



ORAL HISTORY AND THE MEDIA

Friday 3rd &
Saturday 4th
July 2020

CALL FOR PAPERS

Oral history and the media have an important but complex relationship. The media has long been a significant producer of, and outlet for, oral history. Classic radio and television productions like *The Radio Ballads* (1958-1964), *Yesterday's Witness* (1969-1981), and *The World at War* (1973-4) pioneered the use of oral history in the broadcast media, whilst books such as Ronald Blythe's *Akenfield* (1969) and Stud Terkel's *Hard Times* (1970) did the same for print media, all giving voice to those who would otherwise have been excluded from both the media and the historical record.

Since the 1980s, there has been growing use of oral history in TV, radio, print and digital media, with oral histories now forming an important and popular dimension of history and factual broadcasting and publishing. However, the process by which oral histories are mediated from orality to the media (or "transmediated", to use Alessandro Portelli's term), and the methodological, aesthetic, narrative, or ethical decisions behind these productions and outputs – such as who to interview, what questions to ask, and what parts of the interviews end of up on the "cutting room

floor" – often remain hidden.

The relationship between oral history and the media can also be seen in how oral history has been used to explore the histories and experiences of the media itself, with oral history projects documenting the histories of media companies and organisations, alongside an upsurge of interest in memory and nostalgia related to the experiences of media, such as memories of cinema, books and music.

Elsewhere, the advent of new media and social media has fuelled the growth of digital storytelling, interactive documentaries, as well as serialised audio podcasts which draw heavily on oral history testimony. These new technologies, formats and channels offer new ways of creating, disseminating,

consuming and democratising oral history, raising questions about ethics, participation, expertise, audiences, and formats.

This conference aims to consider the relationship between oral history and the media, both historically and today, by exploring similarities, differences, opportunities and challenges between media practices and oral history practices, from interviewing to editing, audiences to ethics, covering topics such as:

- the use and misuse of oral history in the media;
- memories of (the) media: film, books, tv, radio, theatre, music;
- the influence of the media on memory: mediated memory and 'prosthetic memory';
- oral history, media and editing: soundbites, vox-pops and the 'cutting-room floor';

- oral history, media and interviewing: intersubjectivity, questions, and emotion;
- oral history and 'transmediation': transcription, editing, fictionalisation and dramatisation;
- contestation, sensationalism and commercialisation of/in oral history;
- journalism, news, and oral history;
- new media, social media and oral history;
- oral history, false memory and fake news;
- oral histories of the media (professions, organisations and companies);
- changing media and formats and its implications for oral history; and
- archiving, preservation and re-use of oral histories in the media.

PROPOSALS

The deadline for submission of proposals is **20th December 2019**. Each proposal should include: a title, an abstract of between 250-300 words, your name (and the names of any copresenters, panellists, etc), your institution or organisation, your email address, and a note of

any particular requirements. Most importantly your abstract should demonstrate the use of oral history or personal testimony and be directly related to the conference theme. Proposals that include audio playback are strongly encouraged. Proposals should be

emailed to the **ORAL HISTORY AND THE MEDIA** Conference Manager, Polly Owen, at polly.owen@ohs.org.uk. They will be assessed anonymously by the conference organisers, and presenters will be contacted in January/February 2020.

www.ohs.org.uk/conferences