



NEWSLETTER

Oral Historians and Curators: Friends, Foes or Strangers?

By Nancy MacKay
Mills College

Interviewers might think an oral history is nearly finished after the interview, but for the curator the work is just beginning.

I discovered this three years ago when I had the opportunity to set up and manage a small oral history program at Mills College in Oakland, Calif., where I work as a librarian. As a cataloger for 22 years and a practicing oral historian for about 14, I'm familiar with the practices of

each field, but when it came to bridging the gap between conducting oral history and curating, I was stumped.

I faced the typical challenges of any new oral history program but found little guidance in the archives or oral history fields. I muddled through that first year, recreating all the forms and procedures I'm sure had been done before me by equally confused program managers.

I figured there must be a better way, so in the spring of 2004 I conducted a survey on the state of the

archival practices for oral history. I announced the survey on five online discussion groups, distributed it at the Northwest Oral Historians meeting and sent it to certain archivists whose answers I was especially interested in. Responses came in from 62 oral history projects and programs around the world, confirming that archivists are coming up with innovative solutions on their own, but they also are floundering just like me. Everyone is eager for standards and best practices for curating oral histories.

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Oral Historians and IRBs: Caution Urged as Rule Interpretations Vary

By Robert B. Townsend and
Meriam Belli
American Historical Association

Editor's Note: This article is reprinted, with permission, from the December 2004 "Perspectives" of the American Historical Association.

Just as oral historians were beginning to think they could safely go back to oral history research without the possibly inhibiting oversight of Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), some are finding progress blocked at the local level. While some universities have agreed

that federal regulations were never intended to cover oral history research, many other Institutional Review Boards are holding fast to rules that include oral history under human subject research—despite recent communications to the contrary from the concerned federal government office. As a result, oral historians in academia need to be aware of the policies and practices of IRBs at their home institution, both to ensure that they are in conformity with standing policies and to press for change where needed.

As regular *Perspectives* readers will remember, oral historians seemed to make significant progress

on this front, when Michael Carome, the associate director for regulatory affairs at the federal Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP)—which is part of the Department of Health and Human Services—agreed that oral history interviewing activities “in general” fell outside the federal definition of research requiring scrutiny by IRBs.

The AHA consequently issued an advisory statement suggesting that oral historians could now safely conduct interviews without IRB review (<http://www.historians.org/Perspectives/Issues/2004/0403/0403new1.cfm>).

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From Your President

By Kim Lacy Rogers

The Oral History Association's Executive Council had a productive and creative meeting in Providence, R.I., the site of the 2005 annual meeting. We inaugurated two new task forces and put in place two reconstituted OHA committees—the Finance Committee and the Publications Committee. Each of these committees is critical to the health and public profile of the association, and we are pleased with the energy and creativity that are emerging from each group.

In response to a request from an OHA member, we have appointed a task force to investigate the place of oral history in academic life, and specifically to assess how oral history research, archival creation and management and interpretation are counted by academic committees when scholars are being considered for promotion, tenure and merit awards. Ron Grele of Columbia University is chairing this task force and Art Hansen of California State University at Fullerton, Laurie Mercier of Washington State University-Vancouver and Al Broussard of Texas A&M University are serving as members. The task force is initiating a survey to gather information about the varied practices of academic institutions.

Council also appropriated \$3,000 for an Emerging Crises Oral History Research Fund. This fund will be awarded to an oral historian or historians who need financial resources to pursue research in a contemporary crisis—such as a war, epidemic or disaster. We have not yet appointed the members of this task force. Those interested in serving in this capacity should e-mail me at rogersk@dickinson.edu.

We also have installed a revived Finance Committee, chaired by Jim Fogerty of the Minnesota Historical Society, and a reconstituted Publications Committee, chaired by

Irene Reti of the University of California, Santa Cruz. We are confident that both committees are developing innovative proposals and programs for the financial management and publications of the OHA. We are hoping to begin work on a new "Oral History and Community History" pamphlet in the coming year and also a pamphlet on "Oral History and Family History." Members interested in working on these pamphlets, whether as a writer or as co-writers, should contact Irene Reti at ihreti@ucsc.edu.

In other news regarding money and institutional support, we are pleased that the OHA continues to operate in good financial shape. The association has signed another three-year agreement with Dickinson College, which will continue to provide a home and financial support for our operations.

In closing, I'd like to add that the annual meeting in Providence is shaping up beautifully. The program, which is focused on the twin themes of dissent and hope, promises to continue engaging the membership and local communities with provocative scholarship, performances and workshops. Providence is a great restaurant town, too, so we shall all be able to feast on seafood and commune with the ghosts of dissenters past after days of stimulating sessions. Join us on Nov. 2-6! I hope to see you all there.

