



# On Tape Newsletter

**30 June 2012**

Hello OHAA-Qld members, this is the latest newsletter which incorporates information that would have been in a June e-Bulletin. Please also check out our Blog which is updated weekly. You can send information for the e-Bulletin to Suzanne Mulligan at [mulligan@gil.com.au](mailto:mulligan@gil.com.au) and use OHAA E-Bulletin in the subject line. The editor reserves the right not to publish if any information is judged to be inappropriate. Our web site is [www.ohaaqld.org.au](http://www.ohaaqld.org.au). Renewal of memberships are due for most of you on 1 July and you will receive an invoice shortly. Quick payment will ensure you receive your 2012 *Oral History Journal* in the first mailout.

**Suzanne Mulligan**

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## **Using the New H4Zoom Recorder with Sister Regis Mary**

**By Catherine Cottle**

OHAA/Queensland had just purchased two H4Zoom recorders. With an oral history interview coming up with Sister Regis Mary, I was eager to give one a try. Lena Volkova hand-delivered the recorder to me, fresh out of the box, never used! The recorder provides high quality .wav files. Game on!

The manual proved to be daunting with all types of features, but I persevered. No, I did not want to do karaoke! I just wanted to record an interview with the very interesting Sister Regis Mary, a long-time scientist, geneticist and medical ethicist with the Mater Hospital. I tested the equipment at home and it was off to the Mater.

First we had tea, and then we settled into a small room used for storage. I sat next to the vacuum cleaner. Sister Regis Mary sat across from me at a rickety table that had squeaky legs. My friend Helen O'Brien agreed to take notes. She had worked with Sister for 47 years at the Mater Hospital Laboratory and was up to it, knowing the Laboratory history quite well.

I had to fiddle with the Zoom recorder, but it looked good. The light was on and it was recording. I set up my backup mp3 recorder, just in case. The interview started as Sister said, "My parents wanted me to be a home science teacher." We were off and running. At times, it was just incredulous to not only hear Sister's story but to be able to capture it for others. How one person could go from a country home in Toowoomba to genetics testing in the 1950s to providing ethical consultations was just amazing. As Sister said, "We were there, there was no one else." Helen even occasionally shook her head, telling me later that she worked with Sister all those years and found out new information at the interview that she had never known! The power of the oral history interview!

I checked the Zoom during the interview and things were looking good. Every anxiety about the equipment fell to the wayside as Sister told her story. A funny part came when Sister explained that she was sent to (now) QUT and UQ to take medical classes in order to get master's level certification in what she was already doing at the hospital. She and the other nuns had to get special permission from the Archbishop in order to go out at night time! This was after working all day and then taking classes until 9 p.m. at night. The compromise was to take a cab back to the Mater rather than be on the streets!

We finished the interview and agreed to meet again. It was a success. I was able to get a copy of the interview off of the recorder and onto a USB. I felt a huge relief at being able to use a new piece of equipment for an important interview that I very much wanted to capture in order to share with the people of Queensland. I will be happy to use the new recorder again as Sister has agreed to tell me "the rest of the story"!

The OHAA has posted information about how to do oral histories on its website under Frequently Asked Questions. Here is the link to information about the recorder mentioned here - <http://www.ohaaqld.org.au/index.php?faq.html>

## Oral History Workshop in Townsville Ariella Van Luyn



Room at the Thuringowa Library

On 19 and 20 May, Helen Klaebe, Bryan Crawford and Ariella Van Luyn flew to Townsville to run a two day oral history workshop at the Thuringowa Library, Townsville. The workshop was a collaboration between the library and the OHAA Qld. Annette Burns, local history librarian at Townsville, with the support of library staff, arranged flights and accommodation for Bryan, Helen and Ariella, and organised the venue and catering for participants and facilitators over the two workshop days. The facilitators' fees were paid for with a

Gambling Community Benefit Fund Grant.

Eighteen participants attended the workshop for diverse reasons. Participants included Alicia Bolam, Annette Burns, Robyn Maconachie, Barbara Mathiesen and Janeese Henaway from CityLibraries, Townsville. Judith Ecuyer travelled from Saunders Beach, looking for advice on her current projects on the history of Saunders Beach and her own family. D'esley Smith from the Performing Arts History Society Townsville (PAHST) is hoping to record oral histories from Townsville artists. Phil Heang, from Writers in North Queensland, plans to rely on oral histories to augment his play writing.



