

Using Oral History to Tell Your Family Stories



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Historian (race, gender, and social movement)
Oral History (10 years)
Oral History Association



Podcast that comes out whenever I feel like it
Some oral history episodes
www.changeovertimepodcast.com



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Goals

1. Be comfortable in launching a small-scale project capturing family history;
2. Have a basic understanding of equipment necessary for capturing life stories;
3. Have an understanding of ethical issues dealing with recording;
4. Know where to gather release forms and other paperwork for their project.



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QUESTION LIST

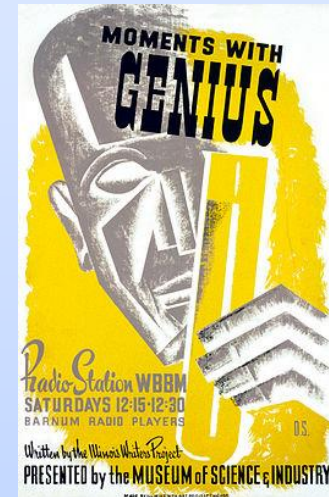
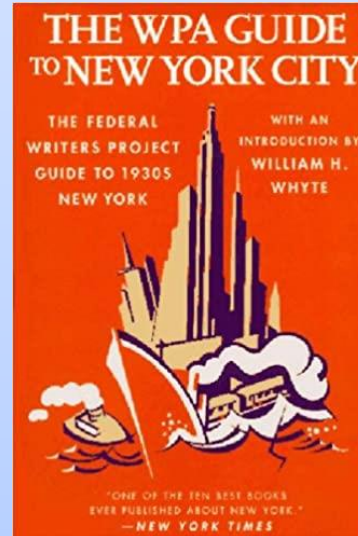
- What is your proudest moment?
- When did you first fall in love?
- What was your first impression of me?
- What is the thing you've always wanted to say but haven't?
- What's your favorite story?



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Federal Writers Project



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WPA Slave Narratives

- 1936-1938
- About 3500 interviews completed representing 2% of those born into slavery still alive at the time.
- Vast majority of interviewers were white southerners. Most of them white women.
- Almost none of the interviews were recorded.
- Interviewers received little to no training on interviewing.
- Little to no discussion on how race, class, and gender would impact the process of interviewing.



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What is Oral History?

Critical
Engagement
with the Past



Learning
from those
with direct
knowledge



Creation of a
Primary Source



Oral History



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Ethics of Recording

OHA Statement on Ethics

Oral historians have ethical obligations that are both specific to oral history methodology and shared with other methodologies and practices, ranging from anthropology to archival work. Ethics encompasses the principles that should govern the multiple relationships inherent in oral history. Everyone involved in oral history work, from interviewers and narrators to archivists and researchers, becomes part of a web of mutual responsibility working to ensure that the narrator's perspective, dignity, privacy, and safety are respected. This statement draws upon the decades of thoughtful work concerning the appropriate way to engage with humans as participants in research projects.



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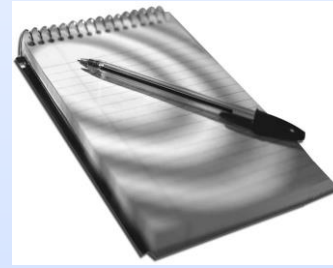
Questions to Ask BEFORE You Begin

- Why are you recording?
- Who do you want to listen to this recording?
- What do you want the audience to do with the information?
- Where is the recording going to live? And how will people access it?



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Recording Equipment



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DON'T PUT TECHNOLOGY BEFORE PEOPLE

A \$40 mic placed correctly is better than a \$400 mic placed badly.

Why are you recording the interview? Notes, archive or broadcast?

A good question is better than a good recorder.



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Back Pocket Questions

- Paint a picture in words...
- What happened next?
- Tell me more
- What was the turning point?
- How did it change you?



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Prepare – Before the Interview

- What is your goal?
- Where are you going to record?
- Get your narrator ready

Be Ready During the Interview

- Follow the good stuff
- Back pocket questions
- Push for reflection
- 2 ears, 1 mouth

It's Not Over Til It's Over

- Get thee to a coffee house
- Send a thank you
- Make copies
- Archive it



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Resource List

<p><u>Oral History Association</u> http://www.oralhistory.org</p>	<p><u>Oral Historians' Digital Toolbox</u> http://storytelling.concordia.ca/oralhistorianstoolbox/</p>
<p><u>OHA Helpful Links</u> http://www.oralhistory.org/web-guides-to-doing-oral-history/</p>	<p><u>StoryCorps Great Questions List</u> https://storycorps.org/participate/great-questions/</p>
<p><u>Vermont Folklife Center</u> http://www.vermontfolklifecenter.org/archive/res_audioequipment.htm</p>	<p><u>Transom</u> http://transom.org/</p>
<p><u>Ask Doug</u> http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/doug/</p>	



THANK YOU



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