



Interviewing during the COVID-19 pandemic

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NOHANZ Newsletter
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NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Ann Packer

Welcome, Dr Michael Dudding, to the newsletter team.

We welcome contributions to the NOHANZ newsletter, published three times per annum. The next deadline is 1 July 2021

Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of NOHANZ, and information on services does not imply endorsement.

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This and back issues in full colour are available on our website
www.oralhistory.org.nz



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NOHANZ is now on Twitter and Facebook. Follow us for regular updates and discussions about oral history. Please feel free to share information about your projects, recent publications, or events on either the Facebook page or by emailing nohanzexec@gmail.com

Twitter handle: @oralhistorynz

Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/nohanz/>

Website: www.oralhistory.org.nz



From the President

Kia ora

I hope you are all keeping safe and well during the current Omicron wave? The virus is certainly sweeping through Wellington now; driving downtown yesterday it felt a bit like a ghost town, almost eerie with an absence of people out and about on Cuba St.

In news from the executive, we last met in mid-February on Zoom and blitzed through a lengthy agenda in just on two hours. First of all, we welcomed two new co-opted members on to the Executive, Julie Benjamin and Louise Tapper, and we thank them for joining us. Louise was one of the South Island members who, along with Ruth Low, Natalie Looyer and Susie Milne organized the “Connections: Oral History Hui” last November in Christchurch. Louise presented a formal report on the hui, and the Executive congratulated the organizing committee on such a successful event. The organizing committee asked that the small profit from the hui be used as seed money for a regional hui or meeting in the future.

I was pleased to be able to report on a very productive meeting, on behalf of NOHANZ, with Alison McIntyre (Associate Chief Librarian, Research Access) at the Alexander Turnbull Library in late December. We

discussed some issues that are of current concern to members, including clarification of collection priorities, library policies concerning privacy and copyright, progress on accessioning backlogs, and increasing staffing for oral history services within the ATL. Regarding the last point, Jessica Moran (Associate Chief Librarian, Research Collections) has since let us know that a new, additional appointment has been made in the oral history services team: Linda Evans will continue with the library in the newly created role Oral History Curator on the Utaina project (digitising audiovisual materials) and Valerie Love is taking up the role of Oral History Curator for one year. If you have any questions, would like to discuss a potential project or donation, or want to check in on the status of material deposited at ATL, please do get in touch with Valerie. I am very grateful to Alison and Jessica for their active and positive engagement with NOHANZ. When other policies and decisions are clarified and finalised we will let you know.

The major topic of discussion at the executive was the 2022 conference and we are very pleased to report that planning is now actively underway. Once again it will be a joint conference with the Stout Research Centre at Victoria University | Te Herenga Waka, from 18 – 20 November 2022. We are very grateful to both the university for providing the venue, and Debbie Levy at the SRC for again handling the administration. It will be held in the same place on campus as in 2020, and the opening keynote lecture, as it was last time, will be held at the National Library. The theme of the conference revolves around the relationship between memory, oral history and objects or material culture. What role do objects play in symbolizing our sense of identity and/or transmitting memory across the generations? Do note, however, that we will also welcome papers on current oral history projects. The Call for Papers may be found both in this newsletter and on the NOHANZ and Stout Centre websites, and I do hope you will consider putting in a paper proposal and/or joining us

for the conference. More information will be forthcoming over time, so do keep an eye on those websites.

The 2021 issue of the journal Oral History in New Zealand has now been mailed out, and I hope you have received your copy. It is an excellent issue with interesting articles, reports and reviews. I remember Liana MacDonald speaking about her topic, “Shifting Perspectives of the Wairau Affray”, to our conference in 2020 while using a collection of different hats to signal a change in narrator/perspective. It was enormously engaging and I am very glad we have been able to publish her article in the journal for all members. Thanks as always to the two editors, Megan Hutching and Pip Oldham, and to all the contributors. Please note the information in this newsletter about the new biennial NOHANZ prize for an article or report published in the journal.

The next meeting of the executive will be in mid-May, and please let us know if there are matters you would like us to consider at that meeting.

