



ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

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Something virtual for everyone...and then some!

Take a close look at the plethora of choices on the [program schedule](#) for the 2021 Oral History Association virtual conference. Unless you can clone yourself, you'll never attend them all. With more than 140 program options from which to choose, beginning with workshops on Oct. 9 through a plenary on listening to wrap up the conference on Oct. 14, you'll have ample opportunities to interact with fellow oral historians from around the world.

Read on for:

- A brief introduction to this year's virtual conference technology
- A rundown of the dozen conference presentation formats that go beyond workshops, panels, papers and roundtables and samples of sessions you'll find in each one. The common denominator? A chance to talk, think, learn and enjoy one another across time zones and geographic spaces as OHA experiments with non-traditional, interactive conference programming.
- Conference plenary sessions
- Half-day and mini-workshop sessions to learn new skills

[President's Letter](#)

[2021 OHA Conference Welcome](#)

First things first: How to attend the 2021 virtual conference

First, register here: <https://www.oralhistory.org/annual-meeting-registration/>

This year's OHA conference participants will be using a virtual event platform called Pheedloop. If you attended last year's virtual conference, you'll see similarities with Pheedloop in that it will be the gateway to accessing all the conference content.

Conference registrants will receive a virtual event invitation from Pheedloop in their email shortly before the conference. It will have the link and login information to access the virtual event platform. We'll also have instructions on how to update personal information and navigate the platform.

In addition to having the schedule of sessions, Pheedloop will provide access to an Exhibit Hall and Poster Session where attendees will be able to engage with exhibitors and presenters through text and video chat. Attendees will also be able to chat with other attendees one on one.

The platform has Zoom integration, which should streamline joining and switching between sessions, and allows attendees to create a personal schedule of sessions. It also has options for accessibility adjustments, which allows attendees to adjust settings like font size, color contrast, saturation and other variables and can optimize profiles for vision impairment, ADHD and more.

2021 OHA event features new program formats that encourage even more dialog

Got a seemingly intractable oral history problem? Or maybe you're stuck in writing a scholarly paper? Want to connect and chat with like-minded folks with whom you share an interest? Or maybe you want to learn a new skill for a half-day or just a few hours? And perhaps you want simply to ponder ideas and discoveries fellow oral historians will illuminate in traditional conference papers and panels.

OHA's 2021 conference planners created a dozen presentation format options for program submissions, each with varied approaches to exchanging information in a structured setting. Here, in alphabetical order, is a digest of what to expect in each format.

Birds of a Feather

Definitely not patterned after those elementary school reading groups of yore—Bluebirds, Redbirds and Buzzards (maybe?). Birds of a Feather (BoF) sessions feature people coming together informally around a common area of interest or expertise. BoF sessions won't have a pre-planned agenda but will have at least one facilitator to introduce the theme and get the conversation going.

Ten BoF sessions are on the schedule, including an Indigenous caucus, a networking and solidarity session for freelancers and other independent oral historians, a session on responding to half-truths in oral histories, and gatherings for Midwest oral historians, among other interests.

Campfires

Lay in a big supply of graham crackers, chocolate bars and marshmallows. (It only takes seconds to make s'mores in a microwave: <https://www.hersheyland.com/recipes/hersheys-smores.html>.) Campfire sessions will feature one or two speakers who will present an idea to the groups for 15 or 20 minutes, followed by comments, questions and insights offered by attendees while the speaker takes on the role of discussion facilitator.

You can choose from more than two dozen campfire sessions with a wide array of themes, including these options:

- Explore what a pop-up exhibit could do for your oral history project
- Create a network of Black oral historians
- Learn how mapping oral histories informs modern day land use in Hawai'i
- Explore oral histories in the Louisiana State Archives of agricultural festival queens
- Take a look at issues related to migration, water and people on the edge
- Reflect on "The Empty Year," a California community's oral history project of and in Covid-19
- Consider how the OHA can support oral historians at risk, such as researchers and narrators doing politically and legally contentious work
- Think about oral histories as data sets, moving from qualitative to quantitative analysis
- And lots more

Listening sessions

In these sessions, one to three presenters will share longer excerpts from oral history interviews (about 30 minutes in total) to generate audience conversations about ethical, interpretive or any other matters that emerge. The presenters also may ask for feedback on their interviewing techniques or share thoughts about interpreting their interviews.

