

## Oral History Basic Guidelines

These basic guidelines can help you get started with an oral history project.

*Plan* – Decide what you want to accomplish and who you want to interview. Consider if the project will be a life review or topic oriented model. Other considerations include budget, publicity, evaluation, personnel, equipment, and time frames. (Attachment I)

*Research* – Do your homework. Find out as much as possible ahead of time about the person, topic, and larger context.

*Contact* – Make initial contact either in person, via e-mail, or telephone to explain the project and set a date for a pre-interview.

*Pre-Interview* – Discuss possible topics with the interviewee, reasons for conducting the interview, and the need for a legal release form. Ask about any photographs or other documents that might be helpful.

*Equipment* – Use the best recording equipment within your means. Make sure you are familiar with your equipment and bring extra supplies.

*Outline* – Create an outline of the main points of interest for your interview including interview topics and questions.

*Interview* – Make sure you and the interviewee are comfortable and that background noises are eliminated as much as possible. Record names of interviewer and interviewee, date, location, and topic before beginning the interview. As you ask questions, be sure to listen and do not be afraid of silence. Use open-ended questions and take notes during the interview. In most cases the interview should last about an hour or an hour and a half.

*Post-Interview* – Label the recording with identifying information. Transcribe the interview; this takes between 4-8 hours for each one hour interview. Let the interviewee review the transcription for accuracy. Make sure you have secured written permission from the interviewee to use the recording and the transcription. (Attachment II) Offer to provide the interviewee a copy of the transcription and recording.

*Storage* – Deposit recording, transcript, accompanying documents, and forms to proper repository. Store the recording where there is low humidity and a constant temperature.

## Attachment I

### Organizing an Oral History Project

#### Planning Questions

- What are the basic aims of the oral history project?
- What factors demonstrate a significant need for the project?
- Are the purposes clearly set forth?
- How will the community (or others) likely view the project while it is taking place? After it is finished?
- How will we inform the community about the project?
- Who will use the recordings and transcripts in future years?
- What is needed (funds, equipment, people) to reach the oral history project's larger goals?
- What aspects of the project's goals are unrealistic? Should some goals be postponed or eliminated?
- What are the group's principal assets? Limitations?

#### Schedule and Time frame

- When can we reasonably expect to complete the project?
- What is our time frame?
- How much can we accomplish in a reasonable period of time?
- Should this factor cause us to refocus our goals again?
- Develop a written checklist for monitoring and evaluating the project
- Discuss, update, and revise during the course of the project

Attachment II

ORAL HISTORY RELEASE FORM

The \_\_\_\_\_ oral history project is a program of the \_\_\_\_\_ [organization name]. Recordings and transcripts resulting from interviews conducted for the project will be deposited in the oral history collection of \_\_\_\_\_ [organization name], where they will be made available for historical research and public dissemination. Participation in the project is entirely voluntary.

I, the undersigned, have read the above and voluntarily donate to the project full use of the information contained in the recordings made on \_\_\_\_\_ (date/s), transcripts of the recordings, and other materials collected during the interview.

I hereby assign legal title and all literary property rights, including copyright, in these recordings and transcripts to the project, which may copyright and publish said materials. The information may be used for scholarly or educational purposes as determined by the project (except as noted below).

Restrictions on use: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

_____ Interviewee's signature	_____ Date	_____ Interviewer's signature	_____ Date
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_____ Interviewee's name (please print clearly)	_____ Interviewer's name (please print clearly)
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Interviewee's address:	Interviewer's address:
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Street _____	Street _____
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City _____	City _____
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State and Zip Code _____	State and Zip Code _____
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If interviewee is minor, signature of parent or guardian:

_____ Signature	_____ Date
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# UTAH STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

## INTERVIEW AGREEMENT AND DEED OF GIFT

I hereby give to the Utah State Historical Society the tapes and transcriptions of the interview/interviews recorded on \_\_\_\_\_ and grant the Utah State Historical Society the right to make the tapes and transcriptions available to the public for such educational and research purposes that are in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Society's Utah History Information Center.

NARRATOR \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

INTERVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_