

2019 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

PATHWAYS IN THE FIELD: CONSIDERATIONS FOR THOSE WORKING IN, ON, AND AROUND ORAL HISTORY

The Oral History Association invites proposals for papers and presentations for its 2019 annual meeting to be held October 16-20 at the Sheraton Salt Lake City Hotel in Salt Lake City, Utah. The deadline for submissions is February 3, 2019. This year's meeting will explore the many different professional pathways one can take with oral history. Whether it encompasses all or a portion of one's professional responsibilities, we will examine how practitioners build careers and make a living (or don't) through oral history.

Oral history as a research methodology has existed for the better part of a century. While this formalization originated and is concentrated in the halls of academia, the specifics of where oral history is done and by whom have expanded significantly since its inception. Further, the work around the entire life cycle of oral history has proliferated as practitioners have recognized it's not enough to do oral history—we have to do something with that oral history. Today, the emergent field is populated by a diverse group of people who come to oral history and work with it in myriad ways, whether in traditional academic settings, the #altac track, or other combinations of private, public, or volunteer capacities.

Beyond examining the interviewer's role in the intersubjective relationship of an oral history interview, interviewers often fade into the background. But overlooking the interviewer has led to a silence around the profession of oral history. What does it mean to be an oral historian? How does one become an oral historian? And how do our preconceived notions about oral historians limit our understanding of all those who work in oral history along its continuum of practice? Oral history is a powerful tool for democratizing history, but we need to consider whether or not we have similarly accomplished that democratization in our professional ranks. In what ways can we continue to open up the field while promoting best practices? Has the change in who is working in oral history been reflected in the histories we gather and how we provide access to those histories?

For many, to do oral history is to understand the inherent value of oral history, but the challenge is convincing our communities, clients, directors, and universities to value and invest in it as well. Indeed, building capacity for oral history seems to be a key part of the job. Beyond building capacity, what are the benefits and challenges of being a practitioner in a given field or discipline, and how does oral history add value to what we do? Is working in oral history a viable professional option, or is it forced to be a passion project? When should one take on a project pro bono, and what are the considerations of doing oral history on a pro-bono or volunteer basis? Technology has significantly impacted oral history at many points of its life cycle, but it's also created pathways for a variety of people to engage in and with oral history. For those who identify as something other than an oral historian, what role does oral history as a field, a product, and a methodology play in their professional lives?

These questions hint at a broad range of intersections—from types of employment, to cultural perspectives, to identity(ies), to interdisciplinarity. As a crossroads and connecting point for

years, Salt Lake City serves as an appropriate location in which to explore these themes. The sovereign nations who have lived in Utah for millennia have witnessed the arrival of missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the 1840s, the Transcontinental Railroad in the 1860s, non-indigenous settlers of all stripes, and, more recently, the 2002 Winter Olympics and a thriving outdoor tourism industry. More than 80 percent of Utah's population lives along the Wasatch Front, making Salt Lake City the urban hub of the state as well as a regional center in health care, film and performing arts, and information technology, all of which reflect the area's role as a profound point of meeting and exchange.

The Program Committee welcomes broad and creative interpretations of the conference theme as reflected in proposals for panels, individual papers, mini workshops, exhibits, and roundtables. We especially encourage presenters to think about innovative delivery models including dramatic performance, interactive sessions, dialogic formats that engage audiences, and the use of digital media. Presenters are encouraged to incorporate voice and image in their presentations. In addition, we welcome proposals from the diverse communities that carry out oral history work—academics, independent scholars, archivists, librarians, museum curators, community organizers, journalists, educators, media artists, community historians, folklorists, activists, filmmakers, playwrights, performers, creative writers, volunteers, ethnographers, public historians, storytellers, and all people working along oral history's continuum of practice.

We hope to have a significant international presence at the meeting. If accepted, international presenters may apply for partial scholarships made available by the OHA in support of international presentations. Small scholarships are also available for accepted presenters and others who attend the meeting.

Proposal format: The online proposal site will open on November 15, 2018 and submission information will be posted on the OHA website, www.oralhistory.org.

Proposal queries may be directed to:

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