



ORAL HISTORY
NSW

ORAL HISTORY NETWORK NEWS

No 98, November 2019

ISSN 2206-866X <https://www.oralhistorynsw.org.au/>

CONTENTS

Click arrow ► to see text.

Oral History Australia & Oral History NSW

- New President for OH NSW
- OH NSW President's Report for 2019
- New committee for OH NSW
- Seminar: The elephant in the room — Ignored histories, Sydney, 6 November 2019
- OH Australia 2019 National Conference: report from State Library NSW

News & Events

- Rosemary Block receives 2019 Hazel de Berg Award for Excellence in Oral History
- New national awards from OHA
- OHA Journal: No. 41, 2019 issued; call for contributions to No. 42, 2020

Reading & Listening

- Svetlana Alexievich, *Last Witnesses. Unchildlike Stories*
- Oral History Review blog:
 - Documenting tears
 - OH as a complicated form of social engagement

Conferences

- London Centre for Interdisciplinary Research, London, February 2020
- International Oral History Association, Singapore, June 2020
- Oral History Society, Bournemouth UK, July 2020

► Contacts & membership

- **Oral History NSW President's Report for 2019** (full report)



[Back to top](#)

New President for Oral History NSW



Maria Savvidis (L) & Shirleene Robinson (R)

Maria Savvidis was elected as President of **Oral History NSW** at its AGM on 26 October 2019.

Outgoing President, **Dr Shirleene Robinson** tweeted: “After two wonderful years as President of Oral History NSW today I’m stepping down. But I’m thrilled that Maria Savvidis has been unanimously elected our new President. Maria brings an enormous professional skill base & great enthusiasm & the future looks bright!”

Maria is a librarian who has worked extensively with oral histories from digitisation projects to the acquisition of new material, and specialist library and information management environments in Sydney and London. Maria is currently in the curatorial team at the State Library of NSW where she is passionate about advocacy, public history, cultural heritage and diversity.

Oral History NSW President’s Report for 2019

Dr Shirleene Robinson gave her report at the 2019 AGM. She stated: “It has been an absolute privilege to work with the [Committee] and I thank them all.” Some key points detailed in her report were:



- OH NSW’s strong training program of workshops provided this year, both in Sydney and NSW regions
- Talks and seminars, including collaborations with other institutions and associations
- The ongoing publication of *Oral History Network News*
- Grants and awards offered, and the winners this year
- Strengthened relationships with a range of other organisations with shared goals and aspirations

She concluded: “In summary, the past year has been a productive and successful one for Oral History NSW. We have shared information about oral history and its techniques, promoted oral history as an exciting field of endeavour and have worked hard to foster a sense of community amongst practitioners. The future looks promising indeed!”

The full report has been appended at the end of this issue of *Network News* — see [HERE](#).

New Committee for Oral History NSW

The following were elected at the AGM on 26 October 2019:

- President — Maria Savvidis
- Vice-President — Scott McKinnon
- Treasurer — Andrew Host
- Secretary — Kylie Andrews
- Public Officer — Isobelle Barrett Meyering
- Committee Member — Minna Muhlen-Schulte
- Committee Member — Alexandra Dellios
- Committee Member — Shirleene Robinson

Oral History New South Wales: www.oralhistorynsw.org.au

[Back to top](#)

History Matters: The elephant in the room — Ignored histories

Presented by
Professional Historians Association (NSW & ACT) and Oral History NSW.



Historians actively choose their research topics and methodological approaches, shaping the histories presented to the public. In this session we consider the subjects that often get ignored or sidelined in history.

History practitioners will unpack why some subjects are not as popular for research: available sources, cultural assumptions, methodological biases, historiographical trends, presentation formats, and the influence of commissioning bodies and grants. How many elephants will we find in the room?

Public history shapes our communities' understandings of the past. This series will explore the issues that stimulate and bedevil the work of public historians. This seminar series aims to encourage a more reflective approach to the practice of history and create conversations across a diverse cohort of practitioners. Professionals, scholars, students and those with a long-standing interest in public history all welcome.

5:30 pm—6:30 pm, Wednesday, 6 November 2019

Macquarie Room, **State Library of NSW** — Macquarie Street Sydney, NSW, 2000 Australia ([map](#))

Only \$5 for OHNSW members, [tickets here](#).



2019 Biennial Conference of Oral History Australia: a report

The State Library of NSW on its website [HERE](#) has provided a report about a number of elements of the OHA conference in Brisbane in early October 2019.



[Back to top](#)

Rosemary Block receives 2019 Hazel de Berg Award for Excellence in Oral History



(L-R): Alistair Thomson (President, Oral History Australia); Rosemary Block; Di Ritch.