Alicia and Janeese conducting preliminary interviews and designing questions

Kerry Kendall and Cliff Robinson both hope to capture stories from Bush men and women. Kris Patterson from the Zara Clark Museum in Charters Towers, plans to record oral histories of residents in Charters Towers. Maxine Cuddihy, from Townsville, hopes to use oral stories for their family history. Jenni Townsend wants to collect oral histories to augment her work in Indigenous education. Others, like Diane Laun from Townsville, Sharon Russo from Ayr, and Fiona Scott from Home Hill, came along without a project in mind, but hoping to learn more about gathering oral stories.



Kerry and Cliff conducting preliminary interviews and designing questions

On Saturday, the group split in two. Facilitators Helen and Ariella took half the participants through the steps in an oral history project, budgeting, and writing information and consent forms. Meanwhile, Bryan showed his groups the basic equipment needed for an oral history project, and worked with them to get some hands on experience using audio equipment. The OHAA Qld's new H4N Zoom recorders had their first outing, as Bryan and his group opened the boxes and tested them out. After lunch, the groups swapped. In the final session, Helen and Ariella took the group

through planning the preliminary interview and designing questions. After Helen and Ariella gave them feedback, participants went home to work on their questions, ready to test them the next day.

In the evening, Bryan, having passed through Townsville but never actually visited the town, finally fulfilled one of his dreams: to walk down The Strand and have a beer looking out over the ocean to Magnetic Island. Ariella was more than happy to join him.

On Sunday, the groups reconvened and recorded short oral histories in groups. After a quick Morning Tea break, the entire group listened to interviews, reflecting on the questions asked, interviewing technique and recording quality. The afternoon was spent thinking about ways to present oral histories as digital stories, family histories, traditional histories, fiction and nonfiction, as well as in museum displays and exhibitions. Helen took the group through evaluation processes, sharing the recent research she has gathered as part of her Smithsonian Fellowship.

Helen had also brought along some digital stories, which were outputs from a number of oral history projects, she, Bryan and Ariella had worked on. Helen showed the group digital stories made as part of the collaboration between Cardwell Historical Association and the OHAA Qld, funded by an RADF grant, which documented stories from the aftermath of Cyclone Yasi. She also played digital stories from her PhD,

‘Sharing Stories: Kelvin Grove Urban Village.’ These stories, speckled throughout the two days, keep the group entertained and enlivened.



Anita and Phil conducting preliminary interviews

The group was keen and happy to participate. Helen, Bryan and Ariella found them a pleasure to work with, and they shared a lot of laughs over the two days. Library staff plan to set up an oral history group in Townsville, based at the library and supported by staff members. It will be exciting to learn about the new projects and stories collected as part of this enthusiasm for oral history practice in Townsville.

**Photos by Bryan Crawford**

## **2012 Gallery and Museum Achievement Awards: Nominations Close 31 July**

55 organisations and 34 individuals have been recognised with a Gallery and Museum Achievement Award (GAMAA) since 2004. Nominations for the 2012 GAMAA are now open. Nominate your organisation or a worthy individual - they could be a winner this year! M&GSQ presents the GAMAA to honour the achievements of individuals and organisations in striving towards excellence.

Organisation awards are open to all public, non-commercial\* Queensland museums, galleries and keeping places. Libraries, arts councils, artist-run spaces and cultural networks that undertake exhibition or museum practice-related activities are also eligible to nominate. \*Privately-owned museums and galleries that are not-for-profit are eligible to nominate. Other privately-owned museums and galleries may be eligible to nominate if they can demonstrate that they operate in a public, non-commercial manner. If in doubt, contact M&GSQ.

Individual awards are open to the paid and volunteer staff of any of the above organisations. Individuals must be nominated by another person, so if you know someone worthy, give them the recognition they deserve.

The winners will be announced at an Awards night to be held in late 2012. Travel costs will be provided for winners and commendation recipients to attend the awards presentation. There are cash prizes and prizes of goods/services for the winners in most categories, as well as a specially commissioned trophy by a Queensland artist.