Noho ora mai

Anna

Welcome to our two new Exec members:

Louise Tapper

I am excited to be joining the NOHANZ Executive Committee as the representative of the enthusiastic South Island group of NOHANZ members. I live in North Canterbury, near Rangiora, and am a proud Cantabrian, although I grew up in Ōtepoti Dunedin. Otago holds some wonderful memories for me.

I have been in love with history since my school days and really would have liked to have headed down that path for my career but then I got side tracked and ended up as an educationalist. I did do an undergraduate degree in history and so after several decades in education, latterly as a researcher, I have come full circle and found oral history! I

completed The Alexander Turnbull Library Introduction to Oral History workshops in 2018. I still consider myself a bit of a newbie in the oral history discipline. I have completed a couple of oral history projects: one with a group of Canterbury women in their nineties and a larger, ongoing project with my colleague, Rosemary Du Plessis, called Making the Most of Now: Young Women's Stories of COVID-19, which became a podcast series. I was on the organising committee for Connections, the oral history hui held in Ōtautahi Christchurch in November, 2021.



I look forward to sharing the ideas that come from our South Island NOHANZ group meetings and to contributing in whatever way I can to the NOHANZ Executive Committee.

Julie Benjamin

I was born in Onehunga in 1954, grew up in Onehunga and Mangere Bridge, near Mangere Mountain, and currently live in an Onehunga villa with my partner Gordon and Penny, the neighbour's cat.

In early 1972 I met Laura Ngatae, my first partner's Aitutakian mother, shortly after my return from a two-month exchange in Tahiti. I soon enjoyed sitting in Laura's dining room with a Milo and a cabin bread, listening to her

swapping stories with her female relatives. French Polynesia and the Cook Islands took a hold of me. From that possession grew a desire to record Laura's life, as it had been in the Kuki Airani and how it was in Auckland. I used a Nagra to record my interviews on quarter-inch tape, and filmed Laura's everyday life on 16mm film. Although I didn't realise it, that was my first experience of recording an oral history.

Most of my oral history and academic work has emerged from a fascination with family stories. My latest project, an examination of West Coasters' memories of a rugby trip to Dunedin in 1949, stemmed from photos taken by my father Harry Benjamin before, during and after an Otago-Buller Ranfurly Shield match. They are autobiographical, an amassing and connecting of various pieces of family histories interwoven with community and national histories.



Julie Benjamin with grandson George, whose generation will reap the reward of our oral history mahi.

Auckland Libraries news

Kia ora koutou

And the season is once again changing; with ngahuru / autumn comes a later light at dawn and often brilliant cloud reflecting sunset in the evening – and although the

days are shorter, and the swimming water cooler, there is an end of harvest bounty of kai in the garden – the chillies are red and ripe as the tomatoes and the salad greens steady and less inclined to bolt. Tūi have returned this week to our rohe /neighbourhood and their presence is so welcome – this is probably my most favourite time of year – I hope it finds you well.



Our mahi as oral historians has certainly been challenging in an environment of such uncertainty and of course concern for community wellbeing. Projects have no sooner started when they have had to stop, and delivering training with connection has challenged our technical knowhow with many connections being reduced to online hui.

From an Auckland Libraries point of view it has given us the opportunity to “stocktake” and to give some focus to the discoverability of our collections with additional content added to Kura Heritage Collections Online. With each tranche of interviews and sound archives uploaded comes the inevitable requests for access from researchers, families and colleagues and at times wonderful additional metadata and context from the community.

We are increasing our pool of people able to do abstracting or time coded transcripts enabling richer descriptions to backlogs of undescribed collections. It’s invisible but essential work that enables researchers best access and discoverability to information—a key aspect

of librarianship.

The recent OHMAS series of online seminars have seen a great deal on participation from Aotearoa – the timing of their Thursday evenings is a perfect Friday lunchtime for us – look out for them on their website for future events. The end February webinar Telling and Preserving Disabled Stories was expanding for thinking not only about the way we work in communities – “nothing about us without us” – but also around questions of accessibility that privileges orality. This was a good challenge for thinking about the way we can make oral history most accessible and certainly has me thinking about the benefits of verbatim transcripts vs abstracts.

It was delightful to read Hanna Lu’s scholarly piece in the recent Journal: “Listening in” is about the experience of using other people’s recorded oral histories in a research context and in a different time. I often talk to researchers about their experience of listening and most note the nuances and characteristics they sense for through listening, enlivening their thinking on a topic.

