



On Tape

Newsletter of the Oral
History Association of
Australia, Queensland
Branch Inc

September 2003

Editor: Suzanne Mulligan

Email: mulligan@gil.com.au

Hello Everyone!

I've been very busy for the last few weeks as I attended the National Conference in Perth. It was my first national oral history conference and I thoroughly enjoyed the presentations and meeting so many like-minded people from interstate and overseas who were passionate about oral history. As there were parallel sessions, I could not attend every presentation and choosing was often difficult. Congratulations to the Western Australian branch for their brilliant organisation of the conference, particularly as they were confronted with a last minute change of venue due to circumstances beyond their control.

The conference delegates I spoke to praised the conference generally and were particularly impressed with the diversity of papers presented and the people who attended. Conference Convenor, Margaret Hamilton, was very pleased with the way delegates mingled with each other getting to know lots of new people. On the Saturday night of the conference we enjoyed a dinner at the Rosehill Country Club at South Guildford where Bill Bunbury played tapes of some of his favourite interviews.

The conference papers were of a very high standard and I hope to give you a taste of that excellence through this edition of the newsletter. Most of the articles that follow

are derived from the notes I made at the Conference. I apologise in advance for any errors or omissions. You may also access the newsletter through my web site:

<http://www.home.gil.com.au/~mulligan>

Many of the papers were published in *From All Quarters*, Oral History Association of Australia, Journal Number 25, 2003. Financial members will already have received a copy of this excellent publication. For anyone else, you can purchase a copy by forwarding \$15.00 to Ms Rosie Block, c/- Oral History Program, State Library of New South Wales, Macquarie Street, NSW 2000.

The editor of the 2004 Journal is looking for contributions so if you have a paper that may be suitable for publication in the Journal, please contact Francis Good, GPO Box 462, Darwin NT 0801 or email him at:

francis.good@nt.gov.au

The deadline for contributions for the Journal is 31st March 2004.

After my wonderful experience at the Conference, I encourage you all to attend the next National Oral History Conference. I look forward to feedback from you all.

Suzanne Mulligan
Editor

Day 1 Thursday, 4 September 2003

Introduction and Welcome

Chair of Consultative Committee, Dr Lenore Layman, introduced local Aborigine, Ben Taylor, to give us a traditional aboriginal welcome. Ben told us a little about his life in Perth and wished our conference well.

Charlie Gregorini, Mayor of the City of Swan, welcomed delegates on behalf of his City and spoke about the history of Guildford where the conference as originally to be held.

Professor Geoffrey Bolton, Patron, welcomed delegates on behalf of the Oral History Association of Australia (W.A. Branch). He told us that he was present at the creation of the Oral History Association in 1979. 2004 will be a historical year for Western Australia celebrating 150 years since Captain Stirling arrived and Professor Bolton is hoping that "history will get quite a good showing."

Professor Bolton said oral history had flourished over the last quarter century. Oral history gives voice to people who were not going to make it into the history books. The spoken word is better for people who were not literate.

"When the Association came into being in 1979 there were already practitioners in the field. Developing the professionalism of the techniques of oral history. At a recent conference, one of the points made was that the oral record did not contradict the written record. Oral record tended to corroborate and fill the gaps. Sometimes oral record does tend to distort. But the risk grows less as the practice becomes more professional. I endorse all that the Association is trying to do," Professor Bolton said.



Turning the Map Upside Down

Bill Bunbury

Bill Bunbury has been an oral historian since the early 1980s. He is a presenter on the ABC Radio National history program “Hindsight” and has written several books.

“Turning the map upside down” is a way of exploring the non-southern way of looking at Australian history. It challenges our long-held notions of Australia as an isolated continent. Bill explored these ideas using testimony of oral historians who have a passion for what they have uncovered (looking at northern Australia). Voices of authority and voices of direct experience have a vital personal interest in the topic.

Bill Bunbury has presented his research in a six part radio series “View from the North.” Early southern Australian ignorance is highlighted. We need to see Australia from Asia downwards. Bill played a recording made about an early landing by the Dutch in northern Australia in 1606 – a story passed down orally through generations. There is evidence that Chinese and Macassars (Indonesians) during the 18th century interacted with the Aborigines both socially and economically.

The southern British colonies had the major emphasis in the 19th century. There were other motivations for European settlement (apart from convict colony). Ships can go across the Indian Ocean and then trade with Asia, also link to the Pacific. Therefore Australia’s position had strategic trade advantages. In the 1860s many southern Australians were still very ignorant about the Northern Territory. Some Asians settled in the Northern Territory despite the “White Australia Policy” of southern Australia. In many ways we have a perception as a white society that is not the case, particularly in the north. Economy and society were closely intertwined with our Asian neighbours. These ideas represent alternatives to the conventional view of our history and challenge our notion as an isolated continent. Bill suggests there is ample evidence of a long-standing association between the aboriginal Australians and Asians.

---ooo00ooo---

Comments from Delegates

Janis Wilton, President of the International Oral History Association. As an Australian, part of her role is to promote Australian participation in the international oral history movement. She believes we are doing a lot of great things in Australia and wants to share that with an international audience. She came to the conference “to be stimulated, to meet with my colleagues, to be inspired.”

“I think as always at Australian Oral History conferences, we’ve got a sense of the diversity of practice and of interests. It is a delight to hear lots of voices of the interviewees, of the people we work with. I also think it’s good to hear those who are challenging established practices and views in history, so Bill Bunbury’s idea of looking at Australia from the other way up, so those sort of challenges too. And the collegiality, the collegiality of the Conference as always, that sort of buzz we have when we meet every two years and inspires you to come and be inclusive.”

Local to global: oral history in an international context

Janis Wilton

Janis Wilton is the current President of the International Oral History Association. She is a senior lecturer at the University of New England and has been associated with oral history since the early 1980s. The University of New England has an oral history course.

“Globalisation” is an idea of the 21st century and refers to the way communications technology has made the world a smaller place. It is a product of capitalism.

Through her paper Janis explored the implications of globalisation for oral history. Look at the notion of the globalised environment as we work as oral historians. Where do we place our work within globalisation, what are our interactions? Starts at the individual, personal level, recording it for a variety of different purposes – honouring of the individual. Can we sometimes choose a blinkered view? Janis has been looking at migration stories. She suggests that sometimes there can be a move of taking a story and somewhere along the line that individual story becomes everyone’s story, becomes a generalisation. How do our experiences fit with those of other individuals? What about comparative experiences around the world? Migration is a global experience. How does oral history in other countries handle these issues? Need to retain the personal experience and locate that experience within the broader context.

How will we showcase what we do to the rest of the world? Some of the strengths in Australia:

1. We have a very varied practice and a large umbrella under which we practise oral history e.g. public collection, artists, writers etc.
2. We actually hear the voices of the people that we work with. Tapes are played at our conferences.
3. Indigenous voices – very important in the nature of the development of oral history in Australia e.g. Stolen Generation program.
4. Our implementation of ethical practice. Guidelines have been produced.
5. Moving oral history from the fringes to the mainstream of history education. Important role of public collections.
6. Strong community base to our oral history movement – training manuals, workshops.
7. Power of the media e.g. Radio National programs, film, video documentaries.
8. Government funded institution projects such as the Australian War Memorial and the National Library collections.

