



ORAL HISTORY MADE EASY

WEEK 5: ORGANISE & CURATE YOUR FIRST ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

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

Recording



in Progress

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. ✓

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

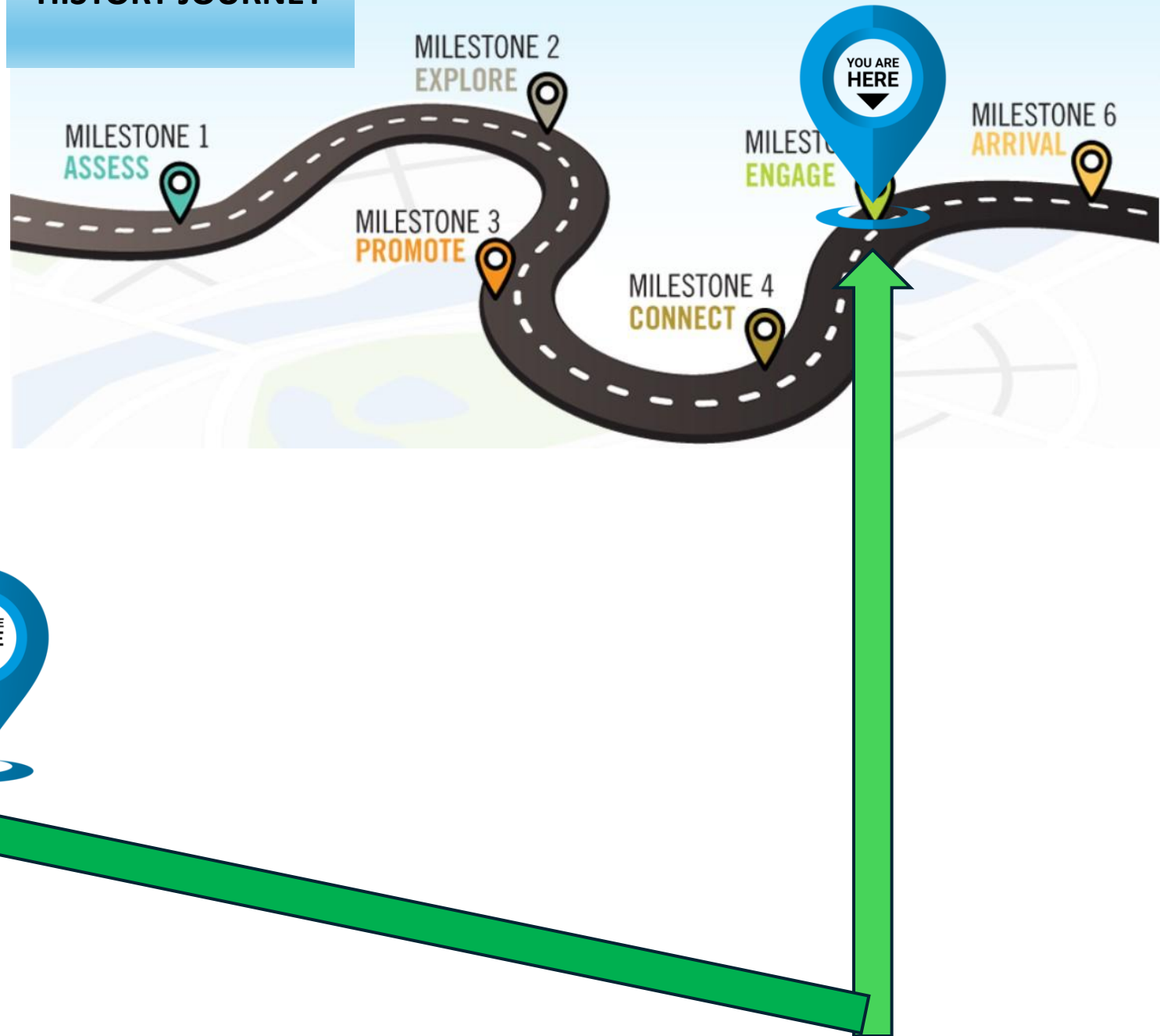
ORGANISE
& curate your oral history collection.