Remember to Renew Your OHA Membership

Please renew your OHA membership for 2005 if you have not done so already.

The University of California Press, which manages the OHA membership list, sent renewal notices in early January. If you are unsure of your membership status, please contact Madelyn Campbell, OHA executive secretary, at 717-245-1036 or e-mail oha@dickinson.edu.

Renew now so you won't miss the annual meeting program, **Oral History Review** and **Newsletters**.

Report from OHA Executive Secretary

By Madelyn Campbell

The Oral History Association has come a long way in my almost six years as executive secretary. At a recent mid-winter council meeting, I reported that the OHA has a healthy operating reserve of \$107,000 and an Endowment Fund that has reached \$123,000. The Finance Committee will be making recommendations regarding ways in which these funds can most benefit the association.

This year the OHA hopes to develop a "members only" section of our Web site, which would give our membership ready access to our membership directory and searchable online access to the **Oral History Review**. It is also our hope that more resource publications will be developed in the areas of education, legal concerns and technology. OHA will be looking for a Web site editor who would be able to develop these new initiatives.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that Dickinson College and the OHA have agreed to extend their contract for another three years. I will continue to serve as executive secretary and look forward to working with council, the many volunteers who are responsible for developing and organizing our annual meetings and with the membership of the OHA. I have thoroughly enjoyed the many phone calls and e-mails that I have received over the years from so many diverse and interesting people.

Here's Your Chance to Vote for OHA Leaders

The Oral History Association Nominating Committee announces the following candidates for election to the position of first vice president and for one OHA Council seat:

For first vice president: **Mehmed Ali**, Lowell National Historical Park.

For Council:

Roger Horowitz, Hagley Museum and Library, or

Beth Millwood, Southern Oral History Program.

OHA members also will elect members of the Nominating Committee. Three two-year positions are to be filled. Members will vote for one person for each of the three seats.

Position 1: **Al Broussard**, Texas A&M University, or **Alva Moore**

Stevenson, University of California, Los Angeles.

Position 2: **Elaine Eff**, Maryland Historical Trust, or **Elly Shodell**, Port Washington, N.Y., Public Library.

Position 3: **Andrew Russell**, Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute, or **Jess Rigelhaupt**, University of California, Berkeley.

The OHA election will be by mail ballot sent this summer to each OHA member in good standing. Biographical information and statements from each of the nominees will be included with the ballots.

The Nominating Committee and Council will accept additional nominations for officers, Council members and Nominating Committee

members in the manner described in the OHA bylaws. Nominees must be members of the OHA.

A petition signed by 20 or more OHA members in good standing, that is, whose dues are paid, may be submitted for each nomination, stating the particular office for which the nomination is made.

A petition nominating a first vice president or Council member must be in the hands of the Nominating Committee by June 15. Send to: Todd Moye, 1371 Metropolitan Ave SE, Atlanta, GA 30316.

A petition nominating a candidate for the Nominating Committee must be sent to the OHA Council by June 15. Send to: Alphine Jefferson, College of Wooster, 1189 Beall Ave., Wooster, OH 44691.

Make Plans for Providence

Oral History Association members will gather in Providence, R.I., Nov. 2-6 at the Providence Marriott, pursuing the theme: "Voices of Dissent, Voices of Hope."

Conference planners said the theme is in keeping with the historic role of the Rhode Island city in welcoming religious dissenters.

Indeed, history lovers will find plenty to love in the tiniest state's capital city.

Providence was founded in 1636 by Roger Williams, a minister from Massachusetts who was banished from that colony for his liberal religious leanings. His crime: advocating individual freedom to worship without state interference or regulation. Williams founded the first Baptist church in America, one of a number of historic churches in the city.

Located at the head of Narragansett Bay, Providence Harbor was the jumping-off point for trading schooners headed for Africa and the West Indies in the rum-slaves-molasses trade.

Historic Benefit Street boasts

nearly a mile of restored houses, schools, taverns, shops and other buildings financed by the wealth of Colonial sea captains and shipbuilders.

Rhode Island became the first colony to prohibit importation of slaves in 1774, and in 1776, it declared its independence from England two months before the rest of the colonies took the historic leap to freedom.

In addition to its rich historical flavor, the city also is home to the famed Rhode Island School of Design and its Museum of Art and Brown University.

OHA members will receive program details and registration information this summer, with a complete schedule of workshops, featured speakers, conference panel sessions, off-site tours and hotel reservation information.

Although the meeting isn't until November, National Weather Service data show temperatures that month range from an average low of 34 degrees to an average high of 52.