Rosemary Block, a long-serving member of Oral History New South Wales, Rosemary received the award from Hazel de Berg's daughter Di Ritch at the recent 2019 OHA Biennial Conference in Brisbane.

In the award citation the judges said Rosemary had demonstrated an 'outstanding contribution to the field of oral history' as the inaugural Curator of Oral History at the State Library of NSW, a role she held for more than twenty years. She had built, managed, commissioned and curated the State Library's Oral History Collection, and supplemented the collection by providing a wide range of professional services and support to the public.

Rosemary also served as National President of Oral History Australia from 1993 to 1997, and 1999 to 2007, as well as serving as NSW state President from 1991 to 2010.

See [HERE](#) for the full citation of Rosemary's extensive contributions to oral history in Australia.



New national awards announced

Oral History Australia is very excited to announce two new national awards for oral historians:

- the **Oral History Australia Media Award**, and
- the **Oral History Australia Book Award**.

The awards are to be presented every two years with the first this year, 2019. Those seeking to enter need to have produced their book or media production in the calendar years 2018 or 2019.

The closing date for applications: 31 December 2019.

Information for applicants including the criteria for eligibility and judging, how to apply and the judges for each award is available in the following two documents:

 [OHA Book Award 2019 - Information for applicants](#) (PDF)

 [OHA Media Award 2019 - Information for applicants](#) (PDF)

[Back to top](#)

Oral History Australia Journal



Issue No. 41, 2019 has now been published. Affiliated state oral history associations will advise members about access details shortly.

Contributions are currently being sought for the Oral History Australia Journal **No. 42, 2020**. This issue will be based on the theme of our 2019 Oral History Australia Biennial Conference: 'Intimate Stories, Challenging Histories'.

Deadlines associated with this issue are:

- peer-reviewed articles — **28 February 2020**
- articles/project reports — **30 April 2020**
- reviews of books and other publications — **30 April 2020**.

Guidelines

Please refer to the following style guide and frequently asked questions concerning the peer-review process.

-  [Oral History Australia Journal style guidelines 2019](#)
-  [FAQ - Peer Review - OHA Journal](#)

Words and Feelings: Reflecting on Oral History and Emotions



Oral History Australia Journal
No. 41, 2019

[Back to top](#)

READING & LISTENING

Items are included in this section for information only, and the content of the material listed is not necessarily endorsed by Oral History NSW.



Russian children hiding in an air raid shelter during attacks on the eastern front, July 1941.

Boris Yaroslavtsev / Tass / Getty

Last Witnesses. Unchildlike Stories

Svetlana Alexievich, Penguin Classics, 2019

“ Svetlana Alexievich’s interviews from Soviet Russia are a moving testament to suffering and show the chaos of conflict.

“There are more than a hundred accounts of childhood, each told with a familiar, blunt poignancy. Recollections of unimaginable terror — of the bombing and desolation that left 15 million civilians dead — are told in a kind of relentless clamour, each voice given its due. . . .

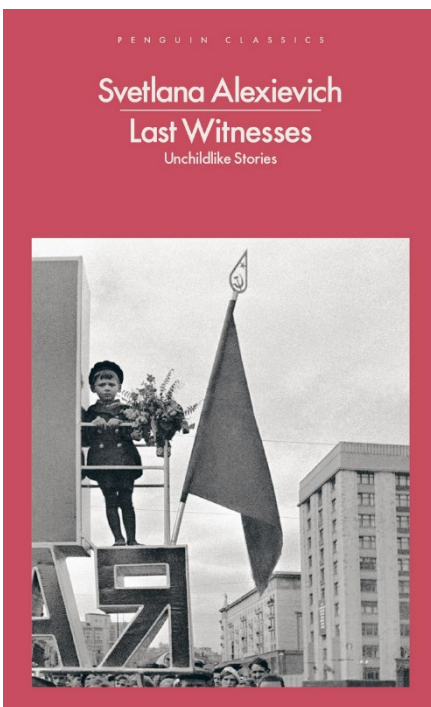
“As anyone who has ever tried to transcribe interviews knows, there is a sort of omnipotence to the process, cutting and arranging while staying faithful to the quoted words. The recollections of survivors or those living with grief are different to other voices in this regard. The traumatic experiences they describe have long been in the retelling as the brain tries to hold them in the frame of normal human experience. Their contours have been smoothed and polished over lifetimes, like stones turned over in old pockets. The trick, then, is to listen for the telling detail, knowing where to begin and what to leave out. Alexievich’s ear seemed uncannily pitch-perfect in this regard. She knew exactly what resonated. ”

— Tim Adams, *Guardian Weekly*, 24 June 2019

See Tim Adams’ full article and review [HERE](#).

