



ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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Conference lineup fulfills program theme "Engaging Audiences: Oral History and the Public"

Dozens of roundtables, scholarly panels and discussions scheduled for the October 4-7 OHA conference in Minneapolis reflect oral history's wide appeal and wide application to a remarkable variety of institutions, issues and communities of interest.

Conference attendees can choose from sessions ranging almost from A to Z. Scheduled program sessions deal with AIDS and HIV, collections management, community oral history, environmental oral history, foodways, health care, higher education and homelessness.

Attendees can continue through the alphabet with sessions on immigration, interviewer stress, libraries, military oral history, Minnesota feminism, multilingual interviews, museums, Native American experiences, organizing in the Donald Trump era, podcasting, police brutality, prisons, transcription and women in

Congress, among many others.

A brief program review, however, reveals no sessions on oral history and zoos.

Check out all the details here: [2017 Program](#).

In an important schedule change from previous OHA conferences, the annual business meeting will be held on Saturday morning. Instead of concurrent sessions scheduled on Sunday following the traditional business meeting time, conference attendees will be able to attend a free professional development workshop on using OHMS described here: [Workshops](#).

Haven't registered for the OHA conference yet? What's stopping you?

Early bird OHA members who register at [OHA 2017](#) by Aug.15 will pay only \$145. It's \$170 thereafter for members. OHA student members pay \$45 and non-member students pay \$100. For non-members who also are not students, the registration fee is \$200.

And while you're at it, unless you're lucky enough to live in the Twin Cities already, you can make your reservation at the conference hotel, the Hilton Minneapolis. Go online at [OHA Hilton](#) or call 612-376-1000 and ask for the Oral History rate, code ORA.



President's Letter



OHA Conference to recognize 2017 award winners



Executive Director's Report

Disparate group of oral historians elected to OHA leadership

Oral historians who hail from Mississippi, Texas, New York, Arizona and Minnesota, with diverse backgrounds in public history, archives, journalism, multimedia creation and college history classrooms, will join the Oral History Association's council and nominating committee this fall.

Elected first vice president was **Curtis Austin** (right), a native of Yazoo City, Mississippi, who served as director and co-director of the Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage at the University of Southern Mississippi before heading to Ohio State University where he teaches African American history and the history of the civil rights movement. In Mississippi he directed a massive oral history digitization project, in which oral histories of hundreds of civil rights activists were digitized and made publicly available online.



Elected to the OHA Council's one open position was **Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez**, a journalism professor at the University of Texas at Austin, who has drawn on her print and broadcast journalism background and her experience in the classroom to create the multi-faceted *Voces Oral History Project*. Since 1999, students and others have interviewed nearly 1,000 Latino men and women of the World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War generations. A new collection focuses on Latino Political and Civic Engagement. The oral histories have contributed to books, plays, educational materials of all sorts, photo exhibits and archival resources.

Additionally, three OHA members were elected to the Nominating Committee. They are:

Suzanne Snider, founder/director of the Oral History Summer School/Oral History Winter School, an interdisciplinary training program in Hudson, New York, for media makers, scholars and social advocates. She also has taught at the New School University and at Columbia University.

Carlos Lopez, special projects archivist and director of the Arizona Legislative Oral History Project at the Arizona State Archives in Phoenix. Lopez previously worked at the Baylor Institute for Oral History, where he received his M.A. In Arizona, he has been involved in a project to help local libraries with training to start their own oral history programs.

Barbara W. Sommer, an independent oral historian from St. Paul, Minnesota, who has been involved in public history, community oral history and oral history education for more than 35 years. Sommer is the author and co-author of a half-dozen books, including a national award-winning, oral history-based book on the Civilian Conservation Corps in Minnesota.



