

ORAL HISTORY IN TROUBLING TIMES: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

ABSTRACTS

Friday 9.15–10.30 OPENING PLENARY 9.15–10.30

Mark Cave, *Why did this happen? Making meaningful answers in the aftermath of crisis*

Mark will explore the limitations of the media in the aftermath of crisis and argue that oral history has an important role to play alongside journalism in creating explanations that not only help communities move beyond crisis but help them move beyond crisis in ways that make them stronger.

Friday 11.00–12.30 Session 1. WORKING LIVES

Paul Sendziuk, *The end of the line: comparing General Motors Holden's and its workers' perception and experience of employee separation*

In 2017 General Motors Holden ceased manufacturing vehicles in Australia, thus ending more than a century of automotive production in this country. As South Australia's largest private employer for much of its life-span, and the linchpin of the state's manufacturing sector, the closure of Holden's operations evoked grave concern for its workers and the hundreds of smaller component manufacturers and local businesses that figuratively and literally fed its factory and workforce. This paper examines Holden's closure and the experience of employee separation, from both the perspective of the company and the employees themselves. Drawing upon documents and evaluations produced by the company, and oral history interviews undertaken with Holden workers who were 'separated' from the company, it will compare and analyse the way in which the two parties understood what was happening and the effectiveness of programs aimed at helping Holden workers transition to new employment.

Elaine Rabbitt, *Death of the travelling salesman: COVID-19 strikes the final blow*

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic the vast state of Western Australia is no longer serviced by travelling sales people, marking the end of an era of bespoke service. For years the travelling service people such as the sewing machine technician were welcome and sought-after phenomena. Sewing circles and craft groups still abound in country towns. They are friendship groups that form under the guise of productivity yet alleviate loneliness and social isolation. Due to Covid and intrastate hard borders, no sewing machine technician could make it to the regions, let alone the Kimberley. The irony of it all is that there has been a resurgence in home crafts during the pandemic and nowadays a sewing machine can be bought for under \$100. It can be argued that travelling sales/service people were a dying breed prior to the pandemic and the contagion was the final blow to a service relied upon by regional and remote communities. This paper will explore how oral history continues to generate space for stories to be remembered and re-told, and to record and document the end of an era.

Dianne Korare, *Entwined lives, divided roles: oral histories of Australian women educators in Papua New Guinea, 1974–99*

In this presentation I reflect on the performative nature of the oral history interviews undertaken with retired teachers who are also my former colleagues. I discuss the practical implications of conducting oral history projects in which the researcher is both participant and observer. Am I the best person to listen? What power relations and ethical issues are involved? How have their memories been affected by time? Did using Zoom rather than face-to-face interviews affect the personal nature of the interactions? Between 1974 and 1999, many Australian women arrived in Papua New Guinea to teach in international schools such as the Port Moresby International School. Most of them left Australia for the first time to accompany their partners or to travel independently to a new country; few of them had any prior knowledge of Papua New Guinea. Their experiences have been left out of the history of education in PNG to date and recording their stories is affording them the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of colonialism, racism and gender in a country full of contrasts and contradictions.

Friday 11.00–12.30 Session 2.

EXPLORING ISSUES AND APPROACHES TO INDIGENOUS ORAL HISTORIES

PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOP: Kath Apma Travis Penangke & Katherine Ellinghaus, *When are troubling times, not troubling times: the ethical conundrums of sharing history that does not silence First Nations voices*

This dialogic workshop will reflect upon the ethical issues today in conducting research and sharing First Nations oral history. It is presented by two historians, one a First Nations Arrente woman, Kath Apma Travis Penangke, the other a Second Nations German and Irish woman, Katherine Ellinghaus. The panel will share their individual ethical experiences on First Nations people telling their own stories and the moral and scholarly obligation that is placed on researchers. We explore the ethical conundrums that have arisen for us in two separate projects that use both oral history and archival research to tell First Nations stories. We share our sense that everything is troubling in such a project, and our questions about who shares the history, whose history is it to share, who says who can share it, and what difference does it make when a researcher has a First or Second Nations identity. These are central questions for anyone today who seeks to research, write and tell First Nations histories. The workshop will enquire how we can draw culturally grounded histories into the present ensuring that we make a difference and the important role oral history can make to understanding and changing our world, one that gives voice to First Nations people.

HOUR-LONG PANEL Kate Darian-Smith, Zoe Rimmer & Rebe Taylor, *Tasmanian Aboriginal oral histories from the early twentieth century to early twenty-first centuries*

In 1908, English gentleman Ernest Westlake sailed to Tasmania and removed over 13,000 Indigenous stone artefacts. As he collected, Westlake interviewed over 100 Tasmanians, many of them Indigenous, creating the richest archival source of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture and language dating from the early twentieth century. Non-Indigenous scholars dismissed Westlake's interviewees as inauthentic subjects. In her 2007 book *Into the Heart of Tasmania*, Rebe Taylor re-presented Westlake's interviews as evidence of an enduring Tasmanian Aboriginal (Pakana) Community. In 2019, Pakana woman Zoe Rimmer embarked on a higher research degree at the University of Tasmania. Zoe's thesis investigates why European collectors removed Tasmanian Aboriginal material

culture and human remains and transported them to museums. Using oral history interviews, Zoe will create the first comprehensive history of her Community's campaign to ensure the safe return of Ancestors' remains and cultural artefacts to Country. In this panel session, historian Kate Darian-Smith, an expert in museum, heritage and memory studies, leads a discussion with Zoe Rimmer and Rebe Taylor on the changes in recording Tasmanian Aboriginal oral histories since the early twentieth century. These changes include methodological approaches, technical advances and the increasing consideration of ethics and protocols for creating oral history interviews with Aboriginal Community members and for depositing and accessing those records in archives.

Friday 11.00–12.30 Session 3. ORAL HISTORIES IN EXHIBITION AND FILM

Elisabeth Gondwe, *Getting equal*

This paper will briefly describe and analyse the method and central role that oral history plays in the research and creation of the *Getting Equal* exhibition. This exhibition explores the political activism and campaign by the 'Aboriginal Gang' from the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum that led to them being granted equal wages in 1944. The project team and interviewees are made up from Quandamooka and non-Quandamooka people. Quandamooka Elders and descendants of the workers are telling their individual family stories and memories of this period through audio and video recordings.

Stephanie Boyle, *Ink in the Lines: oral histories, tattoos and the military*

Ink in the lines, currently on a three year interstate tour, is a pioneering exhibition for the War Memorial. It tells stories of ink tattoos and military service, using oral history and still imagery, all without a customary reliance on objects. However its creators were by no means certain there'd be an exhibition at the end of their two year project to document the skins and stories of Australian veterans, and an exhibition relying solely on voices and pictures was tantamount to a gamble. This paper will give an insight into the oral histories collected and the creation of a body of work which successfully challenges preconceptions about both tattoos and veterans.

