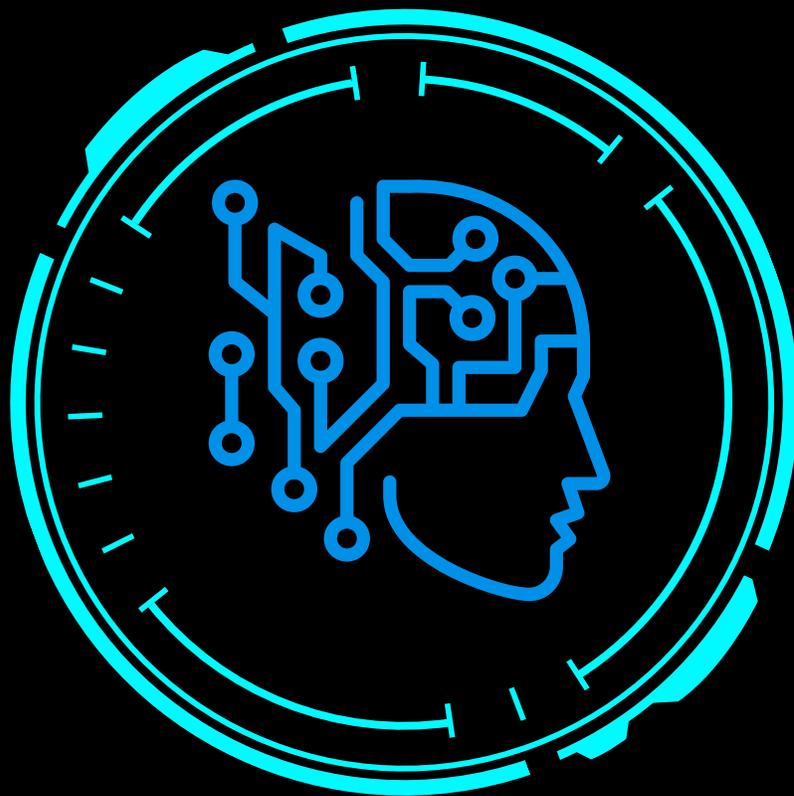


AI IN OH

HOW NEW AND EVOLVING TECHNOLOGIES
WILL IMPACT THE PROFESSION



Virtual Symposium
July 15-19, 2024



**ORAL HISTORY
ASSOCIATION**

Virtual Symposium • July 15-19, 2024

AI IN OH

**HOW NEW AND EVOLVING
TECHNOLOGIES WILL IMPACT
THE PROFESSION**

PROGRAM CONTENTS

- 4 OHA Code of Conduct
- 5-6 Schedule at a Glance
- 7 Welcome from the Program Co-Chairs
- 8-9 OHA Partner Members
- 10-13 OHA Leadership & Committees
- 14-41 Extended Program
- 42 Become an OHA Member!
- 43 2024 Annual Meeting: Cincinnati

OHA CODE OF CONDUCT

Attendees and presenters at the AI Symposium agree to abide by OHA's Statement of Diversity and Inclusivity.

They also pledge to review OHA's Harassment Policy, and agree that the AI Symposium is a harassment-free event for all participants, regardless of gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, race, religion, national origin, physical appearance, disability, or other group identity.

If you are being harassed or witness harassment, please contact an Oral History Association staff person or council member immediately. You can find contact information for OHA leadership [here](#).



OHA Code of Conduct



OHA Statement
on Diversity & Inclusion



OHA Harassment Policy
& Procedures

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

MONDAY, JULY 15TH

10AM-12PM (CDT)

01. Ethical Considerations in the Age of AI (Panel)

Chair: Jennifer A. Cramer

From Contextualized Interview to Anonymous Data: Making Meaning with Oral Histories in the Age of Big Data

Mary Larson

In Support of Putting Oral History Narratives "In the Vault" - Do Humanists Need to Take a Page from "Preppers" in the Age of Artificial Intelligence?

Jane Collings

World Englishes and Whisper: Testing AI and Pedagogically Reframing Oral History Transcription Workflows

Aieshah Arif, Lauren Kata, & Sweta Kumari

2PM-4PM (CDT)

02. From Capture to Engagement: Experiments in Using AI for Indexing, Named Entity Recognition, and More (Roundtable)

Chair: Zack Ellis

Participants: Bram Adams, Zack Ellis & William Mattingly

TUESDAY, JULY 16TH

10AM-12PM (CDT)

03. AI as Human Substitutes in the Oral History Process (Panel)

Chair: James Fowler

Envisioning AI as an Oral History Interviewer: The Educated Youth Oral History Project

Zhao Yigong & Haina Jin

Probing a Community-Based Conversational Storytelling Agent to Document Digital Stories of Housing Insecurity

Brett Halperin

How will AI Enable Oral History to Make it Possible to Converse with Our Dead Relatives?

Mary Gordon

TUESDAY, JULY 16TH (CONT.)

2PM-4PM (CDT)

04. AI's Role in Processing Oral Histories (Panel)

Chair: Patrick Daglaris

Curating Oral History with AI

Christopher Pandza

Creating a Hybrid Workflow: Describing (and Improving) User-Generated Content Using AI Tools

Virginia Millington

Powered by AI: Crafting a GPT Prototype for Oral History

Juliana Nykolaiszyn

WEDNESDAY, JULY 17TH

10AM-12PM (CDT)

05. AI and Black Voices (Roundtable)

Chair: Sara Baum

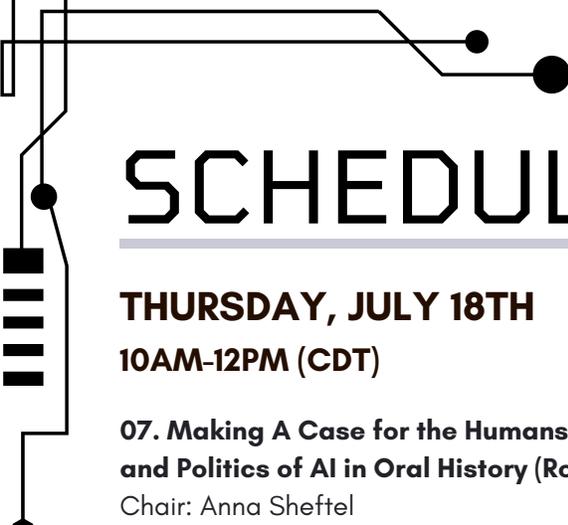
Participants: Sara Baum, Destiny Crawford, Zack Ellis, Alissa Rae Funderburk, Michael Sesling, & Hanassa Wicks

2PM-4PM (CDT)

06. Using Whisper AI for Transcription to Improve Oral History Workflows (Roundtable)

Chair: Tamar Carroll

Participants: Kirk M. Anne, Benjamin Myers, Rebekah Walker, Emmarose Tabin, Caitlin McCabe, Liz Call, & Landyn Hatch



SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

THURSDAY, JULY 18TH

10AM-12PM (CDT)

07. Making A Case for the Humans: The Ethics and Politics of AI in Oral History (Roundtable)

Chair: Anna Sheftel

Participants: Crystal Mun-hye Baik, Doug Boyd, Anna Sheftel, Graham Smith, Katrina Srigley, & Stacey Zembrzycki

2PM-4PM (CDT)

08. AI's Impact on Oral History Indexing (Panel)

Chair: Steven Sielaff

Emerging Directions in Interview Processing and Collection Management: AI Auto-Transcription, Timecode Indexing, and "Multi-Dimensional Content" in Oral History

Michael Frisch

Oral History Indexing through the Lens of AI
Douglas Lambert

Training AI through Oral History Workflow
Daniel McMullan

FRIDAY, JULY 19TH

10AM-12PM (CDT)