To what extent are we exposing these to the international arena? What other contacts are we establishing? How can we facilitate the exchange e.g. Internet. We can do more – publications, conferences etc.

The nature of the international oral history movement - it began with the work of Paul Thompson in Europe in the mid 1970s. There were arguments about the value of it. It was a very Eurocentric movement. This changed in the 1990s - move was on as people from other continents attended the international conferences. Letting the voices of the world be heard - seeks to foster a dialogue between people of different countries. IOHA has a website and publishes an on-line newsletter – latest edition focuses on differences in regions.

Looking at scholarship funds for people from poorer countries to attend international conferences. The 2006 international conference is proposed for Sydney. Janis is looking to all of us for ideas for things we can do at the conference to show the depth of the work that we do in Australia.

The International Oral History Association web site is at:

<http://www.ioha.fgv.br/>

Oral History as modern personal papers

Julia Horne

Julia's role is collecting the oral history of the University of Sydney for the Archives. An abridged form of the paper she delivered at the conference is presented below:

I want to step into the debate of where oral history fits into Archives and Manuscript Libraries by examining biographical oral history as a modern form of personal papers. I have three main questions to address. First, whether a distinction between personal papers and biographical oral histories is meaningful. Secondly, how is the changing nature of personal papers affecting their value as documents of research interest, and, thirdly, how can biographical oral histories help?

My point today is to argue that rather than seeing oral history interviews as the 'icing on the cake' for



Archives and Manuscript Libraries they should now more than ever before be viewed as integral to an institution's collection policy. I want to mount the case for oral history as the way of the future for archives and manuscript libraries.

Oral history has many manifestations, a number of which are useful to the Archivist's arsenal. I want to examine just one of these manifestations to explore my point, the biographical oral history interview.

I want to begin by giving you a few details about my professional experience in Archives. In 1994 I was appointed to the University of New South Wales Archives to look after the Oral History Project, that later became the Oral History Program in the UNSW Archives. I'd been appointed to conduct interviews and also use the oral history collection as a basis for publications. I'd never worked behind the scenes of an Archive before, so I was more than relieved to have colleagues who were archivists, who looked after the archival business of the interviews I conducted.

I organised the interviews, devised the questions. I then prepared the interview for deposit in the Archives, a laborious task as we all know but one which makes the interview a useful and accessible source for other researchers. I took all this material to the assistant archivist who processed it with her magic accessions wand, which meant that researchers ultimately would be able to locate the oral histories through the various finding aids.

Oral history became for this Archives central to its collection policy, and had been from its establishment in 1980. Back then, the University Archivist decided to take advantage of the fact that many of the University's founders were still alive. His reasons for conducting oral history interviews were twofold: first, the 'founders' could be interviewed about their role in 'these beginnings' as well as their lives more generally; and secondly, these interviewees might be encouraged to deposit their personal papers with the Archives. What became clearer to me as I worked there was that the biographical interviews were increasingly taking on the role of personal papers, not because people were depositing their papers elsewhere, but because the very nature of personal papers itself was changing in the late twentieth century.

To my first question. Is a distinction between personal papers and biographical oral histories meaningful?

The conventional definition of personal papers is that they are someone's 'papers', hand-written or typed, and contain various documents (such as letters, journals, diaries, lecture notes, manuscripts) written by the person whose papers they are as well as correspondence from other people. Good personal papers, as Graeme Powell the National Library's Manuscript Librarian has argued, 'range

over a whole lifetime and record not only a person's day-by-day activities, but also their thoughts, motives and ideas, their changing emotions, attitudes and aspirations and their family and social relationships'. This is why biographers, historians and other researchers seek out personal papers. Good collections of personal papers are what create reputations for archives and similar collecting institutions.

Good biographical oral histories range over a whole life-time (which is more than you can say of most collections of personal papers), and provide a record of the thoughts, motives and ideas, attitudes and aspirations, changing emotions, and the family and social relationships of the person being interviewed. Think Film Australia's long-term biographical oral history project with notable Australians, the *Australian Biography* series.

To my next question. Is the nature of what's being collected as personal papers changing, and how does this affect their value as documents of enduring interest, the gems that researchers seek in archives and manuscript libraries? There are many ways in which people's personal archives are beginning to change. Take the decline of the aerogramme or long letter. Many collections of personal papers in the second half of the twentieth century are valuable because of the insights offered in the detailed correspondence between people living or travelling throughout Australia and the world.

Cheap international telephone calls have probably replaced aerogrammes but they are not easily collected together as a personal collection. There are options for preserving e-mails, and organisations have set up guidelines to preserve them that are part of an institution's memory. But they're not applied to personal e-mails. And who can honestly say they regularly take steps to preserve the personal e-mail messages that one day might be historically interesting?

To my third question. What do people want from collections of personal papers and how can biographical oral histories help? I'd like to think that archivists and other relevant collection managers will follow the examples set by some of their colleagues (such as those at the National Library of Australia, the University of New South Wales Archives, the Northern Territory Archives, the State Library of New South Wales and recently, the University of Sydney to name a few) and strategically use oral history in responding to the difficulties of collecting personal papers.

With the right questions, a skilful interviewer, a co-operative interviewee and a lot of time, biographical oral histories can provide the sort of material that increasingly eludes modern collections of personal papers. Furthermore, the very act of interviewing someone about their life can lead to the person deciding to deposit their papers with the institution concerned.

If the papers are available to the interviewer, and time is on their side, the interview can be strategically used to add immense value to the collection of papers. Most personal papers are thin on the first two decade's of someone's life, and often are silent on the circumstances surrounding personal and professional change. These are not simple gaps to be plugged, but are great gaping holes that biographical oral histories can go some way to fill.

Many accounts produced close to the time of the event are likely to be more accurate in the detail than people recalling past events during an interview conducted years later. Accounts produced at the time of the event, however, do not always contain the thoughtful perspective that distance can produce. Is not the gently probing interview years after the event as interesting, even revealing, as a diary entry or letter written at the time? The interview, then, becomes an important addition to a collection of personal papers.

The nature of personal papers is changing. Archives and manuscript libraries, those that collect personal papers, need to seek answers to the question of whether those of present and future generations will continue to contain the sort of material valuable to biographers, historians and other researchers. Personal papers are important cultural resources. The biographical oral history interview is not only a means to pursue new avenues of enquiry by scrutinising personal papers (and other sources), but also, in the absence of personal papers, to ensure that future researchers have something of substance to consult.

Julia Horne's formal paper entitled "Oral History as Modern Personal Papers: In Defence of the Long Interview" can be read in *From All Quarters*, Oral History Association of Australia Journal Number 25, 2003.