Dale Blair & Rebecca Fleming, *In their own words: the use of oral history in the creation of the Department of Veterans' Affairs educational and commemorative resources*

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA)'s oral history program aims to record the experiences of veterans from different wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations to encourage Australians to understand the nature of veteran service. The project aims to create a record which captures the complex and individual nature of the veteran experience for posterity. Of critical importance is that the project allows the veterans to tell their own story. DVA provides a broad and extensive education services program that utilises oral history as part of the products produced. Examples of how veterans' stories are used in podcasts and film in the production of these resources will be presented as well as discussion of how oral history is utilised in commemorative services run by the Department to invite reflections about historical events.

Friday 1.30–3.00 Session 1. QUEER HISTORIES AND THE HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC

PANEL Shirleene Robinson, *HIV/AIDS, trauma and 'Insider' oral history interviewing*

Between 2016 and 2018 I was part of a team which conducted more than 60 interviews with 'AIDS volunteers' who were on the frontlines during the height of the epidemic in Australia. These interviewees performed a diverse range of tasks such as caring for the sick, serving on boards of

management, staffing telephone help-lines, organising funerals and providing friendship and practical support. Although oral history interviews were conducted at a temporal distance decades after the experience, participants had to remember and re-negotiate memories and were at times devastating or difficult. While we sought to empower interviewees, how were we as interviewers to reconcile the fact that our interviews may have been distressing or confronting for some interviewees? In this paper I consider the ethical implications of conducting traumatic oral histories about the HIV/AIDS epidemic. How do oral historians practise a duty of care when perspectives involve difficult memories? What is the role and significance of 'insider' interviewing in negotiating this challenge?

Sian Edwards, Oral histories with health care workers during the AIDS epidemic: '... it caused everything to become so confused and so boundaryless' (JK)

'The AIDS Era – an oral history of UK health workers' is a collection of 62 life history interviews with doctors, nurses and allied health care workers who were involved in the HIV speciality during the years 1986–1998, prior to effective antiretroviral treatment. I present this paper and pose some difficult questions as 'an insider', an oral historian and also an HIV nurse in Sydney and London from 1986. As oral historians we encourage and support people to discuss the difficult and challenging aspects of their stories. But healthcare workers' stories are intertwined with the stories of those they treated and cared for and issues of confidentiality are ingrained into the professional persona. This presentation considers the discomfort some interviewees expressed in discussing their past work and life but also focusses specifically on the HIV speciality where health care workers widely recall and detail how professional boundaries became blurred. As oral historians how do we capture the detailed experiences of this extraordinary moment in the history of health care, while maintaining the confidentiality of patients and colleagues.

Geraldine Fela, 'You're bound to know people': reticence, confidentiality and the queer rural past

This paper will explore issues of confidentiality and reticent narrators in the context of HIV nursing and queer life in rural Australia. The paper will closely examine the oral testimony of two nurses, Sarah and John, both of whom worked in HIV and AIDS care and had connections to the small regional city of Warrnambool in Victoria's South-East coast. The two narrators told very different stories about the place of queer life in the small city. Sarah's reticence to discuss HIV and queerness in Warrnambool painted a hazy picture of lives lived in secret and shame, a picture that was challenged by John's vivid and often joyous account of the city's queer underbelly. The vast difference between their two accounts raised significant questions for me around how to approach reticence in the context of an oral history project that occupies a liminal space, sitting somewhere between a history of healthcare and labour, and queer history. This is a context in which it is difficult to distinguish between the concern that many healthcare professionals hold over issues of disclosure and confidentiality, and the pervasive nature of homophobia that so often renders queer pasts unspeakable.

Friday 1.30–3.00 Session 2. MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Long Yin Ko and Christopher Cheng, Not only in English: oral histories with Cantonese (or other non-English) immigrants in Australia

Australia has been proudly blessed with people of diverse origins and languages. However, as de-globalisation occurs amidst the pandemic, rising nationalist sentiment and misunderstanding between people has created a multitude of tensions locally and internationally. Nonetheless these issues have also created opportunities for new ways of improving understanding. One effective way is to conduct oral histories in immigrant languages. In Australia oral histories have been conducted with many different immigrants, including that of post-war Chinese-Australians (see for example Diana Giese and Janis Wilton). Mutual language barriers – that of interviewers and also immigrant narrators – have narrowed the spectrum of narrators to those better assimilated and therefore articulate in English. Since non-English languages are seldom recorded, this presentation asks how multilingual interviewers can conduct oral history with non-English speaking migrants in Australia. By focusing on Cantonese-speaking immigrants in Sydney we demonstrate that not only mastery of language is necessary, but also a deep understanding of cultural norms as well as historical knowledge. Our experience may benefit other linguistically diverse groups in Australia who have yet to record oral histories in their own language.

Jennifer Rose, Music, multiculturalism and cultural rights: the Boîte as a historical case study

When iconic multicultural music organisation The Boîte hosted their first concert in Melbourne in 1979, the performers (of diverse migrant backgrounds) welcomed an opportunity to break into a new ‘mainstream’ audience. To organisers of the concert, also active in a broader struggle to assert the cultural rights of migrants, the concert also represented an act of political defiance following the 1977 closure of the multi-lingual Access Radio station by the Fraser government. The Boîte has continued to carve out new opportunities for culturally diverse musicians and artists to perform to Victorian audiences ever since. To mark the organisation’s 40th anniversary Jen undertook an oral history project recording the testimony of founding members and musicians, resulting in digital history *The Boîte: history through music, song and story* (winner of the Victorian Community History Diversity Award). In her paper Jen will share insights these interviews provide into 1970s/1980s Melbourne as a time of pioneering community sector activity, as well as community tensions, stemming from efforts to mould and shape multiculturalism to reflect a ‘rights-based’ respect for the integral role of culture in people’s lives and well-being. Jen will also reflect on challenges in capturing diverse voices in oral history projects.

Joan Kelly & Leonie Lane, Migration stories: sound design in place

Migration Stories (working title) is an exhibition that incorporates the songs and resonances of the Italian diaspora that have rung out across the towns, villages and valleys of NSW’s Northern Rivers region since local chain migration began in the 1920s, preceded by the 19th century New Italy settlers. This paper will articulate the value of interweaving intergenerational oral histories as a lead exhibition design feature to give shape and context to the migration narrative of this distinctive Italian community in the Lismore hinterland. The intimately designed soundscape draws on interviews recorded over 40 years. Collected and interpreted sound pieces describe journeys, upheaval, settlement and community that mark the rites of passage to the other side of the world. Migrant voices articulate the good and bad, the boom and bust in the land of the ‘fair go’,

transplanting familiar sound ecologies into new geographies to create a unique sense of place. Embracing curated objects, text and images, the soundscape builds a spatial composition using tone and texture, distance and intimacy, layered to build an insight into place and belonging, reimagined in the New Italy's Italian Pavilion.

Friday 1.30–3.00 Session 3. RESPONDING TO COVID

Lynette Shum, Pivoting to online training: a New Zealand experience

The Alexander Turnbull Library, part of the National Library of New Zealand/Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa, has earned a reputation for the quality of the oral history advice and training that it offers around the country. A hands-on, practical approach to training, taking into account the group or individual's needs, is made possible by keeping the class sizes relatively small and in-person. But while there continues a steady demand, this model is not possible during a pandemic, so we've been experimenting with using different online methods of delivery. In this paper I discuss the process and thinking behind our decisions.