09. Designing Switchboard: An Open-Source Chatbot That Collects Trans* Oral Histories (Roundtable)

Chair: Molly Merryman

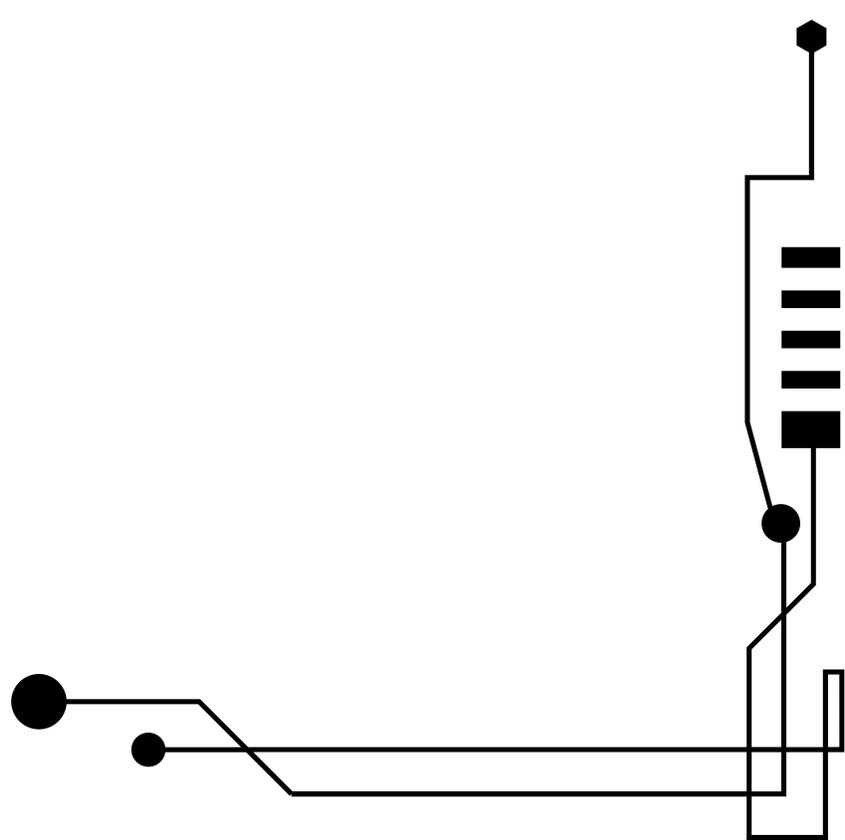
Participants: Alejandro T. Acierto, Ava Aviva Avnisan, Molly Merryman, Dana Middleton, & Dan Paz

2PM-4PM (CDT)

10. Old Ways, New Ways: Archiving the Heirloom Gardens Project Using AI (Roundtable)

Chair: Tessa Lowinske Desmond

Participants: Hassan Adeeb, Tessa Lowinske Desmond, & LuAnna Nesbitt



WELCOME

Greetings and welcome to the AI in OH Symposium!

Since the release of OpenAI's ChatGPT in the fall of 2022, artificial intelligence, or AI for short, has pervaded our shared discourse and lexicon. Myriad organizations and sectors are at once hurriedly embracing and cautiously considering the impacts large language models and complex algorithms might have on their industries. Oral history is not immune to AI's influence, and in certain cases the profession already contains examples of its effects on practice.

For this online symposium, OHA invited oral history practitioners and scholars from all disciplines who utilized oral history in their work to submit proposals detailing any number of intersections between artificial intelligence and oral history. From a strong submission pool, we are happy to present ten sessions over five days (July 15-19, 2024) that delve into the structural and ethical aspects of applying AI to oral history work.

Each session is scheduled for two hours, with the last thirty minutes designated for a robust Q&A section so that attendees have plenty of opportunity to delve deeper into the theory and/or practice on display. We have also scheduled one morning and one afternoon session per day with a two-hour break in between so that everyone has a chance to fit at least some of this content into their weekly schedule. With your registration comes the ability to view all session recordings shortly after the conclusion of the event to accommodate asynchronous schedules.

In addition, we ask everyone keep their eyes peeled for a future announcement regarding a special pre-symposium webinar OHA will host for free to act as a primer for the content of the program. Regardless of your level of familiarity with AI or amount of technical proficiency in general, this pre-symposium webinar should be a helpful starting point for the topics and terminology relevant to the intersections of AI and oral history.

Finally, we would like to thank OHA Council for their support of this event, in particular their interest in creating more accessible OHA programming for a broad audience. We also thank the members of the AI in OH committee Jen Cramer, Patrick Daglaris, and James Fowler both for their aid in constructing the program and for volunteering their time to serve as chairs of sessions. And last but not least, we thank OHA Program Associates Bethany Stewart and Hailey Vinson, as well as OHA Graduate Assistant Chiara Osborne for working so hard behind the scenes to turn this idea into a reality.

We look forward to seeing everyone online, and hope you enjoy the symposium!



Sarah Milligan



Steven Sielaff

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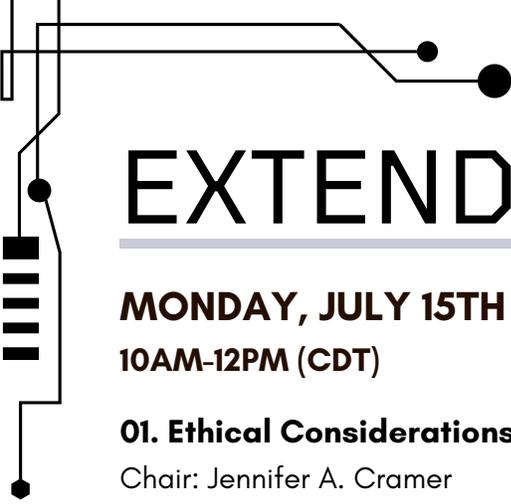
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EXTENDED PROGRAM

MONDAY, JULY 15TH

10AM-12PM (CDT)

01. Ethical Considerations in the Age of AI (Panel)

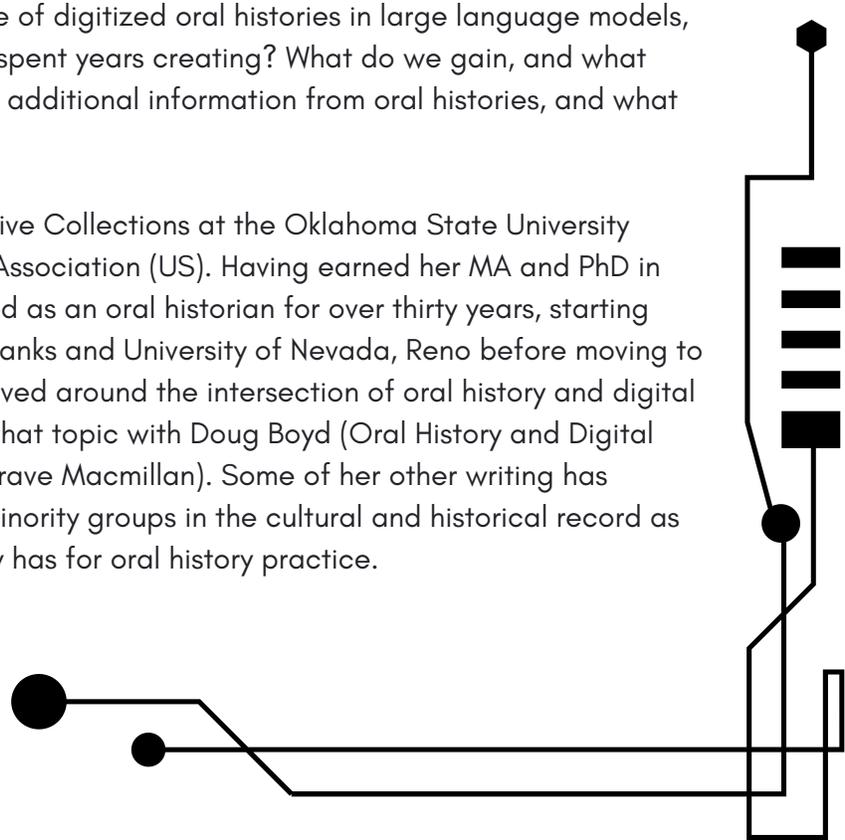
Chair: Jennifer A. Cramer

From Contextualized Interview to Anonymous Data: Making Meaning with Oral Histories in the Age of Big Data

Mary Larson

Abstract: The potential meaning(s) that researchers have been able to draw from oral histories have evolved over the years along with the media on which they are recorded and presented. Transcripts can be a pale representation of an interview, while making audio recordings available provides more depth and emotion. Having video recordings adds body language and visible interaction to the mix, and, more recently, online videos with contextualizing information bring us yet a fuller understanding of the moment that was recorded. But what happens to these oral histories in the age of big data and AI? There is certainly valuable research that can be accomplished, with new arenas opening up in the way of corpora creation and language analysis, but how does this change of format -- the conversion from situated interview to more anonymous data -- impact how we make meaning from oral histories? In order to try to get at more holistic understandings of oral histories and their contents, practitioners have added progressively more extensive layers of context as the methodology of oral history has developed. With the shifts from transcripts to audio, audio to video, video to interactive website, we have been providing ever increasing details that we hope help readers and listeners to better understand the full situatedness of the recorded material. With the use of digitized oral histories in large language models, though, are we undoing the context that we have spent years creating? What do we gain, and what might we lose, when we strip at least some of that additional information from oral histories, and what does that mean for curators and researchers?

