

Abstracts

Friday 22 November 2024

Session 1 Panel. RIVERS, EMOTIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE: VOICES FROM THE MURRAY DARLING BASIN

(Loton lecture theatre, Gateway Building level 2)

Chair-person: Nicolette Snowden

Margaret Cook, 'A chance to tell our story': male voices from the Basin

Katie Holmes, Basin women talk climate change

Karen Twigg, 'You'd have to wade out through the weed to get to clearer water': making sense of change in watery environments

Abstract:

This panel draws on interviews conducted for the Murray Darling Basin Authority with Basin communities. Using a life history approach, the focus of those interviews has been the ways in which people have lived with environmental change. By recording how different life experiences of the river/wetlands/waterways (across generations) have shaped responses to environmental change, we have been interrogating how experience has shaped deep feelings and beliefs and influenced responses to water policy. We are also seeking to interrogate the historical antecedents of the intractable differences that we encounter across the Murray Darling Basin.

In the process of recording these interviews we have been repeatedly struck by the array of emotions people hold towards their watery places, the challenges they face as they confront an uncertain future of climate change and water policy, and the ways they understand and monitor changes in the more-than-human world. The papers in this panel address these different aspects of the interview material.

Session 2 Panel. ORAL HISTORY IN OUR NATIONAL AND STATE AND TERRITORY LIBRARIES

(Gateway Auditorium)

Chair-person: Barry York

Maria Savvidis (State Library of NSW)

Greg Gerrand (State Library of Victoria)

Jennifer Jerome (Libraries Tasmania)

Catherine Cottle (State Library of Queensland)

Antoinette Buchanan (ACT Heritage Library)

Barbara Lemon (National Library of Australia)

Abstract:

This panel introduces the National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) Oral History Network, and the considerations, challenges and responsibilities faced by its member libraries when collecting, archiving, and managing public oral history archives at a wider level and for the very long term.

The panel will discuss how oral histories are collected, preserved, and accessed in the national, state and territory libraries. It will also look at how the group works collaboratively on guidelines and knowledge sharing in relation to all aspects of oral history, and the importance of creating an ongoing dialogue between oral history practitioners, academics, and archival institutions in the GLAM sector, particularly with relation to access, shared interests and challenges, and support.

The NSLA Oral History Network includes key representatives involved in oral history across the ten national, state and territory member libraries in Australia and NZ. The ongoing function of the network is to share expertise on commissioning, transcribing, preserving, and providing access to contemporary and legacy oral history collections in these public collections.

Session 3 Panel. (HOW) ARE YOU BEING SERVED? RETELLING BUSINESS HISTORY

(Room 104, Gateway Building level 1)

Chair-person: Deborah Towns

Robert Crawford, Matthew Bailey and Catherine Bishop

Abstract:

Business and Oral History have not always been fond bedfellows. This panel seeks to illustrate some of the rewards of connecting oral history and business history. It brings together three historians working on the “Shop Talk” project, a history of department stores in post-war Australia. The panellists will use oral history testimony to explore three unique case studies: small business and the department stores; the changing work of departmental buyers, and the opening up of career opportunities for female managers in the 1980s. By discussing the different insights derived from oral history methodologies, the panellists will not only demonstrate the rewards (and risks) of connecting oral history and business history, they will also reflect on the future possibilities of oral history within business history.

Session 4. MAKING AUDIO-VISUAL ORAL HISTORIES

(Owl South Grant room)

Chair-person: Siobhan McHugh

John Winter and Ros Walker, The 100 Project: Community Sourcing Videos of Australian Centenarians

Abstract:

John Winter and Ros Walker are Australian filmmakers who have produced and directed Australian films for over four decades. Their latest endeavour is The 100 Project, a series of short video interviews of Australian centenarians.

The 100 Project harnesses extraordinary recent technological developments in smartphone videography and post-production. By following The 100 Project's tutorials, communities and families record videos of centenarians on their smartphone or camera and the filmmakers professionally edit the material for free.

The result is short films which integrate the video interview with family photos, archival video and photographs, music, audio and captions. The films are screened on The 100 Project website and YouTube channel, with short versions on Facebook and TikTok enabling these oral histories to reach beyond family and community to a wider audience. They have also been screened at art exhibitions and community events, and can be made available for galleries, libraries, museums and school and tertiary curriculum.

The 100 Project aims to build a video content library that represents Australia's diverse history and make the videos available to the widest audience possible. Our challenge is to apply our limited resources of time and funds to achieve those aims and to raise community, media and other stakeholder awareness of the project. Finding funding and research partners to ensure sustainability and growth of The

100 Project, an endeavour that is a social enterprise organisation but not a charity or not-for-profit, is a constant challenge. This presentation will showcase The 100 Project and describe how other oral historians can contribute and become a part of the project.

Chunming Zheng and Jingxi Guo, Eye to 'I': An Oral History Project in Virtual Reality**Abstract:**

The Eye to 'I' Oral History Project, initiated by Chunming Zheng, an oral historian and artist who is vision-impaired herself is a pioneering exploration at the nexus of art, technology, and the human experience. The project delves deep into the narratives and perspectives of vision-impaired/blind narrators, utilizing oral history as a powerful methodology to conduct in-depth, multi-session interviews.

What sets the project apart is the creative fusion of oral history and Virtual Reality (VR) technology. From the rich life experiences of our narrators, we craft individualized VR experiences that not only provide a visual insight into the world of vision-impaired/blind individuals but also portray a sophisticated journey of their lives.

While VR brings viewers into our eyes, oral history, through generous telling and deep listening, offers the bridge to the heart.

It's a journey from Eye to 'I'.

This presentation offers a 10-minute briefing on the project's methodology, impact, and outcomes, highlighting its innovative approach to storytelling and technology integration. Following the briefing, attendees will have the opportunity to experience the VR installation firsthand, allowing for a deep dive into the visual and auditory world of vision impairment.

Rod Freedman, Family Oral History in Documentary - Challenges And Processes

Abstract:

Using two documentaries, UNCLE CHATZKEL and ONCE MY MOTHER, I'll reflect on challenges editing, interpreting and illustrating family stories.

The core of UNCLE CHATZKEL (2000), which I produced and directed, is the oral history of my 93-year-old Lithuanian great uncle, Chatzkel Lemchen, who survived both World Wars, the Holocaust and fifty years of communism. Eight hours of interview in Lithuanian/ Russian/ Yiddish (I spoke none) became the skeleton of the film. Challenges were in truncating his stories to fit the 1-hour TV format, editing in foreign languages, balancing my narrative with his perspectives, enabling his 'voice' to tell the story and ethical issues of using archival footage to evoke his memories.

When she was making ONCE MY MOTHER (2014), director Sophia Turkiewicz's mother, Helen, already had dementia. Helen only recalled scraps of her epic wartime journey from Poland to a Soviet gulag, an African refugee camp and her arrival in Australia as an illiterate single mother. When Sophia discovered Helen's oral history in the National Library, it was a gift. We were able to hear Helen telling parts of her story in her own words. But with no pictures, our challenge was to create and source visual material as well as interweave memories from both the reliable and shaky stages of her life.

Two humble family oral histories, expanded and elaborated as documentaries, went on to travel the world.

Session 5. ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWING: APPROACHES AND ISSUES – 1

(Owl North Armstrong room)

Chair-person: Alison Atkinson-Phillips

Roslyn Burge and Francesca Beddie, Recording garden history: its rewards, risks and possibilities

Abstract:

The Australian Garden History Society's oral history collection is an important pillar in its mission to record garden history. It is a resource for monitoring our changing natural and cultural landscapes and documenting one of Australia's favourite pursuits, gardening. It is also a means of preserving memories of heritage places at risk of disappearing because of the passing of time, neglect, climate change.

This 20-minute presentation will discuss the way the program of interviewing is managed, the challenges posed by relying on a volunteer workforce to conduct interviews, create and update manuals, exercise quality control and archive the recordings.

We will then explore the challenges of working with interviewees who have considerable horticultural or scientific expertise and firm views about how their interviews are presented. What is to be done when they stray from the topic, bring out the red pen and re-write the transcript or refuse to allow the recording to be made public?

Finally, we will talk about dissemination, via the AGHS website, its journal, at conferences, and the possibilities for research the collection offers. By sharing our experiences, we hope to learn more about how we maintain the momentum of this valuable collection.

S. Dorji, Adele Nye and Catherine V Johnston, Developing a Sense of Oral History and Oral History as Pedagogy: An Exploratory Study of School History Teachers in Bhutan

Abstract:

Although oral traditions in Bhutan are vibrant, they did not find a place in the Bhutanese education system until 2017. The inclusion of oral history in the school history curriculum is aimed at transforming the outlook and practices of history education in Bhutan. It was expected to provide oral history experiences to students and also to develop as a pedagogical practice for history teachers. There appears to be a knowledge gap as to how oral history practices can be effectively implemented. My research will investigate this gap and the views of history teachers and students.

The study will use the theory of practice architectures and be guided by post-positivism. Interviews were conducted with 20 Bhutanese history teachers and 3 student focus group interviews were held. The aim was to gain an insight into both group's views on oral history teaching and learning experiences. The preliminary thematic analysis of the transcripts reveals that some oral history practices in schools are occurring but more contextual work is to be done.

The study has shown that the experiences of teachers and students indicate the need to contextualize oral history education and oral history in Bhutan. There are clear opportunities for teacher professional development on oral history meanings and pedagogical possibilities. Further, there is scope to establish an oral history organization in Bhutan as there is currently no existing platform to promote the field.

Lella Cariddi, A diversity of voices: the art of harvesting ethnographic social histories

Abstract:

A diversity of voices: the art of harvesting ethnographic social histories, represents seventy-six intergenerational stories harvested between 2015- 2023, by-and-about Australians from sixteen diverse cultural heritages whose life experiences did not feature in the annals of Australian history.

The community development process employed for researching, documenting, recording, and publishing the seventy-six stories consist of a multi-prong approach which involved consultations with: the SLV multicultural librarian and representatives of public libraries across metropolitan Melbourne. Art galleries in Melbourne, Mildura, Bendigo, and Ballarat. The Emerald Hill Heritage Centre; Penelope Lee at University of Melbourne Centre for the History of Emotions; and ethnographic cultural centres including the Melbourne Greek Cultural Centre, Museo Italiano, Bendigo's Chinese Museum and Melbourne's Islamic Museum.

