



ORAL HISTORY MADE EASY

WEEK 5: Organise and curate your first oral history collection

Sunday 28th April 2024 14.00 hrs GMT

**WITH DR ANGELA MAYE-BANBURY BA MSC PHD SFHEA
ORAL HISTORIAN & EMERITUS FELLOW IN ORAL HISTORY**

Overview

- Review and reflection after your first oral history interview: three things that went well, three things you do differently next time. ✓
- Transcription including verification, timecoding and cataloguing. ✓
- Reviewing for sensitivities: third party references, defamation and risk. ✓
- Using sound editing software: Audacity. ✓
- Managing your archive and/or placing your recordings in a public archive. ✓
- The assignment. ✓
- Celebrating your success: next week and beyond. ✓

Recording



in Progress

6 STEPS TO SUCCESS



to become an oral historian



STEP 01

DECIDE
what sort of oral historian you want to be.



STEP 02

RESEARCH
definitions of oral history & their application



STEP 03

APPLY
an ethical approach in your practice always.



STEP 04

GET READY
for your first oral history interview.



STEP 05

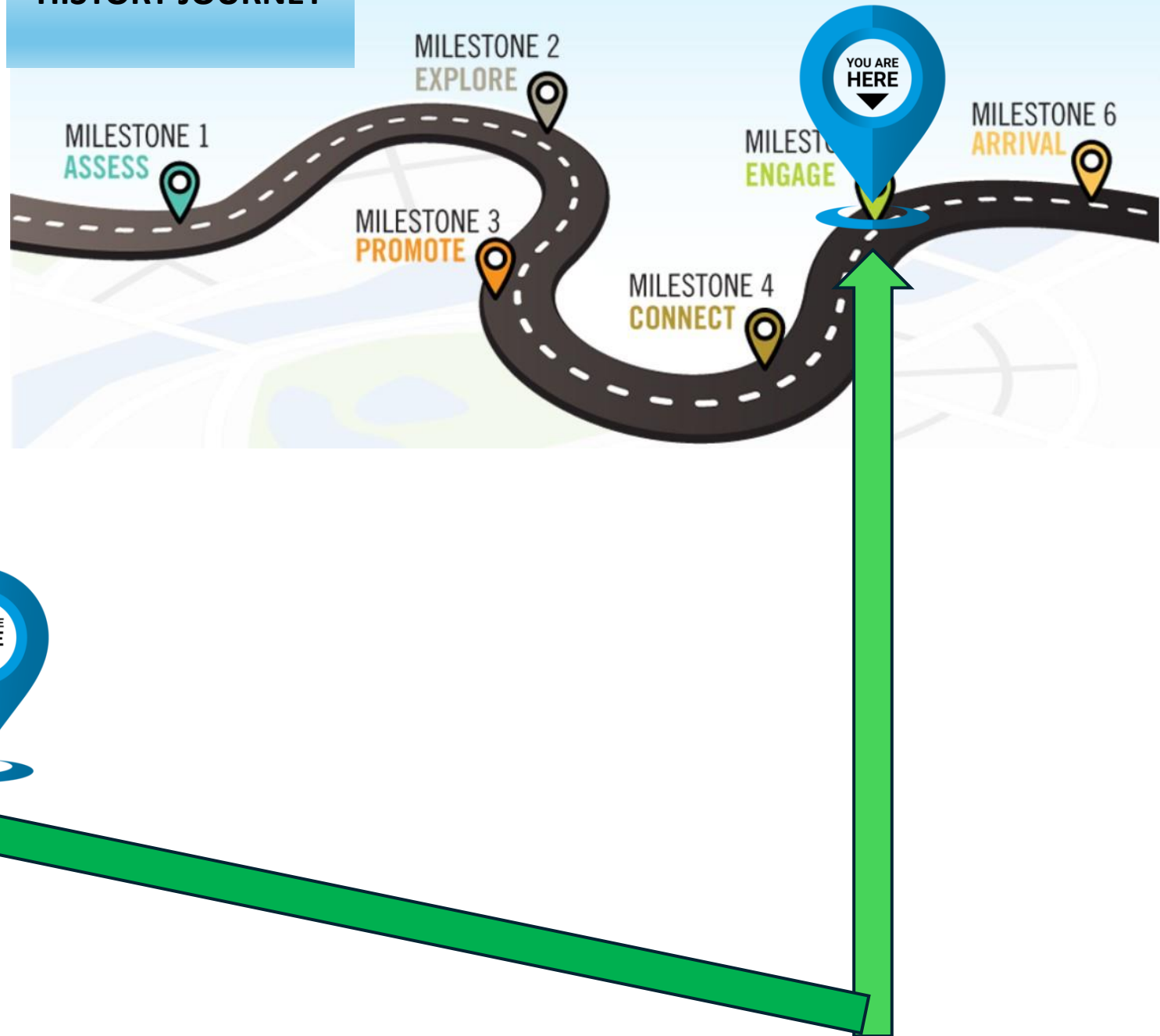
ORGANISE
& curate your oral history collection.



