

Tell Us Your Story: The Doing and Keeping of Oral History

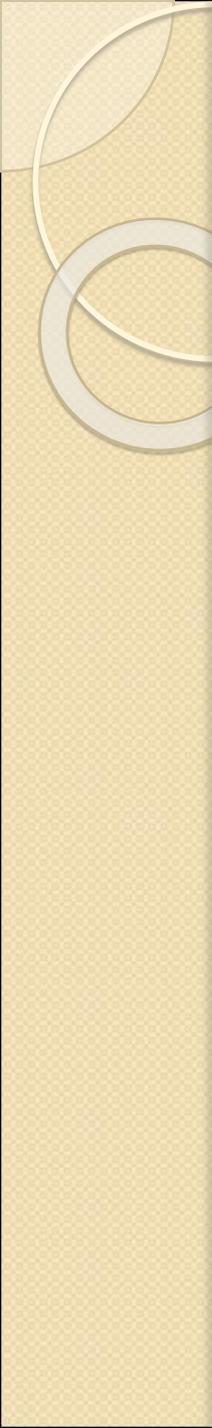
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The Doing of Oral History

- The Interview
- The Recording
- The Cataloging
- The Transcribing
- The Storing and Preserving

Pre-Interview

- Schedule a non-recorded meeting
- Inform narrator of purpose of interview and intended use
- Inform narrator of rights (to withdraw, confidentiality)
- Obtain written consent for interview.
- Release forms (e.g., who owns interview, editing privileges, etc.)
- Interviewer should practice interviewing; should be trained

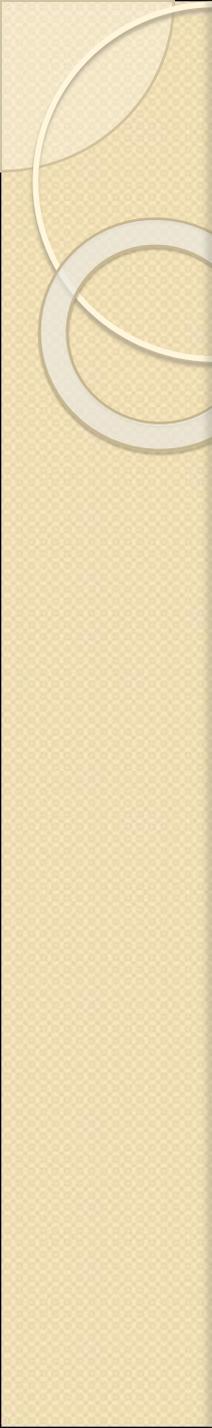
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- Conduct initial research on narrator and subject matter
 - Except in rare circumstances, narrator should be identified
 - Interviewer prepares questions and/or interview guide
 - Test for sound and equipment placement
 - Agree on length of interview (most last two hours)

The Interview

- Room with minimal background noise (watch for computer, a/c, and traffic noise)
- The Equipment/Technology

Analog recorder

- Inexpensive, alkaline batteries
- No time code for logging and analysis
- Fragile medium, not for long-term preservation
- Issue with digitization
- ***More on digital recorders later***

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- The “lead” at the beginning of each tape. (narrator, interviewer, day and year, location, subject)
 - Along with prepared questions and guide, follow-up questions,
 - Focus on purpose of interview
 - Interviewer responsible for determining if interview should continue

Transcription

- Verbatim (manual)
- Abstracting, Indexing, Evaluating

- Professional transcription services
- Transcription software (***more on transcription software later***)



Advances in Oral History Recording

- Digital Recorders
- Transcription Software
- Digitization
- Audio Preservation

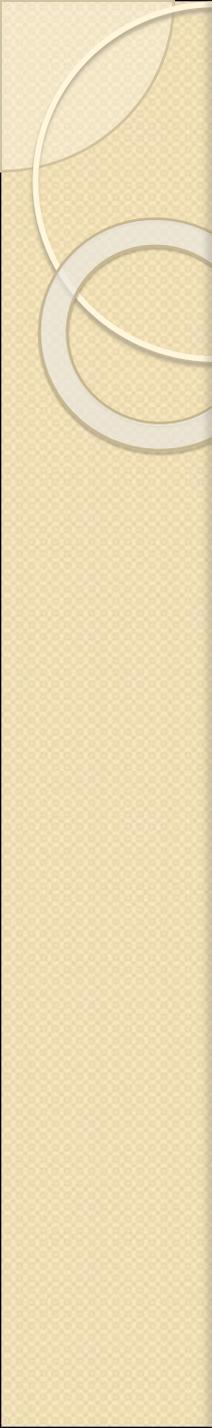
Some examples:

Veterans History Project: LOC

<http://www.loc.gov/vets/>

Behind the Veil: Duke University

- <http://documentarystudies.duke.edu/projects>

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- StoryCorps: Independent, Nonprofit (AFC) <http://storycorps.org/listen/>
 - <http://storycorps.org/listen/stories/bishop-ricardo-ramirez/>

