

# T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History

## Indexing Guidelines

**Please refer to:**

**Transcription and Editing Guidelines**

**Indexing Template**

### 1. Create and Save File

When you open a new Word document for your index, save it to the Share Drive in this folder:

Lastname\_Firstname\_Date\_index e.g., Ammon\_Richard\_September\_15\_2012\_index

### 2. Session Heading

Begin the index document with the names of the interviewee, interviewer, and indexer on the left side; the collection number and tape number, session number (in roman numerals), and date of the interview on the right side. All items in the heading should be in 12 point Times New Roman bold font:

**Interviewee: Cecil Taylor**

**Interviewer: Pamela Dean**

**Indexer: Your Name**

**Session I**

**October 15, 1991**

Below this session heading and before the index text starts, note the tape number, the tape side, and the session number in bold face and brackets:

**[Begin Session I.]**

### 3. Line Spacing, Page Setup, etc.

For the text portion of the index, set the line spacing to single. Use one-inch margins on all sides and Times New Roman 12 point font.

The timestamp for each index section goes along the left page margin in bold font.

After each timestamp, tab over once before starting the text for that section. You can set the tabs longer or shorter if needed by using the indicators on the ruler bar along the top of the document window. Be consistent with tabs throughout the index.

Leave one line of space after the bracketed note in Step 3 and before your first timestamped section. Then leave one line of space between each timestamped section:

**[Begin Session I.]**

- 00:01** Interviewer introduces the interview; it's March 16, 1982;
- 00:40** Interviewee was born in 1924 in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, and he grew up on his parents' farm; his parents were always farmers; his dad only got through fifth grade;
- 01:39** As a boy, his chores included picking vegetables from his mother's garden; primarily they grew corn, sweet potatoes, beans and okra;

You will need to insert a final timestamp in brackets when the interview concludes. Place this timestamp one line below the last line of your index in bold text like this:

**[54:05]**

## 4. What to Write

An index is a detailed summary of an interview that, unlike a transcript, does not reproduce the interview word-for-word. Indexing is a good alternative to transcribing because preparing an index takes only a fraction of the time that preparing a transcript does.

**The value of an index lies in the amount of detail conveyed by you, the indexer!!**

### General information and resources

For details on spelling, grammar, proper names, what to do when you don't understand or can't hear what is being said, etc., refer to pages 5-9 of our **Transcription Guidelines**

Semicolons or periods are used to separate thoughts/topics within each timestamped section. Whatever punctuation you choose, be sure to use it consistently throughout the index.

### Capturing what is said in the interview

When indexing, you want to be sure that you emphasize the things that the interviewee speaks about the most during the course of the interview. If an interviewee stays on one topic for minutes on end, you should be careful to convey his or her discussion of that topic as thoroughly as possible.

For example, if the interviewee talks for ten minutes about the research he did in Mexico, there should be a significant number of lines in your index that describe how long he was there doing research, the towns he visited, the way he felt about the locals, the difficulty of travelling to or from the location, what the outcome of the research was, etc. You should not simply write, "He describes his research in Mexico."

On the other hand, if the speaker only briefly mentions a person, place or thing in passing, it may not warrant any mention in the index.

Deciding on a tone and tense that will remain consistent throughout your index is crucial. Usually the best strategy is to recreate the interviewee's tone and tense by using his or her own wording and phrasing as much as possible. Think of it as deliberately plagiarizing the interviewee's and interviewer's words when creating your index.

As you listen to the interviewee or interviewer speaking, his or her tone of voice, a display of emotion, a long pause, etc. might convey something that is not voiced by the speaker or addressed directly. When this happens, you may have to inject some of your own wording to convey the interviewee's meaning. You can certainly write something like, "Smith gets choked up and asks to stop the tape" or, "West refers to information on a document he gave to Anderson earlier in the interview"

When indexing, it can also be useful to convey the questions being asked by the interviewer because it gives the interviewee's answers more context. An example from Ordell Griffith being interviewed by Everett Besch:

"Besch wonders how the Admissions Office could effectively handle the large number of applications they received; Griffith says they had to work overtime;"

- While indexing, when you come across a section that you know will be useful to you later, please highlight it or place an asterisk next to the section, so that you can return to it later. You may even want to stream this audio portion.

## **9. Finishing Up**

**When you are done indexing, be sure to review the entire index using spell check!**