

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST Of AUSTRALIA

Report by LESLEY JENKINS 2004 Churchill Fellow

To investigate cultural and heritage projects featuring oral history with emphasis on training and documentation techniques, support programs for volunteers and oral history collection management procedures – UK, USA.

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Signed

Dated

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INTRODUCTION

This Report summarizes the findings from a 2004 Churchill Fellowship visit to the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Ireland to attend advanced level training and to meet with independent oral historians, cultural workers, curators and academics working with oral history.

Much of my work as a public historian involves visits to the archives, but I have always found it more interesting to talk to people about their recollections of historical events than to spend time alone there. Both are necessary to arrive at a full understanding, but oral history provides detail, insight and analysis that can surprise, delight and inform both interviewer and interviewee. Oral history has diverse applications and the material can stand alone as a detailed picture of someone's life or it can be used to inform exhibitions, books, plays, heritage walks and documentaries. Practitioners are drawn from a range of disciplines and work in a variety of ways. In Australia there are oral history branches in each state and territory and I would like to thank this community for supporting my application and my work over many years.

My visit overseas would not have been possible without the financial assistance of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust and my entrée to prestigious institutions in the United Kingdom would not have enjoyed such success had I not been a Churchill Fellow.

Executive Summary

Name: Lesley Jenkins ; Address: 93 Petersen Street, Wynnum 4178, Queensland

Email: recordinghistory@optusnet.com.au ; Phone: 07 33933804

Occupation: Writer/Public Historian

Project Description

To investigate cultural and heritage projects featuring oral history with emphasis on training and documentation techniques, support programs for volunteers and oral history collection management procedures – UK, USA.

Fellowship Highlights

I spent two weeks on placement with the National Life Story Collection, an independent charity within the British Library's National Sound Archive. I was amazed at the number of projects running concurrently and at the level of funding from the business sector, which doesn't happen in Australia.

The giant supermarket firm Tesco was supporting a project collecting interviews with current and former workers in the industry. Another project began in 1998 and featured the lives of people in the book trade, which had been funded by the Unwin Charitable Trust. Projects were also taking place in Scotland with oil workers on the rigs, and with artists in London. The topics were very diverse but a common feature of them was their detail and their length – up to 40 hours per person. The Oral History curator, Rob Perks, was particularly valuable in providing information. He is also a resource person for community organizations setting up recording projects. I visited the Kings Cross Voices Project and the Museum of London. Both were involved in training oral historians to collect material that celebrated the local community and informed the broader community at the same time. They had both been well funded thanks to the millions of pounds made available by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

I attended the Summer Institute in Oral History at Columbia University in New York. Here the focus was also on the life history model of interviewing which takes place over many hours and at multiple sittings. Long recordings do not generally take place in Australia and it requires training and experience to sustain them. It can be artificial to isolate part of a person's life, such as their career, from their home life and from world events, but I didn't realise that it was the way large collecting institutions were viewing all their work. Mary Marshall Clark, director of the Oral History Research Office at Columbia, and freelance oral historians Gerry Albarelli and Amy Starecheski were particularly valuable in providing information. I attended a workshop at the Digital Storytelling Centre in San Francisco where I learnt new methods for showcasing people's stories and Emily Paulos proved to be a skilled teacher encouraging me to take the Centre's methods back to Australia.

I concluded that the arguments we are still having in Australia about the legitimacy of oral history have passed on to the next stage in the UK and the US. Funding in these countries is available from government, business and philanthropic trusts. Communities in the United Kingdom are encouraged via the Heritage Lottery Fund to documenting their heritage and their culture. The projects also generate skills, employment opportunities and pride in contributing to lasting records. I have written a series of articles, which will be published in the newsletters of each Oral History Association in each state outlining my findings in detail. I have submitted a paper to the International Oral History Conference to be held in Sydney in 2006 that has been accepted. I have spoken about my Fellowship to ABC Radio and I am speaking about my Fellowship at a public meeting in October 2005. I hope to set up advanced training here via the Summer School model in the years to come.

