From Interview to Access: managing oral histories at the State Library of NSW

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#ohac2017
Collecting Oral Histories

Anne Hocking

Max Dupain 'Street at Central' 1939
How do we acquire oral history interviews?

1. Individual donation or purchases
2. Commissions
3. Partnerships
“...It’s good to have all these oral histories so we can see how far the disability movement has come...”
“...It’s good to have all these oral histories so we can see how far the disability movement has come...”
How do we acquire oral history interviews?

1. Individual donation or purchases
2. Commissions
3. Partnerships
How do we choose?

- Collection Development Policy
- Consider gaps in the collection
- Complement existing holdings
- Mitchell gallery exhibitions

- Significance
- Technical quality
- Accessibility

Max Dupain, *Morning rush hour, Sydney Harbour Bridge*, 1938
Issues?

- Technical specifications
- Access conditions and copyright
- Metadata
“The generation coming... should always remember where things come from... where history comes from... where great artists come from, where vision and traditions originate from... ”
“The generation coming... should always remember where things come from... where history comes from... where great artists come from, where vision and traditions originate from... ”
Crowd crossing the Bridge, Sydney Harbour Bridge Celebrations, 19 March 1932, by Hall & Co.
Digitising the State Library’s Oral History collection

Karen Flynn
Damien Cassidy
Approx. 13,000 tapes/carriers, equating to approx. 11,000 hours of recordings

- Mostly cassettes (ca. 11,000)
- ca. 1300 reels (about 10% of collection)
- ca. 500 DATs (Digital Audio tape)
- ca. 100 other analogue formats (microcassettes, mini-discs, VHS, 1 or 2 vinyl records)
- 160 CDs & DVDs
Sound is slightly fuzzy. Interviewer’s voice is quieter than interviewee. Interview (with postscript) ends at 32:55; during postscript voice has fluctuating echo effect. Rest of tape seems...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Original cassette/red number</th>
<th>Side</th>
<th>Interviewer</th>
<th>Other creator</th>
<th>Corporate creator</th>
<th>Item Title</th>
<th>Series title</th>
<th>Collection title</th>
<th>No. of children</th>
<th>Date/place recorded</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Start date</th>
<th>End date</th>
<th>Physical Description</th>
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Oral History flowchart
Technical Requirements and Specifications
Drawings of bird’s eggs to illustrate a proposed work on oology by E.P. Ramsay with other natural history drawings by Helena Scott and Harriet Scott, ca. 1861. State Library of NSW - PAX 21
Developing Trust

Mothers’ and children’s races.
State Library of NSW - Home and Away - 974
Checking the Quality
Checking the Quality
There’s More Work To Be Done
Interpreting the Oral History and Sound collection

Anni Turnbull
Deng Adut, interviewed and photographed by Louise Whelan for SLNSW, 2014
Deng Adut, interviewed and photographed by Louise Whelan for SLNSW, 2014
Oral History collections on Amplify platform
Workmen mixing and pouring concrete to build the Sydney Harbour Bridge, photograph by Ted Hood, 1932
William Brindle interviewed by Richard Raxworthy, 1982. MLOH 1/5-6

Workmen mixing and pouring concrete to build the Sydney Harbour Bridge, photograph by Ted Hood, 1932
Perspectives from the Reading Room
David Berry
Analogue (Cassette Tapes)
Digital (hard-drive)
Laptop
Need help with your research?
Have a question that you can’t find the answer to? Ask a Librarian! We love to help!

Ask a Librarian
We can recommend methods and resources to help with your research, find the right resources in the Library’s collections and guide you with accessing e-resources.

ASK NOW

We will get back to you within seven working days.
Which oral histories do clients request?

• Local history, City of Sydney (collections relating to the Rocks)
• Topical “in the news” (public housing)
• Anniversaries of significant events (1917 Great Strike)
• Themes (Migration, Ethnicity, Women, Gay community)
Most requested collections?

