

Oral History Section Newsletter

Issue 2

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From the Chair:

New Orleans or Bust
Pam Hackbart-Dean
Georgia State University

It's hard to believe it has been a year since we were "spotlighting archives" in Boston, and now we're gearing up for New Orleans!! I always look forward to congregating with the members of the Oral History Section. This is a chance to meet old friends and make new ones, to rejoice in recent successes and commiserate about continuing challenges. Our meeting is a wonderful opportunity to get to know your colleagues in order to build a network and support group for ideas and advice.

For those new to the job or those who want to polish up on their skills, SAA continues to offer the "unplugged" seminars. This year you can attend sessions such as the audiovisual universe, exhibits on a shoestring, preservation fundamentals, advocacy 101, and the means and ends of archival certification.

You will also find a session in this year's program endorsed by our Steering Committee: **Thursday, August 18 (9:45-11:14 AM) Balancing Competing Interests: Donors, Researchers and Third Party Rights.** Third-party authors or subjects in archival collections can raise legal objections if manuscript collections or oral history interviews contain potentially libelous or confidential information. Even in the absence of legal grounds, custodians should give careful and sympathetic consideration to such objections. The presenters consider the archival profession's need to balance the public's right to know with the individual's right to privacy using examples from the papers of elected public officials and oral history collections.

I hope that all Oral History Section members will attend this year's business meeting on Friday, August 19 from noon to 2 PM. The Steering Committee is very pleased to offer an informative presentation about the Georgia Women's Movement Project by Morna Gerrard, Archivist of the Women's Collection at Georgia State University. Since 1995, the project has conducted over 50 interviews which describe participants' efforts to pass the Equal Rights Amendment in the state of Georgia and which relate to their participation in religious, political, and other organizations involved.

This will be followed by a presentation from Mark Shelstad, Associate Archivist & Information Manager, University of Wyoming, American Heritage Center. He will discuss the IMLS grant that is helping UW and other participating repositories to create standards-based digital audio files (including oral histories) and accompanying descriptions.

I look forward to seeing you at SAA! ❖

Oral History Projects

LGBTRAN Pioneers:
Oral History Pilot Project
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
Religious Archives Network

Have interesting, important, and rarely used oral histories in your collections? This project demonstrates how online oral history exhibits create access and visibility for the collections while adding value to the website. LGBTRAN (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Religious Archives Network) announces the opening of an ongoing virtual

oral history exhibit of LGBT pioneers from a variety of faith traditions from pagan to Protestant. The exhibit currently features the fascinating stories of five lesbian feminists – three WICCAN priestesses, an early evangelical author, and a pioneer Catholic. It contains audio files, photographs, full transcripts, biographical information, and additional resources for each interview and can be seen at <http://lgbtran.org>.

LGBTRAN conducted the oral histories and created this exhibit as a prototype and pilot project for a growing collection of oral histories conducted by others. To encourage this, LGBTRAN will contact and support LGBT religious organizations and individuals to conduct oral histories of early leaders. The LGBTRAN archivist will consult on project design, background research, interviewing techniques, equipment specification, and rights information. LGBTRAN will digitize analog tapes and make them available without charge along with historical and biographical notes. LGBTRAN divided the audio files into half hour segments for ease of downloading. The popularity of books-on-tape and other audio downloading sites suggests that some audio files may have an income potential.

LGBTRAN chose this project to further its mission of encouraging the preservation of LGBT religious history. It is an innovative grassroots online outreach organization that supplements the outreach efforts of archives. LGBTRAN encourages LGBT religious groups to save their records and offers information on donating collections to an appropriate repository. Its website currently hosts the Oral History Page, a Pioneer Gallery, and searchable Collections Catalog. It distributes a monthly e-newsletter with over 500 subscribers.

While researching and reaching out to individuals, LGBTRAN discovered many early leaders and faith traditions whose experiences had never been documented. The culture of secrecy and silence that characterized the early LGBT community inhibited recording of events and accomplishments. There are almost no records of the religious dimension of LGBT

experience before 1964. Grassroots lesbian feminist Goddess circles also chose anonymity. Although they emerged by the hundreds in the 1970s and persisted for decades, in many regions they faced discrimination based on their pagan practices and/or lesbian membership. As a result, these histories were seldom documented.