Archives, oral history, outcomes

Wendy McKinley and Cristina Rodriguez

Wendy McKinley – The oral history collection in the Benedictine Community of New Norcia Archive in Western Australia has concentrated particularly on the Spanish monks. In 1955 they stopped writing the chronicles in Spanish. There is a large collection of both English and Spanish papers. They tried to Christianise the Aborigines. Spanish workmen also came to New Norcia and their skills were taught to the aboriginal people. Boys and girls, both aboriginal and white attended schools in the area. In the early 1990s the Spanish monks were interviewed by Mrs Pat Meldrum and these tapes were used as the base for Cristina Rodriguez's research.

Cristina Rodriguez – Cristina conducted oral history interviews with the three remaining Spanish Benedictine monks of New Norcia as part of her Honours thesis. She found that autobiographic texts, official historic texts and oral histories are equally legitimate sources of history. She said in her presentation that the focus of history is now on the common person. She looked at Miguel de Unamuno's concept of intra-history which looks at daily life, the common and mundane (Unamuno, M. *En torno al casticismo*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 2000). Oral history gives voice to the common person so we can reflect on daily life, reveal daily events that result in those events being documented as official histories. Individual histories also contribute to the overall situation. Below is a short extract from her paper that includes two quotes from Unamuno's work which beautifully and poetically illustrate the value of oral history:

“Through the metaphor of the sea, Unamuno describes his concept of intra-history: that which is found in the depths of official history. Intra-history is the ‘continuous and deep sea’ ignored by history, the ‘surface of the sea’.

‘The waves of history, with their murmur and foam that shimmer in the sun, drift over a continuous and deep sea, immensely deeper than the layer that undulates over the silent sea and, at whose ultimate depth, the sun cannot reach. Everything that is recounted in the daily newspapers, all the history of the ‘present historic moment’, is nothing but the surface of the sea, a surface that freezes and crystallises in books and registers, and, once crystallised, becomes a hard layer, no greater, with regards to the intra-historic life, than is this poor exterior in which we live, compared to the immense burning centre that it holds within. (Translated from Unamuno, 2000, p.41).’

New Norcia's intra-history is not explicitly shown in history books, but rather it is reflected in the undocumented, daily life of those ‘without history’. This is where oral history and autobiography play an important role in retrieving intra-history.’

‘The newspapers say nothing of the silent life of the millions of men without history that at all hours of the day and in all countries of the globe awake at the order of the sun and go to their fields to carry out their dark, daily and eternally silent labour, a labour which like that of deep sea coral, form the bases upon which the islands of history are raised. (Translated from Unamuno, 2000, p.41-42)’”

Cristina's interviews provide a perspective of community that documented history is incapable of showing. Oral history gets to the root, addresses the secret person. The intra-person can tell his story in his or her own words. Intra-historic perspective shows how they feel, motivations, daily life, family life, childhood, and education.

Cristina Rodriguez's formal paper entitled “Oral History, Autobiography and An Intra-history of New Norcia” can be read in *From All Quarters*, Oral History Association of Australia Journal Number 25, 2003.

Riding and swimming through the curriculum

Dr Helen Andreoni

Dr Andreoni's oral history project centred on school in an isolated aboriginal community west of Tenant Creek in the Northern Territory called Mungalawurru (means rain stone – they are the keepers of the rain stone) – a community on a “dreaming trail”. She looked at the reasons for the success of the school and the way aboriginal communities relate to the area.

This is a story of the success of the innovative school run by Principal, Colin Baker and his wife Sandra Baker. Helen interviewed all those involved with the school including the Bakers, students and community members. The interviews focussed on exploring the degree to which the learned skills and experiences enabled them to tackle the challenges indigenous communities face. The community is made up of great-grandmothers and grandmothers who have lost their own children to grog. They are now trying to keep the grandchildren away from the grog. The old women still have traditional skills and enjoy sharing them with their grandchildren.

What do you have to do to get a successful educational outcome? Many things have to happen to ensure success. The principal picks the kids up. There is 100% attendance rate. How have they done it? Sandra Baker provides medical check, and the children are cleaned and fed.

Colin Baker introduced horse riding as part of the curriculum so that the children learn to ride and can later become stockmen. He then introduced swimming after school before moving it into the curriculum. Hearing and hygiene improved because ears were cleaned out. The key people bring other skills to the school. For example, with the horses, the children learn grooming skills.

The children live with their grandparents. Old people are generally interested in education. Parents are generally not interested.

This model has been used by other schools.

Diet is an important issue. Thursday is what makes it all happen. Sandra takes old ladies into town to do the shopping. Old women pay for the food that is distributed at the school. “No child money, you don't come.” Since being partners and being responsible is very important. Tension is when they come into town, family members hassle them for money. Unfortunately, if the old ladies die the community would be abandoned.

Helen Andreoni's formal paper entitled “Riding and Swimming Through the Curriculum” can be read in *From All Quarters*, Oral History Association of Australia Journal Number 25, 2003.

Field notes from an oral historian

Barbara Erskine

Barbara Erskine is a freelance historian who began doing oral history in 1985. Since that time she has honed her skills, building up a significant collection of tapes. She read from an oral history account of a man who survived the Depression.

She said that writing is not usually the problem for oral historians – the problem is explaining what an oral history is. Her purpose is to create a better understanding of what oral history is and how to do it correctly. Oral history has plenty to be enthusiastic about.

Barbara has the skills to help her community do it correctly. The more people she meets the more she realises that there is so much that needs to be recorded. There was always a long list of people to be interviewed. For some people there are levels of importance in oral history. How important is history to our education?

Remembering people from her oral history work can also trigger memories in her own life. Triggers are wonderful. Look for the impact when a trigger is in place. Listen to hear the trigger in action. “When interviewing, memories of my own slide into my mind. Important to keep my mouth shut. To learn when to be quiet is important.” Field notes often contain a lot of knowledge. Knowledge that would be useful if passed on, make learning come alive.

Her enthusiasm began long before it was called “oral history.” As I was growing up I did not pay enough attention to my parents’ stories. As oral history we must be mindful of the bias.

Loss and grief came early in her married life. She became a funeral celebrant which she conducted for free. The most often asked question that is asked – what to do with the body when the person has deceased.

Many of us have not thought about it. Will help you to deal with the loss.

Part of her job is to read/write the eulogy. Oral history interviewing skills come to the fore. Drawing out people’s feelings, remembering, the good and sometimes the bad. Funerals do not always bring out the best. Need to listen accurately. Listen to what they are saying.

---ooo00ooo---

Comments from Delegates

Barbara Erskine enjoyed the conference. In particular she enjoyed -

“The wonderful networking that happens with the Oral History Association. We’ve always been very supportive of – a lot of us do freelance work. A lot of us are out there on our own. A lot of us work in isolation. And it’s just a great organisation to be in and we only meet every two years.”

Ethics Workshop

Chaired by Dr Julia Horne. Panel: Dr Maria Harries, Dr Janis Wilton and Stuart Reid.