Bio: Mary Larson is the Associate Dean for Distinctive Collections at the Oklahoma State University Library and a former president of the Oral History Association (US). Having earned her MA and PhD in anthropology from Brown University, she has worked as an oral historian for over thirty years, starting with the programs at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and University of Nevada, Reno before moving to Oklahoma in 2009. Much of her research has revolved around the intersection of oral history and digital technology, and in 2014 she co-edited a book on that topic with Doug Boyd (*Oral History and Digital Humanities: Voice, Access, and Engagement*, Palgrave Macmillan). Some of her other writing has focused on under-representation of women and minority groups in the cultural and historical record as well as ethics and the implications that technology has for oral history practice.





EXTENDED PROGRAM

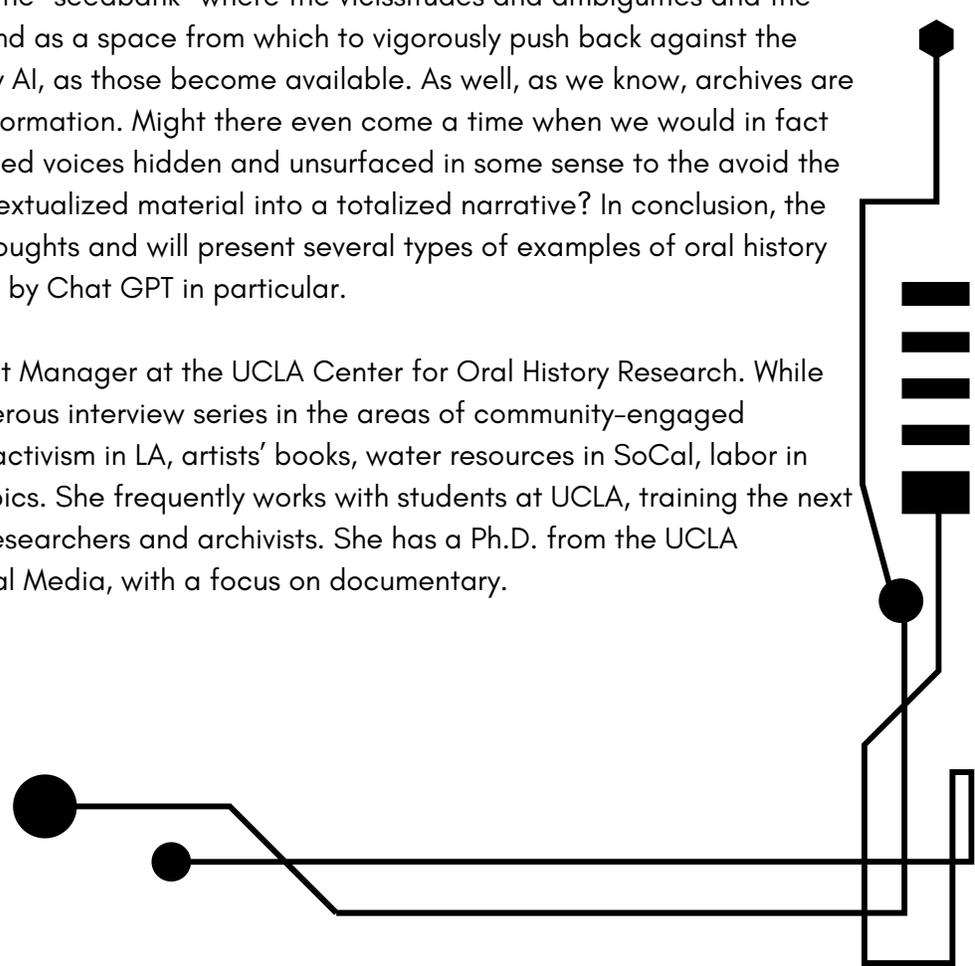
01. Ethical Considerations in the Age of AI (Panel)

In Support of Putting Oral History Narratives "In the Vault" - Do Humanists Need to Take a Page from "Preppers" in the Age of Artificial Intelligence?

Jane Collings

Abstract: Simply put, the imperative of oral history practice for some time has been to record and surface hidden and overlooked history. But what if we could imagine that one day archives of oral history could become the Dooms Day seed bank, as in Svalbad Global Seed Vault in Norway, of human understanding and consciousness in an AI-dominated future? Such archives would be seen to preserve in organic form the structures of thought and the modality of human relationships found within oral history practice. We could see this as the "whole cloth" of the unadulterated, full-length, verbatim narrative, with its inherent nuances and unresolved contradictions, standing in contrast to the "particle board" of AI-generated accounts, where bits of experience have been mined and pulverized into a totalized narrative generated by AI. We could even say that contradictory, nuanced, even rambling at times, oral histories would provide "immune escape" (as they say about Covid vaccines that don't catch all the virus) from the hegemony of AI generated history. Such archives preserve the space for, specifically, humanism, for intimate, one-on-one exchanges that are respectful of the space and time of the persons involved. Therefore, I am championing the support for long form life history oral histories, safely archived and preserved. While this approach has been considered out of date in more recent years, such archival approaches take on a new role as both the "seedbank" where the vicissitudes and ambiguities and the nature of human thinking is preserved, and as a space from which to vigorously push back against the grain of historical narratives compiled by AI, as those become available. As well, as we know, archives are well-suited for sealing and restricting information. Might there even come a time when we would in fact wish to keep hidden voices and unsurfaced voices hidden and unsurfaced in some sense to the avoid the data stripping that would weave uncontextualized material into a totalized narrative? In conclusion, the proposed paper will expand on these thoughts and will present several types of examples of oral history interviews alongside their summarization by Chat GPT in particular.

Bio: Jane Collings is currently the Project Manager at the UCLA Center for Oral History Research. While at the Center, Jane has conducted numerous interview series in the areas of community-engaged theater, environmentalism, anti-poverty activism in LA, artists' books, water resources in SoCal, labor in the LA film and TV industry and other topics. She frequently works with students at UCLA, training the next generation of oral history interviewers, researchers and archivists. She has a Ph.D. from the UCLA Department of Film, Television and Digital Media, with a focus on documentary.



EXTENDED PROGRAM

01. Ethical Considerations in the Age of AI (Panel)

World Englishes and Whisper: Testing AI and Pedagogically Reframing Oral History Transcription Workflow

Aieshah Arif, Lauren Kata, & Sweta Kumari

Abstract: At New York University Abu Dhabi, a global liberal arts and science research campus, the Library's University Archives is the home and facilitator of the community's participatory oral history project, the NYUAD Memory Project; a project developed and inspired by Memory Projects around the world. Initiated in the Fall of 2019, and largely a remote interviewing project since spring 2020, our modest project has resulted in the recording of 95 interviews with a variety of community members, students, faculty, staff, and alumni. These interviews have all been conducted in English, the official teaching language of the campus; but the knowledge shared through memory and story represents a broad diversity of narrators' English speaking backgrounds: NYUAD hosts a student body representing over 120 countries and over 100 languages, and its faculty and staff represent over 50 nationalities. Within this context, University Archivist Lauren Kata - interviewer and archivist for the NYUAD Memory Project - has begun partnering with NYUAD academic writing instructors Aieshah Arif and Sweta Kumari to consider and assess AI transcription tools and human transcription editing workflows within the framework of "World Englishes," as first discussed by Braj B. Kachru (1982). As writing professionals and researchers, Arif and Kumari have applied Kachru's and others' World Englishes paradigm to explore the limitations of solely using "standard" varieties of English in their language instruction. This has led them to create space for diverse backgrounds and varieties of English, in order to foster inclusivity in the teaching and learning of the English language. This talk will discuss our collaboration - still in its early stages - and how Lauren is taking the occasion of testing Whisper's performance to also reframe and evolve transcription "clean up" protocols within overall access workflows in the Archives. Applying the same inclusive writing pedagogies used in the University's Writing Center is leading to a reconsideration of editing methods and standards for speech-to-text English transcripts, i.e., the "next steps" that follow the use of AI tools, which involve the training and contributions of undergraduate student assistants. Examples and patterns encountered will be included in the presentation, such as Whisper's performance in generating transcripts of multiple English accents and varieties at NYUAD, and English expressions and phrases we've identified to be retained "as is" for authenticity and accuracy. In participating in this symposium, we hope for meaningful feedback from the larger community and others testing and encountering similar issues.