PROGRAMME

United States of America

Seattle

Dan Barrett
Independent Personal Historian
Digital Family Story
danbarrett@digitalfamilystory.com

Julie McDonald Zander
Independent Personal Historian
Chapters of Life Memory Books
www.chaptersoflife.com

Olympia, WA

Dr Willie Smyth
Folk Arts Programme Manager
Washington State Arts Commission
Email: willies@arts.wa.gov

Joe McHugh
Personal Oral Historian
Olympia, WA

Jens Lund
Folklorist
Olympia, WA

New York, New York

Columbia University Oral History Research Office
Dr Jessica Wiederhorn
Email: jw712@columbia.edu

StoryCorp
Grand Central Station
www.storycorps.net

Oral History Productions
Elisabeth Pozzi-Thanner
maecenata@aol.com

Lettice Stuart
President, Association of Personal Historians
Portraits in Words
146 West 57th Street, Level 45D
New York, NY 10019

Ellis Island Immigration Museum

Washington DC

Smithsonian Centre for Folklife and Cultural Heritage
Betty Belanus, Folklorist
BettyB@folklife.si.edu

Peter Bartis – Veterans History Project
Library of Congress
American Folklife Center
Email: folklife@loc.gov

San Francisco

Digital Storytelling Centre
Emily Paulos – trainer
Email: info@storycenter.org

Elizabeth A. Wright
Personal Historian
History in Progress
Email: Elizabeth@HistoryInProgress.com

Trena Cleland
Personal Historian
First Person Oral Histories

Alicia Rouverol
Independent Oral Historian
Email: ajrouver@earthlink.net

United Kingdom

London

The British Library Sound Archive
Dr Robert Perks, Curator Oral History & Director, National Life Story Collection
Also: Sue Bradley, Cathy Courtney, Alex King, Johnny Robinson, Angelo O'Reilly, Niamh Dillon, Will Prentice
Email: rob.perks@bl.uk

Annette Day
Curator Oral History & Contemporary Collecting
Museum of London
Email: aday@museumoflondon.org.uk

Margaret Brooks
Keeper of the Sound Archive

Imperial War Museum
Email: mbrooks@iwm.org.uk

Kate Pocock
Sales & Marketing Director
Yale University Press
Email: kate.pocock@yaleup.co.uk

Kings Cross Voices Project
AlanD@kings-cross.org.uk

Churchill Museum & Cabinet War Rooms

Brighton

Kate Richardson
Curator of Community History
Brighton Museum
Email: kate.Richardson@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Al Thomson
Reader in History and Continuing Education, Centre for Continuing Education
Brighton
Email: A.S.Thompson@sussex.ac.uk

Jack Lattimer
My Brighton Project & The Make Multimedia Group

North Wales

Heritage Recording – Nth Wales
Ken Howarth
Email: ken.howarth@btinternet.com

Marian Gwyn – Nth Wales
Marketing & Education Officer
Penrhyn Castle
Email: marian.gwyn@nationaltrust.org.uk

Ireland

Cork

Northside Folklore Project
Mary O'Driscoll
Email: nfp@indigo.ie

MAIN BODY OF REPORT

Before I left on my Churchill Fellowship everyone told me to pack light. I did so, and even though there was only room for a couple of pairs of pants, a few skirts and one book, there was room for twelve small terracotta wombats with gilded wings. A potter made them for me and they arrived wrapped lovingly in tissue and bubble plastic. They nestled together in a plastic container as I crossed the United States with them, flew on to the United Kingdom, journeyed up to North Wales and over the sea to Ireland. As I traveled I gave them to people who had gone out of their way to help me understand their oral history work and how this could be applied in Australia.

Dr Willie Smyth, Folk Arts Program Manager at the Washington State Arts Commission in Olympia received the first wombat. I had a placement with him for four days as I explored his approach to the collection and documentation of oral history. He has a collection of 400 recordings, mostly cassettes, with 300 interviewees and most of the interviews run for 90 minutes. Some of the interviews are fully transcribed. They do not follow the life story approach, rather they are undertaken to explore the specific skills of community members undertaken over time, such as Indian basket weavers, or to explore other aspects of occupational artistry. Willie's training is as a folklorist. This is a degree course run at a number of Universities in the United States. I was to meet many folklorists on my travels in the States as they are often involved in oral history, either as curators, collectors of sound and stories, or in management positions in archives and art institutions.

