

From the Editors

As is customary, the theme for this year's journal replicates the theme for the Oral History Australia (OHA)'s biennial conference. Held in Launceston in 2022, conference presenters crafted their papers around the topic 'Oral History in Troubling Times: Opportunities and Challenges'. As Carla Pascoe Leahy and Anisa Puri iterate in their paper, we have indeed been living in troubling times. Just as the disruptions and stresses of the COVID-19 pandemic began to recede from memory, they were swiftly replaced by the stresses of bushfires, floods and other troubling signs of anthropogenic climate change. These problems are not going to diminish over coming decades, with implications for how we practise oral history. Pascoe Leahy and Puri's reflective piece includes an evaluation of the pros and cons of remote interviewing. Long held assumptions regarding the desirability of face-to-face interviews are challenged in the current era. Factors such as the (generally) larger carbon footprint created by travelling to interviews, the health of participants, and inclusion of those (both interviewer and interviewee) who, for social, physical and economic reasons, cannot easily travel for interviews are important considerations. Judy Hughes's report neatly complements the opening article. Recognising the increased use of remote interviewing techniques, Hughes provides an overview and evaluation of technological advances in recording devices and transcription services, all part of the oral historian's toolbox.

The 2020s are indeed troubling times; in addition to climate change we can immediately add angst regarding the potential re-ignition of divisive and racist views in

relation to the Voice to Parliament referendum, worry over the upcoming US elections, and the seemingly never-ending war in Ukraine... (the list is endless). However, as Nicholas Herriot's and Sue Rabbitt Roff's articles remind us, each generation lives in troubling times – and each generation has the opportunity to make informed choices and challenge injustices. Herriot draws on interviews he conducted with people who participated in a four-week sit-in of Flinders University's Administration building in 1974. Although sparked by anger against compulsory exams, the protest soon became a call for the university's resources to be deployed for the people, not the bureaucrats and their bosses. As Herriot points out, ultimately the students were protesting against capitalism and US imperialism. While this sit-in has been depicted as a last hurrah of student activism, Herriot learned that, rather than leaving interviewees with a sense of defeat and disillusionment, the protest action fundamentally shaped his informants' lives, and impelled them to continue striving for a fairer and more equitable society. As we contemplate today's job-orientated degrees, online teaching, and sparsely occupied lecture rooms and campuses – it is worth reiterating the view of one of Herriot's interviewees, Anni Browning. Browning reflected that the fact that she 'never got a degree anyway' didn't matter, as 'it was much more about being at Flinders to get a much broader education'.

Sue Rabbitt Roff has spent decades researching the cover up of British atomic testing in Australia, Christmas Island and the Monte Bello Islands. In her article, Roff demonstrates the crucial role oral histories play in countering official narratives that obfuscate or deny Australian tests. For those who have seen the film *Oppenheimer*, and who may have wondered about connections between the Manhattan Project and Australian scientists, or about the extent to which Australian prime minister Robert Menzies was informed regarding the intentions of the British, Roff's dense and highly informative article will provide many answers. Roff includes a call to action, making the point that many primary sources are available to the public but have yet to be comprehensively studied.

Of course, there are many other wrongs that echo down the years to the present day. Drawing on their interdisciplinary collaboration, Ashley Barnwell, Cate O'Neill and Kirsten Wright analyse an innovative creative writing program for

Forgotten Australians (people who grew up in children's institutions) at Lotus Place in Queensland. While recording personal histories has often been undertaken as a means to come to terms with difficult pasts, the authors suggest that creative writing can be a powerful tool to process trauma while simultaneously decentering it. Their article can be read as an invitation to oral historians to consider alternative and less-literal ways of working with memory.

Ending the articles section on a poetic note, Lesley Synge's piece is another creative approach to interpreting memory. Synge draws upon an interview she conducted with her grandmother, Molly Doherty, over 40 years ago for the large Australian 1938 Oral History Project. In this affectionate and imaginative retelling of Molly's life, Synge draws upon the recorded interview, other archival sources and her own recollections of the interview process to offer a more complex and multilayered understanding of 'Molly, in her own words'.

Moving to the reports section, we have already referred to Judy Hughes's useful summary of the technological equipment available to the contemporary oral historian. Eliot Perrin informs readers of a transnational research project of which he is part, which addresses the ongoing political and economic legacies of deindustrialization. The project spans continents and has numerous partner organisations and collaborators, including trade unions, indigenous organisations and independent researchers. Perrin describes the ways these disparate people and organisations have forged connections and created a sense of community. A comparable sense of community has been created through 'The 100 Project'. John Winter reports on a crowdsourced project that he has founded, which provides a platform and professional video editing to enable families, carers and friends of 100-year-olds to publish interviews conducted with the centenarians.

Reporting on research examining the legacies of settler-colonialism in South Australia, Skye Krichauff details the unintended consequences of university administrative policies and procedures. Ironically, certain ethics requirements aimed to reassure interviewees of the good intentions of the institution can create a sense of distrust, while complicated bureaucratic requirements and delays contain the

potential to derail oral history projects. She suggests alternative processes that enhance rather than hinder trust and goodwill with Aboriginal communities. David Goodwin and Paul Bronson report on an oral history project recording the oral histories of veterans employed in oil and gas exploration in the Bass Strait in the 1960s and 1970s. The project was conducted in collaboration with students and resulted in a podcast series. Goodwin and Bronson point out that the dangerous weather conditions, logistical complexity and the need for marine skills are equally applicable in the current era of offshore wind turbine deployment.

This year's reviews section can be read as a snapshot of some of the emerging topics and methodologies that are engaging oral historians around the world. Oral historians are increasingly interested in methodologies that disrupt existing orthodoxies – and hold the potential to surprise the interviewer if they are open to what their interviewees can teach them. Books reviewed in this edition cover themes of war and crisis, environments and disasters, care and family, gender and sexuality, and the unexpected.

We would like to warmly welcome Reports Editor Alexandra Mountain and Reviews Editor Gwyn McClelland to the journal team, and thank them for their work in compiling their respective sections of this year's journal. We would also like to acknowledge and thank our hardworking editorial chair, Alexandra Dellios, who consistently ensures the smooth running of the review process. The unwavering support of the journal's Editorial Board and the OHA Executive Committee continue to be much appreciated by us both. The journal is also highly appreciative of the exemplary efforts of copy editor Katie Connolly and designer Karen Wallis. We feel fortunate to be surrounded by such a collegial and professional cohort.

We hope you enjoy reading this year's edition of *Studies in Oral History* – and that you may find some useful information in its contents to help you seize the opportunities presented by these challenging times.

Skye Krichauff and Carla Pascoe Leahy