Bio: Lauren Kata, CA, has engaged in oral history at all stages of the lifecycle and within a variety of contexts for more than 20 years. An archivist, Lauren is an active member of OHA, the Society of American Archivists and is on the editorial team of the International Oral History Association's journal, *Words & Silences*. Lauren joined NYU Abu Dhabi in 2019 as an academic librarian and is archivist and oral history interviewer for the NYUAD University Archives. She is a graduate of Wayne State University (MA, GCAA) and Case Western Reserve University (BA).

Bio: Writing instructor Aieshah Arif has been in a diverse range of roles—marketing manager, French language lecturer, higher education administrator, research assistant, and, more recently, founder of a small concrete design business. Yet, her heart has always been in writing, language and language acquisition. With a background in communications and new media, Aieshah has worked for various magazines and publications as a journalist, translator, and editor. She has also worked extensively with students on their writing through the Writers' Centre at Yale-NUS College and the National University of Singapore. She is a Writing Instructor in NYU Abu Dhabi's First Year Writing Program and Writing Center.



EXTENDED PROGRAM

01. Ethical Considerations in the Age of AI (Panel)

Bio: Sweta Kumari calls herself a storyteller. She immensely enjoys sharing and listening to personal stories, for she believes stories help you appreciate the uniqueness of human beings. She grew up in a small village in Jharkhand (India) in a family of progressive parents and loving brothers. However, girls in her community were not encouraged to have higher education or dream of a career. She defied norms by not only finishing high school but moving to Bangladesh on a full scholarship to attend college. Asian University for Women became her stepping stone, and she never looked back. Post her Bachelors in Liberal Arts, Sweta moved to pursue a PG Diploma in Liberal Studies, aka The Young India Fellowship, at Ashoka University, India. As an Assistant Instructor of Writing, she looks forward to adding new dimensions to her Teaching and Learning experiences.

EXTENDED PROGRAM

MONDAY, JULY 15TH

2PM-4PM (CDT)

02. From Capture to Engagement: Experiments in Using AI for Indexing, Named Entity Recognition, and More (Roundtable)

Chair: Zack Ellis

Participants: Bram Adams, Zack Ellis, & William Mattingly

Abstract: It's a common question: what is the point of collection and preservation if people don't engage with the content? Adding descriptive metadata, summarizing, transcribing, indexing, qualitatively coding, and creating clips all help to increase the accessibility of oral histories, making them easier to discover and use. The problem is, these activities all take significant amounts of time and money, and when you tack onto that limited team capacity, secret treasure trove of inaccessible oral histories grows. Since January 2024, TheirStory has teamed up with Smithsonian Data Scientist, William Mattingly, OpenAI Developer Ambassador, Bram Adams, and TheirStory partner organizations to experiment with utilizing Whisper, GPT, and other Natural Language Processing technologies for saving significant amounts of time in transcribing, indexing, summarizing, applying subject headings, and performing named entity recognition. Join this session to hear about what we learned experimenting with the use of AI for increasing accessibility of real-world oral history collections.

Bio: Bram Adams (@_bramses) is a creative technologist and commonplacer based out of NYC. Bram publishes a weekly newsletter (Sundays), is a community developer ambassador for OpenAI, and does freelance contracts related to AI/web dev/AR+VR. As of Winter 2024, Bram is actively working on Commonplace Bot, a novel and modern look into how LLMs and creative coding can help us capture, engage, and creatively remix the best pieces of information we come across. You can test it out live in the Bram Adams' Discord server. Bram is the creator of Stenography, an API and VSC Extension that automatically documents code on save, which went #1 on Product Hunt. He also is the author of Bramses' Highly Opinionated Vault, an extremely detailed philosophy + vault template used by thousands of Obsidian users (new and old!), and ChatGPT MD, a (nearly) seamless integration of Chat GPT into Obsidian which has been downloaded by over twenty nine thousand Obsidian users. He also taught the GPT-3 in Production Course for O'Reilly Media, teaching students how to leverage LLMs in the real world of production. Previously Developer Advocate @ Algolia, Software Engineer @ HBO, Computer Science B.S. @ University of Rochester.

Bio: Dr. William Mattingly is a postdoc fellow at the Smithsonian Institution's Data Science Lab, where he researches the practical and ethical applications of machine learning in museum archives. His position is also attached to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, where he works primarily with Holocaust oral testimonies. There, he is developing natural language processing and machine learning pipelines for processing Holocaust-related materials. He is also the co-principal investigator and lead developer for the Bitter Aloe Project, where he works with data from South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. His publications include the textbook: Introduction to Python for Digital Humanists and articles on natural language processing with low-resource languages and the application of machine learning in museum archives. His digital projects include Python for Digital Humanities which provides over 250 videos and 7 open-access textbooks on Python.

EXTENDED PROGRAM

02. From Capture to Engagement: Experiments in Using AI for Indexing, Named Entity Recognition, and More (Roundtable)

Bio: Zack Ellis is the Founder & CEO of TheirStory, an end-in-end oral history platform. After completing his BA from the University of Pennsylvania, Zack spent 6 years in Silicon Valley working in API Management, Home Health Care, and Math Education Technology industries. As the grandson of a Holocaust survivor, he created TheirStory as a means of sharing and preserving family stories. Since then, TheirStory has evolved into a platform over 70 institutions use to collect, preserve, and engage with audiovisual stories of the individuals that make up their community, now and for generations to come.

EXTENDED PROGRAM

TUESDAY, JULY 16TH
10AM-12PM (CDT)

03. AI as Human Substitutes in the Oral History Process (Panel)

Chair: James Fowler

Envisioning AI as an Oral History Interviewer: The Educated Youth Oral History Project

Zhao Yigong & Haina Jin

Abstract: Since the 1950s, a large-scale "sent-down" movement has gradually taken shape under national policy in the People's Republic of China. With the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, this movement evolved into a large-scale political phenomenon that officially ended in 1980 after nearly thirty years. The Educated Youth Oral History Project captures the "collective memory" of this group, authentically and vividly documenting the historical period from personal perspectives. Involving millions of individuals and families, the "sent-down" movement constituted the largest population migration of 17 million in the 20th century, exerting significant and far-reaching impact on China's national economy and people's livelihood. Since June 2011, our team of the Educated Youth Oral History Project has been interviewing the educated youth and related groups, encompassing comprehensive historical information about various stages of the "sent-down" movement, their primary departure and settlement locations, different forms of "sent down", significant events, and notable figures from each period. To date, we have been conducted interviews with 495 educated youth, with over 1600 hours of recordings. Additionally, we have collected more than 10,000 documents including, photos, diaries, letters, and other visual and textual materials. The team has also participated in and filmed over 100 educated youth activities, with a total duration of over 300 hours, and collected more than 2000 types of books about the educated youth, including informal publications. Based on the current status of the project, we aim to envision and explore how AI can support our oral history work and how "AI interviewers" can be trained to help complete the remaining interviews of the project. We will delve into the training process for AI interviews, design it as basic training, personification (various identities) of AI interviewers, assessment testing, and implementation of interviews. Each stage comes with its own training objectives and anticipated methods of accomplishment. Initially, AI will be provided with a comprehensive and accurate range of primary project materials to be used as its knowledge base, in order to forestall the cluttering of AI's memory space with a trove of known incorrect information and, particularly, to prevent its misguidance by one-dimensional values. Subsequently, given the current deficiency in Chat GPT's reasoning ability, during training, we will dissect the fundamental operations of oral history interviewers and further streamline interview work into specific tasks, distinguishing between "substantial work" and "auxiliary tasks" to reduce potential errors that AI interviewers may make. Furthermore, considering ChatGPT's present lack of determinism in judgment, we will endeavor to simplify complex judgments as much as possible to sidestep the chain reaction caused by a solitary erroneous judgment. For ChatGPT to satisfy human needs, it will inevitably progress towards customization. Our endeavor is an active exploration aimed at providing a broad realm of imaginative possibilities and operational avenues for oral history work.

EXTENDED PROGRAM

03. AI as Human Substitutes in the Oral History Process (Panel)

Envisioning AI as an Oral History Interviewer: The Educated Youth Oral History Project (cont.)