Between now and June we will be producing a short film series called Ngako – The Collections Talk; supporting a new oral history project with the Riverside community; developing a new oral history project that focuses on broadcasting; arranging for five te reo Māori oral histories that are over 30 years old to be transcribed in te reo and translated into English; and all the business as usual including our podcasting offer, collections management and access! It’s always a busy time, but never too busy to hear from you if you are in Auckland and looking for oral history advice and support.

Ngā mihi,

Sue Berman



From the Alexander Turnbull Library

Recently there have been a couple of changes in the oral history staff at the Library. We have a new Oral History Curator, and the role of Research Librarian, Oral History, has been filled.

We've created more capacity in our Oral History team by appointing Valerie Love to the role of Oral History Curator for one year. Linda Evans will take up the newly created role Oral History Curator, Utaina!

The Utaina! project which is a joint project between the Alexander Turnbull Library, Archives New Zealand and Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision, to digitise all collective analogue audiovisual materials. It is one of the largest digitisation projects ever seen in New Zealand and will digitise and preserve our analogue music and oral history recordings. Analogue audiovisual material is increasingly at risk due to the age-related decay of the magnetic tape formats and the aging playback equipment becoming obsolete. Through the Utaina! project we'll be able to preserve our rich collections so that they will be available for access and use for future researchers. Over the next year, Linda will be working at pace to prepare oral history items for digitisation, including around 25,000 that have not yet been fully accessioned and described.

Valerie's focus will be processing digitally-born oral history recordings acquired by the Library, and overseeing acquisition and management of new oral history donations and commissions. She is well known at the Turnbull Library, having worked with us for the past nine years, first on the Arrangement and Description Team, and most recently as Senior Digital Archivist. Valerie is an experienced oral historian, having conducted projects in both the US, where she is originally from, and here in Aotearoa.

Please get in touch with Valerie via the "Ask a Librarian" button at top right of the National Library website (natlib.govt.nz) if you have any questions, would like to discuss a potential project or donation, or want to check

in on the status of material deposited at ATL. For those of you who already have a relationship with Linda and interact with ATL's Oral History & Sound, Linda and Val are working together on the handover of digital projects for the fixed term period.

Oral historians may remember Gillian Headifen, a past NOHANZ committee member and Research Librarian, Oral History in the Research Enquiries team until her retirement. Sarah Walker, acting in this position since then, has now been appointed permanently. However, she is taking leave for most of the rest of the year, so Tiriata Carkeek will take up the role of Research Librarian, Oral History (fixed-term). Tiriata comes to us from her former role as Team Leader at Ōtaki Library and prior to that, Māori & Heritage Coordinator, where she worked extensively with the local community, including leading a number of oral history projects with her iwi.

On the training front, things have been somewhat hampered with Omicron floating around. Despite strong demand, courses outside of Wellington have been suspended for the meantime, and Wellington-based ones have been radically downsized, to keep everyone safe. In an exciting development, I have been working with Helen Frizzell, trialling an online course, while trying to preserve a hands-on practical experience, small-group discussions and personalised feedback that are a feature of our in-person courses.

I'm part of the planning group for Conference in November, when the Alexander Turnbull Library will be hosting the opening Keynote and pre-conference workshops. Please let me know what you would like to see offered: lynette.shum@dia.govt.nz

Noho ora mai

Lynette



Interviewing during the Covid pandemic

Thoughts from three practitioners

Approaches to continuing face-to-face oral history recording came up at the NOHANZ AGM last year. Sue Berman, Helen Frizzell and Pip Oldham offered to look into the possibility of some NOHANZ guidelines. Their thoughts are based on their individual experiences. The wider context for oral historians is challenging. As well as all the ramifications of the pandemic for people's lives, including mental health, jobs and financially, budgets for oral history work – never easy – are fragile and if not already squeezed, may well be.

Helen Frizzell, Ōtepoti Dunedin

Today, 28 February 2022, marks two years since the first case of Covid-19 arrived in NZ. Since that time I've recorded one face to face interview. This was recorded 21 July – 5 August 2021 when most of NZ was at Alert Level 1. Shortly after the final session NZ went into Alert Level 4. During this period the paperwork was completed, a copy posted to the interviewee then discussed via phone. With a return to Alert Level 2 I was able to meet with the interviewee to sign the Recording Agreement. For this visit I wore a face mask, observed social distancing but didn't stay for a cup of tea and chat. The visit felt odd and rushed.

