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NOTES AND NOTICES

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the 51st edition of *Voiceprint*. We hope you will find interest and information in its pages.

The Conference experience is essential for oral historians who work mostly 'solo'. Sharing ideas about projects and process is an important way to develop questioning and listening skills. We are pleased, therefore, to include reports on the overseas conference experiences of members and also of the two recipients of OHA NSW grants to attend the recent NOHANZ conference in New Zealand. We thank them for sharing their impressions, especially for those of us not able to attend these events.

Do read the two annual reports from outgoing OH NSW President, Virginia Macleod, and the National President, Sue Anderson, which give details of an eventful, productive 2013-14 for the Association. There is also a report on the NSW AGM in August and the Dictionary of Sydney project supported by OH NSW. There are many aspects to our activities and your involvement is important and welcome. Please participate – the newly re-designed website at <http://www.oralhistorynsw.org.au> will lead you to many 'places' of interest.

This is a 'report-full' edition – there are accounts of the oral history situation in the light of changed circumstances at the National Film and Sound Archive and the Mitchell Library (with thanks to Elizabeth Craig and Sandra Blamey) and an update on the Boston College Belfast Project, where the confidentiality of oral history interviews has been challenged by the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Grace Barnes' account of 'Putting the Female Voice into Musical Theatre' poses other questions about confidentiality and speaking out.

This is Margaret's last edition as co-editor. Sally and the new co-editor, Francis Good, will be seeking your contributions for the April 2015 edition soon. Welcome, Francis. From Margaret, thank you to everyone who has contributed reports and information to *Voiceprint* since October 2011.

Margaret Leask and Sally Zwartz

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I am pleased and honoured to be your new President for the 2014-2015 year. I am rapidly learning just how many people behind the scenes work tirelessly to make Oral History NSW as an organisation function smoothly. I will take the time to find out from members how we can develop further but my main aim is to try and build on the wonderful legacy left by Virginia Macleod and Sandra Blamey by strengthening our profile and membership. Thanks to them and the Committee, Oral History NSW is in good shape.



Who am I?

For those members who do not know me, I am an historian who has recently retired from the University of Technology Sydney, so I will be free to write more history! I have had a long association with Oral History NSW, both as a teacher of MA oral history courses at UTS, a long-time practitioner of oral history since the 1980s, a volunteer speaker, advisor and trainer. I have been involved in some key conferences along the way – one of the national conferences with Rosie Block in the 1990s; and I was also part of the team (with Rosie Block and Janis Wilton) who organised the very successful Sydney International Oral History Conference in 2006.

At the recent IOHA conference in Barcelona, I was also elected as the Pacific representative on the International Oral History Committee for the next two years. The next conference will be organised by Indira Chowdrey and held at Bangalore in India and I hope to be helping make this one a success as well.

I have been involved in many oral history projects and writing about them since the 1980s when I first contributed a series of interviews on domestic servants (by then an occupation fading from social memory) to the Council of the Aged-funded NSW Bicentennial History Project. I also conducted 10 oral history interviews with Hazel Hawke for the Western Australian archive before she was stricken with Alzheimer's; and have since been involved in a broad spectrum of oral history projects with Indigenous rangers at National Parks, several local councils, museums (national, state and Jewish museum); and particular university-based oral history projects on the history of journalism; and history of television in Australia. I am on the advisory board of the Palgrave Oral History Series and the Australian Generations ARC project.

I have a couple of concerns I would like to follow up during my tenure. First, I believe we need to be broadening the role of oral history and trying to embed it more fully within the various government and parliamentary authorities as part of the archival collecting process for the history of these institutions as is the case in the USA. Second, I would like to focus less on the interview and more on shared

remembering and how we get more people listening to the oral histories we make that are so rich and tell us so much about our past and present.

Beyond all this, of course I am deeply committed to the best oral history practice and finding ways to improve the technology that is essential to our craft in the digital age. The internet and social media have resulted in a significant increase in pictures of the world about us and its history, but it also provides opportunities for those of us who love the sound archive and the voice to present our material in many different ways.

I am happy to hear your ideas, news or thoughts on oral history and the role of Oral History NSW at any time.

Paula Hamilton, President

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NEW MEMBERS

Xanthe O'Donnell - CAMPERDOWN
Irene Rogers - NOOSAVILLE
Michael Bennett - WAHROONGA
Isobelle Barrett Meyering - DARLINGHURST
Brian James - NORTH TURRAMURRA
Margaret Carroll - MOLONG
Vishna Collins - ST IVES
Jenny MacRitchie – MAROUBRA
Naomi Malone - CAMPERDOWN
Linda Persson - CROYDON PARK
Dush Perera – EPPING
Kathy Tenison – LEETON
Malcolm Santer - SPRINGWOOD
Alison Billing – FORESTVILLE
Kylie Andrews – MALABAR
Catherine Shirley – ST IVES

ASSOCIATION NEWS AND EVENTS

National President's report 2013-14

I feel honoured to have been elected the inaugural President of the newly named Oral History Australia Inc., now operating under an updated constitution. Many thanks must go to Sandra Blamey, outgoing President Jill Adams and the previous committee for their dedication to achieving this goal. I feel all I have had to do was to take over the reins after the hard work was done.

The new committee comprises some very experienced members, like Jill Cassidy, who has been a wonderful support and fount of knowledge, and I thank her and all other members, including Jill Adams, Sandra Blamey, Catherine Cottle, Len Cargeeg, Matthew Stephens, Suzanne Mulligan and Virginia Macleod for their assistance and advice in helping to ease me into this role. I have continued to work closely with Ariella van Luyn, chair of the Journal's editorial board. The other editorial board members, Beth Robertson and Bill Bunbury, have been most invaluable sources of knowledge and advice. Elaine Rabbitt has been progressive in her role as chair of our Sub-committee on the Development of a TAFE Training Module, and we continue to support her initiatives in oral history accreditation.

Not the least of the support I have had has come from our new National Secretary, Anne Johnson, who has brought fresh energy, ideas and skills to the role. I also had the pleasure of travelling with Anne to the International Oral History Conference in Barcelona in July 2014. We had a wonderful experience engaging with many interesting people and papers and I warmly welcome her to the committee.

The International Oral History Conference saw the appointment of Indira Chowdrey from India as President, with Mark Cave (USA) and David Beorlegui (Spain) as Vice Presidents. Paula Hamilton was elected our regional representative for Oceania. Helen Klæbe (Qld) resigned as Vice President and as English editor of *Words and Silences*. The latter position was filled by Christina Landman (Africa) and the Spanish editorial position by David Beorlegui. The next international conference will be held in Bangalore, India in 2016.

The new national committee was appointed at the 2013 Conference held in Adelaide, which was a huge success thanks to the enormous efforts of South Australian President and 2014 South Australian Historian of the Year, June Edwards, and Mandy Paul and Suzanne Redmond of History SA. Compliments about the conference are still coming in. A date has now been set for the 2015 Conference, kindly hosted by Western Australia, of early September and preparation for it is well under way by WA Vice President Doug Ayer, President Len Cargeeg and the WA team.

During the year Oral History Australia has found the need to make a voice with regard to many of the budgetary cuts being proposed by both federal and state governments. We have written to the relevant Ministers and the management of the National Film and

Sound Archive regarding our strong objections to the slashing of oral history positions and resources at the National Film and Sound Archive and have personally attended consultative meetings that have been held around the country to voice our position.

I am also aware of vigorous responses at a state level to cuts and mergers that will impact seriously on public resources for oral history research. For example, the South Australian plan to merge State Records with the State Library is seen as a regressive move given that this is where they came from so many years ago. Please continue to voice your concerns to your local and federal members of Parliament. The more they fear electoral revolt, the better!

The new role of President of Oral History Australia this year has been a steep learning curve for me. However with the support I have received I feel well equipped for an exciting year ahead with an active, collaborative and productive Committee, robust membership and lots of stories to be heard.

Sue Anderson, President, Oral History Australia Inc

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Oral History NSW AGM 2014

This year's AGM, attended by about 20 people, was held at the Macquarie University Art Gallery on Saturday August 16. Worth the trek to get there, the venue had been organised by Leonard Janiszewski who gave last year's AGM illustrated talk on Australia's Greek cafés. Besides enjoying delicious biscuits with the tea and coffee, attendees had the opportunity to view some of the University's art collection before, during and after the meeting. Thank you, Leonard.

Retiring President, Virginia Macleod welcomed members and guests. Apologies were noted and the Minutes from the AGM held on 26 October 2013 were agreed. Virginia's full annual report follows in this edition of *Voiceprint*. She began with the following quote from Helen Garner's 'The Art of the Dumb Question', from *True Stories* (Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1997, pp.9-10), which the meeting agreed is a terrific observation for oral historians.

Interviewing is not what people imagine. Before you try it, you think it must be like pulling teeth. You approach each interview fearing that you will not get enough. But what you learn is that you must humble yourself before the other. You have to let go of your anxious desire to control and direct the encounter. You have to live for a while in the uncertainty of not knowing where it's heading. You don't lead. You learn to follow. And then you are amazed at what people are prepared to tell you. People will always

tell you more than you need to know – and more than they want you to know. This is not only because you are alert to their body language, as well as their speech. I think it's because most ordinary people can't really believe that anyone else is interested in them. In your average casual conversation, the listener is only just restraining himself from butting in with – Well, I -. As an interviewer you have to discipline your narcissism. You have to train yourself to shut up about what you did and saw and felt. You learn by practice to listen properly and genuinely, to follow with respect the path of the other's thoughts. After a while this stops being an effort. You notice that your concentration span is getting longer – longer than you ever thought it could become. Fewer and fewer things bore you. Curiosity is a muscle. Patience is a muscle. What begins as a necessary exercise gradually becomes natural. And then immense landscapes open out in front of you. A woman who spoke to me when I was researching the Penrith story in this book kept cutting herself off mid-sentence and saying, "But this must be boring." After the fifth time she said this, I heard myself say – and mean – words that I had never dreamt would pass my lips. 'Listen, I am one of the least boreable people you are ever likely to meet.'