Catherine Cottle, Collecting most vulnerable oral histories during troubling times

The State Library of Queensland is maintaining a vigorous pro-active program of collecting oral histories from First Nations peoples and ethnic/religious communities during a world-wide pandemic. COVID-19 has caused significant disruption, confusion and even fear never felt before. Telling, recording, and collecting the stories of our most vulnerable people is paramount, in spite of a pandemic that has threatened to shut down the collecting process and has added layers of complexity to interviewing and collecting crucial first-hand accounts. This paper reveals opportunities and challenges around two major collecting priorities: First Nations Elders OH (FNEOH) project and Queensland Atlas of Religion (QAR) partnership with University of Queensland. FNEOH is an SLQ commissioned body of work that records reminiscences of the most elderly of our First Nations' Elders. Here we work closely with trusted family members and are utilising very considered steps to protect our most vulnerable people. QAR is an ARC Linkage grant partnership that has seen religious communities integrating in many instances vulnerable CALD issues of ethnicity and migration with COVID concerns in order to support people in distinct communities of interest. Collecting oral histories in this arena will result in never obtained before information about religious diversity, practices and sense of strong community ties throughout Queensland during most these most challenging times

Carol McKirdy, The Sutherland TAFE Literacy-Languages section's response to COVID-19 Oral History Project

The Sutherland TAFE Literacy–Languages Section's Response to Covid-19 Oral History Project used oral history research methodology to collect research evidence from a cross-section of students and staff directly affected by, and with direct knowledge of, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (2020–2021) on TAFE English as a Second Language (ESOL) and Literacy Training for adults at Sutherland TAFE in NSW. Twelve interviews were conducted at three different periods of the pandemic. Interviews reflect the pandemic's progress and effects over time. They demonstrate how adult students with high needs and educationally difficult backgrounds (low level English and literary facility/ new settlers/socially isolated/financially challenged) develop skills for further work and training opportunities outside traditional classrooms. Students, teachers and educational managers

were interviewed. The implementation of high-quality learning and training in a practical, creative and digitally and technically enabled manner online, in mixed mode and remotely and in rapid response to a dramatically changed learning environment was explored. Interviewees recounted their personal experiences in relation to the pandemic as well as their TAFE NSW pandemic experiences. Covid-19 risk minimisation was implemented during the interviews. The State Library of NSW is adding the interviews to its oral history collection.

Friday 3.30–5.00 Session 1. CONTESTED MEMORIES AND HISTORIES

Cindy Hanson, The construction and erasure of memory about Indian Residential School abuses in Canada

This paper explores the construction of memory, remembering, and forgetting, as relational subjects. It asks how we navigate public memory in a settler-colonial state and whose voices are dominant? Answering this question highlights the importance of discourse and narrative in influencing our understanding and experience of events. Because memory frames how societies recall the past, we use the Independent Assessment Process (IAP) – an out-of-court settlement developed by the government of Canada, and Indigenous and religious bodies to provide compensations for serious physical and sexual abuses suffered by Survivors of Indian Residential School (IRS) – to explore how memory is socially constructed, contested, and subject to change. Specifically, our interdisciplinary study analyzes 14 years of media and government records, and interviews with participants involved in the IAP. During the IAP, over 26,000 Survivors of IRS gave oral testimony about the abuses they experienced as children in the notorious state/church-run schools. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled the testimonies are private (most will be destroyed). Within the context of a settler-colonial states, exploring the development and structure of public and historical memory, serves to illustrate how the ongoing histories of IRS, including the recent stories of unmarked graves on former school sites, are remembered.

Skye Krichauff, ‘Reconciling with the frontier’: juxtaposing oral histories and archival research

The ‘Reconciling with the Frontier’ project draws on archival research and oral histories to map and make publicly available incidents of cross-cultural violence in colonial South Australia. While historical documents provide details of confrontations long since forgotten and a base through which to demonstrate the extent, nature and longevity of a broad range of violent events, the oral histories of Aboriginal people and settler descendants provide a means through which to understand how the violence of colonialism has been remembered and made sense of through the generations. This presentation demonstrates how, when analysed together, the two sources enrich our knowledge of the multifaceted and enduring legacies of colonial violence.

Susanne Roff, Rewriting the narrative of British atomic and nuclear tests in Australia using the 1985 Royal Commission transcripts

The Aboriginal Community's oral witness was vital in triggering the 1984–5 Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia. Seventy years after the tests started in October 1952 and nearly 40 years after the Royal Commission reported its findings, more than a third of the material submitted to it remains ‘unexamined’ in the National Archives. Even so, there are more than 10,000 pages of transcripts from witnesses, both oral and written submissions, accessible online. They are remarkably under-researched and this presentation points to the richness of the material that still needs to be considered. Roff gives two brief case studies where the oral evidence contradicts the

official histories of The Making of the British H Bomb in Australia: From the Monte Bellos to the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. (www.rabbittreview.com). She will also report the recent finding of nine cassette recordings by Professor Sir Ernest Titterton whom Prime Minister Menzies appointed as 'Australian Safety Advisor' to the tests despite being well aware that he was actively conducting weapons research for the British at the tests. Further research is urgently required to explore the ways in which the oral evidence forces a revision of the 'official histories' of the atomic and nuclear weapons tests in Australia.

Friday 3.30–5.00 Session 2. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ORAL HISTORY

Carla Pascoe Leahy and Anisa Puri, Using oral history in pandemic times: adopting remote interviewing in the Mothering in Crisis project

Mothering In Crisis: Family, Disaster and Climate Change is an oral history project that is investigating how mothers in the Gippsland region of Victoria are being affected by climate change and worsening environmental disasters such as floods and fires. The interviews explore how climate change and environmental disasters are impacting maternal experiences, emotions and decisions. While the project team originally planned to conduct in-person interviews, the context of the pandemic prompted us to reconsider our methodology and adopt remote interviewing. In this paper, we discuss our experiences, as interviewers, of conducting remote interviews. We first consider the opportunities and challenges of remote interviewing. We then ask: how does the interview relationship change when interviews are held remotely? And what are the implications of these changes? Are there particular considerations associated with conducting remote interviews on challenging and sensitive topics, such as parenting in the context of climate crisis? This paper suggests that evaluating the methodological implications of remote interviewing raises broader questions about current oral history practice. How has the pandemic affected how we think about safety and intimacy in an oral history interview? Does remote interviewing prompt us to reconsider ideas about what constitutes 'best practice' in the field?

Louise Whelan, The creeping disaster: drought, photography, oral history and collaborating with the archive to process environmental grief

Unlike catastrophic distinctive climate events like floods or fires, the drought is a creeping disaster. Through interviews and photographs the project – Drought of NSW was documented in real time, as the drought happened. Hearing and recording visual stories of the conditions of the drought and subsequent impacts on lives and the environment, was a distressing process. The interviews reveal the wide-ranging effect of rainfall deficiencies on health, the economy, the environment, politics, cultural and the social aspects of life. From interviews with farmers, mental health nurses, Country Women's Association volunteers to Aboriginal Elders the story of a long, unprecedented climate event rang out. During this 20 min talk I will move beyond the raw material of the oral history recording and play a multimedia presentation that will provide insights into living through a drought and the complexities of water system management within Western NSW.