Other interviews haven't gone ahead for various reasons,

such as interviewees not wishing to proceed until the pandemic has ended or being happy to wait – interviews involving long distance travel. The situation continues to evolve – we now have community spread of Omicron but, hopefully, will soon be able to access to RATs (rapid antigen testing). I'm still muddling my way through all of this but here's a few things I've considered from the interviewer's point of view:

- How will you keep yourself safe? Would you work with interviewees who are unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated? Would you expect the interviewee to do a RAT on the day of the interview and/or wear a face mask? If other people are present at the interview location – what additional hygiene practices would you encourage them to follow?
- Would you consider doing interviews requiring significant out of town travel? If so, how will you manage if the interview can't proceed due to either party falling ill just prior to the interview? How will you get home safely?
- How comfortable are you wearing a mask through a recording session? Will this affect developing rapport with the interviewee, listening, audibility and recording quality? And will the risks and extra precautions associated with doing face-to-face interviews during a pandemic cause additional anxiety? What measures can you put in place to mitigate some of these issues?

I've also looked at several health- and business-related websites but the most useful advice has come from colleagues and the Oral History Society (UK) guidelines.

Pip Oldham, Ponake Wellington

Since we talked about Covid precautions at the AGM last year the pandemic has taken another turn with both Delta and Omicron in the community, and currently surging (1 March). Ironically, then, this is one of the most difficult times to be considering face-to-face recording. Having

said that, the risk was always there, before Covid, that an interviewer might be a vector for bringing illness to an interviewee, especially an older or vulnerable person. In some ways the epidemic has given us better tools to identify risks, mitigate them and make sure everyone involved is in full agreement about the plan.

For an interview series I was asked to do with a vulnerable person over December/January this year the commissioner required me to take a saliva (PCR) test (costing \$115) before each recording session. I found knowing I was Covid-negative (albeit when the test was taken the day before the recording) gave me a level of calm after agonizing about whether I should proceed. We took the usual Covid precautions as well of course. As I write today, I know the interviewee is glad we went ahead with those interviews. Private lab testing services may not be a viable option in the current outbreak. In time we may be able to access RAT which is cheaper and can be taken on the day of the recording but less reliable.

Some things I've considered:

- Interviewee's views (critical to explore fully) – are they pressing to proceed with the interview and willing to tolerate elevated risk, or are they happy to wait?
- The recording environment – is it well ventilated, roomy enough to be well distanced?
- Interview sessions – can these be kept short (under two hours)? With interviewer and interviewee masked (in practice masking has less effect on sound than I expected), and distanced?
- Does the commissioner have applicable health and safety requirements?

I spent hours scouring the internet, looking on the websites of MBIE, Ministry of Health and Worksafe. But like Helen the most useful advice I found came from the OHS (UK) guidelines and that is continuing to guide my approach.

Sue Berman, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

Can we use online technology to help us to do oral history recordings in a Covid-19 environment?

Personally, I feel like there is no real substitute for face-to-face relational interviewing. For me it continues to be an absolute preference when risk is mitigated and the space for interviewing negotiated – as Helen and Pip have described.

However, I do believe there is a place to use online recording technology in order to meet potential urgency for interviewing and to eliminate risk for vulnerable interviewees.

There are some technical considerations that you can employ to lift the sound quality. For example, you could courier or provide your interviewee with a USB plug in external microphone, and use an external microphone plugged into your own quality recorder at home. If you have software like Hindenburg, with the external microphones, you can record directly into the sound desk and use the software features to help to manage the levels.

While this solution won't be for everyone – it does rely on your interviewee feeling able to manage a degree of technical practice at their end – it can be a second-best option in an ongoing Covid environment.

There are several options for being able to see a person in a face-to-face view during the interview – ZOOM and Teams and Skype all have a recording option. Ensure, if possible, the most reliable band-width time of day to limit dropping out or freezing during the interview.