Panel re Ethics HREC (Human Research Ethics Committees). Aim of session to call for discussion on ethics impact on oral history. Ethics Committees at universities should be considered a support service. Suggestions on how OHAA can respond to some problems that arise.

1. Hear from some of the panellists.
2. Call upon experience of panellists and audience, examples of good practice.
3. Strategies to move forward.

Why should oral historians apply for clearances from universities?

Stuart Reid – lay member of the Ethics Committee of Edith Cowan University. All universities with significant funding are required to have ethics committees. All research that involves humans must go through these committees. Fundamental requirement for university to get money. Comes from the



medical model background where there are risks to research and attitudes in respect of privacy and confidentiality.

Oral history and other social research go through ethics committee.

Virtually all research has ethical implications.

Potential for infringing any ethical principles e.g. respect for people. Are there benefits to this research? Issues of justice and fairness. To do with causing of harm. Key issue is consent. Is the consent informed consent? Researchers must demonstrate that. Are they ensuring it is understood? Is there a voluntary choice? Not just individual that has to get consent. About risks and benefits. Guidelines “National Statement of Ethical Conduct on Research involving Humans” the bible of ethics committees *Human Research Ethics Handbook*. It has no reference to history or oral history.

Look at the OHAA Ethics Guidelines. Make sure the interviewee knows what the interview is being used for.

A delegate raised the issue of a university requiring a list of interviewees in a project be provided to a counselling service – panel agreed this was very unethical.

We need to look at best practice for universities that have done it well. Be mindful of what this research means for the people.

Strategies –the OHAA – what can we do to get over these problems. A discussion paper which once it has been discussed can be circulated amongst members. Statement that supports what ethics committees do as a support service. Look at some good practices to improve the situation.

Information and advice provided for ethics committee members of the ways we operate in oral history e.g. permission to use forms, explanations why anonymity not used, why the interview should be preserved etc.

Day 2 Friday, 5 September 2003

Alec William Campbell: Gallipoli's Last ANZAC (1899-2002)

Peter Rubinstein

Alec Campbell died on 16 May 2002 aged 103. This oral history project was produced and placed on radio by Radiowise Media Networks (they are currently working on people affected by the Bali bombing).

There was unprecedented media coverage of Alec Campbell following his death. He was the last Gallipoli veteran in the world. Peter Rubinstein interviewed him in 1990, 1997 and 2000. Towards the end he was not as coherent. For the 1990 interview he went to the farewell of 60 Gallipoli veterans and it was the only interview he did. Peter said he was not into oral history at the time. Second interview was in 1997, recording interviews for the national firearms buyback campaign. Series of 60 episodes. He then tried to interview as many World War I veterans as possible. Did 50-minute interview with Alec Campbell and got some highly useable material.

In 2000/2001 he tried another interview looking at other aspects of his life - not a good interview. Now that he was the last Gallipoli veteran, a small organisation, the Queensland ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee committed a budget of \$16,000. Peter conducted interviews to complement Alec Campbell's whole life.

- Born in Tasmania in 1899
- Two marriages, nine children
- Enlisted at 16
- Spent six weeks in Gallipoli
- Campaigned with Jessie Street for women's rights
- Head of the Australian Railways Union of Tasmania
- Did a economics degree in the 1950s
- Sailed in Sydney to Hobart yacht races

Peter got contacts with family and friends to conduct interviews. Fortunately they all gathered together with Alec for his 103rd birthday. Peter interviewed his family, close friends, historians and military personnel. His daughter Mary Burke gave most of the details.

The project was completed one week before Alec's death. Peter immediately produced an audio news release which included the only interview in existence. This was played on almost all radio stations Australia wide.

For Peter it was a very fulfilling project that helped Australians understand more about the ANZACs.

The Department of Public Works Services oral history project

Frank Heimans

Frank came to Australia in 1956 and is based in Sydney. "Evolution of Construction Policy" Department of Works and Services - about the Royal Commission of 1991 into the building industry. The oral history project documented the change in the Department as they responded to the findings of the Royal Commission. It was found there was conflict between employers and employees. Scope of the project from 1988-2001. Frank had four months to do the 17 interviews (which took 45 hours) and a compilation tape. He began by looking at the reports from the Royal Commission which comprised 12,000 pages of material. It took three weeks to absorb what the project was about. Building reflects 2% of Australian GDP.

This was a period of excess in the building industry. Royal Commission headed by Judge Roger Gyles. Worst offenders were the employers with fraud, collusive tendering practices - whoever won the contract, paid the losers.

Contractors associations – special fees would often add \$50,000.00 to the projects. Many other rorts were discovered e.g. Darling Harbour scam. Standover men employed by the employers. With threat of de-registration building unions had to make some changes. Many union benefits were eroded.

Frank had a scoping meeting with the client department to determine parameters. He had to read the relevant newspaper articles. The Royal Commission took two years.

Frank had preliminary meeting with the interviewees. Important to build up trust. Give them time, listen to them. Vital to tell the interviewee what you are going to do, what the project is about, paperwork to sign (release form), restrictions. Interviewee must have good understanding.

Assess the preliminary interview. Then know what will transpire in final interview. Two to three weeks between preliminary interview and final interview. Check recording equipment etc. Get a quiet area in which to record. At preliminary interview make a note of extraneous noises. Used Sony digital TCD10, used by National Library costing about \$4,000.00. Used DAT tapes – 60 minute tape. Microphone 30 cms away from their head and a bit above, used condenser microphone.

Start of interview – start at the beginning of their life to relax them (as long as it wasn't traumatic). Let them go off on tangents. At the end of the interview play back last 30 secs to ensure the sound is there. Label everything, do the log. Work on compilation tape. Look thematically. Work out themes on a board. Feed into computer – Protocols, download free from the internet. Easy to edit, then burn tape. Finally, equalise the tape – get the levels right.

The department made 100 copies of the CD. Frank doesn't know what they have done with it. Department name now changed to Department of Commerce.

Frank Heiman's formal paper entitled "The Department of Public Works & Services Oral History Project" can be read in *From All Quarters*, Oral History Association of Australia Journal Number 25, 2003.

“A Bunch of Loose Cannons” – Vietnam Veterans search for a place in legend

Janine Hiddlestone

Janine interviewed 40 veterans formally but said she probably talked to at least 100 more than that. A newspaper article was published about her research and requested people contact her. She also contacted veterans' organisations. Some interviewees came from references from one interviewee to another. Janine checked that they really were Vietnam veterans. Interviewees were a little suspicious at first. Not until they got to know her did they relax. She used small standard size tape recorder, no microphone attached. Janine wanted them to forget it was there. She used discussion interview technique. Got them talking and then steered them back to the questions. Confidentiality was the issue. About five were unwilling to have their names shown. Attitudes have been changing therefore some may now allow them to be used.

Most have not talked about their experiences in the 35 years since then. They felt free to tell Janine things they did not tell their friends and family. They thanked her for being interested. She did 30 of the interviews in three weeks.