"...folklore is the study of traditions. Things learned by observation, imitation, not from a book. Folklore passed over space and through time: blues singing, basket making, fairy tales, flat foot dancing, herbal remedies, knock-knock jokes." Dr Betty Belanus wrote this explanation in her novel *Seasonal*.¹ Betty is also a trained folklorist and a curator at the Smithsonian Centre for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in Washington DC. I stayed with her a bit later in my trip. I mention this now because the approach to the collection of oral history is fundamentally different when you are documenting the how, what, where & when of a craft or activity, as opposed to the 'life story' which centers on how the person got to be who they are in order to embrace the craft or activity. The life story or life history model is the one I encountered at the large institutions I visited: Columbia University Oral History Collection and the National Life Story Collection based at the British Library Sound Archive.

My time with Willie Smyth focused on the development of the Tour Guide for the Interstate 5 North Heritage Tour: Seattle to Blaine (USA – Canada Border). This included an audio track with traditional music and narratives from local residents. I was interested to find out how this was developed and funded. How many people were involved in the production of the very professional looking, spiral bound booklet? How were the narratives collected and edited along with other sound on the CD or cassette? My first surprise was to learn that these booklets take a team of about six people 1-2 years to finish.

I had originally thought that the development of the Tour Guide could be translated to my current work– a history of the Barcoo Shire. The Council had expressed interest in a range of outcomes as well as the traditional book.

¹ Betty J. Belanus, *Seasonal*, Round Barn Press, Maryland, 2002

Two interns have been working on a number of the Tour Guides and a freelance editor and contracted folklorist were also employed. The maps, sound editing and finished artwork is all outsourced to professional companies. Jens Lund, the folklorist, collects the oral histories and the music in the field, but a professional sound editor does the final mix. The route is traveled many times during the development of the Tour Guide as the speed of the vehicle has to coincide with the spoken word and the identified landmarks. A professional actor ties the narrative together with a voice over. One of the interesting and perplexing aspects of the Tour Guides is that much of what you hear about you can't see. The visible landscape is married with an invisible one of music, songs, stories and reminiscences. These features were essential to the first Tour Guide from Othello to Omark as this identified the region as a cultural heritage site worthy of the funding they received from the Department of Transportation. Subsequent guides have received money from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Washington State Arts Commission.

In 2000 Michael L. Murray wrote a paper about the invisible landscape portrayed in the Tour Guides commenting; 'As the landscape is depopulated of loggers, fishermen, and farmers, these people of the earth and sea come to be the inhabitants of a "lost world" that is nostalgically remembered'.² As I toured one of the routes it was certainly preferable to hear reminiscences from an 'old timer' long since removed to a nursing home, than to hear the story of the huge carpark that passed my view as I was driven along at 100 kilometres an hour.

New York, New York

I arrived in New York at night, feeling a mixture of anticipation and terror. All those stories of muggers and wrong turns combined in my mind to create my own *Bonfire of the Vanities*. The turbaned gentleman driving my Yellow Cab assured me I was at the right place, even though it looked like any other city block in the dark, and after the usual agony of determining the tip, which I gathered from the driver's growing surliness I got very wrong, I wheeled my bag into the dormitory building. I found a group of students acting as receptionists and before too long I was registered for the Summer Institute in Oral History at Columbia University.

Unfortunately the comprehensive pack of course notes had not arrived before I left Australia and was not awaiting my arrival, but I was pleasantly surprised to find that I had a large room to myself and a share bathroom in the student dormitory.

I met most of my fellow students at a reception held the following evening in the wonderful old apartment of Ron Grele, director emeritus of the Oral History Research Office, and one of the presenters at the Institute. The following morning we began with introductions, which lasted for most of the day, and gave all 25 attendees ample opportunity to introduce themselves, to expand on their work and to outline their hopes for the next 10 days. They were drawn from a range of occupations including 9 PhD candidates, 5 history lecturers/professors, 4 archive/project managers, 5 independent practitioners and 2 unaffiliated novices. Countries represented included: Australia, Pakistan, India, Brazil, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the multicultural mix of the United States. The focus for the

² Michael L. Murray, *Touring the Invisible landscape: Oral History and Heritage Highway Tourism*, Graduate Program in Folklore, University of Pennsylvania, Oral History Association Meeting, Durham, North Carolina, 12 October 2000.