A dozen listening sessions are on the conference program, including:

- Documenting evolutions of inequity in Covid-19
- Guantanamo: seeing into the dark archive and why it matters
- An LGBTQ audio history tour through the Making Gay History Archive
- Voices from the Holocaust
- Seeking refuge: collecting oral histories in times of crisis

- Building trust with undocumented narrators

Panels and papers

In these familiar formats, sessions will feature three or four speakers who will present scholarly papers for 10-20 minutes, followed by audience questions and discussion and, often, observations from a commentator.

Attendees can choose from more than two dozen paper and panel sessions, with topics including:

- Education in California
- Life histories
- Methodological questions for the field
- Hurricanes, climate change, resettlement and citizenship
- Secondary analysis in oral history
- Oral history of social and political movements
- Oral history and the Covid-19 pandemic
- Student Covid-19 oral history projects in San Antonio, Texas
- Stories from the opioid epidemic
- Oral history, immigration and migration
- Stories of illness
- Queer oral histories from Louisiana
- Oral histories of empire and migration in British Colonial South Asia

Papers in progress

In this experimental format, attendees will sign up in advance to read an oral historian's work in progress and be prepared to offer suggestions and ideas for the author. Two PIP sessions are on the agenda dealing with the following topics:

- Experiences in Hawai'i of migrants from the Marshall Islands, Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia
- Oral histories and natural disasters in Japan

Personal introspective

In another experimental format, participants will be invited to write down responses to a set of questions posed by a facilitator, which they will then share and discuss with the group, as desired.

One personal introspective session is on the schedule, which will invite reflections on oral histories of migration and advocacy.

Performance and storytelling

Creative interpretations of oral histories have become increasingly popular, and these sessions all involve forms of artistic production related to oral history materials. Conference attendees will have eight performance choices, including:

- How did you get here? Stories of the Great Migration
- Life histories from Hawai'i ranching communities
- Latinx stories of a pandemia

Roundtables

In another familiar session format, roundtables feature from three to six speakers who make brief introductory remarks of up to 10 minutes followed by open discussion from attendees.

Attendees will be able to choose from more than 30 roundtable sessions delving into a wide variety of issues, including:

- Moving collections from archives to public spaces
- Conducting oral histories of war childhood and conflict-related sexual violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Remote interviewing during an emergency
- Making sense of bilingual oral histories
- Oral history timecode indexing and annotation
- Women, religion and oral history
- Evolving and complex relationships in advocacy oral history
- Statewide guides to oral history interviews, collections and repositories
- The value of transcription for teaching and learning
- Professional societies in a post-Covid world

Satellites

These sessions feature locally organized, in-person gatherings that also will be accessible remotely to all conference participants around the world. Oral historians in Michigan have one such gathering on the conference program.

In addition, oral historians in Hawai'i have created extensive in-person programming, also available to everyone, around the theme "Moving History Forward in Hawai'i." The 10 satellite sessions will be presented on Monday and Tuesday of the conference and focus on oral history practice as a responsibility to, and a relationship with, the state's unique communities. Through oral history and storytelling, the presenters aim to promote a movement that seeks to dismantle power and privilege in Hawai'i by elevating the histories and stories often unheard, thus giving voice to communities' identity, culture, and history.

The Solution Room

In another experimental session format, oral historians will be able to seek peer advice on pressing challenges they face. Two Solution Room sessions are scheduled. One will focus on what to do when your life story subject dies, and the other will explore how to preserve oral history collections beyond a single host institution.

Kick-off plenary session focuses on what oral historians have learned from Indigenous, African American and other perspectives

By Sara Sinclair
Program Co-Chair

One of the most celebrated sessions at last year's Oral History Association conference asked, "Is Oral History White?" The session investigated race in three Baltimore oral history projects, and beyond that it asked how the work of the OHA has been racialized or reflective of broader patterns of white supremacy.

Building upon that conversation, the first plenary session at the 2021 conference will highlight what our field has learned from Indigenous, African American and other perspectives and approaches that fall outside the dominant Western paradigm. It will also explore how specific insights, both theoretical and methodological, generated by the fields of settler-colonial studies and critical race studies might help guide practical approaches to oral history.