1.30 – 3.00 PARALLEL SESSIONS

Session 6. ORAL HISTORIES OF PLACE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY

(Gateway Auditorium)

Chair-person: Skye Krichauff

John Heath and Ashley Barnwell, Burrawan - a history for the present

Abstract:

In this paper, John Heath and Ashley Barnwell will speak to their new book, *Burrawan: The desecration and resurrection of Lake Innes*, a local history and truth-telling project. In an attempt to reduce the size of the lake and its surrounding wetlands, in 1933 a drain was dug between Burrawan/Lake Innes and Cathie Creek. The drain resultantly let salt water into the largest coastal freshwater lake in New South Wales. This damaged its rich ecology of plants and animals. A grab for farmland, the doomed project had proceeded against years of expert advice. It was an act of destruction following in the footsteps of colonial greed and disregard for First Nations culture and Country that had commenced with the British invasion of the Birrpai Nation resultant from John Oxley's trespass through Birrpai country in 1818. In this paper, Heath and Barnwell introduce the project and consider how truth-telling about the desecration of Country can be achieved when few known sources of Indigenous oral history are available - often due to these same acts of desecration and dispossession. How can the white record, supplemented with local, family, and oral histories (sometimes also drawn from within the white record), be used to centre First Nations' knowledge and ownership? Overall, the paper explores how the sharing of histories generates new opportunities for the oral transmission of stories and memories in the present.

Mike Jones and Ben Silverstein, Connecting Jayjagurdiny: Oral History in and as Country

Abstract:

The authors have been travelling to Broome since 2019, meeting with Yawuru storytellers and knowledge holders. In this time they have conducted 16 interviews, including in situ at Janyjagurdiny—the area called Thangoo Station by white pastoralists. On all these trips, and in many of the recordings, Yawuru people tell stories of connection. Standing on Didirrgun/Kennedy Hill in Broome, they point across the bay to the large tamarind tree that stands next to the station homestead and tell of their childhood on the station. The tree stands in for a past tamarind tree in the same area in which children used to hide when the authorities arrived. When on Thangoo, they point back across the bay to Kennedy Hill and tell of human and more-than-human beings moving across the landscape. Meeting and recording the same storytellers over space and time, we hear their multiple tellings perform Country, weaving together the places, people, times and stories that fill the present and deep past of Yawuru Land, Seas, and Skies. In this paper the authors explore how acts of speaking—sharing stories about and over time, stories that mark place and connect places—recognise and constitute Yawuru Country through its relations.

Gwyn McClelland, Language, materiality, heritagisation, and the Gotō Islands (Japan)

Abstract:

This presentation sets out to explore oral histories of ‘ordinary people’ and how they resist and subvert political and male-dominated heritage processes that ‘make history’ through language and materiality. I recently interviewed over nineteen locals, including sixteen Hidden Christian descendants, as I focused on analysing four World Heritage sites within the Gotō Islands. I will relate in this presentation some of the results and the highlights of my work with two research collaborators on the islands. The terminology of “Hidden Christian” is fraught. It is described in Japanese in the World Heritage discourse as Sempuku Kirishitan (usually referring to Kirishitan prior to 1873), but it neglects the Kakure Kirishitan (Kirishitan who did not return to Catholicism after 1873) in its Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD).(1) Consequently, the hybridity and heterogeneity of the ‘Hidden Christian’ narrative is not sufficiently celebrated by the World Heritage designation. Additionally, the visual symbolism of the Catholic churches highlighted by Japanese heritagisation processes distinct from the UNESCO listings may be contrasted with the World Heritage discourse to consider how the separation of the material from the symbolic in the terminology of ‘intangible heritage’ can be contradictory.(2)

1. Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

2. Michael Herzfeld, “Intangible Delicacies: Production and Embarrassment in International Settings,” *Ethnologies* 36, no. 1–2 (2014).

Session 7. INTERPRETING ORAL STORYTELLING

(Room 104, Gateway Building level 1)

Chair-person: Robert Crawford

Valerie Mashman, Stories of History from a Borneo Longhouse: Oral history, genre and method.

Abstract:

I was given by chance three historical narratives on cassette to listen to while visiting my husband’s longhouse in the Kelabit highlands, Sarawak in 2010. I wasn’t looking for a subject to research or a reason to do a PhD. A moment of sheer serendipity led to these narratives which the headman-narrator calls *cerita-sejarah* (stories of history) to become the focus of a PhD and later a book (<https://a.co/d/gkPZncD>). In this session, I will talk about the methods I use to deal with this genre of oral history, setting this in a wider Austronesian context, looking at characteristics of the genre, and using anthropology as a way to deal with anomalies and the meanings of the narrator.

The narratives represent history that is conveyed through the value that indigenous people assign to their experiences, which differs from national and post-colonial histories that portray people on the margins as helpless victims of colonial power. Such an approach to history can only be realized through the use of oral histories that show how indigenous peoples manage their lives through their value system and how their own perceptions account for their actions.

Ron Adams, The poetics of oral history: recalling the past, rehearsing the future

Abstract:

To make my argument that the accounts we record as oral historians rehearse a future as much as recall a past, I will refer to two episodes from my research on the southern Vanuatu island of Tanna:

1. The visit by Captain Cook in 1774, and the account of the visit given to a missionary in 1842 by an old man who claimed to have been present at the time.
2. The execution of a young Tannese man in 1877 for involvement in the death of a British trader, and the account given to me by Chief Yaukilipi in 2008.

In both cases, the later oral accounts are fundamentally at odds with the contemporary written accounts. They provide a Tannese perspective otherwise absent from the records. But they also point to an epistemological dilemma: to what extent do they address what happened in the past (e.g. 1774, 1877) as opposed to what was happening in the present (1842, 2008)? In relation to Tanna and the south Pacific more generally, they suggest a different understanding not only of the role of history but also the distinction between past, present and future.

Kathryn Irving, Precious memories: fallibility in family stories

Abstract:

All families tell stories, but families have different sources of authority. It was only after my grandfather died that I realised that the stories he told may not be true. In December 2023, the Royal Historical Society of Victoria published 'Exodus from Vienna,' in which authors Patrick Ferry and Angus Davison explored the journey of an Austrian refugee family to Melbourne in 1938. I am the great great granddaughter of Regine and Michael Weiss—and by chance, a historian.

Reading about my own family in an academic publication illuminated the similarities and tensions between professional historical research and family (his)stories. I have subsequently learned that the stories we tell in my family about 'Grandpa Herb' may not be factual or verifiable. These are qualities of great importance to historians, who are limited to interpreting the evidence that remains in the archive; but, within families, truthfulness may be less important than the other roles that stories play: capturing the essence of a relative's personality, or communicating the family's core values and beliefs.

This paper engages with the collective oral history of my family to explore the limitations of paper archives, and the potential contributions of formal or informal oral histories.

Session 8. ORAL HISTORIES OF PROTEST, ACTIVISM AND RIGHTS

(Owl South Grant room)

Chair-person: Deborah Towns

Barry York, Remembering the 'Battle of Waterdale Road', 1970

Abstract:

The Waterdale Road marches in September 1970 became infamous due to police violence against students. The road led from La Trobe University along the semi-industrial working-class residential suburb of West Heidelberg, 12 kms from central Melbourne. The first march, on 11 September, was attended by 70 protestors. Police attacked with batons and boots. In defiance, a second march was held on 16 th September, attended by 400, including independent observers and the media. The police again attacked the peaceful procession, arresting 19 with displays of violence that made the front pages. Two students were arrested at gunpoint.

The students remained defiant. In the end, on 23 September, another march attracted 800 people and the police, though prepared, were cowed. We won a victory for free speech, the right to protest.

In 2020, the 50th anniversary of the demonstrations, I recorded ten of the participants with a view to donating the interviews to libraries. A number of issues arise for oral historians: the importance of self-funded non-institutional interview projects, the use of technologies such as zoom for interviewing, the inherent biases within the framing of an oral history project and the multi-media use of such interviews.

Geraldine Fela, War on the wharves: revisiting the 1998 waterfront dispute

Abstract:

On 7 April 1998, security guards entered Patrick stevedoring shipping terminals across the country and escorted the unionised workforce out of the gates. With the backing of the Coalition government, Chris Corrigan, the managing director of the Patrick Corporation, sacked and locked out 1400 waterside workers—all of them members of the militant Maritime Union of Australia (MUA). In response to the lockout, the MUA and the broader trade union movement organised a mass industrial, political and legal campaign. Ports across the nation played host to scenes of mass public participation in picket lines, demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience. On May 7, MUA wharfies marched back to work. The union had not been broken, but its members returned to the waterfront with diminished conditions. Both sides claimed victory.

The so-called 'war on the wharves' transfixed the nation and holds a triumphant place in the collective memory and imagination of Australia's trade union movement. Until now however, it is has not been subject to sustained historical examination. Drawing on archival evidence and oral testimony from rank-and-file wharfies, union officials and members of the Patrick corporation's management and legal team, this paper will unpick the complex outcomes and legacies of this landmark industrial and political conflict.

Shirleene Robinson, 'The women who fear no stigma speak out': The significance and strategies of the Daughters of Bilitis/Australasian Lesbian Movement, 1969-1972

Abstract:

The Daughters of Bilitis (later renamed the Australasian Lesbian Movement) began in 1969 as Australia's first openly homosexual political organisation. Over the course of three electrifying years before it officially closed in 1972, the group embarked on a range of a ground-breaking strategies to improve the position of lesbian women

and to break a social silence. Until very recently, most of the archival records of the Daughters of Bilitis/Australasian Lesbian Movement were believed lost and the full significance of this group has yet to be properly acknowledged. This paper utilises oral histories to provide a fuller account of the significance and strategies of this pioneering organisation, as well as the emotional impact of driving social change.

Session 9. REFUGEE AND MIGRANT ORAL HISTORY

(Loton lecture theatre, Gateway Building level 2)

Chair-person: Mia Martin Hobbs

Jordana Silverstein, 'it stops you... being where you want to be': oral histories of statelessness in Australia

Abstract:

Recently I have been conducting oral history interviews with people who were stateless when they migrated to Australia and who now have Australian citizenship. In this paper I will explore some of the histories which people have recounted to me, focusing particularly on how people have described statelessness, how they have talked about its effects and its meanings. Interviewees have told me that being stateless is like being 'homeless' or 'like an orphan'. They have described the feeling of relief and excitement at receiving an Australian passport after they became citizens.