Institute was: *Living to Tell: Narrating Catastrophe Through Oral History*, and some people had come specifically because of this theme. As Mary Marshall Clark, current director of the office, commented in our welcome letter: "The theme not only reflects recent work in oral history, which is increasingly focused on experiences of human suffering in historical contexts, but philosophical and historical thinking across the disciplines."

The morning and afternoon sessions were held in the same large room. Here we gathered around tables joined to create one companionable setting. This was to be our place of instruction for the next nine days, until need for the room determined that we move downstairs and divide, at last, into smaller groups. Invited academics, Columbia University Oral History Research Office staff - past and present, project managers and independent practitioners gave presentations, sometimes as part of a panel and sometimes alone. Sessions generally lasted for several hours before they were opened up for questions, but as the members of the group became more comfortable with each other and the proceedings, questions came whenever people wanted to ask them.

As the Institute progressed I realized that many of my fellow participants had much to offer and even though little had been organized to facilitate our interaction, such as the provision of morning tea, I sought them out to find out more about their work. I ended up eating out most nights with one or other of them and this proved to be one of my great delights during my stay in the Big Apple. Dr Furrugh Kahn from Pakistan continues to work on the oral narratives of Pakistani women's experiences of the Partition of India in 1947. He showed a short but harrowing film and also discussed his problems in making it. He stated in his written introduction to fellow students: "...On so many occasions in civil, ethnic or religious conflicts, women bore a significant brunt of the violence and brutality directed by members, mostly men, of warring communities. The stories of women do find a place in the meta-narrative, but are rarely used as more than illustrative examples of the violence and the wrongs of the 'Other'". He was given a lot of encouragement from the group to continue his work, even though funding is so minimal in his country. He also received some practical advice from fellow student, Rob Katz, an independent filmmaker.

The Institute featured 25 sessions and a handful of these ran concurrently. One of the early sessions included *A History of Oral History from American and Italian Perspectives* by Ron Grele and Alessandro Portelli. This history covered the philosophical development of oral history in the United Kingdom and the United States and included a cursory note on the early oral history collecting of Finland. Italian universities do not support the collection of oral history and there are no oral history associations to support community projects, so we heard about Alessandro's pioneering work and that of his fellow academic, Luisa Passerini. Little was made of the development of an oral history movement supported by associations, its advocacy role in the face of criticism, or that most oral history work takes place outside the Academy not within it. It also seemed odd to me to omit discussion about the impact of technology on the growth of oral history. It's a bit like talking about the history of photography without mentioning changes to the camera. Smaller and cheaper recorders have encouraged a diverse range of affiliated and non-affiliated practitioners to participate. This has produced a number of outcomes worthy of discussion in a talk about the *History of Oral History*.

Mary Marshall Clark spoke with sensitivity on the *Challenges of Documenting Catastrophe through Oral History*, which gave insights into the 9/11 oral history collection at the University. Discussions of this project became a focus of many of the presentations and it

was interesting to note that all the interviews were done with people who had self-nominated for participation. Interviews were also conducted over many visits and a number of interviewees retold their stories in a shorter filmed version. The interviews followed the life story model and were 20 hours plus in length. Interviewers were experienced and contracted to undertake the work, which was usually about 10 interviews per interviewer. 400 interviews were conducted and Mary Marshall elaborated on the features many of the interviews had in common. In summary they were:

- they were explanatory stories;
- they featured secular religiosity e.g. “I was meant to be late that day”;
- interviewees had a need to tell their stories (they felt free to tell the worst imaginable without being labeled as having a ‘post traumatic stress disorder’);
- there were less questions and more silences in the interviews;
- interviewees were able to elaborate on what it meant to survive and to be part of the process of commemoration.

Gerry Albarelli was a contract oral historian on the 9/11 Project and he spoke at a session entitled *Fieldwork after Catastrophe*. It was obvious that he had thought deeply about what oral history is and can do, and about the differences between oral history and journalism, especially since 9/11 has been one of the most documented events in history. Some of the points he made and that resonated with me were:

- oral history tends to gain meaning over time;
- oral history makes an attempt to slow down the telling;
- the telling is for the future and journalism is for the present;
- oral historians have to take the time that journalists don’t have;
- oral history is interested in where the local story intersects with the larger story.

Gerry also conducted a mock interview with Captain Jay Swithers who was a paramedic at the Twin Towers site. This did not work as an example of ‘how to do it’ but it was riveting as a powerful piece of storytelling.