See [HERE](#) for publisher’s website, with previous works by this author and purchase options.

[Back to top](#)



Documenting Tears



Oral historians have begun drawing on the history of emotions, analysing nonverbal communication and sentiment, rather than only the words narrators speak, a theme relevant to Oral History Australia's recent conference titled *Intimate Stories, Challenging Histories*.

In a recent post on the blog of the USA-based [Oral History Association's Oral History Review](#), [Dalrún Eygerðardóttir](#), a PhD student at the University of Iceland, shares her interpretation of expressions of sorrow communicated by Icelandic housekeepers in oral history interviews.

See the full text of her post on the OHR blog [HERE](#).



Author interview:

Lindsay French on Oral History as a Complicated Form of Social Engagement

In her recent *Oral History Review* article, "[Refugee Narratives; Oral History and Ethnography; Stories and Silence](#)", Lindsay French describes the nature of her interviews with Cambodian refugees in Thailand after the demise of the Khmer Rouge. In a recent post for the OHR blog she answers some questions from the OHR about the challenges she encountered conducting ethnographic interviews in this context.

Read a transcript of the interview on the OHR blog [HERE](#).



[Back to top](#)

London Centre for Interdisciplinary Research
**International Conference on
 Oral History**

London, UK, 8-9 February 2020

Extract:

“ The conference will focus on the connections between oral history, collective memory, and individual memory. Whether from a historical, social, or even psychological perspective, we wish to engage scholars in a multidimensional and interdisciplinary



approach in order to deeply explore all aspects of this valuable and fascinating area. We are committed to creating a welcoming space for discussion, collaboration, and exploration of oral history’s potential as a tool for local, national and international projects that would enrich and even revise chapters of history. ”

See [HERE](#) for full details. Proposals deadline: **30 November 2019**



**International Oral History Association
 XXI Conference**

Singapore, 22—26 June 2020

See the new conference website [HERE](#).

“ At the core of oral history is a desire for a more complex and nuanced understanding of the world around us. While we value each oral account as unique, personal and subjective, bringing together many voices – whether in agreement or disagreement – allows greater meaning to be gleaned, refined and accumulated. ...

“As the IOHA conference enters Southeast Asia for the first time, the theme is also an invitation for reflection by the international oral history community to consider how we can help and support one another through friendships, networks and alliances. ”

See more on the website [HERE](#). Enquiries, email NLB_IOHA2020@nlb.gov.sg

Call for papers:

**Oral History Society (UK) 2020 Annual Conference
 Oral History and the Media**

Bournemouth University, U.K., 3 – 4 July 2020



“ Oral history and the media have an important but complex relationship. The media has long been a significant producer of, and outlet for, oral history ... giving voice to those who would otherwise have been excluded from both the media and the historical record. ... However, the process by which oral histories are mediated from orality to the media ... often remain hidden. ... ”

See more detail & the full call for papers [HERE](#).

Deadline for proposals: **20 December 2019**

[Back to top](#)



Oral History Network News is published by **Oral History NSW** for its members and all others in the wider community with an interest in oral history.

Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of Oral History NSW, and information on services does not imply endorsement.

DO YOU HAVE A CONTRIBUTION?

Letters/comments – anecdotes – news items –
links to websites using oral history –
relevant resources for oral historians.

Closing date for items for the next issue (December 2019) is

26 November 2019.

Forward copy to the Editor: networknews@oralhistorynsw.org.au

Oral History Network News No. 98, November 2019

ISSN 2206-866X

Editor: Francis Good

© Oral History NSW Inc.

ABN 73.605.987.834

PO Box 261 Pennant Hills NSW 1715

E. secretary@oralhistorynsw.org.au

T. 02-8094-1239

www.oralhistorynsw.org.au

What Membership of Oral History NSW Inc. gives you:

- Regular seminars and workshops.
- Opportunities for informal exchange of ideas and experience.
- Biennial National Oral History Conferences.
- Subscription to the annual ***Oral History Australia Journal***.
- ***Oral History Network News***, the monthly email newsletter keeping you in touch with current topics and events of interest to oral historians. Notices received requesting oral historians for particular projects are also published here.
- Awards and Grants – the Oral History Australia **Hazel de Berg Award for Excellence in Oral History** recognises oral historians who have made an outstanding contribution to oral history in Australia over a considerable period of time. See more about the award & past recipients [HERE](#).
From time to time Oral History NSW makes available grants to members undertaking research based on, or concerning oral history, who wish to participate or present papers at an international oral history conference.
- ALSO, as Oral History NSW is an affiliated member of the **Royal Australian Historical Society NSW** all members may attend the RAHS Conference at members' rates. See the RAHS website [HERE](#).