Their past is “another country.” They want to have their rightful place as warriors. The level of recognition has improved. They want an opportunity to tell their side of the story. For many it was the first big adventure of their lives and they felt they were carrying on a great tradition. They went with a sense of duty. Majority came home and went on with their lives. There is a concern that the war is now seen through Hollywood eyes.

Many Vietnam veterans have a “victim” mentality – a negative stereotype. Many have medical problems. These men lived extremely ordinary lives. They want respect rather than sympathy.

Australia's going to East Timor changed a lot of things, as did the Gulf war. They are going to be treated better than the Vietnam veterans were. More Vietnam veterans are attending services. ANZAC Day has now become important for them.

Janine Hiddlestone's formal paper entitled ““A Bunch of Loose Cannons”” Vietnam Veterans Search for a Place in the Legend” can be read in *From All Quarters*, Oral History Association of Australia Journal Number 25, 2003.

---ooo00ooo---

Comments from Delegates

Julia Horne

“I've enjoyed it very much. I've never been to Perth before so that's been interesting. The papers have been a nice mixture of work that's actually out there – people, the sorts of oral histories that they're collecting and working on and the conclusions they're drawing as well as the sorts of collections that are being built. And also the types of issues that oral historians have to face. It's been a nice balance so far.”

Migration memories and multi-media trail and the application

Jill Cassidy

Jill Cassidy is the Oral Historian at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston, Tasmania. She has been working there since 1988. She prepared a major exhibition about migration and Tasmania which opened in December 2001 and will run for five years. It is partly based on 30 oral history interviews with migrants from all over the world.

Jill found that oral history fleshed out the story and made the whole exhibition live. People's emotions are most important; help us feel what people have gone through.

Tasmania is the only State to have a "Good Neighbour Council." The exhibition dealt with themes, divided into sections - leaving home, the journey, settling in.

Jill looked for the best way to display the oral history excerpts - single out quotations, done under themes, no more than three lines at a time. Unnecessary words excised. Reduced to its essence. The full interviews are in the Museum collection and are available for research.

On the display screen visitors choose area from a map. It then shows pictures of interviewees. Visitors are invited to choose an interviewee. There are 30 interviewees and three questions. Visitors choose what interests them most. They see the people being interviewed answering the questions that were asked.

It is a multimedia presentation using "Director". The decision was made to do it in-house so they could continue to operate as a team. They were able to develop interactives. Price of Director \$3000 but for educational institution \$1000. "Quick Time" also needs to be installed if operating on a PC. When working with multi-media the most important thing is the brief. Ideas from CD ROMs used for school use. Keep it simple. People should see things after only three clicks of the screen. Main thing was to see video clips of the interviewees.

Involved many days of work over a couple of months. Digital video gave good quality pictures and sound. Half an hour of footage per person out of the filming. The audio interviews were already done. Jill marked the most interesting part of the transcript and then asked them to answer the same question for the video. This was better than trying to video the whole interview from the start. Jill developed a good relationship with the interviewees by the time the video was being done. It is best to have all interviewees facing the same way - full head and shoulders. Editing the videos took some time. Each video edited down to one minute, however, Jill now feels that 30 seconds would have been better.

The final part of the process was the graphic design work. Jill found there is no great mystery to presenting interactives and with the right tools and background knowledge, it can be done.

Jill Cassidy's formal paper entitled "Migration Memories on Multi-media at a Museum" can be read in *From All Quarters*, Oral History Association of Australia Journal Number 25, 2003.

---ooo00ooo---

Comments from Delegates

Professor Geoffrey Bolton was impressed with the conference. "I've been in and out of it but it seems to be very lively and I particularly liked the last paper about the Queen Victoria Museum at Launceston because I'd just visited it and discovered it for the first time and it was pleasantly reminiscent but the whole thing shows since we started 24 years ago how much the profession's advanced and, it's got its own professionalism and very much more respected than it was."

Paul Hasluck remembered: conflicting testimonies in oral history 1941-1963

Professor Geoffrey Bolton

Professor Bolton's very interesting lecture was a bi-product of a larger project on Paul Hasluck who was Minister for Territories during Menzies era. Hasluck was elected the Liberal MP for Curtin in 1949 and was Minister for Territories from 1951 to 1963. He was interested in aboriginal welfare, rejecting segregation and instead favoured the extension of social services and educational opportunities to allow integration of aborigines into mainstream society. At the time that was considered revolutionary.

Two senior members of the Northern Territory Administration who worked with Hasluck: Hugh Barclay, Director of Lands, and Harry Giese, Director of Social Welfare were interviewed about their association with Hasluck. They have very different and contradictory recollections of him. Barclay criticised Hasluck and Giese praised him. This is a dilemma for oral historians. How do we reconcile the different perspectives of Barclay and Giese? Professor Bolton gave examples of the conflicting testimony and examined ways in which he might use them to achieve a satisfactory balance.

---ooo00ooo---

The true history of my mother – or is it?

Jenny Hudson

Jenny Hudson made tapes of her mother made in 1986 when she was 84. Recorded six hours over five weeks. Jenny is now contemplating what she told her and how she told her. Interesting window on one segment of Australian society covering most of the 20th century.

The tapes provide an essence of one life but could it have wider reverberations? Could it be a significant life tool? Or from a wider point of view, could a story like hers become part of a wider pool of material? There is this obsession now with origins. People are concerned why and how the human thought and action processes evolve and function. Why can some cultures adapt and survive while others fail? Why was there a cultural shift in the 19th century when some countries succeeded and others failed? What was the combination of factors that caused this to happen when and where it did?

Are individual decisions on a multitude of very small matters of ultimate cumulative importance in shaping society? Are ordinary individuals in fact the main actors not just the reflectors of great events? The simple cumulative record of actions. What about the actions of one's own ordinary family? Can that tell us anything about the larger whys of Australian Society today?

Basic questions about the recording – what has she really told me? How reliable was her memory? Was she an embroiderer? Did she sanitise? Were there gaps? Our first oral history assignments should be simple family interviews. What ends up on any tape can only be the minute part of any life. – only the essence.

The heights and hazards of recording life stories on video/DVD as a commercial enterprise

Laurel Wraight

Laurel is passionate about oral history and wanted to practise in the visual medium in a commercial context. She was convinced this was the way to go after her son interviewed her father about his life. He spoke fluently and without confusion as a result of his story being listened to and valued (had dementia). That unpolished video is now one of her treasured possessions.

Laurel is fascinated by the individual's life journey. Her professional career had been in social work and she had never been interested in computers and technology. She confessed to being hopeless at asking people for payment. Her active learning techniques were hard to unlearn. She attended the Canberra Oral History Conference and was "hooked". Her business name is "Memory Moments."

Very few people think of their own story as being valuable. Her marketing was targeted at the children of elderly people. She was baffled by the equipment required and lost some excitement about the idea. However, she persevered through this period of self-doubt and found out about video. She did unpaid interviews as practice in a self-imposed apprenticeship. Each video took four months to complete. She found the most effective advertising has been word of mouth.