Virginia then spoke of some of the highlights of the year included in her report and she acknowledged the contribution of the committee (all volunteers). There were many 'thank you's', with flowers being presented to Sandra Blamey for her work on the new-look website, to Joyce Cribb for bringing order to the Archives before they went to the State Library and to Susan Kennedy, the retiring compiler/editor of our monthly *Network News* (now prepared by Francis Good). In turn, Virginia was thanked for her hard work and commitment and presented with flowers and a book gift voucher. Treasurer Andrew Host's financial reports for the year ended 30 June 2014 were presented and accepted. Thirty-three new members joined and were welcomed to Oral History NSW during the financial year. It was noted that grants totalling \$1,200 were paid to three students to attend the national conference in Adelaide in September 2013. Two large amounts, \$3,186 for the new website development, and \$5,000 as a donation to the Dictionary of Sydney, were considered to be exceptional payments from surplus funds which nevertheless resulted in a loss, but not a loss in real terms.

Then followed the election of Office Bearers and Committee Members as follows:

President Dr Paula Hamilton

Secretary Linda West

Treasurer Andrew Host

Public Officer Graham Hinton

Committee Sandra Blamey, Pat Francis, Leonard Janiszewski, Virginia Macleod and Carol McKirdy



*At the AGM: past president Virginia Macleod,
new president Paula Hamilton*

The meeting then broke for afternoon tea amongst the art works. It was re-convened and Virginia introduced Dr Lisa Murray, Historian for the City of Sydney Council and Chair of the Dictionary of Sydney Trust. This growing online and not for profit dictionary project is supported by the City of Sydney, the Australian Research Council, some of Sydney's leading cultural institutions and universities, and Oral History NSW.

Lisa introduced the meeting to the audio capabilities of the Dictionary which is a totally online resource taking advantage of new digital technology. The aim is to work with the community – the content is generated by volunteer writers, there is access via Facebook and Twitter and community radio station 2SER has a weekly blog posting which acts as a short guide and helps reach new audiences. The \$5000 donation from Oral History NSW is making it possible to incorporate oral history into the dictionary, particularly in relation to the George's River people and history project. The website is different to others – it provides highlights from the City of Sydney oral history collection and other archives which point people back to the historical source. Lisa believes the methodology provides a way of sharing information, encouraging curiosity and discovery. Given the age of some of the interviews, Lisa advises that the sound quality does vary but on balance considers it better to use and make accessible the material than not using it at all. The interview extracts have been edited (some to exclude interviewer questions), and mostly last no more than seven or eight minutes. Other archives accessed include the National Library collection and Warren Fahey's research on folk music in Australia. The Dictionary researchers continue to seek other audio material for inclusion.

Lisa distributed an information sheet, *The Sounds of Sydney*, with web addresses to the audio material which includes individuals talking about a diverse range of subjects from Sydney Harbour in 1909, childhood memories of Leichhardt and Petersham in 1930, Parramatta Girls' Home, Central Railway Station, Wentworth Park Racecourse, Sydney's Coffee culture, the Wayside Chapel and peace celebrations in Martin Place in 1945.

In response to questions, Lisa advised that Margo Beasley (former City of Sydney Oral Historian), was reviewing material in Liverpool Council's large oral history collection from the 1980s to digitise and provide access to interviews. This project is acting as a pilot to other local councils as to ways of raising the profile of oral history and adding

layers of understanding to local community activities. She also advised they had received some funding from the Royal Historical Society (\$2000) and were most grateful for the OH NSW support. We were given a demonstration of how images are being connected to the Dictionary, how sound is being integrated and how to go to the full record of an entry. Lisa was pleased to advise that school groups are starting to use the Dictionary and that links are being created to other collections and their catalogues. All contributors are acknowledged – the process is collegiate and transparent in the sharing of resources. This November (2014), the Dictionary will have been live for five years and its accessible material continues to grow. The officer to contact is Kim Hanna – dictionaryofsydney.org.

You'll find the Dictionary [here](#) - recommended!

Margaret Leask

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Oral History NSW President's report 2013-2014

We welcomed 33 new members and many returning members during this year; so we currently exist to support you - 240 people and institutions who are either already involved in practising oral history or are about to start. All of you are interested to learn more and contribute to this rapidly expanding field. Read how your subscriptions have been used to your benefit.

In the 10 months since the association's new name was approved at our AGM last October, Oral History NSW has achieved a new presence on the internet. Our website has been completely redesigned to make it more appealing visually and easier to find what you want. The section Doing Oral History provides comprehensive guidelines, technical information, copyright information and templates for documenting interviews and conditions of consent. Read /Listen section stores our monthly newsletter *Oral History Network News*, now archived for a six monthly cycle, and *Voiceprint* is available since the October 2011 issue. You can also listen to seminars you may not have been able to attend, and find reference articles and books to expand your knowledge. The headings are self-explanatory – so explore all that the site offers, at <http://www.oralhistorynsw.org.au/index.html>

The upgrade started at the end of December and finished at the end of June. The work was commercially contracted to the company which has hosted and managed our site for three years. However much of the supervisory work was undertaken by Sandra Blamey, who has been dedicated and tenacious, ensuring that we have a good quality result. Member Sava Pinney has volunteered to maintain the website now construction is complete, a task previously undertaken by Tiu Tarmo. Thank you all.

Our change of name also entailed work on providing a new format and template for both *Network News* and *Voiceprint*. *Network News* has already been released with its new masthead and *Voiceprint* will appear in October

For the last two years Susan Kennedy edited and produced *Network News*, bringing members notices of events, websites, exhibitions, podcasts, articles and other contributions about oral history. Francis Good took over in May and has kept up this tradition with interesting content. Thank you both.

Margaret Leask and Sally Zwartz, our editors of *Voiceprint*, bring us a rich publication with in-depth articles and contributions from members about their experiences doing oral history and we reached a milestone with the 50th anniversary publication in April 2014. Francis Good will be joining the team and allowing Margaret to retire for the edition in April 2015. Thank you all three.

One of the main activities of Oral History NSW is to provide opportunities for members to share experiences and hear from those who have undertaken oral history projects. This year we had two very successful sessions: one on oral history in the field of medical history and another popular morning on the nuts and bolts of community projects in the workplace, a local government area and with migrant communities. Both these were held at the State Library of NSW with the assistance of Sally Hone, the library's Curator - Research and Discovery, who also recorded the sessions so they can be accessed through our website. We appreciate Sally's support.

Workshops are held to introduce beginner interviewers to the concepts of oral history and the technical and archival aspects too. For the third consecutive year two workshops have been held in Sydney with the Royal Australian Historical Society. These reach many people working in local historical societies as well as individuals planning interviews for family history, or professional or private projects. We appreciate working collaboratively in this way with the Society.

It's pleasing to note that workshops are spreading to rural NSW. One was held at Orange last August, another in Newcastle in June and one in Riverina for volunteers in local museums at the end of July. More are planned. These workshops depend on volunteer members contributing their time. Especial thanks are due to Sandra Blamey, who has co-ordinated these programs, and Carol McKirdy who took over this role in June. Others have contributed as presenters: Francis Good, Andrew Host, Diane Taylor and Janis Wiiton, and as assistants: Pat Francis and Linda West.

We supported three post-graduate students to attend the conference in Adelaide last September and will assist two more to attend the New Zealand Oral History conference next month. In this way we hope to encourage and provide opportunities for those taking up oral history.

We advocate on behalf of oral history and this year attended the Mitchell Library Consultative Group committee meetings at the State Library of NSW, to ensure the best outcome for access to oral history collections, under the revised conditions of use for the Mitchell Reading Room. We were also represented at a meeting in July with the National Film and Sound Archives which proposes drastic cuts, especially in its oral history program.

In pursuit of its aim to foster preservation, access and use of oral history collections, the committee chose to make a donation to the Dictionary of Sydney to enable more oral history to be added to this multimedia online resource. We are very pleased that Dr Lisa Murray, Chair of the Dictionary Trust, will be talking to us at the AGM about the work of the Dictionary.

I would like to recognise and thank everyone who has supported our work. The committee - Sandra Blamey, Pat Francis, Graham Hinton, Andrew Host, Leonard Janiszewski, Susan Kennedy, Carol McKirdy and Linda West - have all worked hard in various spheres. Other members have helped at seminars, with archives (Joyce Cribb), with talks on our behalf (Rosie Block) and in many other ways. Thank you all.

I enjoy being part of the oral history community, but am retiring as President this year. The committee needs new input and support to keep it moving forward so well. We are a voluntary organisation and need support from you, our members, so I encourage you to be involved and contribute as you can.

Virginia Macleod, August 2014

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Mitchell Library Consultative Group Meeting

*OH NSW representative at the meeting **Sandra Blamey** reports back*

The Mitchell Library Consultative group was established earlier this year in response to widespread concern about the impact of the planned rejuvenation of the Mitchell Library. It aims to act as a forum for communication and ideas between the research community and the State Library of New South Wales.

The group aims are to:

- provide a forum for discussing the broad issues of service and access to the Mitchell Library collections;
- communicate major achievements related to the collections, services and research activities of the Mitchell Library;
- provide a forum for communication amongst key stakeholder groups.

Mitchell Library staff meet every six weeks with nominated representatives from the Australian Historical Association, the Australian Society of Archivists, Australian Society of Authors, History Council of NSW, Independent Scholars Association of Australia (NSW Branch), Oral History NSW, Professional Historians Association NSW, Royal Australian Historical Society, Society of Australian Genealogists and the Society of Women Writers.

Below in brief are the key points raised at the meeting held in July.

- Mitchell Library Renewal progress - this is taking longer than expected but most will be completed by mid-November. The Fellows' room will be retained. The Friends Room will have a fairly light refurbishment. A resurgence of interest in using these facilities has been noted.
- Mitchell Reference Collection - this is currently in the State Library but will come back to the Mitchell Library. Library staff urge everyone to order ahead to avoid delays and particularly if you only have limited time. This can be done online using Ask-a-Librarian <http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/services/ask/> or by email.
- Access for people with mobility issues – the State Library acknowledges that access to the Mitchell Library is below standard, and this will receive attention. Special access can be pre-arranged through Ask-a-Librarian.
- Small Picture Files – approval has just been given to employ a contractor to work on this ongoing project – sorting and listing material.
- Press Clippings – this section will be moving soon. There is some duplication with Trove so the focus has been on cuttings prior to 1954.
- Catering/room hire - several organizations present expressed dissatisfaction with the requirement to use the library's contracted caterers and the high cost involved, but were told this policy is non-negotiable. However, a community group with similar aims to the State Library could discuss some easing of charges in relation to room hire. It was obvious from discussions around the table that these arrangements are ad hoc rather than following a policy.
- Copies of Digital Photos - bespoke work to obtain high digital standards is naturally costly whereas reference copies (particularly in bulk) can be negotiated at a more reasonable rate.