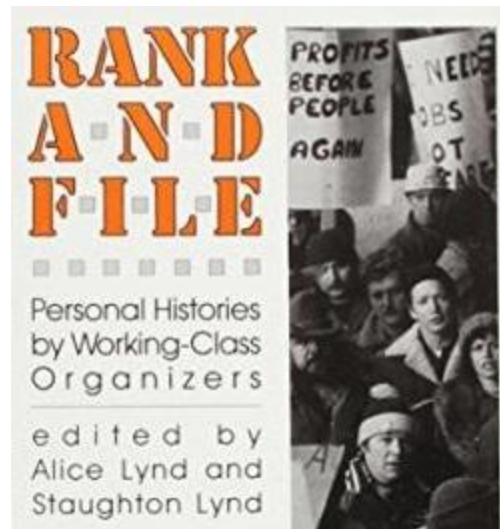
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Irish and British oral historians to hold joint meeting



“Dangerous Oral Histories: Risks, Responsibilities and Rewards” is the provocative theme of the joint meeting of the British Oral History Society and Oral History Network of Ireland, to be held in Belfast on June 28-29, 2018. Information about the program is available at <http://www.ohs.org.uk/conferences/belfast-2018/>.

This year, each organization held a separate annual meeting. The Irish network convened in Galway, on Ireland’s rugged west coast, June 23-24. The program focused on work and leisure. Past OHA President Don Ritchie delivered the keynote address, “Oral Historians at Work (and Play).” He and Anne Ritchie, also a past OHA president, also conducted a workshop on “The Rewards and Perils of Creating an Oral History Archive.”

The conference featured presentations that ranged widely from the “smokestack nostalgia” of deindustrialization to Dublin’s master tailors, job security at the Guinness brewery, Irish women working in London and New York, post-war cinemas and the history of punk in Northern Ireland.

The British Oral History Society held its meeting in Leeds, July 14-15. Its conference theme, “Remembering Beliefs-The Shifting Worlds of Religion and Faith in Secular Society,” provided a setting for papers that contrasted belief and unbelief in modern society, including older people’s reflections on religious belief in their lives, intergenerational identities of British Muslim women, Catholic birth control debates, science and religion, and the intersections of faith, belief and sexuality.

The diversity of the topics and substantiveness of the presentations at both meetings attested to the scholarly momentum of oral history and demonstrated the methodology’s remarkable versatility. Next year’s meeting will bring both of these groups together and promises to be an exciting event.

Pioneering oral historian dies in Washington, D.C.

Roberta “Bobbie” Greene McCarthy, who headed the Robert F. Kennedy oral history program at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, died June 29 in Washington, D.C. She was 74.

A native of the Bronx, New York, McCarthy was a path-breaking oral historian who got her start in the field when she applied for a job at the JFK Library in 1968 after serving in the Peace Corps.

In a 2005 oral history interview, she recalled that the man who interviewed her for the job told her he had

“never considered hiring a woman for this project. He said, ‘It’s not the lack of a master’s or the fact that you aren’t a history major.’ He said, ‘We have just never considered a woman.’ And I thinking, that’s—this is 1967, and the climate was quite different from what it is today.”

McCarthy had a long career in public service, working as deputy chief of staff for first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, director of Save America’s Treasures both in the White House and at the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She also was vice chairman of Vital Voices, a human rights organization founded by the former first lady and former Secretary of State Madelaine Albright.



In her 2005 interview with the JFK Library, she reflected on her own experiences as an oral history interviewer, saying:

“Well, I think people love to talk. And in my experience, it doesn’t matter what their rank is, whether it’s a Supreme Court justice or a senator or, you know, a personal friend, they love to talk. And it’s partly, I think, the nostalgia of it. But it’s also people like to be listened to. So I very seldom found any difficulty in getting people to be open.”

Congressional committee rejects Trump proposal to defend humanities

The House Appropriations Committee in mid-July endorsed a subcommittee’s earlier approval of legislation that would provide \$145 million each for the National Endowment for the Humanities and National Endowment for the Arts in the 2018 federal budget.

The National Humanities Alliance, a coalition of more than 170 institutions and organizations, including the Oral History Association, reported that while the committee-approved amount represents a cut of \$4.8 million from current funding levels, it marks a clear departure from the president’s budget proposal to eliminate funding for the agencies.

The humanities alliance noted, however, that the budget process is still in its early stages and urged humanities advocates to remain active in supporting efforts to continue humanities funding. For more information go to the alliance’s [Take Action](#) page to learn about how to support the NEH.