**Nominations close 5pm Tuesday 31 July 2012.**

2012 nomination forms are available on the M&GSQ website at <http://www.magsq.com.au/01 cms/details.asp?ID=50> along with sample nomination forms, a PowerPoint to help you develop a quality nomination, and answers to frequently-asked questions about the GAMAA. If you need more information or assistance with your nomination, phone M&GSQ on 07 3215 0842 or freecall within Queensland 1800 680 433.

## **Your Community Heritage**

The Federal Government has provided more than \$9.8 million in funding to support 237 heritage projects around Australia, helping communities preserve and celebrate their important places and stories.

*Your Community Heritage* recognises that our heritage is not just about 'big' heritage such as places on the World and National Heritage Lists, it is also about the heritage of individual communities, be they in regional Australia or small towns or in dispersed multicultural communities. The program is about broadening our understanding and support of heritage and the organisations, individuals, volunteers and communities, who protect and manage so many of our unique heritage places and stories.

We have heard from the Tablelands Region that their applications were successful in the first round of funding – congratulations! If you have received funding through the *Your Community Heritage* program, please let M&GSQ know - [information@magsq.com.au](mailto:information@magsq.com.au) For further information on the funding program, visit <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/programs/ych>

### **Call for Entries: Museums & Galleries National Awards 2012**

Museums Australia is calling for entries to the Museums and Galleries National Awards (MAGNA). The registration form is available online at <http://museumsaustralia.org.au/site/magna2012.php>

### **Call for Entries: Multimedia and Publication Design Awards**

Museums Australia is calling for entries to the Multimedia and Publication Design Awards (MAPDA) for all publications, websites and multimedia published in 2011. The registration and entry form is available at <http://museumsaustralia.org.au/site/mapda2012.php>

If you have any questions regarding MAPDA, please email [mapda@museumsaustralia.org.au](mailto:mapda@museumsaustralia.org.au)

### **John Oxley Library Community History Award**

The John Oxley Library Community History Award recognises excellence and innovation in the recording of Queensland history by individuals and local community organisations. <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/whats-on/awards/slqawards/jchaward>

The State Library of Queensland has a leading role in ensuring that Queensland's cultural heritage is collected, organised, preserved and made accessible. Our heritage is a critical contributor to our identity and self understanding. The Community History Award recognises the rich history of Queensland's diverse communities, and seeks to encourage the communication of those histories in varied formats. This may take the form of a print or online publication, exhibition, website, multimedia presentation, walk, tour, register or records.

The Award recipient is selected by an expert panel representing the historical and cultural community, in consultation with the John Oxley Library. The Award attracts a \$5,000 prize.

### **2012 John Oxley Library Community History Award recipient**

On 2 June 2012, the John Oxley Library Community History Award was presented to the Cardwell & District Historical Society for its efforts to record the events of Cyclone Yasi, despite its own museum being destroyed by the cyclone. The Cardwell & District Historical Society showed great community spirit as they worked together to collect oral histories from the town's inhabitants in the wake of Yasi while also salvaging their valuable collections. (The above is from the SLQ web site)

Cardwell & District Historical Society is a member of OHAA-Qld Inc. and we were pleased to have had the opportunity to facilitate the Society's oral history training so they were able to collect and exhibit the stories of Cyclone Yasi. President of the Society, Mrs Anne Mealing, said they very much appreciated having people of the calibre of our oral history trainers, Dr Helen Klaebe, Ms Ariella Van Luyn and Mr Bryan Crawford spend the weekend with them to teach them about oral history and photography. She said they learnt a lot and had a wonderful weekend. Anne lamented that contrary to the written advice from the Cassowary Coast Regional Council, their damaged historic building which served as their museum was demolished. Council had assured them that the damage would be repaired; however, their beautiful 120 year-old building was completely destroyed by the Council. It has since been replaced with a "replica" of the old building. Anne said winning the Award was particularly satisfying in view of this tragic development.