Oral Historians and IRBs: Confusion Continues

(Continued from page 1)

The Oral History Association (OHA) also issued a similar statement.

[The complete text of the policy statement, which originally appeared in the Winter 2003 OHA Newsletter, accompanies this article.]

In a clarification issued on January 3, 2004, Carome reaffirmed the OHRP's concurrence with the policy statement as drafted by the AHA and the OHA (and modified according to suggestions made by the OHRP).

Oversight of oral history projects remains a confusing patchwork of widely disparate policies and procedures.

Despite this effort, a preliminary review of current institutional review policies in several universities, conducted by AHA staff and Zachary Schrag (an assistant professor at George Mason University), reveals that oversight of oral history projects remains a confusing patchwork of widely disparate policies and procedures. Some university policies, for instance at the University of Texas, seem to have adopted the position of the OHRP as stated in its communications (and contained in the AHA-OHA advisories) and have excluded, "in general," oral history interviews from IRB review (http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humanresearch/special_topics/oral_history.php).

In sharp contrast, a number of institutions are following a conservative line set by UCLA, which stipulates that "communication between OHRP and the oral history community does not change the HHS interpretation of the Federal regulations for the protection of human subjects nor does it change

UCLA policy on such research." (<http://www.oprs.ucla.edu/human/Newsletters/20031210.htm>) Still other institutions have remained silent on the issue, further compounding the general ambiguity.

"We are disturbed," observed Roy Rosenzweig, the AHA's vice president for research, "that some IRBs are not following the understanding the AHA worked out with the OHRP. But we feel that we owe it to our members to make them aware that some universities are insisting on IRB oversight of oral history."

The federal regulations on human subject research were designed for medical and psychological research that could inflict physical and mental harm on human beings, an aim reflected in the professional composition of most IRBs and the semantics of OHRP regulations. These regulations have been framed primarily to address research projects using interviews conducted with questionnaires and anonymous sources, not the type of open-ended, individualist interviewing normally involved in oral history. Accordingly, the AHA and the OHA have argued that these regulations should not be applied across the board to the humanities and social sciences in general and oral history in particular.

Some legal scholars say oral history, like journalism and English, does not fall within the scope of IRB jurisdiction.

Several legal scholars support this position. For example, C. Kristina Gunsalus—academic ethics expert, special counsel in the Office of University Counsel, and adjunct professor in the College of Law at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign—asserts in a forthcoming

article in *Ethics and Behavior*, that oral history, like journalism and English, does not fall within the scope of IRB jurisdiction. She also insists that the related research currently subject to IRB regulations (surveys, informational interviews, etc.) would be best dealt with at the departmental level "rather than [left to] centralized review" ([see http://www.news.uiuc.edu/news/04/1011subjects.html](http://www.news.uiuc.edu/news/04/1011subjects.html)).

By requesting IRB exclusion for oral history research, historians are simply affirming the distinct nature and purpose of oral history research.

One repercussion of the present uncertainty has been a retreat to a cautionary stance by academic administrators and a certain degree of apprehension among historians doing oral history. By requesting IRB exclusion for oral history research, historians are simply affirming the distinct nature and purpose of oral history research (as compared to medical or even political science, despite interdisciplinary overlaps).

Despite the confusion on some campuses, the AHA continues to support the policy statement jointly elaborated with the OHA and agreed upon by the OHRP. However, given the legal uncertainties and complexities, the AHA cautions researchers doing oral interviews—especially graduate students for whom the stakes are particularly high—to carefully consult the institutional policy of their universities, as well as their department chairs, before undertaking fieldwork. This is imperative for all academic historians using oral interviews for their

research, regardless of whether such interviews are the core of their work or only one source among many.

However, caution alone will not suffice. Historians—both as individual researchers and collectively as departments—must actively work within their universities to raise awareness about the potentially harmful effects of applying standards intended for a very different type of research to oral history.

One example of such awareness-raising engagement comes from Mary Marshall Clark, director of the Oral History Research Office (OHRO) at Columbia University, who expressed optimism about maintaining what has historically been “an excellent informal working relationship” of mutual respect between the OHRO and the IRB office. “We look forward to clarifying this relationship in the next few months as we

determine a formal policy of guidance for the creation and use of oral history interviews that acknowledges both our concerns and our independent authority,” Clark said.

The AHA’s Research Division is currently undertaking a more systematic survey and analysis of IRB policies at a wide range of colleges and universities and will present a detailed report in a spring 2005 issue of *Perspectives*.

Statement Outlines Oral History Interview Policy

Application of the Department of Health and Human Services Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects at 45 CFR Part 46, Subpart A to Oral History Interviewing

Editor’s Note: The following statement, referred to in the above article from the American Historical Association, is reprinted in full from the Winter 2003 issue of the OHA Newsletter.

