1. Introduction

Oral History in its various guises is central methodology in the historian’s toolkit, and a good way to approach the study of the past. You may have already considered using interviews for your research, and should attend one of the Faculty’s workshops on Oral History methods http://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/graduate-students/training/approaches-methodologies Also useful are the training events organized by the Oral History Society at the British Library on a regular basis: http://www.ohs.org.uk/training.php?trg=1 The OHS offers extensive advice and support through its website, which we strongly recommend.

Ethical considerations, including the protection of sources, are central to the exercise of responsible research using interview methods. To this end the Faculty has put in place a procedure for approval. This is outlined below, alongside some initial advice on the handling of oral history materials.

2. Design and Approval

2.1. Oral History Approval
You must discuss the practicalities and ethical issues of your oral history interviews with your supervisor, and, with them, complete the Oral History Approval form. This is to be forwarded to Director of Graduate Studies, for final approval.

2.2. Retrospective approval for exceptional circumstances
In exceptional circumstances approval can be sought retrospectively for oral history interviews. A justification is to be added to the Oral History Approval form.

3. Undertaking Interviews

Before an interview takes place, interviewers should:

3.1 Obtain Consent
Supply the prospective interviewee with the Oral History Information Sheet and Consent Form.
Information should be given on how informants for the study are being recruited and how the interview will be used (for use in your thesis/dissertation, and/or for transcription, and/or for publication). Ensure that the interviewee has understood this background information and ask him/her whether or not they wish to remain anonymous for the purposes of the study. All informants should sign the consent form.

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Where an interviewee is non-English speaking, it is your responsibility to translate the consent form into their native language. Where an interviewee is illiterate, a recording of the interviewee’s verbal consent will be sufficient.

3.2 Determine the preferences of the interviewee as to the location and conduct of the interview (for example, the presence of other persons; subject matter or personal references to be avoided, whether or not he/she agrees to be audio-recorded).

3.3 Carry out research and acquire sufficient knowledge to conduct an interview of the best possible standard.

3.4 Consider the purpose of the interview and the range of possible future uses to which it might be put, assessing potential implications for the safety and dignity of informants.

3.5 During the conduct of an interview, interviewers should try to ensure that the interviewee's preferences are abided by; treat interviewees with respect and courtesy.

4. **After the interview: Working with Oral History Sources**

4.1 Transcription and Analysis

Even a small number of interviews will produce hours of audio (and/or video) and thousands of words for analysis. Most historians find that the best way to work with this material is to make full transcripts of each interview. This is a laborious and time-consuming process, but allows you to get into the interview and understanding the source in a much greater depth. It is not, however, absolutely required. Other researchers use software packages such as atlas.ti or envivo which allow them to catalogue audio and video files in detail. These can also be used in tandem with transcripts.

At the very least, you should seek to fully index each interview (with contents and time indices of key passages) and transcribe the passages that will be used in your work. The Oral History Society provides further advice: [http://www.ohs.org.uk/practical-advice.php#after](http://www.ohs.org.uk/practical-advice.php#after)

4.2 Storage

It is vital that you keep your interviews, transcripts, consent documents and other related materials safely and securely. This is your responsibility as a researcher, and a commitment you have made to your interviewees. Ensure that materials are backed up or copied in two independent locations. Keep interview recordings, transcripts and source identifying-documents securely
(that is, in locked spaces) to protect the privacy and any requested anonymity of interviewees.

It is your responsibility to keep these documents at least until the examination process is complete (as they may be requested by the examiners) and it is highly advisable that these are kept for longer since you may publish your work or return to it at a later date.

You may want to explore options for long-term storage and deposit with recognised repositories. Some funding bodies, such as the ESRC or the AHRC require that sources produced by funded research be deposited – check the terms of your grant to find out more. The OHS provides advice, a list of possible repositories and issues to consider when searching for appropriate libraries or collections: http://www.ohs.org.uk/ethics.php#archiving-lts

5. **Submission of Dissertation and Supporting Materials**

Transcripts of interviews and other materials, including interview guides or questionnaires are not normally submitted with the dissertation. If, however, in consultation with your supervisor it seems appropriate to include any of these, they may be submitted as appendices

Please note, however, that examiners may request to see the transcripts and audio/video recordings used in the research for the purposes of assessment, as they may seek to check any other primary material. If you cannot produce these on request this may lead to any parts of the dissertation based on them being discounted.

In general, your thesis will explain your oral history methodology in its introduction.

The primary source section of your bibliography must include a list of interviewees (anonymised as necessary), indicating the date and location of the interview, unless the latter compromises the anonymity of the source.