### **Payment for Journal Articles**

Jill Adams, National President, has advised she needs to know the whereabouts of any of the following oral historians/authors. She recently received a payment of \$479.00 from the copyright agency. It is for copying of articles that have been published in our journal. She needs to find the authors so that she can arrange to pay them their due. Some of the articles go back a bit but she's hoping to locate at least the authors who are due for \$100+ Please advise if you are one of these authors or if you have contact details for any of them. Contact Jill Adams at [president@oralhistoryvictoria.org.au](mailto:president@oralhistoryvictoria.org.au) . After two e-Bulletin/newsletters notices, if no-one contacts Jill, they forfeit the payment and it remains in the National coffers. Below are the names and dates of publication of their articles:

Erica Neate (1997)  
Anna Kyi (1999)  
Loreen Brehaut (1999)  
Barry Godfrey (2001)  
Pauline Rockman ((2002)  
David Dolan (2003)  
Jennifer Barrkman (2000)  
Alison Gregg (2000)  
Bronwyn Fredericks (2006)

## **My Oral History Assignment**

### **Marg Doherty**

I am studying the Graduate Diploma of Local, Family and Applied History at the University of New England. I was excited when I finally had an opportunity to study Oral History with Professor Janis Wilton. I have been doing family history for over thirty years and had interviewed a number of relatives during that period so I felt this subject would be a breeze. Well I was wrong!

The second assignment was to do a family history interview, write the interview summary, prepare the interview log, undertake a partial transcription and analyse the interview. But first I had to organise the technology. We were encouraged to use up to date technology but not required to purchase anything. This was where my difficulties started as I explored the various options. I eventually decided to borrow equipment from the Oral History Association of Queensland. The equipment included a Fostex FR2LE Field Flash Card Recorder and an Audio-Technica AT804 microphone with a tripod. I purchased an eight gigabyte compact flash card.

The equipment was relatively easy to use after my husband and I worked out that the compact flash card required formatting. This was not clear in the instructions. Formatting the flash card was the only further technological problem I experienced. As I had already undertaken my research on the topic and organised my questions, I was off to the interview.

The interviewee was a seventy-six year old friend from the Genealogical Society of Queensland. She lived as a child in Mackay during World War Two. As I was interested in the topic of the home front in Australia during World War Two I felt she was the perfect narrator.

As my friend is known to be a storyteller I was sure that she would be interesting, and she was. We ticked off most of the points on my research list without my intervention. She talked about air raid practices, trenches, identity bracelets, rationing and unexpectedly the accidental death of a Royal Australian Air Force cousin. This was a difficult time for the family and brought an emotional response sixty years later. As knowing my friend's family did not experience any war deaths, this caught me by surprise although it passed quickly.

When I listened to the interview later, I realised that as an interviewer I had a lot to learn. There were many places where I should have asked further questions. This was a learning experience and I will endeavour to hone my oral history skills with assistance from the Association. In closing thank you to Lena Volkova (Loans Officer) who met me with the equipment and collected it when my task was complete. Also, thanks to Suzanne Mulligan (Secretary) who helpfully organised the arrangements.

## **Oral History Basics Workshop**

### **Brisbane**

A reminder OHAA-Qld Inc is holding a workshop on Saturday 4 August 2012 at the Toowong Library in Brisbane. For full details see our web site <http://www.ohaaqld.org.au/> under the Workshops button.

## **Rathdowney School Centenary Book**

The Rathdowney State School: 100 years of Education has been published to celebrate the School's Centenary Year, and was launched on 12th May 2012 at the Reunion held at the School. The book was published by the Rathdowney State School Centenary Committee. This school history updates Memories of the early Schools: Upper Logan area: 1892-1962, published by the RADHA, and the Rathdowney and District State School: 75 years: published by the School's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee in 1987. The School's 100 year book, and the Upper Logan School's book are available from the Rathdowney VIC for \$20.00 and \$10.00 respectively. Eileen Ward's A brief history on "Closed" Schools in Albert and Christmas Creek Valleys, Cannon Creek and Bromelton is available from the Beaudesert Museum for \$5.00. The Margaret Barry Archive at the Beaudesert Museum contains extensive files on Beaudesert district Schools.