 - Queens Memory Project
<http://www.queensmemory.org/>
(Using TASCAM, Audacity)

Handheld Recorders

Zoom H1

<http://www.samsontech.com/zoom/products/handheld-audio-recorders/h1/>

- Price \$99.00
- Mac/PC compatible, USB 2.0, comes with a 2 GB microSD card, can upgrade to 32 GB card if desired.
- Ability to record in multiple audio formats
- Battery powered (AC adapter available, USB type)

- **Marantz PMB660**

<http://www.sweetwater.com/store/detail/PMD660/>

- Price \$ 449.00 +
- Product description only mentions holding 1 GB compact flash card
- Mac/PC compatible, USB 2.0
- Records at 16/48 or 44.1 kHz or .mp3 at 64 kbps or 128 kbps
- Battery powered (four AA battery)

Alesis Two Track Stereo Handheld Recorder

- <http://www.alesis.com/twotrack>
 - Price \$79.00 - \$99.00
 - Mac/PC compatible, USB 2.0
 - Supports only up to an 8GB microSD card
 - Records in mp3 or 16 bit wav
 - Battery powered (one AA battery)

Transcription Software

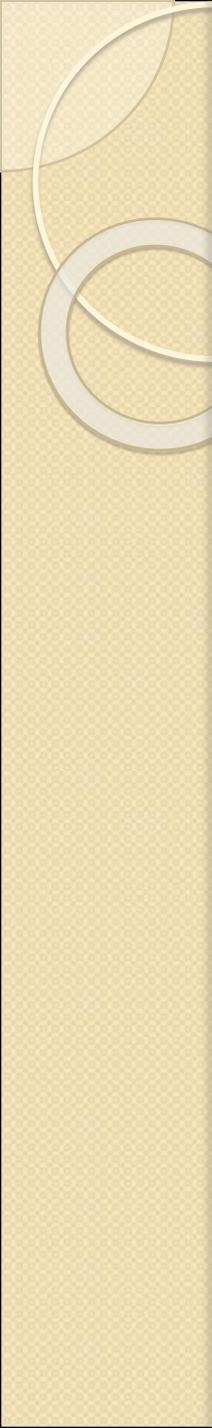
- Express Scribe. Free software program that is easy to use and has keyboard controls for pausing, backspacing, etc.:
<http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/index.html>
- Dragon Naturally or Dragon Speech Recognition Software
- <http://www.nuance.com/dragon/index.htm>

Indexing and Abstracting

- Goal is to provide easy access, facilitate easy retrieval by the researcher, user without inserting much of your own point of view
- Assigned vs. Derived indexing

Abstracting

- Title of Interview Project
- Number and/or title of interview session if project consists of multiple interviews
- Names of interviewee or interviewer, as well as abstractor
- Date and location of the interview
- Recording equipment used
- Track Number
- Time-codes and space for notes in interview
- May insert image of interviewee



Track 0.0

0:00:00 (Text here)

0:00:00 (Text here)

0:00:00 (Text here)

What to look for:

- Describes
- Details
- Explains
- Mentions
- Outlines
- References
- Reflects
- (?)
- []
- ()
- “ “

Evaluation (ex: The Historymakers)

- <http://www.thehistorymakers.com>



Session Information

Name of *HistoryMaker* (HM):

Interview Complete?

Interview Length (HH:MM:SS):

Quantity of Tapes this Session:

Interview Evaluated:

Interviewer:

Location of Session City:

Location of Session State:



Evaluator:

Videographer:

Date of Evaluation:

Date of Interview Session:

Production Report:

Production Report Creator:

Date of Production Report Creation:

Audio Level: (Good/Poor):

Video Level: (Good/Poor):

Proper Sight Lines (Yes/No):

Proper Slating (Yes/No):

Date of Previous Interview:

Programs to Use

- Adobe Audition

<http://www.adobe.com/products/audition.html>

- Recommended program, metadata creation and manipulation is easy and complete.
- Cross platform.
- Can often get through a vendor that caters to libraries or non-profit organizations for lower than

- **Reaper**

<http://www.reaper.fm/>

- Cross platform.
- 2 price points: \$60 or \$220.

\$60 applies to educational and non-profit organizations. A full service digital audio workstation for both platforms and uses third party tools to create and manipulate metadata.

- **Audacity**

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

- Free!!!
- Cross platform.
- Comes with a Metadata Editor

Audio Formats

- In most cases, you should save uncompressed audio to the AIFF or WAV formats. Save to the compressed mp3 format only when creating files for the web or portable media players.