STEP 06

NEGOTIATE
the next steps of your oral history journey.

YOUR ORAL HISTORY JOURNEY



REVIEW & REFLECTION AFTER YOUR FIRST ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW



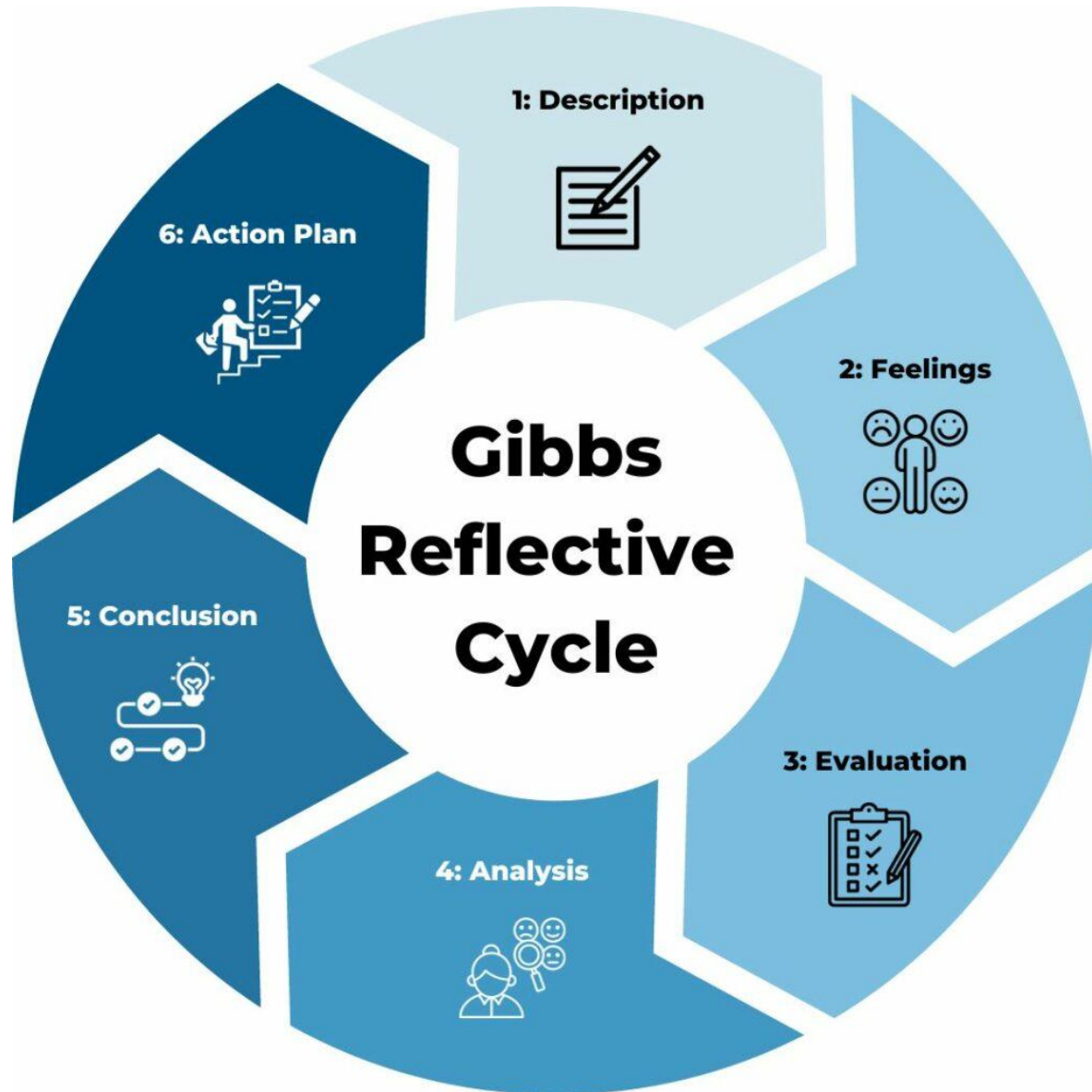
Your reflections on your oral history interview (1)