The meeting was followed by an extensive visit to the Digitisation Laboratory which is very impressively equipped with the latest equipment for scanning and copying many different types of materials. Most of the staff are contractors or have been temporarily hired on a short term basis by the State Library. There are no sound laboratory facilities planned – this work is contracted out to three companies who have been through a quality control vetting process. The Library has recently appointed someone to take charge of their digitisation file management and quality control standards and practices. This will be a key position in ensuring all contractors work to agreed standards. We would encourage the State Library to widely publicise what has been achieved in this new department.

REPORTS AND PROJECTS

Restructure of the National Film and Sound Archive

Elizabeth Craig reports on proposed changes to the Oral History Program

Public archives, libraries and museums across the country have been struggling to cope with increasing costs and decreasing budgets. A large part of the problem has been the pressure to adapt to the digital economy. Now that online access to information has become the norm, public collection agencies have had to change their focus from preservation and storage to creating better public access to their collection through digitisation, while retaining standards of curatorship and preservation – a hugely expensive exercise.

In April, following a six month business review, the CEO of the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA), Michael Loebenstein announced a major restructure to address the problem. 28 members of the NFSA's workforce of 206 were to go, and some programs axed or integrated with other functions. The news was greeted with outrage by many in the audiovisual community. Angry discussions took place on online forums and other outlets, and a petition signed by 140 members of the film and broadcast industries protested against the lack of consultation and transparency in the NFSA's restructure. They called on the NFSA to release its business review and demanded a series of public forums before decisions on the restructure became final.

Interestingly, job and service cuts to other public sector institutions such as the National Library, War Memorial and Sydney's Powerhouse Museum, didn't attract anything like the angry response to NFSA's announcement. Journalist, academic and oral historian, Barbara Alysen commented that this reflected the deep relationship the stakeholders have with the NFSA. They not only draw on it to produce their films and audio productions, and rely on the Archive to preserve their work, but, she writes, they are also fundamental to its history. 'In the early 1980s they lobbied to have the audio and moving image collection made independent of its then-home, the National Library. They were active again when the Archive was absorbed into the Australian Film Commission in the early 2000s. The NFSA has been a statutory authority since 2008.'⁽¹⁾

In response to demands by the audiovisual community, Michael Loebenstein and the NFSA Board announced a series of public forums to be held in capital cities around the country in July, where consultation and discussion could belatedly take place. Transcripts of the discussions have been published on the website. ⁽²⁾

So how will the NFSA change?

In the Draft Strategic Plan 2014/15-2016/17 released in June, Loebenstein outlines his vision for the NFSA and the changes to the business model needed to ensure the Archive becomes more 'relevant, vibrant and connected' in an increasingly digital economy.

Essentially, the main priorities to achieve this ideal are:

- Large scale digitisation
- Collaboration online with other public collecting agencies
- Build partnerships with peak industry bodies and interest groups to encourage sponsorships and other fundraising methods. Raise the profile of NFSA.

The NFSA will be operated by three branches:

- Corporate and Business Affairs Branch,
- Collections Branch (which includes responsibility for curatorship and preservation), and
- Strategy and Engagement Branch (under the direct management of Michael Loebenstein). This branch includes the Communications section (headed by Nina Frykberg), responsible for marketing and publicity, fundraising, establishing partnerships, developing online audience engagement ... and the Oral History Program.

The Oral History Program

To the alarm of the oral history community, a casualty in the restructure was one of only two staff members dedicated to the NFSA's Oral History Program. Melbourne manager Ken Berryman lost his job despite the program having just completed its most productive year ever, with over 100 new interviews commissioned, and with transcription and digital preservation programs running as well.

Also unsettling was that the Oral History Program was to be moved from the Collections branch, responsible for curatorial and preservation functions, to the Communications section in the 'Strategy and Engagement' branch. Did this mean that curatorship and preservation would no longer be a priority? In a letter to the Minister for the Arts, copied to the CEO and Chair of the NFSA, Oral History Australia's president Dr Sue Anderson protested that it was difficult to see how the effectiveness of the program could be sustained with reduced staffing and its revised status (3).

This issue was raised at the public forums held around the country in July. Other concerns included:

- *The Draft Strategy Plan states that the Oral History Program will be developed 'as a model two-way collaborative activity demonstrating the NFSA's 'share objective'. (4) What does that mean?*

Firstly, Loebenstein assured questioners at the public forums of his clear commitment to the Oral History Program. Indeed he maintains he will be keeping a close eye on it as Manager of the Strategy and Engagement Branch in which the Communications section sits. Secondly, he is adamant that curatorial and preservation standards will not be compromised. A key role of the Communications section is to closely align itself with

the Collections branch which will have input into the preservation and curatorship of oral histories.

Loebenstein sees the Oral History Program as a 'key part of our collection that speaks to both the 'collect' and to the 'share' agendas.' NFSA commissions oral histories of the creators of audiovisual work already held in the collection. Their stories shed light on and create context for their work. Their oral histories can therefore be used as an instrument to build connections with stakeholders (the producers, cinematographers, writers, scholars, etc). And because NFSA mostly has control of the content of oral histories, they can also be published, acting as a lure, inviting the audience to look further into the collection. As Loebenstein puts it: 'Oral histories are... a perfect calling card for drawing attention to what the archive actually does as a whole.' (5)

And this explains why the Oral History Program has been moved from the Collections Branch to the Strategy and Engagement Branch where it is much more accessible. Loebenstein was never comfortable with its location in Collections Branch because, unlike film and sound productions, its function was to support and give context to those productions in the collection. It will now become part of the strategy of helping the NFSA to raise its visibility, attracting interest in its collection and sponsorships.

- *If oral histories are going to be used to attract sponsorships, isn't that going to skew the candidates selected towards celebrity names? A social history of the audiovisual industry would be incomplete if it did not include the oral histories of backroom people who play significant roles – producers, editors and production people.*

Loebenstein believes the best chance for success for the program is to have a healthy mix of popular creators and lesser known people. 'If for opportunistic reasons it just focused on broadly popular creators, I think it would fail,' he says. "If it neglected the opportunity to create more awareness and to capture very renowned and probably elusive creators, it would also fail.' (6)

- *Isn't there a conflict of interest between using oral histories as a tool to attract attention to the collection and maintaining their integrity? If interviewees can't be confident of the guarantee we give them that any sensitive material will be kept under wraps as they have instructed in the Copyright Agreement, then we will end up with sanitised stories, no different from publicity interviews.*

Management assure oral historians that integrity of the interviews will be maintained at all times. The policy is that nothing is published without checking first with the interviewee, even if they have ticked the box giving total control of the interview to NFSA.(7)

- *Has the Oral History Program become Sydney-centric now that it no longer has a presence in Melbourne?*

Although the program will now be run out of Sydney it is in the context of a broader organisational branch. Sydney is now the hub for industry interaction. 'It would be very foolish to not have a stronghold in Melbourne, says Loebenstein, 'and very foolish to

not work with Melbourne interviewers [and] advisors.” (8) In fact, he says, there is a commitment to oral history around the country.

- *In what ways will oral histories be used to increase resources?*

Loebenstein feels that oral histories can attract funds in a number of ways, from philanthropy and sponsorships down to micro-payments, where someone can be offered already digitised material for free, in return for a donation towards digitising a project, or production of another oral history.

Volunteer resources in the form of direct approaches to part time or retired industry people and crowdsourcing are other considerations. (Crowdsourcing is where services, such as providing transcriptions, are solicited online from large groups.) Loebenstein acknowledges that volunteer resources have had mixed results in the past, but feels it's time to revisit the idea.

- *Collaboration with other collecting institutions, broadcasting and TV networks and industry interest groups*

Although there has been fellowship between federal institutions, it has not been the case with the states' collecting agencies. There has been no sharing of resources, and a 'them and us' attitude has prevailed. With recognition that digitisation and online access are priorities common to all collecting bodies, and that all are struggling with fewer resources, state and federal agencies are moving towards collaboration.

Meetings between managers at NFSA and some of the State Libraries, and also with state funding bodies are commencing soon.(9)

- *Online index of oral histories held in public and private collections*

The aim is that once proper investment has been made in infrastructure, digitisation will allow access to a catalogue of all the collecting agencies' oral histories (known as metadata). Similarly, the NFSA is keen to include broadcasting and TV networks in this collaboration, urging them to record oral histories of staff as they depart (as only Foxtel is doing currently) and make them accessible online.

- *Sharing storage*

Storage is a huge issue for collecting institutions, and digitisation means that while original material needs to be preserved, but not often accessed, one suggestion has been to have shared deep storage off site. This would save the constant and expensive need for more space in high cost real estate areas where public museums and libraries are located.

What's next in the process towards the NFSA's vision for the Oral History Program?

As yet, NFSA Management is still feeling its way in the implementation of its vision. But consultation with stakeholders is certainly planned to be a continuing part of the process.

Later this year there will be a second round of meetings for consultation with interest groups and peak industry bodies, involving NFSA's managers. The final strategic plan and a business model will be published towards the end of the year. From there, Michael Loebenstein plans to have regular small informal meetings to address specific issues. He has in fact already met with some industry groups for discussion on their area of interest.

On September 2, Michael Loebenstein, Nina Frykberg and Bronwyn Murphy (Coordinator of the NFSA's Oral History Program), attended a meeting of the Film and Broadcast Industries Oral History Group (FBIOHG) in Sydney. (10) Discussion on the future of the Oral History Program was frank and constructive.

The budget is slightly less than before the restructure, and during the readjustment period, there will be fewer oral histories commissioned. Loebenstein and Nina Frykberg intend to put a lot of effort into attracting new funds for the Oral History Program.

A stocktake of the collection will be conducted, looking for the gaps, and working out how many of the existing digitised oral histories and transcripts can be published (according to the copyright agreements). The next step will be to devise a system which emphasises sharing of oral histories, and then to ramp up that program. Ideally, funding for the program will be found from a third party, and the program expanded over the next three years.

Michael Loebenstein has undertaken to attend FBIOHG's December meeting where indigenous representation in the Oral History Program will be discussed.

Loebenstein sees the Oral History Program evolving "from something that is largely driven internally by the Archive and funded one hundred per cent by the Archive, to a more collaborative endeavour [with public and private sector bodies] to expand the funding basis of the program.... and to sharing the collection.

