



State Library
South Australia

Oral History Toolkit

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1. Introduction

This Toolkit is designed for individuals and groups who are considering recording oral history interviews and donating the interviews to the State Library of South Australia ('the Library').

It provides information about oral history at the Library, a brief summary of the process of recording oral history interviews, and advice on how to apply to the Library to lodge interviews in the Collection that meet the Library's requirements.

2. What is oral history?

Oral history is a picture of the past in people's own words. It involves an audio or video recording of peoples' memories of their unique life experiences in a planned, structured interview. It is an excellent way of documenting the past by asking questions of people who have lived experience of a particular time period, place, occupation, or event of interest.

3. The J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection at the State Library of SA

The State Library of South Australia collects and preserves the oral history of South Australia in the J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection ('the Collection'). The Collection contains over 9,000 interviews, making it the largest and most comprehensive collection of its kind in any state library in Australia and the major archival repository for oral histories in South Australia.

The Collection was established in 1987 and named after James Dugald Somerville, whose daughter provided a large bequest to SLSA in his honour. The Collection provides an oral record of all aspects of the South Australian experience, and particularly of those people who are poorly represented in documentary records such as low-income earners, people of non-English speaking background, women, and country people.

The Collection also includes other unpublished sound recordings such as live performances, speeches, South Australian folk performances and material from Radio 5UV and the University of Adelaide.

4. Oral history methodology

Successful oral history interviews involve significant research and planning. The better the research and planning, the better the result is likely to be. The main steps are:

1. Identify suitable interviewees who have lived experience of the topic of interest, who are willing to be interviewed and happy for their interview to be lodged in a repository such as the State Library of South Australia where it will be made available to researchers and the public.
2. Research the interview topics and interviewees.
3. Hold a preliminary meeting with each interviewee to get an overall understanding of their experiences and to explain the process to them.
4. Prepare for each interview, including making notes of the main questions to be asked.
5. Record the interviews using high quality equipment at archival standards (see Section 5.2), and using a good interview technique, asking open questions, and maintaining silence whilst the interviewee is speaking.

6. Take a photograph of the interviewee, complete Conditions of Use forms, and write an interview summary.
7. Prepare a transcript for each interview.
8. Check and correct the transcripts with interviewees.
9. Lodge the interview audio files, transcripts, and other required material (e.g. Conditions of Use forms) to the chosen repository for archiving and making available to others.

5. How can I donate oral history interviews to the State Library of South Australia?

The Library accepts donations of high-quality oral history interviews that meet one or more of the collecting priority areas (see Collecting Priority Areas box). The content of the interviews must be historically significant¹ and likely to be useful to future researchers.

Oral history projects are an immensely enjoyable and satisfying way of recording our history, and by contributing them to the Library's collection, you are ensuring that the records are stored safely in archival conditions and enabling others to access those recordings in future.

5.1 Project planning

Before you start your project, you should discuss the project with a member of the Archival Collections Team (contact: SLSAOralHistory@sa.gov.au). We can help refine your ideas, and ensure your proposed project meets priority collecting areas and does not overlap existing material. You can also discuss the number and breadth of interviews, and range of interviewees, to help increase the value of your project.

In planning your project, please take into account that the Library seeks interviews that are historically significant, likely to be of considerable research value, and that fit one or more collecting priority areas. The Library does not usually accept:

- material that is already part of the Library's collections. Please check our [catalogue](#) first.
- material not originating from or about South Australia, or created by a South Australian
- material that is more suitable for another collecting institution
- material with poor quality audio, or that is an informal chat rather than a planned interview (please see Part 5.2 on Recording equipment and technical standards)
- material that you do not own, or an interview for which participants have not given permission for the interview to be used and accessed (please see Section 2: Forms).

Collecting Priority Areas

- Aboriginal voices and experiences
- Activism and grassroots campaigning
- Arts and creative sector
- Children, young people, and family
- Environment
- Food and drink culture
- Health and Ageing
- LGBTQIA+ lives
- Multicultural communities
- People with disabilities
- Rural and Regional Communities
- Science and industry
- Sports
- Under-represented voices in public life
- Wars and peacekeeping after 1945
- Women's lives and feminism

¹ 'Significance' refers to the values and meanings that items and collections have for people and communities. It is a way of telling compelling stories about items and collections, explaining why they are important. Significance may also be defined as the historic, artistic, scientific, and social or spiritual values that items and collections have for past, present and future generations. These are the criteria or key values that help to express how and why an item or collection is significant.

