employee Press

Tiffany Colannino, MSLIS, B.A.

Archivist, Woody Guthrie Foundation

Alan Harris Stein

Assoc. Director, Consortium of Oral History Educators

**Description:**

This session explores the diversity of cultural and political uses of oral histories for advocacy and social change. Speakers share background on how activism and the uses of oral histories in their archives and projects relate to issues of sex, race, class, and human rights. From an acclaimed book on oral histories of women working in the NYC trades to an examination of Studs's life and activism; through the use of folk songs as oral history in the Woody Guthrie Archives to a current oral history project on the impact of detention on Guantanamo detainees, this program celebrates the life of Chicago's own master oral historian - Louis "Studs" Terkel - activist, author, and radio journalist.

## **2011 Oral History Section Meeting**

Submitted by Joel Minor, Section Chair

If you're in Chicago for the SAA annual meeting, please join us for the 2011 Oral History Section meeting, on **Friday, August 26, 3:30-5:30 p.m. in the Columbus K/L room**. We will start with the short business portion of the meeting, then Lauren Kata will update us on the SAA 75th Anniversary oral history projects happening at the annual meeting. The main attraction will be the presentation by students and teachers from Chicago's Catherine Cook School highlighting their 8th grade digital oral history project. Following is a brief description of the presentation, sent to us by David Harris:

"As part of the 8th grade Humanities curriculum at The Catherine Cook School in Chicago, students participate in a Digital Oral History project, which over the past two years has involved interviewing 12 Vietnam veterans, many of whom never shared their experiences concerning the war. Four former students who participated in the project over the past two years will be joined in the presentation by Mr. David Harris, Humanities teacher and coordinator of the project and Mr. Justin Sheehan, Teacher and technology director. The presentation will include a brief introduction by Mr. Harris and Mr. Sheehan followed by a student discussion of how the project impacted them, what they learned, and why they think oral history is important. The presentation will also include a showing

## ORAL HISTORY CALENDAR

of a compilation of the interviews that students will have helped prepare. We will then discuss the things we learned as teachers doing this project and how Catherine Cook School plans to move forward with the project in the coming years. A brief question and answer period will follow." (See page 3 for more on the Catherine Cook School project).

### SEPTEMBER 2011

#### **PERSONAL HISTORY EXPO: Transform a Headful of Memories and a Trunkful of Photos into an Enduring Legacy**

**Saturday, Sept. 24, 2011 from 12:00 – 4:00 pm**

Free and open to the public

Clifton Cultural Arts Center, 3711 Clifton Ave., Cincinnati OH 45220

<http://cliftonculturalarts.org/upcoming-events.htm>

Information: [info@beyondthetrees.net](mailto:info@beyondthetrees.net)

The most precious legacy you can leave future generations is the story of your life and the wisdom earned through years of experience.

On September 24, 2011 join local personal history experts to learn how your memories and family photos can be transformed into an enduring legacy for your descendants and for posterity.

- Participate in informal photo portraits
- Watch demonstrations of oral history interviews
- Listen to presentations on a variety of topics
- Browse booths filled with ideas and products to help you create your own personal history or preserve the story of a loved one

Whether you are writing your own memoir or want a professional to take over the task, personal historians can ensure that your unique, priceless legacy is recorded for your descendants and the world.

### OCTOBER 2011

#### **Oral History: From Planning to Preservation**

**Monday, Oct. 3, 2011 - 9:00 AM - 5:00 pm**

Bismarck, ND

**Early-Bird Registration Deadline: Sept. 3, 2011**

Attendance limited to 40.

Instructor: Fred Calabretta

Description:

There is a successful oral history interview or project in your future! When you attend this workshop you'll get a thorough overview of oral history, including its integration into archives. Topics include the value and uses of oral history, project development, recording equipment, interviewing, media storage, video interviews, and an evaluation of digital technology of particular interest to oral historians.

#### **Upon completing this workshop you will have:**

- Developed an enhanced appreciation for the unique value of oral history;
- Evaluated recording formats, including the most current digital options;
- Learned about researching, framing, and conducting oral history interviews;
- Looked at collections care, transcribing, and records keeping;
- Grasped the ethics and legal issues pertaining to oral history;
- Explored the promotion and use of oral history collections;
- Hear about the challenges of the rapidly-changing technological options.

**Who should attend?** The workshop does not require prior oral history experience, and is designed for anyone interested in this subject. Attendees with a specific interest in management of oral history collections should have an understanding of basic archival practice.



# 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 2010-2011

### Section Chair

Joel Minor  
Texas State University-San Marcos  
minor@txstate.edu

### Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect

Howard Levin  
The Urban School of San Francisco  
howard@howardlevin.com

### Past Section Chair & Nominating Committee Chair

Mark Cave  
The Historic New Orleans Collection  
mark@hnoc.org

### Member (term 2009-2011)

Beth Ann Koelsch  
University of North Carolina-Greensboro  
bakoelsc@uncg.edu

### Member (term 2009-2011)

Marlene Justsen  
The National Press Club  
mjustsen@press.org

### Member (term 2010-2012)

Carrie Daniels  
University of Louisville  
carrie.daniels@louisville.edu

### Member (term 2010-2012)

Chana Kotzin  
The Jewish Buffalo Archives Project  
Buffalo, New York  
archivesproject@bjebuffalo.org

### Newsletter Editor/Ex-officio Member

Jennifer Eidson  
The David C. Driskell Center, University of Maryland  
jgeidson08@gmail.com

### Project Leader for 75th Anniversary Oral History Project (term 2009-2011)

Lauren Kata  
Archives of the Episcopal Church  
Austin, TX  
lauren.kata@gmail.com

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



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