Zhao Yigong & Haina Jin

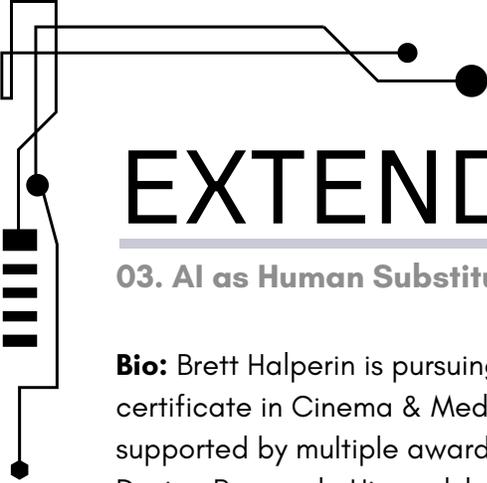
Bio: Zhao Yigong, Chief Journalist at the Cui Yongyuan Oral History Research Center of the Communication University of China, previously served as the planner and coordinator of the "Tell It Like It Is" program, Chief Journalist of the "Story of Movie" program at China Central Television. He is also the leader of projects such as "Oral History of Filmmakers" and "Oral History of the Educated Youth". With over 20 years of experience in conducting oral history interviews, he has engaged with over 3,000 individuals, taking a leading role in collecting oral histories of veteran filmmakers in China from 2002 to 2011, conducting interviews with over 1200 people for more than 3400 hours. Additionally, he led the collection of oral histories of educated youth from 2011 to 2021, interviewing 495 individuals for over 1600 hours, capturing over 100 educated youth activities on film, and assembling a collection of more than 10,000 visual and textual materials.

Bio: Haina Jin is a professor of translation, film, and communication studies at the Communication University of China. Her research interests include film translation, translation history, and film history. She is the editor in-chief of Journal of Chinese Film Studies (De Gruyter) and the series editor of Routledge Series in Chinese Cinema. She is the chair researcher of the China National Social Science Foundation Major Research Project, "A General History of Film Translation in China." She has published a monograph titled Towards a History of Translating Chinese Films (1905-1949) and is now working on a sequel, which will cover the 120-year history of film translation in China. She is the translator of the three-volume General History of Chinese Film published by Routledge.

Probing a Community-Based Conversational Storytelling Agent to Document Digital Stories of Housing Insecurity

Brett Halperin

Abstract: Despite the central role that stories play in social movement-building, they are difficult to sustainably document for many reasons. To explore this challenge, this paper describes the design of a community-based conversational storytelling agent (CSA) to document digital stories of housing insecurity. Building on insights from an ongoing grassroots project, the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, we share how a study initially focused on CSA-support opened an investigation of the role that artificial intelligence may play in housing justice movements. Drawing from 17 interviews with narrators of housing insecurity experiences and collectors of such stories, we find that collectors perceive opportunities to expand means of documentation with multimedia and multi-language support. Meanwhile, some narrators perceive potential for a CSA to offer therapeutic storytelling experiences and document otherwise unrecorded stories. Yet, CSA encounters also surface perils of machine bias, as well as reduced possibilities of human connections and relations.



EXTENDED PROGRAM

03. AI as Human Substitutes in the Oral History Process (Panel)

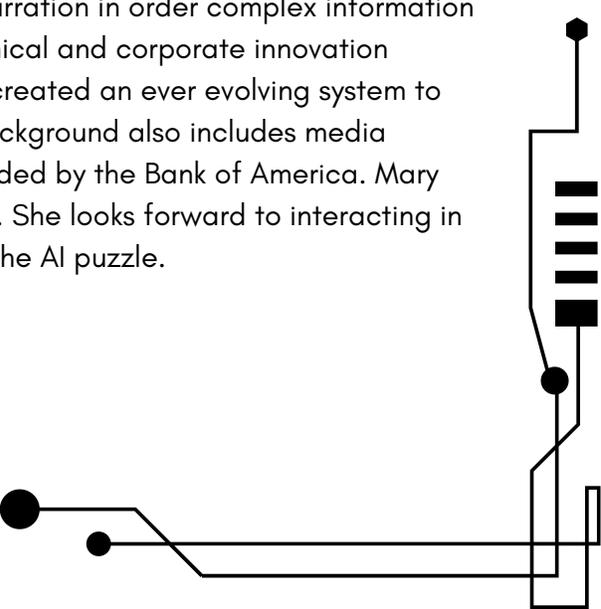
Bio: Brett Halperin is pursuing a PhD in Human Centered Design & Engineering with a graduate certificate in Cinema & Media Studies at University of Washington, Seattle. His research has been supported by multiple awards and published in the fields of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and Design Research. His work has been awarded Best Paper at the Association for Computing Machinery CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, the premiere international venue for peer-reviewed HCI research. Halperin holds an MS from the University of Washington and a BA from Brown University, where he also studied at the Rhode Island School of Design. He is a National Science Foundation research fellow and adjunct faculty member of the Technology, Culture, & Society department at New York University Tandon School of Engineering.

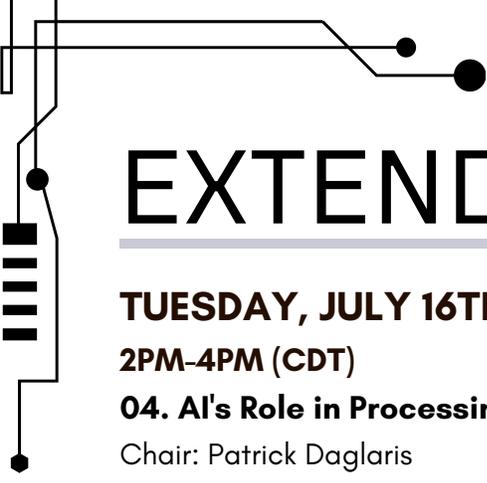
How will AI Enable Oral History to Make it Possible to Converse with Our Dead Relatives?

Mary Gordon

Abstract: In 2022 the title of an article in the October MIT Review could cause one to think that AI will enable us to speak to our dead relatives. Upon further examination, oral historians have a basis for this possibility. with the many databases we create. This presentation will use visuals to show 1) a Narrative Data Management System (NDMS) the presenter has developed and used over at least 20 years in situations as diverse as those dealing with corporate memory to those dealing with family memory for purposes of answering questions from future successors or descendants. 2) the memory issues involved, 3) Interview skills needed, 4) what would be involved in seemingly conversing with dead relatives from technical and ethical standpoints, 5) how would the database be any different from the databases kept for oral history collections? 6) How would it connect to historical backdrops?

Bio: Relevant to this presentation, Dr. Mary Contini Gordon worked on an AI project at UCLA in the late 1980s. She directed and participated in many interview projects from planning to analysis at two Fortune 500 companies. These projects produced massive amounts of narrative data requiring systems so be developed that would allow for banking, finding, sorting, analyzing narration in order complex information to answer significant executive and senior scientist questions in technical and corporate innovation contexts. For her three books which required historical contexts, she created an ever evolving system to incorporate data beyond that of interviews she conducted. Mary's background also includes media development of displays, single videos, and educational TV series funded by the Bank of America. Mary has received significant university and corporate awards for her work. She looks forward to interacting in this presentation with so many who bring to bear different pieces of the AI puzzle.





EXTENDED PROGRAM

TUESDAY, JULY 16TH

2PM-4PM (CDT)