She has a pre-recording session which she found good for herself and the interviewee.. She uses an information form covering basic facts, education, immigration etc., timeline of interviewee's life's history. She also has a contact authorisation form which allows her to speak to people that know the interviewee. She is with them for at least two hours during the preliminary interview. By the end of the session the interviewee is keen to start sharing the memories. Thorough research is essential. She researches the information gained, talks to the people named in the contact information form. She also researches historical events that may have occurred during their lives – how did these events affect the interviewee?

Questions for each session are written on a spiral cards to avoid sound of rustling during recording. She has interviewee wear the same clothes at each session. Also beware of changing hairstyles! She aims to bring person back from their memories to the present before she leaves. Beginning by recording name, address then replay to ensure everything is working then ignore equipment for the rest of the video. Edit out questions as much as possible. Allow the person to become "the star."

Majority of work is commissioned by relatives. Review and log the tapes, revise. Record as many photos and memorabilia as possible to be inserted at the appropriate moments. If possible she visit places of significance.

Lessons learned –microphones with plug in, remember to turn off microphone. Ensure there is a suitable background view. Laurel usually records eight to nine hours. Video editing is very time-consuming.

Evaluating - original camera footage is archived. Clients want to focus on "the star". Use a high quality directional microphone. Once eye contact is established, the recording equipment is ignored. DVD better format. Three hours per finished minute –very expensive! Biggest cost has been the equipment. Laurel has a web site at:

www.memorymoments.com.au

Laurel Wraight's formal paper entitled "Take 1: The Heights & Hazards of Recording Life Stories on Video/DVC as a Commercial Enterprise" can be read in *From All Quarters*, Oral History Association of Australia Journal Number 25, 2003.

Day 3 Saturday, 6 September 2003

Heritage work and oral history

Dr David Dolan

Dr Dolan is the Chair of the National Trust of Western Australia.

He is looking at ways that oral history can be better used in heritage work. There has been a steady rise in the use of oral history since the 1980s but he believes that oral history is under valued. It was originally thought of as suspect and not “real history”. There are many negative views espoused in newspapers and book reviews. False memory cases have contributed to the damage to reputation of oral history.

Dr Dolan said oral historians need to look at the social value of places when assessing the heritage value. He advocated the need to have oral history projects around places of value such as schools, churches, post offices, banks, light houses, mills etc. and challenged delegates to do more in this direction.

David Dolan’s formal paper entitled “Oral History and Heritage Work” can be read in *From All Quarters*, Oral History Association of Australia Journal Number 25, 2003.

---ooo00ooo---

Out on a limb – young men and post-war travel from Australia

Valwyn Wishart

There are 300,000 Australians currently employed in England. Australian links with the U.K. working holiday is part of the continuing discourse of Australians and their pre-occupation with travel. Valwyn’s earlier project “Australian Girls and a Working Holiday” was broadcast on ABC Radio National. She then decided to see if the experiences of young men were any different to that of the females? She found there was a regular stream of young men though not as many as women. They were looking for adventure in the wider world often risking losing full time employment in Australia. They thought that overseas work would contribute to future career advancement.

Valwyn interviewed at private individuals rather than well-known people. At first they did not think their experiences would be very interesting. As they were interviewed they realised that the trip did influence their lives. They spoke of the immediate task of keeping body and soul together in England. They experienced some condescending treatment as “colonials”. How did they deal with this class structure?

They used rickety old cars for their travel around England and Europe. The vehicles were a metaphor for the travel experiences of these adventurous young men. The experience brought them great personal rewards and satisfactory personal and career outcomes.

Valwyn’s Wishart’s formal paper entitled “Out on a Limb: Young Men and Post-war Travel From Australia” can be read in *From All Quarters*, Oral History Association of Australia Journal Number 25, 2003.

The Westrail workshops (Midland) history project 1998-2004

Dr Bobbie Oliver

Through her oral history project, Dr Oliver examined the worth of oral history as a teaching tool.

For 90 years the Westrail Workshops were Western Australia's largest industrial work site, employing up to 3500 workers at their peak in the 1940s and 1950s. They trained people outside the railways as well. In March 1994 the workshops were closed amid public outrage and protest. Since 1998 the workshops have been the subject of an extensive oral history project.

Employees feared the buildings would be destroyed so they wanted the history recorded orally. Site continues to attract many people including past employees and their children and grandchildren.

In October 1999 a \$80,000.00 grant over two years was secured. However, they required additional funds. Volunteers were trained by Stuart Reid and Bill Bunbury to undertake interviews. Recording equipment was purchased and hired. 200 names were collected. A survey form was developed which provided a rich source of information. Had a team of six volunteers. Memorabilia was contributed and used for displays.

Second stage of the project was a \$425,000.00 grant over three years. The material was used in a number of ways – including a scholarly history, DVD, web page and significant collection of archival material. Project will end at the end of 2004.

There were significant scholarly outcomes. Material used to teach students at Murdoch University's media school.

Most importantly, the project's findings helped persuade the site's redevelopers of its significant heritage value and the need to plan for an on-site heritage centre.

See web site:

www.radio.Murdoch.edu.au

---ooo00ooo---

Comments from Delegates

Jill Cassidy

"I always enjoy coming to the conferences and just being inspired by all the different stories and getting the opportunity to meet the faces behind the names that you've heard of and just lots of discussion and all the issues that come up. It's just really good to be refreshed every couple of years and be part of the whole community."

Bringing them home and connecting with oral history in general

John Bannister

John Bannister was an interviewer for the National Library's "Bringing Them Home Project". The project's aim was to interview the people involved in the "Stolen Generation" issue, when there was a government policy to remove aboriginal children from their families. The project is seen as important for research and for reconciliation. An abridged form of the paper he delivered at the conference is presented below:

"I have always felt that I am not a speechmaker and as all good oral history interviewers should know, our job is not to talk but to ask short, hopefully intelligent questions. Our specialty should also combine the perfected skills of audio machine operation and the art of 'being quiet.

I have been asked to speak to you about my experiences with the Bringing Them Home Oral History Project from an interviewer's point of view... I was involved from the early stages of the pilot project and undertook many interviews in the Perth Metropolitan area throughout the three or so years of my involvement.

I admit that my understanding of the Stolen Generation at the time was poor - my assumptions lying, I believe, in a lack of awareness held by many people of my generation with a somewhat sheltered and directed Anglo/Australian upbringing.

Assumptions and a lack of awareness that the Bringing Them Home Oral History project has aimed to change. I hope that with the publication of the book *Many Voices* these aims are now being achieved on a much wider scale...

The extent of 'my' understanding of the process of separation was that Indigenous children like other unfortunate, unwanted, homeless or parentless, children were adopted out to caring families under the usually understood processes.

I was not aware of the extent of the policies and the darker process of separation and assimilation that had been implemented by people in positions of power and authority over many years. I had never heard of AO Neville and his work with assimilation of indigenous children into the white community as chief protector of aborigines, a position that he held for some 25 years until 1940.

