



voiceprint

Newsletter

of the New South Wales Branch

of the Oral History Association

of Australia

28

April 2003



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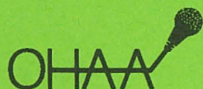
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The views expressed in articles in this *Voiceprint*
are not necessarily those of the NSW Branch of the
Oral History Association of Australia, nor its editors



Editorial |

In this issue of Voiceprint we have again presented the talks from our last seminar – “Oral History Made Public”. Thank you to Margaret Park, George Imashev and Enzo Accadia for allowing us to present their informative addresses to a wider audience. I struggle to understand how all the new technology works – all this information to be had sitting at home at your own computer. And then, photos from the family of the dear babies in London, in colour, complete with blueberry and apple all over them – pure magic! But then surely oral historians have always recorded the great events, the sad and tragic times, the fun and the laughter and the magical moments! Now we have challenges with new ways of doing things and allowing the world to know what was said. If you are like me, struggling a bit to understand the developments in technology, do file Voiceprint No 28 for reference. George Imashev has set out such a clear and logical explanation of the process and terms involved with digital preservation, and making it all available in the public domain. He has added to my knowledge. Margaret has done so much in North Sydney and she has shared so much information with us from her experiences. In so many ways Margaret has brought history to the public! Enzo was confronted with such a challenge – 150 cassettes just sitting in boxes, rarely accessed! I am sure soon we will all be able to know so much more of the history of Coffs Harbour and the life of its people. I hope you enjoy reading and learning from how he has met this challenge. Perhaps someone will be inspired to do something with other boxes of tapes gathering dust.

As I said I am no expert but some of our members I know are already well advanced in their use of newer technology – others I am sure are standing at the crossroad wondering which way to go! With all things new there are various ideas being debated and discussed about what is the best way forward. We have in the past had some discussion from members as to their preferred methods. I do invite contributions from members about their experiences, comment on the methods and technologies they have found suitable. Please take the opportunity to share your knowledge and expertise. I am sure we would all like to think that the voices recorded by the late Jean Teasdale, OHAA first Honorary Life Member will be heard long into the future.

Please send your comments and contribution by email if possible – but post still acceptable!

Joyce Cribb

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New Members

This is the largest number of new members we have ever listed – thank you all for joining the Association. I am reluctant to write just ‘Retired’ as a description because if you have joined the OHAA you may have retired from your past professional life, but clearly are embarking on a new one! We note the usual diverse occupations and interests which will enrich us all. Thanks again for your support.

Sisters of Mercy	North Sydney
Sisters of Mercy	Gunnedah
Ryde Library Service	
‘Tadpoles’, Southern Highlands	
Stroke Stroke Support Group	
Wentworth Shire Library	
Kim Warner	Student
Heather McNamara	Residential care nurse
Benjamin Clark	Student – research assistant
Dr Jan Lyall	Part time interviewer
Dianne McKrummel	Tour guide and Sydney Heritage Fleet Volunteer
Robin Wood	Creative memories consultant
Jeanie Wood	Student
Enid Charters – Ng	Retired
Lesley Holt	Former staff member, SLNSW
Marshall Tanner	Family historian
Louise Heilpern	Designer/teacher
Caro Millstead	Florist
Anne Goodfellow	Adult education co-ordinator
Michele Hatch	Photographer
Maria Mackell	Community Service Organiser
George Imashev	Curator, Australian War Memorial
Iain Dunstan	Student
Marie McDermott	Writer

Caroline Pryor
David Lance
Joan Mulligan

Information and research officer
Museum executive
Retired

Nuts and Bolts

Vale

Jean Teasdale December 1928 – November 2002

Jean Teasdale, born Western Australia December 1928. She commenced her education at a bush school and then at the relatively new Albany High School in 1942.

She attained a BA, Dip: in Social Science at University of Western Australia and Masters Preliminary at Universities of WA and Adelaide, before commencing her career in social work. She remained a locum social worker in the Emergency Department of Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital until very recently.

In 1975 Jean worked with the State Library Oral History Programme and it was following this that she became determined to form an association of oral historians, which she accomplished with the people who were interested in the early years, and it was as a result of her energy and dedication that the WA Branch of the Oral History Association began. The inauguration of the National Association was achieved in 1978.

Jean's undertakings in oral history were many and varied. Many early interviewers were trained by Jean and she encouraged anyone interested in this fresh acceptable approach to history to "have a go". She lectured in the process of oral history to secondary and tertiary school courses and in External courses at University of WA. She was on the Editorial Committee of the IOHA Journal, and also worked on the early WA Branch journal and newsletters.

As a volunteer, she co-ordinated the 1988 Bicentennial Oral History Project for *Australians 1938*, one of the volumes of *Australians: A Historical Library*. Jean had many journal articles published, always including oral history.

In 1997 her book *Facing the Bow – European Women in Colonial Malaya 1919-1945* was published

As a result of her many contributions to oral history Jean was made The Association's first Honorary Life Member.

Not Farewell, but a Change ...

We are noting with some regret, but with good wishes, that the following three members of excellent standing are changing their circumstances.

None of them, of course, is giving up their membership. All have been active participants in the Association, regularly attending and contributing to conferences and seminars. Margaret and Judy have served on the NSW branch committee for a number of years and Judy has been the secretary since 1992, including several stints as National Secretary.

Margaret Park is relocating to Canberra. Some of you will remember that at the conference dinner in 2001 at the National Museum of Australia two people were, owing to ill health, in close conversation throughout. They did eventually join the tour of the museum, still in close conversation. And the rest, as they say, is history. Margaret is the North Sydney Council Historian and has mounted exhibitions, trained volunteers, conducted oral history projects, written publications and for the last one, won two prizes, and much more. She is a dynamo – Canberra is very lucky indeed.

Richard Raxworthy has for the last decades been an very active oral historian and has deposited almost all of his interviews in the State Library of New South Wales. His Sydney Harbour Bridge Builders (1982) is listed No 1 in the Mitchell Library Oral History collection (MLOH 1/1 – 29). Next to the Bicentennial Oral History Project it is probably the most consulted collection. Owing to ill health, Richard is retiring from his active professional life as an oral history consultant. He lives in the Blue Mountains so he has not got to 'retire' anywhere else, already being in a paradise.

Judy Wing has relocated permanently to her beautiful beach house at MacMasters Beach. She is not retiring from her professional life, but distance demands that she retire from the NSW branch committee. She came into oral history via the previously cited NSW Bicentennial Oral History Project (1987) and remained to continue its practice. She has, however, in addition, researched and written a number of books and is presently engaged on a history of Norfolk Island. Because of her role on the committee I have worked closely with Judy and have found her sound good sense and cool critical eye a real resource.

We are going to miss you all in your present incarnations, but happily we shall be continuing to meet and to share in the great world of oral history. Our thanks and blessings go with you.

Rosie Block

Awards for Margaret Park

Congratulations to our member Margaret Park, North Sydney Council Historian on receiving some recent awards.

Rotary Award

The citation from The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International reads: "Margaret Park is hereby named – Paul Harris Fellow in appreciation of tangible and significant assistance given for the furtherance of better understanding and friendly relations amongst peoples of the world"

The award was presented on 2 December 2002 by the Rotary Club of North Sydney. Margaret has worked for many years with the Club on special history projects and they became aware of her community history work this way. Margaret told the Club. *"I am overwhelmed by this most generous recognition of my historical endeavours over the last 15 years at North Sydney Council. I feel very rewarded by the 'tangible' evidence I am leaving behind when I head for Canberra in 2003, as your award so nobly records. If I have one particular work ethos, it is to make history publicly accessible for all in order to further a better understanding of our past to plan for our future. Your award gives me great satisfaction in knowing that I have reached outwards and brought history to people within and outside the North Sydney community. I have always enjoyed our strong working relationship and thank you for your continuing support and also for this encouragement to continue my work beyond the boundaries of North Sydney."*

Planning Award and Heritage recognition.