04. AI's Role in Processing Oral Histories (Panel)

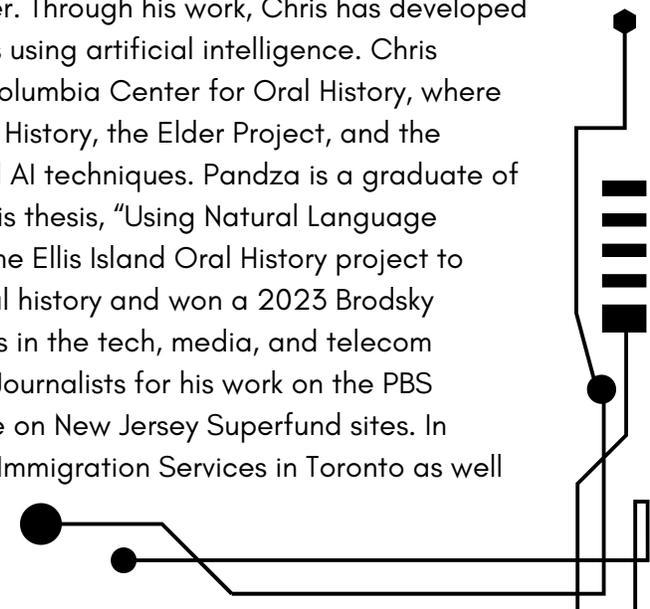
Chair: Patrick Daglaris

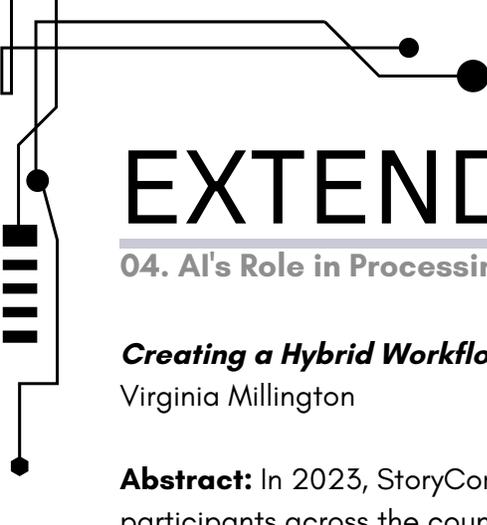
Curating Oral History with AI

Christopher Pandza

Abstract: An oral history project's conclusion often marks the beginning of its public life, but how rich that public life is depends on how accessible the project's interviews are. The sheer amount of text and audio produced by oral history interviews, coupled with the medium's semi-structured form, poses a significant challenge for curators tasked with making sense of a collection, as well as for the audiences who may benefit from engaging with a collection. New artificial intelligence (AI) tools present new opportunities for assisted curation, but also new pitfalls. What might the role(s) of AI be in the process of curation? Does AI necessarily reinforce its own biases on a collection, or can it help curators measure and mitigate their own biases? How does AI interact with the ethical and epistemological frameworks that shape oral history? Using real-world examples from the Ellis Island Oral History (National Park Service), Obama Presidency Oral History (Incite at Columbia University), and The Elder Project (Incite), I will demonstrate a number of innovative AI techniques that practitioners can use to prepare oral history collections for public use. Techniques include but are not limited to named entity recognition, topic modeling, and metadata creation using large language models. In addition, I will demonstrate how AI can be used to make a project's curation process more rigorous and inclusive. In demonstrating these techniques, I will explore the ethical and methodological considerations that must be carefully navigated within the discipline. The proposed presentation would introduce attendees to potential tools at their disposal as well as frameworks for considering how they might adopt these tools into their own practice. A companion paper would bolster this presentation and serve as a more permanent resource for the field to refer to, build upon, and challenge.

Bio: Chris Pandza is a New York-based oral historian and designer. Through his work, Chris has developed a number of novel techniques to analyze and curate oral histories using artificial intelligence. Chris currently leads design for Incite at Columbia University and the Columbia Center for Oral History, where he is curating digital experiences for the Obama Presidency Oral History, the Elder Project, and the Movements Against Mass Incarceration Lab with the help of novel AI techniques. Pandza is a graduate of the Oral History Master of Arts program at Columbia University. His thesis, "Using Natural Language Processing to Organize and Analyze Oral History Projects" used the Ellis Island Oral History project to demonstrate organizational and analytical use-cases for AI in oral history and won a 2023 Brodsky Award. Prior to his work at Incite, Pandza worked for several years in the tech, media, and telecom industries. In 2022, he won a New Jersey Society of Professional Journalists for his work on the PBS podcast Hazard NJ, which explored the effects of climate change on New Jersey Superfund sites. In addition, he has volunteered with the Centre for Community and Immigration Services in Toronto as well as with the Canada Service Corps.





EXTENDED PROGRAM

04. AI's Role in Processing Oral Histories (Panel)

Creating a Hybrid Workflow: Describing (and Improving) User-Generated Content Using AI Tools

Virginia Millington

Abstract: In 2023, StoryCorps launched a new platform designed to offer interested potential participants across the country the chance to match up with someone unlike themselves for a recorded conversation. Although this platform remains in the beta stage, it has allowed StoryCorps to experiment with using a variety of AI tools for creating a workflow that allows for the scaling of descriptive annotation, tagging, and transcription - while still allowing for oversight, intervention, and moderation from a team of archivists and program managers. At this point in the process, the technical considerations are necessarily and deliberately accompanied by complex discussions around the ethics - and opportunity - for hybrid workflows that utilize AI within a public-facing, human-centered organization. In this paper, we will discuss the process of implementing AI tools alongside the development of an ethos of practice - and consider a framework of ethical integration. We hope to invite discussion and participation from other individuals and institutions facing the same questions.

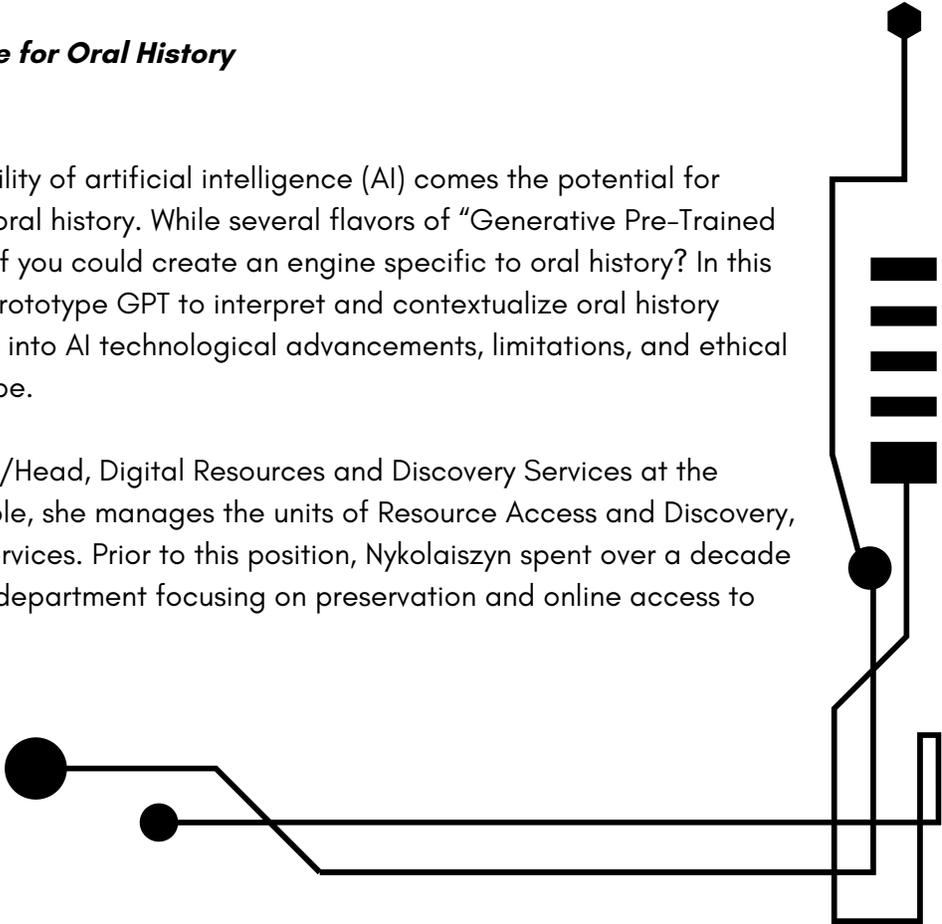
Bio: Virginia Millington is the Managing Director, Program Operations, at StoryCorps. She has previously held positions at the Folger Shakespeare Library and the Walker Art Center. She received her MLS from the Pratt Institute, and currently lives in New York.

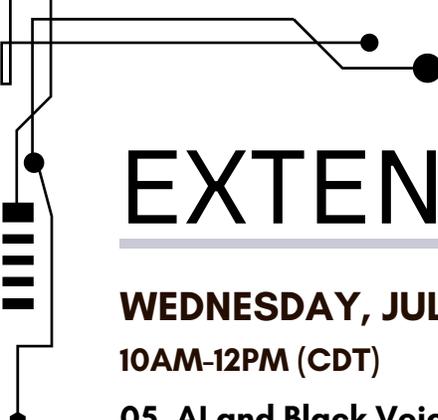
Powered by AI: Crafting a GPT Prototype for Oral History

Juliana Nykolaiszyn

Abstract: With the rapid rise and accessibility of artificial intelligence (AI) comes the potential for exploration within diverse spaces, such as oral history. While several flavors of "Generative Pre-Trained Transformers" or GPTs are available, what if you could create an engine specific to oral history? In this session, I will share the development of a prototype GPT to interpret and contextualize oral history narratives. Attendees will also gain insights into AI technological advancements, limitations, and ethical implications within the oral history landscape.

Bio: Juliana Nykolaiszyn serves as Professor/Head, Digital Resources and Discovery Services at the Oklahoma State University Library. In this role, she manages the units of Resource Access and Discovery, Metadata, Scanning, and Digital Library Services. Prior to this position, Nykolaiszyn spent over a decade working with the OSU Library's oral history department focusing on preservation and online access to collections.





