



Serving those who are interested in methods and techniques of the oral history process as a means of preserving unique memory of people, places, events and ideas

MOHA Forum: What's Happening in Oral History in the State of Michigan?

Saturday, November 7, 2015
10:30 am - 1:30 pm
Delta Township District Library
5130 Davenport Dr., Lansing

The Michigan Oral History Association will be hosting a forum on **recent projects and activities in Oral History from around the state**. There will be both official reports from MOHA members as well as an open discussion. The Forum is **free** and a box lunch will be included. Participants are asked to **register by November 4th**. **To register**, email gwisekemann@arq.net or visit our website at <http://www.michiganoha.org/> or [Click Here](#). See Page 8 for scheduled presentations.



MOHA Board member Donna Odom talks about student oral history projects with Saginaw Valley State University Professor Brad Jarvis at the annual conference of the Historical Society of Michigan in September.



Tribute to Dr. Philip P. Mason, Founding Director of the Walter P. Reuther Library, WSU. Unveiling portrait with Dr. Mason's wife Marcia, Gary Pollard, Chair, Board of Directors, Dr. Mason, Sandra Lee, Dean, WSU Library System, and Erik Nordberg, Dir., Reuther Library. More on Tribute Page 3.

MOHA 2015 Strategic Plan

Progress – with a strategic initiative to identify and create the best ways to utilize resources, and to reach those who would benefit from sharing of expertise on oral histories: that is the purpose of the MOHA Board of Directors' recent work to organize around planned goals.

The MOHA Board of Directors approved the formation of a revitalization committee that will examine and propose new approaches for managing and sustaining the organization.

The goal is to make improvements toward more effective and efficient operations that best serve its members and the ongoing advancement of oral history. A set of recommendations will be provided for board review with the ultimate goal to establish a strategic plan that outlines the priorities, changes, and best practices for operating a healthier organization in the 21st century.

See Page 5 for full committee work.

About the Michigan Oral History Association

Mission

The mission of the Michigan Oral History Association (MOHA) is to provide for effective cooperation and communication among persons, programs, and institutions concerned with the techniques, uses, and promotion of oral history in Michigan. Based on the foundation of the Michigan Oral History Council organized in 1979, the name of the non-profit corporation was changed to Michigan Oral History Association in 1994.

Who We Are

MOHA serves people who are interested in methods and techniques of the oral history process as a means of preserving unique memory of people, places, events and ideas. It promotes and educates about oral history as a resource for capturing on electronic media attitudes and emotions not otherwise preserved. The pool of presenters includes experienced oral history practitioners, archivists, database managers, video producers, authors, professional transcribers, journalists and teachers. Presenters participate in history-related conference sessions, conduct workshops, and serve as facilitators for state and regional forums. They contribute their energy and expertise without pay.

Complimentary Mailings are exchanged with history-related organizations, editors, and representatives of other state/regional oral history organizations.

Attendees at MOHA sponsored events and workshops are entered on the mailing list for one year and one month from date of contact and receive all mailings that paid members receive.

Request a Workshop

Each workshop is designed to meet the specific needs of the audience. For help planning a workshop, contact Geneva Kebler Wiskemann at gwiskemann@arq.net or (517) 321-1746.

"Wonderful conference. Wish I would have known about it years before."

Become a Member!

As a member, you will receive:

- The MOHA Newsletter
- Mentoring and assistance with your oral history project
- Opportunities to participate in local and statewide conferences and workshops
- News of MOHA publications and other related resources
- Updates on oral history innovations and current projects in the state
- Opportunity to join a MOHA committee

Membership Dues:

Individual:	\$25
Institutional:	\$50
Patron:	\$50
Sponsor:	\$100
Student:	\$15

*Send to: MOHA,
5580 W. State Rd.,
Lansing MI 48906-9325.*

How Can MOHA Help You?

Beginning oral historians can attend workshops, receive oral history manuals, and find advice and resources from the professional oral historians in MOHA. Experienced oral historians can benefit by meeting others who may have similar problems, obstacles, and opportunities. Established or in-progress oral history projects can benefit from MOHA's ability to promote and publicize projects. Through mutual efforts, we can improve the quality and quantity of oral histories in our state.

Thoughts on Transcribing Oral Histories – Lynn Simmons

Next Issue in Series on Transcribing: Working With a Transcriber, Verbatim or Edited Transcript, the Transcribing Process, and Becoming a Transcriber

My Background

I have been a court reporter and a transcriber for around 40 years, and making my work easier has been a major focus of my work. In that time I have transcribed hundreds of oral histories. When it comes to transcribing oral histories, they are a special kind of transcription.