Most oral history interviewing projects are not subject to the requirements of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations for the protection of human subjects at 45 CFR part 46, subpart A, and can be excluded from institutional review board (IRB) oversight because they do not involve research as defined by the HHS regulations. HHS regulations at 45 CFR 46.102(D) define research as “a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.” The Oral History Association defines oral history as “a method of gathering and preserving historical information through recorded interviews with participants in past events and ways of life.”

It is primarily on the grounds that oral history interviews, in general,

are not designed to contribute to “generalizable knowledge” that they are not subject to the requirements of the HHS regulations at 45 CFR part 46 and, therefore, can be excluded from IRB review. Although the HHS regulations do not define “generalizable knowledge,” it is reasonable to assume that the term does not simply mean knowledge that lends itself to generalizations, which characterizes every form of scholarly inquiry and human communication. While historians reach for meaning that goes beyond the specific subject of their inquiry, unlike researchers in the biomedical and behavioral sciences they do not reach for generalizable principles of historical or social development, nor do they seek underlying principles or laws of nature that have predictive value and can be applied to other circumstances for the purpose of controlling outcomes. Historians explain a particular past; they do not create general explanations about all that has happened in the past, nor do they predict the future.

Moreover, oral history narrators are not anonymous individuals,

selected as part of a random sample for the purposes of a survey. Nor are they asked to respond to a standard questionnaire administered to a broad swath of the population. Those interviewed are specific individuals selected because of their often unique relationship to the topic at hand. Open-ended questions are tailored to the experiences of the individual narrator. Although interviews are guided by professional protocols, the way any individual interview unfolds simply cannot be predicted. An interview gives a unique perspective on the topic at hand; a series of interviews offer up not similar “generalizable” information but a variety of particular perspectives on the topic.

For these reasons, then, oral history interviewing, in general, does not meet the regulatory definition of research as articulated in 45 CFR part 46. The Office for Human Research Protections concurs with this policy statement, and it is essential that such an interpretation be made available to the many IRBs currently grappling with issues of human subject research.

Survey Explores Archival Practices for Oral History

(Continued from page 1)

I was struck by the range and variety of institutions supporting oral history. Academic libraries, the traditional repository, constitute 33 percent of the respondents. Government agencies constitute 13 percent, and historical societies, often administered by a government agency, constitute 21 percent. The remaining third represent non-traditional programs, such as religious, community or cultural projects, museums and nonprofit or for-profit corporations.

Respondents offered insightful comments on current practices, everyday challenges and dreams for the future. Here are a few highlights:

+ **Donated oral histories** are a mixed bag for curators. On the one hand they offer the rich subject matter that would not otherwise enter the public record. On the other hand they often come to the archive requiring a great deal of attention—the recording media is in bad shape or essential information, such as a narrator's name and date of the interview, is missing.

+ **Mixed formats** are a nightmare for curators. Each recording medium—from reel-to-reel tape to audiocassette to any digital medium—has different requirements for storage, playback, preservation and access.

Oral historians move transparently from one recording format to another as technology progresses, but archivists curate the past as well as the present and must accommodate for all formats ever used. Nearly all the respondents noted the problems of mixed formats.

+ The **Internet** is becoming the universal medium for information delivery, and oral history curators

are responding to the call. Two-thirds of the respondents have posted or are planning to post oral histories online in some form. That includes all academic institutions except one and most government or historical agencies. The format for online access varies from a simple list of interviews to the complete audio and transcript online and searchable.

Technology concerns resonated in every survey response. Respondents are both enamored and overwhelmed by the challenges and the possibilities of technology.

For curators this means digital preservation projects, new possibilities for cataloging and access and oral histories on the Internet. It also means more collaborations—with content specialists, with information technology professionals and with other institutions

I conducted this survey to assess the situation, not to draw conclusions. Yet, these topics rose to the surface as most in need of discussion between oral historians and curators:

+ Guidelines for independent oral historians and scholars to select an archive and prepare oral history materials for archival preservation

+ Appropriate technology for preservation

+ Appropriate technology for access

+ Standard cataloging practices, metadata standards for oral history

+ More collaboration on digitization projects

+ Investigation into aggregated databases for oral histories for improved access

+ Oral history teamwork, to include the curator, cataloger and information technology expert as well as the historian, interviewer,

transcriber, etc.

+ Advocacy at high levels for the critical importance of preserving oral histories as an inherent link to our cultural heritage.