Staying on the theme of catastrophe, we heard from Alessandro Portelli on *Memories from Above and Memories from Below: The Oral History of the Bombardments in Roma* and Jessica Wiederhorn on interviewing for the Shoah Foundation Oral History Collection, the AIDS Pandemic, Rwanda, and from fellow students Selma Kapidzic and Lara Nettlefield on the *War Crimes Documentation through Methodology of Oral History Project* in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These presentations were offset with sessions on *Organizing and Developing Community Oral History Projects* and *Writing for Publication* conducted by the energetic and informative Linda Shopes and others. Steve Rowlands talked about recording and creating *Aural History Documentaries* and we had the privilege of listening to excerpts from his elegant programs featuring jazz greats.

Unfortunately, the long and grueling conference format did not allow for embedding the theory with participatory, practical or facilitator led enquiry, or with field trips to some of the places in New York under discussion, such as Chinatown or the 9/11 site. These I visited with a friend I made at the Institute, along with a visit we made to StoryCorps.

StoryCorps is a national project, supported by donations and corporate sponsorship, to instruct and inspire people to record one another’s stories in sound. The recording takes place in a sound booth, which looks like Dr Who’s ‘Tardis’ and is located in a corner of

Grand Central Station; just across from the shoe shine seats. There is one smoky window that allows visitors to have a look at what is taking place within. A technician operates the sound equipment and this ensures a perfect recording and he also helps the interviewer and interviewee if they get stuck. Sessions are booked for 40 minutes, however, back-to-back slots allow for an 80-minute recording. Inside the booth the light is dim, the seats comfortable, and it looks like a small lounge room as a vase of flowers sits on the table. When I was there a granddaughter was interviewing her grandmother and at the end of the session, which cost \$10, they received an audio CD of the interview. Upon completion they signed a form giving their permission for a copy to be added to the StoryCorps Archive, housed at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. This permission also allows for excerpts to be selected and played on WNYC (New York Public Radio) and NPR (National Public Radio).

Washington DC and San Francisco

Another warning came over the loud speaker at Pennsylvania Station and the people I'd been chatting to laugh nervously. This seems to be as much about the potential bombing the message might signal, as embarrassment that an Australian visitor is witnessing their nation's lack of control in the face of messages to the contrary. When I arrived the train doors opened and an overwhelming heat welcomed me to the nation's capitol, Washington DC. I followed the instructions to the National Mall. I found the festival marketplace, and the richly decorated Filipino truck, I asked a question of a harried volunteer and wended my way through thousands of visitors to the administration van. Dr Betty Belanus emerged to welcome me to the 39th Annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival. The festival featured four programs – Oman: Desert, Oasis, and Sea; Forest Service, Culture, and Community; Food Culture USA; and Nuestra Music: Music in Latino Culture. As the handsome program book stated; '...the Festival once again presents a sample of the diverse cultural heritage of America and the world to large public audiences in an educational, respectful, and profoundly democratic way... True to form, the Festival illustrates the living, vital aspect of cultural heritage and provides a forum for discussion on matters of contemporary concern'.

I had never met Betty before she asked me to stay with her, husband Steve, and adolescent daughter M.E (pronounced Em-me). I stayed in leafy Arlington and time together enabled me to talk to Betty, a trained folklorist, about the inclusion of oral history in her project work and the development of each festival. I learnt that Queensland is to be celebrated at the Festival in 2009 and links have already been developed with the Queensland Premier, Peter Beattie, and the organizers of the Woodford Folk Festival, an annual event held just north of Brisbane. Betty had her eye on me as an advisor on the ground, I think, and I was happy to give her multiple leads to pursue along with the names of artists who include oral history in their work. Our mutual exchange of ideas and experiences included introducing the almost bald Steve to Vegemite but as he was not partial to the taste he thought he might try it as a hair-restorer.