How did you feel about interview beforehand?

How did you feel afterwards?

What three things went well?





Your reflections on your oral history interview (2)

Zoom rooms.

What three things might you do differently next time?

TRANSCRIPTION, TIMECODING & CATALOGUING



Recording and transcription

How did you record the interview?

Where is it stored?

What format is the file? i.e. .wav; MP3; M4A

Have you at least two copies of your audio recordings in two separate locations, one on hard drive?



Transcription – guidance notes

Preserving someone's words in writing verbatim and verifying the interview with your participant is an integral part of the oral history process.

Accuracy spelling of people's names; place names; names of organisations; institutions and more.

Check acronyms (give in full) and colloquialisms (explain as footnote if necessary).

Add line numbers and timecodes for ease of reference.

Add 'approved' when verified by your respondent as a watermark. See Richard Pierce's oral history.

Time coding – guidance notes

Using audio editing software such as Audacity or Wave Pad, insert ‘time codes’ (markers) to denote particular segments of the audio recording.

See [Peter Masterson’s transcript.](#)

Verifying the transcript



Verifying transcripts – The 5 step process

VERIFYING THE TRANSCRIPT

5 STEP PROCESS



GIVE PARTICIPANT ACCESS TO THEIR TRANSCRIPT

Print out or email the transcript (double spaced with line numbers) to your respondent.



MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

Tell them that as the transcript is a written record of their oral history, it may read differently to how they expect.



SEEK CLARIFICATION

Flag any words/phrases by highlighting them which may require clarification.



GIVE A DEADLINE FOR REVISIONS

Ideally get sign off when you meet them. If a delay is inevitable, give a deadline of 2 – 3 days then contact them again.



SEND PARTICIPANT COPY OF FINAL TRANSCRIPT & RECORDING

Send copy of the final transcript to your participant. Send a copy of the recording (if requested) with on flashdrive, CD or using web transfer software.

Timecoding

The screenshot displays the Audacity interface for a recording file named "GMT20231103-181515_Recording (1)". The main window shows a blue audio waveform on a grey background. A vertical green line, representing the current time position, is located at approximately 00:06:38. The top of the interface features a menu bar (File, Edit, Select, View, Transport, Tracks, Generate, Effect, Analyze, Tools, Help) and a toolbar with various playback and editing controls. A transport bar below the toolbar shows time markers at 0:00, 15:00, 30:00, 45:00, 1:00:00, 1:15:00, 1:30:00, and 1:45:00. On the left side, a track control panel includes "Mute" and "Solo" buttons, an "Effects" section with a volume slider, and stereo level controls for "L" and "R". The track's technical specifications are listed as "Mono, 32000Hz, 32-bit float".

A large white arrow points from the green time marker line down to the "Time Signature" section of the bottom transport bar. In this section, the time is displayed as "00 h 06 m 38 s" in a blue font, with "Seconds" selected as the unit. To the right of the time display is a "Selection" area with two dropdown menus, both showing "00 h 00 m 00.000 s".