So, from a stakeholder's point of view, it certainly appears that oral histories will retain a strong presence in the NFSA, and a very positive outcome is that they will be far more accessible than in the past, not only those held by the NFSA, but if the collaboration plans go ahead, in all collecting institutions. And as the chequered history of the NFSA's Oral History Program has shown (see footnote 10), stakeholders will not hold back if they believe it is being compromised or under prioritised in any way.

Elizabeth Craig
Coordinator, Film & Broadcast Industries Oral History Group

NOTES

- (1) Barbara Alysen, 'Files Can't Wait: the Future of the National Film and Sound Archive, <http://theconversation.com/files-cant-wait-the-future-of-the-national-film-and-sound-archive-29479>, 31 July 2014
- (2) <http://www.nfsa.gov.au/about/corporate/strategic-plan-2014-15-to-2016-17/>
- (3) ¹Letter to Senator George Brandis, Minister for the Arts, from Dr Sue Anderson, President, Oral History Australia (undated)
- (4) Draft Strategic Plan 2014/15 to 2016/17, p.15
- (5) Public Forum, Canberra, 7th July, 2014
- (6) Public Forum, Sydney, 1st July, 2014
- (7) Nina Frykberg, Manager, Communications Section of Strategy and Engagement Branch, FBIOHG meeting, 2nd September, 2014
- (8) Public Forum, Melbourne, 4th July, 2014
- (9) Meeting with Film & Broadcast Industries Oral History Group, Sydney, 2 Sept. 2014
- (10) FBIOHG (under the auspices of NFSA) is a group of 20 or so volunteers from the film and broadcast industries, who since lobbying the NFSA in 1991 for greater commitment to oral history (and kept on its case as interest in the program ebbed and flowed under different managements), have conducted oral histories for the Archive, as well as advised and supported it on various industry issues. The NFSA recognises and appreciates the expertise of FBIOHG members, and always has a presence at its quarterly meetings.
- (11) Public Forum, Canberra, 7th July, 2014

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National Oral History Association of New Zealand Conference

OH NSW provided financial assistance to two post-graduate students to attend the NOHANZ conference in Wellington in September. They report and reflect on the experience below.

The gift of memory

The National Oral History Association of New Zealand (NOHANZ) Conference 2014 took place in Wellington on the weekend of September 20-21. I had the honour of attending after being awarded one of two Oral History NSW Grants to help with travel costs. The conference provided an excellent opportunity for oral historians across New Zealand and Australia to share their research in a supportive and stimulating environment.

As this was my first oral history conference, I was particularly excited to engage with other historians' research aims and methodologies, and gain valuable feedback about my own study. To contextualise my reflections about the conference, I will briefly discuss my research background. After completing my undergraduate studies, Honour's Degree, and Master of Arts Degree at the University of Waikato, I joined the Department of Modern History at Macquarie University in Sydney, where I am currently undertaking a Doctor of Philosophy. My study focuses on homosexual men's changing experiences of living with HIV in Sydney in the 1980s and 1990s. Undertaking this research involves conducting life narrative interviews with 25 gay men who were diagnosed with HIV before 1996, and unpacking their interviews to further understand how they remember, and convey living with HIV as a terminal illness. While current

histories of Australia's responses to the epidemic predominantly focus on activists mobilising to establish support networks and organizations, the impact HIV had on men's personal lives is yet to be explored. At the time of the conference, I had completed 22 of these interviews, and had the final three scheduled to conduct upon my return.

I delivered a paper titled: *Illness and life narratives: Investigating the significance of the changing social experiences of HIV-positive homosexual men in Sydney between 1982 and 1997*, which focused on how men make sense of the longevity of HIV, and the efforts they made to regain control of their own health both within, and outside of the hospital setting. My paper specifically focused on how men simultaneously rejected and adopted the role of the 'patient.' After delivering my paper, I received very valuable questions that focused on my own position as a researcher, and I was provided with the opportunity to share my personal experiences while researching in this field. The questions also encouraged me to reflect on just how significant my position as an outsider to both the gay community and the HIV-positive community is to how the men remember and convey their pasts.

The impact the interviewer has on the outcome of the interviews was a key point of discussion throughout the conference. Presenters including Ben Morris from the University of Wollongong and Dr Nēpia Mahuika from the University of Waikato, reflected heavily on their own positions as researchers interviewing individuals from communities to which they also belong. Likewise, the power dynamic between the interviewer and interviewee was a particularly interesting point of discussion. Sara Donaghey proposed an alternative method of interviewing, whereby she passes the interview to two participants, and in doing so suppresses the role of the interviewer. She raised some very important questions about whether or not it was ever possible for an interview to be grounded in a truly collaborative effort, and contested the term 'sharing authority' in favour of 'shared authority,' the latter of which she argues indicates a more autonomous relationship. I found such discussions particularly stimulating as oral historians are continually faced with questions about the power dynamic that exists between an interviewer and interviewee.

One of my favourite parts of the conference was viewing Jacquie Foley's short film which she played prior to the final session. The film was particularly moving, and was based on a textile artist's narrative about losing her son, and dealing with such loss through her art. Her art also became a way for others to process their own losses. Foley's film encapsulated the conference theme *The Gift of Memory*, and demonstrated how memory is both a gift for the individual, and for others with whom they share their memories.

The theme *The Gift of Memory* was interpreted in numerous and very diverse ways throughout the duration of the conference. Lizzie Catherall discussed both the cruelty of losing memories, and the 'curse' of remembering painful events. With specific

reference to her father's memories of his war experiences, she powerfully reminded her audience that, 'some cannot remember, some do not wish to.' The connection between painful memories and war also emerged in Ben Morris' study into the oral histories of an ANZAC battalion that served in Vietnam. Morris posits that: 'memory may be a powerful gift for some, for others it is a painful wound.' This statement resonated with me when considering my own research and the emotional impact remembering painful memories may have on the men I am interviewing. Several recurring themes have emerged across my interviews which predominantly focus on the impact of losing numerous friends to HIV, and survivor's guilt.

Alternatively, Dr Bernard Jervis positions 'the gift of memory' as a gift the interviewer is given, and reminds listeners that sharing someone's story, and in turn sharing part of their life, is indeed a gift. He asserts that silence is painful, and as oral historians we have been gifted with the opportunity to listen to people's stories. Such diverse and convincing interpretations made me reflect on my own understanding of memory as a gift. I am incredibly grateful to the men who have shared their stories with me, and as an oral historian I have been given the unique opportunity to listen to these men's life stories.

In attending this conference, I hoped to gain a further understanding of oral history theory and how other researchers were applying it to their own areas of study. In this regard, I found Michael Dudding's paper, whereby he challenges 'myths' with specific reference to architectural publications particularly enjoyable and thought-provoking. Such discussions have helped shape the way I will approach oral history in the future, and have made me think more carefully about the collective memories that emerge in the men's narratives.

The conference focused on establishing a strong international network, and encouraged delegates to consider attending the Oral History Association of Australia's conference in September next year, and the International Oral History Association's conference the following year in India. The conference raised very important points for me to consider as I pursue oral history, and I keenly anticipate further interesting and enlightening discussions about the value and application of oral history. I hope to attend both upcoming oral history conferences, and look forward to hearing about other oral history research that is currently underway.

Participating in the NOHANZ conference was a truly incredible experience, and I am grateful to have met so many people who are passionately pursuing oral history. The conference focused on the 'gift' of memory, both in terms of sharing memories, and listening to how other people convey their lives. The conference also demonstrated that sharing our research with others, and listening to others passionately discuss their own studies is a remarkable gift.

**Cheryl Ware, PhD Candidate
Macquarie University**

Expectations exceeded

I attended the National Oral History Association of New Zealand Conference with the hope that I would get some targeted feedback on the oral history component of my current PhD research and I certainly was not disappointed. Perhaps more importantly, however, I came away with a stronger grounding in the principles and practice of oral history.

My research

I am currently in the fourth year of my PhD in history at UNSW. My research examines the contested place of children in the Australian women's movement from 1969 to 1979, a period which saw the resurgence of a vocal feminist movement in Australia. The bulk of my project is archival-based, but it would not be complete without giving consideration to activists' own reflections on this period.

To that end, I am interviewing feminists who were either involved in campaigns around children's rights in the 1970s or who were raising or working with children at the time. I am also interviewing women and men who were raised in feminist households in the 1970s or who participated in feminist organisations themselves as children, such as feminist high school groups.

As well as conducting my own interviews, I am grateful to be able to draw on a range of oral history collections that have been produced by other researchers and volunteers. So far I have made some great finds in the National Library of Australia and numerous state libraries. Another valuable resource for my project is the 100 Voices Oral History Project, produced by the Pride History Group in Sydney and launched in 2013.

The Gift of Memory

As I am relatively new to doing oral history, the New Zealand conference was a valuable opportunity to reflect on my project so far. By chance, it also proved to be fortuitous timing in respect to my research schedule.

For close to six months now I have been in the process of lining up a number of interviews. Just four days after arriving back in Sydney, one of the much-awaited interview dates arrived. Having just returned from the conference, I felt that I was able to go into this interview with a clearer sense of 'The Gift of Memory' that is oral history, as the conference title so aptly put it.

The nature of this gift is, of course, open to interpretation. While the call for papers alluded to multiple possibilities, the one that first caught my eye was the question of 'reciprocity' or the 'giving and receiving' of memory. For my conference paper, I chose to focus on what happens to the 'giving and receiving' of memory in an intergenerational context.

An intergenerational gift?

Since the early 1990s, the spectre of generational conflict has surfaced time and time again among Australian feminists. Given these tensions, one might expect that building the necessary trust for oral history research would be more difficult. Equally, oral history seems to be all the more necessary, as a means of facilitating dialogue between different generations of feminists.

These are issues that I have been thinking about for some time now and in my paper I considered both the opportunities for, and barriers to, intergenerational dialogue in feminist oral history. I was also keen to hear from other conference participants about whether similar generational tensions had manifested in their oral history projects. The conference proved to be the perfect platform for raising this topic, as my paper featured in a dedicated session on transgenerational research.

Presenting alongside me was Dr Sara Donaghey, whose current research explores lesbian identity. Her project uses an alternative interview technique in which an older and younger lesbian are paired together and invited to discuss their life experiences while being recorded. Intergenerational dialogue is thus at the heart of the project's methodology. It offers a fascinating model for how oral historians might creatively address generational issues.

Other gifts of memory

Where our session focused on the gift of memory across generations, our fellow participants interpreted the conference theme in a range of other ways.