I met Jens Lund again at the Festival, Jens had offered an insight into his work when I was on placement at the Washington State Arts Commission. He now had a new job as folklorist with the Forestry Service and I went with him to talk to Wally McCrae a cowboy poet and environmentalist. Wally had been to Australia on a poetry tour and had spent time at the Stockman's Hall of Fame in Longreach. The Festival is set up with multiple stages of different sizes and visitors move between them to hear speakers, participate in

learning new crafts, dance with the performers or just to watch and absorb what's going on. Introductions to speakers are a little like oral history interviews, as they tend to take a question and answer format. Both parties are knowledgeable about the subject and they focus on the interviewee's experiences over time. They are also documented in some way, which may include an audio recording. The Festival is a huge event and this year it took place over six days separated by a week in-between which when it was closed to visitors. This allowed the workers and performers to rest and for some fine-tuning to take place.

I also visited Peter Bartis, Senior Program Officer, at the American Folklife Centre in the Library of Congress. Peter manages the Veterans History Project and has written two booklets that support the collection of oral history and personal wartime recollections.³ These booklets encourage individuals or communities to record the first person recollections of American War Veterans. The project is supported financially by the United States Congress, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP-Founding Corporate Sponsor) and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Charitable Service Trust. The Archive has 35,000 interviews and most of them haven't been listened to or viewed by anyone. The volume precludes this and the other feature of such a large community driven project is the variability of the material that comes in. As Peter put it, "From crap to quality we get it all". Some filmed material doesn't survive entry into the Archive as the US Postal Service has been irradiating material to the Library of Congress since the Anthrax threat. Some elite interviews are undertaken with people of particular importance but these interviews are still quite short at around one hour's duration. Researchers and filmmakers use the material, but the Archive's main importance is as a country wide participatory project that documents individual stories in oral, film and written form for families.

My next stop was Berkeley in San Francisco. I spent an enjoyable two days at the Digital Storytelling Centre engaged in creating my story at the Digital Storytelling Workshop. Digital Storytelling can be about any aspect of our lives but there are seven elements to the process of constructing a story:

- Point of View
- Dramatic Question
- Emotional Content
- The Gift of Your Voice
- The Power of the Soundtrack
- Economy
- Pacing

My two days were long ones but as there was only myself and one other student I received personal tuition from a wonderful teacher for most of the time. This was fortunate because the main software programs we used were Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Premiere. I have a nodding acquaintance with Photoshop but Premiere was totally unfamiliar to me and quite complex. I managed to produce a 3 minute scripted film but I couldn't repeat the exercise because two days was too fast to practice what we learnt.

³ Library of Congress American Folklife Center, *Veterans History Project Field Kit – Conducting and Preserving Interview*, Washington, n.d., *Veterans history Project Memoir Kit – guidelines for Writing Personal and Wartime Recollections*, n.d. Peter Bartis also wrote the document that predates the above two, *Folklife and Fieldwork – A Layman's Introduction to Field Techniques*, 1979, Library of Congress, Washington.

Digital Storytelling may not seem to have a lot to do with oral history but it can be used as another way of encouraging people to tell their stories.

During my month in the United States I made contact with nine independent practitioners, mostly through the Association of Personal Historians and the Listserv for Folklorists. They all used oral history as the basis of their businesses but only three were also members of the Oral History Association. The Association of Personal Historians is a members' organization for people who are involved in producing life stories through books, oral histories, audiotapes, videos or DVDs. A few members are involved in training and mentoring in this area and in editing or writing commissioned histories. They are a young but growing organization which currently has approximately 500 members with a few located in Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada and Europe. They have a very active and supportive discussion list, which is particularly encouraging to newcomers. The skill level of members (and the quality of their products) varies greatly and I asked those I met about moves the organization had made towards a system that recognises this difference. The President, Lettice Stuart, who is a former journalist, told me that discussions had taken place some years ago with the membership about implementing a credentialing system and it was thought that a panel of experienced members might judge the work submitted by others. This was the cause of unrest among members about who should do the judging and how they would assess the skills, experience and knowledge of their peers. It proved to be a divisive issue and as a result nothing was put in place. However, a feeling remains that as the membership grows, so does the need to address the issues of standards and professionalism. This is an issue that has been aired in Australia and I will be developing a Discussion Paper based on my talks with people during my Fellowship.

United Kingdom and Ireland

I arrived in London and my first port of call was a chemist shop to buy an umbrella! Then I visited Rob Perks, Curator of Oral History & Director, National Life Story Collection, who was kind enough to host me for two weeks.