Checking for sensitivities (1)



The guidance on reviewing for sensitivities has supported oral historians for decades so should be viewed positively to protect all concerned rather than as a burden.



As oral historians, we record faithful accounts of the past including the recording of sensitive and/or controversial materials with the principles of informed consent in mind.




As oral historians, we need to be vigilant of any content which could be damaging to the participant. “It will be of no benefit to the oral history program to have a narrator’s reputation damaged through something he said in an oral history interview” (Duke University, 2024, p 1).

Checking for sensitivities (2)



 Defamation “is any intentionally false written or spoken communication that harms a person’s reputation or wrongly induces disparaging feelings against that person” (Duke University Libraries, 2024).

 Generally, words held to be defamatory relate to “accusations of criminal, unethical, or immoral behaviour, professional incompetence, financial irresponsibility or association with despicable people” (Sommer, 2018, p 4).

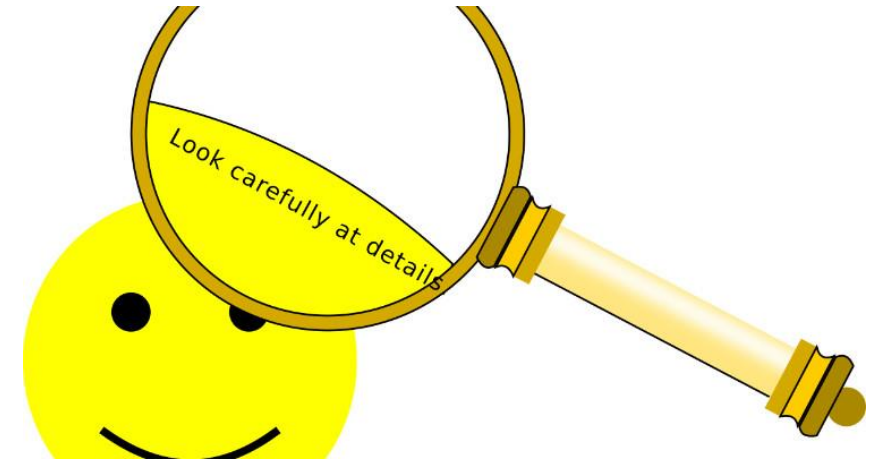
Checking for sensitivities (3)



Includes confidential or sensitive information about anyone such as: discussions of personal tragedies, medical conditions, sexual abuse or violence, criminal allegations and defamation against named or identifiable third parties.

The fact that an allegation is in the public domain does not provide us as oral historians licence to repeat it (Digital Repository Of Ireland, 2022).

What are we looking for in our oral histories?



Libel (avoid possibility of being sued).

Criminal activity (have a duty to pass on information relating to active criminal investigations to the police in the event of a subpoena/summons).

Safeguarding issues (institutions have a duty of care to children, young people and vulnerable adults).

Sensitive personal information likely to cause substantial damage or distress to living third parties.

The 'six questions': red flags



1. Does this interview contain personal information such as physical address, phone number, or social security number?



2. Does this interview make criminal allegations against another party?



3. Does this interview contain slanderous or liable language?



4. Does this interview reveal trade or corporate secrets?



5. Does this interview use culturally insensitive language?



6. Does this interview reveal sensitive, private information, that could be potentially harmful, about a third party discussed in the interview.

Beware references to third parties

Does the recording contain personal information about one or more third parties?

Are some or all of these third parties identifiable?

Are third parties known to be or likely to still be alive?

If one of these third parties is known to be or can be assumed to be dead, is the personal information about them still confidential?

Does the recording contain personal information about one or more third parties?

Is the personal information about deceased third parties likely to put someone in extreme danger to their safety or physical/mental health?

If third parties are known or likely to be alive, is the personal information about them sensitive, libellous or confidential?

Is it corporate information that is still likely to be confidence or libellous?