Voices of a landscape: planning North Sydney was published last year and released as part of North Sydney Councils' Centenary of Federation program. The book won a commendation in the 'print' category of the 2002 National Trust Heritage Awards and won the award in the 'media/publications' category in the 2002 Planning Institute of Australia Awards. *Voices of a Landscape* is a creative and frank adjunct to the formal history of North Sydney. It provides an interesting insight into the decisions that led to the development of North Sydney as it is today. Through the interviews and their recording, the less well known, but equally important facets of North Sydney's planning history, are now available.

This book of edited transcripts is one part of the 'tangible' historical record Margaret has produced during her time at North Sydney. Our congratulations to Margaret! Ed

REPORTS

PHIN at Carisbrook House, Lane Cove

Evening tour of house and gardens, 27 February 2003 – Margaret Park

This significant Victorian sandstone house flanked on one side by magnificent gardens cascading down to the river is located on the heavily trafficked Burns Bay Road. Once you step inside Carisbrook's gate you are transformed into another world with only the drone of the never – ending traffic to remind you that you are in the twenty-first century. PHIN members and guests were treated to tour of Carisbrook by historian, Sue McClean, and the house's enthusiastic caretaker, Terry Eakin. Sue, whose background covers museums, heritage and history, provided us with an informative and revealing history of the house but more importantly with the ongoing issues that the Carisbrook management committee face, such as interpretation and display of a house museum while at the same time providing a local studies centre and museum. Much work has been achieved at Carisbrook and it is well worth a visit to explore not only the history of a middle-class home built in the 1880s boom period but also the history of the surrounding area. Carisbrook is open to the public

Wednesdays, Thursdays, Sundays and Public Holidays 11am to 4pm. Group and school bookings outside of these times are by appointment, contact Terry Eakin on 9428 1364.

PHIN (Public History Interest Network) operates as a special interest group under the umbrella of the Oral History Association of Australian (NSW Inc). Formed as a professional support network PHIN has a growing membership and holds several meetings throughout the year. These meetings take the form of informal talk sessions or tour outings, such as Carisbrook House tour. We also act as a 'sharing information' network and circulate via email events, happenings, lectures, courses and workshops that are of interest to our membership. If you would like to place yourself on our email listing, please email Margaret Park – parmar@northsydney.nsw.gov.au or Roslyn Burge – rburge@ozemail.com.au.

OHA Seminar 9 November 2002

Oral History made Public and a practical Seminar

Margaret Park, North Sydney Council Historian, George Imashev, Curator of Film and Sound, Australian War Memorial and Enzo Accadia, Information Technology Officer, from Coffs Harbour Council Library, provided a wealth of information on making oral histories available to the public. For the interest of members and a record of all those technical terms we provide here an edited version of their talks. Thank you to Margaret and George for making copies of their notes available. Many thanks to Marjory Day for the assistance with transcribing Enzo's talk.

**"Lunch in the Park" (Photo Jan Grieve)
Cover photograph from *Voices of a Landscape*
Edited by Margaret Park**



ARTICLES

Oral History Made Public – From the Recording to the Page

– Margaret Park, North Sydney Council Historian

I was asked to speak to you about my experiences making oral history public. I have been involved in oral history work for a number of years, well over 20 years in fact. My careers, and there have been a few spread across libraries, archives, museums and public history, have provided me with the opportunities to understand oral history within a historical context. All have helped me develop my practice of bringing oral histories into the public arena. My paper today goes part of the way of sharing with you my experiences and philosophy behind my work.

As oral historians, when we listen to people's stories we are entrusted with their personal thoughts and anecdotes that have made significant impacts on their memory. These thoughts and reminiscences are often mere slices of time that stand out or carry more weight than all of our experiences across a lifetime. These imprints on our memory are not always the greater story lived through, they can often be the more mundane, routine aspect of early childhood memories or daily life experience that a person performed or witnessed routinely etching a more permanent thought in our minds and hearts. The oral historians task is to activate memories usually based on a particular theme for another purpose entirely – to document the life and work of people whose story or impression of a particular event or episode in history would otherwise remain untold or add a variety of meaning to a period in history,

gathering together a number of different perspectives based on the things that make us different – class, religion, ethnicity, tribalism, gender, education, personality and temperament.

The other purpose of opening up these accounts is to ensure that the contribution we make to society forms part of the wider source of documentation, offering a richer font of knowledge for researchers and writers to draw upon in the future. As we are all aware, oral history has made its way into mainstream historical endeavours. This was not always the case and we have come a long way in the practice of recording memories for a wide range of uses – memory work, family history, professional history projects and for documentary collections at the local, state and federal level.

Recording for the sake of capturing memories without an informed intention or without a defined purpose can often

be detrimental to the cause of oral history and result in a material collection which remains unidentified and useless, a library without a catalogue or a museum collection without an accession register. We need to know more about why we are collecting, what we are collecting and for what purpose the collection exists. And once we have the collection how do we share it with the wider community for whom we often claim we are collecting in the first place.

I agree with Paula Hamilton, that as oral historians we need to see oral history as part of the package and as a vehicle to help us understand the changes in society and the way history is shaped by these changes:

We have to avoid seeing oral history as a separate practice and perceive it in context as part of all the other ways a society remembers – individual memory writing, material objects, artefacts, memorial sites, memorial rituals and practices. This is not to deny its special and specific natures... I would want to make a plea for a more reflective process or more consideration of your role in the process. (Paula Hamilton in OHAA Journal No 18, 1996)

Also as oral historians we need to remain involved and connected with our material, not just as collectors but also as producers of history which oral histories are able to shape and enliven.

Making oral history public is a sweeping statement which makes the process sound much easier than it really is. But at the same time, it doesn't have to be difficult. Making it public also opens up a Pandora's box full of dilemmas and copyright issues which all oral historians need to be prepared for at the outset, not at the end of a recording. There has been a great deal written on these ethical issues, discussions held and several good oral history handbooks and websites to explore to satisfy your concerns on this important aspect of oral history work.

Another important point to consider before conducting oral history projects with a particular end in mind, i.e. for a collection, a publication, a Cd-Rom, and so on, is that as a major player in the process, the oral historian adds another dimension, another layer of history and a perspective that will derive a different outcome from another historian, just as a writer of history produces their version of that history. Joanne Scott who taught oral history at the University of the Sunshine Coast reflected to her students: *Oral history can encourage students to reflect critically about the nature of history and of historical evidence because it is in oral history that historians themselves participate most clearly in the construction of evidence.* (Joanne Scott in OHAA No 21, 1999, p69)

There are numerous ways to offer oral history in a publicly accessible format, some more sophisticated than others, but all valid and important means of providing oral history from a research tool to an informative and entertaining compilation in an exhibition or publication (and here I refer to publication in its basic form meaning 'to publish' whether it be in a book or other technological format). In making oral history public there are important factors that must be taken into consideration before launching into the task at hand. As oral historians I believe we are morally bound to remain faithful to the interviewee's memories as we would to the integrity of any material we are handling, whether that is an historical document, such as a personal letter or diary, a film or sound recording, or a lock of someone's hair. Therefore, as with any historical project we embark upon, it is important to have a philosophy in place, as well as a practical methodology to achieve a quality result and at the same time provide something tangible at the end for the interviewee to have to acknowledge that they are an integral part of the project. The basic format is, of course, a copy of the interview, usually in audio-tape form, and a written transcript or log summary featuring significant milestones in the interview. If the recording is to be lodged with an institution as a part of its

documentary collection, then this is a form of publishing the work, as the institution concerned will be making it accessible to their public as part of its research collection. In some cases they will go further and make the recording accessible in its entirety on-line via databases and websites and you will hear more about this from my colleagues, George Imashev, Curator of Film and Sound at the Australian War Memorial and Enzo Accadia, Information Technology Officer at Coffs Harbour Council Library.

