

**2021
ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
OF THE**

**ORAL
HISTORY
SOCIETY**

ONLINE



ON AIR

ORAL HISTORY AND THE MEDIA

Friday 9th & Saturday 10th July 2021

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. Originating in the pioneering oral history TV and radio productions in the 1960s and 1970s, there has been significant growing use of oral history in TV and radio documentaries and storytelling since the 1980s, with oral histories now forming an important and popular dimension of history and factual programming and broadcasting. 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. Oral history has also been put to work to explore the histories and experiences of the media itself, with oral history projects charting the

development of media companies and organisation. This has coincided with an upsurge of interest in memory and nostalgia related to the experiences of media, such as memories of cinema, books and music.

The extensive and often complex uses and approaches of oral history with, by, and for, the media prompts us to consider vital questions about ethics, participation, consumption, expertise, audiences, and formats in oral history practice. This conference considers 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, including:

- The Use and Misuse of Oral History in the Media

- The Influence of the Media: Mediated Memories and Misremembering
- Oral History in the Media: Documentary Film, Radio, and Digital Storytelling
- Oral History, Media, and Interviewing: Confession, Testimony, and Intimacy
- Oral History, Citizenship and State Media: Nation, Narrative, and Identity
- Oral History and Journalism: Reporting and Remembering Conflict and Disasters
- Memories of (the) Media: Film, Books, TV, Radio, Theatre, Music
- Oral Histories of the Media Professions and Companies
- Oral History, Media, and Ethics: Roles, Responsibilities and Authority
- Oral History and the Web: Access, Permission, and Presentation
- Archiving, Preservation and Re-use of Oral Histories in the Media.

www.ohs.org.uk/conferences

ORAL HISTORY AND THE MEDIA

PLENARIES

● **Prof MARGARETTA JOLLY** (University of Sussex) on *Ms.Represented: Oral Histories and Feminism in the Media*

● **ALAN DEIN** (BBC Radio) on *The Voices on the Cutting Room Floor*

● **STEVE HUMPHRIES** (Testimony Films) on *The Art of the Intimate Interview*

● **CHARLOTTE KNOWLES** and **MICHELLE SCARLETT** (Independent Film Trust) on *ColdharbourVR* – using oral histories in 360 degrees

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

FRIDAY 9th JULY 2021

09.15 – 10.30 Welcome

Plenary – The Voices on the Cutting Room Floor
Alan Dein (BBC Radio)

10.30 – 10.45 Break

10.45 – 11.45 **Parallel Session 1**

11.45 – 12.00 Break

12.00 – 13.15 **Parallel Session 2**

13.15 – 14.15 Lunch and Networking

14.15 – 15.15 **Plenary – Ms.Represented: Oral Histories and Feminism in the Media** Professor Margaretta Jolly (University of Sussex)

15.30 – 16.30 **Parallel Session 3**

16.30 – 16.45 Break

16.45 – 18.00 **Parallel Session 4**

19.00 – 20.30 Performance
Networking

SATURDAY 10th JULY 2021

09.00 – 09.50 OHS Special Interest Group Meetings

10.00 – 11.00 **Plenary – The Art of the Intimate Interview**
Steve Humphries (Testimony Films)

11.00 – 11.15 Break

11.15 – 12.30 **Parallel Session 5**

12.30 – 13.45 Lunch, Networking, and OHS Annual General Meeting

13.45 – 14.45 **Parallel Session 6**

14.45 – 15.00 Break

15.00 – 16.00 **Workshops, including ColdharbourVR – using oral histories in 360 degrees** Charlotte Knowles and Michelle Scarlett (Independent Film Trust)

16.00 – 16.15 Break

16.15 – 17.30 **Parallel Session 7**

17.30 – 18.30 OHS Special Interest Group Meetings
Networking

PROGRAMME MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

PLENARY SPEAKERS

ALAN DEIN (BBC Radio)

The Voices on the Cutting Room Floor
“Just to confirm, we can only use snippets of our conversation in the final edit”. As a radio documentary presenter, these are the toughest lines that Alan Dein has to deliver to an interviewee, as he politely clarifies that much of their conversation will end up on the metaphorical cutting room floor. But Alan Dein is an oral historian too, with over 30 years of experience recording interviews that will be housed in their entirety in a sound archive for posterity. Some may argue that ‘never the twain shall meet’? How far have we come from the days when the BBC recorded interviews which were then edited for a broadcast re-enactment? Alan will explore the relationship between these broadcast and archival imperatives, and reflect on how the skills and values an oral history training and sensibility can enrich both public history and the media landscape.