Archiving and storage (1)

- “Every effort should be made to ensure oral history materials are adequately stored, processed, maintained, and made accessible according to archival standards and best practices” (Oral History Association, 2022). Sources ‘born digital’ are unlikely to be easily accessible in the next 8 – 10 years.
- Make the interviews discoverable i.e search engine optimisation.
- Record in .wav format (can be converted to MP3).
- Upload onto web archive.
- Ask for library cataloguing or other public archive.



Archiving and storage (2)



- Multiple computer external hard disc drives are now favoured over CD-Rs and DVD-Rs for long-term storage.
- Make multiple copies and place on both cloud storage, portable disc drives hard discs.
- Use RAID (Redundant Array of Inexpensive Disks) ready hard discs.
- Find a public repository for your interviews. <https://corkfolklore.org/>
- Your method of archiving should be future proof.
<http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/06/the-digital-mortgage/>
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References to third parties

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- Is the personal information about deceased third parties likely to put someone in extreme danger to their safety or physical/mental health?
- If third parties are known or likely to be alive, is the personal information about them sensitive, libellous or confidential?
- Is there any corporate information that is still likely to be confidential or libellous?

Exercise 1: Scenarios

“I have heard that the O’ Malley family has paramilitary connections although it’s not something we ever talk about these days.”

“Jane Jones is a total narcissist. She doesn’t care who she has to stamp on to get higher up the career ladder. She’s always taking credit for my ideas.”



“When I look back on it all, I can’t help but think that the university leadership team was more concerned with business expansion than the core mission of providing an excellent education for our students.”

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Reputational damage and potential cause offence.

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Personal opinion

RISK LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	LEVEL OF ACCESS
0 NONE	The recording contains personal data where the data subject cannot be identified either on its own or in combination with other information e.g. a child not mentioned by name with whom an older participant played	Online
1 VERY LOW	The recording contains personal data in which a living individual could be identified but is very low risk because of the wider context. It may contain confidential information but is low risk given passage of time. e.g. a participant whose oral history was recorded in the 1980s says she wants to leave her current job but that she wants to keep this confidential until she tells her current employer	Online
2 LOW	The recording contains personal data or sensitive personal data in which a living individual could be identified, however the personal data in question would be considered low risk because of the wider context. e.g. a recording in 1970s where participant says his neighbour is a member of the Labour Party	Online
3 MEDIUM	The recording contains personal data or sensitive personal data in which a living individual could be identified, however the personal data in question would be considered low risk because of the wider context e.g. participant talks about a former colleague, now 90 years old, positively but references the colleague's religious practices.	Partial online with redaction
4 HIGH	The recording contains personal or corporate information that is libellous, personal or corporate information that is confidential where the reason for confidentiality has not ceased with the passage of time or sensitive personal data. Publishing the material online or allowing access onsite carries a high risk of causing damage or distress to the data subject or their identifiable living relatives e.g. rumours of an affair between two well known people and suggestion that had a child together.	Partial online with heavy redactions

What happens to the original recording?

- “It is vital that the original recording is not edited or redacted in any way, but that playback or publicly-accessible copies are generated and then passages muted, each redaction being carefully annotated on any content summaries and transcripts” (British Oral History Society, 2024).