These types of collections, many of which are in local libraries around Australia and therefore more readily accessible than state and federal collections, are then able to be researched and used by a whole gambit of users from the school student to the history or social researcher or novelist who will themselves make the oral histories public in essays, publications, exhibitions, novels or reports, hopefully citing the oral history source appropriately. As a historian and manager of an oral history collection at North Sydney Council I have come across all of the above in the course of their work seeking to use oral histories to gain insights into their chosen topic, or in some cases steering the researcher towards oral history sources they were unaware of. What they did with the oral history was not within my control but I

remain hopeful that they would treat the source of information respectfully and as equally important to their creation as they would any other material evidence they uncovered during the course of their research work.

As a creator of both the oral history and the end product in a variety of published formats, I am a strong proponent of producing oral history work in a public forum. As a keen historian who believes that to achieve a standard of knowledge, we need to have all angles of a story available to us. By this I mean that we need to share the material culture from which we can best shape a more balanced picture, be it a different view from the same material. In this sense, it helps to have collections, in whatever format they may be, publicly accessible.

From the initial background research aiming to achieve a more well-rounded and satisfying interview, to ensuring that the interviewee is aware of the reason for the interview and what I am able to offer them as a creative piece of work at the end of the project, I view the making of this history a significant, but only a part of the creation. I realise it is difficult to involve an interviewee in another process produced as the result of a research project where one is using existing recordings to add value or weight to historical argument, but if you are the originator of the interview

program, it is essential to place importance on this step as well as the interview process itself.

Transforming a recording from sound wave to the written page is similar to translating from one language to another. Recently, I was listening to Radio National and heard a piece on language translation skills by Jan Linguard from South – East Asian Department at the University of Sydney. She stressed that to be a good translator “You need to maintain the intent and style of the original language”. This struck a particular chord with me, as I believe it is the same as transcribing an oral history recording. Creating a translation, you need to have the knowledge of the language you are translating (both from and to) and to transcribe an oral history interview, you need to have knowledge of the background of the interviewee, their personality, voice and expression. Taking the time to get a feel for the language (and I mean in a broad sense, the person whose voice and words you are transforming from sound to page) assists with the production of a worthwhile transcription that has integrity and is faithful to the voice patterns of the interviewee.

The art of transcribing, and indeed it should be considered a creative work, is a skill, not a chore tacked on at the end of an interview. There are numerous arguments about whether transcriptions

are an essential tool accompanying the interview as research material. Concerns are often expressed that reading a transcription makes it easier for the user to skip the more important task – listening to the voice. But transcriptions take time, a great deal of time, as much as 8 hours to 1 hour of interview and if a budget is involved they add a significant cost to the project as a whole. Log summaries, capturing only highlights by the use of a self-guided indexing methodology, are less time-consuming and often suffice as an aide to access the interview and identify the required segments for re-use in a published work, but they can also omit just that treasure of information you are searching for as the logger didn't consider it significant enough to log.

I have worked with log summaries and transcriptions and have had equally satisfying results, but I have also made it an important practice in my work to return to the interview and listen to the words of the interviewee once I've located the particular story I want to incorporate into my history. It helps, of course, if you were the interviewer, as you would already have the voice pattern in your head, I find in every project I've been involved with (and there have been many) I can just about summon up the face and voice of the people I interviewed years after the project is history.

In relation to transcriptions I have found that as well as the interviewer

adding a consequence to the story, the transcriber or the logger, also adds another layer of influence. As I've already mentioned, the logger is the cataloguer or indexer and sets his or her own guidelines as to what is an important marker on the tape. As with any type of selective indexing or cataloguing this leaves much to the ear of the beholder. The transcriber, on the other hand, believes that he or she is providing everything the interviewee said, or are they? Those of us who have transcribed or even simply logged, all know how easy it is to mishear the voice of our interviewee. It is not uncommon to play a sentence a number of times over and hear it differently each and every time – you and I will hear it differently as well. With transcriptions, just as with our command of English, we say things differently, so our written style is often starkly different from writer to writer and placing emphasis within our sentence structure varies and I have found this a problem with transcriptions, especially if there are many different transcribers transcribing for one project.

I came across this when I began editing transcripts of oral histories produced for one of my current historical endeavours at North Sydney Council – North Sydney's Planning History. I am in the process of writing the book – *Designs on a Landscape: a planning history of North Sydney* – hopefully ready for launch next April. This history of

planning has been in progress for the last two years and has involved the interviewing of former mayors, alderman, planning staff, architects, developers, lawyers and local citizens who contributed to the evolution of planning in North Sydney over the last 40 years. Seeing the need to understand this history and how planning evolved in North Sydney, Council asked me prepare a report on the feasibility of producing such a work. I advised that a history should be written, but before this could be done it would be necessary to conduct an oral history project at the same time as undertaking extensive research. The oral history component would provide the opportunity for the voices of the people to be recorded so that their involvement in the changes over time and how North Sydney plans for its future, would be documented and aid in procuring a more detailed picture than the scattered written records could reveal. At the same time hopefully play some part in preventing the constant re-inventing the wheel' that tends to occur in local planning practice.

Interviews with 40 people and over 500,000 words later, the interview stage was completed. I have read their words, identified themes and edited the transcripts in a publication as the first stage in the planning history project. This book entitled *Voices of a landscape: planning North Sydney* was released last

year as part of North Sydney Council's Centenary of Federation program. By producing a book of edited transcripts prior to the written history, I believe I returned something tangible to our interviewees, as well as to my volunteer interview team who assisted me throughout the project and took a keen interest in the process and results. It has also helped to formulate dominant themes for the written history. (I also know there are many of the interviewees who were very anxious to hear what the others in the project had to say about them – they too will have something concrete to digest to satisfy that natural curiosity about former colleagues and differing perceptions of the same issue.)

Returning to the problems of using transcriptions – when I was editing *Voices*, I worked with transcriptions created by at least 6 different transcribers, all with varying degrees of skills and knowledge about the subject matter and the people interviewed. The results were diverse to say the least. I had to edit punctuation, typographical quirks, repair misspellings, especially proper names and place names, and overall spend many hours of extra work which was of a technical nature along with the skills of professional editing to ensure I remained faithful to the voice and presented a narrative that was of interest and a good read. To do this, in each case, I returned to the recording to

ensure that this integrity was maintained and that the stories I chose to tell in Voices were consistent in their editing pattern. If you are the manager of the project, it will help to relate to your transcriber what is important to leave in and what can be left out. The 'ums' and 'ers' can be omitted, but I prefer if my transcribers leave in most other expressions, and in particular, to show where laughter occurs or other asides that enhance the flavour of the interview and present the editor or writer of the subsequent published work with an overall picture of personality of the interview. I believe this will ensure a richer resource to work with producing a more polished and professional result. Overall I would say that listening to the recording is crucial to understanding the original intent expressed in the voice patterns and where the interviewee placed emphasis should be integral to the edited version. I came across an interesting internet discussion on the theory and practice of transcribing. The item I particularly found most interesting was from Susan Kraft from the New York Library for Performing Arts who offered her thoughts on whether the transcriber should be the editor! An idea I do not feel comfortable with but her thoughts on returning to the interviewee's voice and patterns match my own. One point she emphasises is that knowledge is the key-knowing what

was done with the interview in the transcription and editing process helps to understand the result:

Most important is that users of the transcriptions know to what degree the interview was edited. In our case, we like the transcript to be a readable document that does justice to the speakers. This does require some judicious editing. As anyone who has studied translation knows, pure word for word translation often does not accurately reflect the speakers intent. And I do believe translating is what we do when moving from the spoken word to the written word. On the other hand, our project is going to great lengths to preserve the original recorded interview because there is a level of information that researchers will only ever be able to get from hearing the pauses, the 'ums' and 'ahs' and the very particular tone of voice that accompanies the words. I guess I would say that going back to the recording is like studying a translated poem in its original language!