A slow grief crept through me as I worked on this collection. Driving from the green front lawns of suburbia Sydney, passing through the crisp brush of the Blue Mountains, to the western planes of Broken Hill and Menindee where the red dirt crunched in your teeth and the drinking water smelt like dead fish. Sadness and tears overwhelmed me.

As a way of processing my environmental grief during this long project, I created two artworks. One, a multimedia poem, and two a textile-based work. I will present and discuss the creation of these works.

Friday 3.30–5.00 Session 3. NEW APPROACHES TO ORAL HISTORY

Marion Meischke, Exploring the accuracy of using traditional or current methods

What are the challenges in gathering oral history by traditional or contemporary methods? The validated primary witness is the gold standard for oral history. Traditional methods rely on memory, which is most accurate when contemporaneous to the narrative, but memories change over time. They become less accurate as they incorporate more recent events or influences, and details can be lost while core memories remain. The long-term memories of old age reflect this reality. In contrast, current methods have the primary witness reliving an event in real time. Digital platforms and the media make accounts vivid and immediate, but fake news, sound bites and the phenomenon of an ‘alternative truth’ can challenge their accuracy. It is a mountainous task to plough through the sheer weight of available online information and records. The oral historian must rise to a difficult challenge. Both traditional and current methods must address accuracy, authenticity, and an unprecedented store of information. Both methods also present opportunities which can illuminate the lived experience of ordinary people in past and present troubling times. How can oral historians best implement both methods in their work? Can the blending of traditional and contemporary methods be an opportunity for a deeper, richer history?

Christopher Chevalier, Riding the ‘hybrid mule’: making sense of oral history

In his 1984 article, ‘Riding a hybrid mule through the “terminological jungle”’, Charles Morrissey likened oral history to a strong beast that combines the pedigree of a racehorse (history) with the utility of a donkey (oral communication). Theoretical and practical developments since then have expanded the range and complexity of oral history, encapsulated in Alistair Thomson’s ‘Four paradigm developments’ (2007). In my 2021 PhD research (available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/238277>), I developed a model to make sense of the multiple aspects of oral history. The model divides aspects of oral history into six ‘domains’—Visual, Spatial, Oral-Aural, Textual, Numerical, and Digital (V-S-O/A-T-N-D)—and divides the oral history research process into three phases—primary (recording and collection), secondary (curating and processing), and tertiary (analysis and interpretation). Domains can be expanded, contracted, added, and subtracted depending on the oral history project. The model adds clarity and coherence to the complexities of oral history. It may be useful to others who are designing, undertaking, or have completed oral history projects. I would like to present an overview of the model to show how it can help to make sense of the ‘hybrid mule’ in academic and non-academic oral history projects.

Sandra Gorter, Navigating the hazards of oral history accounts: what actually happened?

A variety of documentary sources is essential evidence for supporting work based largely on oral history, but what of the situation where only a few, conflicting, documentary sources are available? Where there is conflicting evidence, the oral historian has a number of tools at their disposal. Three point calculation, an interdisciplinary approach borrowed from mathematics and used in navigation and land surveying, is a useful tool for historians where the work is largely based on oral accounts. Using a case study, this paper demonstrates how conflicting accounts in narrative and documentation can be reconciled by establishing three points of navigation by re-visiting earlier

contributors, and widening the context to provide further information enabling the interpretation of information supplied and the supporting documentation.

Saturday 9.00–10.15 PLENARY SESSION

Kim Mahood, Mapping place, mapping story

To map a place is to map the stories that live in that place. The process of making the map allows for stories and knowledge to emerge organically and conversationally, individually and collectively. The painted map becomes a portal to the spoken experience and knowledge of place. My visual presentation will show how the co-mapping project between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants becomes a tool for cross-cultural communication, drawing on oral histories, memory, language, cultural knowledge and science to produce a multi-layered understanding of the relationship between people and place. From its origins in the collaboration between me and the Walmajarri and Jaru people of the southeast Kimberley, the mapping process has since been applied to the built environment (Fremantle and the Uni of WA), regional NSW in the Murray-Darling area, remote South Australia, Central Australia and the Top End.

Saturday 11.00–12.00 Session 1. QUEER ORAL HISTORIES

Scott McKinnon, Against the law: gay men's memories of criminality in pre-law reform New South Wales

Until 1984 male homosexual sex remained illegal under the New South Wales Crimes Act. This paper draws on interviews with older gay men to explore how criminality and the law are positioned within life narratives. While some remember traumatic pre-law reform stories of aggressive policing and the fear of discovery, these memories are often countered with affection for an illicit subculture since sanitised by the mainstreaming of gay life. The paper contemplates how a singular change in law has come to be remembered as both the beginnings of a new kind of freedom, but also as the end of an underground world recalled by some with nostalgic fondness. By listening to these memories, the paper explores how trauma, nostalgia, celebration and regret are each entwined when gay men remember lives once forbidden but now sanctioned by the state.

Dante DeBono, Exploring non-monosexual experiences using oral history

This presentation explores the impact non-monosexual orientations can have on the lives of young, queer Australians, using oral history interviews to gain insight into their personal experiences. Research concerned with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer + (LGBTQ+) people has been dominated by scholarship focused on individuals who identify exclusively as homosexual, a trend mirrored in modern society. The invisibility of other sexualities negatively impacts those who identify with non-monosexual labels such as bisexual, pansexual, or queer, in a variety of ways. By prioritising the voices of non-monosexual people using oral history, their first-hand accounts contextualise not only their own experiences but the broader sociocultural systems that reinforce heteronormative understandings of sexuality. Samples from three interviews included in this presentation uncover new knowledge of the personal impact non-monosexual orientations can have on queer individuals, including the intersectional elements that shape how they develop and negotiate their identities. This presentation explores the oral histories of three young Australians with non-monosexual orientations, seeking to advocate for a holistic approach to

research on the LGBTQ+ population that promotes inclusivity and diversity within the queer studies field and prioritises the voices of those directly involved.

Saturday 11.00–12.00 Session 2. CREATIVE WRITING

Yvette Barry, Reanimating the untold stories of women and children in a Tasmanian mining town during the 1920s

Tasmanian archives of the 1920s tend to offer a narrow and unsatisfying record of women and children—or omit them entirely. How, then, could I recover some of the ‘hidden’ lives ignored in the inter-war record whose voices have long faded? My research uses family history interviews and fiction to revive the unrecorded – yet not forgotten – voices of women and children who lived in the mining town of Derby in north-east Tasmania during the 1920s. This paper centres around four women and children whose surprising life stories suggest a more diverse inter-war history is still alive in the memories of Derby’s residents. I also explore the reanimation of these untold stories in a historical novel.

