



# Coastal Change Oral Histories Project

## Teacher Training Oral History Workshop



# LSU LIBRARIES SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

## T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Workshop



Online



## Ground Rules:

- Please feel free to excuse yourself, if necessary
- Feel free to ask questions, but please save them for the end of each section
- We will adhere to schedule

# Pre-Test

## Oral History Project Will Involve:

- Project Planning & Pre-Interview Research
- Fieldwork: Creation of Primary Source
  - Interviews, photo, video, additional mtl's
- Creation of Secondary Source from above
- Transfer of materials to repository

## Oral History, Defined:

A qualitative research process based on personal interviewing, suited to understanding meanings, interpretations, relationships, and subjective experience

- Life narrative/biographical
- Project-oriented/topical

A product that is preserved—an audio or video tape recording—that is an original historical document, a new primary source for further research.

## Three Stages of Oral History Project:

1. Interview
2. Preservation
3. Public Access

## Oral History Interview Focus:

- Behavior and experiences
- Concrete examples from which to infer subjective orientations
- Develop facts and events first, then explore feelings and values
- Memory is most **fallible** regarding previous attitudes and feelings
- Stimulate the respondent's memory or reduce chronological confusion by supplying facts learned from background research



Rewards:

Multiple perspectives

Primary sources to document  
every day peoples' lives

An opportunity to explore  
community memories



## Challenges in Conducting Oral Histories

- Time Management & Project Organization
- Maintaining the ethics of the research partnership
- Building trust and rapport
- Balancing multiple perspectives
- Negotiating interview-interviewee roles
- Managing personal bias

## Why Student Oral History Projects?

- Role of researcher: both *active* and *passive* investigation
- Increased awareness of culture and identity
- Sense of giving back to community
- Tech skills
- Cooperation, teamwork
- Develop critical thinking, writing skills
- Increase social awareness, listening skills
- Learn to use and create primary resources
- Place-based learning; understanding of environment


## Possibilities?

- Because this involves multiple interviews on a topic, consider a full quarter or full semester project
- Using a recording of an interview, students may create transcripts, stories, articles, or essays, podcasts, radio/TV drama scripts, poems, a web site, a media presentation, readers' theater, art, music, or dance. The project may focus on the narrativity of interviewing—e.g., storytelling, listening, writing. Students may look beyond what people say in an interview to dig deeper into how people express themselves and why.

## LSU Student Oral History Project (OHP) Samples

- McKinley High School Oral History Project
  - See [CD](#); [YouTube](#); [Podcast](#); [Publications](#)
  - Willie Spooner
  - Almenia Freeman
- Bayou Lafourche Oral History Project
  - See [Podcast](#); [CLW article](#)
  - Ophelia Lafort
  - Mike Doucet

## OHP Samples

- McKinley High School Oral History Project
- Willie Spooner, Jr. 

Willie Spooner, Jr. was a school teacher and boycott supporter. Here, he explains the level of commitment to the boycott that was necessary for riders who needed public transportation for their livelihood:

*And during the bus boycott it was a tremendous sacrifice for me because I was married; I was working on Terrace and Highland Road, so bus transportation was the only transportation that I had at that time. But we gave it up, my wife and I. We gave it up to try to make the bus boycott work."*

From: "Old Ways No More: Oral Histories of the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott, 1953" (2003) and "People Rode Free by Day and Paid for it at Night:" How the Baton Rouge Community Influenced Martin Luther King, Jr. (2010) <http://oralhistory.blogs.lib.lsu.edu/2010/01/>

## OHP Samples



- McKinley High School Oral History Project

- **Almenia Freeman**



Almenia Freeman, a boycott supporter recalls her efforts in provision of alternative transportation.