STEP 06

NEGOTIATE
the next steps of your oral history journey.

YOUR ORAL HISTORY JOURNEY



Exercise 1:
Who would
you most like
to sing a duet
with?



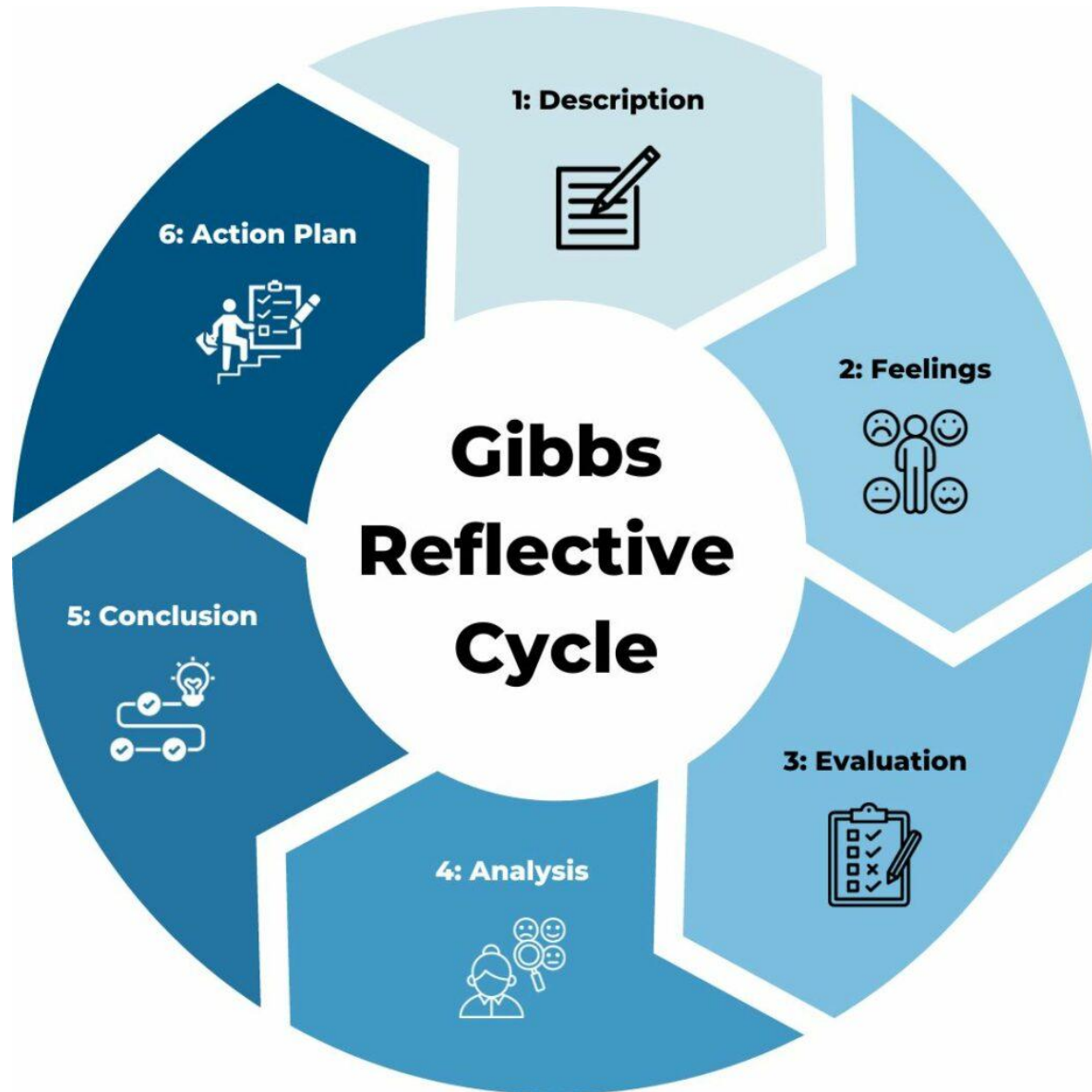


REVIEW & REFLECTION AFTER YOUR FIRST ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Personal reflection for deeper learning

- Using the principles of reflective practice, note how you are felt immediately after the interview.
- What three things went well? What three things would you do differently next time? These reflections will be very useful for your assignment.