(Susan Kraft, a dance oral history project for New York Library for the Performing Arts, on internet site: H – ORALHIST@H – NET.MSU.EDU)

From theory to practice is always a learning curve. It's important to understand the philosophy behind a process before bringing the principle into practice. I have used oral histories from North Sydney's collection as research for

exhibitions, interpretive signage, walking tours, publications, heritage studies and Cd – Roms. I have also reproduced sections of oral histories to either stand alone as edited transcripts demonstrating thematic histories or as supporting evidence within the overall text. As oral historians, we need to understand the rich array of resources we have to work with, oral history being one of many, so we can more fully represent history across society and across boundaries. There is never only one point of view, as historians and oral historians, we must remember we are part of that picture and have a role to play in its interpretation.

The possibilities for making oral history public are endless and not all require vast sums of money to do so. For instance, the exhibition Taking the Ferry cost only research and writing time, and the text label package was handled in house at very little cost.

I want to finish with perhaps something contradictory to my philosophy on making oral history public – that it is always important to have a purpose or an intent behind the interview (always an exception to a rule!) And here I will provide one of my own anecdotes as it does relate to making oral history public.

Just this week I attended a funeral, but I think I'd prefer to call it a 'celebration of a life' of one of North

Sydney's finest! One of my jobs as historian for Council is to compose a 'minute' for the mayor when the need arises to honour people who have contributed significantly to our community. Charles Boyd was one of those very special people, one of the best. To assist me with writing the mayoral minute I listened to an interview conducted with Charles by one of my invaluable volunteer interviewers, Carmel Rose from nine years ago. Indeed I believe it was her first interview! After listening to the interview and hearing his smiling voice reliving his life story, as I used this documentary material to commemorate his achievements over a long lifetime for Council's Mayoral Minute, I have to say that maybe there are occasions when there is value in the voice alone. If it's never used for more than just enabling that person to come to life again, it confirms its cultural value.

One of the more exciting ways of making oral history public as we enter the 21st century and the technology becomes more readily available and hopefully more affordable as time goes by, is what I will leave to our next two presenters. Digitalising the sound from tape to byte, so by using a home computer we can dial into websites of oral history collections and hear the voice, read the transcript – hard to get much more public than this or more accessible. If you don't have a home

computer (and I think as Australians we have one of the highest home computer ownerships along with internet access) there is always your local public library which has continually strived to make resources accessible as far and wide as financially possible and technologically feasible. And they just may have their own oral history collections for you to tap into on site!

(Margaret played and showed a number of examples from her work, but there is no audio with Voiceprint! However I am sure you can see the picture evoked by this example. Ed)

When curating thematic exhibitions at North Sydney I include oral histories to enhance the text labels and add vibrancy to the display. In Taking the Ferry Exhibition at Stanton Library, April-May 2002, I selected quotes to use from our general collection, our daily life and work interviews, where we asked people to recall their memories about growing up and working in North Sydney. These recordings were conducted over the last 10 to 15 years. Such as this overhead of Milsons Point Ferry Service and the quote from our interviewee Alan Willoughby added to our explanatory text:

Milsons Point

The ferry wharf was right on the point... but later on when the Bridge began to be built the ferry wharf was moved around

towards where Luna Park is now, and the railway station was terminating there then too, as previously it was going right down to the Point. There were escalators to go down to the ferry wharf, probably the first escalators I'd seen... So we'd get off the tram and down the escalators to the wharf and into town. It was a lovely trip into town. Allan Willoughby, Oral History Interview 1996

(Explanatory Text) One of the more dramatic changes on the Milsons Point waterfront in the twentieth century was the passing of the famous ferry terminus and arcade. The terminus was a North Sydney landmark and an important transport interchange since the late 1880s where trams, trains and ferries met. It was an integral part of harbour life and provided the means to transport people and goods from up the shore across the city and back again. To accommodate the construction workshops of Dorman Long Co., builders of the Bridge, the Milsons Point terminal was moved towards Lavender Bay and the vehicular ferry was moved to Jeffrey Street, Kirribilli. To reach the new transport links new escalators were installed to move people up the cliff face to Alfred Street from the shores of Lavender Bay. These new people movers were designed to move 10,000 people per hour.

The Sound Collection of the Australian War Memorial

Digitisation of the Australian War Memorial's Oral History Collection for preservation and publication – George Imashev, Curator of Film and Sound, Australian War Memorial

The purpose of the Australian War Memorial is – ‘to commemorate the sacrifice of those Australians who have died in war.’

The Memorial's mission is – ‘to assist Australians to remember, interpret and understand the Australian experience of war and its enduring impact on Australian society.’

It does this in a variety of ways. One particular important way is by the establishment of a national collection of historical material. Historical material is defined as – ‘material relating to Australian military history’ and that history is the history of – ‘wars and warlike operations in which Australians have been on active service, including events leading up to, and the aftermath of, such wars and warlike operations’ and, ‘the Defence Force.’

The role of the Memorial's Sound Collection is to collect sound recordings relating to Australian military history. The Sound collection includes oral history recordings, music of the period, and radio interviews and programs. The physical characteristics can be a wide range of materials. In practice it usually

consists of: –

- Gramophone discs which can be acetate, glass, metallic, shellac or vinyl.
- Magnetic tape consisting of reel to reel and cassettes on acetate, polyvinyl, chloride and mylar.
- Paper documentation associated with the production of sound recordings including programs, transcripts and interview notes.
- Equipment used for the recording and dissemination of sound material.

The Sound collection was established during the second world war when discs from the AIF's Military History Section were acquired. The collection consists of the following five broad categories – contemporary recordings, radio programs, music, statements of reminiscence and interviews. The first three categories contain original records used to broadcast wartime messages, programs developed by the Army's Directorate of Public Relations, and recordings of military tunes and regimental marches played by Australian military bands. The reminiscences were

obtained as a result of a project between the Memorial and the ABC started in 1953. Each consists of an eight hundred word statement by an eminent war time Australian. The major part of the Sound Collection consists of interviews. These interviews are of recent origin with sixty percent being the result of the Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of Australia in the War of 1939-45 project. The aim of this archive, set up in the late 1980's, was to create a collection of oral testimony to answer the question 'What was it like for Australians to experience the second world war at home and overseas, in the services or as civilians?' The archive comprises of just under 400 interviews and includes an interview, a transcript and an index.

The Memorial's total Sound Collection consists of over 5000 discrete items of discs, audiotapes and audiocassettes. Only those items that have completed the conservation and documentation programs are available to researchers. The Keith Murdoch Sound Archive having been established as an independent project has had its conservation and documentation programs completed and is available to researchers.

Conservation consists of providing purpose built storage facilities and the implementation of a copying program. At the Memorial we copy the original (disc, cassette, micro cassette, reel, etc...)

onto 1/4 inch audiotape. For the preservation copy we use AGFA 468 tape (10 inch reel) with a recording speed of 7 1/2 inches (19cm) per second for voice and 15 inches (38cm) per sec for music. The duplication copy (working master) is recorded simultaneously but onto BASF 911 tape. The equipment used are two Studer 2 track A810's. For reference purposes a cassette is made.