*"When the bus boycott come along in 1953, I was happy to help with that. We met with Mr. [Fred] Matthews and Reverend Jemison and others. We had meetings, and I was available to get out and drive up and down the road, take people wherever they had to go. It was like a daily job. It was a pleasure, you know?"*

From: "Old Ways No More: Oral Histories of the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott, 1953" (2003) and "People Rode Free by Day and Paid for it at Night:" How the Baton Rouge Community Influenced Martin Luther King, Jr. (2010) <http://oralhistory.blogs.lib.lsu.edu/2010/01/>

## OHP Samples



- Bayou Lafourche Oral History Project

- Ophelia Lafort



*Most people that lived along the bayou lived, they worked in . . . later on, in the oil field but before that, it was trappers. We trapped furs like muskrats, minks, otters. Every year, we'd go to a camp in the marsh. I used to be the skinner of my daddy's muskrats, I used to skin pelts....Yes. And I was just fourteen, fifteen years old so everybody would . . . but the bayou was it. That was "Main Street". And on both sides, people lived and I remember as a child we had a grocery store across the bayou. We had to ride a flat boat to go buy groceries. Painting . . . if people would realize just what painting is . . . that you can lose yourself. It's so rewarding. You can meditate, you can . . . you know. It's really wonderful. I had to do a rendering of this boat to show my children how it was when I was a young kid growing up we'd stand on the bayou and they would pass, they'd go from New Orleans from Grand Isle. Grand Isle raised watermelons and, I didn't know that at that time, but I found out later that they did the cucumbers and they'd go to the French market in New Orleans with that. So I did a rendering of that boat, as I'm standing on the shore. They would throw us bananas and apples and stuff like that so I did that and I'll show it to you if you want.*

<http://oralhistory.blogs.lib.lsu.edu/2011/02/22/%E2%80%9Cgo-home%E2%80%A6-and-listen-again-a-religious-studies-oral-history-project-offers-insights-into-life-along-bayou-lafourche/>

# OHP Samples



- Bayou Lafourche Oral History Project

- John Doucet



JOHN DOUCET:       *Anyway, by the time we got there, things were really bad. We got out, we went in the house and it was late. It was almost time to go to bed but as a kid, I was petrified. I was a nervous wreck. I couldn't possibly go to bed. Alright? So mom was nervous, everybody was nervous. They wanted the kids in bed and away, so. I was nervous. I threw up in bed. I remember that the boards that my aunt had put against her window were pounding and one of the windows crashed on top of me so there was no way I was getting back in bed so I was a wreck all night but the most harrowing thing was when the man got together to murmur the Rosary. When women pray, it's alright. When men pray, you know something's wrong. And that was probably . . . it wasn't' the nervousness, it wasn't 'cause my dad wasn't there although those were tremendously big emotional things. It wasn't the glass falling on me. When my grandpa and the other men started praying, that was scary.*

<http://oralhistory.blogs.lib.lsu.edu/2011/02/22/%E2%80%9Cgo-home%E2%80%A6-and-listen-again-a-religious-studies-oral-history-project-offers-insights-into-life-along-bayou-lafourche/>

## OHP Samples

- Student: Spooner



- VS

- Pro: Jones



## Print Resources

- *Story Bridges: A Guide to Conducting Intergenerational Oral History Projects.* Angela Zusman, 2010.
- *Dialogue With the Past: Engaging Students and Meeting Standards Through Oral History.* Glenn Whitman. AltaMira, 2004
- *Doing Oral History.* Don Ritchie. Oxford University Press. 2003. \*\*\*\*

## Online Resources



- Library of Congress:  
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/index.html>
- Urban School of S.F. <http://www.tellingstories.org/>
- Voices from the Fisheries handbook:  
[http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/voicesfromthefisheries/documents/VFF handbook final.pdf](http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/voicesfromthefisheries/documents/VFF_handbook_final.pdf)
- LSU: guide and video:
  - [http://www.lib.lsu.edu/special/williams/talking\\_gumbo.pdf](http://www.lib.lsu.edu/special/williams/talking_gumbo.pdf)
  - <http://www.lib.lsu.edu/special/williams/video.html>

## Secondary School OH Projects

- Rocky Gap High School, VA:  
<http://www.blandcountyhistoryarchives.org/gap.html>
- Caroline Elementary School, NY:  
<http://www.icsd.k12.ny.us/legacy/esp/Caroline/emiller/>
- D. C. Everest School District, WI:  
<http://www.dce.k12.wi.us/srhigh/socialstudies/histday/>
- Anderson Valley Rural Network, CA:  
[http://www.ncrcn.org/projects/av/av\\_vov.html](http://www.ncrcn.org/projects/av/av_vov.html)

## Expectations

- What is your overall goal?
- Who do you want to interview (# of people)?
- How many students do you expect to be involved?
- When are you planning to begin?
- What's your time frame? Duration?
- What main question do you have today?