Some presenters focused on the gift of memory from the perspective of the interviewee. For example, the keynote speaker, Dr Nēpia Mahuika, reflected on the meaning of oral history to indigenous peoples and argued against seeing oral history as a 'democratic' practice. He questioned the merits of democracy itself, pointing to a number of ways in which it can exclude indigenous peoples. He instead suggested that we should use the gift of memory to decolonise history and democracy.

Other presenters emphasised the gift of memory from the perspective of the oral historian. Most presenters acknowledged in at least some way the pleasure they took in doing oral history. Recognising that historical research and writing are often lonely tasks, many spoke of the enjoyment that came with connecting with their interviewees. Several presenters who had worked as part of a team of researchers emphasised the pleasure they had derived not only from sharing time with interviewees, but from working with fellow researchers.

Another key theme to emerge from the conference was the importance of preserving the gift of memory. Fittingly, the conference included a session on a new recording agreement that has been launched by the National Oral History Association of New Zealand. The agreement has been produced following significant consultation with libraries, other repositories and researchers. While some conference participants still

had reservations about negotiating copyright using the new agreement, it seemed to be well received and the work of the committee that put together the document was acknowledged.

Having approached my own project through the established ethics procedures of my university, I found this session particularly valuable. It was interesting to learn how oral historians working outside academia manage the consent process. The university ethics procedure emphasises the risks and benefits to participants, whereas there seemed to be a much stronger emphasis in this session on oral history as a mutual undertaking of the interviewer and interviewee. It was a refreshing perspective.

Finally, the conference underlined the gift of being part of a wider oral history community. More so than many conferences I have been to, there seemed to be a strong emphasis on sharing practical skills and building a sense of morale. After seeing the high quality of presentations and use of sound, I came away inspired to update my technical skills. Several presentations made me reflect on the creative presentation of history, including through the production of digital stories and short films.

I also appreciated the way in which the program had been designed so that there was no need for concurrent panels. Not only was this a great opportunity as a presenter, in terms of maximising audience and feedback, but it was also rewarding as a conference participant. The conference had a sense of cohesion to it that is often missing at conferences with multiple sessions.

The sense of community also crossed national borders. Having made the trip to New Zealand, we were warmly welcomed by our hosts and affectionately referred to as the Australian contingent throughout the conference. Unfortunately it could only be a fly-in, fly-out visit for me on this occasion, but all up the conference was well worth the trip to Wellington.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Oral History NSW for supporting my attendance at the conference through a travel grant. I also wish to acknowledge my PhD supervisor, Dr Zora Simic, for her advice on my project and, most importantly, all of my research participants for taking the time to speak with me.

**Isobelle Barrett Meyering, PhD Candidate
School of Humanities and Languages, UNSW**

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Three Conferences and a Pilgrimage

Ben Morris travelled to oral history conferences in Barcelona, Madrid and Manchester - he shares some of his experiences below.

I attended the *Power & Democracy: the many voices of oral history*, XVIII International Oral History Association Conference held in Barcelona July 9-12 2014. I was fortunate enough to win a scholarship to attend the conference, for which I am very grateful.

Prior to the conference, master classes were conducted by Dr Indira Chowdery, who heads the Centre for Public History at the Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology, in Bangalore. India is the location of our next IOHA conference. Our master classes were on 'Orality, Memory and Traditions: Oral History in India'; they were extremely interesting and, due to the small number of attendees, there was much discussion as two parallel streams of Indian history were examined. These corresponding streams cover three different eras: while Westerners are aware of the British-recorded Indian history during their control of the sub-continent, there was already a rich history which covered the many centuries before the British arrived. The Indian people themselves preserved their history during the British rule by oral means among other non-official ways.



Ben Morris Photo: Mostafa Photography

Barcelona

Barcelona was a splendid location for an oral history conference, with the conference starting in the magnificent historic Paraninfo of the University of Barcelona, built between 1863 and 1893.

Mercedes Villanova was the keynote speaker at the Conference (1) and her paper was entitled, 'Principio y final de un sueño, la Barcelona republicana entre 1931 y 1939' ('Beginning and end of a dream, Republican Barcelona between 1931 and 1939'). She stated that 'people who have a hidden history which is brought into the public record are living in heaven, for their hidden history has been recognised'. It occurred to me that a hidden history that continues to be denied puts the participants of that history into a living hell, as their life experience is not recognised, especially if the denial comes from official sources. My research involves veterans' histories which do not

always fit the official history, and it causes many veterans pain that their narrative of their war experience is not recorded in official histories.

This theme of power and democracy was continued in the first plenary session when Pilar Domínguez spoke on the subject 'Oral history in post-dictatorial Spain'. She spoke of how the voices of the people were silenced during the Franco years, and the way that their oral histories tell the story of their struggle for democracy in Spain. This was a common theme in the papers of presenters from countries recovering from oppressive regimes. Civil rights and oral history go hand in hand.

The thorny issue of disclosure of a crime in an oral history was discussed during the conference. Dialogue centred on the Boston tapes. In these tapes, former loyalist and republican paramilitaries chronicled their involvement in the Irish Troubles. Known as the 'Belfast Project', it was commenced in 2001 and intended to become an oral history of the Troubles.

These interviews were held in a library at Boston College and became known as the Boston tapes. The deal was that the former terrorists would tell their stories in secret on the understanding that the recordings and transcripts would only be made public after their deaths. Two interviewees, Brendan Hughes and Dolours Price, both now deceased, admitted they were involved in a kidnapping and murder. There is a view that their disclosures were more for political rather than historical reasons.

In 2011, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) began a legal bid to gain access to the transcripts held by the college. Following a lengthy court battle the PSNI was given the transcripts of interviews by Hughes and Price.

In the discussion during the conference it seemed as though people with no legal training were trying to give a legal opinion, and secondly, they were attempting to re-marginalise those voices that needed to be heard. It appeared that some presenters had lost funding because sponsors of their research had to pay compensation when the marginalised and the ignored had decided to sue for their legal entitlements as a result of information disclosed in some oral history projects. The politicians and the bureaucrats were not amused and funding had ceased. This I found distressing, as it seemed that while one of the principal benefits of oral history is giving a voice to the unheard, some were prepared to capitulate to the powerful because it offended oral history sponsors and their influential associates.

All this touches on my research. After I left Australia, I received two emails from veterans involving admissions/confessions. One was an email about a complainant who had reported a war crime and was informed by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) they would not investigate his claims as there was no evidence which would lead to a conviction, even though a veteran had admitted a war crime in an oral history interview. He had classified his action as a mercy killing in a book he co-authored. He had also admitted the crime on an ABC television program, and had signed a letter to

the same effect. The AFP would not prosecute with only a verbal admission; they required other evidence to commence the case.

The second email I received had an attachment detailing a decision of the Full Bench of the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory, on 20 June 2014. Three judges reaffirmed the case of *Gruber v Backhouse* (2003) 190 FLR 122; where a confession obtained in an interview was ultimately ruled inadmissible in criminal proceedings. Both emails gave an alternative view to the opinions expressed at the IOHA Conference.

The Boston College case suggests that oral historians need to exercise caution particularly in regard to agreements with narrators but the Boston College tapes should not become a block to oral history activity. The case law suggests that an oral history narrative may be inadmissible evidence in legal proceedings and a good defence lawyer could get evidence from an oral history narrative thrown out of court using the *Gruber v Backhouse* case.

During the conference, I had very interesting discussions with Donald A Ritchie. Besides being an author of several oral history books, Ritchie is the Historian of the United States Senate and a past president of the American Oral History Association. I took the opportunity to discuss some of my research with Ritchie. I explained that my researcher and I may have found evidence of a possible stolen identity in Wallace Terry's book *Bloods, An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans*. We need to verify an enlistment date to prove our case and American war files are not easily accessible like comparable Australian and New Zealand records.

Another highlight was discussing the verification of war narratives with Alessandro Portelli.

It was unfortunate that the programming schedule meant that a major popular issue was being discussed at a parallel session. As it was one of the 'leading lights' of the oral history fraternity it was not a surprising our panel's topic failed to attract a sizable audience. Nonetheless all the panellists appreciated the opportunity to present their papers at this conference,

Other Conferences

Madrid Conference

My journey to Europe included two other conferences. The first was the "Twelfth International Conference on New Directions in the Humanities", in Madrid June 11-13. It was an interdisciplinary conference covering the humanities perspectives across the cultural, literary, philosophical, political, linguistic, and educational studies. It was conducted at the Universidad San Pablo-CEU, and sponsored by Common Ground Publishing. I gave a paper on 'War Veteran's Oral Histories: Fact or Fiction'. There was a good discussion afterwards and I picked up some useful ideas to help my research.

After the Madrid conference, I travelled to Santiago in Spain via Oporto in Portugal. After arriving in Oporto, I walked to Santiago, about 240 kilometres via the Camino. The Camino de Santiago (the Way of St. James) is a large network of ancient pilgrim routes stretching across Europe and coming together at the tomb of St. James. During and after the Camino, I met a number of Australians who, like me, have hiked the Camino. I felt satisfied when I arrived in Santiago, and think it was the achievement of walking over 200 kilometres. It was nice to walk through the countryside and enjoy the open air. At times there were fellow travellers who walked with me and at times I was able to just enjoy my own company.

Manchester Conference

The Annual Conference of the Oral History Society was titled *Community Voices: Oral History on the Ground*, and conducted at the Manchester Metropolitan University on July 18-19.

My presentation was “An Effect of Oral History – Correcting the Record”, in which I discuss an incident where the official view espoused by politicians, Department of Defence, and military historians was overturned by using the oral histories of soldiers. This is where my research examines the intersection between war veterans’ oral histories, national myths and legends, and traditional military history.

As usual at any conference, there were a number of Australians attending. I had lots of feedback from the Manchester conference and the questions and the discussion following the presentation were of benefit to me.

During this period I made contact with Patrick Hagopian, who has done research on oral histories of the Vietnam War and we had some fruitful discussions. Again I was chasing sources of information and how to verify American soldiers’ active service. Hagopian’s research centres more on memorials and monuments, but he has written several articles that have been drawn to my attention and I have visited his website. Our interest coincided in the area of the Vietnam War in regard to oral history; memory; and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. I made the journey from Manchester to Lancaster to have lunch and a most interesting chat with him.

Overall the conferences were valuable for deepening my understanding of oral history. I returned to Australia with further lines of inquiry for my research.

NOTES

1. Mercedes Villanova, ‘Principio y final de un sueño, La Barcelona republicana entre 1931 y 1939’, Congreso Historia Oral, Barcelona, 9 July 2014.