I will draw on these interviews to build on Marianne Hirsch's description of 'stateless memory' and its possibilities: 'Despite,' she writes, 'experiences of loss and negation, I want to suggest that statelessness could be claimed as a space of openness and potentiality, rather than merely a blockage to be overcome.' I will thus explore the articulations of the emotions of statelessness that arise, describing how through these interviews we can come to grips with the fragmentation – and all its attendant histories – that so many formerly stateless people describe.

Vannessa Hearman, 'We all went through very rough and difficult times': Oral histories of East Timor's clandestine resistance and the voyage of a refugee boat to Australia'

Abstract:

The Tasi Diak (the Good Sea), a wooden fishing boat, arrived in Northern Australia in late May 1995, carrying 18 East Timorese asylum seekers, including a six-month-old baby. Despite it being the first and only refugee boat from Indonesian-occupied East Timor, there is, to date, no detailed study of this episode of East Timor's resistance history. This paper discusses the process of researching and writing a book on the voyage based on a set of oral history interviews conducted with some of the boat passengers and clandestine operatives in East Timor who helped them on their journey to Australia. Given the highly secret nature of the voyage, oral history has been an important method to reveal the interviewees' reasons for leaving and their positions in the clandestine movement that resisted Indonesian rule. The oral history interview method has also allowed the passengers to discuss the journey's emotional and less heroic aspects. Finally, this paper will discuss the reticence of some of the prospective interviewees in participating and its implications for the research.

Nataliya Poshyvaylo-Towler, Voices of Resilience: Documenting 75 Years of the Ukrainian Women's Association in Victoria

Abstract:

This presentation delves into the rich tapestry of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Victoria (UWAV), spanning seven decades of unwavering commitment, cultural preservation, and community resilience. Drawing on the powerful medium of oral history, our exploration seeks to illuminate the diverse experiences and indomitable spirits of the women who have shaped the organisation since its inception in 1949.

As custodians of an essential chapter in Ukrainian-Australian history, this project of collecting video and audio evidence and interviews unveils narratives that echo the struggles, triumphs, and transformative moments woven into the fabric of the UWAV. Through a curation of oral testimonies, we aim to amplify the voices of these women, providing a platform for their stories to transcend generations.

The conference presentation will showcase the methodology employed in collecting and preserving these narratives, emphasising the collaborative nature of the project that involved participants, researchers, and the wider community. By shedding light on the multifaceted roles of the UWAV in fostering cultural identity, social cohesion, and empowerment, this initiative contributes to a broader understanding of the profound impact women's associations can have on immigrant communities.

Session 10. PODCASTING ORAL HISTORIES - 1

(Owl North Armstrong room)

Chair-person: Karen Twigg

Emma-Jean Kelly, Creating a podcast from oral history interviews – Te Rauparaha: Kei Wareware

Abstract:

In April 2022, Paul Diamond (Ngāti Haua, Te Rarawa and Ngā Puhi, Curator Māori, National Library of New Zealand) and Ross Calman (Ngāti Toa independent historian and translator) gave a public talk about Ross's new book, a translation of his tupuna (ancestor) Tamihana Te Rauparaha's 1860s manuscript about his father, the great tribal leader Te Rauparaha.

'That's a great idea for a podcast' I thought. Then came the hard work: finding the funding, convincing Paul and Ross to spend time on the project, identifying an appropriate podcast producer, ensuring the rūnanga (council) of Ngāti Toa were involved and so much more.

In October 2023 the podcast was released, and immediately went to number one in the New Zealand Apple podcast charts. The process from conception to publication was complex and involved careful navigation of ethical, cultural and intellectual challenges. This presentation will describe some of these challenges, and the satisfaction of getting it right.

Rosemary Baird, Aotearoa Unearthed: From oral history to podcasting, and back again

Abstract:

This paper looks at my experience as an oral historian creating a podcast about New Zealand archaeology for my employer, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga. I will talk about the process of adapting an oral history approach to podcasting. I've had to accept risk and shorten the interviewing, consent, and editing process. I'll share some practical learnings from teaching myself how to use online digital editing software, online recording software, and a podcasting platform.

I'll also talk about the potential of making audio interviews accessible – how it's supported the new New Zealand histories curriculum, highlighted the importance of indigenous Māori voices, and widened the reach of Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga's archaeological messaging.

The Aotearoa Unearthed podcast has demonstrated to the New Zealand Archaeology Association (NZAA) the importance of recording oral histories. The podcast has paved the way for a new oral history project on early New Zealand archaeologists. I'll end with giving an example of an Aotearoa Unearthed podcast edited from a full oral history interview with an archaeologist.

Alexandra Pierce, An oral history audio series: from concept to production

Abstract:

Over four years, I interviewed nearly 60 women about their involvement in protesting the Vietnam War and national service. When I began, I did not have a clear vision of how I would use this material; it has now become a 15-part series, "Women, Conscription, War." I undertook all parts of the project myself: the interviews and transcriptions, writing and recording the narration, editing the audio, and creating a website. In this presentation I will outline the process of doing such work as a solo creator, with a focus on what was required to produce a podcast from oral history interviews. Some issues were technical, such as learning to balance volume and dealing with poor audio quality; others were more conceptual - finding common themes, and linking the experiences of the interviewees in a way that audiences would find compelling.

3.30 – 5.00 PARALLEL SESSIONS

Session 11. FIRST PEOPLE'S TESTIMONIES: TRANSFORMING THE HISTORICAL RECORD - 1

(Gateway Auditorium)

Chair-person: Elisabeth Gondwe

Anni Hine Moana, 'Our own history books': Telling our First Nation stories in ways that make us stronger.

Abstract:

Building on my background as a psychotherapist and counsellor, I completed a PhD working with Australian Aboriginal women exploring the relationship between the emotion of shame and problems with alcohol. Styled 'narrative inquiry', I pursued my research as an oral historian. With the growth of mutual confidence and trust,

more and more the women would refer to their 'own history book' in recounting the sense they made of their lives. At odds with what they'd read in the mainstream history books at school, the narratives in their own history book provided each woman with a fundamentally different understanding of her problems with alcohol. In my presentation, I describe how telling their own story gave the women agency and power – in their words, 'made them stronger'. I also describe how, in our interaction, I too discovered agency and power, as the historian-informant/counsellor-client power imbalance began to shift and I began to understand that the project really was less about an oral history project and a PhD, and more about decolonisation and reconciliation.

Skye Krichauff, The inclusion of oral histories in the 'South Australian Frontier and its Legacies' website

Abstract:

From 2020-2023, Skye Krichauff was employed as Project Manager, oral historian and archival researcher on a truth telling project investigating violence between colonists and Aboriginal people in colonial South Australia. The project was funded by the Australian Research Council and the project's website and interactive story map were launched in Adelaide during Reconciliation Week in May 2024. In this paper, Skye outlines and reflects on the oral history component of the project, including ethical considerations and requirements, consent processes, intellectual property rights, obligations to Aboriginal participants, the publication of the research online, and the learning resources developed with and for teachers.

Nikki Henningham, An oral historian in the colonial archive: listening for First People's voices in government archives for the Yoorrook Justice Commission

Abstract:

In July 2020, in response to calls from the Victorian First Peoples' Assembly, the Victorian Government announced its commitment to a truth and justice process. Formally announced in March 2021, The Yoorrook Justice Commission's mandate was/is to inquire into both historical and ongoing injustices against First Peoples in Victoria since colonisation. A crucial part of the process was/is the collection of First People's testimony. 'Have your voice heard,' the YJC website implores. 'It's time to tell the truth about the impacts of colonisation.' Another important part of the process is to hold government agencies to account for the harm they have, and continue, to inflict.

For two years, I have worked with a government agency, the records of which reveal the extent to which Aboriginal people were surveilled, controlled, harassed and, on rare occasions, supported by government agents. Government voices are loud, clear and, surprisingly, more diverse in some regions than I expected. The voices of Aboriginal people are much harder to hear, but they do exist.

This paper will speak to my experiences of working with archival material, listening to it in parallel with testimony (oral and written) from First People to the YJC and thinking about how recovering voices from the colonial archive can assist First People to understand the gaps in their own lore and the stories handed down to them. In her testimony before the commission, Aunty Vicki Couzens noted that a paper she had read recently, built on archival research, had helped her to understand stories her own people didn't pass on because, in her

own words, they didn't know or didn't want to tell. How does an appreciation of oral history and its methodologies help us to create these opportunities?

Session 12. ORAL HISTORIES OF MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA

(Loton lecture theatre, Gateway Building level 2)

Chair-person: Jill Barnard

Alexandra Dellios, Remembering the Greek Social Security Scandal: Ambivalence and Shame in Community Oral Histories

Abstract:

Multiculturalism can mean many things in Australia. In one sense, it is a managerial policy framework to contain and police the cultural diversity of the Australian population—and to maintain its settler-colonial and Anglophone systems. In this way, it also functions to marginalise the heritage of ethnic difference and transculturality. Despite recent state-based efforts to improve the representativeness of things like heritage lists and registers, multiculturalism (as a metonymic device and a celebratory but politically bankrupt descriptor) has failed to alter heritage management practices, or to foster identification among communities. Multicultural heritage effectively creates a politics of mis/recognition, in which the ability to actively remember and interrogate the politics of ethnic and class injustice are curtailed. I explore this through one example: the 1978 Greek Social Security Scandal, and its collective memory politics today—drawing on oral histories with migrant-background lawyers and social workers whose work was intertwined with the scandal. Despite efforts to attach memories of this Scandal to a particular site, this episode is not a 'useable' or valued past in a multicultural heritage framework—at both a broader collective level, and at a community level. It operates as a contested and ambivalent memory even within pockets of the Greek-speaking community. Is this ambivalence tied to the narrative limits of celebratory multiculturalism? It's a community history that challenges us to think through the legacies of ethnic persecution and inequality, as well as the ongoing problems with the welfare state and the denial of social care in multicultural Australia.

Jennifer Rose, The power of oral history to illuminate the role of 'grass-roots' service providers in shaping multiculturalism in Melbourne.

Abstract:

In the early 1980s, a group of workers with young people in Melbourne saw a need to challenge the anglo-centric assumptions that made services inaccessible to young people from non-English speaking background. Amongst them were second-generation migrant, tertiary qualified youth workers who bridged a gap between 'ethno-specific' and 'youth' services to develop new, culturally responsive ways of working with young people. Beyond this, they sought to shape the meaning of multiculturalism in public policy and public debate at a time when the question of how to implement multiculturalism was new. Their advocacy for a 'social justice multiculturalism' in the 1980s was influenced by the struggle of migrants' rights activists who had gone before them. Drawing on oral history testimony with these youth workers, this paper explores the power of oral history

to illuminate the important role of 'grass-roots' activity in translating multiculturalism from a policy concept to a practice approach and a lived reality in communities.