## **National Family History Week**

The 2012 National History Week will be held from 27<sup>th</sup> July to 5<sup>th</sup> August 2012. Suggested activities to celebrate the week are: have a family reunion, start your family tree, organise your family photos, log on and explore family history sites on the net, start a journal, write your life story, interview and record a relatives life story, talk to distant relatives, family traits: find where they came from, take a history walk, visit areas of family significance. Sponsors include the National Archives of Australia, family research; major supporters are Ancestry.com.au, and Find my past. For more information go to [www.familyhistoryweek.org.au](http://www.familyhistoryweek.org.au) Contact the Genealogical Society of Queensland <http://www.gsq.org.au/>

## **Queensland Week**

Queensland Week is an annual celebration where Queenslanders come together to reflect on what's great about our State. The week originated from Queensland Day, 6 June, the date of Queensland's official separation from New South Wales as an independent colony. In an effort to support communities in hosting their own Queensland Week celebrations, applications are now being invited from community groups and organisations for events to be held during Queensland Week in 2013, 1-9 June. Up to \$10,000 will be considered for events that reflect on and celebrate what is great about Queensland, with a total of \$100,000 on offer. For more information, and to download the 2013 sponsorship program guidelines, visit the Queensland Week website at [www.queenslandweek.qld.gov.au](http://www.queenslandweek.qld.gov.au)

Applications close Friday 31 August 2012.

## **Locative Media for Place-Based Stories**

### **Hamish Sewell**

For some years now I've worked on a range of social history/oral history projects as both an oral historian and a radio producer. Many of these are place-based works, and are often carefully and skilfully reworked for an audience engagement. I am now wanting at this point to learn more about ways in which to facilitate the public interacting with these stories (whether radio pieces, digital stories or simple showcase extracts born from oral history) at the actual location (is this locative media?). I realise that there's much to know here and don't expect anyone explain this to me over an email. However, if anyone can point me in the right direction, I'd be most grateful.

To further explain, I'm currently working on several projects. One is as a radio producer and is built on audio recordings and photos based on a very talented sound artist/blacksmith in Kin Kin - here on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. The radio piece will be a mix of narrative and sounds. From out of this radio piece, I will then make a 10-12 minute digital story where professionally shot images are worked against the audio story. While I can make this digital story widely available for posting on the internet, it's my hope to organise for the many people who drive past this sound garden, and who often want to know more about this curious place, to be able to experience something of what is going on here via this digital story - there and then as they stand at the gate.

Second, I am a founder of The Story Project here in Australia ([www.thestoryproject.org.au](http://www.thestoryproject.org.au)). We undertake recorded conversations between friends, loved ones etc (that's right, we're inspired by StoryCorps in the US!) where two people book in to record with us a conversation - something precious remembered, a moment shared, a story passed on etc. These conversations help build important relationships in communities and we further help celebrate these special moments and recognise the value of people genuinely sharing by broadcasting standout moments on radio - assuming consent is given. We're hoping to make these standout audio files available to the public in respective communities via QR code which are placed on large public posters (of respective participants who came to record with us) in the community. Hence, the public can walk past these pictures of two people in their community, scan the code or download an app etc, and listen to the audio file of their conversation.

While the projects above are different in their execution, both are about transforming audio social history, oral histories into engaging formats where the public can experience them and appreciate them. My understanding is that iPads are best here as they afford a higher quality experience and to me this is very important - as is the simplicity in access.

Time and time again, I feel I've got my hands on very powerful stories and which help build community and celebrate our collective experiences, but I don't quite understand how to get my head around the delivery of these for people who choose to listen on location. Having done some preliminary research I'm getting kind of lost between QR codes, app's and GPS tracking systems and was wondering if anyone out there could possibly point me in any direction here as to whom I could contact or where to go. Once I was more up on how it all works, I'd then seek, as a radio producer, oral historian and writer, to work alongside someone with the appropriate skills to create more place based works.

All suggestions most welcome. Hamish Sewell [hamishsewell@gmail.com](mailto:hamishsewell@gmail.com)

**Lena Volkova** won our bursary in 2010 to attend the International Oral History Conference in Prague. Her story was not published at the time, but we're doing so now. You can learn about her experiences and some of the interesting presentations she attended. It may inspire you to attend an international conference (next one coming up from 4 to 7 September in Buenos Aires, Argentina). They are a wonderful experience.

### **The International Oral History Conference *Between Past and Future: Oral History, Memory and Meaning.***

**Lena Volkova**

2010 presented an amazing opportunity to participate in the International Oral History conference held at the University of Economics in Prague, Czech Republic from 7 to 11 July. I attended it together with my colleagues and committee members Helen Klaebe and Ariella Van Luyn. You have the opportunity to read a substantial report in published on the OHAA Blog written by Ariella Van Luyn. This is my view of the conference.