## Managing a Classroom Oral History Project

### Project Planning

- Professional Dev. & Tech Assistance
- Choosing and Researching Topics
- Locating Interviewees
- Release Forms
- Ethics

### Pre-Interview Research

- Background Research
- Topical Outline(s)
- Prepping Interviewees

## Project Planning:

- Think of end result and work backwards
- So what? (niche)
- Clear, do-able goals
- Task Division: who will do what?
- Reasonable timetable
- Actionable Items

## Project Planning--Consider the following:



- How will the topic fit into the curriculum? Talking Gumbo and Voices from the Fisheries Handbook
- See Talking Gumbo. P.8-11 for justification/admin. Support
- How will it interest you and your students?
- Resources: recorders, interviewers and ees, storage, public access
- Lesson Plans: Talking Gumbo (p.72-86), Library of Congress, Voices from the Fisheries (p.95)

## Project Planning--Consider the following:

- Who do you want to interview and why?
- What do you want to do with the interviews?
- How much time do you have?
- What kind of help will you need and where can you get it?
- With whom might you form partnerships?

## Project Planning: Choosing and Researching Topics

- Start small, and grow
- Topic have some historical analysis available to students in published biographies or secondary sources which provide background, context, and a basis of authority for their research
- Topic can be researched through oral history that have happened in lifetime of people living today

## Project Planning--Topics Must be:

- Focused
- Do-able in allotted time
- Do-able in the local area
- Matched to available interviewees
- NOT be highly sensitive or emotional

## **Project Planning—Preliminary Research on Topic**

- To establish its historical context; to learn more about who would make the best interviewees
- Visit libraries, archives, museums
- Start Basic Topic Outline to ask informed questions

## Project Planning: Locating Interviewees

- Start close to home: relatives, neighbors, family friends
- Community: retirement homes, churches, community service organizations
- Through your research, word of mouth, local media announcements

## Project Planning: Interviewee Selection

- Biographical Data Form
- Select respondents who will be able and willing to provide information you need, whose life experience fits your topic
- Interviewees may be chosen because their lives illustrate certain historical processes or because they have special knowledge of or occupy a unique position in an historical event, movement, or institution.

## **Brainstorm:**

What community groups are available to form partnerships?

Identify people in your community to interview

## Project Planning: Release Forms

- Audio Recordings are an individual's intellectual property and are subject to copyright law.
- Interviewees must sign Copyright Release Forms before students can use the recordings
- Interviewers must sign a Copyright Release Form
- Repositories require completed forms
- Signed forms do not preclude the interviewer or interviewee from using the recordings
- For more info, see [“Oral History and the Law”](#)

## Project Planning: Release Forms

- Interviewee Release Form
  - To be signed after the interview
- Interviewer/Permission Form
  - Requires parent/guardian signature, too
  - Please list all interviewees on one page
  - If more than one student is on the recording, that student must fill out individual form, too

## Project Planning: Ethics



For professional ethical standards, see “Educator and Student Guidelines” of the Oral History Evaluation Guidelines.

- Informed consent: Tell interviewees their rights and obtain their permission. Explain the purpose, the process, and the potential uses of the recordings.
- Be sensitive to differences, such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, and age. Avoid expressing your own stereotypes and biases.
- Long-term: Produce the best quality recording you can and preserve it by depositing it in a library or archives.

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS

General Grand Independent Order of  
Brothers and Sisters of Love and Charity

NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA, LIBERIA AND  
ADJACENT ISLANDS

EXECUTIVE SESSION

HELD IN  
ODD FELLOWS HALL, Plaquemine, La.  
JUNE 14, 1927

ANNUAL SESSION

HELD IN  
ODD FELLOWS TEMPLE  
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA  
SUNDAY, MONDAY AND TUESDAY,  
MAY 27-28-29, 1928

EXTRA SESSION

HELD IN  
TRUE FRIEND HALL, Donaldsonville, La.  
OCTOBER 19, 1928

HON. WM. CLEMENT, Gen. Grand Worthy Superior  
MAGGIE B. BREUX, Gen. G. R. Secretary  
Edna C. MARINEAUX, Asst. G. G. R. S.

compiled by  
Maggie B. Breux, G. G. R. S.