Elizabeth Triarico, Italian Oral Histories in Australia: The CO.AS.IT. Italian Historical Society Story

Abstract:

Established in 1980, CO.AS.IT.'s Italian Historical Society (IHS) remains the only Italian historical society of its kind in Australia. A key part of Victoria's largest Italian welfare organisation, the aim of the IHS is to work closely with the Italian community to collect, preserve and promote the Italian Australian immigration story. Creating and preserving community stories and oral histories have been at the core of the work of the IHS since its inception. The IHS holds a highly significant collection of over 400 oral histories mostly undertaken in the 1980s and covering an historical period starting from the 1890s. Many of these oral histories are multilingual and reflect all aspects of the Italian Australian immigration experience. While the aim and work of the IHS remains the same, much has changed over the last 40 years including technology, access and the way oral histories are used. This presentation explores the impact of these changes on the original IHS oral history collection, the benefits, and challenges of working with a multilingual collection and the successful strategy of using oral histories as part of the IHS program for collecting objects.

Session 13. PODCASTING ORAL HISTORIES - 2

(Owl South Grant room)

Chair-person: Elaine Rabbitt

Daniel Bacchieri, Beyond Bourke Street: Podcasting the Trajectory of Melbourne Street Musicians Through the COVID-19 Pandemic

Abstract:

Drawing upon 45 interviews comprising more than 21 hours recorded with Melbourne-based street musicians, the podcast series 'Beyond Bourke Street' examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on buskers through first-person recordings before (in 2019), during (2020-2021) and after the lockdowns in the Central Business District (2022-2023). Now archived through the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, 'Beyond Bourke Street' is a located oral history project that vividly captures the sounds of the city and the buskers who bring the streets of Melbourne to life.

This presentation highlights the pros and cons of doing interviews in the streets in comparison with remote recordings produced during the pandemic. The role of editing is also emphasised, with podcast episodes averaging nearly 9 minutes in duration, while Melbourne artists showcase original songs and talk about their lives and work as buskers. As stated in this oral history production, the street music community in Melbourne operates in physical, virtual and temporary spaces where the audience plays the role of digital gatekeepers. Throughout the analysis, it is possible to map a music environment with mobile artists and audiences built by pre-scheduled and impromptu busking sessions.

Susan Timpani, Closed Borders Podcast: Go Home! Australia's COVID-19 message to temporary migrants in 2020

Abstract:

In the podcast *Closed Borders*, nursing tutor Susan interviews international nursing students studying in South Australia during COVID-19. Students talk about their trauma, when the COVID pandemic hit. Cat from Brazil: "They told us to go home. It would be six different flights, staying in different countries for like twenty-four hours. It was taking about a week for people to get home". Not eligible for income support, Liana from China: "International students do not have enough money to purchase the food, drinks, and life-necessary items". COVID-19 rates in Asia escalated. Arianne from the Philippines: "And then you hear from the news all the deaths, all the positive cases in your country. And then, of course, you're going to worry about your family". From Korea, Lisa was too afraid to go shopping: "So although I'm wearing a mask and I went out, people look at me, give a look, and stare at me...I was very scared". Like their local classmates, they were also training to work in one of the most at-risk professions in the world at that time. The *Closed Borders* podcast provided a medium for international nursing students to tell a vital story for remembrance and hope for change.

Siobhan McHugh, The Greatest Menace: Investigating a 'Gay Prison' via oral history and narrative podcast

Abstract:

Now two decades old, podcasting's affinity with oral history rests on the power of voice, to connect and communicate. *The Greatest Menace* (2022) is an acclaimed narrative podcast (2022) that exposes historical injustice: a 'gay prison' established in Australia in 1957 to incarcerate homosexual men, while a committee chaired by a University of Sydney psychiatrist examined the 'causes and treatment' of homosexuality. Over three years, 102 hours of interviews were recorded with former inmates, activists, academics, and former policemen assigned to entrap gay men at public 'beats'. These interviews, along with many hours of archival recordings and actuality, were carefully crafted into episodic audio storytelling using theory and practice of narrative podcast aesthetics. The author is a seminal scholar and practitioner in this emerging field, and co-producer of the podcast. The strong parasocial bond between host and audience (Heiselberg & Have 2023) was leveraged, as host Patrick Abboud navigates interviews with hostile witnesses and documents his struggle for acceptance as a gay man in his homophobic Arab-Australian community. The podcast has won 17 awards, including a Walkley, and has helped former prisoners to have their criminal records expunged. This presentation explores how we balanced fairness and facts with riveting storytelling.

Session 14. ORAL HISTORY AND WOMEN'S HISTORY

(Room 104, Gateway Building level 1)

Chair-person: Shirleene Robinson

Natasha Suzhan, 'All of a Sudden the Pill offered you Freedom': Female Technologists and Oral Contraceptives in Australia, 1961 to 1991

Abstract:

It has been 63 years since the Pill was released onto the global market as a (mostly) female-controlled contraceptive technology. This product was unlike any of the messy, fiddly, inconsistent, fallible, and sometimes mood-killing mechanical and chemical contraceptive methods and products that preceded it. Oral contraceptives basically sold themselves through the promise of spontaneous and guaranteed safe (from pregnancy, at least) marital sex through the regimented daily ingestion of a pill that 'c[ould] be eaten like candy'. The rapid uptake in the Pill in Australia (and most of the western world) in its first decade of sale demonstrates that there was a broad enthusiasm across ecumenical, economic, and ethnic cohorts for an efficient female-managed technology that didn't require constant maintenance, extensive pre-sex preparation, or the use of fine motor skills.

But how did this shift in contraceptive practice – and its resultant socio-cultural and gender ruptures – relate to scientific communication? Was it a product of an incremental increase in public appreciation and application of medico-scientific knowledge built up over several decades by contraceptive scientists and activists? Or a by-product of the apparent scientific breakthrough that had rendered the reproductive female body wholly manageable? No one has yet asked these questions – but they are central to my oral history of oral contraceptives in Australia.

This talk will present initial findings from this project's pilot trial and seek to draw some useful conclusions about the intersection of science and technology communication and gender and reproductive autonomy in recent Australian history.

Bronwyn Ryan and Louise Whelan, Filling the space gap: Building the Women in the Space Industry Oral History Collection

Abstract:

In 2023, oral historian and photographer Louise Whelan and the National Library of Australia embarked upon a project to redress the lack of documentation around the critical role of Australian women in the space industry. To amplify women's voices in the male-dominated realm of space exploration, the Library commissioned Louise to document the contributions and experiences of women in the space industry in Australia through 22 oral histories and 70 portraits and photographs. Their reflections touched on gender equality, space ethics, law and governance, space medicine, sustainability, STEM and the emerging technologies of the current space race.

This presentation will discuss the Women in Space Industry project from two perspectives. Bronwyn Ryan from the National Library of Australia will talk about the Library's involvement in planning and shaping the project with Louise and the importance of whole-of-life oral history interviews. Louise Whelan will talk about her work for the project, challenges she experienced and what she has learned from the interviews, including the everyday use of space technologies, future colonisation of Mars, and how to manage a work/life family balance as a female space professional.

Vivian Lu, *Survival, Camaraderie and Aspirations: Recording the Working and Private Lives of Chinese and Vietnamese Migrant Women in Melbourne’s Textiles Industry*

Abstract:

This presentation draws upon oral history research I conducted in 2019 for my History Honours thesis at the University of Melbourne, and will discuss the importance of oral history testimony to migrant, diasporic and labour history, and the ways these testimonies can be employed to write migrant ‘histories from below’. The presentation will provide a summary of my research, which draws extensively on oral history interviewing and diasporic memory to articulate the ‘hidden’ agency of migrant garment factory workers, discuss methodological challenges and possibilities encountered (i.e. conducting bilingual interviews, recruiting participants) and highlight the methods used to interpret subjective memories. It will also highlight the radical potential of oral history research and how it can be harnessed to challenge orthodox historical accounts of labour and migration.

Session 15. ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW RELATIONSHIPS

(Owl North Armstrong room)

Chair-person: Katherine Sheedy

Nicolette Snowden, *Humility and self-importance: managing egos in the interview encounter*

Abstract:

Oral historian Valerie Yow says we cannot pretend there is “nothing going on inside of us that is influencing the research.” In this paper I consider how ego impacts the interview exchange. I draw on interviews conducted for a commissioned history for a large Australian university’s upcoming anniversary. Oral history interviews formed part of the project’s methodology and interviewees were largely decided upon by a university-led steering committee. Many interviewees had crucial institutional knowledge gained across many decades and most held positions of power and prestige within the organisation. There were stark differences amongst the interviewees, most noticeably those who had large egos and asserted their role and achievements, compared with interviewees who were more humble and sometimes reluctant to describe their contribution.

I outline the emotional labour involved in responding to interviewees’ divergent ways of recollecting their work lives, the repercussions of using interpersonal skills that do not always feel comfortable or genuine, and the implication of applying moral judgements to personal characteristics such as humility and self-importance. I hope this paper prompts a discussion about interview techniques and the internal emotional gymnastics that interviewers might make when aiming for an interview that is respectful and beneficial.

Miranda Francis, *“May all the stories nurture your life ahead”*: Unexpected joys of the interview exchange

Abstract:

Oral historians recognise that both the narrator and interviewer are changed by interviewing. Sometimes these effects are long-lasting and endure beyond the research project completion. Although oral history is not therapy, the interview relationship can bring unexpected joys and therapeutic benefits for narrator and interviewer.

In this paper I will draw on my experience interviewing women about their lives as mothers. Their powerful stories show mothers as historical actors and agents who respond to and shape historical change. Listening to their intimate lives, I witnessed mothers embrace new opportunities, resist social pressure, and push back against gender structures to act for their safety and that of their children. Although this research is officially complete, the women and their families continue to live in my head. Many narrators have stayed in contact, and one recently wrote that she hoped “the stories nurture your life ahead”. This paper will explore the ways oral history interviewing has enriched my life and shaped my research interests, a reminder of the enduring personal impacts of these encounters.