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Mary Kay Quinlan, Editor

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President's Letter

by Doug Boyd

When I interviewed Don Ritchie on September 25, 2015, for the Nunn Center's Interviewing the Interviewers oral history project, we spoke of many things regarding the history of the Oral History Association (<https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/catalog/xt712j685w90>). Among the many things discussed, Don recalled the debate regarding the OHA transition to the mail ballot for electing leadership. The rationale behind using the mail ballot was to broaden membership voting and be inclusive of engaged membership who were not able to attend the annual business meeting. A few years ago, OHA transitioned to electronic voting for electing leadership, once more updating our organizational methods to better meet the needs of our membership.

As you know, we are in the process of transitioning to a new institutional home (we are in the contract negotiation phase, and I hope to have an announcement soon). During this year of transition, we have taken the opportunity to scrutinize and update our administrative policies. Specifically, we have identified the need to update our constitution and bylaws in order to be a more nimble and more effective organization. Some of the changes include:

- Expanding OHA Council from four to five elected members.
- Changing "Institutional" membership to "Partner" membership.
- Making minor linguistic changes to allow the utilization of a co-director model for OHA leadership, rather than limiting OHA to a sole executive director.
- Formalizing standing committees.

We will communicate these changes in a more specific fashion in the next few weeks. However, as an organization, we can only make changes to the constitution with an in-person vote at the annual business meeting. For the same reasons that we transitioned to mail ballot and then to electronic voting for electing leadership, I am advocating that we empower the transition of all membership votes (including making changes to the constitution and bylaws) to electronic voting platforms.

The following is what we are proposing as a constitutional change to advocate for empowering electronic membership voting for changes to the constitution and bylaws.

Currently, our constitution reads:

Amendments to this constitution must be proposed in writing by at least ten members and filed with the executive director. Copies of the proposed amendments shall be sent by the executive director to all members at least thirty days in advance of the meeting at which they are to be considered. If approved by the Council, they may be adopted by a majority of the members attending any business meeting of the Association; if not so approved, a two-thirds vote of the members in attendance will be required.

We are proposing the following:

Amendments to this constitution must be proposed in writing by at least ten members and filed with the executive director. Copies of the proposed amendments shall be sent by the executive director to all members of council at least 60 days prior to the annual meeting. If approved by the Council, proposed amendments may be adopted by a majority of the members voting. Voting on constitutional amendment(s) will be done electronically. Amendment(s) approved by Council must be presented to the membership at least 30 days prior to the annual meeting. Discussion of the amendment(s) will take place at the business meeting. A transcript of the discussion on the constitutional amendment(s) together with a ballot shall be sent to the membership no later than ten days after the close of the business meeting. Members will then have 30 days to cast their ballot. If Council rejects a proposed amendment, a vote can take place at the business meeting to authorize a membership vote on the proposed amendment. A 2/3rds majority vote is required at the business meeting in order to authorize a vote on a proposed amendment that has been rejected by Council. A proposed amendment that has been rejected by Council must then be approved by a 2/3rds majority membership vote following a 30-day discussion period in order to be approved.

If approved at this year's business meeting, I believe that this change will enable our organization to be more nimble, dynamic, inclusive, and effective. I am looking forward to seeing you all in October.

Executive Director's Report

By Kristine Navarro-McElhaney, Interim Executive Director

As you know, OHA is in transition and there are many changes on the horizon for the organization, from the editors for the *Oral History Review* to a new institutional home for our executive offices. As we move forward, it is important for us to remember that our staff, volunteers and members of the council provide stability and help keep our organization running smoothly.

From the program committees, standing committees, the local arrangements committee and others, our dedicated volunteers have stepped up to ensure that OHA remains the premier organization dedicated to the practice of oral history. I want to personally express my gratitude for their continued hard work.

One of the critical missions of our volunteer committees is determining the recipients of OHA scholarships. Every year, we receive many more scholarship applications than we have funding for. This year, we received more than 55 applications and are only able to give 23 scholarships. It's heartbreaking to have to turn away so many promising scholars. Many thanks to Erin McCarthy, the Scholarship Committee chair, and her fellow committee members Adrienne Cain and Carol Quirke for making the tough decisions.