Call for Papers



STOUT RESEARCH CENTRE
for New Zealand Studies



NEW ZEALAND ORAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

Stout Research Centre for New Zealand Studies and the National Oral History Association of New Zealand
(NOHANZ) Te Kete Kōrero-a-Waha o Te Motu

Te Herenga Waka | Victoria University of Wellington
18 – 20 November 2022

Te Reo a Ngā Taputapu | Memory, Oral History and Material Culture

From taonga tūturu to inherited family possessions material culture plays a fundamental role in symbolizing our expressions of identity and transmitting memory across generations. The term material culture here is taken to include any objects made or modified by a human, from the smallest item of jewellery to large monuments or buildings, and the ways in which these objects are understood and/or given symbolic or other meanings. In this conference we hope to explore two major themes. The first concerns the different roles that objects play in the oral histories of iwi, hapu, whanau, and national, family or individual oral history narratives; and the second focuses upon oral histories and material culture in the context of institutions, such as galleries, libraries, archives, and museums (sometimes referred to as the GLAM sector).

We therefore invite papers that describe and discuss the significance and meaning of objects expressed through oral histories recorded in a wide range of cultural or social contexts. Secondly, we hope the conference will also explore the ways in which oral histories are used in museum or gallery exhibitions constructed around material objects. For example, papers might address any of the following questions or topics:

- What roles do inherited family objects play in contemporary life narratives/identities?
- How are photographic records of the past interpreted in oral histories?
- Can inherited objects generate counterfactual family histories?
- Are there gender differences in terms of objects and remembering the past?
- Do culturally significant objects have agency, in terms of collective cultural practices?
- Can the symbolic meaning of an object change over time?
- The relationship between oral history and objects in galleries, libraries, archives and museums.
- The conference will also include presentations, not necessarily connected to the conference theme, on recent oral history projects.

To submit a proposal: Please send a title, 250-word (maximum) abstract, and a brief (two sentence) biography, as a **Word** document, plus an indication of the focus of your paper within the broad themes of the conference, to:

To: Stout-centre@vuw.ac.nz

By: Monday 1st August 2022

You will be notified by mid-August whether your paper has been accepted. Please note: your abstract will be used for the conference programme.

Keynote speakers

Keynote speakers will be announced at a later date.

Workshops

There will be workshops on Friday 18 November – venue and topics to be confirmed.

For further information please contact either:

Liz Ward: e.m.ward@massey.ac.nz or Anna Green: anna.green@vuw.ac.nz

Alexander
Turnbull Library

National Library of New Zealand
Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa



Ministry
for Culture
& Heritage

What's new?

May Public History Talk:

With the Boys Overseas: radio listening during World War II and New Zealand's first broadcast war correspondents

- When: 12 noon, 4 May 2022
- Where: Online via Zoom – see National Library website for how to register

Historian Sarah Johnston will speak on radio recordings made by New Zealand forces overseas during the Second World War. In the 1940s radio played a central role in the life of the New Zealand household as a source of news and entertainment. Sound historian Sarah Johnston is researching radio during this era, particularly the role of our first radio war correspondents, who travelled with the New Zealand forces in North Africa, the Middle East, Italy and in the Pacific as mobile broadcasting units.

She will talk about details she has uncovered in her research, including the way demand from listeners back home shaped the work of the broadcasting units. Her talk will include archived radio recordings from the era, courtesy of RNZ and Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision.

About the speaker

Sarah Johnston is a former radio journalist, broadcaster and sound archivist who is passionate about sharing the sounds of our past. In 2021 she was the recipient of a grant from the New Zealand History Research Fund and the Judith Binney Trust to research and write about New Zealand radio during World War II. You can read about her current work on the blog *World War Voices*. For more information on Sarah's work, visit: worldwarvoices.wordpress.com

International Oral History Association Conference

The School of Social Sciences of Fundação Getúlio Vargas will host the IOHA conference in 2023 in Rio de Janeiro. Dates and call for papers will be announced in the near future.

“In a life you accumulate so many memories, your brain constantly winnowing through them, weighing consequence, burying pain, but somehow by the time you're this age (86) you still end up dragging a monumental sack of memories behind you, and eventually it becomes time to take them out of the world.”

‘Cloud Cuckoo Land’ by Anthony Doerr
From *OHQ e-Bulletin*, 31 March 2022