Sian Edwards, The Insider oral historian: opportunities and challenges in an HIV project

Abstract:

‘The AIDS Era - an oral history of UK health care workers’ is a collection of 62 life history interviews with UK doctors, nurses and allied health care workers who were involved in the HIV speciality during the years 1986 – 1998. I was involved in establishing the oral history collection, interviewing many of the HIV health care workers involved, and am currently interpreting and presenting the findings for a book publication. I am also an HIV specialist nurse and so identify closely with the interview material. I am an insider. This presentation focusses specifically on interviews in which health care workers recall and detail how dramatically professional boundaries became blurred. At times interviews contained challenging and controversial disclosures. I wish to examine the impact of being an insider oral historian on the choices we make when interpreting and presenting oral histories; what we choose to present, what we choose to hide and how to still ensure the preservation and presentation of robust history.

SATURDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2024

Trinity College Gatehouse Centre, University of Melbourne

9.30-11.00 PARALLEL SESSIONS

Session 16. FIRST PEOPLE’S TESTIMONIES: TRANSFORMING THE HISTORICAL RECORD - 2

(Gateway Auditorium)

Chair-person: Lucy Bracey

Bronte Gosper, Speaking into the void: the co-opting of Indigenous testimony throughout history and how we resist this through oral historical practice

Abstract:

Capturing Indigenous oral histories, or Indigenous perspectives in general, is an often fraught practice. Throughout history, Indigenous people have been asked to speak, to testify, when a unified ‘voice’ is expected of us, usually only at moments of

national need, in transitional periods or when the nation must justify itself on the international stage. Indigenous testimonies are often collected and co-opted by the state to tell a certain story about itself, rather than to be heard on their own terms or

to disrupt colonial control. Too often, Indigenous voices are mystified, romanticized, and the ever-nodding head of (often well-meaning) non-Indigenous listeners belabours our freedom of expression. What is their demand? Why is an Indigenous story more relevant when it is a story of suffering? The conditions of settler colonialism seem to ensure that its expectations reproduce themselves again and again, shapeshifting through the public imaginary. How can we escape this? In this session, I will explore how Indigenous sovereignty can be asserted through the very methodology we use in our oral historical practice. I will use my oral docuseries 'The Everywhen' winner of Columbia University's Brodsky Award in 2023 as reference point, citing examples of non-linear narrative structures used by my narrators and encouraged by a certain form of interviewing. Can these oral histories shape our understandings of time and how is this, in itself, a form of activism? In my documentary and accompanying writing, refusing colonial time comes to be a way of asserting Indigenous sovereignty and an Indigenous temporality through oral historical practice.

Catherine Cottle, Risks, Rewards and Possibilities: First Nations Elders Oral History project at State Library of Queensland

Abstract:

First Nations oral histories transform historical archives and challenge mainstream histories. At State Library of Queensland, we witness collaboration and truth-telling as powerful dynamics that bring forth voices and perspectives to shake up traditional versions of history and reshape policies and politics. The First Nations Elders Oral History project (FNEOH) has realised an opportunity for Elders to record invaluable, first-hand narratives of lived experiences that may be shocking and affirming at the same time for the larger community. These opportunities come with risk as the Elders' oral histories may disrupt accepted narratives and can possibly generate pain and conflict, in families, communities and nations.

With collaboration and truth-telling deeply embedded in State Library's ethos, this immensely rewarding project's value has grown with participants, government, media, institutions and the general public. We are now seeing First Nations Interviewers collaborate with Elders providing insights and knowledge of First Nations practices that can educate all.

Specialist Librarian Catherine Cottle shares the complexities and rewards of FNEOH collaboration and collection building, with emphasis on cultural appropriateness, rights, long-term access and long-term preservation.

Carla Pascoe Leahy and Julia Hurst, Caring for kin and Country: Aboriginal mothering in a time of climate crisis

Abstract:

In this presentation, oral historians Julia Hurst and Carla Pascoe Leahy reflect on a collaborative project with the National Library of Australia interviewing Aboriginal mothers living on Wadawurrung Country. These life history interviews reflect on how these mothers' responsibilities for raising children and caring for traditional lands, waters and skies have been disrupted by the ongoing crises of colonisation and climate change. Julia and Carla

will explore Aboriginal connections to Country and to intergenerational patterns of kinship and care, demonstrating that caring for Country and caring for children are intertwined in the lives of these First Nations mothers.

Session 17. ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWING: APPROACHES AND ISSUES - 2

(Owl South Grant room)

Chair-person: David Sweet

Mark Wong, Navigating Detours and Digressions in Oral History Interviews: Balancing Control and Collaboration

Abstract:

In oral history, the notion of control is a complex one. On one hand, the interviewer has the responsibility to guide the conversation and ensure that the interview stays focused on the research objectives. This requires a certain level of control, particularly in terms of asking relevant questions and gently steering the conversation when necessary.

On the other hand, oral history is meant to be a collaborative process that values the interviewee's agency and voice. This means allowing the interviewee to tell their story in their own words and following their lead when they bring up unexpected topics or connections. In this sense, the interviewer should be open to relinquishing some control and being flexible in their approach.

This delicate balance becomes particularly challenging when interviewees introduce unexpected topics or detours. Drawing from examples from the National Archives of Singapore, this presentation explores the reasons and meanings for these situations and develops strategies for handling detours and digressions effectively, exploring their potential risks and rewards

Elaine Rabbitt, The Power of Oral History: Let's talk about interview styles

Abstract:

Goolarri Media's idea to train community radio stations and media workers in professional oral history practice was one the Community Broadcasting Foundation, CBF welcomed.

In 2020, prior to the CoVID19 pandemic, they saw the potential to significantly enhance radio broadcasting production capabilities, podcasts, thoughtful extended interviews, news stories and documentaries.

The Australian Government's Community Broadcasting Program, enables the CBF to nationally support professional oral history training as a potential tool for stations to create content and archival material.

However, as embedded practices are difficult to change, challenges arise in training experienced broadcasters and journalists in the oral history style of interviewing.

The power of oral history is evidenced by the interview style, its purpose, and the dynamics between interviewer and storyteller. The interviewer shapes the questions and the storyteller the narrative.

Alison Atkinson-Phillips, Exploring 'informed consent' in a diverse community: a case study from the 100 People Project

Abstract:

100 People Shieldfield began as an artist residency that explored connections between people and places in an inner-urban part of Newcastle upon Tyne (UK). Running 2022-2023, the project resulted in a film (100 People, a portrait of co-existence), exhibition and song. Recordings of conversations between community members now form the basis of the Dwellbeing Shieldfield community archive.

In 2022, I worked with artist/film-maker Andrew Wilson and members of the Shieldfield community to explore ways of translating formal oral history protocols into on-the-ground practices of ethical informed consent. Shieldfield is a diverse area, with a high concentration of social housing including many people who have come to the UK as refugees, and recordings included people with a wide range of written and spoken English literacy. The Shieldfield Youth Group was also involved in the project, so informed consent needed to consider the needs of children. In this paper, I will share some of the learnings, challenges of outcomes of this process.

Session 18. CONTESTED MEMORIES AND HISTORIES

(Loton lecture theatre, Gateway Building level 2)

Chair-person: Siobhan McHugh

Peter Hodson, Gallaher's Tobacco: navigating risky oral histories in post-conflict Northern Ireland

Abstract:

The paper uses the example of Gallaher's Tobacco factory in Ballymena, County Antrim, to explore the gendered impact of deindustrialisation and the risks of oral history fieldwork in Northern Ireland. Gallaher's opened a state-of-the-art cigarette manufacturing plant in the mid-1950s which provided female industrial employment in a rural area of Northern Ireland. Using oral histories, the paper will discuss how women framed their shopfloor experience in a mixed-religion workplace, identity as manual workers, and status as female earners within the household economy.

The paper will explore how women workers negotiated job loss, perceptions of capital flight and their re-integration into a saturated industrial labour market. The paper discusses difficulties encountered in recruiting interviewees in post-conflict (and post-Boston College tapes scandal) Northern Ireland. The paper reflects on the powerful 'instinct to say nothing', especially among working-class communities where social history is intertwined with sectarian conflict – a stark reminder of where agency and power lies in interview situations. Oral history in Northern Ireland is difficult precisely because remembering can be dangerous, and many narrators were uneasy when confronted with their transcripts. Some retrospectively opted for anonymity or highlighted sections as 'off the record'. The paper will conclude by discussing issues surrounding potential re-traumatisation and narrator references to paramilitarism, which pose significant ethical challenges for oral historians undertaking fieldwork.

Mia Martin Hobbs, Looking for stories that don't want to be told: Oral history research with anti-war Vietnam veterans in Australia

Abstract:

This paper explores the difficulties of recovering radical anti-war stories in a society that is increasingly militaristic. In my oral history project with American and Australian veterans who returned to Vietnam after the war, I encountered dozens of staunchly anti-war American veterans, while the Australians were mostly conservative and adhered to the Anzac narrative. While many of my Australian interviewees expressed some anti-war views, they also explicitly opposed the anti-war movement and strongly identified with mainstream veterans' organisations. In this paper, I discuss the ways I attempted to overcome this demographic gap by trying to find an explicitly anti-war Australian Vietnam veteran to interview, including signs of hesitancy, refusal, and even indicators that anti-war veterans were intimidated into silence by mainstream veterans' organisations. Drawing on the small number of openly anti-war Australians that I interviewed, I suggest that anti-war Australian veterans choose to drop their veteran identity and blend into broader pacifist organisations, rather than drawing on their veteran experience to protest war. In doing so, I reflect on balancing the power of oral history to challenge traditional Australian war narratives with the risks and repercussions of anti-war testimony.

Judith Pabian, Challenging Popular Narratives as an Outsider: Language, Cultural Sensitivities and Gender

Abstract:

On Thursday 6th April 1944 around seventy armed partisans successfully defended the remote Tuscan hill-fortress of Monticchiello against a dawn raid by 240 heavily armed Italian Fascist militia, forty of whom died as a result while two young partisans lost their lives. The partisans fought a strategically exceptional eleven-hour battle that was unmatched in the history of the Tuscan resistance. The following day a German punitive raid that intended to massacre the villagers also failed in its mission. The popular heroic narrative of these events has been repeated for eighty years with little variation at public celebrations. This paper highlights the risks, as well as the unexpected rewards and possibilities of being outsider and a woman, not beholden to the expectations of an hierarchical local culture. Through oral testimonies supported by archival research I challenge enduring popular narratives that were carefully constructed to create historical certainties and erase historical ambiguities.