I would like to start from saying that I am very grateful to OHAA Queensland for providing me with a scholarship to go to the conference. It was an opportunity not to be missed and it proved to be very inspirational.



I've been in Prague before and fell in love with this city. I was looking forward to see it again: the spikes of its medieval cathedrals, the vast expanse of its river, the old bridge guarded by motionless knights and the cobblestones of its old streets. I was looking forward to meeting old friends and build new networks with other oral history practitioners around the world.

I am particularly interested in the role of memory and remembering in oral history interviews – the interest that I developed interviewing GULAG survivors and WWII veterans. The conference presented an excellent opportunity to listen and learn from the leading experts in the field, scholars and oral history practitioners. These are few of the highlights.

#### **Selma Leydesdorff: “Oral history interviews and people with (severe) trauma”**

The keynote speaker Prof Leydesdorff (University of Amsterdam) was involved in a number of incredible projects interviewing Holocaust survivors and survivors of the recent conflicts, such as in the former Yugoslavia. Speaking about her experience of interviewing women survivors of the Srebrenica atrocities, she describes her approach to oral history interviews as a mix of

“solidarity involvement and academic approach”. I have to admit that listening to her and then going through my notes to prepare this report was very confronting.

In her paper she explores the interrelations between memory, remembering and what she called the “collective silence”. Many of those she interviewed had friends who joined perpetrators and it was disturbing for them to talk with love about someone who became an enemy. She argues that silence is not the right word to describe what is not told in those traumatized interviews. It was rather an inability to remember - or not wanting to remember. Therefore the main problem for her as a researcher was to capture what cannot be remembered and put into words:

*The women I have interviewed were reluctant to talk about those atrocities and the pain they had gone through. The chaos which was then there has become a chaos in their heads, a memory which can better be muted. Silence is everywhere, and silence gets many meanings. When emptiness replaces memory, connectedness, context and a place in society, when there is no positive memory or positive future it can be better to forget.*

Leydesdorff finds striking similarities between her interviews of Srebrenica women and Holocaust survivors. There are recurring themes in both cases, like a survivor guilt or feelings like “I feel as if I’ve never left this refugee camp/concentration camp”, and the desire to become invisible – not to attract attention.

One would wonder why people talk eventually. Leydesdorff suggests that they want our reaction, our solidarity. They want a place where they can tell the story – but at the same time they never tell the whole story. Some still need an enemy. The enormous challenge in these cases is to understand the impact of genocide on all those individual lives.

### **Professor Alessandro Portelli: “Memory as process”.**



Professor Alessandro Portelli is in agreement with his colleague from Amsterdam. He makes a point by saying that an interviewer never hears the whole story. It is an intrinsic part of oral history and memory.

He maintains that memory is a trace of experience and as such it deteriorates with time. How can we trust memory? He suggests that a constructed story is incredibly valid as it represents the search for the meaning of past events rather than striving for accuracy. He argues that memory is not a noun but a verb, activity not a fact – it is *remembering*. In this context the narrative will keep changing according to our ever-changing relationship with the past. It is essential and very revealing process. And as such the oral history interview is a document of the present as well as of the past. If the story is told “correctly” we would probably learn nothing. At the same time he warns not to confuse a wrong memory for the lie - the difference that should be observed especially while interviewing generals or politicians.

He concludes by saying that if a memory is a process of meaning-making then what is the interview if not an attempt to construct a *space of possibility* that evolves in dialogue with other persons.

**Tineke Jansen (Foundation LISTEN FOR A CHANGE): “*The Time is Right When Nothing Is Left*”. Secrets among the Radical Left and Oral History”**

A very interesting paper was presented by an independent scholar Tineke Jansen. In fact, I found a lot of similarities between her experience and what I encountered as a radio journalist in Russia in the early 1990s.

In her paper she examines the consequences of keeping political secrets and maintaining silence in regards to past political activism and related to it the issue of self-censorship. What is silence in this context and how is it related to remembering? Jensen maintains that sometimes silence brings meaning to the life of those who you interview. In some instances silence became a tool to dominate – not giving away power. Sometimes the interviewees are permanently making risk assessment: is it safe to speak? Is it safe to speak to her/him? The narrative could change accordingly too. So to avoid memory mishaps Jansen suggests asking about *intentions* – not memories. She concludes by saying that the activists' polarised view reminds us of how much political secrets, “born before the Berlin Wall had crumbled, have a life on their own, are renewed and negotiated every day; that they always stay on the mercy of present-day dominating political narratives that themselves never know mercy”.