Ashley Barnwell, Cate O’Neill & Kirsten Wright, Writing wrongs right: using creative writing to record traumatic life stories

Developing a narrative can help people to make sense of troubling times and traumatic events from the past. However, for people who have experienced complex trauma (as opposed to single incident trauma), the established formats for storytelling and life-writing can be inadequate and problematic. More innovative and flexible models are required in storytelling projects with communities who are profoundly marginalised and have experienced trauma. We will discuss our research project with practitioners and participants of a long-standing successful and innovative creative writing program run at Lotus Place in Queensland, a service for Forgotten Australians and survivors of institutional abuse. The program’s emphasis on creative writing rather than re-telling an individual’s life stories allows people to reclaim agency over their stories and is a way to decentre trauma in their narratives about their past. The project explores how creative writing is a new way of recording lives and offers therapeutic mental health and wellbeing outcomes for people with complex trauma.

Saturday 11.00–12.00 Session 3. PROTEST AND ACTIVISM

Lynette Shum presenting on behalf of herself and Margaret Pack, Jane McDonald, Nergis Narayan and Chris Hannah, A history of abortion care in Aotearoa New Zealand

As a team of 5 current and past abortion care providers, and in conjunction with the Alexander Turnbull Library, APGANZ (Abortion Providers’ Group Aotearoa New Zealand) and Otago University, we are undertaking a project aiming to capture the oral histories of those abortion providers who work / have worked nationally in the health care systems of New Zealand to develop the techniques and health care services that exist today. We have invited APGANZ members nationally to participate as either oral historians or as past or present abortion providers with an historical story to tell about their work in abortion care. Twenty four participants have either come forward nationally from a newsletter advertisement to be interviewed or to be oral historians in the project. As many of our participants have experienced the stigma of work in the abortion field, the narratives we have gathered so far document a story of activism facing opposition in the conventional hospital health care systems. The implications of the development of abortion services in the context of new legislation introduced in 2020 amid Covid level 4 restrictions are reflected upon.

David Faber, *Writing Green Light: a Brief Oral Political History of the Australian Greens (SA) 1995–2020 in Troubling Times, 2018–2021*

The paper will canvass the origin, conceptualization, conduct and execution of an oral history of a State Branch of a contemporary Australian political party on the 25th anniversary of its incorporation, addressing the practical, theoretical, epistemological and philosophical issues arising. The author is a Tasmanian expatriate long resident in Adelaide, apart from 3 years in Milan, Italy, and a politically engaged activist historian throughout, increasingly informed by Gramscian political philosophy. How the project, to be finalized in late 2021, originated will be narrated, with methodological issues and findings being related seriatim against the primary background of the politics of those years in those places and the current challenges in these troubling times of climate change underlining the need of a progressive mainstream Green New Deal.

Saturday 1.30–3.00 Session 1. INDIGENOUS ORAL HISTORIES

Carly Heinrich, 'It's all chat, chat, chat, but no-one's listening': reckoning with colonial pasts to build more just futures

Revisiting my 2019 honours project titled 'Aboriginal People Speak', I review the oral histories of Peter, Geraldine and Jeannene, three First Nations peoples as they live on Kurna Yarta navigating homelessness and the majority non-Aboriginal service providers positioned to assist them. Upholding Indigenous research protocols that centre respect, reciprocity and responsibility as the bedrock from which to build relations, our yarns (interviews) promoted truth-telling and acted as recuperative spaces in which my collaborators were able to add their often-overlooked histories to the record. They each document a life in the colony in which they are spoken over, for and about, but rarely with, while their ways of knowing, being and doing continue to be undermined. Peter, Geraldine and Jeannene pinpoint the disconnects between these ways and the western world-views of those tasked with managing their lives as the barrier to parity, which they maintain can only be achieved by listening to each other, closely so that First Nations peoples can determine their own futures. As we contemplate a way out of the covid crisis, I argue that the real disaster to be interrogated is the catastrophe of colonisation and its perennial reverberations through history. As I reflect on Aboriginal peoples' pasts, I contemplate the ongoing damage to their realities perpetuated by white, western futurity.

Heather Goodall, *Cross purposes: learning from the memories of Indigenous former students at Tranby Adult Education campus, 1980–2000*

The Networking Tranby project conducted 20 in-depth interviews with former Indigenous adult participants in Tranby Adult Education courses at Glebe, from 1980 to 2000. Their memories offered a very different picture of what they considered valuable learning experiences and conditions at Tranby than those of myself and other teaching staff over this time. The chief investigators included two Indigenous educators, Dr Belinda Russon, CEO of Tranby, and Professor Heidi Norman, University of Technology Sydney. I was involved not only through my interest in Aboriginal history and politics but because of my early 1980s Tranby experience as a teacher under Aboriginal direction. From my experience at Tranby, I expected that relevant course content and teacher accessibility were the most useful elements that Tranby offered its students. I was wrong. Each of

the narrators – unsolicited and at great length – explained that it was the composition of their all-Indigenous peer groups of earners that was most important in their positive leaning experiences. None expected to remain in all-Indigenous leaning situations – many excelled later in mixed learning environments at university or elsewhere. Indigenous former student memories offer both opportunities and challenges that non-Indigenous teaching staff – and indeed perhaps all teaching staff – can learn from.

Doug Racine, Indigenous storyteller and lawyer who represented Canadian Indian Residential Survivors, will contribute as discussant

Saturday 1.30–3.00 Session 2. ORAL HISTORY AND FAMILY HISTORY

Terry Young & Kate Bagnall, Voices and connections: reflections on using oral history in researching a migrant family history

In this paper family historian Terry Young and social historian Kate Bagnall explore the value of oral history for researching migrant family histories. Thirty years ago Terry undertook interviews with his migrant parents, motivated by his ignorance about their lives in China before they came to Australia. He interviewed his father using the village dialect they spoke at home, fortuitously asking for the names of his parents' parents, siblings and home villages. The interviews have proved invaluable for Terry's ongoing research into his family history, providing information that has led to: uncovering the story of his grandfather's life as a market gardener in country Victoria; visiting the family's ancestral village in China; and connecting with another branch of the family in Cuba. The interviews have more than a practical research value though. They are significant for their recording of a language once (but no longer) commonly spoken in Australia's Chinese communities, and they are deeply meaningful to Terry and his family – as beautiful artefacts and memory pieces of the voices of an earlier generation.

Sophie Couchman, Oral histories as sources for family historians: a challenge for oral historians and the GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives & museums) sector

Oral histories offer a potentially rich source of information for those researching their family histories. For example, since the 1980s hundreds of oral histories have been recorded with Chinese Australians in response to the growth in oral history as a methodology to help better understand the lives of those outside the dominant narratives of white men. But how do we make such interviews accessible to family historians? Chinese Australian oral history interviews are held in libraries, archives and museums across Australia. Not all have permissions documentation, have been transcribed, have summaries, have been digitised or are discoverable online. Accessing them can be difficult, depending on the resources of the repository. These oral histories were also created for different purposes, by different people, at different times and with different cohorts of Chinese Australians. Once family historians have access to oral histories, how do we help them to appreciate the complexity of understanding what they are accessing? Using the case study of Chinese Australian oral histories held in the GLAM institutions, this paper aims to start a broader discussion about how we might overcome these challenges and facilitate use by family histories.