Yachthaven Herald Publishing House  
Plaquemine, Louisiana

Pre Interview Research: What to  
know before you go:

Know Your Equipment

Know your "Stuff"

Know your Self

## Pre-Interview Research/Background Research

- Ten Hours Per Hour of Tape
- Create Topical Outline: Mostly Open-Ended
  - Williams Center Sample (10 pp)
  - Bayou Lafourche
  - Coastal Changes

## **Pre-Interview Research: Know Yourself & Embrace Diversity:**

- Leave baggage at the door
- Respect, genuine interest

## How to Get a Good Interview:

### Interview Tips

- Test your equipment
- Record an Intro: names, date, location, project
- Start w/ Biographical Info
- Progress to more difficult questions

# At the Interview



## DO

- Respect the Respondent: dress, punctual, manners
- Be a good listener:
- Ask Follow-Up Questions
- Assist memory recall
- Use body Language
- Watch for signs of tiring
- Spell out difficult names of persons and places specify lengths...

# At the Interview



## DO

- Ask Open-Ended Questions
  - Who, What, Where, When, Why,
  - “Tell Me about....”; “Please describe ....”
- **Avoid:** Yes or no questions, leading questions
  - “Do you know...?” *instead* “What do you know about...?”
  - “Have you noticed...?” *instead* “What have you noticed about...?”
  - “Have you experienced...?” *instead* “What have you experienced in regards to...?”

# At the Interview



## DO

- Ask closed questions at the **right** times
  - Answered in 1 or 2 words
  - After a story, use to gather details
    - What was your mother's maiden name?
    - What was your rank?
    - How long has your family lived here?
    - How did your parents make a living?

# At the Interview



## DO

- Ask for definitions: “What does \_\_\_\_\_ mean?”
- Ask follow-up questions. Solicit details.

What happened next? Where were you living at the time? Who else participated? How long did it take? How did you get there?

- Ask experiential questions:
  - What did you hear? What did you see? How heavy was it? How did he appear? How did it taste? Smell? Feel?

## DON'T

- Interrupt
- Ask “Yes” or “No” Questions
- Ask Leading Questions
  - “Was your neighborhood tight-knit?”
- Ask More than One Question @ a Time
- Talk too Much
- Argue with the interviewee
- “You’ve Got to Hear This Story!”
  - Disaster: 4:30-5:42; Don’ts: 5:42-16:20; age, gender, race: 21:31-25:00

## Balancing Act:



- Allow respondents to express the logic of their lives as they understand them
- Simultaneously maintain control over the overall direction of the conversation and framing questions so as to elicit information which is relevant, reliable, and valid.
  - Listen carefully.
  - Embrace silence.
  - Take notes, rather than interrupt
- If way off track, ask a direct question to get back on track

# Common Mistakes Student Interviewers Make



- Lack of practice
- Improper introduction/labeling/incomplete forms
- Not listening/talking too much
- More than one question at a time
- “Yes” or “no” questions
- No follow-up questions
- Reading off the guide/not engaging
- Looking disinterested
- Misplacement of emotional or controversial questions
- Cutting the interview short

## Strategies for teaching students to interview

See *Talking Gumbo*, p. 44

- Brainstorm question-writing activity
- Analyze existing transcripts
  - what makes the interview good?
  - How could it improve?
- Blooper activity: act out common interviewing no-no

# Strategies for Organizing and Logistics



See Talking Gumbo, p. 46

- Decide on team size
- Identify Tasks
- Assign responsibilities

<u>Task</u>	<u>Responsibility of:</u>
• Background questions	team
• Brain storm questions	team
• Ask questions	interviewer
• Monitor equipment	audio engineer
• Form compliance, notes	note-taker
• Take photos/videos	photographer/videographer

## Photographs and Video

- Natural light is best, if possible
- Photos:
  - Interviewees
  - Interviewees with important objects
  - Important objects (macro)
  - Take before and after interview, and during interview, if possible, get a few shots of interviewer and interviewee
  - Be subtle, do not interrupt flow

## Photographs and Video



- Natural light is best, if possible
- Video
  - Using camera, so remember memory is limited
  - A few 1-3 minute clips of:
    - Important story/stories, even if it's already started, it's okay
  - 30 seconds at beginning, end