Your reflections on your oral history interview (2)

What three things might you do differently next time?

Exercise 2:
One minute
per student

If there's
ONE thing
I've learnt
it's _____





AFTER THE INTERVIEW

After the interview

1

Immediately afterwards, explain the interview will be transcribed. Give timescale e.g. minimum 4 – 6 weeks. Manage expectations.

2

Write to your participant and thank them outlining what will happen next.

3

Download your interview. Make a minimum of two copies. Keep one copy on cloud based password protected storage and another on password protected hard drive.

4

Have interview transcribed. Use line numbers and highlighted text to identify specific words/phrases which you need them to clarify.

5

Go through the interview with your respondents. Be mindful of any special needs. NB All interviews need to be verified by your respondent before being disseminated.

5

THE ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT STEP PROCESS



1. CONDUCT SENSITIVITY CHECK ON TRANSCRIPT

Print out the transcript (double spaced with line numbers) and review using a robust risk assessment matrix.



2. MANAGE NARRATOR'S EXPECTATIONS

Tell respondents that their transcript is in progress. Advise that as it is a written record of their oral history, it may read differently to how they expect.



3. SHARE & SEEK CLARIFICATION WITH NARRATOR

Share your edited transcript with your narrator. Flag any words/phrases by highlighting them which may require clarification.



4. GIVE A DEADLINE FOR REVISIONS

Ideally get sign off when you meet to go through revisions. If necessary, give a deadline of 2 - 3 days then contact them again to follow up



5. SEND PARTICIPANT THE FINAL TRANSCRIPT & RECORDING

Send copy of the final transcript a copy of the recording (if requested) with on flashdrive, CD or using secure web transfer software to your narrator. Tell them how they can access the online version - and write a letter of thanks.

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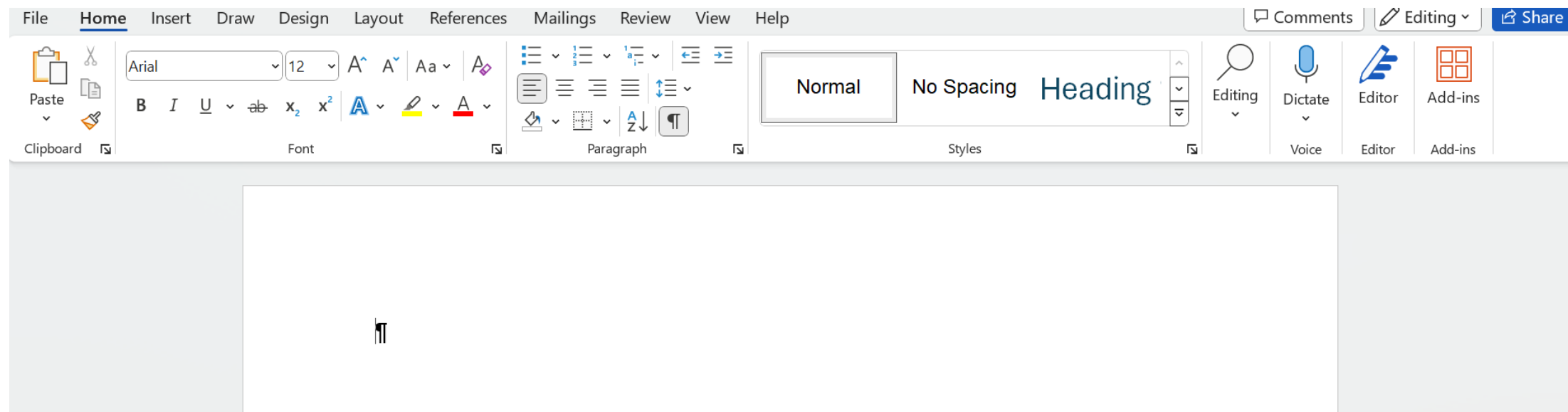
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Transcribing the interview