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Putting the Female Voice into Musical Theatre

Grace Barnes turns a feminist eye on the world of musical theatre

“I mean, a lot of people going to the theatre ... it’s about escapism, isn’t it? And we don’t have very many female writers. We don’t have many women writers so our voice is never from a primary source. Our voice is always imagined. It’s what a male writer imagines a woman is like.”

I have spent most of my theatre-directing career working on musicals. I started in stage management on the original London production of *Les Miserables* and continued on a path towards directing when I moved to Australia in 1988. It is notoriously difficult to sustain a career in musical theatre, both for performers and for the creators of shows, but I did well and worked as a resident director on shows such as *My Fair Lady*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Martin Guerre*, *The Witches of Eastwick*, *Guys and Dolls*, *West Side Story* ... amongst others. As my career progressed, and as I matured and became more politically engaged, I became aware that whilst women were gaining footholds in industries that had previously been male dominated – politics, the judiciary, science – musical theatre continued to be controlled by men. Women in creative positions became such a rarity that Wikipedia highlighted as ‘unusual’ the fact that the producer, director and writer of *Mamma Mia* in 1999 were all women. Sadly, the situation has not improved. There are women in senior management roles - associate or resident directors, choreographers and musical directors - who maintain the show once the originators have departed, yet not at the top level. Women who want to create musicals quickly realise they can only do so in fringe or regional theatres.

“When Cameron Mackintosh started, and the Frenchmen (1) who wrote all those musicals – they started writing really strong men’s roles and the women’s roles ... they’re good, they have a couple of nice songs, but they’re not as ... kind of interesting as the roles pre feminism for women in musicals. Where the focus was on the woman in musical theatre and not on the man.”

I also became aware of how the onstage roles for women were changing. The leading lady, previously a staple of musicals, was fast disappearing as shows began to focus on men, and tell male stories. Frequently, I began to bristle at a depiction of women onstage which was at odds with my reality. Why were all the female characters onstage bimbos or victims? Where were the strong independent women who had taken centre stage in shows such as *Mame*, *Cabaret*, *Hello Dolly*, *Evita*, *A Little Night Music*? I realised that what the audience was being presented with was a male version of women. How they saw them, or how they would prefer them to be. The irony of this is that statistics prove that more women than men attend musical theatre. Women form the backbone of support for the industry, yet they are sold stories by men, for men and about men. They are also frequently presented with a version of their sex

onstage which is now at odds with the way contemporary women and men negotiate their place in society.

'When you're doing a piece that's set in another period – and so many of them are – you kind of have to go, "OK, so this is what it was like for women then." It was. Whether you like it or not. And that's the problem. That's why they get away with it, because so many musicals are set in yesteryear where they have the excuse, "Oh, but that's how it was for women then. We can't change that.' '

In 2010, I enrolled at the University of Technology in Sydney to undertake an MA in non-fiction writing. I intended to explore the subject of gender and musical theatre for my major writing project, with a view to developing it into a book. My observation of shows onstage and my experience behind the scenes had made it clear to me that what was missing from musical theatre was a woman's voice. Any literature on musical theatre excludes women, and literature on women's theatre ignores musicals. I wanted to bridge that gap by hearing from women currently working in the industry, and by deconstructing the contemporary musical within a feminist context. The resulting book, *How To Handle A Woman: The Role of Women in Musical Theatre* will be published by MacFarland in New York early next year.

'I think it's very natural for a group of successful men in the business to assume that the next group of successful people will be men because that's how it's always been. So if I'm in my 70s and the people I've worked with are all male, it's just natural for me to assume that the next generation down will all be male.'

In December 2011, I went to New York and interviewed nine women working on Broadway – two directors, two producers, three performers, one musical director, one composer and one choreographer. Prior to this, I had conducted interviews in Australia with two performers, two musical directors and one producer. I wanted to hear the views of women working in all areas of the industry but despite interviewing five more women in London in 2012, I was unable to find a female lyricist or script writer who would agree to be interviewed. This was a recurring problem, female practitioners reluctant to voice personal views on a potentially contentious issue for fear of jeopardising their careers. A director in New York was only half joking when she pointed out that I would never work again if the book was ever published. A performer in London shrewdly observed that 'sexual discrimination is the best kept secret in the industry.'

I became aware that what we were doing with these conversations was breaking the unwritten code of silence around the dismissive and disrespectful treatment of women in musical theatre. Women wanted to talk about it, and the fact that the interviewees in London and Australia knew me well – I had worked with most of them – allowed them to be more candid than they might have been with a stranger. In some cases, this became problematic – as when interviewees told tales of bullying or sexual harassment

and named men who still hold positions of power within the industry, subsequently making parts of the interview unusable for legal reasons. One area I had to be very careful around was the domination of musical theatre by gay men, and the detrimental effect that has on both the creation of female characters onstage, and on the number of women on creative teams – the *'too many women'* excuse. Whilst it is a simple fact that gay men have always controlled the industry, both as creators and producers, I had to make sure that throwaway remarks by the interviewees could not be misconstrued as homophobic, when that was not the intention behind the point they were making.

'I feel that now, I don't have to imitate being a man – because I've been around for long enough and people know what my gestures are like, or what my voice sounds like. So it's becoming... some parts are becoming a little easier. But certainly when you start off ... I mean, I've literally been told, "play like a man", "conduct like a man" or "you need to do this more like a man".'

Because the interviews were initially conducted for academic research I did not ask any of the interviewees to sign a release form. Whilst I was nervous about doing this, almost a third of the interviewees only agreed to talk to me on the understanding that their comments went no further than an academic paper. I knew that the success of the project depended on the women's voices and I agreed to requests to submit the academic paper for approval, in case any interviewee wanted to withdraw a quote. (Interestingly, when I did send the thesis to the interviewees who had requested it, most of the women commented how much they enjoyed reading the comments from other women.) I submitted three chapters of the book as my major writing project and graduated from UTS in 2012. I then spent six months writing the remaining five chapters and submitting the manuscript for publication. There was initial interest from three publishers in New York but none would commit to an offer until I obtained signed release forms from all the interviewees. It was at this point that a number of interviewees dropped out - three actually said they were doing so because they believed their comments would harm their career if they were made public.

An example of this was a well-known London performer who, when discussing a production at the Royal National Theatre for which she won an Olivier Award, talked about the problems she had with the male director who:

'was so in love with the leading man that if I put my hand up to ask a question, I was completely ignored. At one point, I wouldn't let it go, I just kept saying but ..but ... And he turned round and tore a strip off me in front of the whole cast. It was like some Jewish mother syndrome where if a women spoke up "tchttch!" He would do that. He seemed so afraid, so afraid. Of women.... I felt like ... like a foolish, silly little girl. Which is what they want you to feel, I think. Put you in your place. I was definitely put in my place.'

As she had previously named the show, it would have been glaringly obvious to anyone who knew anything about musical theatre, exactly who she was referring to. Even with her well-respected status in the industry, this particular performer was not willing to risk biting the hand that fed her and she subsequently withdrew the entire interview. Whilst only one woman in New York withdrew her interview, four out of the five women I spoke to in London, and three out of the five in Australia, eventually did so and this reflected something I had noticed when conducting the interviews. The women in the UK and Australia clearly felt less empowered, less able to speak out, than their American counterparts. The New York interviewees seemed far more positive about moves to redress the gender imbalance and spoke of sexism as something that belonged in the past. The UK and Australian interviewees described their industries as rife with prejudice, and unsupportive or dismissive of women.

On the whole, the remaining 11 women who agreed to be quoted in the book were well established in their field within musical theatre. They were secure enough of their position to talk openly about the gender issues in the industry without fear of repercussions. But all of the interviewees asked to edit or rewrite some of their comments. This was partly due to the fact that, on Broadway at least, in the intervening two years since the initial interview things had progressed quite dramatically with more women in creative positions on major new productions. A New York director requested a complete new interview which I did by Skype. Other interviewees modified their comments to present a less confrontational stance.

One woman in the UK, for instance, had originally commented, *'I don't think there is a woman's voice at all. If there is, it is in the wilderness.'* She asked me to add, *'but it is getting better. It really is.'* She wanted to be seen to be more positive than her initial remark indicated. A composer gave me permission to use her original interview, but only if this section was removed.

'I think men keep (women) out. I really do. I think they justify it by saying "oh, women can't handle the toughness ... the tough decisions." Being decisive Women are much more in the role of being the conciliator. Negotiator. And that's not a strong enough position for a director or composer, or the perception of what a creative person is in the theatre. However, as creators we are collaborators and that means something. We all work together. But if you have a male director, the male director will put his vision in place.'

What is apparent in the book is that only women can change the way the industry currently operates in relation to gender equality. And with so few women in positions of real power, it is difficult to see how this can be achieved. It has to start with women speaking out and being brave enough to actually call the prejudice what it is. But the women in musical theatre are too frightened for their careers to speak up, and the majority of men around them are unable, or unwilling to recognise that there is even an issue.

The fact that musical theatre worldwide is marketed to, and consumed by women, yet there is no real female voice being heard onstage or off, is shameful. Particularly in this day and age. I don't expect my book to change the current state of affairs – my intention was always merely to start the debate. But at least a few female voices will be heard.

'You know, that audience for Wicked, they're girls who blog and who tweet, and maybe that will be the thing that changes these women's roles ... the teen generation of today will certainly grow up to be women who aren't just going to want to see victim roles, aren't just going to want to see you know ... a limited version of what a woman is ... Maybe there is a lost generation in there of women, and maybe they are waking up now to write more women's stories.'

Grace Barnes

NOTES

(1) Alain Boublil, Claude Michel Schoenberg (*Les Miserables, Miss Saigon, Martin Guerre*)

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Improvising in Barcelona!

*Attending (and performing at) the IOHA conference in Barcelona renewed **Aviva Sheb'a's** passion for oral history*

I sincerely thank the IOHA, Oral History Australia and Oral History NSW for the invaluable support and encouragement that enabled me to present *This is a War Zone, Baby – Improvise!* with my director, Anne-Louise Rentell, at the International Oral History Association Congress in Barcelona in July.

During the months of preparation, I knew it was going to be a special journey, but it turned out far more than I imagined. The experience gained has already enriched my work and personal life.