All documentation is carried out by using the Memorial's recently developed computerised Collection Management System called MICA which is part of the overall network. Access for the public is via the Memorial's Web site.

The last twenty years has seen a dramatic increase in interest in preserving orally the war time experiences of Australians. The present collection is growing at the rate of nearly two hundred items a year despite the limited resources available. Eighteen months ago funding was made available for the Memorial to establish its own Oral History program. Until then we had only been a passive receiver of material. This oral history program is targeted at filling a gap in the Sound Collection. This has been identified as the Korean War and the pre-Vietnam Period, namely Borneo, Malaya and the Indonesian Confrontation. The future will see us have oral histories for the 1991 Gulf War, the peace keeping forces in Cambodia, Somalia and elsewhere, the recent

Afghan War, and the current War on Terrorism, or what I like to call the 'War on Whatever!'

It is interesting to reflect that when I first came to the Australian War Memorial in the mid 1980's, there were discussions going on about how we would have nothing to collect after Vietnam and the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the evil empire! How wrong can you be? Changing events and the growth of new technologies has brought about a brave new world.

This of course brings me to the main topic of my talk, Digitising the Sound Collection. Since 1983 the policy of the Australian War Memorial (AWM) and the Sound Section has been to preserve the collection for access. Experience has shown that the major cost in managing a sound collection is the preservation copying program. The making of a reference copy or access copy is relatively cheap. At the AWM we complete this loop and make a reference copy available for every item we preserve.

Why Digital

There are two basic reasons for why the Memorial has decided to embrace digitisation.

1. New technologies – The Memorial has a policy of taking advantage of increased opportunities presented by new technologies. It has a commitment to exploring the advantages and disadvantages in digitising its National Collections. The Memorial aims to have as much collection material as possible on the Web in line with its policy of providing the public with as much access as possible to the National Collections without placing the collection material at risk. One result is the digitisation of the Photograph collection. Over 200,000 images are on our Web site and copies can be ordered through the E-Business facility.
2. Old technologies – As I mentioned, Memorial produces analogue copies of sound recordings for preservation, duplication and public access. Analogue recordings, that is, recordings made on magnetic tape, are a technology that is rapidly disappearing. The broadcast and recording industries worldwide have replaced analogue recording and editing equipment with digital technology. Studer, the manufacturer of the tape recording equipment

currently used by the Memorial, will cease manufacture of all analogue equipment in a year's time and maintenance support will cease in two years. Even the popular audiocassette is rapidly disappearing.

The Memorial, to keep its Sound Collection usable and relevant in the current broadcast and sound industries environment, has no alternative but to digitise.

Benefits

Enhanced access to Memorial Collections

The world will have online, broadcast quality access to the Memorial's Sound Collection. No more will there be a need to make an audiocassette available for clients in the Research Centre.

Increased revenue for the Memorial

If the digitized photograph collection is taken as a reliable guide, the Memorial can anticipate increased revenue generation through E-Business strategies. For example, approved customers, at an agreed fee, can download elements of the sound collection.

More efficient use of staff time

By encouraging clients to make their own copy straight from the digital network, staff will be able to devote

more uninterrupted time to the core business activity of the sound collection preservation copying program.

Keep up-to-date with changes in technology

By making a digital copy of the sound collection instead of a second analogue copy

- a] the use of analogue tape stock will be halved. Putting it another way, existing supplies will last twice as long. This is critical for preservation copying and also represents savings. Currently, analogue tape costs four times that of digital stock for any given length of time.
- b] the life of existing analogue machinery will be doubled.

Physical storage costs reduced

Storage requirements for analogue tape will be greatly reduced.

The Memorial's Digitisation Program

Before I give details about how we went about establishing this program I would like to briefly touch on some basic principles, vocabulary and definitions we have adopted. You most probably are aware that to read and understand the signs on the digital highway you need to learn the new language. Some people would argue that the language still needs to be created if consistency is to be established.

One thing I found when preparing reports on the digitisation program, and during the research and consultative process, was the need to go back to fundamentals. To establish an effective digitisation program I had to be consistent with my terminology. I even had to be clear on what I meant when I said the word Sound. So here is some vocabulary and definitions.

Vocabulary and Definitions

Sound is a continuous variation in *air pressure* which may be represented by means of a *signal* that may be stored as the *primary information* on a *carrier* using a particular *recording format*. The *signal representation* may be *analogue* or *digital*.

Analogue means the continuous representation of the varying alternative waveform over time. Digital means a discontinuous or *discrete* representation of values, each value represented by a number. The digital signal consists of a sequence of instantaneous amplitude measurements sampled at equidistant instants of time (*sampling frequency* or *sampling rate*) and expressed in a binary code. It is marked by an incremental, step-like course.

Digitisation is the process by which an analogue signal is replaced by a digital signal. The accuracy of the amplitude resolution is defined by the number of bits used in a digital

processing system. The number of bits is called the *digital word length* of the sample.

Systems processing analogue signals are characterized by their bandwidth (the useable frequency range). The equivalent analogue bandwidth of a digital signal is determined by the sampling rate – the maximum frequency possible being slightly less than half the sampling rate.

In the storage of signals we distinguish between carriers relying on magnetic phenomena, optical phenomena or the mechanical deviation of a groove on the surface. Hence we speak about *magnetic, optical, magneto-optical (MO) or mechanical carriers*. There are other forms of storage.

Mechanical and optical carriers are used for analogue and digital signals while in practice mechanical carriers, in the form of cylinders or discs, have only been used for analogue signals and MO-disks solely for digital recordings. *Metal matrices – negatives (fathers), positives (mothers), and stampers (sons)*, are used for the production of mechanical carriers as well as for CDs and DVDs.

Carriers cannot be read without suitable apparatus – *hardware*. Carrier and hardware constitute a *system*. Obsolescence of a system is frequently caused by a market-driven discontinuation in the manufacture and support of the hardware.

Due to the limited life of carriers and hardware, the safeguarding of the audio heritage can only be achieved by copying the recorded contents from old to new carriers.

The term *copying* is used for any kind of transfer of content (including analogue to digital, or linear to data reduced).

The term *refreshment* is used for the copying of digital data retaining a given format, carrier and hardware structure.

The term *migration* is used for the copying of digital data including the change of file format, and /or hardware.

In *emulation* the new software imitates the obsolete operating system or software to run the original file. The digital object is not changed.

BWF [Broadcast Wave Format] refers to the 'wav' file that has become the de-facto standard

Last but not least is **DMSS**, a digital mass storage system.

In any program it is important to have clearly defined outcomes. At the Memorial the following terminology was adopted to facilitate this.

Web-ready: A collection is said to be web-ready when it can be used in a program of digital copying for future online access, copying and e-business.

Use-neutral: All digitization requires the digital file to be use-neutral so that all future possibilities can be considered. This is contrasted to, and distinct from,

Use-specific, which has little benefit in any Memorial collection digitization program.

The Memorials Sound Digitisation Program – The Issues

The aim was to change the existing preservation copying program [analogue] to incorporate the creation of a digital file. An extensive consultative process took place between Curatorial, Multimedia and IT staff in the Memorial. Further discussions and workshops were held by Memorial staff with staff from the National Library of Australia, ScreenSound Australia and representatives from Industry and Product suppliers. The result of these deliberations was the identification of five issues that embraced the major aspects of a digitising program. These issues need to be addressed and agreed to for the digitisation program to be successful. At all times the principle of use-neutral and the acceptance of established world best practice for preservation standards, were maintained.