I am continuing my research with case studies of six oral history programs that have been particularly successful, and I invite readers to complete my original survey (posted online at the link listed below). In addition, I hope for discussions between oral historians and those who care for them, to work toward establishing best practices and standards for curating oral histories.

Readers who would like more information about my work can visit the following Web sites:

Survey:

<http://people.mills.edu/mackay/Survey1.doc>

Survey results:

<http://people.mills.edu/mackay/FinalSurvey%20results.htm>

List of respondents:

<http://people.mills.edu/mackay/Respondents.htm>

Read on! The next two pages outline important information about archival considerations that oral historians should know.

Curating Oral Histories: A Primer for Oral Historians

By Nancy MacKay
Mills College

What is curation?

Curation refers to the long-term management and care of historical documents to ensure maximum access now and in the future. A curator is often an archivist, but can also be a cataloger, preservation officer, program manager, historian or technical specialist.

Here are some principles of curation as they apply to oral history:

+ Legal issues.

Three legal issues stand out with regard to oral histories: ownership, copyright and restrictions.

First, an archive must secure *physical ownership* of the materials it acquires. This usually is done through a deed of gift.

Intellectual ownership, on the other hand, is secured through copyright. Most archives require that copyright be transferred to them for ease in granting permission to users, though clauses in the agreement can exempt the interviewer and narrator.

Finally, archives frown upon restricting access because anything limiting use of the materials contradicts the basic premise of archival practice. Partial restrictions on oral histories (either on the content or the time period) are understandable and even necessary in certain cases, but they create bookkeeping nightmares and curators avoid them.

+ Preservation.

There is a great deal of confusion about best preservation practices for oral histories these days, but archivists agree on certain basic principles:

- 1) materials belong in a climate-controlled environment;
- 2) materials must be copied onto

various stable media and

3) original recordings must remain untouched and copies made for public use.

+ Cataloging.

A catalog helps users find oral history materials by the narrator's name, subject, institution and other important terms.

Currently there is no single source for finding oral history materials, but models such as Alexander Street Press and OCLC's WorldCat allow users to search for oral histories across institutions. Most institutions provide access to oral histories through their library online catalogs or directly through their Web sites.

+ Access.

Every archive's goal is to make its materials available to interested users. Traditionally that meant a list in a printed catalog or finding aid. Today that means the possibility of full-text access and keyword searching from anywhere in the world. Who knows what tomorrow will bring?

What's so hard about curating oral histories?

Certain features inherent to oral histories make life difficult for curators, and as a result, the oral histories end up on the problem shelf, unprocessed. Here's why:

+ Transcript or recording: what is the primary document?

In the early days of oral history, the transcript was considered the primary document and the recording often was discarded. Today, the recorded interview is generally considered the primary document, and the transcript supplements it to

verify proper names and difficult phrases.

While oral historians can follow current practice, curators must deal with interviews from the past as well as the present. Paper materials and recording media require entirely different kinds of care and often are sent to different departments for processing with different procedures.

The lack of standards for oral histories in any format means that transcripts and recordings may be processed and catalogued by separate standards, even within the same institution.

+ Insufficient information.

The value of an interview is greatly diminished if it arrives at the archive with incorrect or insufficient information.

The minimum information required is the narrator's and the interviewer's complete names, the date of the interview, a list of proper names spelled correctly and a summary of the content.

Any information not supplied by the interviewer means the cataloger must do additional research, make educated guesses or listen to the entire interview.

+ Media and formats are problematic in every step of processing for the archive.

CDs, MDs, microcassettes, audiocassettes and videocassettes each have their own requirements for access, cataloging, playback and preservation. Current recording technologies are in transition, but at some point, standards for recording and preservation media will surface. When this happens everyone will be relieved, but the curator's headaches aren't over. Because an archive preserves the past as well as the present, curators will always have to cope with obsolete and nonstandard formats.

More About Curating Oral Histories

What about all those interviews that haven't made it into an archive?

Curators and oral historians alike know there are thousands of worthy interviews tucked away in the offices of independent scholars, interviews collected for research that is now complete. Everyone agrees that these materials should be made available to future researchers.

But taking the steps to find the *right* permanent home for an interview collection requires planning.

Curators receive frequent offers for donations of materials that belong in the public record, but they must set priorities about which ones they can accept. It is worthwhile for oral historians to seek out an archive most appropriate for their interview materials, preferably before the interviews take place.

Here are some tips for preparing oral histories for an archive:

+ Proper legal release.

This is the most important item. No reputable archive will consider a

donation without the proper legal release forms. Because practices vary, each archive should be consulted about the necessary paperwork.

+ Content.

Curators need to know if the subjects covered in the interview fit into the collection guidelines of their archive.

+ Size.