Since we have such a great need to bolster our scholarship program, we have decided to host another **OHA Giving Day on Tuesday, Sept. 12**. With the funds you donate we hope to grow our endowment once again. Additionally, one exceptional graduate student will be the recipient of the first Cliff Kuhn Scholarship award, which is a fitting way to recognize our old friend and OHA champion while providing a great experience to an up and coming oral history professional. We hope you will once again show your generosity and donate to this great effort and encourage your friends, colleagues and fellow OHA members to participate.

Conference plenary and special sessions feature social justice issues

Three OHA conference sessions will examine the use of oral history in pursuit of social justice.

Documenting Activism in the age of #BlackLivesMatter and Standing Rock is based on the premise that the simple act of documentation itself is a form of activism. A panel will examine how the smartphone and social media, which have democratized documentary tools, intersect with ethical precepts and archival practices of oral history

Accompanying Staughton and Alice Lynd through 50 Years of Oral History Practice acknowledges the lifetime contributions of the Lynds to oral history practice. In the 1970s, their work *Rank and File* challenged oral historians to document the lives of everyday people. And in subsequent decades they have used oral history as a tool for social justice in working with draft resisters, steelworkers and others.

Recording on the Frontlines of Labor's Renewal: Lessons from the Twin Cities' CTUL Organizing Campaign focuses on the Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha/Center for Workers United in Struggle, commonly known as CTUL. Between 2009 and 2016, CTUL members and their allies won union recognition across the Twin Cities' entire retail cleaning industry, including stores owned by industry giants like Target, Macy's, Best Buy and Home Depot, making the Twin Cities the first major metropolitan area where nearly the entire retail janitorial industry is union.

Informal, social opportunities abound at OHA conference

Because oral historians like to talk as well as listen, the 2017 OHA conference lineup includes plenty of informal gatherings: receptions sponsored by the International Committee and Committee on Diversity; a Presidential Reception at the Mill City Museum, site of a historic flour mill; a Newcomers Breakfast for first-time attendees; and a poster session and project bazaar.

People arriving on Wednesday also can take in evening performances and films on disparate topics, including Jewish immigrants, homelessness and mental illness, workers' rights and Black Lives Matter—all sure to generate lively, informal discussions, a hallmark of oral history gatherings.

Participants also can choose from: a walking tour of "Eat Street," a one-mile stretch of Nicollet Avenue south of downtown Minneapolis, known for its immigrant-owned ethnic restaurants and markets; a pub crawl of historic St. Paul, including tastings; and a two-hour ramble along "The Ave" with several local Natives who will share information about Minneapolis' Native American Cultural Corridor.

OHA conference to recognize 2017 award winners

Continuing a tradition established in 1994, the Oral History Association recognizes exemplary oral history work with the following awards to be presented at the 2017 conference:

Article Award

“Allan Nevins is Not My Grandfather: The Roots of Radical Oral History in the United States”
Daniel R. Kerr

Book Award

A Two-Spirit Journey: The Autobiography of a Lesbian Ojibwa-Cree Elder
Ma-Nee Chacaby and Mary Louisa Plummer, University of Manitoba Press, 2016

Elizabeth B. Mason Project Award (large)

Oklahoma 100 Year Life Oral History Project
Oklahoma State University, Alex Bishop and Tanya Finchum

Elizabeth B. Mason Project Award (small)

University High School Oral History Project
University of South Carolina, Christian K. Anderson and Andrea L’Hommedieu

Martha Ross Teaching Award

John Hutchinson, Marin Academy, San Rafael, CA

Oral History in a Nonprint Format Award (two awards in this category)

Gatheround: Stories of Atlanta (Museum Exhibit), Atlanta History Center, Calinda Lee
Making Gay History (Podcast), Eric Marcus

Stetson Kennedy Vox Populi Award

Staughton and Alice Lynd

OHA continues workshop tradition to advance skills

Oral historians—and would-be oral historians—attending the Oct. 4-8 annual OHA conference in Minneapolis will have a chance to brush up their skills or try something new at workshops scheduled for Wednesday (Oct. 4), Saturday (Oct. 7) and Sunday (Oct. 8).