Once you have refined your project ideas, you also need to consider:

1. The equipment you plan to use to record the interview, and
2. Interview technique

5.2 Recording equipment and technical standards

Oral history interviews accepted by the Library should be recorded on high quality digital recorders using parameters that meet international archival standards (International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives Technical Committee, 2017).²

Interviews should be recorded using the following parameters:

- 48kHz recording frequency
- 24-bit bit depth
- Uncompressed .wav files
- Stereo recordings using separate microphones for interviewer and interviewee, on a recorder that enables each input to be separately controlled.

The Library loans professional quality equipment to people who have undertaken the mandatory one-day workshop and whose project has been approved by the Archival Collections Team. The workshop also explains good interview technique, the ways in which oral history interviews differ from informal conversations, and the ethics of interviews. For information on training contact SLSAOralHistory@sa.gov.au.

Note: the Library will not approve projects unless interviews are recorded at the required standards using appropriate equipment. Recordings made on smartphones or iPads for example, are not sufficient.

5.3 Formal offer of oral history project

To submit a formal project application, please fill in the Project Application form (the first form in Section 2) and e-mail it to SLSAOralHistory@sa.gov.au.

If you are planning to use your own equipment rather than borrow the recording kits from the Library, you will need to provide details on the form of the model of recorder and microphones that you will be using, and the recording parameters.

Your project will be appraised in terms of:

1. Whether the interview content is likely to be significant, will add to an understanding of South Australian history, meets priority collecting areas, does not overlap significantly with other material, and will be of use to future researchers.

² International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives Technical Committee. (2017). *The Safeguarding of the Audiovisual Heritage: Ethics, Principles and Preservation Strategy*. London: International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives .

Available at https://www.iasa-web.org/sites/default/files/downloads/publications/TC03_English.pdf

2. Whether the interviews' copyright status and access conditions will not unreasonably limit their access and use.
3. Whether the technical standards of the proposed interviews will meet international archival standards.
4. Whether you have experience as an interviewer and/or have completed the required workshop.

Archival Collections Team staff will acknowledge receipt of your application within 5 business days, then following appraisal, will let you know the outcome:

1. Your project is provisionally approved, subject to the interviews you lodge meeting the required standards.
2. Your project could be approved subject to some minor changes to your project plan.
3. Your project would be better suited to another collecting institution.

5.4 Conducting your project

Once your project is approved, you will be able to book an oral history recording kit by contacting SLSAOralHistory@sa.gov.au.

You will be given a practice session on the recorder when you come to collect it. You will need to sign a form indicating that you will return the kit in good order, and by an agreed date.

When you record the interview, you must start with an introductory statement (see Example interview introduction) that includes the names of the interviewer and interviewee, the date and place of the interview, the name of the oral history project (if relevant) and any grant funding (if relevant). If there is a break in the recording during the interview, you should re-introduce participants at the beginning of the new file and indicate that this is now file number 2 (or subsequent number, as appropriate).

Example interview introduction

I'm [interviewer name], interviewing [interviewee name] on [date] at [place].

This interview is part of the [name] Oral History Project, being funded by [name of funding body, if relevant].

Thank you [interviewee first name] for agreeing to be interviewed.

5.5 After the interviews: project deliverables

Once you have completed your interview(s), you should return the recorder to the Library on or before the agreed date. When you return the recorder, audio engineers will process the audio files and provide you with a link to download copies of the files for you and the interviewee.

At the time of returning the recorder it is important that you provide the following materials and files (see 6. Checklist):

1. The recording media (e.g. compact flash cards) that came with the recorder
2. Correctly completed and signed Copyright and Conditions of Use forms (the second and third forms in Section 2: Forms). Each interview should have forms for both the interviewer and interviewee.
3. Summary form for each interview (see the fifth form in Section 2: Forms). This material is used to catalogue the interview.
4. Photograph of the interviewee(s)

Oral history interviews remain private until interviewees give written permission for interviews to be accessed and used. The Library is therefore unable to accept interviews into the Collection unless accompanied by the signed Copyright and Conditions of Use forms.