Every interview needs individual attention. It needs to be accessioned, evaluated for preservation, copied, possibly transcribed and catalogued. Each of these steps requires the attention of skilled professionals. Therefore, curators will be interested in how many physical items, i.e. tapes, transcripts, etc., you plan to donate in order to assess the resources required for processing.

+ Condition of media.

A tape or disk in poor condition or an obsolete format can add many levels of difficulty to the curator's job. She must balance the value of

accepting a donation that requires preservation work against collections of similar content that easily can be added to the collection.

+ Missing or incorrect information.

Curators are unlikely to accept interviews that are not properly labeled or if vital information is incomplete or incorrect. An error on the tape or disk label will be copied into the catalog record, into the transcript, onto the Web site summary and eventually into an academic paper.

Likewise, an interview that lacks vital information such as names and dates diminishes the value of the oral history.

Catalogers take all this very seriously. They often are unable to do the required research to correct misinformation and are unwilling to perpetuate errors into the public record.

Editor's Note: The OHA Newsletter thanks Nancy MacKay for sharing the results of her research and working to educate oral historians about issues they often overlook.

University of Virginia Launches Kennedy Oral History Project

The long political career of Massachusetts Sen. Edward M. Kennedy will be the focus of a new oral history project at The Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia.

The center announced the project in December 2004, saying it planned to create an archive of spoken recollections and reflections that illuminates Kennedy's public life, his vocation, the U.S. Senate and the political world in which he has moved.

The Miller Center said that in addition to extensive interviews with Kennedy, it also plans to interview:

Kennedy family members, friends and classmates; staff members from his senatorial and presidential campaigns and the campaigns of his brothers, President John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy; national and Massachusetts Democratic party officials; Massachusetts supporters, adversaries and constituents; key staff members; outside advisers, journalists; interest group and community activists; selected members of the executive branch and selected public figures from other countries.

The project, which is expected to take about six years to complete, is

part of the Miller Center's Presidential Oral History Program, which has established a systematic effort to collect comprehensive, spoken accounts of the presidencies of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

The center says its goal is to preserve for the historical record the voices of key actors within each administration.

The Kennedy project is expected to shed light for scholars on many aspects of Kennedy's career as well as the evolution of the Senate and the changing nature of political leadership in America.

OHA NEWS UPDATES

OHA Task Force Examines Academic Evaluation Practices

By Ronald Grele
Columbia University
Oral History Research Office

The Oral History Association has established a task force to investigate the role of oral history in the professional evaluation of our academic colleagues for whom the practice is a major part of their work.

We are particularly interested in the ways in which oral history practice is weighed in decisions dealing with hiring, retention, promotion and tenure, if, indeed, that work is considered as part of those processes. In what ways are publications based upon oral history considered when assessing the publication record of colleagues, or in teaching or public service or the other aspects of faculty standing?

At this stage we are interested in gathering any formal reports or statements of established policies that mention oral history as a factor in hiring, retention, promotion or tenure decisions of departments or academic institutions, as well as anecdotal evidence.

We plan to use this information to construct a more detailed and reflective survey of the profession. We would be most interested in hearing from those who have developed an oral history practice, which they have submitted as a part of their dossiers, or from those who have served on various committees evaluating colleagues on the basis of their work in oral history.

Please send responses to: Ronald Grele, 90 Morningside Dr. #3A, New York, NY 10027. E-mail: RJG5@columbia.edu.

Thank you.

Author Sought For New Pamphlet On Family History

The Oral History Association is searching for a freelance writer to write a pamphlet on using oral history in family history. This will be published by the OHA as part of the pamphlet series. Stipend payment will be \$1,500.

For more information, contact Irene Reti, chair of the OHA Publications Committee, at ihreti@ucsc.edu or at 831-459-2847.

Awards Deadline Coming Soon

Vagaries of mail delivery may render this announcement obsolete, but if you receive this *Newsletter* in early April, you still have time to submit nominations for the three Oral History Association awards to be presented at this fall's meeting in Providence, R.I. The awards are:

- + The Martha Ross Teaching Award, for distinguished pre-collegiate teaching of oral history;
- + Award for the Outstanding Use of Oral History in a Non-print Format, recognizing distinguished use of oral history in a film, video, performance piece, radio program or series, exhibition or drama;
- + Book Award, for distinguished use of oral history in a published work by academic scholars, public historians, independent professionals or community-based groups or individuals.

Submissions for all three awards must be postmarked by April 15. Complete details are available on the OHA Web site: www.dickinson.edu/oha

Letter to the Editor

Thanks for a good OHA *Newsletter*. I especially liked the report by Norma Smith and others about the session where three of the homeless people interviewed in the Sisters of the Road project responded to the presentations. In my opinion, it was one of the best sessions of a very good conference!