**Emma Vickers: “Counsellor, confidant, historian: negotiating the competing demands of oral interviewing”**

Although the paper examines the complex relationships which are forged between the oral historian and their subjects, Vickers also reflects at large on the role of memory and remembering and the impact of remembering on both an interviewee and a researcher.

As an Honorary Research Fellow of the Lancaster University (UK) she recorded oral testimonies of gay veterans of WWII. Her paper examines challenges, obligations and responsibilities of the interviewers for their subjects especially for those whose recollections of their traumatic experience are very tense and emotionally charged. She starts with posing a question: how would you deal with the situation when very traumatic memories surface and you have to be at your subject's aid?

Many of us know from experience that this is one of the most challenging parts of oral history interviewing. This is the moment when we are confronted with the dilemma: should we proceed with the interview for the sake of pursuing the “truth” or should we stop immediately. She argues that “In such situations, when the tape is turned off and the historian becomes a counsellor and confidant, all notions of the effective, objective researcher are subsumed. In terms of our own needs, it also goes without saying that we also need to question the notion that we are hardened researchers, immune to the emotion of our practice. We are just as likely to suffer trauma as our respondents”.

Vickers emphasises that the resemblance between oral history and psychotherapy means that we need to know how we can effectively deal with this aspect of the practice. It needs to be factored

into the training that we receive and deliver. However, there some simple measures that shouldn't be underestimated: to ensure that potential respondents are fully aware of what they are involved in, how their testimony is going to be used and where, ensuring that they are safe and well prior to, during and after the interview, ensuring that they are happy with how they have been represented in any publication and making sure that they agree with any conditions of access.

The conference presented an array of interesting interpretations of oral history but the main idea that united the audience was that there is not much use in having the memory and holding on to it. The memory needs to be shared to become a part of our progress as humans. It was interesting to see how many forms a recorded memory could take. Archives, web applications and books were the most common among those discussed at the conference. A group of American dance students presented their interpretation of an oral history interview (for more details see the September issue of the "On Tape", Ariella Van Luyn's Conference Report). Another quite amazing way of capturing and presenting oral history was described by Mark Tebeau in his paper "**Interpretive Vistas**". It is about twenty cultural gardens created by migrants in Cleveland, Ohio as a way of telling their stories and subsequently turning these gardens into the oral history educational centres for students.

After the conference I meant to go to Moscow to touch base with my former colleagues in the field of oral history. This plan was unexpectedly amended at the last moment (or should I say – improved?) when our Secretary, Suzanne Mulligan asked me whether I am going via Warsaw by any chance. She said: "They have an amazing Museum of Rising where they use oral histories in a very creative way". For someone who worked in museums for 15 years and is very passionate about it, to get this news was like winning lotto. Itinerary changed, and I was on my way to Warsaw. I am sorry you weren't there with me.



Oral history is used in the museum context to enrich the exhibition narrative, to provide additional information within the context of a particular display, or more importantly, as an "object" of its own kind—as an audio-visual installation. Building on the success of such installations, museums started to explore an opportunity to use new media to create a totally different experience.

The Warsaw Museum of Rising is one of the most interesting examples of engaging the audience in a dialogue about the events of WWII. The museum occupies the building of an old power station and adapts this space to create an atmosphere of the city in combat. The museum provides visitors with the choice to experience content through its very layout and in a great variety of forms that range from the traditional display cases to sophisticated audio-visual and new media installations.

The approach to engage visitors with the museum narrative can be described as a multilayered installation. For example, one of the first layers is the weathered brick wall of this industrial building with the war-time posters, photographs, paintings, and display cases.

The second layer allows visitors to explore the material that was “hidden” from the view of the common passers-by, resembling going to the “next level” in a traditional computer game: a few pairs of binoculars embedded in the walls (pictured) allows the viewer to penetrate through space and time and view the stream of microfiche with files of the participants of the uprising.

The other level of engagement is represented by the objects and documents that visitors can take with them and examine at home, for example, tear-off wall calendars that contain the names and stories of the combatants—men, women, and children.