Kelly Navies of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture will moderate the plenary. Panelists include: Benji de la Piedra of the University of the District of Columbia, Romeo Guzman of Claremont Graduate University, Nishani Frazier of the University of Kansas and Winona Wheeler of the University of Saskatchewan.

The session is scheduled for Monday, Oct. 11 from 12:30-2 p.m. (Eastern) and the conversation will continue at a roundtable session set for 5:30-7 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 12.

The second conference plenary will be the annual OHA business meeting, scheduled for 12:30-2 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 12, and the conference will wrap up on Thursday, Oct. 14 with a plenary on listening from 5:30-7 p.m.

Half-day and mini-workshops offer new things to learn

Oral history novices as well as experienced hands can choose from among six half-day workshops on Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 9 and 10, as well as two mini-workshops scheduled during regular conference sessions later in the week.

The half-day workshops on Oct. 9 are:

- Inviting Authorship: Oral History as Spontaneous Literature
- Trauma Interviewing and Oral History: Co-Creating Narratives with Survivors of Violence
- What Does Done Look Like? Oral History Project Planning Workshop

The Oct. 10 half-day workshops are:

- Decolonizing Your Research Method
- Equity Budgeting for Oral History: Paying Everybody More!
- Rebalancing Power and Privilege During the Interview Process

Complete half-day workshop descriptions and registration information are available here:

<https://www.oralhistory.org/pre-conference-workshops/>

Two mini-workshop sessions are also part of the scheduled conference programming. They include a session on peer-to-peer oral histories in support of diversity, equity and inclusion work in a high school setting and one on oral history and storytelling.



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2021 OHA Conference Welcome

**By Amy Starecheski, OHA Vice-President
Sara Sinclair and Nikki Yeboah, Program Co-Chairs
August 2021 Newsletter**

In October 2021, the Oral History Association will gather for our first-ever PLANNED virtual meeting. Doesn't it feel nice, at least compared to 2020, to be able to make plans in advance? Kind of?

While we will miss many things about gathering in person, our team is having a great time making the most of the opportunities that come with gathering online—especially in terms of access. The conference will be affordable—free if you volunteer, as low as \$40 for student OHA members and \$50 for non-members. We will have live automatic transcription of all events and ASL interpretation for all plenaries and on-demand for parallel sessions.

We also know that access requires more than this. We want this conference to be accessible to non-academics, to our narrators, to people with all kinds of learning styles, to those who have historically been marginalized within the field. So we are creating a mandatory pre-conference training for all presenters and chairs on how to give an accessible, inclusive and engaging presentation and how to facilitate an inclusive conversation. Stay tuned for more details on this in September.

We will kick the conference off with weekend workshops on Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 9 and 10, and then offer four days of programming, Oct. 11-14. Each day will have three main time slots for parallel sessions or plenaries, timed so that they work for time zones throughout the Americas, with generous breaks in between. We will not be having the usual receptions but will be providing lots of other opportunities to gather and socialize. The platform we are using, Pheedloop, makes it easy to chat with other participants, individually or in small groups. There will be “birds of a feather” sessions for those who share an identity or experience to gather.

And we are working hard to make sure that the regular conference sessions are places where you can connect, not just tune in. Mini-workshops, campfire sessions and others will be interactive spaces for dialogue. Some sessions will close with an invitation to join the participants for a more informal chat or a meal afterwards, and participants will host small, informal online gatherings for a meal, coffee or cocktail (depending on your time zone!). We also know that one of the benefits of attending a conference online is being able to listen in while cooking dinner, taking a walk or caring for children, so we'll be sure to label “cameras off” sessions that lend themselves to more passive participation.

There will even be opportunities to gather in person in some locations. For example, oral historians in Hawai'i have organized a satellite conference where they will gather in person and also stream their sessions for others. In September we will offer one more opportunity to sign up to host local in-person gatherings like watch parties, meals or outings in connection with the conference.

We look forward to seeing you in October!

President's Letter

By Dan Kerr
August 2021 Newsletter

As we near the end of August, the OHA Executive Office, the program committee for the annual conference, the Council and our standing committees and taskforces are very busy completing work as we near our annual meeting, "Moving Stories," this October. As I near the end of my term of president, it has become clear to me that we have our own moving story to tell.