Collections relating to City of Sydney and Sydney’s historic Rocks

- MLOH 668 Interviews with residents of the Rocks, Millers Point & Dawes Point (1986)
- MLOH 224/243 Interviews with residents of Pyrmont Ultimo (1996)
Rocks Residents’ Action Group records, ca. 1971-1985

• Series 01: Rocks Residents’ Action Group Records, ca. 1971-1985 (Manuscript/printed material)

• Series 02: Rocks Residents’ Action Group recordings…resident protests against proposed redevelopment 1976-1980 (Oral History)

• Series 03: Photographs, posters and architectural plans related to the Rocks Residents’ Action Group, ca. 1973 (Pictorial)
Rocks Residents’ Action Group (Pictorial)
What does an Oral History look like in our catalogue?
Oral History excerpt...
Geoffrey Ruggles interviewed by Susi Phillips, 2 March 1998
MLOH 378/46-47

Ferry “Kuttabul” (later torpedoed by Japanese at Garden Island), Sydney Harbour ca. 1925
Ferry “Kuttabul” (later torpedoed by Japanese at Garden Island), Sydney Harbour ca. 1925
Improving online access to the Oral History collection and making it more discoverable

Jenna Bain
Digitisation is great – but it doesn’t make material automatically accessible.
Machine learning is a form of artificial intelligence (AI) that allows software applications to become more accurate in predicting outcomes and patterns without being explicitly programmed.
Speech recognition is the ability of a machine or program to identify words and phrases in spoken language and convert them to a machine-readable format.
Help the State Library of New South Wales enhance its collections by correcting computer-generated transcripts from our vast sound archive.

Select an interview to get started.

All images used on this platform are drawn from the Library’s collections, but are not intended to represent individual speakers unless explicitly stated. If you can provide us with further detail about any of our collections, please contact us.
Evans, can you remember an amusing instant, incident that happened while you were on the bridge? Yes I can, uh, Richard. There, you know there was no toilets there we could go to or get down to go to, you mightn’t have time by the time you got down.

So we’d have to take a brown paper bag or a sheet of paper and if you want to do a crap, well you’d hide in the bracing or in the chords and do what you want to do, and then when you’re done what you wanted to do, you’d come out and throw it on the lee side; that is; the way the wind was blowing - to the other side; but this particular day. my boss Jimmy Muir and Mr. Hipwell were walking across and there must have been somebody up there that took short this day. And, when they’d finished what they were doing, instead of him throwing the bag to windward, to leeward, he threw it up against the weather side and it blew over back onto the roadway and fell down as Mr.
Title: Bridge Builders [Tape 12 Part 2] Interview with Tom Evans
Last Updated: 2017-08-03 7:03AM
This transcript was generated by Amplify and may contain errors.
Read more about how this transcript was created at https://amplify.sl.nsw.gov.au/

00:00:02.000 <Richard Raxworthy> Well Mr.
00:00:02.000 <Richard Raxworthy> Evans, can you remember an amusing instant, incident that happened while you were on
00:00:06.000 <Multiple Speakers> the bridge? Yes I can, uh, Richard. There, you know there was no toilets there we
00:00:13.000 <Tom Evans> could go to or get down to go to, you mightn’t have time by the time you got down.
00:00:20.000 <Tom Evans> So we’d have to take a brown paper bag or a sheet of paper and if you want to do
00:00:27.000 <Tom Evans> a crap, well you’d hide in the bracing or in the chords and do what you want
00:00:32.000 <Tom Evans> to do, and then when you’re done what you wanted to do, you’d come out and
00:00:39.000 <Tom Evans> throw it on the lee side; that is, the way the
00:00:46.000 <Tom Evans> wind was blowing - to the other side; but this particular day, my boss
00:00:52.000 <Tom Evans> Jimmy Muir and Mr.
00:00:54.000 <Tom Evans> Hipwell were walking across and there must have been somebody up there that took short
00:00:59.000 <Tom Evans> this day. And, when they’d finished what they were doing,
00:01:06.000 instead of him throwing the bag to windward,
00:01:13.000 to leeward, he threw it up against the weather side and it blew over
00:01:20.000 back onto the roadway and fell down as Mr.
00:01:25.000 Hipwell and Mr Muir were walking across and flattened out like
00:01:30.000 <Multiple Speakers> a pancake on the roadway. Wasn’t there anyway, were you not
00:01:37.000 allowed to go down to the toilet while you were on working on the arch? No, you
00:01:41.000 <Tom Evans> couldn’t. You wouldn’t have time to go down, Richard. It was
00:01:46.000 <Tom Evans> a thing that you had to do everything when you were up aloft. And there was no sort
00:01:51.000 of toilet arrangements up there at all? No toilets whatsoever. Only the blokes
00:01:56.000 working down below. They’ve probably had
00:01:58.000 a toilet but as far as working on the, on the, heights of the bridge, you had to take
00:02:04.000 <Multiple Speakers> and do for yourself. Wherever you could. Well, things have changed
00:02:08.000 <Richard Raxworthy> a bit since those days [laughs]. Thank you very much.
Local studies collections go global
## Questions and discussion

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