Linda Hunt, The value of oral history in family history: student perspectives

Oral History is a core unit in the University of Tasmania's Diploma of Family History (DFH). First offered in 2016, more than 2000 people have enrolled in the unit, as part of their journey of sharing

family stories. Throughout the unit, students explore the role of oral history in documenting family history and learn practical skills, including how to interview, to transcribe, and to share oral histories in a written form. These are skills not familiar to many family history students, and as a result they approach the unit with trepidation. The presentation draws on the results of a survey which seeks to understand student perspectives on being taught oral history as part of their DFH. The survey also sheds light on the opportunities and challenges of studying oral history during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings will contribute to better understanding of the role of oral history in family history teaching.

Saturday 1.30–3.00 Session 3. PLACE, COMMUNITY, MEMORY

Christeen Schoepf, 'A picture of the past in the people's own words'

Local history and oral history are methodologies that reflect the complex experiences and events that have shaped the lives of individuals and communities through written words, material culture, illustrations, and recorded memories. They are at a micro-level and from the ground up – memory by memory – individually and as a collective. They are the grains of sand that form the bricks and mortar of a community's history, and spatially and temporally locate that individual and community experience and response within the bigger history events that have affected the wider world such as wars, disasters, technological advances, and financial depression.

But not all recorded words and memories truly capture that journey. When a community sets out to present their individual memories and collective experience through an oral history project or a published history, there are occasions when a total stranger is more beneficial to the project than someone who is familiar and lives within a locality. Through the lens of several real, but unidentified case studies, this paper will present the reasons why Beth Robertson's notions of oral history being 'pictures of the past in people's own words' do not always provide accurate representations of a locality's history or individual experience.

HOURLONG PANEL Maria Daly, Ellen Forsyth, Cathrynne McLean, Fran O'Flynn, Julie-Anne Sykes, Portable local studies collecting: sharing new stories in NSW public Libraries

In late 2019 the State Library of NSW provided oral history collection kits to 11 NSW public libraries. These kits in backpacks contain items to assist public library staff conduct and record oral history interviews. Oral history and collection care training was provided as well. Priority collecting areas were communities whose stories are not in their library with a focus on more diverse collecting. This panel session will explore what happened during this project both planned and opportunistic, including the impact of bushfires and a pandemic on recordings. It will highlight some of the amazing recordings which were made by three of the public libraries as they took the opportunity of the equipment and training to record while making sure they complied with distancing requirements. This project focuses on contemporary collecting, so that recent information is included in local studies collections in public libraries. This contemporary collecting will help bring together many voices whose stories may otherwise have not been collected, and will help record the diversity in communities, deepening community understanding and perspectives. This project is inspired by the *Archivist in a backpack* program.

Saturday 3.30–5.00 Session 1. WOMEN'S HISTORY, MEN'S HISTORY

Kate Murphy and Alistair Thomson, Explaining gender inequality in the Australian home: combining oral history interviews and time use studies

The movement of married women into the Australian workforce was one of the most profound transformations of the second half of the twentieth century. Yet despite idealisation of the so-called 'new man', changes in men's domestic roles have been much less impressive – as evidenced by 'time use studies' that quantify men's and women's domestic work. This presentation considers how oral history evidence can complement such quantitative evidence and help explain why, on the whole, most Australian fathers in heterosexual couples still do much less domestic work and childcare than their female partners. Drawing upon interviews conducted in Melbourne in the late 1990s, we explore how men's and women's accounts, used in tandem, can illuminate the household negotiations and decisions of Australian parents, and how a complex interplay of material forces, cultural expectations and personal circumstances sustains gender inequality in the home. We show how quantitative data provides essential evidence about what fathers and mothers are actually contributing to domestic work and childcare, and how oral history evidence explains how and why fathers and mother usually end up with such different domestic roles, while also revealing the opportunities and challenges for couples who seek equality in the home.

Sianan Healy, 'Happening in a shadow world': privacy and silence in oral histories of women's infertility

Drawing on oral history interviews conducted with women about their experiences of infertility and/or recurrent pregnancy loss, this paper considers why participants decided to come forward to be interviewed. The interviews followed a life narrative format ranging from 1.5 to 2 hours, during which the interviewee was asked about their experiences of trying to conceive within the context of their life story, beginning with their childhood and finishing with reflections on the impact of infertility on them. Towards the end of each interview, I asked the interviewee why they chose to be involved and their answer, while varied, reflected a number of common themes around shame, stigma and silence. With this paper I tease out the complexities around the interviewees' desire for anonymity and privacy, and the contrasting urge to bring the conversation about infertility more into the public space and the desire to save other people from experiencing those feelings of shame and invisibility.

Ruth Melville, 'Beneath the Mask': exploring the story of Agatha Quinlan's admission to a psychiatric hospital during the Spanish influenza epidemic of 1919.

My great-aunt, Agatha Quinlan, refused to wear a facemask during the Spanish Influenza epidemic in 1918. As a consequence, she was admitted to Sydney's Callan Park Mental Hospital where she remained for the rest of her life. That tale has been swirling around my family for years, and in 2021, in the midst of another epidemic, I set out to investigate whether it was actually true. I conducted interviews with family members who had met or heard about Agatha. I interviewed a historian with knowledge of early twentieth-century mental health treatments. I found references to Agatha in family letters and in archival primary sources, and I eventually put together an audio narrative that ran on FBI radio's All The Best program. At the same time as I was questioning the veracity of the story, I was conscious of creating a new set of inaccuracies. Who but Agatha – long since dead – could speak truthfully of her experience? In seeking to fill silences and address gaps in knowledge,

the narrative I created became itself another form of myth-making. Incorporating audio excerpts from the program, *Beneath The Mask* considers some of the rewards and shortcomings of combining oral history with other narrative techniques when the aim is to capture a small piece of a person's life.

Saturday 3.30–5.00 Session 2. ETHICAL AND LEGAL CHALLENGES IN ORAL HISTORY

Margaret Leask, What's the brief? On the receiving end of commissions to record oral history interviews.

Like many oral historians my work comes from accepting 'commissions' from curators, archivists, librarians, local authorities with heritage requirements, and individuals seeking to record family stories. Some recent experiences have focussed my thoughts on this process and it plays out in relation to budgets, timing, research, perceptions on all sides (commissioner, interviewer and interviewee) and ultimately interview outcomes. The primary inclination for the interviewer is to do one's best by the interviewee, and for future access, by capturing the story with as much nuance as possible. We all know that research, empathy, trust and preparedness to listen are vital but so often budget constraints, signing off on heritage requirements and anticipated immediate use (eg. an exhibition, publication) decide parameters and inform process. So, how do you juggle these issues, identify priorities and manage the administration involved while seeing to prompt memories and encourage thoughtful reflection from an interviewee? Having worked in the arts since university, my default position is to facilitate good experiences for creatives and audiences as the biggest reward is having access to interesting people, ideas and great stories. Very like oral history interviewing! In this paper I explore the challenges and pleasures of accepting commissions.