In the past three years, I have had the privilege to witness the commitments, the dedication and effort that many people have made to advance the work of the association and the field of oral history. Witnessing the collectivity of this effort during the extraordinary time that we have lived through and continue to live in is truly awe inspiring.

When it became clear that we would need to cancel last fall's in-person meeting, I was not alone in my fear that OHA faced a looming catastrophe. If I knew then that we would not be meeting in person in 2021 either, there is no way I could have imagined the level of resilience the OHA would demonstrate and the growth it would undergo throughout this crisis. That growth and resilience was by no means a foregone conclusion. It was only possible because of the time, effort and creativity that so many people have dedicated to the OHA during the pandemic.

This activity and stability have only been possible because of the solid foundation countless committed members of the association have constructed over our 55-year history. Together we have built something extraordinary that none of us ever could have conceived of on our own.

Last fall OHA members passed a visionary new strategic plan that has shaped our work over the current year:

<https://www.oralhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Strategic-Plan-October-2020.pdf>

To put this plan in motion, Council formed the Restructuring Taskforce led by Tomás Sandoval and Cynthia Tobar. Since last November they have carefully reviewed our organizational structure, and in June they presented to Council a series of recommended changes. I expect that Council will endorse their recommendations this month, and we will ask our members to approve changes to our bylaws at this fall's business meeting.

The taskforce is recommending that we establish a standing Development Committee, charged with planning for our long-term economic sustainability. To achieve the advocacy goals defined in our strategic plan, the taskforce is proposing to establish an Advocacy Committee. To enhance our year-round programming, workshops and webinars, the taskforce is suggesting the creation of a standing committee (the name of which is still under discussion) to oversee this work. To coordinate the membership of these committees, the proposal calls for forming a Committee on Committees.

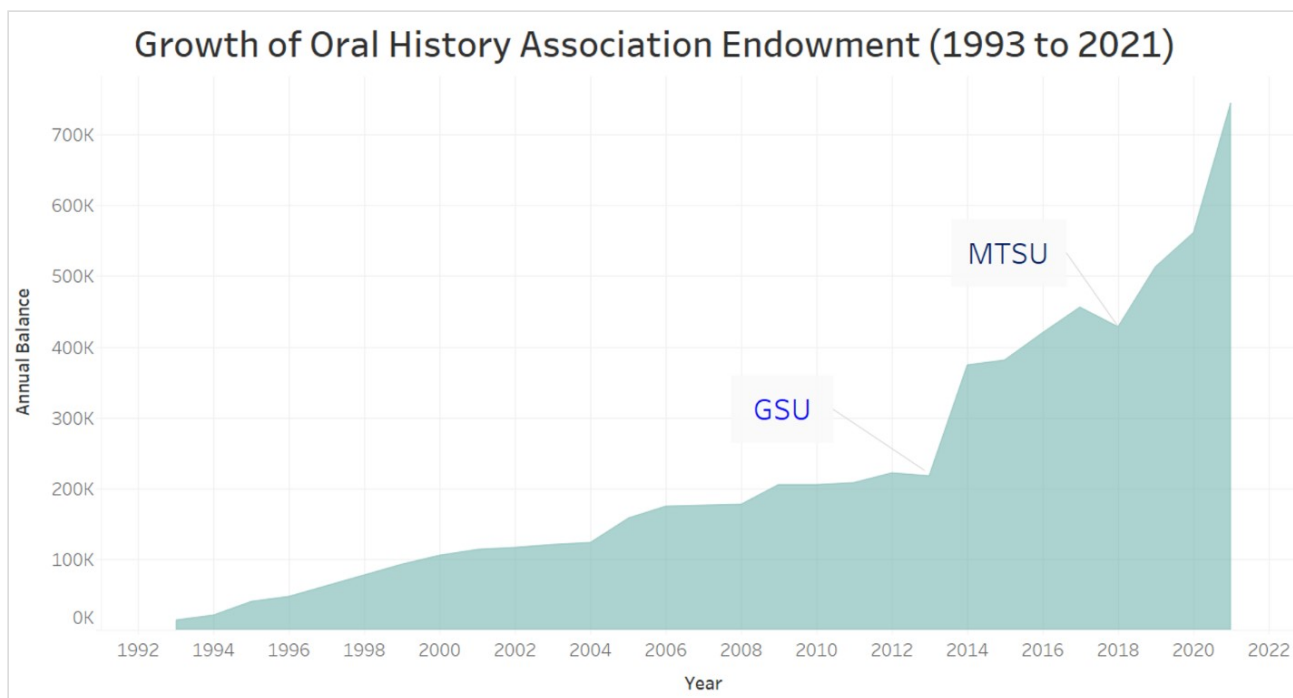
The standing committees will oversee the ongoing work of the OHA that needs to be done year in and year out. For projects that are not ongoing, we will continue to rely on the taskforce structure – committees that dissolve upon completion of the work.