5.6 Interview transcripts

It is a Library requirement that interviews are accompanied by a full transcript as soon as possible after completing the interview. You have the option of using transcription software, preparing the transcript yourself, or assigning someone else to do it on your behalf.

If you would like to use online software to prepare the first draft of the interview transcript, please let Library staff know when returning the recording. You will be provided with a link to access the draft transcript, and information about how to make corrections. The transcript should then be provided to the interviewee to check, before sending an approved version to the Library for final checking (to SLSAOralHistory@sa.gov.au).

6. Checklist

6.1 Before undertaking the project

- Discuss project proposal with member of the Archival Collections Team
- Submit an Oral History Project Application form by email (Form 1)
- Receive provisional approval from the Archival Collections Team to lodge interviews at SLSA
- Book the oral history recording kit, if applicable,

6.2 The project

- Do a preliminary interview with each interviewee
- Borrow the recorder, if applicable, and complete the one-on-one training
- Record the interview(s)
- Fill in and sign the Conditions of Use forms (one set for each interview) (Forms 2 and 3, and Form 4 if relevant)
- Prepare an interview summary for each interview (Form 5)

6.3 After the interviews: items to provide to the Library

- Recording kit, if applicable
- Original sound recordings, recorded as 48kHz, 24-bit, stereo .wav files, on the original recording media (compact flash or SD cards)
 - If you used your own recording equipment, these cards will be returned to you.
- Signed, completed Copyright and Conditions of Use form for the interviewee
 - Please provide these as hard copy forms, one per interview
- Signed, completed Copyright and Conditions of Use form for the interviewer
 - Please provide these as hard copy forms, one per interview
- Signed, completed Copyright and Conditions of Use form for the translator/interpreter (only if relevant)
 - Please provide these as hard copy forms, one per relevant interview
- Digital photograph of each interviewee taken on the day of the interview (.jpg or .tiff file)
 - The files should be named using the following format:
date_name of person_photo.filetype (e.g. 20220630_BillSmith_photo.jpg)

- Completed interview summary form for each interview (word document)
 - The file should be named using the following format:
date_name of person_summary (e.g. 20220630_BillSmith_summary.docx)
- Time-coded transcript for each interview, checked with the interviewee (word doc)
 - The files should be named using the following format:
date_name of person_transcript (e.g. 20220630_BillSmith_transcript.docx)

Digital files should be e-mailed to SLSAOralHistory@sa.gov.au.

7. Resources and further reading

International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives Technical Committee. (2017). *The Safeguarding of the Audiovisual Heritage: Ethics, Principles and Preservation Strategy*. London: International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives .

Available at https://www.iasa-web.org/sites/default/files/downloads/publications/TC03_English.pdf

Oral History Australia. (2007). *Guidelines of Ethical Practice*.

Available at Oral History Australia: <https://oralhistoryaustralia.org.au/guide-ethical-practice/>

Robertson, B. (2013). *Oral History Handbook, 5th edition*. Adelaide: Oral History Association of Australia (SA Branch).

This is an excellent reference for beginners and experienced interviewers alike, covering all aspects of the process of planning and conducting an interview, creating a transcript and timed summary and many more important topics. The book is available for purchase from Oral History Australia SA/NT: oralhistoryaustraliasant.org.au, and is held by many local libraries.

Section 2: Forms

The forms on the following pages are needed to (1) apply to lodge an oral history project with the Library and (2-5) to enable interviews to be accepted by the Library and made available to the public.

Each recorded interview should be accompanied by forms 2-3 and 5. Form 4 is relevant only if an interpreter is present during the interview or translates the interview transcript.