EXTENDED PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY, JULY 17TH

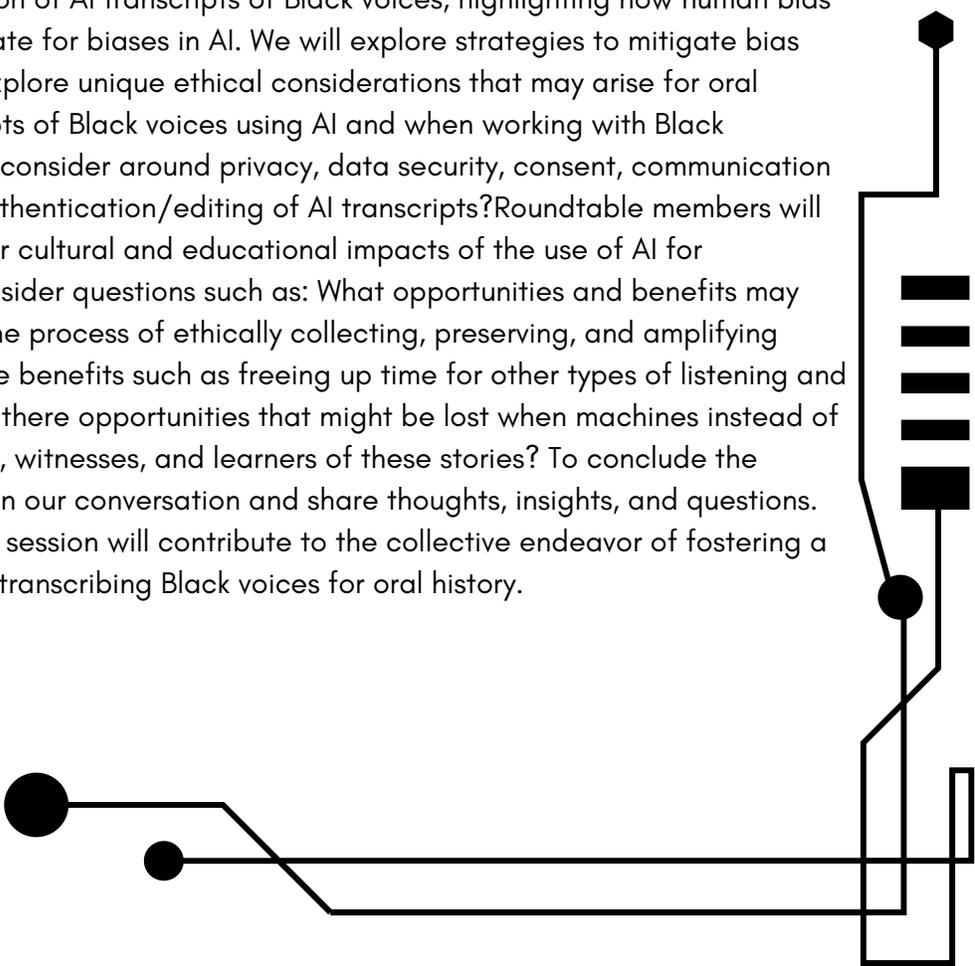
10AM-12PM (CDT)

05. AI and Black Voices (Roundtable)

Chair: Sara Baum

Participants: Sara Baum, Destiny Crawford, Zack Ellis, Alissa Rae Funderburk, Michael Sesling, & Hanassa Wicks

Abstract: Crafting an oral history transcript goes beyond capturing spoken words; it serves as a medium to collect, preserve, and share the nuances of language, speaking style, cultural expression, and historical perspective. When transcribing Black voices, how can we ensure the thoughtful and accurate capture of these multifaceted aspects? Are there unique ethical and cultural considerations in transcribing Black oral history? And, what roles can and should AI and humans play in this process? In this roundtable, a diverse group of oral history and transcription professionals will delve into the linguistic, technical, ethical, and cultural challenges and opportunities that arise when grappling with these questions. We will begin our discussion by exploring the accuracy, reliability, and considerations inherent in both AI and human transcription of Black voices. We will discuss the performance of different AI models in transcribing Black voices, considering factors influencing their effectiveness and potential methods to optimize their capabilities. Panelists will share practical examples and experiences related to the transcription of spoken-language elements such as dialect, punctuation, accents, emphasis, and sentence structures. We will address human editing/authentication of AI transcripts of Black voices, highlighting how human bias may interact with, overlook, or compensate for biases in AI. We will explore strategies to mitigate bias impact within transcripts. We will next explore unique ethical considerations that may arise for oral historians involved in producing transcripts of Black voices using AI and when working with Black narrators. What issues might there be to consider around privacy, data security, consent, communication with narrators, and post-transcription authentication/editing of AI transcripts? Roundtable members will offer reflections on the potential broader cultural and educational impacts of the use of AI for transcription of Black voices. We will consider questions such as: What opportunities and benefits may exist when it comes integrating AI into the process of ethically collecting, preserving, and amplifying Black voices? Could the use of AI provide benefits such as freeing up time for other types of listening and meaning-making for oral historians? Are there opportunities that might be lost when machines instead of human transcribers become the listeners, witnesses, and learners of these stories? To conclude the session, we will invite the audience to join our conversation and share thoughts, insights, and questions. We hope that this interactive roundtable session will contribute to the collective endeavor of fostering a thoughtful and responsible approach to transcribing Black voices for oral history.



EXTENDED PROGRAM

05. AI and Black Voices (Roundtable)

Bio: Sara Baum is Founder and Owner of Sharp Copy Transcription, a company dedicated to crafting oral history transcripts that capture the diversity and complexity of human voices and experiences. With 25 years of transcription expertise and a background in education, healthcare, and economic development, Sara's work has always been rooted in a deep love of listening and a belief in the impact of well-told stories. Sara leads a diverse team of transcribers from across the U.S. and beyond who contribute exceptional skills in listening and writing as well as their deep and varied knowledge of fields of study, languages, dialects, accents, and cultures. Sara holds a BA in Sociology and a Master's Degree in Urban Planning and Public Policy, specializing in Disability Studies. She lives in Oak Park, Illinois.

Bio: Destiny B. Crawford is an Oral History transcriptionist for Sharp Copy Transcription. She is a graduate of Claflin University, the oldest HBCU in the state of South Carolina, where she earned a Bachelor's in African and African American Studies. At Claflin the focus of her research was Race and Advertising. Fueled by her passion to make history accessible to others, she earned her MA from Grand Canyon University in History with an Emphasis in Education and working with Adult Learners. While at GCU she conducted research on thriving African American communities in the Early 1900s. When she is not transcribing she works full-time in Higher Education and Workforce Development as a Student Success Coach at Central Piedmont Community College. A historian at heart, she is also a part-time adjunct faculty member in the History Department at the college.

Bio: Zack Ellis is the Founder & CEO of TheirStory, an end-to-end oral history platform. Zack was a Division 1 wrestler at the University of Pennsylvania where he earned his Bachelors in bioengineering. After college, Zack spent 6 years in Silicon Valley working in industries ranging from API Management, to Home Health Care, and Math Education Technology. As the grandson of a Holocaust survivor, he founded TheirStory in 2018 as a means of sharing and preserving family stories. Since then, however, TheirStory has evolved into a platform used by over 70 institutions including Cornell University, the National Library Board of Singapore, Chickaloon Native Village in Alaska, and the Council of American Jewish Museums to collect, preserve, and share the stories of their community members, now and for generations to come.

Bio: Alissa Rae Funderburk is the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Oral Historian for the Margaret Walker Center at the HBCU Jackson State University. She maintains an oral history archive that, like the Center, is dedicated to the preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of African American history and culture. She holds both a bachelor's degree in anthropology and masters degree in oral history from Columbia University. Currently Alissa Rae serves as a council member for the Oral History Association and is creator of the new nonprofit, The Black Oral Historians Network, a virtual meeting ground for Black memory workers. Her most recent project, Thee Black Pride in JXN focuses on recording the life histories of Black members of the LGBTQ community in Jackson, Ms. In addition, her latest research centers on narrator compensation, reparations, and the transcription of Black voices. For more visit alissaraefunderburk.com.

EXTENDED PROGRAM

05. AI and Black Voices (Roundtable)

Bio: Michael Sesling is just a guy who had no experience in the transcription world until he walked into the office of owner Sandy Poritzky January 2, 2006 looking for a temp job. He left 4.5 hours later running the Audio Transcription Center. He's been working at ATC ever since for 18 years.