The Issues

1. Sound Digitisation and existing cataloguing data bases

To achieve a useable outcome with regards to preservation and client access, the digitisation of Sound Collections needs to incorporate the current collection management system and the current public access system. A review of existing accessioning conventions and how they relate to versions (analogue), derivatives (digital) and transcripts (associated documentation in analogue and digital) will revealed that some changes to the current accession procedures will be inevitable. This must not however, compromise existing cataloguing or metadata standards. The main objectives are to:

- Maximize automation so that data entry error and staff time is minimized.
- Ensure mandatory information is systematically entered.
- Provide a platform to manage digital derivatives when providing access through other electronic systems.
- Provide a model for future digitisation of other collections.

2. Physical Layout of the Sound digitisation work area

The location of equipment, cabling and staff workstations will give you an idea of the cost involved in starting this

program. At this stage aim for a Rolls Royce but be prepared to drive a Morris Minor!

3 Sound Digitisation Workflow

You need to be able to show how the existing preservation copying program (including access copies) can be adjusted to fit into a digital preservation copying environment (with access derivatives). Appropriate equipment (analogue and digital) for specific tasks must be identified. The benefits of automation and most efficient use of staff time must also be shown. Future developments must also be allowed for.

4 Metadata Standards and Location

These standards should be based on the Dublin Core Guidelines and the Australian extension of them as promoted by the Australian Archives, namely, the Australian Government Locator Service (AGLS).

These standards, however, when applied to the Memorial's sound collection digitisation program are little more than motherhood statements. This is because the Dublin Core Guidelines and AGLS are a set of elements devised for resource discovery. To ensure that digital archival objects like digitised sound are preserved and accessible over the long term, metadata beyond resource discovery is required. While the set of 'essential' preservation

metadata elements is still being developed by the industry, certain elements can be identified. The basic requirement is for future users to access preservation management data and to decode the information data.

The location of the metadata is another issue. It can be imbedded in the source text or kept separate from the resource. There are advantages and disadvantages for both methods. At the Memorial we will employ a mixture. The actual memory used is insignificant compared to the actual digitised sound item.

5 Sound Digitisation Standards for Preservation and Access

I will not go into details except to say for Preservation copying the standards are based on that developed by the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA) and the Library of Congress. Further information was obtained from the Phonogrammarchiv Vienna, The National Library of Australia and ScreenSound Australia.

A corollary of use-neutral principle mentioned above is the reality that the Memorial will only digitize once from the analogue copy. For the Sound collection this requires a digital copy that is of broadcast quality. This is the standard used by all sound archives and will enable the Memorial to take advantage

of online access, online copying and e-business strategies.

In the past the Memorial has insisted on a permanent physical format, the ten-inch analogue 1/4 inch reel for its preservation and duplication copies. With the loss of market place support for stock and equipment, a tradition of the past half-century is coming to an end. This dependence on a permanent physical format was an illusion anyway!

The Memorial has decided to abandon the paradigm of depending on a permanent physical format and has decided to embrace the new paradigm of continual refreshment and validation of digital data. With technology changing at an ever-increasing rate and variety, such a course of action is effective and efficient.

Transfers made from old to new archive formats will be carried out without subjective alterations or 'improvements' such as de-noising, etc. The copying process will ensure the transfer of the full dynamic range and frequency response of the original, leaving sufficient headroom, particularly for the spikes of noisy recordings.

The adoption of these practices and standards will bring the Memorial in line with other National Institutions in Australia, North America, and Europe.

For Access copying, standards may vary. Nevertheless the quality of the digital access derivatives will depend on the quality of the 'original' preservation digital signal.

There are two aspects to access copying, namely, research access and supply of copies.

1. Research Access.

- The aim here is to provide access to the Sound Collection for both internal and external Memorial researchers. At the moment while the catalogue is available on the Memorial's Web site the actual sound is only available as an audiocassette in the Research Centre. With the increase in functionality provided by the digital preservation copying program, it is possible to make available a sound copy on the web site.
- As this sound copy serves only as an audition copy the quality need only be sufficient for researchers to hear adequately the content to assess its usability. MP3 quality should be sufficient.
- After the initial audition, some researchers eg. Documentary makers, will request higher quality (broadcast) copies.

2. Supply of Copies.

- In most cases the need will be to supply a broadcast quality copy. This can be done totally electronically through e-business, or more conventionally through the use of an operator to make a copy. As the source will be digital, the digital copy supplied will be made in less than real time. The types of copies will depend on demand, with CD and DAT becoming more popular. There may still be requests for audio cassette copies but the Memorial may decide that an MP3 download from its web site would be more than adequate for this kind of request.

To conclude, it is relatively straightforward in a digital environment to provide research access and supply copies to Memorial collection users. The challenge will be to have the Digital Mass Storage System with all its derivatives talk to all the appropriate databases.

Conclusion

In summary it can be said that sound digitisation standards adopted at the Memorial brings us in line with other National Institutions in Australia, North America, and Europe. Put simply, the principle of preservation copying on a no loss basis is recognized and adopted.

The quality of access copies can vary according to the need. The quality of the digital derivatives is determined by the need to find a balance between ease of access and the end use of the collection item in an e-business environment.

Management Principles

For the program to succeed you also need some management principles. The following are areas for consideration.

1. The Task of Sound Archives

It is the responsibility of the AWM to assess the needs of its users, both current and future, and to balance those needs against the long-term preservation of the sound collection.

2. Safeguarding the Information.

- a) By preserving the carrier and the associated equipment and by minimising the use of originals.
- b) By copying the content/primary information to new carriers/systems. Only the digital domain offers the possibility of lossless copying. For the long-term preservation of the primary information contained on the analogue carrier it is necessary, therefore, to first transfer it to the digital domain.

3. Optimal Signal Retrieval from Analogue Carriers

When playing historic formats, replay parameters (speed, playback equalization, track, format, etc) must be chosen objectively and be based upon knowledge of the given historical format. As a matter of principle, irreversible steps must be avoided.

4. Unmodified Transfer to a New Target Format

Full dynamic range and frequency response of the original must be transferred, leaving sufficient headroom, particularly for the spikes of noisy recordings. This is to be done without 'improvements' such as de-noising etc. The careful documentation of all parameters and procedures employed in the transfer process is essential.

5. Improvements in Transfer

Technologies Current transfer technologies result in irretrievable loss of information. That is why the original carriers and suitable playback equipment must be preserved. However, it is likely that most transfers from the analogue to the digital domain will improve. For example, the laser replay of some mechanical carriers which provides contactless, optical replay.

6. Data Reduction

Data Reduction is frequently mistakenly called compression. Such transfers must not be used, as parts of the primary information are irretrievably lost. The results may sound identical or very similar to the original, but further use of the data reduced signal will be severely restricted. This rule does not apply, however, for digital audio recordings originated in data reduced, non-linear formats.

7. Digital Archiving

- a] Each digital recording produced for archival purposes must be free of uncorrectable errors, and have the lowest possible number of correctable errors. An error status report has to be produced and kept for future monitoring. Digital recordings entering the archive from outside sources may, however, contain uncorrectable errors; again, an error status report including the position of such errors must be retained.
- b] Each carrier containing digital recordings must be checked at regular intervals for data integrity.
- c] Digital contents must be transferred to a new carrier whenever the number of errors increases significantly – at any rate before uncorrectable errors occur (refreshment).

- d] Digital contents must be migrated before the old carriers, formats, and/or hardware become obsolete.

8. Digital Mass Storage Systems (DMSS)

Such systems must permit automatic checking of data integrity, refreshment, and migration with minimum use of manpower. When this is achieved ‘eternal’ preservation as well as the new dimension of remote access to stored away holdings will be possible.