- The gold standard is the verbatim transcript verified by your narrator.
- Using third party software has serious ethical implications e.g. third party ownership; copyright issues.
- Moreover, no software is as effective as transcribing by a person.
- Factor in 15 mins transcription time for 60 seconds of audio. Using the 'Transcribe' tool on Word can help to speed up transcription.
- Double space text and insert line numbers.
- Add time codes.
- Send to interviewee for final sign off, checking how s/he would like to be named when published and to verify any unusual spellings in the interview itself.
- See www.achilloralhistories.com and [Peter Masterson interview and transcript](#)

Using Word's 'Transcribe' tool



Using the 'Transcribe' tool in Word (1)



Stuart reads from the Shopes paper



Angela reads from the Shopes paper

Original Shopes text

What Is Oral History?

"Oral History" is a maddeningly imprecise term: It is used to refer to formal, rehearsed accounts of the past presented by culturally sanctioned tradition-bearers; to informal conversations about "the old days" among family members, neighbors, or coworkers; to printed compilations of stories told about past times and present experiences; and to recorded interviews with individuals deemed to have an important story to tell.

67 words

Each of these uses of the term has a certain currency. Unquestionably, most people throughout history have learned about the past through the spoken word. Moreover, for generations, history-conscious individuals have preserved others' firsthand accounts of the past for the record, often precisely at the moment when the historical actors themselves, and with them their memories, were about to pass from the scene.

63 words

Stuart

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63 words

Angela

What is all history?

All history is a mattingly imprecise term. It is used to refer to formal, rehearsed accounts of the past, presented by culturally sanctioned tradition bearers to informal conversations about the old days among family members, neighbours or co workers; to printed compilations of stories told about pastimes and present experiences and two recorded interviews with individuals deemed to have an important story to tell.

64 words

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66 words



Archiving and storage

- “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).
- 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.



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.

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).

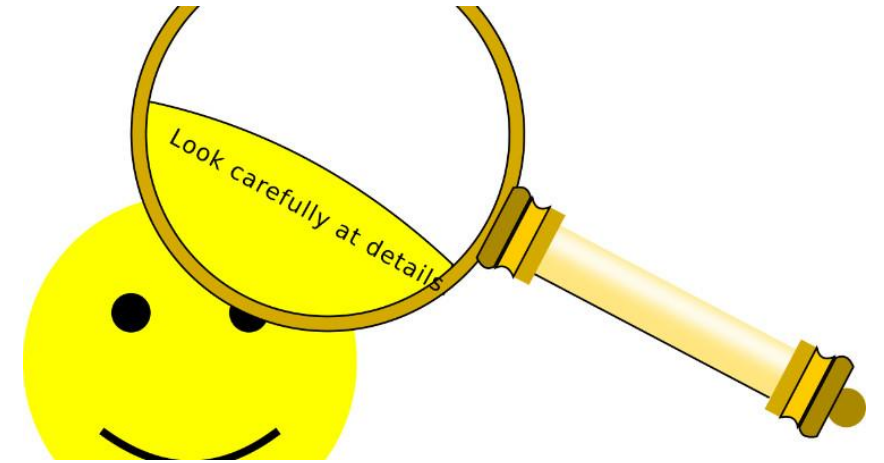
Checking for sensitivities (3)



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.

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?
- 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?

5

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Exercise 3: 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.”

Exercise 3: Scenarios

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

Reputational damage and potential cause offence.

“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.”

Reputational damage and potential cause offence.

“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 actioning our core mission of providing an excellent education for our students.”

Personal opinion

		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
5 VERY HIGH	The recording contains sensitive personal data which could cause an identifiable individual to be negatively	Onsite

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).

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/>
-





USING SOUND EDITING SOFTWARE

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.