Alan was born in London sixty years ago. As a part-time employee of a local museum in the late 1980s, he embarked on a career as an oral historian. He has continued to record interviews for both community and institutional projects, while working as radio documentary maker. His features have won numerous broadcasting awards, and is currently presenting the long-running series ‘Don’t Log Off’ on the BBC World Service.

Professor MARGARETTA JOLLY

(University of Sussex)
Ms.Represented: Oral Histories and Feminism in the Media

Drawing on her *Sisterhood and After: The Women’s Liberation Oral History Project*, Margaretta uses oral history to illuminate women’s deeply conflicted relationship to media, and the sometimes ingenious ways this was re-imagined and re-visioned by the generation of the Women’s Liberation Movement, New Left and Black Power. In doing so, she suggests that oral histories can also challenge media stereotypes and simplifications of feminists themselves, including the disproportionate focus on public protest and spectacular actions. But as we shall see, oral histories are not exempt from Guy Debord’s ‘society of the spectacle’ or the responsibilities of Laura Mulvey’s concept of ‘the gaze’. The storming of the 1970 Miss World protest by activists and its multiple mediations, including in the recent film *Misbehaviour*, will give us a test case as oral historians who navigate the politics of representation in a flourishing field.

Margaretta is Professor of Cultural Studies in the School of Media, Arts and Humanities, University of Sussex and directs the University’s Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research. She is editor of *The Encyclopedia of Life Writing* (Routledge, 2001) and author of *Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the UK Women’s Liberation Movement* (OUP, 2019), based on the archive she helped create in partnership with Polly Russell at the British Library 2010-14. She is also Principal Investigator for *The Business of Women’s Words: Purpose and Profit in Feminist Publishing*, likewise partnered with The British Library and funded by The Leverhulme Trust.



ORAL HISTORY AND THE MEDIA

>>> STEVE HUMPHRIES (Testimony Films)

The Art of the Intimate Interview

Steve will reflect on his long career in documentary filmmaking, and about the intimate personal testimonies that are at the heart of many of his oral history-based films. Over a period of more than thirty years, Steve has filmed around 1,500 interviews asking intimate, in-depth questions on the most difficult subjects – like sex, war, personal tragedy, disaster and the secrets that lie behind the respectable image of family life. Steve will discuss how he finds the people who tell these extraordinary stories, and how he gets people to open up on camera. To illustrate these intimate interviews, he will show memorable clips from several of his films like *Sex in a Cold Climate*, the first film to expose historic sexual abuse by the Catholic Church and the inspiration for the feature film *The Magdalene Sisters*.

Steve is a former lecturer in history at the University of Essex who became a documentary filmmaker. He has made over a hundred life story-based films with Testimony Films, the Bristol-based company he formed in 1992, mostly for the BBC and Channel 4. Several of his films have won national and international awards and, in 2018, Steve was awarded a Royal Television Society Lifetime Achievement Award.

CHARLOTTE KNOWLES and

MICHELLE SCARLETT (Independent Film Trust)

ColdharbourVR – using oral histories in 360 degrees
This is a 360° documentary built on oral history testimony from local people from the Coldharbour Ward in Brixton, South London. The immersive nature of the project and the participatory way in which it was developed, offer new insights into how oral histories can be collated and experienced in the physical space they derive from.

Charlotte is a film producer, executive producer, and CEO of the Independent Film Trust (IFT). Charlotte has produced work for international broadcasters and has enjoyed screenings at major film festivals around the world. In her role at the IFT, Charlotte champions film and media projects produced by underrepresented talent and campaigns for a more diverse and inclusive screen sector.

Michelle is a documentary filmmaker with experience in production, 360° VR and directing. She is an Immersive Producer with the Independent Film Trust, and she Assistant Producer on ColdharbourVR project/ Michelle has created two further projects that use oral histories as its foundation: *A Place To Be* is a Virtual Reality (VR) experience that offers a narrative of black joy and achievement, and *Voices of Our People*, an Augmented Reality (AR) book and podcast series in commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of the 1981 Brixton Uprising. Michelle is also known as Mili Red, the MC on *Legs Eleven Sound System*.



CONFERENCE BOOKING DETAILS

Book your place now: <https://www.ohs.org.uk/conferences/conference-booking/>

CONFERENCE FEES

- Full rate: £64 ● OHS member: £48
- Concessionary: £48 ● Students: £32
- For more information, please contact the conference organiser at polly.owen@ohs.org.uk

Membership discount:

Don't forget that you can receive discounts on OHS conferences, as well as early notification of all forms of events when you become a member of the Oral History Society.