I must point out, though, that this impromptu sharing wasn't the first time narrators were included in an OHA conference. In 1995, at the conference in Milwaukee, I chaired a panel which included four of my narrators: "The Unity of the Catholic Worker Movement: A Panel Discussion between Narrators and Interviewer."

As I'm remembering, we discussed—at length and with some disagreement—whether I "got it right" in my oral history of the Catholic Worker movement, "Voices from the Catholic Worker" (Temple UP, 1993).

And yes, it's a concept we should actualize more often.

Rosalie G. Riegler
Professor Emerita of English
Saginaw Valley State University

International News About Oral History Available Online

Check out the latest issue of the International Oral History Association's newsletter, with a roundup of oral history activities around the world. It is available online at: <http://www.ioha.fgv.br/>



Washington Update

By Bruce Craig
National Coalition for History

Editor's Note: The National Coalition for History serves as a national advocacy office in Washington, D.C., for historical and archival professions. It is a consortium of more than 50 organizations, including the Oral History Association. Here are selected excerpts from recent "NCH Washington Update" columns that might be of interest to oral historians.

Language Mandates Annual Instruction About U.S. Constitution

Shortly before Congress acted in December 2004 on the final \$388 billion omnibus appropriation bill, Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., the Senate's unofficial constitutional scholar, inserted language into the measure requiring that all educational institutions that receive federal monies must offer students an instructional program on the U.S. Constitution each Sept. 17, Constitution Day.

The measure will apply to all public and private institutions, including colleges and universities,

that receive federal money.

Becky Timmons, director of government relations at the American Council on Education, said college leaders are concerned that the provision could set a precedent in which future Congresses would feel free to issue additional mandatory curricular requirements.

The U.S. Department of Education is expressly prohibited from establishing a national curriculum.

The language of Byrd's rider does not specify how the instruction should be carried out, though the Department of Education is expected to issue a rule or letter of guidance to colleges and schools.

Byrd was motivated to take this action because he firmly believes that Americans need a better understanding of the Constitution and its importance.

"We can build upon the respect and reverence we still hold for our Constitution," Byrd said. "But we had better start now, before, through ignorance and apathy, even that much slips away from us."

Byrd's reverence for the Constitution is well known on Capitol Hill. He habitually carries a copy of the document in an inside breast pocket of his suit, and he has been known to flourish it during heated arguments on the Senate floor.

Watergate Papers Now Public

On Feb. 4, the University of Texas unveiled the Woodward and Bernstein Watergate Papers. The Washington Post reporters' collection includes thousands of pages of hand-written notes, typed memos and transcripts culled from 75 file-drawer size boxes bought by the university for \$5 million. The archive, however, said it would not reveal the identity of the "Deep Throat," the reporters' secret source, and other confidential sources until their deaths.

Summer Workshop Options Available

Oral historians interested in more training have options on the East and West coasts and the Midwest this summer.

A two-and-a-half day Oral History Institute at **Kenyon College** in Gambier, Ohio, is scheduled for June 7-9. The program will emphasize hands-on experience in planning and conducting oral history projects.

The institute is co-sponsored by the Ohio Humanities Council, the Rural Life Center at Kenyon College, the Ohio Association of Historical Societies and Museums and the Ohio Historical Society.

The institute costs \$250, which includes lodging, six meals and all workshop materials.

Applications are available at www.ohiohumanities.org. The deadline is April 30.

The Summer Institute on Oral History at **Columbia University**, scheduled for June 13-24, will focus on the challenges of using oral history to document catastrophe in its immediate aftermath.

The institute also will feature workshops on interviewing, developing community history projects and recording audio and video oral histories for multimedia productions.

Registration is \$1,000. Campus housing is available for \$41 a night for a shared room or \$82 a night for a private room.

Applications are available at: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/oral/summer/index.html>. The deadline is April 8.

Another training opportunity is the **LEGACY Oral History workshop at the San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum**, scheduled for July 14-16.

The three-day workshop is designed for beginners through advanced oral historians.

The workshop fee is \$300 before June 1 and \$350 thereafter. Contact Jeff Friedman at Legacy@sfpalm.org or call 415-255-4800, ext. 823.

STATE AND REGIONAL REPORT



SOHA Holds Meeting With Anthropologists In Santa Fe, N. M.

Members of the Southwest Oral History Association are meeting April 8-10 in conjunction with the Society for Applied Anthropology.

The joint session in Santa Fe, N.M., focuses on the theme: "Heritage, Environment and Tourism."