The congress started on July 9. We arrived in Barcelona on July 3 with time to recover from the journey, hire a wheelchair, see some historical sites, visit the flamenco dance shop, *Casa Menkes*, and of course, rehearse. We'd only found out the day before we left that instead of the standard 20 minute presentation time, we had the 90 minutes we'd requested, though it was only the day the congress started that we really believed it. Being in Barcelona away from our daily commitments enabled us to immerse ourselves in the Spanish and Catalan languages and cultures and to work on our lengthened presentation.

My childhood dance teacher, Maestro Albert Vila, migrated to Australia in the early 60s. Delighted I was going to perform in his home city, he told me a lot about Barcelona's history. He'd lost touch with his one remaining family member there, whom I found through Facebook. Toni, with his wife and mother, gave us an unexpected guided tour of Barcelona. This was literally a busman's holiday; he's a professional tour bus driver.

We all communicated on a huge array of topics in a mix of languages. We ate (oh, *how* we ate!) traditional Catalan delicacies. I have some severe food allergies and a lot of food intolerances. Fortunately I'd had the list translated into Spanish, and the willingness of people in Barcelona to accommodate people with disabilities and allergies made it easy to eat well. We had become close to these warm, caring people over the hours, and were reluctant to part.

I have impaired mobility, but can walk short distances. From working with people who use wheelchairs, I'd heard a lot about the difficulties, but this was my first foray into being dependent on someone to assist me. Anne-Louise and I joked about her telling me what to do (as my director); she now also pushed me around! We got the wheelie thing down to a fine art after a few days, honing our sense of humour in the process.

The presentations I attended taught me about many subjects. It was a delight to see other attendees also learning so eagerly. There were seven presentations concurrently so it wasn't easy to choose.

Some things I learned about in presentations:

Non-verbal transmission of trauma; children's accounts rarely being included in the conversation; children becoming eye-witnesses by default; witnessing various adults' experiences, behaviour; witnessing resilience and breakdown; developing their own coping mechanism.

Oral History in Palliative Care including a photography service in Sheffield, UK. 90% of the people cared for in this particular setting wanted to record their life stories...an aural history with no particular theme, permanently archived, adding depth and richness to British history. This was presented as clearly being history, not therapy, though it could be cathartic. The interviews 'put the person back in the patient'.

Reconciling traumas can be aided by acknowledging each other's oral histories, negotiating and sharing, not holding or defending a point of view, rejecting the victim label, but exchanging stories. This could potentially resolve conflict and lead to peace.

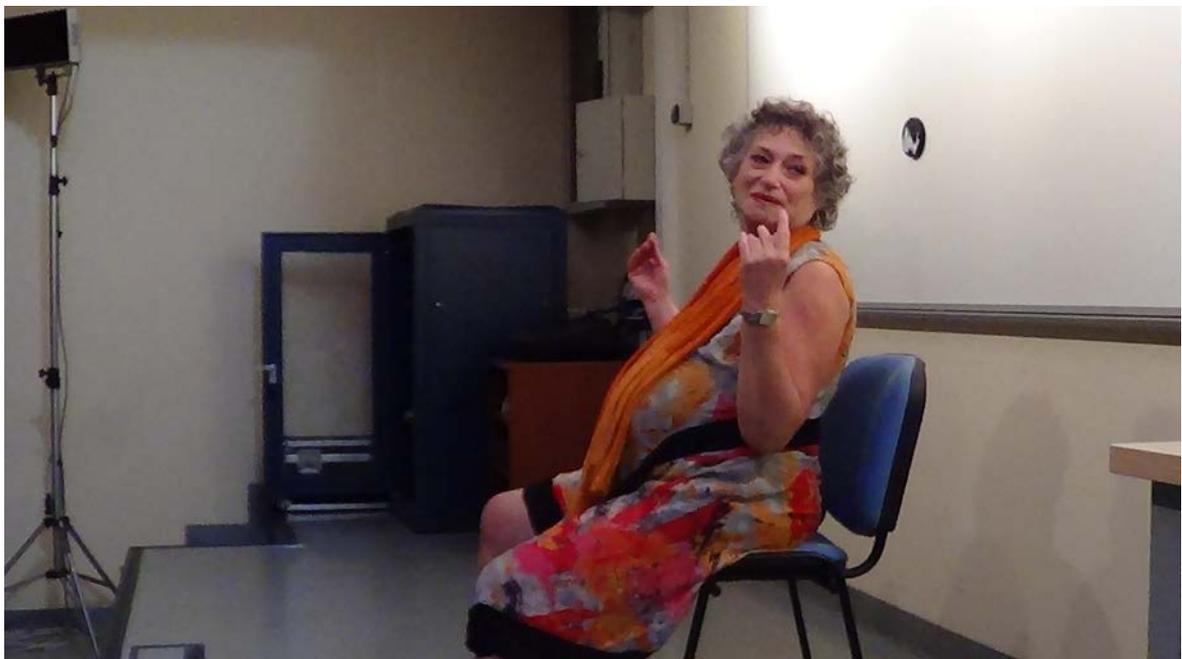
The 1948 pogroms in Aleppo, Syria, and in other Islamic countries caused a wave of migration of Jews to South America. Migrants interviewed had a negative view of their countries of origin, where they were not equal citizens and were traumatised, and an idealisation of the host (Latin American) countries. They questioned what their real homeland is. Different ways of telling their stories: the Sephardi way is more oral, and the Ashkenazi way more written. All ways are equally valid. The Holocaust of Jews in the Middle East is only recently being recognised, let alone documented and counted. The Sephardi Voices Project is constructing an audiovisual library that equates with Spielberg's Shoah project and Yad Vashem (Holocaust memorial in Israel), where only 100 testimonies of Middle-Eastern Jews have been collected. Presenters questioned: why should Sephardi Jews' stories not be collected? For example, in the British Library there are stories of immigration pertaining to Holocaust, human rights, refugees, but little (if anything) of Jews from Islamic countries.

I saw slides of the 'Iraqi Jewish Archive': looted booty from Saddam Hussein's regime, found by a US servicewoman, shipped to the US. Some of this dates back to 1568. It is being restored for the National Archives, Washington. Sacred texts were found rotting under water. That which couldn't be saved received a traditional burial according to Jewish law. Who knows about this? We do, now.

A young Chinese woman who is a tour guide showed slides and told us about taking people into Tibetan culture, learning from Tibetans who are still living their traditional lifestyles; very different from what one usually hears about Tibet and China.

I even learned about female teachers fighting for equal pay in 1960s and beyond in Australia!

Through these and other presentations, my dedication to and passion for oral history deepened.



Aviva Sheb'a performing in Barcelona

As we had the entire 90-minute session, we could relax and not feel the need to rush to get the information and points across. Anne-Louise gave a short introduction, then I performed two humorous body-image pieces, *There's No Such Thing as a Whole Hole*, and *Sketches*, which I wrote years ago and performed last year at The Vault Cabaret. I performed excerpts from my oral history show, *This is a War Zone, Baby – Improvise!* The intimate audience was clearly 'with me'. I luxuriated in performing. Anne-Louise talked about her experiences as a director making performance from oral history and verbatim theatre. I spoke about my experiences developing my performance over many years, of how long it took me to realise I'm a performer of oral history. We both talked about how we work together. We also had time to answer questions.

Someone who had been nodding enthusiastically during my performance had a lot of questions. He turned out to be the executive director of the American Oral History Association, and asked me if I'd be interested in presenting in America.

Presenting with Anne-Louise was a wonderful experience; attendees said it was for them as well. She's also the perfect travel companion.

The scholarship committee who had assisted me attend the congress was very pleased to have us there, and is wondering what we'll offer for the next IOHA congress in Bangalore, India, 2016. My brain's working overtime!

After the congress ended, Anne-Louise and I had a couple of days to debrief, then went on our separate journeys. I didn't want to leave Barcelona, but Amsterdam was calling. I'd lived there most of the time from 1976 to 1985, with the exception of when I was on tour in Italy, in Israel or Australia.

I met up with friends who were also colleagues, most of whom I hadn't seen for nearly 30 years. Images of some of them had been shown in my show at the Illawarra Performing Arts' Centre, April 2013. They had been in my mind all these years, and apparently I had been in theirs. One is documenting her work for the Dutch National Archives, including the work we did together. This means my work with vocal dance and oral history will be documented there as well.

Having just experienced such an intense period of oral history immersion, the three weeks I spent in Amsterdam turned into a long, exciting, emotional oral history collecting talkfest. I stayed with dear friends, went to some of the places I'd performed and taught, watched the new generation of Amsterdammers and tourists come and go. I even spent time with someone I'd met on the beach in France in 1973, who had introduced me to Holland. (He turned out to be the world's best wheelchair pusher, with a diabolical sense of humour.)

Just after I arrived in Amsterdam, the Malaysian Airways flight was shot down and the Netherlands went into shock; war raged in Israel and Gaza, my daughter, Rosie, was in Israel, my hostess's twin sister lives in Tel Aviv; my son was on tour in France with the band he plays with every European summer, and I worked out how to finish writing my memoir, begun 18 years ago. I went to *de Oude Kerk* (the Old Church), where I performed in 1977 with my vocal dance students (as *The Energy Exchange*) and jazz musicians from the Netherlands, USA and Italy. Together we had re-sounded the Old Church, after 27 years of restoration.

The flight from Amsterdam to Singapore had a very special atmosphere, particularly as we flew almost the same route as the plane that had been shot down so recently. Some of us had known someone on that flight, and there seemed awareness that the person next to you or across the aisle, could be the last person you spoke to. It's a

terrible way for people to realise that we're all human beings sharing the planet, regardless of our backgrounds or foregrounds.

One of my friends in Amsterdam gave me her copy of *Suddenly They Heard Footsteps*, by Dan Yashinsky. Back in Australia, reading pp. 29- 30:

'They wandered about from camp to camp telling stories, bringing news. They were definitely regarded as medicine people, elders. They were seen as just a little mad - that's why they were called 'storm fools.' These intrepid northern narrators told myths, legends, news of the tribe, tall tales, jokes; their purpose was to keep people connected to the community. Then they would travel on to the next group of storm-staying listeners. Storm fools are one of the oldest artists' alliances in the world. They include all the storytellers who have ever left their own house and village and set out to bring these stories to new listeners in other places. Homer was a storm fool and so was Peire Vidal, the Provençal troubadour who travelled from court to court in late medieval France. The Irish Traveller described by Ruth Sawyer in The Way of the Storyteller was a storm fool. He went from village to village mending tin pots and drew his customers by telling wonderful folktales by the side of the road: He gathered a crowd in no time. Words became a living substance for all who listened... For the duration of the story nothing lived but the story, neither listeners nor storyteller.'