In this paper I discuss how, by taking on these risks, the act of engaging with oral history opened up the possibility of revealing a broader, more complex and fluid local rural resistance to the German occupation conducted largely by women and children in a rural Tuscan agricultural community.

Session 19. MAKING ORAL HISTORY BOOKS, EXHIBITIONS AND PERFORMANCES

(Owl North Armstrong room)

Chair-person: Christeen Schoepf

Sally Anne Watson Kane, Transforming an oral history into a published life story

Abstract:

Most verbatim transcripts of oral history recordings have poor readability and accessibility for the average reader compared to a published memoir or autobiography. This is no one's fault. It is natural for most storytellers to repeat the same story, adding different details with each telling, and tell a range of stories in a train-of-thought manner, in any order.

Oral history transcripts can, however, be transformed into a published memoir or autobiography by compiling, editing and designing the transcripts' content into a professionally presented book that the narrator can share with family or the public. The key is ensuring the narrator's "voice" and ownership are preserved throughout the life story and project.

In this version of "shared authority", what are the tensions between the different "storytellers" – narrator, interviewer, editor, designer, publisher/client?

Alison Ingram, Post-Verbatim Theatre: Creating Collective Oral Histories as Audio-Dramas

Abstract:

From the early-late-twentieth-century, an estimated 250,000 Australians were taken from their mothers at birth and "adopted" under closed-records legislation. This period in history is known as the "forced adoption" era. As an insider to the lived experience and cumulative trauma of being adopted, my Theatre and Performance doctoral research project, *Infans VOIC'D* (A History Play in Five Acts), is an Audio-Drama, developed in collaboration with six adult "adoptees" as the performers of their own stories. Based upon verbatim transcriptions of recorded interviews and theatrically structured through identified commonly occurring events, the play is a chronological account of the performers' memories, from childhood to reunion with their mothers. This presentation considers what Australian theatre-scholar Caroline Wake calls 'the ethics of repetition' – that is, the risk of re-traumatisation through repetitive telling, an integral practice of theatre production. Using British oral historian and verbatim-theatre-practitioner Clare Summerskill's (2021) analysis of these two closely interrelated disciplines and where they diverge, I will argue that despite being an edited and reconstructed collective of the performers' original interviews, *Infans VOIC'D* sits in-between the two disciplines, as a model offering opportunity for interdisciplinary collaborations, by which Audio-Dramas may be archived as creative and authentic oral history projects.

Abigail Belfrage, Listening with the eyes and hearing with the heart: making a community-based exhibition

Abstract:

In 2023 the Australian Orphanage Museum launched its first temporary exhibition; "Our Lives, Our Stories: Geelong Care Leavers Talking Back to their Records", receiving a Commendation in the Oral History category of the 2023 Victorian Community History Awards. Based on oral history interviews and contextual research, the exhibition features the stories of people who grew up in orphanages and children's Homes in the Geelong area, and their experiences of accessing records about their childhoods.

In this presentation, historian Abi Belfrage, who was commissioned by Care Leavers of Australasia Network to produce the exhibition, will explore some of the principles and processes guiding this community-based exhibition project, and how the project team adapted to challenges along the way. The project centred the experiences of individual Care Leavers and the wider Care Leaver community, providing opportunities for participation, and expanding traditional models of consent for contributors. Abi will also reflect on the challenges of communicating speech, and complex, nuanced, societal issues in a static visual format, and in a way that people would want to read.

Session 20. NATIONAL TRUTH-TELLING AND ORAL HISTORY

(Room 104, Gateway Building level 1)

Chair-person: Deborah Towns

Kresno Brahmantyo and Harry Darmawan, The Indonesian Mass Killing of 1965. An Oral History Project

Abstract:

The Indonesian mass killing of 1965 is an event that has never been thoroughly discussed until now. This tragic and bloody event in Indonesia's modern history linked many people, both perpetrators and victims, who lived in the shared space called Indonesia. It is presented in various forms of historical narrative, including books, essays, drama scripts, poetry, radio broadcast, art installations, and documentary films such as "Jembatan Bacem" (The Bridge of Bacem), "Tjidurian 19," and "Air Mata di Ladang Tebu" (Tears in the Sugar Filed).

However, the written sources detailing this tragedy remain weak, lacking both in narrative depth and comprehensive data. The victims' stories have not been adequately integrated into the historical narrative, which tends to be dominated by the perspectives of the actors or winners of the events. Documentation efforts have also been lacking and not readily accessible to the public. In response, various non-governmental organizations have taken the initiative to document the incident, conducting oral history interviews and gathering related documents. These efforts have allowed the victims' experiences to take their rightful place in the historical record. For years, victims lacked the opportunity or platform to share their experiences, as the historiography of 1965 likely did not provide space for their voices. The victims' experiences and testimonies now serve as the foundation of the historical narrative presented in public discourse.

This oral history projects aim to collect, preserve, and present these accounts within the context of Indonesian experiences following the collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998. By amplifying the voices of the victims in historical narratives, Indonesia's dark history is hopefully becoming more open and democratic.

Sam Dalgarno, "My recollection was not quite so dramatic": Northern Territory patrol officers, Aboriginal child separation, and oral history in Australia's public life

Abstract:

From the 1980s, Northern Territory patrol officers told their stories of working with Aboriginal people in the middle decades of the twentieth century in a variety of public contexts and especially in oral history interviews. Following the release of the 1997 Bringing Them Home report into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander children from their families, the experiences and memories of these patrol officers became material to the heated political contest about the “truth” of the report’s history of Aboriginal child removal.

With “truth-telling” about the past now being widely emphasised as a way to reconcile Australia’s past, it is timely to reflect on the difficulty nations face in “working through” such unsettling histories, particularly those within living memory. This paper will do so by considering the recollections of these men, exploring how the officers remembered (and forgot) their involvement in removing children, and how they tried to reconcile their own pasts.

Session 21. ORAL HISTORY AND POLITICS

(Loton lecture theatre, Gateway Building level 2)

Chair-person: Judy Hughes

John Mickel, Bjelke-Petersen Nutter or Strategist.

Abstract:

My PhD research of the 2008 merger of the Queensland Liberals and Nationals, comprises many Elite Oral History interviews covering a forty-year period including the Coalition split of 1983 which left a bitter taste in the mouths of State and Federal Liberal parliamentarians.

Bjelke Petersen’s 1987 quixotic Joh for PM campaign alienated Federal MPs who vetoed merger attempts up until 2008. Public oral histories gave insights in the relationships Bjelke Petersen had with fellow politicians.

Material from my interviews provided insights into how interviewees felt about specific personalities and events. A public interview with National MP David Cory outlined the different attitudes to Coalition relationship building from Premiers Nicklin, Pizzey and Bjelke-Petersen. He spoke about how Bjelke- Petersen slowly eroded previously cordial relationships between Coalition parties.

This insight was not taken in isolation but was checked against other oral histories and books from that period. For instance, the oral history was backed an author’s opinion who said of “Bjelke - Petersen He was never a ‘hail fellow, well met’ politician. Nor did he have the quiet dignity of Frank Nicklin.”

This paper argues that Bjelke- Petersen’s personal style broke political relationships thereby delaying the 2008 Queensland merger for decades.

Mary-Ellen Ryan, Elite Oral Histories cast new light on Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen's 'strong man' leadership

Abstract:

Queensland's Bjelke-Petersen Government carved a unique path in response to the emerging AIDS public health crisis in early 1980s Australia. Refusing to join the Commonwealth's co-operative model, to which all other mainland jurisdictions signed, the Bjelke-Petersen Government instead opted for a legalistic and punitive model which aggressively targeted both individuals and marginalised groups. The approach was without regard to potentially deadly health outcomes. The Queensland response was not based on a policy approach formally

adopted by Executive Government, but on an Idee Fixe held by the Premier. His compounding mismanagement of the politics of AIDS resulted in crucial National Party support swinging away from Bjelke-Petersen, most notably, Queensland National Party President Robert Sparkes, as the Premier proved incapable of grasping the Weltanschauung of the Queensland people. This is the first time this history has been recorded.

Unique to Queensland, AIDS was a public health crisis taking place within a series of political crises, with the beginning of the AIDS crisis coinciding with the final tumultuous years of the Bjelke-Petersen premiership. To capture a more comprehensive account of the impact of the AIDS crisis on Queensland's political leadership, I conducted oral history interviews with five key public figures (elites) who had direct involvement in, and background knowledge of, Queensland's unique experience of, Queensland's unique response to AIDS from 1983 to 1987. Participants included two Cabinet Ministers in the Bjelke-Petersen Government; Queensland Health's then Deputy Director-General tasked with the Department's response to AIDS; then head of Brisbane's Mater Hospitals; and the Commonwealth Health Minister Dr Neal Blewett's Principal Secretary. I asked all participants what they remembered of the early years of the AIDS crisis, and to describe their own role in the response. I also asked them to reflect on what the State's initial response revealed about the functioning of the Bjelke-Petersen Government. Their responses, both individually and in combination, revealed new information about a co-ordinated guerilla campaign to combat AIDS, without Bjelke-Petersen's knowledge. Crucially, they also revealed particularities of Queensland's AIDS crisis response which exposed profound vulnerabilities in the Premier's in the Premier's leadership style, which contributed directly to his catastrophic downfall.

Session 22. MASTERCLASS

(Gateway Auditorium)

Chair-person: Alice Garner

Siobhan McHugh, Wrangling complex oral history on queer true crime into a compelling narrative podcast: The Making of The Greatest Menace

Abstract:

Narrative nonfiction podcasts can sound effortless, but an invisible art underpins the conversion of voluminous interviews and data into an episodic podcast that sounds intimate and authentic, while delivering a hard-edged expose. The Greatest Menace is an eight-part narrative podcast, winner of 17 awards, including gold at New York Festivals and a Walkley, that traces the history of a 'gay prison' in Australia.

The author was part of a three-person team that shaped 102 hours of raw interviews and evidence into serialised audio storytelling. The podcast is hosted by Patrick Abboud, a gay man whose struggle for acceptance in his homophobic Arab community counterpoints the historical narrative.

In this masterclass, using actual script drafts and illustrative audio clips, the author will reveal the production process. She will show script/interview edits and call attention to how in this medium, engaging storytelling emerges from a careful consideration of tone, texture, tempo, character and narrative arcs. She will discuss apt choice and placement of music, crafting of scenes and development of a host persona. In short, this masterclass will deconstruct how the team created the work and provide a template for the production of an exemplary narrative podcast from raw oral history.