9. Metadata: Information about the stored recording

Metadata is a key component in the preservation and management of any digital collection and must be designed to support future preservation strategies.

Resources

Funding

You need money to buy the appropriate equipment, storage on your network and to set up the required work area and stations. The cost of extensive cabling must also be considered

Staff

While your current preservation copying staff can be employed to copy digitally greater involvement from IT staff, cataloguers etc will be necessary and must be identified in work programs, business plans and so on. Other stakeholders eg. Web site managers, E-business must now be identified and their input measured.

Timetable

Once all the above has been determined you are in a position to establish a timetable for delivering a digital preservation copy and access copy from your original sound item.

Conclusion

The Memorial has established a program for the digitisation of analogue documents and the refreshing or migration of digital documents. The original carriers together with suitable replay equipment will be placed in suitable storage.

The creation of a substantial metadata for each recording is required to control the files and objects. Metadata also support and make possible the asset management systems that back up and periodically duplicate files in a preservation repository.

Data preservation features include refreshment and backup, archiving (the process of bundling the data for input,

storage and output for the next generation repository), migration, and emulation.

The archiving concept mandates further requirements, including specialized metadata fields, the maximized independence from specific or proprietary technologies, and the ability to communicate with other formats.

It is abundantly clear from other institutions' digital mass storage system ventures that the success of digital preservation rests to a large degree on the scope and reliability of the metadata recorded. Each recording stored in the DMSS will be represented by a set of digital files known as a digital object. The digital object will consist of the audio tracks of a recording and digital files representing the graphic information from the packaging, label and sleeves, created by scanning all print components of the recording.

It would seem that the Memorial by adopting the above strategies is not overtly adventurous by world standards. Nevertheless it is a radical step for the Memorial because for the first time ever, a preservation copy of a National Collection item will be 'stored' on the Memorial Network. As a consequence, the philosophy of a healthy, cautious approach has been adopted. The project is now at the stage where prototypes for preservation and access can be

established and tested. Once this is done the Memorial will be one step away from having sound items from the National Collection available on its Web site.

Already other areas of the Memorial are keen to use the facilities and processes being developed and established. The implications for education, web delivery, marketing and sales is infinite.

An Alternative Way – The low cost option

Greg Moss from ScreenSound Australia, at the recent ASRA Conference held in Canberra came up with an 'el cheapo' strategy. What I present here are my notes from the talk that Greg gave. What you need, new or second hand, is the following: –

- A standard computer with CDRW
- An AD/DA converter
- Hi-Fi amplifier
- Original player [eg. Reel to Reel, cassette, Record (vinyl), CD etc]
- Earphones
- Cables and connectors
- Recording software
- MP3 generating software
- Real audio authoring software
- CD recording/labelling software
- CDR blanks
- Internet dial up connection

Standards approach CD quality ie. 44.1 kHz/16 bit and you can have Wav/Aiff/MP3. The dynamic range is reduced and noise and distortion can increase. The quality should be sufficient for the speaking human voice, in other words, for oral history. It is just that the frequencies at the high and low end are tailored.

Sources

Useful publications were:

The Safeguarding of the Audio Heritage: Ethics, Principles and Preservation Strategy, IASA Technical Committee 03, 2 September 2001,

Planning the Library of Congress National Audio-Visual Conservation Center, IASA Journal No. 18 December 2001.

The application of preservation metadata to digital objects, Australasian Sound Archive No 27, 2002)

Publishing on the World Wide Web

Enzo Accadia – Information Technology Officer – Coffs Harbour Council Library

Thank you for inviting me along to talk about what we are doing at Coffs Library. I am an information technology officer at the library which really means I'm a bit of a dog's body! I have a library background in terms of librarianship but my day is spent a little on the circulation desk, lots of time on the reference desk and between that I'm actually doing my I.T. job in the backroom. My responsibility in terms of I.T. relates to our automation system, our web site, Internet and Intranet development and maintenance, and in client support. However, digitisation quite interests me, which is why I'm here today.

I should point out that we are a good example of a small collection. At Coffs Harbour City we have about sixty to sixty five thousand people in the local government area, the library itself has about twenty thousand active borrowers and about ninety thousand items on the catalogue. We are not big, in terms of staff, about the equivalent of fifteen full-time. In the library's oral history collection is a specific project called "The Voice of Time". It was done as a Bicentennial project in 1988, and we've had it sitting in our backroom gathering dust, cassette tapes in boxes. In November 1996 in Coffs Harbour we had

a mini flood, which went through the city centre and it took out the whole bottom shelf of the library. Luckily, the boxes were not on the bottom shelf and we decided that we really ought to do something with them, to digitise them.

Today I am talking about how we are actually going to publish on the web, which is the most obvious and best way of allowing accessibility. To give you some background, I think the project involved about four or five people. I believe that they received an eighty two thousand dollar Bicentennial grant to get this off the ground originally. The paperwork has one hundred and seventy eight numbered interviews. However, several I can't find at all. The original project coordinator still lives locally, but doesn't know what happened to them. Another interesting aspect with the original collection is with the numbering system. Some of the interviews are over two or three cassettes and some are just single ones, or a cassette will be numbered 'eight and nine' and will involve two people on that cassette, which makes it complicated when 'saving' and 'naming' in electronic files more than a hundred and fifty cassettes. Also with them was a whole set of

documentation, interview summaries, a couple of pages on each interview, spelling mistakes and all! They also came with indexes, a topic index; there are about seventy odd topics, social, cultural, sport, through to the two world wars. With each topic is a listing of interview numbers. When I first started in 1999 to do something with this project, we had only recently established a local studies collection at the library. We wanted to promote local history, local studies type information. The oral history collection was a unique and special collection which could be a flagship, for want of a better term, to promote our local studies.

In terms of the project team, I am it! Another important thing, there were actually three copies made, we have a copy, the local historical society museum has a copy as well, and Coffs Harbour City Council had the master copy. Each of the introduced summaries has a photograph of the interviewee with it as well. However, we have the photocopied version, and they are pretty ordinary copies, so a lot of definition is lost in the photos. The originals appear to have been stored in a Council basement and destroyed in the November 1996 flood. I put out notices seeking photographs of the original interviewees, but only one person came in and gave me some photographs, very disappointing! However, when I get it on the web and promoted again, I'm hoping for more

response then. There is further impetus to get the tapes digitised since the master is no longer available – gone in the 96 flood which prompted us to action!. As the original collection was lost, there was no original administrative documentation. I had nothing of the signed permissions on how the interviews might be used, which raised the question “will I bother with doing this digital process, if I can't actually publish it on the web?” We are still going ahead as we were really lucky in that at the beginning of each oral recording, the interviewer starts with a disclaimer – saying basically how this recording is to be used. I sought much advise but in the end, common sense prevails – what we have on the tapes is enough.

With digitisation we were looking for preservation and access. The collection was rarely, rarely used, so by digitising it, putting it on the web, it is out there and can be promoted. Even back in 1999, we felt that this was the way to go. I was not too sure at that point whether or not to offer the actual audio externally on the Internet. I knew that we could certainly just provide internal access to these audio files across our computer network, within the library, but I was really aiming at the global approach of the World Wide Web.