I feel I have come home.

Aviva Sheb'a

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Boston College Belfast Oral History Project – Update

The recent concerns and issues regarding the Boston College Belfast Oral History project are important to oral historians everywhere. In this project oral history interviews, conducted with the promise of confidentiality, were subpoenaed and eventually released. Below we reprint the Oral History Network of Ireland's statement about the project, issued in August. For further reading, follow the links below to responses from the Oral History Society UK and Oral History Association USA.

Oral History Society UK Statement on the Boston College Belfast Project, May 2014

UK: <http://oralhistorynoticeboard.wordpress.com/2014/05/19/ohs-boston/>

Oral History Association USA response to developments in the Boston College Belfast Case May 5 2014

<http://www.oralhistory.org/2014/05/05/oral-history-association-response-to-developments-in-boston-college-case/>

**Statement by the Oral History Network of Ireland on the Boston College Project,
August 2014**

by Arlene Crampsie on H-Oralhist Network

Oral history allows both academics and non-academics alike to enter into conversation with eyewitnesses of historical events and to create meaning from this dialogue. The contemporary nature of oral history provides an opportunity to understand our recent past in a way that is not otherwise possible, but its use requires sensitivity as well as both a legal and an ethical rigour as our sources are living and are referring to events within living memory. The controversy surrounding the Boston College Belfast Project is a cautionary tale for oral historians and those engaged in all types of interview-based research both inside and outside Ireland.

In summary, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) secured court orders granting them access to interviews that were carried out during the Boston College Belfast Project. Their request was made on the grounds that these recordings might contain material of relevance to the ongoing investigations into unsolved crimes that were committed during the Northern Ireland Troubles. These orders were granted despite opposition from the Boston College Belfast Project who argued that they had given categorical undertakings to interviewees that their interviews would remain closed until their deaths. The release of these recordings has serious personal implications for both the researchers and the participants involved as well as for the broader oral history community.

This case emphasises the importance of conducting oral history projects to the highest legal and ethical standards and, in particular, the significance of ensuring that all parties (collectors, curators, academic institutions, and funding bodies) involved adhere to the principle of informed consent. From the outset of a project, all parties must endeavour to guarantee that the proper procedures and safeguards are in place. It is only by doing so that due care and protection may be provided to all. If potential risks are identified, these must be discussed in advance in an open and frank manner with all parties involved, but most particularly with the research participants, in order to inform them fully about any potential consequences of their participation.

The Boston College Belfast Project case highlights the fact that no confidentiality agreement or deposit agreement supersedes the law of the state. Participants may be offered closure only within the confines of the law and, as illustrated clearly by this case, the law is subject to change. Participants must be apprised of the possible implications of the information that they are providing in order to make informed decisions about participation, anonymity, closure periods, and the type of future access or dissemination that they will allow. Oral historians must look beyond the individual interviews and towards the collection as a whole when planning overall access and dissemination rights. In some cases, it may be necessary to close entire archives for pre-agreed, set periods of time so as to prevent potentially harmful disclosures. These

decisions must be communicated clearly with all parties involved and must be thoroughly documented and preserved within the project's administrative records.

The issues raised by this case continue to generate commentary from across the humanities, leading to sustained calls for better protection for researchers who are engaged in a range of qualitative methodologies and their respective participants. These are important conversations. They illustrate the fact that there is a precedent for these types of incursions into closed research materials and that the Boston College Belfast Project case is not simply a highly publicised anomaly. (1)

Inevitably, the PSNI's actions have had an impact on the future of oral history, in particular the collection of personal narratives that concern what may be perceived as 'difficult' or 'sensitive' topics. Rather than preventing the collection of post-conflict narratives, the Boston College Belfast Project case challenges practitioners of oral history to engage in more ethically sound and more legally aware oral histories in order to ensure the preservation of a rich, detailed archive that both illuminates and preserves our history and our heritage for future generations. The best way to achieve this is to adhere to the highest internationally recognised standards of both legal and ethical principles.

The Steering Committee of the Oral History Network of Ireland

NOTES

(1) There have been a number of other instances where research materials have been used or have been sought for in legal battles and/or criminal investigations. For details see M. Israel (2014) 'Gerry Adams Arrest: When is it right for academics to handover information to the courts' and associated links available at

<http://theconversation.com/gerry-adams-arrest-when-is-it-right-for-academics-to-hand-over-information-to-the-courts-26209>[Accessed 14 July 2014]

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NOTES AND NOTICES

A NEW PARTNERSHIP between Oral History NSW and the Dictionary of Sydney will result in increased oral history content on the Dictionary of Sydney website. The project will see the Dictionary of Sydney working closely with the Heritage Collection at the Liverpool City Library to capture choice excerpts of local people reminiscing about the area. Oral historian Margo Beasley will be curating the content for this project.

A NOTE FROM Suzanne Mulligan, editor of our Queensland counterpart's e-bulletin: I'd like to bring to your attention the possibility that with the ABC's budgetary cuts there is talk of axing two radio history programs, which include oral history.

Please read [this article](#) at [The Conversation](#) and add your comments at the end of the article, or contact the ABC direct. Australia cannot afford the erosion of history programs and if this proceeds, we will be culturally poorer.

A HIGHLIGHT at the recent 2014 Premier's History Awards Ceremony and official launch of History Week was the announcement of a new award, the Deen De Bortoli Award for Applied History, made possible by the generosity of the De Bortoli family. Named in memory of Deen De Bortoli (1936-2003), the purpose of the Award is to encourage historians writing Australian political, social, cultural and environmental history to approach their subjects in ways that use the past to inform contemporary concerns and issues.

The winner will receive a citation and a prize of \$4,000 either at the Premier's History Awards or the Annual History Lecture. The two runners up – the best two entries in each of the other two categories – will each be awarded \$1,000.

The winning entry will demonstrate a sound, critical knowledge of the relevant historiography, a high level of competence in the use of primary sources, and the capacity to develop complex arguments linking the past to contemporary, contentious issues currently impacting on Australia.

The closing date for entries to the inaugural award is 31 March 2015.

*For more information, contact Dr Mandy Kretzschmar,
executive@historycouncilnsw.org.au*

NEW OPPORTUNITIES for oral historians working in the many areas of the history of medicine are now available. OH NSW members are invited to attend the ANZSHM Biennial Conference June 30 to July 3 2015 to be held at Australian Catholic University in Sydney. This event will feature a series of presentations by distinguished international and local speakers, concurrent plenary sessions at which researchers can present their original work and a Witness Seminar. Witness seminars have been a feature of previous conferences and are opportunities to record patient's testimonies in relation to their experience of illness and medical treatment.

Day rates are available and for at least the first day of the conference where oral history will be the focus OH NSW members are offered a reduced registration fee (the same rate as ANZSHM members).

OH NSW members are also invited to submit papers that relate to oral history practice in the broad area of medicine, and apply for grants available to postgraduate students using oral history in the course of research into the history of medicine. The call for papers opens on Monday November 3, deadline February 9 2015.

For further information visit <http://www.dconferences.com.au/hom2015> or email <mailto:hom2015@dconferences.com.au>

OH NSW MEMBERS have a new incentive to help out at events and seminars following a decision at the recent OH NSW Committee meeting to offer volunteers free or discounted entry to a future event of the member's choice (up to the value of \$35.00). That's an offer too good to pass up!

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Seminar: *Where's Oral History Heading?*

Professor Michael Frisch

The impact of digital technologies on approaches to creating, sharing and interpreting oral histories.

USA historian Michael Frisch is one of the most influential contributors to international developments in oral and public history: in the 1970s he led new interpretations of memory and history; in the 1980s he proposed the concept of 'shared authority' in the oral history relationship; and since the 1990s he has worked at the forefront of digital technologies for creating, sharing and interpreting recorded interviews. Oral History NSW has invited Michael to Sydney after his visit to Melbourne as keynote speaker at the Australian Generations Conference: *Researching 20th Century Lives and Memories*.

Professor in the Department of History at the University of Buffalo, the State University of New York, Michael's interests are urban social history and responses to de-industrialisation. He has many years' involvement with oral and public history projects, often collaborating with community history organisations, museums and documentary filmmakers. He has provided insights into the dynamics of interviews and understanding of memory, particularly of place.

DATE: Saturday 15 November 2014 9.45 – 1pm

VENUE: Dixon Room, Mitchell Library, State Library NSW Sydney

COST: (includes morning tea) \$45; Oral History NSW members: \$35

Bookings essential

Enquiries: 8094 1239. Email: secretary@oralhistorynsw.org.au

Further details and registration: <http://www.oralhistorynsw.org.au/article/wheres-oral-history-heading-a-seminar-not-to-be-missed-15-november-2014>

Australian Generations: Researching 20th Century Lives and Memories

The Australian Generations Oral History Project has interviewed 300 people living in Australia born between 1920 and 1989. The interviews explore Australian life and society across time, and illuminate generational change and inter-generational dynamics. This event is the research team's first opportunity to share its findings about 20th and 21st century history and memory.



The *Australian Generations* Conference will feature academic historians and industry partners who form the Australian Generations Oral History Project's research team. Internationally renowned public historian Professor Michael Frisch will deliver the Keynote Address.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

Oral history in the Digital Age

Thursday 30 October, 6- 7.30pm

at the State Library of Victoria

Presented as part of the *Making Public Histories*
Seminar Series

Keynote Address is free but bookings are required

Contact the State Library to register:

03 8664 7099 or inquiries@slv.vic.gov.au

CONFERENCE:

**Australian Generations: Researching 20th Century
Lives and Memories**

Friday 31 October, 9am – 5pm

Building H, 1.25, Caulfield campus, Monash University

REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE: bit.ly/1qW89k
(\$70/\$50)

DRAFT PROGRAM: bit.ly/1pWloCU

Queries: anisa.puri@monash.edu or 03 99052206

<http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/australian-generations/australian-generations-conference/>



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Submissions of any kind (reports, articles, reviews, photos with extended captions, letters to the editors) are enthusiastically received. For copy deadlines, information on style, formatting or to discuss a contribution contact the editors at voiceprint@ohaansw.org.au **<mailto:voiceprint@ohaansw.org.au** Send articles and correspondence to the editors at voiceprint@oralhistorynsw.org.au or PO Box 261, Pennant Hills, NSW 1715 .

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Our website <http://www.oralhistorynsw.org.au> carries notices of all events and activities together with resource information for all interested in oral history.

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