[Back to top](#)



President's Report on the activities of Oral History NSW Inc. for 2019

2019 has been a busy and successful year for Oral History NSW. I would like to begin this President's Report by acknowledging the support and hard work of a very dedicated Committee that has made this activity possible. This year's Committee consisted of Scott McKinnon as Vice President, Andrew Host as Treasurer and Membership Officer, Isobelle Barrett-Meyering as Secretary, Bruce Carter as Public Officer and Committee Members, Alexandra Dellios, Maria Savvidis, Minna Muhlen-Schulte.

While I will be standing down as President this year, it has been an absolute privilege to work with this team and I thank them all. I would like to particularly acknowledge the work of Isobelle Barrett-Meyering, as she is stepping down as Secretary this year. Isobelle's commitment and energy over the course of the last year has been very important to the continued success of Oral History NSW. I would also like to acknowledge and thank our active and engaged members, who are essential to the ongoing success of our organisation.

One of the primary activities Oral History NSW conducts is a strong program of training. This is provided to a wide range of oral historians, ranging from those who are just beginning through to practising oral historians who wish to up skill or undertake further professional development. Over the course of the past year, for example, we have held two 'Capturing Memories' (beginner) workshops, as well as a 'Capturing Memories' (advanced) workshop. We have also introduced a new initiative, a 'Mastering the Recording-Technical' workshop, which has received very positive feedback. I acknowledge all those who have been involved in these workshops, including Andrew Host, Pauline Curby, Janis Wilton, Maria Savvidis and Alistair Thomson.

Regional workshops and events outside of metropolitan Sydney are also an important part of the work that Oral History NSW does and we continue to support these endeavours. Examples include a workshop that Mary Hutchinson held in Cooma and that Virginia McLeod held in Wagga Wagga. Alexandria Dellios co-ordinated an event on 28 August at the Australian National University in Canberra on 'Oral History Collections and Museum Practice'. This event included Paula Hamilton and Mary Hutchinson as speakers. We have also continued to provide advice to oral historians from across NSW on a variety of topics.

We also actively continued to promote talks and seminars relating to oral history. Over the course of the year, Oral History NSW was involved with the History Matters seminar series, a joint event with PHA NSW, with the venue provided by the State Library of NSW. The organisation of this series has been led by former Oral History President, Professor Paula Hamilton and the City of Sydney's Historian, Lisa Murray. I would like to acknowledge their hard work and thank Paula Hamilton for providing her enormous expertise on oral history to this ongoing event.

(Continued—>)

In August, Maria Savvidis and myself spoke at 'History Matters: A Babble of Voices, Using Oral History Collections', a session moderated by Vice President Scott McKinnon. On 8 September this year, Scott McKinnon gave the Oral History NSW Annual Lecture for History Week 2019 on the topic ' "Everywhere you look is a loss": Memories of Bushfire in a Transformed Suburban Landscape.'

Communication amongst our members and with the broader oral history community, as well as interested members of the public, is a very important part of the activities of Oral History NSW. I would like to acknowledge the work that has been done to maintain our website over the course of the past year. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of Francis Good, who is responsible for "Network News", which provides a rich and important monthly update to the Oral History NSW community.

Last year, we introduced a new award and a grant to support NSW oral historians: the Oral History NSW Excellence in Community History Award and the Oral History NSW Regional Engagement Grant. Both the Award and the Grant continue. The successful recipient of the Oral History NSW Excellence in Community History Award will be announced today and the Biennial Oral History NSW Regional Engagement Grant will be awarded next year. This year we also offered two grants to assist members attend the Oral History Association of Australia's Biennial Conference in Brisbane. The successful recipients were Rhonda Povey, who presented the paper 'When camp dogs run over your maps: "proper-way" research in an Aboriginal community in north-east of Western Australia' and Natalie Ortiz, who presented the paper ' "Home Sweet Home", and the Myth of Returning among Spanish Migrants in Australia'.

Throughout the course of the year, we have continued and strengthened our relationships with a range of other organisations with shared goals and aspirations. These include the State Library of NSW, the Professional Historians Association of NSW, the Royal Australian Historical Society and the History Council of NSW and of course Oral History Australia. Oral History NSW looks forward to building on opportunities for continued collaboration into the future. In summary, the past year has been a productive and successful one for Oral History NSW. We have shared information about oral history and its techniques, promoted oral history as an exciting field of endeavour and have worked hard to foster a sense of community amongst practitioners. The future looks promising indeed!

Dr Shirleene Robinson

President

Oral History NSW

26 October 2019

[Back to top](#)