The Restructuring Taskforce also is proposing a new category of participation, member- formed and -led caucuses, which will be formally recognized by the OHA. The caucuses, formed from the bottom up by members who hold a shared interest, identity or other commonality, will, we hope, foster community and inclusivity and create spaces for building mutually beneficial relationships.

I believe these recommendations will allow us to be more responsive, inclusive and transparent as the OHA to evolve.

In July the OHA publicly announced its search for a new Executive Office, which we hope will succeed our current Executive Office on Jan. 1, 2023. The search is being led by Kelly Navies, Zaheer Ali and LuAnn Jones.

Kris McCusker, Louis Kyriakoudes, and Faith Bagley have done a terrific job overseeing the Executive Office since 2018. After next year they will have completed their five-year commitment, and they will leave us in a great position for growth. Stephen Sloan, who chairs our current Development Taskforce, recently produced a chart demonstrating how important the executive office structure has been to our endowment's growth, which is an indicator of our long-term economic sustainability. The chart notes when the first Executive Office was created at Georgia State University, followed by the move to Middle Tennessee State University.



The Executive Office has also enabled us to expand our membership numbers and the levels of membership participation. Acknowledging the value of Executive Office for the OHA, the Council has agreed to increase our commitment to the next Executive Office by \$20,000 to a total of \$70,000. Please consider submitting a proposal or encouraging someone else to submit a proposal to help lead the OHA over the coming years in an Executive Office capacity.

In July, Council approved a recommendation from the Diversity Committee, chaired by Anna Kaplan and Daisy Herrera, that the OHA form an Equity Audit Taskforce to further our strategic goals with respect to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

This new taskforce will lead a sweeping and introspective audit of OHA's past, current and future commitments to DEI in all facets of its operation. The audit will assess OHA's track record of achieving "the meaningful involvement of historically-marginalized populations, in particular based on race/ethnicity, spiritual beliefs, gender, sexuality, class, educational background, and ability," while remaining open to additional inequities and fault lines that the audit reveals. The taskforce will work closely with our members over the next two years to as it undertakes this audit.

The Independent Practitioners Taskforce, chaired by Sarah Dziedzic and Jess Lamar Reece Holler, is nearing completion of a suite of materials for all our members, especially those working as non-salaried professionals. These resources will include an Independent Practitioners' Toolkit (a guide to navigating the field of independent oral history practice for freelancers), an Oral History Practitioner's Directory (to promote networking connections and job opportunities) and an Advocacy Statement (a statement of support drafted for an audience of hiring organizations that recommends baseline best practices and ethics for working with freelance oral history practitioners). Council in July approved funding to develop the new directory.

In July, the Social Justice Taskforce, chaired by Nishani Frazier and Cliff Mayotte, presented a draft Summary and Recommendations Report for Council feedback. The report presents new ethical and procedural frameworks for practitioners working with vulnerable communities in a social justice context. Calling for a narrator-centered approach to oral history, the taskforce recommends practices that lead to deep community collaboration and power sharing and proposes new models of rolling consent. The taskforce will continue to seek feedback on their work over the coming months.

The OHA thrives on our members' activity and contributions of all sorts. You can help shape the association with your time, creativity and money. On Aug. 25, we will hold our Annual Day of Giving. With this campaign, we are seeking to further build our endowment with the longer-term goal of reaching \$1,000,000. A larger endowment will allow us to invest in the advancement of the field of oral history and will help propel the OHA forward. Would you join me in contributing to this campaign?

Contribute now at <https://oha.memberclicks.net/2021-day-of-giving#/>

Together we have built the Oral History Association, and through our ongoing contributions we can help ensure that the association and the field will continue to thrive well into the future.