



ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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OHA 2020: Different but the same

Time to get ready for next month's Oral History Association annual conference. No need to pack your bags or practice relaxation breathing to prepare for inevitable airport delays.

Just check your internet connection, find a comfy spot and get ready to listen, learn and engage in the first all-virtual OHA conference, set for Oct. 19-24.

The conference features all of its usual elements: more than 100 panels, roundtables, performances and scholarly paper presentations; workshops for novices and experts; plenary sessions and keynotes; host city tours of Baltimore (from the comfort of your home or office); the annual meeting and plenty of opportunities for the informal social interactions and networking for which the annual conference is famous.

Based on a survey of OHA members, conference planners have turned to technology and to the experiences of other professional organizations to roll out an annual conference online that will employ virtual meeting platforms familiar to many—such as Zoom—as well as some that might be less familiar but that are established virtual meeting services with a track record of success.

The online meeting format—with flat rate registration fees depending on membership categories—will give all participants a chance to attend every session and reception.

The [conference schedule](#) lists events in Eastern Daylight Saving time, with most program events beginning at 11:30 a.m. EDS and the final sessions of the day ending at 5 p.m. EDS. Evening social events are scheduled from 6-8 p.m. EDS. Go ahead and consult the schedule so you can mark your calendar now with sessions you particularly want to attend, noted in your own time zone. 😊

To facilitate accessibility in the virtual space, conference presenters have been sent a guide for making sure slides and other presentation aids are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act standards. This includes assurance that people using screen readers will be able to see slides and other materials. Presenters are also asked to provide a transcript or closed captioning for audio clips or video clips that have an audio component.

An automated transcription service called Otter.ai will provide real-time automated text transcription of conference sessions. Searchable audio and video recordings will be available on the Aviary Platform along with the transcripts after the conference.



President's Column



Co-Executive Directors' Report

Technology tools enable real-time virtual interactions

The magic of digital technology will enable OHA conference attendees to ask questions of presenters, participate actively in roundtables and remotely socialize, though you have to provide your own glass of wine and snacks for the presidential reception.

While many attendees will be thoroughly familiar with Zoom, three less familiar platforms will facilitate conference participation.

When you register for the conference, you'll receive information on how to download [Attendify](#). That's your gateway to navigating all the conference sessions. Don't worry. You'll get instructions.

Likewise, you'll be able to try out [Second Life](#). That's a virtual, 3-D platform where the conference social events will take place. Video gamers may find Second Life fairly intuitive, but everyone will be invited to attend a Second Life demo to become familiar with the platform. The demo sign-up link is <https://forms.gle/G1WbS9Vj8TfsmrQz8>. It will continuously be updated with new times.

You'll use Second Life to meet new friends and reconnect with old ones at the mentor reception, the welcome reception, the presidential reception and the international reception, which long have been popular features of in-person OHA conferences.

Finally, conference attendees will use a platform called Pix-Stori to highlight different aspects of Baltimore, participate in an optional conference directory and virtually attend the poster session.

A "Pix-Stori" consists of an image and a recorded audio file. People will highlight what they love about Baltimore to provide some connection to the area, even if we are not physically there. The directory will allow people to introduce themselves and connect with each other. And the poster session will show each poster and the presenter talking about their research.

Anna Kaplan works behind the scenes to harness power of digital media



Independent scholar and oral historian Anna F. Kaplan has remotely joined the Oral History Association staff for five months to steer the digital strategy for OHA's fall conference.

Thanks to her, people attending the virtual conference will have access to an array of guides to help them navigate the online conference platforms, beyond Zoom, with which they may be unfamiliar.

In addition to her

temporary work for the OHA, Kaplan also is the consulting oral historian and projects manager for the D.C. Oral History Collaborative and serves as an adjunct history faculty member at American University. She earned a bachelor's in anthropology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, master's degrees in anthropology and oral history from Columbia University and a doctorate in history from American University.

Kaplan is completing her first manuscript, *Left by the Wayside: The Struggle over Control of the Memory of the University of Mississippi's Desegregation*, which shows how different communities in Oxford, Mississippi, used and continue to use memory and historical narratives to control the public narrative about race at the university, including post-1962 Black student struggles for integration. In addition, she is beginning research on a project to re-center Black women and their labors in the history of establishing institutional oral history programs.