Sue Anderson & David Sweet, Whose story? A case of possible litigation

The Oral History Hub (ohh...) was established at the University of South Australia (UniSA) in 2018 by the authors as an endeavour to capture and preserve those recorded oral histories that fall into the gap of stories that are rejected by libraries and other repositories. However, such a well-meaning enterprise has encountered a provoking conundrum that most oral historians would not expect to face. An interview conducted by David Sweet with a colleague from UniSA (since deceased) and made accessible through the ohh... has come under attack by a relative of the interviewee. Michael, an intersex person who identified as male, was highly respected and loved by many at UniSA. With his pending death, this prompted David to record Michael's story before his ultimate demise. Having the interviewee's full and enthusiastic permission, the interview and transcript were uploaded to the ohh..., something that was lauded by many uniSA staff as a fitting memorial to the interviewee. However, almost two years later a backlash from an estranged member of Michael's family came out of the blue. The demand was that the interview be taken down from the ohh... site because it was claimed to be incorrect in fact and defamatory in nature. A three-page correction of 'untruthful' information, as the complainant saw it, was provided. Further, bitter and aggressive emails were sent to individuals threatening legal action unless the interviewee was removed by a certain time on a certain day. The authors felt that this would be a betrayal of a person who had given his story in good faith and with the understanding that it would be publicly available, as specifically instructed by Michael. The question this raises for oral historians is who has the right to veto someone's story and under what circumstances, particularly if permissions have been clearly given? The issues around this situation will be discussed.

Alice Garner and Mary Leahy, Does it have to be the full story? The ethics of editing audio for a web-based oral history

In 2020-22, we recorded a series of interviews with sixty unionists and union educators for a project seeking lessons from 1975-1996, a period when trade union training was generously government-funded and had bipartisan support in Australia. To reach contemporary union trainers, and to make this history easily accessible, engaging and useful to them, we chose to share interview material through thematic collations of audio excerpts on our project website. The researchers' voices are for the most part absent from the edited audio selections, though their analysis has informed the selection of stories. What ethical principles should inform the curation of audio excerpts for public web-based dissemination? Do we risk misrepresenting narrators by using only the excerpts that suit our research focus or is that nothing new? Should we offer access to the whole interview to listeners, alongside curated excerpts? This paper reflects on the ethics of selection and curation for digital dissemination of oral history interviews, at a time when accessibility and immediacy of experience increasingly determine the ways we share research.

Saturday 3.30–5.00 Session 3. WAR STORIES AND ORAL HISTORY

Alexander J. Potocnik, WWI remembrance along the former Soča/Isonzo front

The geographical position of the First World War Soča/Isonzo Front vaguely matches the present-day Italian–Slovenian border. During the fighting the belligerents, Italy and Austria-Hungary, constructed a network of trenches and access tracks, many of them still quite visible in the mountainous landscape. Until the 1990s the surfaces of some parts of the former battlefield were still strewn with the remains of military equipment and even armaments and ammunition. While WWI remembrance was elevated to glorification on a state level in Italy, it was excluded from the dominant national narrative in Slovenia. From seventeen interviews, mostly with Slovenian WWI artefact collectors, I aimed to deduce what role the physical presence of the battlefield played in the retention of WWI remembrance on an intimate level and in its re-emergence in the Slovenian national narrative in the 1990s, as well as how the awareness of that part of history – or the lack of it – affected the preservation of material heritage of the First World War in Slovenia. The last interview which was conducted via Zoom due to the pandemic is especially relevant to the main topic of the conference. It illustrates a severely limited control of the setting, diminished possibilities of establishing personal rapport and other difficulties stemming from remote interviewing.

Mia Martin Hobbs, Reading empathy and ideology in oral history transcripts: race, gender and the US reconstruction in Iraq

In 2003 the US military deployed to Iraq the most diverse soldier-force in its history, touting cultural competence as a strategic strength in counter-insurgency operations. Yet a central factor in the failed reconstruction of Iraq was the US failure to listen to Iraqis about what was needed to rebuild their country. Drawing on interview transcripts with women and minorities in the United States Institute for Peace Oral History 'Iraq Experience' Project, I explore tensions between empathy and ideology in the US reconstruction of Iraq. Following Laleh Khalili's call to look at the 'seam of the encounter' in counterinsurgency contexts, I focus on described moments of interaction between the US military and the Iraqi population (Khalili, 2011). I use NVivo to identify textual relationships and absences in interview transcripts, revealing an ongoing cognitive dissonance among women and minority

soldiers. Interviewees drew on identity-based skills and sensitivities to relate to Iraqi frustrations with the US occupation, yet they maintained absolute commitment to the viability of US nation-building as an anti-terror project. These interviews indicate a refusal among soldiers to 'see' how the US mission in Iraq itself sustains the terror/security threat in Iraq, demonstrating the limits of empathy in militarized contexts.

Sunday 9.00–10.30 Session 1. INTERPRETING MEMORIES

Nikki Henningham, 'If I wasn't there already, it would have led me to drink': using oral history narratives to reveal the nature and calculate the cost of women's bravery

The last two years have limited the opportunities for many oral historians to get out in the field to conduct interviews, however, the silver lining for me has been the chance to review the content of my collection. Time to listen back without an agenda or the pressure of a project deadline has given me the opportunity to listen differently. The organising principle of a commissioned project – collecting the stories of women who farm, women in the legal profession, women disability advocates, for example – guides the way the interview proceeds and the way the content is initially reviewed. But listening to interviews that were recorded several years ago for no particular reason (except, perhaps, to critique my own performance) has revealed to me themes I hadn't paid close attention to before, and taken me down the path of a new project. I'm interested in women's stories about trailblazing and speaking out when it was hard to do so. How do women talk about being brave, and what is the personal legacy of being brave? The quote from my title comes from an interview with a woman who, on the face of it, was a hero of her profession and had all the trappings of success. Hearing her say that again (combined with the circumstances of the interview, which I'll discuss) prompted me to do a broader review of my interview collection and ask questions about the way gender operates in the world to exclude women's bravery from being recognised. I'm constructing a platform to explore common understandings of courage and bravery, but also to tease out what motivates people to be brave. I'll trace the legacy of courage. How does 'being brave' play out? What are its enduring and unexpected impacts? Is it true that no good deed goes unpunished? Is virtue really its own reward? I'm listening again to the stories I've been told to find answers to these questions.

Anisa Puri, Using archived interview collections: reflections on conducting secondary analysis

Secondary analysis of archived oral history collections is a fast-growing methodology, particularly as online delivery systems have transformed the ease with which we can discover and access digital interviews. Some historians, including Joanna Bornat and Malin Thor Tureby, have written about secondary analysis of oral history interviews but this methodology remains under-examined. Much of my recent research has involved working with interviews recorded by other oral historians. In this paper I examine and reflect on the opportunities and challenges I encountered while using archived interviews in the Australian Generations Oral History Collection to research experiences and memories of youth migration to post-war Australia. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using archived oral histories to research a topic that differs from the original project's focus? What interpretive possibilities does secondary analysis offer? Does conducting secondary analysis enable us to 'hear' in new ways?

Alexandra Dellios, Reading activist lives in oral history collections: ethnic women and early multiculturalism

In the process of drawing on two very different oral history collections, this research became an exploration of the timeliness and future use of oral history collections in historical research: how do researchers productively draw on and build histories with oral history collections created in vastly different political and social contexts? Such questions are worth exploring in relation to oral history collections formed in or after politically contentious contexts and with politically active interviewees. Here, oral histories are read (or re-analysed) in a context in which there is a constrained or different discourse around multiculturalism and 'migrant rights activism', and around the role of men and women in public life. This type of re-analysis becomes a matter of listening both intersubjectively and dialogically to ethnicised and gendered voices in the archive. In this case, the aim is to cast a light on a history of welfare rights and social activism in migrant working-class communities, and thus explore their alternative visions of multiculturalism espoused by women working on the frontlines.

