

OHNSW Presidents Report for 2014/2015 Year

It has been a busy year for your committee and I will be telling you here about some activities we have developed as well as some of the work, initiated by former President Virginia Macleod, that have come to fruition. During this year we welcomed 28 new members as well as sadly losing some: both long time fellow oral historian Judy Wing and Nan Manefield passed away.

Over the last few years OHNSW has aimed to diversify our offerings and increase our outreach activities. Two initiatives of the previous committee bore fruit in the 2014/15 year. The first was a project with Rachel Vincent the Regional Museum Officer at the Riverina Museum who secured a grant of 150,000 from Arts NSW titled '*Talking Machines: a regional partnership to revive rural technology collections in the Riverina*'. Our part of the project was to provide workshops for Indigenous participants. One of our members, Therese Sweeney, gave a very successful workshop in Wagga.

The second was a partnership involving Liverpool City council, RAHS, and OHNSW to help make the content of the Dictionary of Sydney's oral history collection more accessible. We donated \$5000 to curate, identify and digitise a collection of oral histories completed in the 1980s about the Liverpool area which was carried out by Margo Beasley for the Dictionary. Our second \$1200 donation was to contribute to technological innovation on the Dictionary website which made it easier to access oral histories in general.

As your new president, I embarked on a process of developing the profile of the organisation further by setting up some issue seminars at intermediate level that went beyond basic workshops which we continue to do twice a year with the RAHS that are important for all newcomers to the field. The first of these was also held in conjunction with RAHS and PHA (NSW) where we aimed to have a convivial evening drink for people to network and chat as well as have some intellectual stimulation with a themed seminar.

The seminar '*Possibilities and Pitfalls in oral History: the Interview in Perspective*' was held on June 11th with three speakers who helped explore differences between types of interviewing that also reflected on oral history's particular qualities. It was an enormous success and a great feeling to be part of a wider group of oral historians who are everywhere - over 45 people came from both Lismore and Canberra as well as all parts of Sydney. A big thanks to everyone involved who helped to make this such a great event. If you couldn't make it, you can read a report in our final *Voiceprint* coming out in October.

Similarly, towards the end of June we held an intensive workshop on digital storytelling which was conducted by Helen Klaebe from Queensland University of Technology and her colleague Bryan Crawford. This seminar was very well-attended and attracted participants from all over the state and beyond, with one participant flying in from Melbourne. Klaebe and Crawford provided a thorough overview of the steps involved in creating a digital story, which gave participants the tools to be able to go home and feel confident enough to further explore this medium. The workshop culminated in a viewing of all the digital stories produced on the day, which was a moving and inspiring note to end on.



We have a couple more events coming up with the same intention in September and October that I hope you can attend. Before the AGM on August 29th, we have a seminar titled '*From the Margins to the Centre: Some major LGBTI projects*' in which Robert Reynolds, Shirleene Robson and Scott McKinnon will reflect on their involvement in these significant oral history projects. In September Doug Boyd, who is the keynote speaker at the OHAA conference in Perth is coming to Sydney to present an Oral History NSW seminar on how technology is changing the practice and purpose of oral history.

In our final event for the year, this October, the well-known English oral historian Anna Green will be coming over from New Zealand, where she now lives, to speak about intergenerational oral histories in families. This should be a great seminar for those doing oral histories with different family members, - grandparents, daughters, sons and grandchildren. Even siblings often have a very different memory of the same events within a household, so we should have a great discussion about the nature of memory as well as the issues in conducting oral histories.

We'll also be running our regular basic training workshop, *Capturing Memories: Oral History in the Digital Age* in partnership with RAHS in October, which will be led by Janis Wilton and Andrew Host.

Finally, this year we also ran a special workshop with the Indigenous curators at the state library who would like to interview elders and other members of communities they visit in NSW in the course of their work for the library - and we hope that this will be the beginning of an important relationship and the building up of indigenous collections across the state.

Our ongoing partnerships with both the Royal Australian Historical Society and the State Library of NSW have been essential to our functioning and success over the last few years and I would like to take this opportunity to thank these organisations for supporting Oral History NSW.

The Committee this year has done a great deal to further the work and profile of the organisation, so I would like to thank Andrew Host, Leonard Janizewski, Linda West, Sandra Blamey, Sue Andersen, Virginia Macleod, Graham Hinton and finally Anisa Puri who was seconded to the committee when she arrived last December from her work as project officer on the Australian Generations project in Melbourne. Sandra Blamey has been indefatigable in managing the website with Sava Pinney, who unfortunately has to retire, but Sally Zwartz will step in to help out here. I would also like to thank both Francis Good and Sally Zwartz for the sterling work that they have done to produce the *Network News* and *Voiceprint* between them over the last year.

Next year we will be keeping *Network News* which is vital for getting out messages of events and information to members but we will phase out *Voiceprint*. We have set up a Facebook page, soon to be live, and will have a blog on our website for more active discussion of issues arising in our community. We will let you know when this happens, so please think about posting a short piece that will help us all to exchange ideas and communicate with each other.



The volunteer help we receive from members on the committee is invaluable and it is hard for others to appreciate what it takes to keep things bubbling along. So a special thank you for years of work to retiring members Pat Francis, Virginia Macleod and Leonard Janizewski. We will be electing two new committee members at the end of August AGM.

Paula Hamilton, President 2014-2015