Kaplan has contributed to projects for the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the U.S. Golf Association Museum, the Archives of American Art and the National Park Service. She serves on the Diversity Committee and the 2020 Program Committee for the Oral History Association and is the vice president of Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region.

Keynote speaker uses art to examine social issues

To call OHA conference keynoter [Joyce J. Scott](#) an artist is a bit of an understatement.

Before she went to kindergarten, this granddaughter of North Carolina sharecroppers was learning from her artist mother how to quilt and do beadwork. Since then, her passion for making—and for using her creations to examine social and political injustice—have expanded the list of nouns with which she is identified: jewelry-maker, sculptor, weaver, print-maker, quilter, fiber artist, 3-D visual artist, educator, performance artist.

Conference attendees will have a chance to decide for themselves what to call her after engaging with her keynote presentation.

Scott, a Baltimore native, holds a bachelor of fine arts degree from the Maryland Institute College of Art and a master of fine arts degree from the Instituto Allende in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. But her earliest teacher was her mother, Elizabeth T. Scott, herself an internationally known fiber artist.

Joyce Scott won a MacArthur Foundation “genius” award in 2016. Her work is displayed in the collections of dozens of museums from New York to Los Angeles.

With work ranging from the tiniest of beads as its raw material to large-scale installations that challenge viewers’ perceptions of the African American experience, Scott’s artistic and social conscience will suffuse her powerful—albeit virtual—keynote address.

Plenary sessions feature cookbook author, community activists

OHA conference attendees can expect to be inspired by two plenary sessions.

Food and nutrition journalist Toni Tipton-Martin, author of *Jubilee: Recipes from Two Centuries of African American Cooking*, dug into the history of great African American cooks to go beyond stereotypes. She found rare cookbooks by African Americans that found their way into print between 1800 and the civil rights era. These important writings reveal the technical, creative, managerial and organizational skills Black cooks share with professionals and show how those characteristics have been misunderstood throughout history, thus broadening the image of the Black cook as a role model who can teach us more than just the recipe for great pancakes.

In the second plenary, Baltimore activist and author D. Watkins will be the guest in a live, on-air interview conducted by Marc Steiner, an award-winning radio personality with the Center for Emerging Media. Both men are Baltimore natives who will talk about storytelling, activism and the power of narrative from a local perspective.

Times and locations for both plenaries will be updated in the conference schedule.

Conference panels offer something for everyone

In keeping with the Oral History Association's longstanding custom, the panels, papers, roundtables, listening sessions and performances scheduled for the fall conference offer dozens of opportunities to explore new ideas. Here are just a few:

Interested in science? You can learn about a heliophysics oral history project. (If you'd like some background, NASA can help you here: https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/sunearth/index.html)

Have a global perspective? Several conference sessions address oral history in Nigeria, Uganda, Rwanda, China, India and Canada.

Concerned about COVID-19? Two conference panels will take up discussions related to oral history.

What about people whom disaster has befallen? Three scholars will present disaster testimonies by those affected by climate change, natural hazards and extreme weather.

Is public history your field? Or oral history and pedagogy? Numerous program sessions will explore the use of oral history in museums and classrooms.

And what about oral history involving often-marginalized

communities? You'll find myriad sessions from which to choose that deal with the Muslim American diaspora, Mennonites, interviewing deaf people using American Sign Language, and stories of LGBTQ+ people in rural communities.

Countless additional topics are on deck, and the virtual conference format will allow you easily to sample as many as you choose.

Start your journey to the virtual OHA conference by registering now: <https://oha.memberclicks.net/oha-2020-registration-form#/>

Pre-conference workshops begin Oct. 19

This year's Program Committee has planned a great array of [pre-conference workshops](#), which focus on practical skills and strategies for oral historians, from novice to expert. Check the conference schedule for specific dates and times.

Additionally, mini-workshops are sprinkled throughout the conference covering a wide variety of topics, and the Local Arrangement's Committee has planned two virtual workshops geared toward Maryland residents.

Here are your pre-conference workshop choices:

More Than Kickstarter: Grassroots Fundraising as a Sustainable Strategy

Where does money come from? How do you get it? What's the secret? This workshop solves the riddle of how to get money for your project by focusing on who actually makes donations: individuals of modest means. We will focus on raising money from people you know and who know people you know. The aim is to develop a long-term, sustainable strategy for making your project happen. Workshop led by Daniel Horowitz.