AIFF format settings (*aif, *.aiff, *.aifc)

- AIFF is the standard uncompressed audio file format on Mac OS.

mp3 format settings

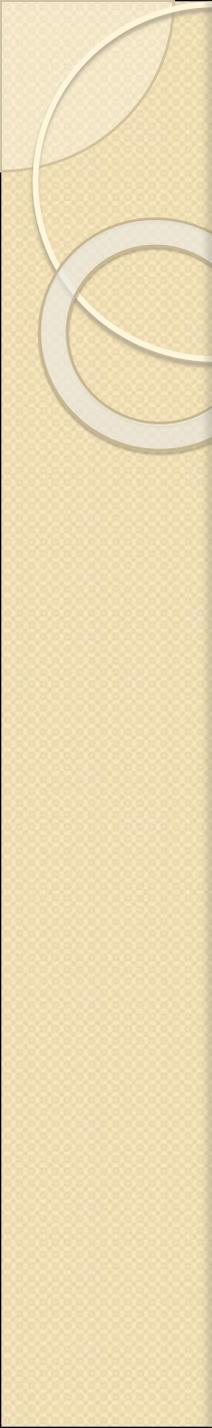
- mp3 is the standard compressed audio format across platforms.
- Type Choose Constant to apply a consistent bitrate or Variable to change the bitrate based on audio content.
- Bitrate (for constant bitrates) or Quality (for variable) Adjusts the tradeoff between file size and audio quality. Higher settings increase size and quality; lower settings reduce size and quality.
- Avoid compressing the same audio to mp3 more than once. Opening and resaving an mp3 file causes it to be recompressed, so any artifacts from the compressing process become more pronounced.

QuickTime format settings (audio-only *.mov)

- You cannot adjust format settings for audio-only QuickTime files, which are always saved as uncompressed PCM (Pulse Code Modulation) data.

Wave PCM format settings (.wav, .bwf)

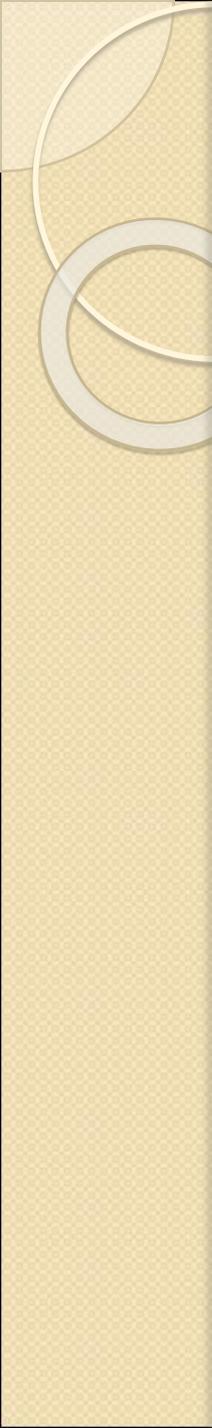
- Wave PCM is the standard uncompressed audio format on Windows.
- Sample Type (available only for 32-bit files) Sets the audio bit depth. Higher bit depths provide more dynamic range and reduce distortion, though they increase file size and processing time. Integer settings clip audio that extends beyond the amplitude range for a given bit depth. Floating Point settings require slightly more storage space, but retain much greater dynamic range.



Some thoughts from the ARSC Technical Committee

Archives can and should move digital files to new storage media using automated processes as and when data storage technology advances without the need to re-create each digital file; migrating and duplicating analog recordings to new media is a more costly, labor-intensive process

Archiving audio recordings as digital files makes possible easier and expanded access to their



The digital copy should be a complete surrogate for the original recording, including all the supplemental information (notes, labels, images of the box, sleeve or other container and all available technical information) that accompanies the original carrier.

The transfer process should not add any artifacts or subjective changes. The initial digital transfer to archival masters is not the place for file compression or other data reduction such as MP3 encoding, change in dynamic range, or noise reduction that is not already encoded in the original signal.



The digital archival master file format should be widely used, self-documenting, with publicly accessible specifications, and it should not depend on a specific operating system or type of equipment

The *de facto* standards for archival master audio file formats are WAV and Broadcast Wave Format. In practice, the Broadcast Wave Format is the better choice because it provides a specific, defined location within the file itself for metadata about the content, ownership, source recording, and digitizing signal chain associated with the digital file, as well as a unique source identifier (USID).

24 bit/96kHz BWF and WAV files are recommended as preservation masters

Resources

ARSC Technical Committee Preservation of Archival
Sound Recordings

Version 1, April 2009

Available at [www.arsc-
audio.org/pdf/ARSCTC_preservation.pdf](http://www.arsc-audio.org/pdf/ARSCTC_preservation.pdf)

Beginning Resources for Audio Preservation

www.arsc-audio.org/pdf/ARSCTC_resources.pdf

Techsoup

<http://home.techsoup.org/pages/default.aspx>

Converting cassette tapes to digital audio

http://forums.cnet.com/7723-6122_102-42895/converting-cassette-tape-to-digital-audio/