To capture essential features of this history, the LGBTRAN board advised an oral history project. A small grant from the School Sisters of Notre Dame funded the pilot project. Choosing from literally dozens of important, undocumented early leaders, this project chose five women – Virginia Mollenkott, one of the first, distinguished pro-LGBT authors among evangelicals; Karen Doherty, founder of the Conference for Catholic Lesbians; and three early Wiccan priestesses: Ruth Barratt, first high priestess under Z Budapest; Falcon River, guardian priestess; and Jade River, founder of the national umbrella organization, the Re-Formed Congregation of the Goddess-International. Their stories reflect off each other and illuminate the impact of feminism in reshaping faith experiences and LGBT identity.

Doris Malkmus, MSI dmalkmus@arczip.com

**Colorado Fuel & Iron Archives
Chosen to Participate in the
Collaborative Digitization Program
*Bessemer Historical Society, Pueblo, CO***

The Colorado Fuel & Iron Archives, Bessemer Historical Society (Pueblo, CO) has been chosen to participate in the Collaborative Digitization Program's (CDP) Sound Model grant project. The two year project, funded by a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, will digitize some 2000 audio cassettes, reel to reel tapes, wire recordings and other sound media and make them accessible on the internet.

BHS will digitize oral histories donated by H. Lee Scamehorn, emeritus professor of history at the University of Colorado and the author of two volumes on CF&I history, *Pioneer Steelmaker in the West: The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, 1872-1903* and *Mill and Mine: The CF&I in the 20th Century*. Dr. Scamehorn interviewed individuals from both management and labor to assist with the writing of his two books. These individuals include a man who assisted in the organization of Slavic miners during the Ludlow massacre, the last president of the CF&I corporation, the superintendent of Sunrise Mine (WY) and a miner from Valdez known for weaving artistic rugs. The interviews provide a breadth of information, giving both sides of the corporate story.

This two year project will build on the existing digital collections available through the CDP's *Heritage Colorado* and *Western Trails* initiatives, located at www.cdpheritage.org. The program will enable library and museum users to easily find and use primary resources in audio format in the context of other resources. Additionally, the project will include curricula and lessons to enable teachers to incorporate audio primary resources into the classroom. Some 25 institutions from 8 Western states will be participating in the project.

The Center for Spoken Language Research at the University of Colorado-Boulder will generate transcripts. A user will be able to enter a search term, receive a list of audio files containing the search term used in the transcript, and then locate and listen to occurrences of the search term in the audio files. The ability to allow users access to specific sections of audio files without creating individually cataloged small pieces of a file will be a tremendous time saver for researchers and cultural heritage organizations.

These collections will be available in several ways: 1) in the Heritage catalog of metadata, linked with URL's to the audio server, 2) some will be loaded into local library catalogs or, for museums, integrated into separate web-based exhibitions, 3) through the

Colorado Virtual Library (CVL), a finding aid listing every online catalog in the state, and enabling integrated searching of digital primary resources, websites, print resources, and journal article resources, and 4) through a web-based exhibit for digital audio resources on the CDP website.

Hear Me Roar: A Decade of Collecting Georgia's Women's Movement Oral Histories *Georgia State University*

The Georgia Women's Movement Oral History Project began in 1995 as a joint endeavor between Georgia State University Library Special Collections Department and the newly established Women's Studies Institute. This project documents participants' involvement with the Women's Movement and with efforts to pass the Equal Rights Amendment in Georgia through oral histories and collections of associated papers. In all, this innovative oral history project has captured the narratives of over 50 individuals.

The goal of the project is to create a collection of oral history interviews which will be part of the archival collections in the *Donna Novak Coles Georgia Women's Movement Archives*. Transcripts are created from each interview and are made available at Georgia State University. These interviews are also individually cataloged into OCLC.

To learn more about this ongoing project, visit our website which features sound bytes from the interviews, text clippings from the transcripts, short biographical sketches of each interviewee, as well as a photograph of the individual.

<http://www.library.gsu.edu/spcoll/women/oral/history/>

Boder Interviewees Sought
Department of Oral History
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

In the summer of 1946, psychology professor David P. Boder, of Chicago, traveled to several displaced person shelters in Western Europe, where he conducted what are believed to be the first audio-recorded interviews with Holocaust survivors and other refugees following the war's end. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Oral History branch is now searching for and re-interviewing these same survivors about their wartime experiences.

