
NOHANZ

The National Oral History Association of New Zealand
Te Kete Kōrero-a-Waha o Te Motu

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The American Oral History Association Conference in San Diego, October 2002

This report provides a few notes after attendance at the conference of the American Oral History Association in San Diego, October 2002. I found it a source of

- Inspiration, more commitment and enthusiasm
- Further knowledge of technical aspects
- Engagement with those from other disciplines and cultures

All the presentations were interesting; with the sense of place heightened by much research pertaining to local identifiers, and the influence of the Chicano and other Hispanic cultures on social issues on the west board of the American continent.

I was particularly impressed with the number of speakers who addressed issues concerning attitudes to interviewees and the nexus between the academic research objectives and a moral obligation to subjects of the research. Academics in the USA appear subject to fewer ethical constraints than academics in New Zealand; and repositories in the USA are numerous, with differing standards and requirements.

Many attendees who were not students or academics were free-lance oral historians, and provided a range of papers demonstrating how not-for-profit bodies and local councils support documentation of origins and impact of social changes with oral history. With the conference in San Diego, there was a very strong Hispanic influence in the venue for the social functions, the entertainment, and plenary sessions.

For example, at the conference dinner instead of a band they offered a one-man play *Holy Dirt* – a retrospective and engaging monologue of a Chicano actor.

The core of the conference was the plenary and concurrent sessions; there were over 300 attendees with four solid days of papers. My experience of it being well organised, cheerful, and friendly, and an extremely valuable experience appeared shared by many others. There were very few attendees at the conference from outside of the USA and no other attendees from a business college, so it provided me with an opportunity to alert students and academics to opportunities offered in areas of business and commerce to the application of accounting oral history. My visit was financed with a travel grant from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of New Zealand, supporting my current project on an oral history of changes in 'Big 8' accounting firms in New Zealand in the 1970s and 1980s.

A Workshop preceding the main conference was concerned with new technology and its impact on the practice and protocols for oral history archive: *Field recording aural histories in the digital age* by Charles Hardy II. He presented for three hours intending to cover

- Sound generation and collection
- Authority in sound
- Storage and preservation
- Dissemination
- Law

The first focus for that day was on learning about miking, as he said, “most all audio producers have ten ears”. As learning has become more formal, this has led to more formal learning, and

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more of us are tone death. A key message of the session was improving our own sonological competence; this means developing an inner ear, and paying attention to sound: the more we pay attention to sound, the quicker we learn. Try imagining preparing a historic sound artefact; for example, take a tour of your own home, or where you work. Put together a tour of historically significant sounds as a sound artefact in your neighbourhood (what about Guy Fawkes sounds of childhood - the swish of rockets...) I reflected on how much more we depend more on our ears when staying a night or two out in the bush: with visual fields limited, sound is much more useful; it is not only multidirectional but more useful at night. This seminar was going back to getting ideas about building our own some sonological competence, and then authoring the sound so that people will be interested in listening to it

A lot of the rest of the seminar concerned equipment and microphones; he considers the new Marantz portable CD recorder will facilitate recording in an optimal storage medium, so that transformation of data will not be necessary. It is clear that in the States there is not the same debate as we have had going on the New Zealand about requirements for archival recording to be on magnetic tape. With the issue of dissemination, Hardy celebrated what he termed the extraordinary revolution in sound democratisation: with \$200 and four days in the studio, you can now develop a CD sound production that people used to have to have ten years of training to do. **Work from the tape that has in and of itself power.** Write to the tape. Create bridges and transitions. If you listen to the tape long enough, you'll find that link. Use sounds for linkage such as sound of the typewriter, the closing door, and ambiences, sound effects, narration, or actualities. Now home transcribing my

tapes here in summer Auckland, I am back to the familiar soundscape of the seasonal roar of the crowd at the ASB tennis stadium, children in the nearby crèche, the chirp of sparrows and a steady drone of traffic coming off the motorways, but listening a little bit differently.

Rachel Baskerville

The following articles were sent to NOHANZ through the museums network. They are from Dickinson College, Pennsylvania.

Oral History Units for High School History Courses

Check out Living Legacies Historical Foundation's fabulous web site:

www.tellmeyourstories.org

This web site gives educators a curriculum for middle and high school students for doing oral history projects. One of the practice interviews in the pilot course was a Holocaust survivor. The students had to do research about Poland, pre-WWII Poland, anti-Semitism, and other topics, to prepare for the interviews.

As a therapist and oral historian, I agree with the prior input that you be cautious about what you have the students get involved in, and do a lot of work with the students beforehand, on what happens if:

1. The subject cries, grieves, etc. during the interview (see FAQ on above mentioned web site)
2. The interviewer gets horrified by what they hear
3. The subject decides they don't want to go on

There are many Holocaust survivors (at least in Los Angeles) who have been involved in public speaking about their experiences, including with teens.