1. Oral History Project Application form
2. Conditions Of Use Form For Oral History Interviews: interviewee
3. Conditions Of Use Form For Oral History Interviews: interviewer
4. Conditions Of Use Form For Oral History Interviews: translator/interpreter
5. Oral History Interview summary

Oral History Project Application

<p>Project name</p> <p><i>Name by which the project will formally be known</i></p>	
<p>Organisation name(s)</p>	
<p>Funding support provided by</p>	
<p>Project theme(s)</p> <p><i>Description of the project to be used in cataloguing</i></p>	
<p>State Library collecting priority(s)</p> <p><i>Please check all the boxes that apply. If none apply, please indicate why you think the interview(s) will fill a collection gap.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal voices and experiences <input type="checkbox"/> Activism and grassroots campaigning <input type="checkbox"/> Arts and creative sector <input type="checkbox"/> Children, young people, and family <input type="checkbox"/> Environment <input type="checkbox"/> Food and drink culture <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Ageing <input type="checkbox"/> LGBTQIA+ lives <input type="checkbox"/> Multicultural communities <input type="checkbox"/> People with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/> Rural and Regional Communities <input type="checkbox"/> Science and industry <input type="checkbox"/> Sports <input type="checkbox"/> Under-represented voices in public life <input type="checkbox"/> Wars and peacekeeping after 1945 <input type="checkbox"/> Women's lives and feminism <input type="checkbox"/> Other - please describe _____
<p>Expected project duration</p> <p><i>(Please state expected end date. If project is ongoing, please indicate).</i></p>	
<p>Scope of project</p> <p><i>Number of intended interviews and number of intended hours of recordings. If project is ongoing, please indicate how many interviews you anticipate completing per year.</i></p>	

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Interviewee(s)					
Project materials to be included in donation <i>Please tick</i>	Audio(s)	Video(s)	Timed transcript(s), log(s) or summary(s)	Photograph(s)	Other
Recording equipment to be used <i>Please indicate the brand and model of recorder, type of microphones.</i>					
Recording format(s) <i>SLSA requires interviews to be provided as digital files. Audio files should preferably be WAV format, recorded at 48kHz and 24-bit bit depth. Please indicate the format for your proposed interview(s).</i>					
Project coordinator/interviewer					
Address					
Telephone					
Email					

Return completed version of this form to SLSAOralHistory@sa.gov.au



J D SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
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CONDITIONS OF USE FORM FOR ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

Person interviewed assigns copyright to Libraries Board of South Australia

Both you (the person interviewed) and the Libraries Board of South Australia own copyright in your recorded interview. This includes the rights to edit, reproduce, publish (including electronic publication on the Internet), broadcast, transmit, perform, or adapt the interview. This form asks you to give your copyright to the Libraries Board so that the State Library can make the interview available to the public. However, this form also lets you put restrictions on how the interview will be used and it does not stop you from reproducing or publishing the interview yourself.

I (*person interviewed*) assign to the Libraries Board of South Australia any copyright owned by me in the interview recorded (and photograph of me taken) on (*date*) by (*interviewer*) on the following conditions:

Please tick the conditions below that do apply, and cross out the text of any part that does not apply.

No conditions

Anyone wanting to edit, reproduce, publish (including electronic publication on the Internet), broadcast, transmit, perform or adapt the interview (and/or photograph) either during my lifetime or before (*date*) must get my written permission first, unless reasonable attempts to contact me are unsuccessful. (I understand that I may send change of address notices to Archival Collections via email to SLSAOralHistory@sa.gov.au.)

Other conditions (please specify)

I understand that the interview (and photograph) will be held in the J D Somerville Oral History Collection of the State Library of South Australia where it will be used for research, publication or broadcast by the Libraries Board of SA and the public under these conditions.

I also understand that I will receive a copy of the recording of the interview and any transcript that is made, and that I am granted a licence (permission) to reproduce, publish, broadcast, transmit, perform, or adapt the interview myself.

Signature of person interviewed Dated

Address.....

Telephone number Email

Signature of interviewer Dated



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CONDITIONS OF USE FORM FOR ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

Person interviewing assigns copyright to Libraries Board of South Australia

Both you (the person interviewing) and the interviewee own copyright in the recorded interview. This includes the rights to edit, reproduce, publish (including electronic publication on the Internet), broadcast, transmit, perform, or adapt the interview. This form asks you to give your copyright to the Libraries Board so that the State Library can make the interview available to the public. However, this form also lets you put restrictions on how the interview will be used and it does not stop you from reproducing or publishing the interview yourself.