Protect the Value of Your Labor: Survival Skills for Freelancing in Oral History

Working in oral history is fraught with requests for unpaid work, tight budgets for designed for aspiring and seasoned freelance oral historians to

come together, share their experiences, troubleshoot their concerns and swap valuable information about fundamental tools and tricks of the trade.

This workshop will cover:

- The first year in freelancing
- Understanding your labor rights
- The structure of a successful work agreement
- And figuring out how much to charge

As the title of this workshop suggests, one of the greatest challenges of working in oral history is protecting the value of our labor. Communicating and coordinating with other oral historians is the strongest way to work toward better wages and work environments for all of us.

Workshop led by longtime freelancer Liz Strong.

An Oral Historian's Guide to Public History

This introductory workshop provides an overview of public history and how it intersects and complements the practice of oral history. The workshop will cover important aspects of public-facing oral history work, including: interpretation and respect for narratives, accessibility and audience, technology and various media, documenting and partnering with communities, as well as foundational public history concepts and resources.

The workshop will include breakout sessions to consider how to incorporate public history into current or future oral history projects, as well as the challenges and opportunities in taking such an approach. To fully participate in this portion of the workshop, please bring a project to discuss. Workshop led by oral historian Amanda Tewes.

An Introduction to Remote Interviewing

Current times have not only created a need for a safe method to continue conducting oral histories, but they also have caused practitioners to reconsider the place of conducting an interview remotely in our ongoing practice. Using the Oral History Association's Remote Interviewing Guidelines, this introductory workshop will teach attendees the basics of remote interviewing, including the ethical, methodological, archival and practical considerations of using a remote format for an interview.

Topics will include how to decide when a remote interview is best, how to work with a narrator to select the best platform, how to prepare both

interviewer and narrator for a remote interview and other pre-interview considerations, different equipment and platforms available to conduct interviews remotely, and special considerations unique to using remote formats. Throughout the workshop leaders will reference the Oral History Association's Principles and Best Practices. Workshop led by members of the OHA remote interviewing taskforce.

Note: For those new to oral history, we recommend you take an introductory workshop before attending this workshop.

Photographing People as a way of Documenting Place

In this workshop, we will explore the way photography can be used in concert with oral history and writing as a way to document place and enrich storytelling. In addition to seeing examples of photographs that effectively capture people and place, we will discuss the essential elements of good visual storytelling, with an emphasis on portraiture and building narrative through photo essays. Workshop led by Kate Medley.

Podcasting with Oral Histories

This hands-on workshop is an introduction to the basic tools and techniques for telling compelling audio stories. Participants will learn about the best recording and audio editing equipment, the fundamentals of narrative storytelling, how to integrate audio "scenes" and immersive sound and other best practices for working with historical or pre-recorded interviews. Oral histories are a rich source of story content; shaping them into audio narratives can bring them to a broader and more diverse audience. This workshop will focus on story structure techniques and workflow specific to working with oral histories. We'll address the entire workflow step-by-step, from generating story ideas, to finding your narrator, writing an audio script, recording and performing voice narration, editing and integrating other audio (like music or recorded sounds) into your mix. Workshop led by Francesca Fenzi.

Introduction to Oral History

This workshop will introduce participants to the fundamental concepts and best practices of oral history interviewing and project design. Special attention will be paid to the humanistic and dialogical *spirit* of oral history, with which all types of encounter-based projects and research can be imbued. Participants will be exposed to understandings of oral history traditionally promoted by the Oral History Association, as well as important

critiques of these approaches, and alternative traditions that continue to broaden and nuance the possibilities of oral history as a co-creative, community-oriented process. Workshop led by Benji de la Piedra.

Mini-workshops throughout the conference, which are included with the flat registration fee, will address a wide variety of topics, including:

- the role of oral history in family history
- techniques and technology for accommodating disability in oral history
- bilingual indexing in OHMS
- non-verbal information in oral history
- using automated transcription services.