My initial brief was that I would be employed to interview historians and administrators, knowledgeable with, if not personally involved, in the policies associated with the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, and what has become known as the Stolen Generation. I later became involved with interviewing indigenous people, a large proportion of them women.

As a result, the project for me, took on more than an historical fact finding mission, becoming an interviewing process that would take on an incredibly emotional and 'intimate' human communication context that I had not expected.

The fact that I was a white male seemed to make no difference over the course of interviewing indigenous people and this fact if anything, I believe enhanced one of the aims of the project, that of cross cultural awareness and understanding. I also believe, that at least for me, and the indigenous interviewees concerned, a sense of reconciliation was reached.

I have chosen to talk of Doris Pilkington - Nugi Garamara - the writer and Sandra Hill the visual artist, as two examples of individual stories I helped to record. Both Doris and Sandra have attempted to come to terms with their experiences for themselves, through the use of their chosen art forms - by helping themselves to come to terms with their stories, they have, I feel, touched the public through the written word and painting

Doris Pilkington's book *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* has as we all know been turned into film and as a result reached large audiences worldwide. Sandra Hill has exhibited her work worldwide and within the local public domain with her involvement at Curtin University and Art Spaces and public art projects throughout Australia.

Having seen the film version of Doris Pilkington's story, regardless of its expert cinematography and its success and the impact that it has had on so many people, I must say that it will never compare to the story that I heard across the kitchen table, from the author's own lips while she shared her intimate, heart rending, childhood experiences with me and told me of their affect on her life and her family. The impact of her story was immediate, confronting and took on a form of human sharing and communication that will stay with me always.

The power of the Oral History interview I feel is often found in what is unsaid - in the things that are expressed in the spaces between the words - the spaces given to thought, reflection and awakened memories. These things cannot be reproduced in a transcript or book - one must listen to the stories to get an understanding of the power that these recorded recollections own. I have experienced interviewees eyes fill with tears and mist over as they not only remember their experiences but actually go back to relive those times as they recall the moment.

The term 'Reconciliation' was something that came up during the interviews on regular occasions. The sense of this being achieved was no more strongly felt by me at the end of recording, when I was thanked on numerous occasions for being the quiet listener - and the operator of the machinery, through which the interviewee was able to tell 'their' story.

When you obtain a copy of the book/CD *Many Voices* I am sure you will be awakened in incredible ways. You will be surprised at the stories and emotions related to me. Avoid transcripts if you can. Listen to the tapes. That is what oral history is all about - listening to the spoken word.

Let us hope that the 'Bringing Them Home' project and the book *Many Voices* will ensure that if things have not changed - the way has certainly been cleared for change to begin now. Let us also remember a well-used phrase 'those who forget the past are doomed to relive it'."

Many Voices - reflections on experiences of indigenous child separation...edited by Doreen Mellor and Anna Haebich. The book (including CD attached to back cover) can be purchased by ordering from the National Library through any bookstore, or by phoning Sales and Distribution at the National Library on 1800 800 100 or emailing the library on nlasales@nla.gov.au, or go to this site <http://www.nla.gov.au/pub/bringhome.html> and you will find an order form online, along with information on the book.

---ooo00ooo---

Delegates tour the Old Observatory residence – Headquarters of the National Trust



Oral history and film: a third space for frontier history

Dr MaryAnne Jebb

Oral history and film “Whispering in our Hearts: The Mowla Bluff Massacre” documentary produced by Michelle Torres with her community in the West Kimberley.

Dr Jebb examines the concept of “the third space” as applied to film as an analytical tool. “Us” and “them” – example of sherpas and non-indigenous climbers where the climbing track is the “third space”. Another “third space” example shown was paintings depicting the conflict between aborigines and settlers.

Historians must not look only at the written record. A more complete history includes the oral accounts. The written record is partial, particularly in the area of frontier history.

The written records and oral history were used to make the film.

Film tells story of massacre at Mowla Bluff “Whispering in our Hearts”. Study guide included.

History, fact and truth - do not see one person’s story as necessarily wrong. The video can be borrowed from WA Library or bought.

---ooo00ooo---

The Bankstown model: oral history and cultural diversity involving young people

Tim Carroll

Tim Carroll has been the Arts Officer in Bankstown for 11 years and has completed three oral history projects. Bankstown is a very culturally diverse area. Tim said he was not a standard oral historian as it is only small part of his position.

For his most recent project, interviews were obtained from interviewees in senior citizens centres and ethnic day care. Students involved as interviewers. Finished product was a collection of tapes and transcripts.

The spin-offs from the project were:

- lots of good press
- a play directed by a local teacher that was performed several times in Bankstown and as part of a international popular theatre exchange.
- heaps of contacts and goodwill for future projects.

Tim Carroll’s formal paper entitled “The Bankstown Oral History Project: A Multicultural Perspective” can be read in *From All Quarters*, Oral History Association of Australia Journal Number 25, 2003.

Living inside modernity: an oral history of the first housing project in Latin America

Dr Gerardo Necochea Gracia and Graciela de Garay

Dr Gerardo Necochea Gracia focussed on the video “My ‘Multi’ is My Multi” based on the interviews in a housing project in Mexico City that was the first multi-family residential building in Latin America, built in 1949. Interviewed 69 people for the project, three generations, women, and men. The project looked at the building from 1949 to 1999. Residents mainly working class people. Built for retired public servants and bureaucrats

The place where people live – we create local culture around those spaces. Can this be similar process in other countries? Is there an echo of this in Australia? Why have so many schemes to improve human lives failed? Modern schemes tend to fail because they ignore cultural and social differences. Research has found that the residents were happy in these multi-family buildings.

Architect of the building trained in Europe and returned to Mexico where conditions were poor with a housing shortage. At the beginning people were very suspicious about the idea because they thought the architect was forgetting about tradition. People were not used to living in high buildings. Many migrants came from the countryside. At the beginning they had to adjust. After 50 years we came to the conclusion that they were happy.

It was successful because the architectural scheme was very well planned and well built. It had many luxurious things they had not had before such as a swimming pool and hot water. It was close to the city, therefore residents were not cut off. These residents had a very clear identity. Apartments averaged 49 sq metres. There were 5,000 inhabitants. In the late 1980s the government decided to sell the apartments to those that were living there, for a very low figure. This created a number of problems – how do we manage this? People that lived there went from being renters to owners. Kinship was important. The buildings survived the 1985 earthquake.

Gerardo Necochea Gracia’s formal paper entitled “From Favour to Right: Two Generations View Their Living Space in Mexico City” can be read in *From All Quarters*, Oral History Association of Australia Journal Number 25, 2003.

---ooo00ooo---

Comments from Delegates

Rosie Block, National President of the Oral History Association of Australia

“I think it’s going wonderfully. I think it’s very interesting, everything’s very diverse and there’s a real buzz. I like to meet up with people who are in the same community of oral historians and I very much like oral history to be promoted, although I know we’re promoting it here among the converted, but not altogether the converted. There are plenty of visitors I think who are learning something about oral history, if not for the first time, but certainly at the beginning of their oral history knowledge and I also always look to having a different perspective from different speakers on traditional topics.”