Session 23. MASTERCLASSES

(Owl South Grant room)

Chair-person: Al Thomson

Anna Zhu, Portrait photography for oral history, tips for cameras and phones

Abstract:

Professional photographer for 15 years and oral historian for the National Library for three years, I'm hoping to share my insights into portrait photography. Participants can bring both their mobiles and/or digital cameras, or just watch my presentation. Topics covered will include: setting the mood, selecting backgrounds with context in mind, lighting, composition, making the complex simple. I will walk through a small selection of my photographs as examples.

John Winter and Ros Walker, How to Film Video Interviews on a Smartphone

Abstract:

The 100 Project celebrates the lives and stories of Australian centenarians from all backgrounds reflecting today's diverse Australia. The core concept of this project is simple – families, friends and carers can learn from the website how to film centenarians on their smartphone and then The 100 Project team professionally edits the material for free.

In this participatory workshop, experienced filmmakers John Winter (producer, Rabbit-Proof Fence) and Ros Walker (producer, Everybody's Oma), will take participants through the steps required to get good video and good audio using a camera or smartphone. The workshop will include technical tips about framing, lighting (without lights), choosing the right location, tripods, audio and microphones, as well as smartphone settings. They will also discuss suggested questions for interviewing centenarians.

Whilst The 100 Project is focused on centenarians, the techniques discussed in this workshop will be applicable to other oral history video projects.

Session 25. LIGHTNING PRESENTATIONS

(Room 104, Gateway Building level 1)

Chair-person: Jordy Silverstein

Sherrie-Lee Evans, Australian Cultural Resource Management in Antarctica: The Case of Mawson's Huts

Abstract:

The thesis will focus on the history of the management of the Mawson's Huts site as a case study to explore various questions relevant to the wider application of CRM in Antarctica. Mawson's Huts is the most extensive and culturally prominent Historic Site or Monument (HSM) in the Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT).

In his 2005 article “Ice, Icon and Identity: The Meaning of Mawson’s Huts” Richard Mackay posited that “Changing approaches to the conservation of Mawson’s Huts reflect developments in Australian conservation philosophy, practices, and techniques” (2005: 107). It might be reasonable to assume therefore, that the history of how approaches to the conservation of Mawson’s Huts changed over time would also offer insight into the history of CRM in the AAT.

In Mackay’s brief examination of that history, he has painted a picture of an initially reactive Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) creating a management void into which both “lay enthusiasts and professionals were happy to move” thereby setting up “a management environment that fostered a contest for site ‘ownership’ between enthusiasts, heritage professionals and scientists of different persuasions.” This situation also led to “an intriguing three-way tension between the AAD (as responsible government agency), the Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) (as statutory authority responsible for Commonwealth heritage management) and the AAP and later Mawson’s Huts Foundation (AAPMHF and MHF)” (Mackay, 2005: 112-113).

Mackay’s review thus suggests a history of competing heritage discourses which have challenged and, in some cases, changed the Prevailing Antarctic Heritage Discourse (PAHD) as opposed to Hingley’s assertion that non-state actor engagements with Antarctic heritage “have cooperated with, conformed to and been absorbed by the official and legal framework for heritage management” (Hingley, 2021: 43).

A detailed examination of the history of the conservation management of Mawson’s Huts with contrasting developments in CRM and enabling and domestic legislation in Australia by way of archival research and oral history interviews would help to test this hypothesis.

Jue Fang Shih, Xiaomeng Tian and Peihan Li, Capturing Spiritual and Cultural Heritage: The Nan Tien Temple’s 30th Anniversary Oral History Project

Abstract:

As Nan Tien Temple celebrates its 30th Anniversary this year, we endeavour to capture the temple’s transformative journey through firsthand oral history interviews with a diverse group of individuals. This project not only commemorates three decades of spiritual and community growth, but also attempts to serve as a vital repository of cultural heritage and intergenerational wisdom within the diverse society of Australia.

Our methodology intertwines traditional oral history techniques with innovative digital archiving. By sharing these narratives, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of cultural legacy (i.e., the integration and transformation of Buddhist culture within Australia’s multicultural framework), resilience, and the profound impact of spiritual institutions on individual and communal life.

Our 5-minute presentation will offer insights into the project’s conception, the risks and challenges encountered when using oral history to capture memories (e.g., navigation of personal biases and community norms), and the invaluable skills and lessons we learned. Our presentation aligns with the conference’s theme and resonates with its commitment to preserving and celebrating oral history’s role in understanding our past and shaping our future. Therefore, we eagerly anticipate the opportunity to share our current journey and open for discussion for further improvements.

Sam Scott, Strategies and Meanings of Chilean Activism in Melbourne, 1973-1990

Abstract:

The Chilean civic-military dictatorship between 1973-1990 led to thousands of Chileans migrating to Melbourne, where many of them remain today. The PhD broadly addresses the shortage of historical research on Chileans in Melbourne and their experiences of migration.

The presentation, which relates to a chapter of the PhD thesis, is centred on Chilean activists' participation in the Chilean solidarity movement in Melbourne throughout the dictatorship period. The presentation explores political strategies of Chilean activists and the meanings they experienced from participating in solidarity activities. I argue that Chilean activists strategically appealed to Melbourne's working-class to overcome the challenges of disempowerment associated with forced migration. Furthermore, I argue that Chilean activists remember the solidarity movement in Melbourne through opposing meanings of disillusionment and positive change.

The presentation findings are primarily based on empirical data taken from life history interviews in 2023 and 2024 with Chilean activists in Melbourne. I discuss the interpretation of opposing meanings in oral history interviews, and how such meanings highlight the sometimes contradictory nature of lived experience.

1.30 – 3.00 PARALLEL SESSIONS

Session 26. INTERPRETING ORAL HISTORIES

(Gateway Auditorium)

Chair-person: Jen Rose

Anisa Puri, Exploring Connections: Oral History and Linguistics

Abstract:

Oral history and linguistics are different in many ways, but oral historians and linguists share an interest in language and the voice, and the meanings associated with how people speak. Oral historians have long been interested in the aurality of oral history and use a range of creative methods to connect listeners and readers to the voice of the person telling their story. Like oral historians, linguists create interviews—and some linguists have found that oral histories are very valuable for linguistic analysis. Both oral historians and linguists have called for closer collaboration between their two fields.

This paper explores intersections between the practice of oral history and sociolinguistics, based on my experience working with sociolinguists as part of the Language Data Commons of Australia project. This paper considers how sociolinguists and oral historians can learn from each other, by asking questions such as: how do sociolinguists use archived oral histories in their work? Are there digital tools that linguists use to work with interview audio that might be useful for oral historians? Are sociolinguistic interviews potentially a useful source for historians?

Jill Barnard, The little clues that complicate the narrative - listening to family stories in NLA's Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants interviews

Abstract:

This paper will explore how careful listening to interviews archived in the NLA's Forgotten Australian and Former Child Migrants oral history collection can reveal new insights about family lives in mid-twentieth century Australia and complicate and augment the public narrative about the relationship between family life and institutional life for Australians who experienced out-of-home care as children. I will discuss how attention to the 'little clues' that pepper these interviews - pauses, contradictions, repetition, emphasis and changes in tone - helped me to make sense of these complicated life stories.

Carolyn Collins, 'I Want to Tell A Good Story about Holden': Navigating and Analysing the Power of Pre-determined Narratives.

Abstract:

The closure of the last Holden factory in Australia in 2017 was the catalyst for an oral history project focussing on the memories of former workers. Based on similar projects overseas, we expected many of these workers to be angry and sad about the loss of jobs, livelihoods and community. What was unexpected was the fierce determination of many of our interviewees to tell 'good stories' about their working lives and their employer. This created challenges in regard to balance, especially given the restrictions of university ethics which prevented us from making direct contact with others who may have provided an alternative view. This paper examines the challenges of dealing with pre-determined narratives but also how an analysis of the motivation of our interviewees, and these 'good stories', ultimately provides a more nuanced layer of understanding of the social history of Holden's factories.

Session 27. ORAL HISTORY AND WORKING LIVES

(Owl South Grant room)

Chair-person: Alexandra Dellios

Paul Sendziuk, Protecting the Hands that Built 'Australia's Own Car': Health and Safety at General Motors Holden

Abstract:

General Motors Holden (GMH) frequently asserted that workplace safety was the company's foremost priority. Nevertheless, in its factories throughout Australia major accidents did occur and workers were exposed to the risk of hearing loss and repetitive strain and posture-related injuries. Drawing upon oral history interviews with almost 100 former employees who worked at GMH factories between 1945 and 2017, this paper examines the evolution of the company's approach to occupational health and safety, and its workers' memories of safety culture and the injuries they sustained or witnessed occurring whilst at work. In doing so, I ponder the meanings of 'silences' in their testimony, such as failure to remember or mention the 'unseen' injuries of labour, and consider why they remember the GMH factory as a safe place to work despite evidence to the contrary.

Moreover, I suggest that while workers' narratives are inherently subjective, careful analysis of them reveals nuanced details about workplace culture not captured in official company accounts of health and safety, which mainly focus on the financial cost of 'time lost' due to accidents and injury.

Christopher Chevalier, Oral history and Pacific labour history: past and present

Abstract:

In this presentation, I examine past Pacific labour history, which used oral testimony extensively (for example, Moore 1972; Bennett 1981; 1987; and Moore et al. 1990). Oral testimony provided evidence of workers' lives, both individual and collective, that confirmed and contested other sources and perspectives of the labour trade. Field work with pre-digital technology meant that oral history recordings were often taped over, unplayable, or lost deep in the archives or researchers' filing cabinets. Recordings were often unsuitable for archival purposes due to poor quality, deterioration of the tapes, or failure to secure permission from informants for archives.

A 21st century Pacific labour trade grew rapidly during and after the Covid-19 epidemic with now around 40,000 Pacific Islanders working in agriculture, horticulture, aged care, childcare, tourism and hospitality industries in Australia. As a research method, oral history can collect and preserve the stories of Pacific Islanders' experiences during and after their time in Australia. Oral history also has the potential for advocacy to improve working conditions or deter exploitation by employers and labour hire companies. Research requires overcoming significant barriers to recording oral histories, such as accessing and gaining the confidence of Pasifika workers, and ensuring that their identity, employment and visa status are protected.