Local workshops, held prior to the conference, aim to support oral history training in and around Baltimore, our virtual host city. Registration priority will be given to Maryland residents, but if space is still available, registration will open more broadly on September 21:

- Introduction to Oral History
- Oral History in the Classroom

You may be at home, but you can still visit Baltimore

Baltimore, Maryland, is the host city for OHA 2020, albeit remotely. But whether you've never visited or already know this historic city, you're likely to learn something new in one of the free virtual tours planned for the conference week.

Here are your choices (no comfy shoes necessary):

Slavery and Emancipation in Baltimore's Mount Vernon Neighborhood

On this walking tour around Mount Vernon Place, Baltimore's most prestigious neighborhood in the 19th century, Baltimore Heritage Director Johns Hopkins, (yes, that's really his name!), will discuss the lives and labors of some of its enslaved residents, who were never memorialized with statues. We will also learn about the enormous wealth concentrated in Mount Vernon,

which supported the establishment of some of Baltimore's most noted institutions and an American-style philanthropy.

Downtown Baltimore History Tour

Join Hopkins to explore the events that shaped the history of Baltimore and the nation, including the transatlantic trade, the nation's first railroad, wars fought on American soil, the writing of the National Anthem and Baltimore's Great 1904 fire.

A Walk through "The Reservation": The Historic Lumbee Indian Community of East Baltimore

Join Ashley Minner, folklorist and community-based visual artist, on a virtual tour of the Lumbee Indian community of East Baltimore, where thousands of Lumbee Indians migrated from North Carolina after World War II seeking jobs and a better quality of life. With the neighborhood being redeveloped and the Lumbee population shifting, Minner frames her work as a project of reclamation - of history, of space and of belonging.

LGBTQ History in Baltimore's Charles Village Neighborhood

During the 1970s and 1980s, Charles Village, a rowhouse neighborhood in north Baltimore, was home to many activists and institutions at the heart of the city's LGBTQ community. Join us to virtually visit several landmarks of this iconic neighborhood!

And in non-conference news...

Yale University's Oral History of American Music reaches milestone

Oral History of American Music (OHAM) is pleased to announce that its cornerstone collection, Major Figures in American Music, is now accessible online. Major Figures in American Music incorporates more than 1,400 interviews with noted American composers, performers and other significant musicians, dating from 1970 to the present. OHAM continues to conduct

interviews and add these to the collection every year.

The collection notably features multiple interviews with a number of celebrated musical figures, such as Aaron Copland, John Adams, Julia Wolfe, Willie Ruff, and David Lang. Interviews were often conducted at various stages of their careers, and this provides a unique insight into their life and work over time.

The collection's finding aid can be found at <https://archives.yale.edu/repositories/7/resources/5480>. It includes links to stream each interview online via OHAM's AV access system, Aviary. Yale users can connect to the Yale VPN to stream these interviews without restriction. Other users may request access to interviews directly through Aviary. For access instructions, see <https://guides.library.yale.edu/oham/collectionsguide/access>.

Users may also find interview tables of contents and request transcripts through OHAM's website: <https://guides.library.yale.edu/oham/collectionsguide>.

The other OHA—Down Under

Oral History Australia invites proposals for presentations at its next biennial conference, scheduled to be held in Launceston, Tasmania Oct. 14-16, 2021. The conference theme is “Oral History in Troubling Times: Opportunities and Challenges.”

Here's a snapshot of the theme:

With drought, bushfire and floods, and now the pandemic, these have been desperately troubling times for all of us. They are also troubling times for oral historians wondering if and how to continue our work. Oral History Australia plans to meet in solidarity and optimism for our biennial conference in Tasmania in 2021 - but if that proves to be impossible, we will run our conference online.

Our conference theme invites you to reflect on the challenges and issues of undertaking oral history in troubling times, and to consider how oral history can illuminate the lived experience of troubling times both in the past

and in our contemporary world. Through oral history recordings, we hear the intimate stories of everyday lives, and we create histories that challenge orthodoxy and speak truth to power. Oral history drills beneath the big histories of state, society, and politics. It illuminates ordinary people's extraordinary lives and the ways in which people deal with the troubles of their lives and of our world.

Proposals are being accepted until March 1, 2020. For detailed information check out this OHA website (the one in the Southern Hemisphere): www.oralhistoryaustralia.gov.au



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By Kristine McCusker
September 2020

This year has been tumultuous, to say the least, and we hope you and your families are safe.