Day 4 Sunday, 7 September 2003

Library Workshop

Chaired by Jan Partridge – Panel: Jan McCahon, Ronda Jamieson, Rosie Block

Rosie Block – overview of the position of growth, strategies or decline. Three topics:

1. Position
2. Profile
3. Proof

Position – oral history cannot grow unless it has somewhere to go. In NSW it languished till 1991. When the program began attended an oral history group. It is important to have a practising technician who can teach oral history techniques and to have a good partnership with the Oral History Association of Australia. Oral history is a community-based endeavour. State Library of NSW seminars support the regions. Part of Rosie's duties is to give advice and support. She would like to know what is going on in the community and this needs a specialist to drive it. It is specialist's role is to inspire and support in creating material and then preserving it and caring for it and making it accessible. When there is no specialist, it languishes. May not need a specialist to do the cataloguing or preservation. The collection needs to be known.

Profile: oral history must be promoted. Finding somewhere safe for our material is important. We must publicise and publicise our skills. We need to grow the Oral History Association membership. We need to promote all publications based on oral history and for oral history. We need to promote the term "oral history" before the public. We need to promote the practice in universities - some universities think students "know how to do it". We need to make partnerships with oral history groups, National Trust etc. PHIN etc. One of the major ways is to catalogue the material on line. NSW has many already on line so is accessible to everybody. Oral history needs somewhere to go in order to grow.

Proof: Oral history will grow under a specialist. National Library has a top range studio and specialists to support it. Promotes use of extensive collection. We have to look at the passing of the first generation of oral history specialists. Are we so closely connected with the collection that when we go we take the collection with us? We need to ensure there will be someone to replace the current generation of specialists so that there is someone to carry on after we go, to ensure the collection is safe. One of the ways to promote is hold exhibitions with sound content and interviewee content, storyboard, memorabilia of exhibition. Web is good for a catalogue. There are also equipment issues. We need an oral specialist who knows how the equipment works.

Ronda Jamison – oral history collection is one of the many heritage collections that the Battye Library is responsible for. We treat it the same as other collections. Responsibility to ensure that the collection reflects the community. Collection goes back to 1961. First project done was interviewing coalminers and their wives. That is the inspiration for those that follow. Projects gradually were paid for.

Library is now getting 200-300 hours of tape per year. Library takes preservation responsibility – encourages people to donate. Library has an on-line catalogue.

Issues – we don't know who will want the material in the future or why. Whenever someone has given their time they have a right to feel that the best was made of their story. Ronda is still distressed at the standard of interviewing and transcribing. Where is the source material for the questions asked.

Ronda said transcribing worried her because we love the voice however, if we have long tapes most people will approach the interview for a particular bit. Ensure interviews transcribed are checked. Transcribing should only be done if people do it properly. Accuracy is critical.

Libraries are moving to place the voice on line. However has the interviewee agreed to that being on line? This may intrude on their privacy and may be insensitive, also be aware of giving interviews to radio. If we ask people for permission, will it change what they tell us? The oral historian deals with people not pieces of paper. Needs to be done well.

Questions from delegates:

Difficulty where tapes would be used for "gossip" rather than research?

It is a dilemma. Allow the transcript to be borrowed but only listen to the tape in the library. When people gave the interview they signed a form in the knowledge it would be in the library. Interviewees need to re-hear their interviews. They won't sign the form if they have any difficulty with access.

Transcribing is very expensive and not many good transcribers, what do you think about a summary at the least?

No problem with no transcript but a summary okay. If they transcribe, it must be accurate or should not be done at all.

Would you consider anonymous tapes?

No.

Comment on use of time summary.

Digitising of sound using time codes – time summary. National Library interviewers required to provide time summary. So it can be a quick way through from item to the sound on the tape. Promotion of the material is very important. Use NLA list.

What action is being taken by the institutions to ensure we have good standards of interview and transcription? To ensure the collection are of a high standard?

Rosie Block replied that NSW ran regular seminars at the library to teach best practice. We need to promote use of Oral History Handbook. Even with teaching cannot ensure will be of the correct standard. Interviewers must be taught basic practice but it is more important to ensure the interview is done.

Ronda Jamieson does not see it as the library's role to ensure standards are maintained. They are only a repository. It is a cost issue – balancing priorities.

Who evaluates the material that comes in?

The archivist evaluates before it is accepted.

There is a need to use video to record the stories of deaf people. There is also a concern about change of format to DVD. Therefore, will poorer people be able to access it? Is there a national arrangement between large and small collecting institutions and the OHAA where these issues are addressed?

A conference is the forum for bringing up these issues.

Should there be certain standards of how transcribing should be done?

Use a time summary or log of the tape. The sound recording is paramount. No rules for transcribing. This is up to you.



Jesley Chua, Margaret Hamilton, Jan McCahon, Gerardo Necochea Gracia, Rosie Block



Graciela de Garay, Rosie Block, Jan McCahon, Lesley Alves, Gerardo Necochea Gracia, Margaret Hamilton, Janis Wilton

Comments from Delegates

Helen Andreoni

“I enjoy the opportunity to meet special people like Barbara Powell. You never know who you’ll meet at an Oral History Conference and they all come from different areas, different disciplines, different life experiences but they all share great enthusiasm for the power of oral history so that’s why I’m here. I wouldn’t miss it for the world.”

---ooo00ooo---

Barbara Powell

“I’ve enjoyed it tremendously. I’ve come out of here out of personal interest and also as a representative for the Genealogical Society because I’m a family historian. I am – I love meeting people and sharing information with different people and having met Helen who is a doctor and I’m fascinated with people who go and do further qualifications and become extremely qualified and to be able to listen to people like that is really inspiring and wonderful.”

---ooo00ooo---

Jesley Chua came from Singapore.

“I must say that I’m very impressed by the way the whole conference has been organised, very organised and I’m enjoying actually the entire conference in terms of the content itself as well as the warmth and friendliness of people, the participants.”

---ooo00ooo---

Gerardo Necoechea Gracia came from Mexico.

“I guess my first impression is just the wide variety of people that gather for this. I’m used to more of an academic conference format so I like the fact that you have academics, but you also have volunteers, people working in local studies programs and so on. I think that’s been the one thing that has impressed me the most on and I find that very good. Of course, the other thing is that I’ve learnt a great deal about Australian history so that to me in particular has been very important.”

---ooo00ooo---

Margaret Hamilton, Conference Convenor

“One of the things that I have noticed and has thrilled me a great deal is the way that so many people who’ve never met before are talking to each other and then at another meal break or tea break are talking to somebody else. At many a conference, not necessarily only oral history, you find the people from one state are sticking together a bit. They might occasionally edge into somebody else’s camp because they’ve overheard something they’d like to take part in. But overall, here, I’m amazed at the real minglement and that probably has thrilled me as much as the content of the papers. I’ve been very thrilled at our speakers. Yes, I’m overall pleased.”