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Depending on whether you are aiming at brand new stories being revealed by individuals who haven't had a chance to share their experiences before (which would require a very mature interviewer, and many adults can't handle this kind of horror being detailed to them), OR primarily having the student get to learn about this part of history from a real person – then it could be someone who is already at ease discussing their experiences. Living Legacies Historical Foundation and Living Legacies Productions been involved in public speaking about their experiences, including with teens.

Ellie Kahn
Living Legacies Historical Foundation
and Living Legacies Productions

Oral History Units for High School History Courses (2)

The (Dickinson College, Pennsylvania) Oral History Association offers two publications that might be of assistance in planning high school oral history units: "Oral History Projects in Your Classroom" and "Using Oral History in Community History Projects." See below for descriptions and costs of these publications.

To order them, go to www.dickinson.edu/oha and click on Publications.

"Oral History Projects in Your Classroom" by Linda P. Wood, with introduction by Marjorie L. McLellan, 2001.

Paper, 3-hole punched notebook format. 87 pages. Bibliography. \$US15 (with binder \$US20)

This guide, written for classroom teachers, includes sample forms, handouts, numerous examples, curriculum suggestions (for the US) and discussion questions, taken directly

from real-life classroom oral history projects around the country.

"Using Oral History in Community History Projects" by Laurie Mercier & Madeline Buckendorf, 1992.

Paper. 34 pages. Bibliography. \$US8.00.

Offers concrete suggestions for planning, organizing, and undertaking oral history in community settings. Provides a step-by-step guide to project planning and establishing project objectives, with suggestions about identifying resources and securing funding. The authors address common problems encountered in executing such projects, and present a series of case studies of successful community oral history projects. The pamphlet also includes a basic bibliography.

Susan Becker
Maria Rogers Oral History Program Manager
Carnegie Branch Library for Local History

Chinese New Zealand Oral History Foundation Inc.

In February 2002, in the Grand Hall at Parliament, the Prime Minister Helen Clark made an official apology on behalf of the Government to the Chinese people of NZ. She apologised to those who had paid the Poll Tax and to their descendents for the discrimination and injustice imposed by statute.

The Minister for Ethnic Affairs said the issue was the injustice and deprivation imposed on those early Chinese settlers. It was about the separation of families, and the poverty of settlers forced to work for years to pay off their tax, let alone earn a living.

The apology sparked controversy within the NZ Chinese community. Many felt it should never have been made as it

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only reminded people of sufferings that happened in the past and should be forgotten. "It was the law of the time and we lived by it." Regardless of different positions concerning the apology, it has provided opportunity to speak about former unspoken matters, the pain of forced family separations and imposed poverty being such topics into more open discussion.

Associated with this has been the strong sense that their history has a specific place within the broader NZ historical context. Oral history has therefore gained an awakening. In response, a group of Chinese New Zealanders has formed the Chinese NZ Oral History Foundation Inc. Based in Auckland presently, it is expected to coordinate other centres in Wellington and Dunedin.

The CNZOHF aims to create a library recording of early Chinese settlers and new Chinese immigrants stories. Master copies of interviews will be held at the NZ Oral History Centre, in the Alexander Turnbull Library. The Foundation hopes to be able to make compressed digital files of all recordings for its own library. Copyright will be held by the Foundation. The material will be made available, in accordance with the Consent Form, which indicates the conditions of access to all recordings. According to the wishes of many of the interviewees, the NZCOHF will be the organisation who will be asked to give approval for the material to be released ensuring a congruency between researcher and data.

The CNZOHF, comprising a cheerful but dedicated group is organising its first Oral History training workshop, in Auckland on 31st May with a follow up training day on 2nd August. They're keen to be in touch with anyone who would like to train as an interviewer and also with Chinese people who want to

tell their stories. Contact Secretary, Sue Gee, P O Box 2861 Auckland, or e-mail suegee606@clear.net.nz.

Tel 09 278 1133

Oral Histories of Welsh Immigrants at the Turnbull



Members of the Welsh Society of Wellington sing the Welsh National Anthem.

After five years of painstaking work, the Welsh Society of Wellington handed over twenty-three interviews to the Alexander Turnbull Library on 30th April 2003. Society members and family representatives were treated to the sight of an Olympic size Welsh flag 'Y Ddraig Goch' - The Red Dragon - hanging in the stairwell. Several examples of Welsh costume were worn, representing different areas of Wales, and the steple hats varied in size between 20cm and 45cm (eight and eighteen inches) high. Formalities began with the singing of the Welsh National Anthem. Philip Rainer, acting Chief Librarian, spoke on behalf of the Library. Linda Bevan Smith, the project manager, explained how the project began while Bryan Watts, President of the Society, spoke about the practicalities of the project. Heulwen Jones, one of the interviewees, told of the early Welsh settler who named Milford Sound and the nearby Cleddau River. This was part of a speech she had given at the Welsh National Eisteddfod in August 2002 at St. David's, Pembrokeshire, Wales. The

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handover concluded with a very friendly
and pleasant morning tea.

- Linda Bevan Smith

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