I started straight away with getting all those type-written documents, the interview summaries converted into

electronic format. I got volunteers to do that, because it was a big job. I suppose there was a chance I could use Optical Character Recognition software and scanned it in, but at the time we really did not have those resources, and I had volunteers. I started doing research on how to go about converting the analogue [audio] files into digital format. What format was I going to choose? There wasn't much around in 1999. The National Library of Australia had some information on their web site. I phoned the oral history section there and talked about the issues. They sent me their technical guideline, which is now available on the National Library web site. It is rather technical, and I thought rather a steep learning curve for me, with all the various issues in contracting out to have the material digitised. I decided there was no way I was going to be doing the digitisation because – I'm on the circulation desk, the reference desk, answering the inquiries etc!. It was a time constraint more than anything else and I didn't have the time to learn technology as well. We didn't have the funds to start what I knew was going to be an expensive process. I knew we had to get the money to pay for another supplier to digitise the material for us. The first application for a Commonwealth Heritage Grant, National Library of Australia was unsuccessful! Which was probably good

because it meant that it went on the back burner for a while. I was able to look at what was going on in the world of on-line audio and I suppose make some better decisions down the line. I had the chance to let things mature a bit and see what other people were doing. We actually didn't start converting our tapes to digital format until 2001. The file format decided on, was basic CD format for our master. We get a master copy for preservation and we have an in-house copy for people to take off the shelf and play on a CD player and listen to the record. In terms of web access or network access, MP3 format is what we've chose there. Obviously there are other formats, but that's become the mainstream way of doing it.

We got funding through some grants and the first funding was \$1500 from the Royal Australian Historical Society which got us started. Then we were lucky with the State Library getting a local [special] projects grant for a few thousand more dollars, which has I suppose about two thirds of the collection done. We are at the stage now where we can actually put it on the floor, put it on the web and have something to show people, and now we are looking for the next grant to finish it off. I've got a draft web site. Once I get that up, I think it will help us in gaining further grants and we are fairly confident that we will get the money to finish it off.

I wanted the work done locally, to work face to face with someone, without having to transport the cassettes all over the countryside. I put feelers around, found out who was available that could actually do the work. There were about four or five places in Coffs that had the facilities, but there was only one guy who came in with the full brief and showed me how the equipment would work and discussed standards and quality control, etc. He got the job! I got CDs from him and he puts the tracks in for me, with logical breaks at three, four, five minute marks – tracks become the MP3 files – so that's how we work it. Some of them are a little bit big, but the problem if you start getting small MP3 files, like a thirty second grab, to me it is not much 'meat'. There is not much for the person listening to get a feeling for what is being said. Even on the Internet with a fairly slow processor, probably a slower modem, it is worthwhile in the end if you down-load and listen to a slightly longer file. The supplier does the lot in terms of labelling CDs and all those sort of things as well. I get back the Word document with the interview summary lined through to mark the tracks and I put track numbers against them so that I have details there to work off when putting it on the web.

Some decisions I had to make! How exactly are we going to publish it on the web? We have the CD's, audio files now –

electronic format on the network – so I can deal with, play with it! How we actually get it on to the web so that people can access it on the Internet – we are looking! There are three ways you could go about it. One is static web pages – I could do that because "The Voice of Time" project is a closed collection, not growing, made back in 1988. I could do static web pages, simply fill them up, and hard link. The other option is to have it dynamic, whereby you have a database on the backend or fit a web interface with database in the backend which would basically build pages 'on the fly'. The other option is to use the library management system. Our library system is Spydus, an Australian product and it has a really good web catalogue with its OPAC and I could look at ways of customising it, to accept this data as well. These are the options. The first option, static pages, simple and easy, for those who have got some web authoring training. It certainly is within my capabilities and resources, that is actually how the library Internet site is done, also there is no new issue with that. It is certainly suited to that particular project because as I said it is closed, it's not a growing collection. Static web pages are very effective for web search engine retrieval, because the web search engine can literally go in and index all those different pages you've got sitting there on your web

server. So those searching say in Google etc. should be easily able to retrieve some results which will have, hopefully my oral history page sitting there They could type in a name and get that person with a simple internet search engine.

We could have a catalogue record for our library catalogue which would have a what we call an 856 tag, a bit technical in terms of library MARC records, and would have a link on it because it is on the web anyway where we interface our record – you could still find our oral history collection by the web catalogue – and click on a link to the ‘Library oral history’ or ‘Voice of Time’ web site – another option. The other option is for dynamic pages. Having a database on the back end of all the data – when I’m saying data I’m talking about, sound files and images and interview text and summaries, talking about metadata. Have each of those interview summaries on bits of metadata in terms of subject or topics, which could then have a bit more dynamic searching, use a database to do the work of retrieving information based on whatever you are looking for. Now dynamic web pages are a bit more complex, a bit more expensive and you need a database to drive the thing. The library system [our LMS DBMS] really isn’t suited because of the type of the database management system we’ve got – so this is not the way to go ahead. A truly relational database is the back

end and you need to put some other stuff in there as well to make it work from the middle to join the web interface with the database. It starts to get really involved, and not only that there’s a bottle neck there. It is hard enough with our library systems sometimes, our library website – let alone saying to the City Council, ‘can we use your Microsoft SQL server and this is what I want to do! That would really hold up the whole thing! So based on what I know it would be too complex. It would work for a growing collection, and if it is a big collection, it really is the way you’d have to do it. There are other technologies, one called XML which is another way.

The other option was our library management system – that was going to need some customisation. It is quite suitable, but we would have to pay money to our system’s supplier just to change a few things. I’d use a MARC record, like a library catalogue record, but even that is not entirely suitable to try and get the tracks in there, to show tracks and to show a link into the MARC record – it looks a bit cumbersome. I’m still looking at doing that last option, which is using the library catalogue, I still like the way of information retrieval via a database, that might have to wait until I can really look at it a bit more. The things I should point out is that you need to follow web standards, in terms of your

HTML coding behind the page, there is a standard [HTML] 4.01, but it is heading towards an XML standard as well, called XHTML, using style sheets. This is rather technical, but some of you might know what I'm talking about. If you do publish anything on the web or you contract someone to do it for you, you need to specify that they follow the standards and are accessible for those with disabilities accessing the web. All my pages on the oral history site have metadata in them using the Dublin Core metadata standard which is what most people use – it is a Commonwealth Government requirement. There is plenty of information on how to use it and that helps for searching and retrieval either via a web search engine or via internally. All sorts of web design issues in terms of being attractive, logical, easy layout, navigation you name it, including filename sizes or file sizes. Disclaimers and copyright notices given, I'm sure you people know all about that anyway. From here I need to finish the website, graphic design – Council is redeveloping its whole web site. I'm going to 'piggyback' on that, hopefully that'll pay the bill, get a bit more graphical. I'm not really great on the graphics, but they can make it look attractive. I'll access the [audio] CDs on our library system, get them out on the

floor, buy some security, head phones and other bits and pieces – all pretty inexpensive and then promote it to the community. So that's what's happening.

The next project? I am 'eyeing off' the local historical society – they have a big image collection which we don't have. We have hardly any images across the library, and it is one of our community resources I would love to see on the web – but that's going to take a bit of negotiation!

(Enzo has since reported that they have received a further grant and the audio digitisation is progressing steadily. He goes on 'as indicated in my presentation, I did look more closely at publishing the project using our Library Management Systems Web Catalogue (Spydus). I have decided that this is how it will be done with only a few static pages to support it – such as a homepage and web pages describing the project, etc. which will link across the web catalogue where the interview summaries will be. These interview summaries (web catalogue records) are steadily being created now. I am hoping to make the project publicly available on the web and inside the library by May 2003' Look out for it – Ed)

Diary of Events



Executive meeting Dates for 2003

Members are welcome to attend the Management Committee meetings to be held at the State Library cafeteria at 5.30pm on: – 15 April; 10 June; 12 August; 14 October; 25 November.

Next Seminars – 3 May; 26 July; 8 November.

National Oral History Conference September 4-7 2003

The Conference is being hosted by the Western Australian Branch and is to be held at Guildford which is less than 15 minutes drive from Perth Airport. The theme this year is “From all Quarters”