Gabriel Clark, Patrick Grant, Elizabeth McFarlane and Ronnie Scott, Using oral history to investigate & illustrate the creative ecology of comics makers in Australia

Abstract:

"Folio: Stories of Australian Comics" is an ARC Linkage project that employs oral history as a tool to unveil the creative ecology of graphic storytellers across Australia. Through a series of interviews conducted nationwide, the multidisciplinary team from the fields of design and creative writing have curated an archive of personal stories, offering an intimate look into a culturally significant yet often overlooked movement in Australia.

This paper is an overview of this project and will explain the following:

- how we translated an archive of oral histories into a useful online experience.
- the role played by oral history interviews in contextualising and validating creative practices within a community.
- how using personal anecdotes and stories worked in constructing a portrait of a nationally significant creative community.

The project underscores the importance of oral history as a valuable resource for understanding and representing creative communities and practices. By foregrounding personal stories, "Folio" offers an intimate perspective on the cultural landscape of Australian comics, highlighting the pivotal roles played by individuals, places, and objects in shaping and sustaining a nationally significant creative community.

Session 28. ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWING: APPROACHES AND ISSUES: 3

(Room 104, Gateway Building level 1)

Chair-person: Daniel Bacchieri

Judy Hughes, The whole story - Exploring the working lives of journalists through whole-of-life interviews

Abstract:

In researching the lives of working people interviews are often confined to a theme, work practices or particular events. But does that approach deliver the whole story, the whole truth of a working life lived? Conducting whole-of-life interviews is considerably more time-intensive and complex than a thematic approach. So, is it worth it? This presentation considers the use of whole-of-life oral history interviews in a research project examining the 1980 national journalists strike. It considers how childhood and early adult reminiscences as well as mid and end-of career reflections can help in understanding the lived experiences of those involved in the strike. Journalists are often perceived in terms of stereotypes: the brave and committed news hound overcoming barriers to uncover misdeeds through to the unscrupulous hack invading the privacy of the vulnerable. In order to understand a labour history event such as the 1980 strike it is important to look at the people involved in the context of both a working life and a life lived.

Alison Wishart, Oral history interviews with old white males: risks, rewards, and ethics

Abstract:

Since June 2022, I have worked as a freelance historian for the Big Brother Movement Youth Support [<https://www.bbm.asn.au/>], interviewing some of the 8000 older men who migrated to Australia from the UK as 'Little Brothers' between 1948-1960. After each interview, I write a summary of the subject's life story in first person for the BBMYS website, which the interviewee had the opportunity to review and amend [<https://www.bbm.asn.au/littlebrothers/>].

While undertaking this work, I have become aware of ethical issues that I would like to discuss with OH practitioners through this paper. Firstly, how does an OH practitioner balance the goal of historical accuracy with the right of the interviewee to control the final record? Secondly, when interviewing subjects who are in the final decade (and sometimes the final year) of their lives, how do you manage the interviewee's grief, which the process of reflecting on one's life in an OH interview might arouse, and how does the interviewer manage their own emotional response to recording the cycle of life? Finally, older men are the demographic group most likely to experience social isolation, which research tells us can negatively impact on physical and mental health. What ethical and social obligations does the interviewer have to respond to this and what is an appropriate way to respond?

Jennifer Macey, Listening Geographies - the possibilities and risks of recording oral histories in a 'place'

Abstract:

Podcasting has great potential as a novel methodology for oral history, as well as geographical research on 'place'. I discuss the possibilities and risks of recording oral histories in a 'place', drawing upon a PhD project

making a podcast about a place, Port Kembla, Australia's largest industrial site that has since the 1950s attracted migrant workers from around the world. From interviews conducted in a variety of physical contexts, I consider how place affects the person being interviewed, and how place-based oral histories are heard in the resulting podcast. Soundproofed studios have excellent recording qualities; they convey to the participant that their perspective matters, but they can also make the interview partner feel intimidated. Recording an interview in someone's home, workplace or on the street enables a sense of ease, and captures the lively sounds of place. However, this may lessen the perceived importance of participants' views, plus create challenging background noise for podcast production, such as traffic, refrigerator noises and industrial sounds. I discuss the tensions and opportunities to combine oral histories with sound design to recreate or reimagine a 'soundscape', and in so doing evoke a sense of place in a way not possible through traditional interviews alone.

Session 29. ORAL HISTORY, CLIMATE AND CATASTROPHE

(Loton lecture theatre, Gateway Building level 2)

Chair-person: Margaret Cook

Christeen Schoepf, Shaping the Memories of Re-lived Experience: Recollections of fun, fear and family trauma during the 1956 and 2022 River Murray flood events.

Abstract:

The recollection of events that occurred as children are often influenced by the experiences of life and are reshaped and retold accordingly. An oral history project recording the memories of people living in Mypolonga, on the lower River Murray, who had experienced both the catastrophic 1956 flood, and the late 2022 event, intended to capture and compare community experiences and challenges and contrast the government responses and recovery processes. As children and young adolescents during the 1956 event, interviewee recollections included riding bikes to watch the levee break, the presence of an army duck and soldiers, and snakes hanging from rafters. In contrast, the recent floods are recalled through an extremely emotive and traumatic perspective that is still raw and confronting. Drawing on scholarship where oral history and environmental events intersect, this paper examines how childhood memories are remembered, shaped, remoulded, and understood by adults who have relived the same experience as adults, parents, and grandparents and discusses the ways trauma and emotion can resurface while navigating these memories.

Nicolette Snowden and Deb Anderson , 'Bowled over by burning kangaroos': exploring courageous stories in women's climate crisis journalism through the lens of oral history

Abstract:

This paper explores a journalistic response to the climate crisis and the deficits in mainstream Australian journalism, through the lens of feminist and environmental oral history. We draw from interviews with a cross-section of women journalists, working within and beyond the newsroom, about the challenges of weather disaster reporting across the past two decades—a period of 'unprecedented' drought, flooding, cyclones and bushfires. We detect a pattern of women reporters increasingly taking a literary and personal approach which eschews conventional dispassionate disaster reporting, that challenges the fraught construct of journalistic

objectivity. Through their oral histories, we learn that women writers are amplifying 'everyday' familial and community-based understandings of disasters.

We also learn why women are leading this emerging subgenre of journalism, including impacts of power relations, social hierarchies, institutional dominance and, vitally, experience as a form of expertise. The labour histories of women journalists speak to the gendered nature of disaster and a shift in journalistic agency and environmental consciousness. Our paper calls for a deeper understanding of women's engagement with climate change and larger questions about what needs to change in Australian society to bridge personal experience with public needs and political action.

Gretel Evans, Power and responsibility: Community-led storytelling after the 2019/2020 bushfires

Abstract:

People are increasingly recognising the power of story and storytelling, particularly when they can share their own experience and catalyse positive change. Storytelling in the post-disaster context has become prolific, in part due to the industry shift towards community-led practice and the perceived importance of listening to the voice of community.

I trained as an oral historian before joining a transdisciplinary research team formed in response to the 2019/2020 Australian bushfires, that seeks to support communities to be better prepared to face the next disaster or challenge. Throughout the project, I often find myself pondering what it is to encourage storytelling within the context of a program that wants to be 'community-led', 'trauma informed' and foster systemic change. How can we respect the specific storytelling context and purpose, while also championing the power of stories to effect positive and systematic change? How can oral history methodology and practice inform and support community recovery and preparation for the next disaster? And what does an oral history training bring to a transdisciplinary research team?

I will explore these questions in the context of regional communities recovering from and preparing for future fires, sharing stories as a means and end to exploring what happened, and what will happen next.

Session 30. ORAL HISTORY IN GALLERIES, LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS

(Owl North Armstrong room)

Chair-person: Mark Wong

Bronny Lawrence Nawe and Muhammad Shahrul Bin Bahro, Exploring Oral History in Sarawak: Insights from the Sarawak State Library's Perspective

Abstract:

The Sarawak State Library commenced its Oral History endeavours in 2000, initially lacking a specific focus on topics and methodologies. This led to redundancy in documentation efforts and overlapping initiatives with other agencies in Sarawak dedicated to preserving the region's rich history. However, through participant observation conducted by the Oral History Division within the Sarawak State Library, a refined direction emerged in 2023. Four primary scopes were delineated: Civil Officers of Sarawak origin; Community Leaders,

Politicians, and Prominent Figures in Sarawak; Historical Events and Periods in Sarawak; and Indigenous Customs and Traditions in Sarawak. This delineation aims to minimize duplication of efforts among agencies while advancing the development of the Oral History Collection for the Sarawak State Library. Through concentrated endeavours, the aspiration is to establish the library as the primary guardian and comprehensive repository of oral history materials in Sarawak, culminating in the creation of a centralized oral history database

Nicole Hilder, *Beyond Books: Active collecting of oral histories of migration and home in public libraries*

Abstract:

Public libraries have historically relied on passive collecting to build their local history collections. This approach has led to significant gaps and silences, particularly concerning the experiences of immigrant communities. Public libraries are increasingly embracing oral history as a means to authentically connect with communities and support local storytelling and placemaking. This talk will highlight two oral history projects that illustrate how public libraries are providing training and amplifying diverse voices.

-- International Oral History Project with the Indian Community at Hobsons Bay Libraries: This project highlights the power of oral history in providing training and storytelling skills and equipment to capture and preserve narratives of immigrant communities, fostering a deeper understanding of their contributions to the local fabric.

-- Homeland: Preserving Stories of Treasured Objects at Yarra Plenty Regional Library. By focusing on personal objects imbued with cultural significance, this project facilitates community connection through a greater understanding of local diversity, identity, and culture.

My ambitious goal is for any resident who comes into their local library feels that their experiences are represented and valued.

Scott McKinnon, *Australian responses to COVID-19: Capturing experiences of the pandemic through a national oral history project*

Abstract:

This paper will explore the goals and design process of a large-scale oral history project currently underway at the National Library of Australia. The 'Australian Responses to COVID-19 Oral History Project' aims to capture some of the diversity of Australian pandemic experiences by recording up to 300 interviews. Interviewees include individuals in key leadership positions through the course of the pandemic to date (e.g. politicians, medical and public health researchers, leaders in community, arts, business and education sectors), along with a broad cross section of the community across each state and territory. The paper will examine the primary aims of the project, placing it within the context of past National Library oral history collecting. Through an exploration of some of the interviews completed to date, the paper will also consider the difficult decision of who to interview, given that all Australians have a pandemic story to tell.