In the midst of that tumult, the Oral History Association, thanks to Co-Executive Director Louis Kyriakoudes, applied for and won a \$43,000 National Endowment for the Humanities CARES grant. This money has allowed us to maintain our financial stability, but more importantly, it has allowed us to hire Anna Kaplan as our digital media strategist (see below for Anna's biography).

While Anna's position is temporary (five months), working through the CARES grant process enabled us to get a new understanding of what employment practices and procedures need to be in place to fulfill the requirements of major granting agencies, another step toward greater flexibility in OHA management.

Anna's work has also been essential to us having to shift gears mid-year and move from holding a face-to-face conference to holding a virtual one. With our President-Elect Dan Kerr's vision for the conference guiding us, our program chairs Kelly Navies and Shanna Farrell have essentially had to plan two, almost entirely different conferences. We are grateful to all of them for their hard work and willingness to be flexible when the pandemic required us to shift strategy.

And we are also always grateful for our intrepid program associate Faith Bagley for her hard work and her steady hand.

By Allison K. Tracy-Taylor
September 2020

Greetings all. Since my last letter in June, the Program Committee has continued its good work on the 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting, and I'm excited for you all to learn more about it in this fall, pre-conference newsletter. It has been a significant undertaking, and I thank all those who continue to work to make it happen.

I also have spent much of 2020 thinking about how to shift to virtual platforms, and one bright spot for me this summer has been chairing the task force charged with developing the OHA's Remote Interviewing Resource. I'm happy to announce we are almost ready to share our work with the membership.

The resource is a suite of documents intended to help us all continue interviewing during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. It includes a decision tree, which serves as the central tool for people to use. Linked to the tree are narrative pieces unpacking special considerations around remote interviewing, documents outlining and comparing various platforms for remote interviewing and case studies from different projects utilizing some of these platforms. The interactive nature of the resource is best utilized via the OHA's site, though PDF versions of the different documents are also available for download.

We intend for this to be a living, dynamic resource. Understanding that the various technologies we use for remote interviewing are constantly changing, we will work to keep the information correct and up to date. The resource isn't an exhaustive examination of all the platforms one could use; rather, we tried to include ones that seemed ubiquitous, and will continue to add information on different platforms as they emerge or grow in popularity. If you are using a particular platform we don't cover but you find useful, please let us know. If you are working on a project that relies on remote interviewing, please consider submitting a case study. At the annual meeting, we are planning to hold a pre-conference workshop on remote interviewing using the OHA's Remote Interviewing Resource, as well as a town hall meeting to give folks an opportunity to ask questions, provide feedback and offer thoughts on how the resource can be improved. You can find more information about both in the meeting program. You can also email feedback to the Executive Office at oha@oralhistory.org.

Beyond the remote interviewing resources, I must admit the summer has proved challenging. Here in California, fires have broken out across much of the state, causing destruction and chaos. I'm writing this letter during a part of the day I would normally be walking, but poor air quality has forced me to pause this daily ritual (one I didn't quite realize the importance of until I couldn't do it).

The recent shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, Wisconsin, has weighed heavily on my mind and heart. The [OHA's statement on the killing of George Floyd](#) in Minneapolis and the work it is asking us all to engage is as important as ever. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has affirmed the continued need to shift to virtual platforms not just for our annual meeting, but in many aspects of our lives. Further, many of us are negotiating uncertainties around online vs. in-person instruction and programming at the various institutions we work at and engage with. All of which is to say, I'm still struggling to get through 2020, and I can only imagine many of you are, too.

One thing that has kept me going this year is all of you, and all the contributions you have continued to make to the Oral History Association. In spite of myriad challenges, you've given your time, resources and money when all were scarce. It has been my honor to serve as president of the Association, but as I've witnessed you all continue to move the Association's work forward during these unprecedented times, it has especially been an honor this year. There is a lot of work that still needs to be done, but I'm hopeful in working together there will be few limits to what we can accomplish.

You will hear from Council and the Executive Office more as we head into the annual meeting, but this is the last time I'll be writing to you in this form, so I wanted to say I look forward to seeing you virtually at the annual meeting, I'm sending you good thoughts, and thank you all. Please stay safe and sane.