The library is located on a congested London road and it was heaven to pass into the large courtyard and through the library doors into relative peace. Libraries are busy places these days and the British Library is no exception. It has a bookshop, multiple exhibition spaces and cafeterias but it's still primarily a place for quiet research. Rob took me on a tour of the building and we looked for famous faces researching the next best seller but we found none. I was shown the sound proof carrels where researchers sit in small rooms listening to sound recordings, including oral histories. It was reassuring to see that a number of these were in use when we passed them.

I was surprised at the number of projects running concurrently at the National Life Story Collection, which is an independent charity within the British Library's Sound Archive. I was also surprised to meet a number of contracted oral historians working on projects supported by charities linked to or supported by the business sector. Rob works very hard at generating these leads and at answering enquiries that come from all over the UK and from overseas.

The giant supermarket firm Tesco was supporting a project collecting interviews with current and former workers in the industry. Another project, funded by the Unwin Charitable Trust, began in 1998 and featured the lives of people in the book trade.

Projects were also taking place in Scotland with oil workers on the rigs, and with artists in London. The topics were very diverse but a feature of them was their detail and their length – up to 40 hours per person. The oral historians working on the projects told me that people had asked them if they had been trained not to yawn. “No chance”, they said, “it’s too interesting”

Interviews are summarized and occasionally transcribed and the summaries are added to the British Library National Sound Archive’s Cadensa on-line catalogue, which is available on the Web. I listened to 8 tapes making up one interview and summarized them according to a set of guidelines that ensure consistency and encourage brevity. Each 30-minute section of interview should be a single paragraph not exceeding 250 words.

Compilation CDs are also made of selected oral history excerpts and the material is often used to inform exhibitions or books. The oral historians do their own summaries on the equipment at the library, ensure that it is uploaded onto the database and undertake research, preparation and gather their equipment from the Library. They were using the digital Marantz PMD 660 which uses a flashcard. I discussed the issue of uncompressed and compressed sound. Rob Perks and his oral historians use 2 Gigabyte Flashcards which record for 3 hours at 24 bit/44.1 - the CD standard. The sound is transferred to MP3 so that they can summarise them more easily and this sound (compressed) is what you hear if you go to the their web page.

The people and the institutions I visited are moving along the digital road at different speeds. Decisions are made according to their budgets, the technical advice available to them, and the compatibility requirements of their institutions who need to marry the accessibility and storage of their sound recordings with their other collections. For instance, the recordings made by the Columbia University Oral History Office for their 9/11 project were recorded using a HHB Professional Mini Disc recorder (compressed sound). They fully transcribe their interviews and these are available via an antiquated card system. The Imperial War Museum has moved from the Marantz CP 430 cassette recorder to the HHB Professional Mini Disc Recorder. They have also moved away from full transcripts, preferring to spend the money on contract interviewers collecting interviews. They now provide summaries. The Museum of London uses the HHB Professional Mini Disc Recorder but they are moving towards the Flash Card. Interestingly, they store the mini-disc as the master plus 2 CDs (Archival Gold). They provide summaries but they also have a few transcripts. The general move is to store the audio on two different makes of archival quality CD or DVD in case one brand is discovered to have a fault. The other move is to store the uncompressed and/or compressed sound recordings on a hard drive that in effect becomes the archival copy. In the case of the Imperial War Museum the hard drive is stored off site for safety and security reasons.

The Oral History curator at the British Sound Library is also a resource person for community organizations setting up recording projects. I visited the Kings Cross Voices Project, which trains local residents to collect stories and the Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting, Annette Day at the London Museum. The Museum has an active recording program and a recent project printed oral history excerpts on shopping bags, developed postcards and had stories that could be picked up by transceivers (borrowed from the local library) as you traveled past the suburb in your car. They had both been well funded and would run for many years thanks to the millions of pounds

made available by the Heritage Lottery Fund. I also visited the Brighton Museum to see how oral history had been integrated into their exhibitions. While in Brighton I visited Jack Lattimer who has been active with Queenspark Books, a community publishing venture which has been operating successfully for many years. Jack was particularly valuable in discussing academic oral history as opposed to community based oral history projects, which he prefers to be involved with. Dr Al Thompson is Reader in History and Continuing Education at the Centre for Continuing Education in Brighton. I spoke to him about Life History Courses and oral history training in general. I also spent four days in North Wales with Ken Howarth, principal of Heritage Recording. This allowed a valuable interchange to take place about oral history methodology and equipment. Ken took me to see many parts of the Wales he loves which included a visit to Penrhyn Castle.