Scholarly panels, workshops, an art gallery walk and an American Indian film festival are scheduled.

Vermont Web Site Tells POWs' Story

Andy Kolovos
Vermont Folklife Center

A Vermont Public Radio documentary that aired Dec. 16, 2004, to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge is available in streaming audio format on the Vermont Folklife Center Web site: <http://vermontfolklifecenter.org/multimedia/radio/pow/>

The folklife center, in Middlebury, Vt., produced the radio documentary titled "Prisoners of War: A Story of Four American Veterans." The documentary is based on oral history interviews and presents the experiences of four World War II veterans who were captured by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge and held as POWs until the end of the war.

Research materials for the

program were generated under the auspices of the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project.

Independent radio producer Erica Heilman and folklife center folklorist Gregory L. Sharrow produced the program.

Kentucky Civil Rights Oral History Materials Available Online

By Doug Boyd
Kentucky Oral History Commission

More than 10,000 pages of electronic transcripts plus audio and video interviews collected by the award-winning Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky Oral History Project are available online.

The interactive online digital media database is full-text searchable and can be sorted by county, subject or by decade.

The site is at: <http://history.ky.gov/civilrights.htm>

The Kentucky Oral History Commission is a program of the Kentucky Historical Society.

NOHA Spring Meeting Scheduled in Idaho

The Northwest Oral History Association will join with the 2005 Pacific Northwest History Conference at the Red Lion Downtowner Hotel in Boise, Idaho, April 28-30.

The NOHA region encompasses Utah, Idaho, Montana, Washington, Oregon, Northern California, Alaska and British Columbia.

3rd Edition of "Heroes" Released in Texas

The University of North Texas Oral History Program has released the 3rd edition of "Heroes," edited by Christopher N. Koontz and Ronald E. Marcello.

The publication is the finding aid for the World War II holdings of the university's oral history program.

The 189-page catalog includes chilling excerpts from the interviews as well as annotated listings of interviewees in an effort to "educate the reader that war is a deadly, serious, brutal business," Marcello said in a cover letter distributing the guide.

Japanese Restaurant History Documented In Hawaii Project

The Center for Oral History at the University of Hawaii Manoa has completed a 450-page bound volume of transcripts of interviews with 11 men and women connected with restaurants on Oahu owned and operated by families that originated in Oroku, Okinawa.

More than 70 such restaurants have operated on the island since the 1920s.

Interviewees recounted the long hours and hard work associated with running a family restaurant. Others recalled memories of their clientele. And one described his career rising from dishwasher to chef.

The project was a joint effort of the Hawaii United Okinawa Association and the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, which contracted with the Center for Oral History to conduct the interviews.

The publication, "The Oroku, Okinawa Connection: Local-style Restaurants in Hawaii," was distributed to University of Hawaii system and state regional libraries.

Endnotes...

Washington Press Corps History Book Released

New from Oxford University Press is "Reporting from Washington: The History of the Washington Press Corps" by Donald A. Ritchie, associate historian of the U.S. Senate and past president of the Oral History Association.

The book chronicles dramatic changes in Washington journalism from Franklin Roosevelt's presidency through the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Radio Program Features Oral History Interviews

In March, C-SPAN Radio began a series of broadcasts of the Former Members of Congress oral history program, headed in the late 1970s by longtime OHA members Charles Morrissey and Fern Ingersoll. The series began with the broadcast of OHA member Ron Grele's interview with New York

Rep. Emanuel Celler, who served in Congress from 1923 to 1973.

African Americans Focus Of Petersburg, Va., Meet

Historical threads that connect the Civil War to today is the focus of a Conference on African Americans and the Civil War, scheduled for May 26-28 in Petersburg, Va.

For more information check the Web site: www.caacw.org.

World War II Memories Highlight London Meeting

The consequences and legacy of World War II in the memories of participants and for successive generations is the focus of a July 1-3 conference at King's College, London.

Sponsored by the college and the Oral History Society, the conference marks the 60th anniversary of the end of the war and offers an opportunity to understand how the processes of remembering, and the memories themselves, have changed.

For more information, contact

Belinda Waterman at:
belinda@essex.ac.uk.

Inupiaq Whaling Captain Featured in Oral History

Oral History Association member Karen Brewster is the editor of "The Whales, They Give Themselves: Conversations with Harry Brower, Sr.," published by the University of Alaska Press.

The oral biography of an Inupiaq whaling captain, artisan and community leader from Barrow, Alaska, spans a period of dramatic cultural and economic change for Native people in 20th century Alaska.

The OHA Newsletter invites contributions of stories and photos for the next issue. Please send them by the Aug. 1 deadline to: ohaeditor@aol.com

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