

Slide One: Oral History Makes a Problem Come Alive

Play Anna Devear Smith Clip

<https://www.pbs.org/video/brief-but-spectacular-1522972894/>

Remind them: oral history gathers stories for a particular purpose

- To learn about the complexity of an event
- To foster dialogue
- To identify community-based ideas and potential solutions
- To help build more inclusive collections for future researchers
- To provide primary source material for non-fiction projects

Transition Slide: STEPS TO PREPARE FOR AN INTERVIEW

Today I'm going to provide you with specific instruction about how to prepare for an interview

There are three steps:

- A. Pre-interview research
- B. Preparing your questions
- C. Interview technologies

Slide: Do Your Homework

1. You must Prepare for an Interview
2. Read about the event, place, time or conditions you have chosen to learn more about; after you read ask yourself, jot some notes:
 - a. What did you learn?
 - b. What surprised you?
 - c. What else do you want to know?
 - i. If they read the stuff I shared, see separate Summaries of key points from articles that might lead to good research questions
3. Identify people who have interesting ideas, perspectives, stories that relate to your interview focus
 - a. No matter how well you know your interview subject, before you interview them, you'll want to conduct a pre-interview:
 - i. Tell them about your project and your interests
 - ii. Show them the collection and explain why collections are important
 - iii. Ask them if they are willing to participate and if they wish to be interviewed
 - iv. Ask them if they have a story to tell and get an idea of what they might say.

For example, if you are taking the Uprising itself as your topic, you

 - a. Did this person witness or participate in protests? Where? With a group or as an individual? What specifically moved them to do so?
 - b. Did this person belong to an organization or have a job or even just a personal interest in conditions or events that contributed to the uprising?
 - c. Did this person establish a business or nonprofit in the aftermath of the protests?
 - d. Do you have a personal connection to this person?

- v. Based on your pre-interview, figure out: is there anything else you might need to know?
 - a. More information about the Uprising and your subject's particular perspective on it.
 - b. Basics about the business or job or nonprofit this person is associated with
 - c. This helps you ask better questions
- vi. Where can you find more information?
 - 1. Newspaper or journal articles
 - a. How can you assess the value of these?
 - i. Published by a reputable source
 - ii. Author biography
 - iii. Additional search on author
 - 2. Website for the business or nonprofit
 - 3. Other people who know the person well –did someone recommend your interview subject? Why?

SLIDE: STEP TWO DEVELOP QUESTIONS

- b. Develop Questions
 - i. What is the goal of your interview?
 - 1. An entire life history?
 - 2. A specific, event focused story?
 - ii. How Can you Encourage your Subject to Talk?
 - 1. Help your interview subject get comfortable and invite them to remember
 - a. Start with general questions
 - i. Tell me about yourself/your neighborhood/your project or business
 - ii. Where did you grow up? What were the most important experiences of your childhood? How did these experiences shape you?
 - b. Move to more specific questions about the event
 - i. What do you remember about the Uprising?
 - ii. What did you see or do?
 - iii. What were you thinking about?
 - iv. How did you feel?
 - v. Have your feelings or opinions changed since then?
 - c. Finally, get to the focus of your story
 - i. What do you think the Uprising was about?
 - ii. How did you decide to respond?
 - iii. What impact has your project made?
 - iv. What is left to do?
 - v. What would you like to see happen?
 - iii. What kinds of questions are best?
 - 1. DO NOT ASK yes or no questions

2. AVOID TOO MANY purely fact-based questions
3. Ask open ended questions that invite people to share what they saw, what they felt, what they think, what they did, why did they choose that path
- iv. Some Guidelines
 1. A good goal is to have 3-4 basic informational questions; 3-4 questions to help them describe what happened, what they saw; 3-4 questions about their feelings and opinions
 2. IMPORTANT: the questions should be a guide for you if you get lost or the interview slows down, but you should not worry about asking all of them or asking them in order. Instead: listen carefully. Ask follow up questions. Allow time for silence. THIS IS THE HARDEST PART.
 3. Take a few minutes to draft some questions to use as a guide

SLIDE: STEP THREE BEST PRACTICES AND TECHNICAL ASPECTS

A. EQUIPMENT

- i. Tascam digital recorder
- ii. Rev Voice Recorder
- iii. Test it out
- iv. Have them do short interviews with each other –the basics
- b. RECORDING SPACE: you will need to find a quiet space for oral histories. It won't work to be in a loud, busy space. A quiet office where you will not be interrupted is best.
- c. CONSENT FORM
- d. IMPORTANT: Make sure the first thing you record is an introduction: your name, the date, the location of your interview, the name of the person you are interviewing, and the basic topic you hope to cover;
 - i. This is Denise Meringolo, I am interviewing Frank Anderson on August 8, 2018 at the Arch Social Club. We plan to talk about graduate school education at UMBC.

2. What Else

- a. IF your interview subject agrees to this you can decide together to upload your interview to the collection
 - i. You can do this yourself by connecting the device to your computer OR I can upload your files from a shared google folder
- b. You can provide a summary of the interview:
 - i. When and where did it take place?
 - ii. What is the most important thing your interview subject talked about?
- c. Best practices is to transcribe
 - i. SHOW EXAMPLES: show summary, show transcript, listen to start of interview