## Additional Materials



- Copies of:
  - Photographs
  - Maps
  - Letters
  - Papers
- How?
  - Portable scanner
  - Digital Scanner
  - iPhone or Droid app

- Better to do on-site, rather than “borrowing” materials
- Invite the interviewee to school or library to use scanner there

## Homework: Develop 10-12 interview questions

3-4 Background Questions

3-4 Personal History Questions

- Vocational/professional
- Educational
- Cultural
- Activities

3-4 Regarding environmental change

\*\*remember to keep it applicable to interviewee's knowledge base

## Listening Exercise

Groups of three

Contemplate Answer

LISTEN for three minutes

DO NOT INTERRUPT

BE PRESENT

Share with class

## How to Get a Good Interview Pt. II: Equipment

### The Importance of Archival Quality Audio

- Reel-to-Reel: 70 year
- Cassette: 25 year
- CD/DVD: 10-15 year
- Uncompressed digital audio file stored on server with tape back-up: perpetuity

### Why store oral histories in a repository?

- Preservation
- Processing
- Public Access

## How to Get a Good Interview Pt. II: Equipment

### Why Preserve Student Recordings?

- Rare resource
- Share with future class
- Participate in complete process
- Honor interviewees and share with community

# How to Get a Good Interview Pt. II

## Tips on Using a Digital Recorder

### See Field Recorder Tutorial

- Types of Recorders:
  - Solid State Recorder (Flash Memory)
- File Formats:
  - Compressed VS Uncompressed
  - Archival VS User-Friendly
  - Need both for present and future

# How to Get a Good Interview Pt. II

## Tips on Using a Digital Recorder

### See Field Recorder Tutorial

- Adjusting Recording Levels on Recorder
- Marantz PMD620 Quick Tips
- Opportunity for a pre-project individual consultation

## How to Get a Good Interview Pt. II

Transferring and saving audio files

See: After the Interview Checklist #1-2

- Organization of Files
- **Managing the Master Audio:**  
**\*\*Uploading the Interview\*\***

## Mock Interview

Using the questions you developed from last night's homework:

- Team up with a partner
- Take turns interviewing each other (10 minutes each), remembering to record an introduction
- Upload interview to computer

## Post Interview Pt. 1: Preserve the Interview

### Creating User Copies

#### See: After the Interview Checklist #3

- Conversion of uncompressed (.wav) to compressed (.mp3)
- Ready for processing, editing, sharing

## Post Interview Pt. 1: Preserve the Interview

Transfer of materials to Sea Grant & LSU Libraries

See: After the Interview Checklist #4

- Each interviewee assigned a folder
- Includes the following materials
  - User copy audio
  - Photos and videos
  - Transcriptions
  - Edited audio clip
  - Additional materials

## Post Interview Pt. 1: Preserve the Interview

### Transcribing the Interview

#### Express Scribe Software:

- 10 hours of transcribing per 1 hour of recording
- Use a style guide: Chicago Manual of Style
- Use a dictionary
- Be accurate. Do not correct grammar
- Teamwork: divide transcribing and auditing tasks
- Guideline

# Evaluate Recordings and Content Analysis



Questions to guide evaluation/interpretation/presentations:

- Quality of Recording? Clear audio? Volume?
- Ask open-ended questions? Follow-up questions?  
Interrupt or listen well?
- What to do differently next time?
- Important points in interview?
- How are the interviewees' stories different from textbook history? Why?
- How do these interviews compare to each other? Patterns, Themes?

## Post Interview Pt. 2: Share

### Secondary Source examples (see slide #21)

- Books, articles, or essays, podcasts, radio/TV drama scripts, poems, a web site, a media presentation, readers' theater, art, music, neighborhood tours, or dance
- Community event to honor interviewee
- Sea Grant examples (Timmy Vincent by Darcy Wilkins)

# Assessing the Student



See OHA guidelines:

Assigning Grades: see Talking Gumbo pp. 68-70

- Interview completed (on time; quality)
  - Interview transcribed (on time; quality)
  - Final Project (on time; quality)
  - Completed forms and labeling, 10%
  - Student conduct/teamwork, 10%
- 
- See also Voices, p. 78 and Library of Congress

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# Post-Test