Sunday 9.00–10.30 Session 2. RECORDING INTERVIEWS DURING THE PANDEMIC

Lucy Bracey, Fiona Poulton and Katherine Sheedy, COVID kids: a pandemic oral history project

In Victoria in 2020, in the midst of some of the toughest Covid-19 lockdown restrictions in the world, Way Back When began thinking about a problem we have frequently experienced in our work – the relative silence of young people in archival collections. Acutely aware of the impact of the pandemic on children, and that restrictions were due to ease (meaning that memories of lockdown would soon begin to fade), we decided to act quickly to collect children's voices and perspectives. This paper will explore our experiences of conducting a time-critical oral history project with children in lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic. Drawing on our collection of more than 50 interviews with children and young people from 4 to 19 years of age (recorded remotely via Zoom), we will delve into the joys and challenges of conducting an oral history project with children during one of the most significant global events of our lifetimes. The paper will explore what we learned from the experience and the questions and issues that the Covid Kids project has raised for us as oral historians.

Heather Kelly, 'I remember when...': one community's journey

Conducting an oral history program in a rural community often involves a range of specific challenges. Opportunities for recruiting and retaining volunteers, networking and accessing affordable quality training and technology may all be limited by the smaller and more dispersed communities in which and with whom we work. These challenges have been compounded by Covid-19 over the past year, particularly in border towns such as Yarrawonga/Mulwala which was affected by 41 weeks of border closures. For Yarrawonga/Mulwala Community and Learning Centre Oral History Group, the pivot online that many organisations and community members made during the pandemic created opportunities to overcome challenges beyond the immediate concern of navigating Covid-19 restrictions. This presentation will outline how we were able to strengthen our group and explore new technologies such as Zoom and online training. Building on past experience we have been able to develop and maintain a community-driven, sustainable oral history program in our small rural community. We have documented and shared diverse stories of resilience such as

surviving periods of severe drought, rural downturn, and living through and with the legacy of war service. In difficult and unprecedented times, such stories are more important than ever.

Judy Hughes, Is remote oral history interviewing here to stay?

As the third anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic approaches, it is timely to evaluate what we as oral historians have learned from the turn to remote interviewing. Just as the pandemic has forced a re-think on the value and practicality of working from home, has a similar shift occurred in the arena of oral history practice and in particular, the assumption that oral history interviews are always best conducted face-to-face? This presentation examines the pros and cons of remote interviewing compared to face-to-face-interviewing, the technological options that have emerged during the pandemic and related issues including how best to establish a rapport with the interviewee and ensure the best audio quality in a remote interviewing environment. The presenter draws on her personal experience in conducting four remote interviewing projects and beginning an oral history-based PhD during the pandemic. The presentation will address the implications for remote interviewing in the fields of academia, work as a consulting historian and for family historians.

Sunday 9.00–10.30 Session 3. PLACE, COMMUNITY, MEMORY

Hamish Sewell, The emerging opportunities to archive the ‘situated listening’ experience

As cultural archives and national institutions collect records about a place, institution or people, and seek to amass collections of note, what value ought there now be put on the ‘situated listening’ experience? It is just over twenty years since GPS was made freely available with smartphones following suit with the capacity to track our whereabouts—arguably one of the most profound technological and social changes in a generation. Given our increasingly mobile-moderated lives and our reliance on the mobile phone, the world now is quite literally coming alive around us. Whether deemed narrative cartography, locative audio or situated listening, it doesn’t really matter. What matters is that audio, namely voices, sounds and stories, now occupy an increasingly powerful place in the embodied (digital) place-based experience. Put simply, it is the human ear that will be the primary nexus between the physical and virtual worlds. Alongside questions around narrative conventions of spatial storytelling, or the politics of situated listening—which places are deemed important? what stories will be told? and whose voices will be heard?—the issue of the legacy, or the preservation, of the situated listening experience is now coming to the fore. Without the ability to archive, let alone reanimate such experiences within our future, augmented-reality/ hybrid world, such voices, sound and stories will simply disappear. Join Australian based oral historian, sound producer, Hamish Sewell as he weighs into this new field of practice that has myriad touch-points with oral histories. Drawing off his experience working with his locative-audio app, Soundtrails, Sewell will break down the situated listening experience, and play examples. He will discuss what he feels are some of the important factors to consider when determining what is ‘worthy’ of preservation in the mix of offerings, then step out one approach to archiving the situated listening experience.

Janis Hanley, Milling around: collectively remembering work at the factory

This paper provides practical insights into methods to work collectively with memories of former workers at an industrial heritage site. This research activity took place at the former Queensland

Woollen Manufacturing Company (QWMC) factory in Ipswich and formed part of my doctoral research. The factory is now in disuse, so provided an ideal opportunity to conduct a walkthrough, although its emptiness and heavy graffiti were unsettling. There were nine participants, who worked at the mill at different times, during the period of 1947 to 1971 when the woollen mill closed. The session took two hours, was audio recorded and each participant was given a floorplan to make notes on. The historical data and memories that emerged were richly tactile and sensory, providing information on how the factory space was used, the work they did, and small details about everyday work. I separately interviewed each participant, and it was interesting the difference the at home interviews produced compared to the session at the factory. Both informed, but the in-situ session enabled additional information gathering about day-to-day work as well as participants' responses to the space and the group conversations.

Frances Crawford & Roslyn Budd, Putting an idea into action: how an oral history of 'welfare' in Western Australia 1969–1984 developed

In 1984 staff farewelled Keith Maine, leader of the WA state welfare department for 15 years. Cards and letters of appreciation were collected by Roslyn Budd, staff representative on the Community Services Board set up as a policy development link between the department and community. Despite Maine's displacement by government decision, he continued to be held in high esteem by staff for all his ground-breaking achievements in social welfare. In 2018 many of these staff gathered at Maine's funeral. Concerned that his achievements were not recorded, a Working Party of five was formed, all former staff. Conducting the resulting oral history included challenges consequent on aging participants, a shoestring budget and Covid. Despite this the project has flourished with participation from a wide range of former staff and colleagues. In retirement many appreciate the chance to record reflections on a time of major change and development. This era (1969-1984) corresponds with the development of WA from Cinderella status to mining behemoth. This presentation covers steps taken to articulate the project purpose, align with expectations of the State Library regarding an Oral History Project, develop questionnaires and record and transcribe interviews. Working Party members conducted interviews with their network so this insiders' account has the insights and limitations entailed.

Sunday 11.00 – 12.30 CLOSING PLENARY

Palawa people of Trouwerner/Loetrouwitter/lutruwita Tasmania: challenges and opportunities

Julie Gough, Theresa Sainty and Zoe Rimmer will talk about the significance of memory and oral history for palawa people, and raise issues for discussion by all oral historians working in Australia and other countries with First Peoples.