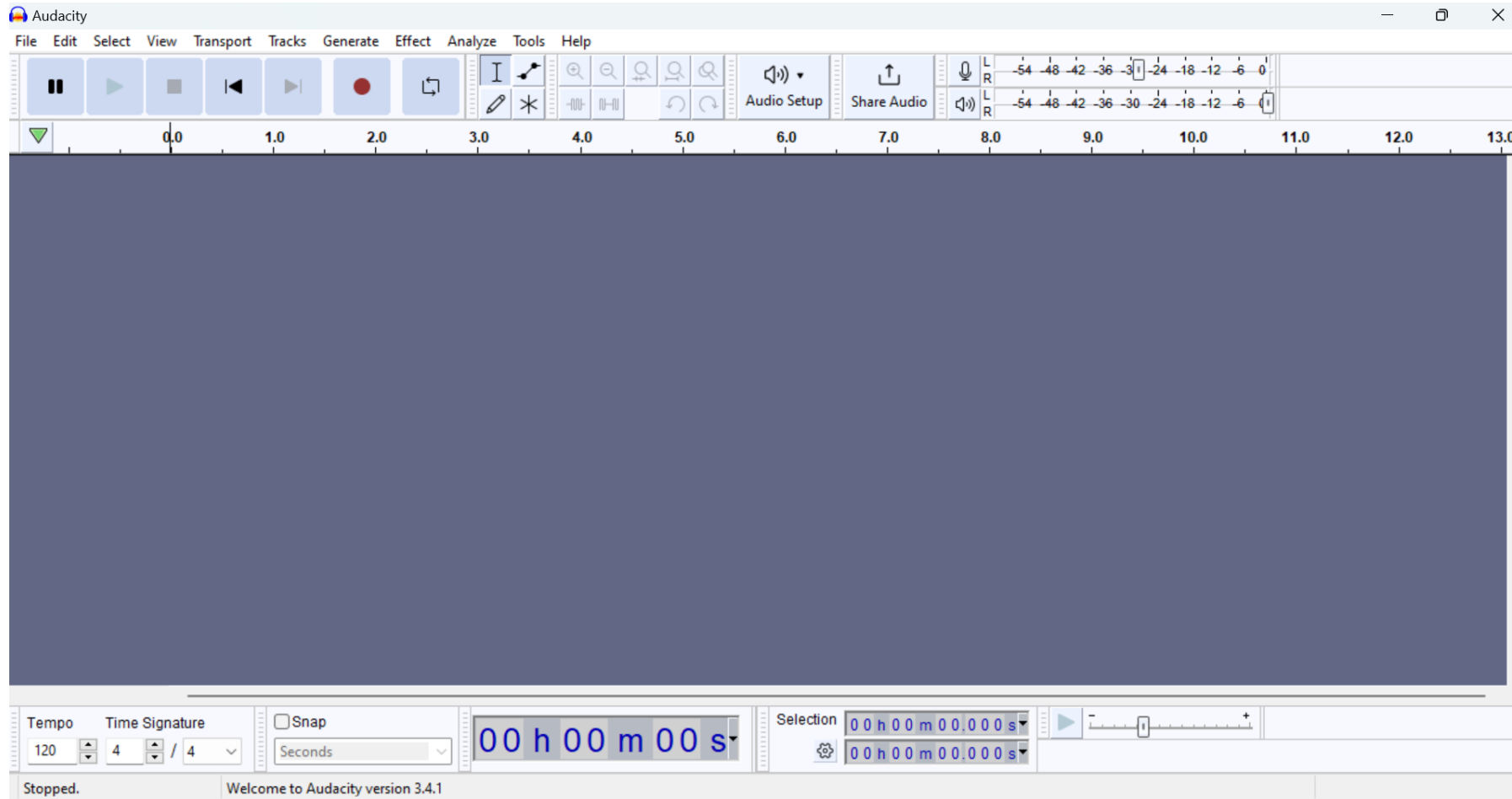
See [Peter Masterson’s transcript.](#)

