

# This is how we...

## Write catalogue summaries

### A Guide for Community Groups

by the East Midlands Oral History Archive

#### Purpose

The purpose of summaries is to gather key information about the circumstances of the interview and provide a concise guide to its contents, with some extra information to help users decide which interviews they want to listen to. Summaries need to include names, places, events, and topics appearing in each interview, with indications of how substantial the reference is, and where in the course of the interview the reference appears.

#### Length

Ideally, we'd like them to be 200 words or less, but, realistically, 300 or thereabouts is fine.

#### Tracks and time codes

If the interview is made up of multiple recordings (two different files), note where a new recording begins in square brackets alongside the timing in format [HH:MM:SS] e.g. [File 2 begins: 01:03:22].

Where the interviewee mentions something particularly noteworthy or changes topic you should also include a time code, formatted as [HH:MM:SS] e.g. [01:05:32].

#### Writing

Concentrate on providing a clear statement of what is talked about in the interview, rather than detailing opinions or anecdotes. The summary should be a guide to what can be found out from the interview in sequential order, not a paraphrase of what the interviewee actually said. Where the interview focuses closely on one subject for a long period, a few short words of summary may be perfectly adequate.

It is helpful to point out the character of some of the references in a summary - that a passage provides a 'detailed description' of an event, an 'explanation' of an action or technique, a 'comic story', or whether a speaker only 'mentions' a person named in the summary.

Some examples of terms to indicate more or less substantial passages in the interview are:

- description (for a long and detailed passage)
- discussion (where interviewer contributes a lot)
- story

- anecdote
- comment
- remark
- mention

Try to avoid elaborate sentence constructions e.g. use 'Eldest of five sons' not 'He was the eldest of five sons'; and 'Mentions' not 'Next the interviewee goes on to mention'. At the same time, try not to compress too much! Where a distinct aspect of a subject is referred to, make that clear in the summary: e.g. 'describes difficulties of finding work' rather than 'describes search for work'.

## Formatting

Always give the interviewee's full name in the first instance, followed by the abbreviation in square brackets (e.g. Jane White [JW]). Then use the abbreviation throughout. It is better to repeat initials than to use the more ambiguous 'he' or 'she'.

If you use a well-known abbreviation for the name of an institution, spell the full name out in curved brackets first e.g. Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) or Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A).

For countries, always use full names e.g. European Union, not EU. When you're noting a British place name, give the county the place is in, unless there is no possibility of confusion. For places outside Britain, give the country, or state for USA.

Put the titles of books, newspapers, and works of art in single quotation marks (e.g. 'War and Peace').

Don't use bold, italics or underline, and only use ampersands (&) in company names.

Finally, if you need to correct facts given wrongly in the interview, put your correction in square brackets.

## Examples

Good	Better
<p>[00:24:43] JG says he did not talk about his work because he hated his work. There were no pit baths and JG would get washed at home. Describes how difficult the environment is in the pits in context of visiting and working there. He did not talk about the pit but played boules with his colleagues. The mining community was close knit and often several family members would work in the mines at the same time. [00:26:09]</p>	<p>[00:24:43] JG hated work. Description of JG washing in front of fire. Remarks on difficult environment at pits. Mentions leisure with colleagues; comments on close-knit mining community. [00:26:09]</p>

**Example:** Interview with Cliff Donald [CD], born 1934 in Hammersmith, London. Father a plasterer; mother worked at a sweet factory. Family moved to the Samuel Lewis Trust estate at Lisgar Terrace in 1928. [00:04:43] Describes going to school at Avonmore Road and then Addison Gardens; comments on playing truant. [00:07:15] Describes evacuation to Somerset during the Second World War and his return to London in 1940. Comments on the air raid shelters and the bombing of the flats in August 1944. [00:21:57] Describes childhood games on the estate. [00:26:28] Started National Service in 1952. Stationed in Germany and Egypt with the Suffolk Highlanders. [00:33:11] Describes how hard his mother worked. [00:40:28] Talks about working as a press setter in a factory, for a car radio company, and then Dial-a-Ride. [00:44:59] Describes the modernisation of the flats. [00:53:03] Comments on the poverty of his childhood.

**Example:** Track 2 [Session two: 26 October 2005] Comments on Robert Fournier's [RF] relationship with Sylvia. Remarks on being a founder member of the CPA [Craft Potters Association]. [00:03:00] Long description of Isaac Button [IB] and his pots, remarks on taking him to the opera. Description of making a film about IB with John Anderson [JA]. [00:19:45] Description of filming David Leach and Rosemary [RW] and Denise Wren. Remarks on David Attenborough collecting RW's animal sculptures, description of the Oxshott pottery. [00:25:50] Long description of IB's workshop. Further description of filming IB. Comments on IB's opinion of studio pottery. Description of a raku firing. [00:33:50] Description of RF's reasons for making films and writing things down. Remarks on RF and JA funding the films themselves. Description of JA. [00:39:51]

Categories of sensitive data	Scenario examples
Religious / philosophical	An OH where an interviewee talks about her religious views, worshipping practices and those of their family.
Political	A private recording where an individual comments on the political views and party membership of a former colleague.
Sexual / sexuality	An un-broadcasted radio programme where an individual talks about his sexuality and personal relationship history.
Trade union activities	An OH where a former business owner complains about the activities of the trade union at his business and names union members.
Corporate or industry	An OH where an employee talks about the unpublicised financial difficulties of the private company they work for,
Illegal / criminal / bullying / malpractice	A private interview describes a former manager as a known bully, alleging that they were responsible for the departure of a number of colleagues.
Race or ethnicity related	An OH where an individual talks about the racial background of another individual without their knowledge.
War / violence / colonial	An OH where a number of individuals are reported to have an affiliation with the IRA.
Medical / health	A private recording where an individual talks about the mental health of a friend, the treatment they received and the medication they took.
Scurrilous content / gossip	An OH where an individual questions the paternity of a man based on a rumour that his mother had an extramarital affair.