I (person interviewing) assign to the Libraries Board of South Australia any copyright owned by me in the interview recorded (and photograph of interviewee taken) on (date)

of (interviewee) on the following conditions:

Please tick the conditions below that do apply, and cross out the text of any part that does not apply.

No conditions

Anyone wanting to edit, reproduce, publish (including electronic publication on the Internet), broadcast, transmit, perform or adapt the interview (and/or photograph) either during my lifetime or before (date) must get my written permission first, unless reasonable attempts to contact me are unsuccessful. (I understand that I may send change of address notices to Archival Collections via email to SLSAOralHistory@sa.gov.au.)

Other conditions (please specify)

I understand that the interview (and photograph) will be held in the J D Somerville Oral History Collection of the State Library of South Australia where it will be used for research, publication or broadcast by the Libraries Board of SA and the public under these conditions.

I also understand that I will receive a copy of the recording of the interview and any transcript that is made, and that I am granted a licence (permission) to reproduce, publish, broadcast, transmit, perform, or adapt the interview myself.

Signature of interviewer Dated

Address.....

Telephone number Email



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CONDITIONS OF USE FORM FOR ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

Person translating assigns copyright to Libraries Board of South Australia

Both you (the person translating the interview) and the interviewee own copyright in the recorded interview. This includes the rights to edit, reproduce, publish (including electronic publication on the Internet), broadcast, transmit, perform, or adapt the interview. This form asks you to give your copyright to the Libraries Board so that the State Library can make the interview available to the public. However, this form also lets you put restrictions on how the interview will be used and it does not stop you from reproducing or publishing the interview yourself.

I (person translating) assign to the Libraries Board of South Australia any copyright owned by me in the interview recorded on (date) of (interviewee) on the following conditions:

Please tick the conditions below that do apply, and cross out the text of any part that does not apply.

No conditions

Anyone wanting to edit, reproduce, publish (including electronic publication on the Internet), broadcast, transmit, perform or adapt the interview (and/or photograph) either during my lifetime or before (date) must get my written permission first, unless reasonable attempts to contact me are unsuccessful. (I understand that I may send change of address notices to Archival Collections via email to SLSAOralHistory@sa.gov.au.)

Other conditions (please specify)

I understand that the interview (and photograph) will be held in the J D Somerville Oral History Collection of the State Library of South Australia where it will be used for research, publication or broadcast by the Libraries Board of SA and the public under these conditions.

I also understand that I will receive a copy of the recording of the interview and any transcript that is made, and that I am granted a licence (permission) to reproduce, publish, broadcast, transmit, perform, or adapt the interview myself.

Signature of translator Dated

Address.....

Telephone number Email

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Oral History Interview summary

A separate form is required for each interview. The form must accompany any recordings sent to the State Library					
Project name					
Sponsoring agency name(s)					
Project number <i>(OH / - if known)</i>		Interview date(s)			
Interviewer's name <i>As it will appear in catalogue</i>					
Contact <i>Telephone/email</i>					
Interviewee's name <i>As it will appear in catalogue</i>					
Contact <i>Telephone/email</i>					
Interview location					
Interview theme(s) <i>Please provide a concise summary of main topics discussed. To be used in cataloguing</i>					
Proper names <i>Please include correct spelling of personal, place and organisation names referred to in the interview. To be used in cataloguing Continue over page</i>					
Interviewee biographical summary <i>To be used in cataloguing</i>	<i>Full name:</i> <i>Date of birth:</i> <i>Place of birth:</i>				
Recording format <i>Audio/Video</i>				Recording duration	
Recording notes <i>Make/model of recorder, number of SLSA kit, any equipment or noise issues</i>					
Materials being deposited <i>Please tick</i>	Audio(s)	Video(s)	Timed transcript(s), log(s) or summary(s)	Photograph(s)	Conditions of use

Return completed version of this form to SLSAOralHistory@sa.gov.au