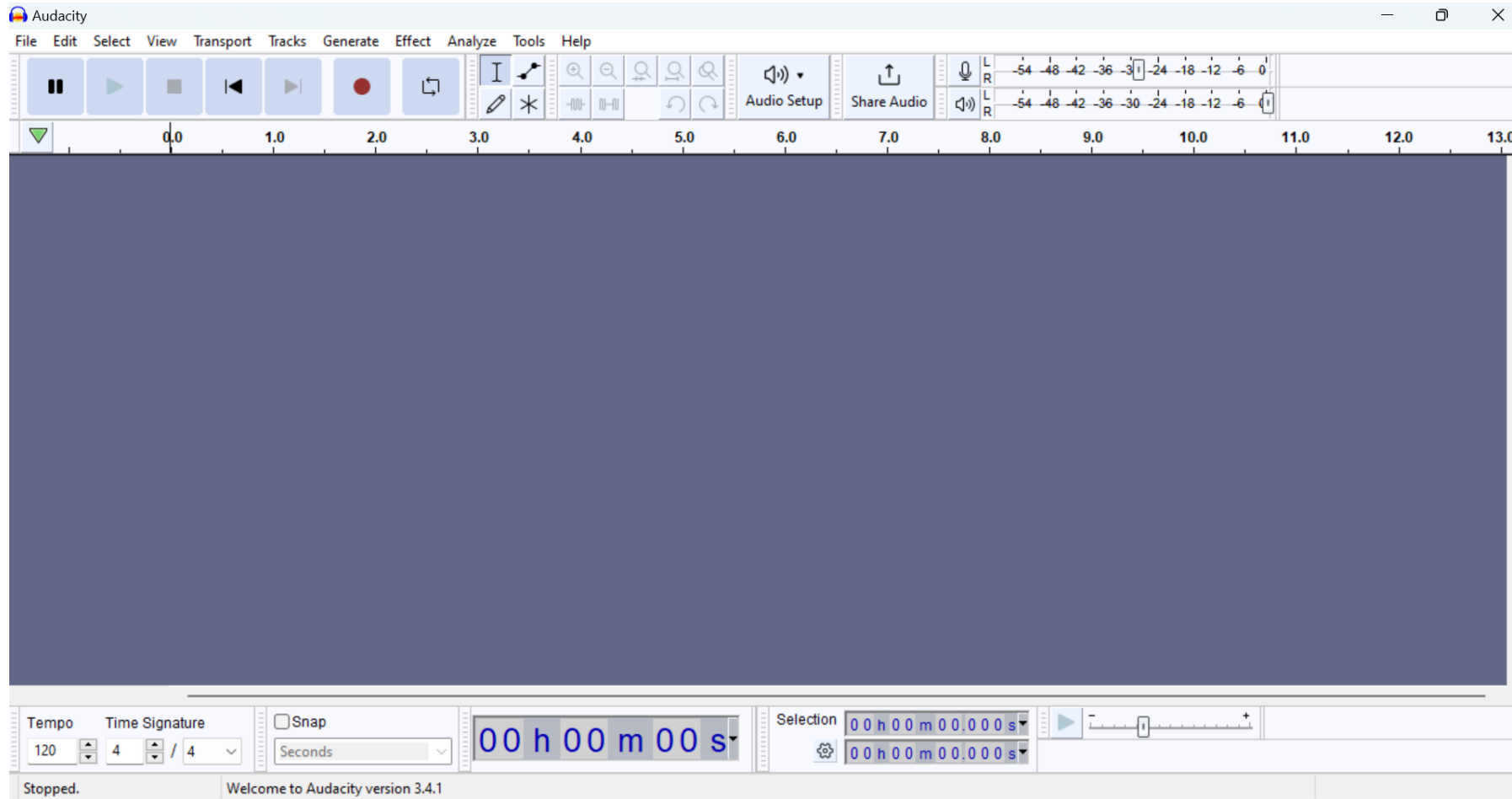
USING SOUND EDITING SOFTWARE



Audacity (1)



[Download Audacity](#)



Audacity (2)



AMB: Audacity demo

[Introduction to Audacity tutorial](#)

THE ASSIGNMENT



The assignment

Formative feedback: constructive, targeted and forward thinking.

Your reflections on having completed the assignment.

All written feedback to be sent by Angela to you next week.



CELEBRATION NEXT WEEK!





Time to
celebrate you
as an oral
historian!



A few final specifics

Email Angela with how you would like your name to be written on your Certificate of Completion.

Staying in touch as a community of oral history practitioners: sharing email addresses.

Web page dedicated to you with individual bios.

Your evaluation of the course: please complete online evaluation to help Angela to continuously improve and to share with future students.

What we covered today

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- The assignment. ✓
- Celebrating your success: next week and beyond. ✓

References

Duke University Libraries (2024) Oral History - Methodologies and Sources, Duke University.

Neuenschwander, J. A. (2014). *A guide to oral history and the law*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Sommer, B. W., & Quinlan, M. K. (2018). *The Oral History Manual*. Rowman & Littlefield.