Timecoding

The screenshot displays the Audacity audio editing interface. At the top, the title bar reads "GMT20231103-181515_Recording (1)". The menu bar includes "File", "Edit", "Select", "View", "Transport", "Tracks", "Generate", "Effect", "Analyze", "Tools", and "Help". The toolbar contains various playback and editing controls, including a red recording button. A timeline at the top shows time markers from 0:00 to 1:45:00. The main track area shows a blue waveform for "GMT20231103-181515_Recording (1)". On the left, track controls include "Mute", "Solo", a volume slider at 1.0, and "Effects" options. The bottom status bar shows "Tempo 120", "Time Signature 4 / 4", and a time signature display of "00 h 06 m 38 s". A large white arrow points from the waveform area down to the time signature display.

Audacity (1)

[Download Audacity](#)



Audacity (2)



AMB: Audacity demo

[Introduction to Audacity tutorial](#)

Sharing and storing your oral history



- Public archive (retain at least two copies)
- Project web site
- Youtube (upload image and audio)
- Soundcloud.
- Itunes
- Vimeo
- [OHMS \(Oral History Metadata Synchroniser\)](#)
- <https://openlearnware.tu-darmstadt.de/collection/digital-oral-history-exploring-the-state-of-the-art/> and [Digital Repository Ireland resources](#)



Digital preservation

- We preserve to ensure that those who need access do have access in the longer term.
- Digital preservation is the systematic storage of our oral history recordings. It therefore concerns the system out in place and the people responsible for maintaining that system.
- Storage, integrity, control, metadata and content (check regularly for 'bit rot').



Digital preservation

- Identify relevant files: recordings (format); release forms, transcripts.
- Document: catalogue (online and hard copy); project title; length; any restrictions.
- Organise: maintain rather than create; consistent naming (name/date i.e. Johnston_Tom_16thOct2018); folders; sub folders
- Storage: designate a central storage materials and consolidate all files from other equipment e.g. camera; email etc.
- Backup: three copies of your file different locations using three different media e.g. on computer; hard drive(different locations); cloud based storage.
- Maintain: spot check for 'bit rot'; replace is necessary; plan to replace backup drives every 4 – 6 years.



Archive, Curate, and Share the Web.

High-fidelity crawling, innovative quality assurance, and collaborative organization empower you to preserve, curate, and share archived web content with confidence.

Archiving your web site

- <https://webrecorder.net/browsertrix/>
- Installable version of Browsertrix here <https://github.com/webrecorder/browsertrix> and instructions for installing here <https://docs.browsertrix.com/deploy/local/>



Digital preservation

STEP BY STEP FLOWCHART

STEP 1

Identify: relevant files: recordings (format); release forms, transcripts.

STEP 2

Document: catalogue (online and hard copy); project title; length; any restrictions.

STEP 4

Storage: designate a central storage materials and consolidate files from all sources