When, in April 1945, General Dwight D. Eisenhower invited American news people to visit the newly liberated Nazi concentration camps so as "to leave no doubt . . . about the normal practices of the Germans in these camps," David Boder was eager to join them. His goal was to record the experiences of concentration camp prisoners as told in their own languages and their own voices. Using a magnetic wire recorder and spools of carbon steel wire, Dr. Boder interviewed over 100 survivors who spoke nine different languages. He subsequently translated 70 of the interviews into English and published eight of them. However, his efforts to translate and publish the remaining interviews as well as to fund original-language transcripts of the interviews were unsuccessful. Dr. Boder died in 1961.

The Museum's Oral History staff is conducting a massive effort to trace the Boder interviewees, and to date has interviewed nine survivors in the United States, Israel and France. Several more interviews are planned in France and Australia. The Museum's objectives are to gain a more complete picture of these survivors' initial recollections as told to Dr. Boder and to contrast their original perspectives of the Holocaust with their views today. To see the list of Boder interviewees being sought by the Museum, visit the "What's New" section on the Museum's website, at www.ushmm.org. For more information about David Boder and the

texts of his translated 1946 interviews, visit <http://voices.iit.edu/>.

Elizabeth Hedlund, Program Coordinator
(202) 314-7850

Events/News

**Bridges of Memory:
New Directions in Oral History
New Orleans Oral History Roundtable
SSA Conference: May 27; Baton Rouge LA**

Chair: **Al Stein**, New Orleans Public Library & City Archives Collection

Jennifer Abraham, T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, LSU

Laura Thomson, Amistad Research Center
Bruce Rayburn, Hogan Jazz Archives,
Tulane University

Members of the New Orleans Oral History Roundtable discuss key issues surrounding the collection, preservation, and provision of access to oral history collections, including copyright, digitization, needs assessment, preservation and migration of various av formats, standardization of finding aids and metadata, and interview techniques and protocols for forms, releases, etc. to be used by archivists who have oral history collections and/or are conducting surveys and field work. Using oral history for public outreach and interdisciplinary collaborations is also discussed. An oral history workshop is conducted as part of this presentation.

Alan H. Stein, astein@uno.lib.la.us,
(504) 596-2614

**Society of American Archivists
Oral History Section Steering
Committee 2004-2005**

Chair

Pam Hackbart-Dean
Special Collections Department
Georgia State University Library
100 Decatur St., SE
Atlanta, GA 30302-3967
404-651-3896
FAX: 404-651-4314
libphd@langate.gsu.edu

Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect

Eileen Simon
Veterans History Project
Library of Congress
2 Laurel Hill Road #J
Greenbelt, MD 20770-7753
esimon@loc.gov

Steering Committee

Susan Tucker (2003-2005)
Tulane University
Newcomb Center for Research on Women
62 Newcomb Place
New Orleans, LA 70118
504/314-2722
Fax: 504/862-8948
susannah@tulane.edu

Kim Winters (2004-2005)
Simpson Archivist
Alan K. Simpson Institute for Western Politics
and Leadership
American Heritage Center
University of Wyoming
Dept. 3924
1000 E. University Avenue
Laramie, WY 82071
Phone: 307-766-2557
Fax: 307-766-5511
kimain@uwyo.edu

Lauren Kata (2004-2006)
Special Collections Department
Georgia State University Library
100 Decatur St., SE
Atlanta, GA 30302-3967
404-651-3898
FAX: 404-651-4314
lkata@gsu.edu

Web Liaison (Ex-officio)

Deborah Whalen
Eastern Kentucky University
Library 521 Lancaster Avenue
Richmond, KY 40475-3102
Phone: 859/622-1792
Fax: 859/622-1174
debbie.whalen@eku.edu

Newsletter Editor (Ex-officio)

Rebecca Hankins, CA
Assistant Professor
Cushing Memorial Library;
MS5000 TAMU
College Station TX 77843-5000
Phone: 979-845-1951
Fax: 979-845-1441
Rhankins@lib-gw.tamu.edu

Past Chair/Nominating Committee

Herb Hartsook
University of South Carolina
112 Silver Lake Circle
Columbia, SC 29212
Phone: 803/777-5745
herb@gwm.sc.edu