On Wednesday, attendees can learn how to create digital exhibits using oral history or delve into the ins and outs of podcasting or explore using oral history for social change.

Saturday features morning and afternoon workshops aimed at introducing K-12 teachers to oral history and showing them how to develop oral history work for the classroom. Both workshops count for Minnesota teachers' continuing education requirements.

Sunday's professional development workshop, a first for OHA, will introduce participants to the use of Oral History Metadata Synchronizer (OHMS), an open source, web-based system to enhance access to oral history online.

Here are more details:

Creating Digital Exhibits Using Oral History will be presented Wednesday morning by Janneken Smucker of West Chester University. Using free and low-cost tools, participants will learn how to work with oral history audio clips, images, maps and other resources to create accessible, contextualized, online exhibits. Participants should bring a laptop computer if possible for hands-on work.

Podcasting and Oral History I and II will be presented Wednesday morning and afternoon by Susan Davis of Better Broadcasts. The morning session will focus on the building blocks of podcasts people will listen to. In the afternoon session, participants will learn how to design and carry out a sustainable production schedule and how to promote and distribute their podcasts.

Oral History for Social Justice will be presented Wednesday afternoon by Sarah K. Loose of Groundswell. Participants will examine the role of oral history in social movements, including its practical, theoretical and ethical implications. They also will take a look at oral history projects that have contributed to social change and acquire basic skills to support their efforts to advance social justice through oral history.

Teach the Teachers is a day-long, two-part workshop on Saturday that will be presented by Ryan Barland of the Minnesota Historical Society, Adrienne Cain of Baylor University and Erin Conlin of Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The morning session will focus on concepts and methodologies of oral history while the afternoon session will engage participants in developing oral history lessons appropriate for their own classrooms. Both will highlight resources available, particularly for Minnesota teachers.

Introduction to OHMS is the OHA's first Sunday professional development workshop, which will be presented by OHA President Doug Boyd of the University of Kentucky and Christian Lopez of the University of Georgia. OHMS is an open source, web-based system created by the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky Libraries. A user-friendly, universally compatible system, OHMS connects text search terms in an oral history transcript or index with the corresponding moments in a recorded interview. Workshop participants will get a general introduction to OHMS and learn how to get started using it.

The cost to register for the first four workshops on Wednesday is \$40 for OHA members or \$50 for non-members. There is no fee for the remaining workshops. Sign up for workshops when you register online for the conference here [OHA 2017](#).

OHA keynoter to explore Joe Gould, Augusta Savage and oral history's dark past

By Rachel Seidman, Program Committee Co-Chair

A century ago, Joe Gould, a bohemian from Greenwich Village, began writing down anything that anyone ever said to him, especially in Harlem. Gould, who coined the term “oral history,” founded an oral history association in the 1920s. He wrote an extraordinarily long book called *The Oral History of Our Time*, said to be the longest book ever written.

In 1931, Gould wrote to leading American historians, very likely including Allan Nevins at Columbia University, explaining what he was doing. “My book is very voluminous,” he wrote. “It will have future value as a storehouse of information. I imagine that the most valuable sections will be those which deal with groups that are inarticulate such as the Negro, the reservation Indian, and the immigrant. It seems to me that the average person is just as much history as the ruler or celebrity.”

When Gould died in 1957, no one could find the manuscript, and in 1964, Joseph Mitchell, a *New Yorker* writer, argued, in a beautiful story called “Joe Gould’s Secret” that *The Oral History of Our Time* never existed: Gould had made it up.

Curious, and unpersuaded, Jill Lepore, Harvard historian and *New Yorker* writer, went to look for it, and found that Joe Gould had a very different secret, involving a woman who was the most important artist of the Harlem Renaissance, the sculptor Augusta Savage. The story Lepore tells in her latest book, *Joe Gould’s Teeth*, unravels a mystery, but also raises the deep ethical questions that lie at the heart of oral history. Gould may be the founder of oral history, but he also haunts it.

Lepore, also the author of *The Secret History of Wonder Woman* and numerous other award-winning books, will explore Joe Gould’s secret in her OHA keynote talk on Thursday, Oct. 5 at 12:30 p.m.