The visitors have an opportunity to listen to oral histories from various portals across the museum space, such as computer screens embedded in the walls of the museum, or telephone booths that create the illusion of talking to a real person. The video is demonstrated both from a big screen (documentaries) in a cinema-like setting and from the old TV set (a 1960s movie drama) in a replica of a kitchen. The use of sound and imagery allow for the immersion in the atmosphere of the Polish resistance, and at the same time let a visitor to experience it in a variety of ways, all by choice. The depth of experience and its emotional impact allow me to suggest that visitors enter the museum as individuals and leave as a community.

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## **Black History Month**

Black History Month is a free program of events and activities in Brisbane celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's history, heritage and future. Black History Month events run from 27 June to 29 July 2012. Check out the link to Brisbane City Council's 'What's on' and see the list of free movies, documentaries, exhibitions, discussions and more. See <http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/whats-on/featured/black-history-month/index.htm>

## **Queensland Smithsonian Fellowship**

### **Dr Helen Klaebe**

My current Queensland Smithsonian Fellowship is still a ‘work in progress’, after it was awarded in August 2011. I have fellow OHAA member, Lesley Jenkins, to thank for being here. Lesley met Dr Betty Belanus, a Curator at the Centre while she travelled the US on her Churchill fellowship in 2005. When Betty came out to Australia, State Library of Queensland had her give a guest workshop and I was on a panel with her. Betty stayed at my house and we discussed our work in more detail and we could see possibilities of collaborating emerge, so I applied for the grant.

#### **Why am I here?**

This QLD Smithsonian Fellowship provides me with the opportunity to work alongside leading researchers at the Centre for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (CFCH), in order to trial innovative ways of evaluating public narrative driven Arts-based programs, so what better place to do that than at the Annual Smithsonian Folk Life Festival, which attracts over a million visitors annually – all coming to see and hear artists, crafts specialists, and performers tell stories about their creative practice. See <http://www.festival.si.edu/>

#### **What are we doing?**

I have been working with Smithsonian (SI) researchers from past, present and future festival programs to look at how the planning, delivery and sustainability of public programs offered by cultural institutions, through to community organizations can be augmented by good evaluation methodology. So this is my research plan:

- **Phase one** (December 2011-March 2012) – literature review; work with programs from the past (Colombia) present (Campus & Community) and future (Saving Endangered Languages); talk to curators/interns/sponsors, attend any planning meeting/ workshops; build a simple evaluation model for SI; produce templates to be trialled in 2012
- **Phase two** (December 2011-March 2012) – produce a brief evaluation report on the 2011 Colombian program; work with Betty Belanus on the 2012 program; and other CFCH staff on how best to introduce, train, integrate evaluation models into their current planning activities.
- **Phase three** (June-July 2012) – return for the summer Festival, in time for the final weeks before it begins, monitoring its progress. Then, afterwards (on returning to Australia) finish final report.

#### **What will be produced?**

A free online resource ‘tool kit’ for organizations large or small to access that clearly explains how to better evaluate narrative-driven community engagement activities, where artists or creative practitioners are engaged in storytelling in public spaces. I will be doing one for the Smithsonian, and one that hopefully will be more useful for Australian community groups to access and use.

It has been a great privilege to come here and spend time with the wonderful staff at the Smithsonian's Centre for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and as the Festival gets underway this week, I can see it will be a very exhausting program, but a fantastic experience for me to immerse myself in.



Columbian Village

I have had so many highlights and plenty of new ideas and best practices that I am keen to share with members and Queensland communities (and a very long slide show, so be warned!). The most memorable experiences that come to mind however are visiting: Bogota and its surrounds in Colombia; New Orleans and the Katrina Exhibition (oh and of course the Jazz bars); Thomas Jefferson's farm *Monticello*, at Charlottesville; history tours under the city of Seattle; seeing an audience interactive performance of *Sleep No More*, an interpretation of Macbeth in NYC; the 9/11 memorials; the interactive museum work that is occurring at the New York Public Library, MoMA, Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum; and all 18 Smithsonian museums in DC, including the zoo!

I look forward to sharing some of the travel adventures (and of course some of my research findings) when I return in mid July 2012.

**Memory... is the diary that we all carry about with us. ~Oscar Wilde,  
"The Importance of Being Earnest"**