STEP 3

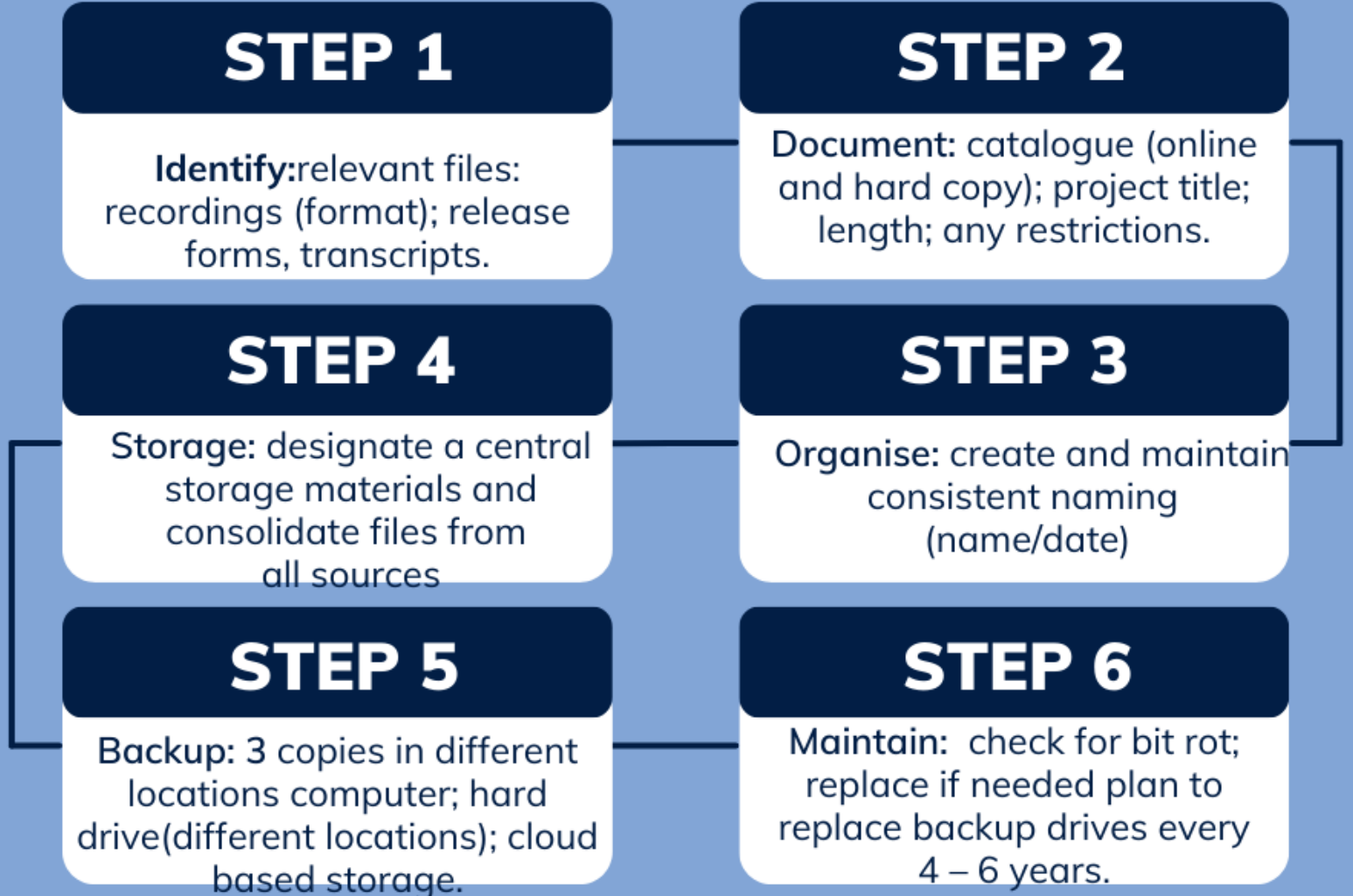
Organise: create and maintain consistent naming (name/date)

STEP 5

Backup: 3 copies in different locations computer; hard drive(different locations); cloud based storage.

STEP 6

Maintain: check for bit rot; replace if needed plan to replace backup drives every 4 – 6 years.





REVISIT YOUR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT DESIGN

Revisit oral history project design

- ✓ Your project title
- ✓ Topic/purpose
- ✓ Methodology
- ✓ Scope, time and place.
- ✓ Potential narrators.
- ✓ Selected archives
- ✓ Planned outcomes, including dissemination strategy.
- ✓ Timeframe for completion.
(One side of A4).





**TRUST
YOURSELF**





CELEBRATION NEXT WEEK!



Time to
celebrate you
as an oral
historian!



A few final specifics



Angela will be in touch to ask how you would like your name to be written on your Certificate of Accomplishment along with course evaluation form.

Your evaluation of the course will help Angela to continuously improve her teaching, mentoring and oral history capabilities so these may be shared with future students.

Staying in touch as a community of oral history practitioners; WhatsApp; student showcase events; newsletter

Web page dedicated to you with individual bios on [Oral History Made Easy](#)

What we covered today

- 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. ✓

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.

[Best Practices for Recording and Preserving Oral Histories \(youtube.com\)](#)