Conducting the Interview

As in court transcript work, the transcript has to be able to stand on its own and be meaningful. Even though an interview may be video recorded, what the person says needs to make sense on paper. For example, saying something was “this big” is probably being used to describe an item, the interviewer needs to follow up with an estimate of the size; “three feet”. If photos are being described, naming people from left to right rather than randomly will make the inclusion of the photo in the final transcript meaningful. If the person is describing an object, naming it as well as telling how it was used will help a future reader understand what is being described. Also, I have found that when people are describing a photo or an object, they often drop their voice. That can create a problem for the transcriber because time has to be taken to adjust the volume of the transcribing program.

Setting of the Recording

The setting of a recording really matters. If it is being done in a controlled situation, like a studio, this is really not an issue. The most important aspect from a transcriber’s point of view is that the volume of the recording for the speakers be balanced. If one is much louder than the other, then the transcriber is continually having to adjust the volume of

the playback, and that takes a lot of extra time. If the recording is taking place in a home or some other location, the background noises can make a huge difference in the ability to transcribe the recording. A kitchen, while very inviting, is one of the noisiest rooms in the house: the refrigerator, a ticking clock, a tile floor that results in a certain echo effect. An animal in the background can make it difficult. A panting dog for example can drown out a soft-spoken interviewee. Rattling of papers is also disruptive to the recording. So if you are pulling out documents to be reviewed, do not speak during that process or ask the interviewee to repeat something that might have been obliterated by these noises.

Cost of Transcription

When planning an oral history project, one question to ask when figuring out the cost of the project is how much will a transcript cost? There are two ways of paying for transcribing: by the hour and by the page. Paying by the hour at first seems like a practical plan, but depending on how efficient the transcriber is, it may prove to be the most expensive. Paying by the page allows for a better estimate to be possible. I have found that generally speaking two minutes of recording equals one page of transcript. It’s not exact, but reasonably close. This would be a page that has 25 lines double spaced with a wider left margin than the right, to allow room for binding the transcript. Double spacing makes it easier to read for corrections. So a 60-minute interview would be a 30-page transcript.

When I quote my price for completing a transcript, I include one revision to get to the final copy. If more than one revision is contemplated, then that would have to be built into the pricing.

Please submit newsletter ideas, information, news, and features to: Marci Cameron at cameronlady210@comcast.net.

New Initiative from StoryCorps StoryCorps founder David Isay spoke on NPR: “We're asking U.S. history teachers - high school teachers - to ask their students over Thanksgiving weekend to record a grandparent or another elder using the StoryCorps app. We are hoping to record as many interviews over that one weekend than we've recorded over the last 12 years combined.” The idea is to create an audio snapshot of one American generation hearing from another. In the meantime, you can hear any of your favorite StoryCorps moments at their website - npr.org.

Oral History v. Oral Interviews in the Classroom

By Jim Cameron, History Teacher for 40 years

According to the Oral History Association, “Oral history is distinguished from other forms of interviews by its content and extent. Oral history interviews seek an in-depth account of personal experience and reflections, with sufficient time allowed for the narrators to give their story the fullness they desire. The content of oral history interviews is grounded in reflections on the past as opposed to commentary on purely contemporary events.” Oral histories also require the appropriate documentation- Biographical Data Sheet, Release Form, transcription, transcription approval, and many others.

Teachers want students to complete oral research but may not have the time for formal oral histories. Oral interviews are an excellent way to bridge that gap. Dispensing with the Release Form, transcription, and transcription approval will shorten the time necessary and still provide students with first hand accounts of historical events. Proper preparation is necessary as with any oral research so a Biographical Data Sheet and a good set of questions will be as important in oral interviews as in oral histories. Interviewing grandparents, parents, even older brothers and sisters can provide historical perspectives as well as encourage family connections. While teaching high school US History, my students were required to do an oral interview with a person who grew up during the decade under study for each post-WWII decade. Although not formal oral histories, the students learned much about each decade and enjoyed sharing their information with the other students.

Whenever possible, teachers should encourage students to do formal oral histories. But real world limitations may make oral interviews the better option.

Upcoming Issues of the MOHA Newsletter will feature “how to” articles on Using Oral Histories and Interviews in the Classroom – both in high school and college classes.

Ethnic voices through oral histories and story-telling will also be featured.

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Projects – 50-Year church anniversary, community activists, training middle school students, experiences of Hmong Americans, issues of transcribing, State of Michigan updates, and newest technologies supporting oral interviews. These are some of the presentations and discussions exchanged at the November 2015 MOHA Forum. More such update/exchange forums are anticipated for presentation to MOHA members and visitors.



*To receive the **MOHA newsletter electronically**, send an email to MOHAnewsletter@gmail.com with the word "newsletter" and a preferred email address.*

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