I toured the Castle and talked with Marian Gwyn about her work as the marketing and education officer and her plans to develop an oral history program. I was particularly interested in Marian's thoughts about how collective memory is shaped, especially in relation to memories about the Pennant Family (the former owners of Penrhyn Castle) and how this can vary from official records and affect a communities' desire to participate in an oral history project.

I had been invited to give a talk at the Northside Folklore Project in Cork, Ireland about my Fellowship and what I had learnt about oral history on my travels. I was happy to make a short visit to Ireland to do this and to see their work. The Northside Folklore Project was instigated in 1996 to document the urban folklore of Cork. It is also provides training and employment opportunities for long term unemployed local people. The Project produces radio programs, a journal and books which are all completed to high standards. The interviews are usually between 40-80 minutes long and are archived at the University College Cork which is closely linked to the Project and provides new workers with training and support.

CONCLUSIONS

Oral History is a diverse practice drawing people from a range of disciplines and there are many ways of collecting material, archiving it and making it accessible to others. How this is done depends on the funding available to the institution or project and how they determine their priorities for using it (this may be linked to the political climate which carries its own implicit requirements). This means that some organizations have sophisticated methods for making the sound widely accessible because the sound is viewed as the most important resource, or they may have spent their money on transcriptions because researchers find it quicker to read than to listen to long interviews.

Although some large institutions favour the collection of long life histories this is not necessarily appropriate or possible for most community based projects or independent oral historians. Efforts directed at making differences between oral historians who do not work in this way seem counterproductive. The field is a relatively small one operating within a bigger field of history and heritage work, or as part of a community development or community arts focus.

When I left I wanted to find out how many oral historians operate independently and whether this was a viable occupation in countries with bigger populations. I realised that there are a growing number of people setting up businesses based around the collection of oral history in the United States but that most of them were not charging enough to make a full time living from their enterprise. Australia has a much smaller number of businesses of this sort but the Oral History Association of Australia has developed Fee Guidelines, which take into account the skill, knowledge and experience of practitioners and this helps to ensure that projects are adequately costed from the beginning. There is some way to go before this is embraced elsewhere. I was surprised to see how many institutions employ contract oral historians but payment varies from an honorarium to a modest fee. I also discussed a system of credentialing for oral historians with many people overseas and while I am still thinking about this myself I now have an international perspective to bring to the debate.

Oral History training is fairly widely available in the United Kingdom and the United States and there are a number of summer schools to attend in the US. Most are based on an academic model of instruction and after discussions with folklorists there may be scope to introduce training here based on the model of the 'community scholar'. This would be directed at the broader community history and arts community who do not seek 'credit' and who are not working towards degrees or post graduate qualifications. This would allow for a more practical and less theoretical model to emerge.

One of the biggest differences I noticed was access to funding for oral history. The British Library Sound Archive nurtures the National Life Story Collection, which is a registered charity. This allows business to become involved with oral history and to receive the tax deductibility benefit of doing so. The United Kingdom also has the Lottery Heritage Fund, which has a large budget for oral history, and other heritage based projects. This allows for projects to run for many years and to build better community and training links and more professional outcomes. In the United States philanthropy has been a feature of the society for a long time. This extends to funding oral history projects, which are labour intensive, costly and sometimes innovative as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Library of Australia should investigate developing a National Life Story Collection, with charity status, similar to that operating at the British Library Sound Archive to encourage business involvement and to broaden the oral history collection.

The Oral History Association of Australia should develop a discussion paper on the credentialing of oral historians with a view to establishing a register of experienced and knowledgeable practitioners.

The Oral History Association of Australia- Queensland Branch should investigate the possibility of running a summer or winter school in Oral History Practice.

The Oral History Association of Australia- Queensland Branch should initiate discussions with The Queensland State Library to:

- appoint an experienced oral history curator, similar to the position existing at the State Library of NSW, to develop the collection in Queensland and to support communities engaged in a wide range of oral history projects.
- investigate developing a National Life Story Collection, with charity status, similar to that operating at the British Library Sound Archive to encourage business involvement and to broaden the oral history collection