Bio: Hanassa Wicks has been a transcriptionist for a handful of years now, and began working with the Audio Transcription Center in June of 2023. As well as maintaining a role as a transcriptionist and project manager overseeing a team of transcriptionists, she has also taken on a handful of other roles within the Audio Transcription Center and wears many different hats. Her educational background includes a Bachelor's degree from Hope College in Holland, MI in social work, a minor in psychology, and she is currently taking classes to obtain a certificate as a paralegal. Her academic foundation has laid the groundwork for her commitment to uplifting marginalized stories, and contributes to her journey dedicated to social justice and understanding. When she is not working or studying, Hanassa cherishes her role as a mother, spending time with her three daughters and enjoying the beautiful outdoors of the U.P. of Michigan.

EXTENDED PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY, JULY 17TH

2PM-4PM (CDT)

06.Using Whisper AI for Transcription to Improve Oral History Workflows (Roundtable)

Chair: Tamar Carroll

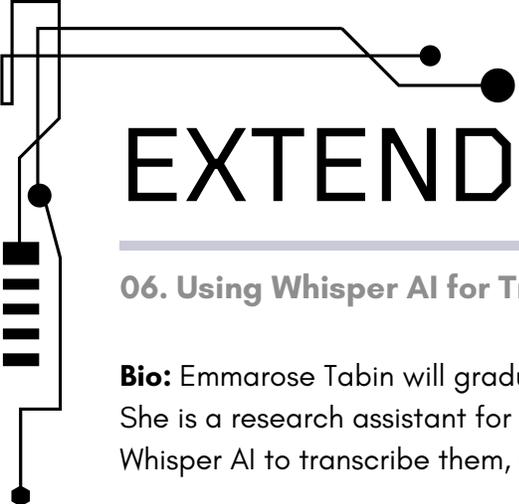
Participants: Kirk M. Anne, Benjamin Myers, Rebekah Walker, Emmarose Tabin, Caitlin McCabe, Liz Call, & Landyn Hatch

Abstract: In this round table, historian and project lead Dr. Tamar Carroll of Rochester Institute of Technology and her collaborators from research computing, the RIT library, and two undergraduate research assistants, will discuss their use of Whisper AI to transcribe audio and video oral history interviews. These interviews were part of Carroll's research on the Lambda Network at Kodak, an LGBTQ employee resource group which formed at the company's Rochester headquarters in the early 1990s when everyone was still closeted in the Kodak workforce. Over the past several years, Carroll and her undergraduate research assistants have conducted both audio and video oral history interviews with Kodak Lambda Members. This past year, Carroll and her students worked with research computing to run Whisper AI on RIT's computing cluster, allowing us to use the largest natural language processing model, and achieve very accurate transcriptions of those interviews, with a few caveats that we can detail during the round table. We will discuss our workflow and share training materials which helped to translate the technical aspects of using the research computing cluster and Whisper AI with humanities faculty and undergraduate students, and discuss the benefits of cross-disciplinary collaboration for oral history projects. After student research assistants had edited the transcripts, we worked with digital humanities librarian Rebekah Walker to add them to our Omeka exhibition and digital archive, <https://www.lambdanetworkkodak.net/page/home>, which we can also demonstrate during the round table.

Bio: Dr. Tamar W. Carroll is Professor and Chair of the Department of History at RIT. Her scholarship focuses on the history of social movements in the U.S. Since 1945, and she uses oral history as a central research methodology. Kirk Anne is Director of Research Computing at RIT. In that role, he collaborates with faculty and students to advance their research projects.

Bio: Dr. Ben Meyers currently supports researchers utilizing Research Computing services at RIT, including cluster access, computational workflow design, software packaging, and troubleshooting. Ben received his Ph.D. in Computing and Information Sciences from RIT in 2023, and his B.S. in Software Engineering from RIT in 2018. His research focuses on human factors in software engineering, notably applying human error theory, natural language processing, and machine learning to study software engineers' behaviors, workplace interactions, and security posture.

Bio: Rebekah Walker is the Digital Humanities & Social Sciences Librarian at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York. In this role Walker advises RIT's students, staff, and faculty on methods of digital pedagogy and project implementation. She leads instruction sessions, provides one-on-one consultations, and supports the full life cycle of digital project development.



EXTENDED PROGRAM

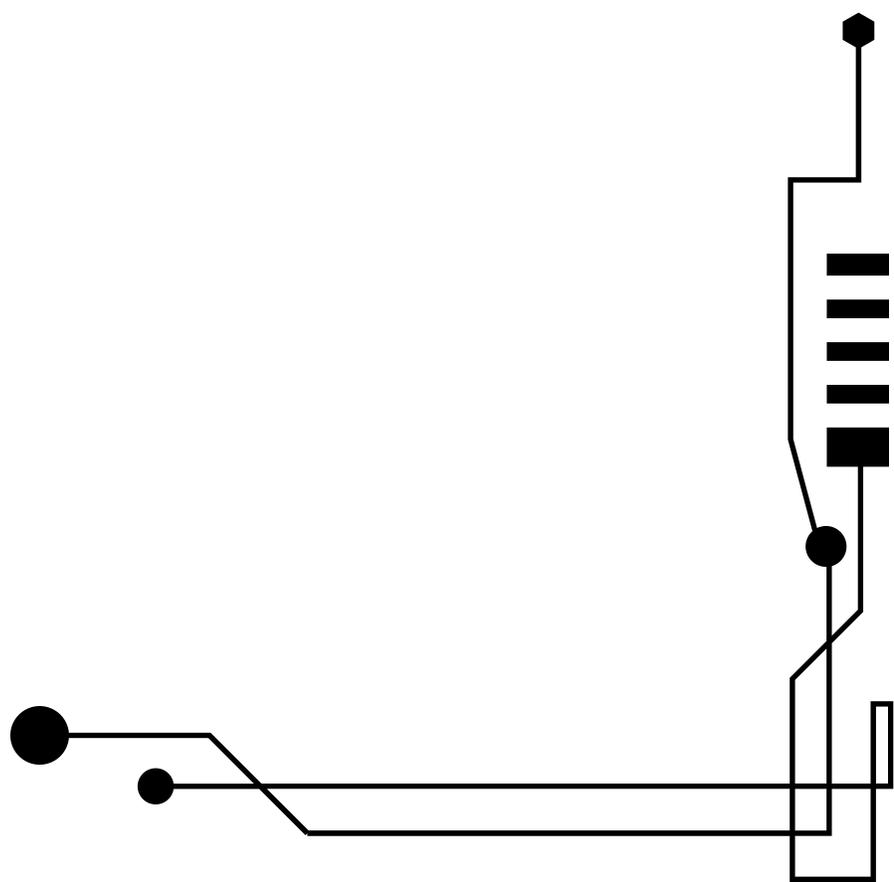
06. Using Whisper AI for Transcription to Improve Oral History Workflows (Roundtable)

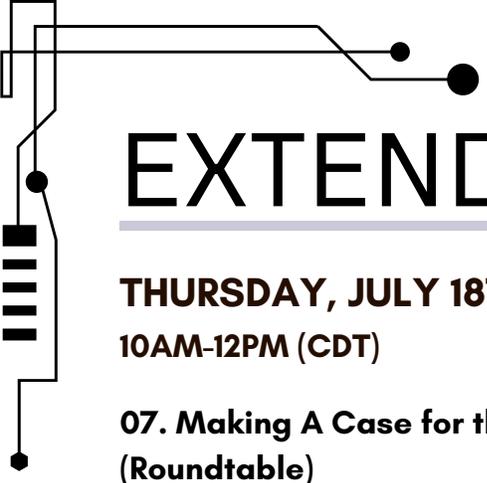
Bio: Emmarose Tabin will graduate from RIT in 2024 with a B.S. in Humanities, Computing, and Design. She is a research assistant for the Kodak Lambda Project, and has conducted oral history interviews, used Whisper AI to transcribe them, and added them to the Omeka project website.

Bio: Caitlin McCabe will graduate from RIT in 2024 with a B.S. in Museum Studies and History. She is a research assistant for Dr. Carroll, and in that role, has also conducted oral history interviews and used Whisper AI to transcribe them, before using them in podcasts and in journal articles.

Bio: Elizabeth Call is the university archivist at the RIT Archives (Rochester Institute of Technology). Her professional experience in special collections and archives has centered around creating and building community around the collections she stewards. Before joining RIT, she held positions at the Brooklyn Historical Society, Columbia University, and the University of Rochester.

Bio: Landyn Hatch is the Marie Golisano Graham Outreach Archivist in the RIT Archives (Rochester Institute of Technology). Trained as a museum professional and folklorist, she embraces multidisciplinary and collaborative approaches to oral history, exhibits, and experiential learning with university archives. Hatch co-manages the RIT Archives Oral History Program and its RIT Archives StoryBooth initiative (est. 2022).





EXTENDED PROGRAM

THURSDAY, JULY 18TH

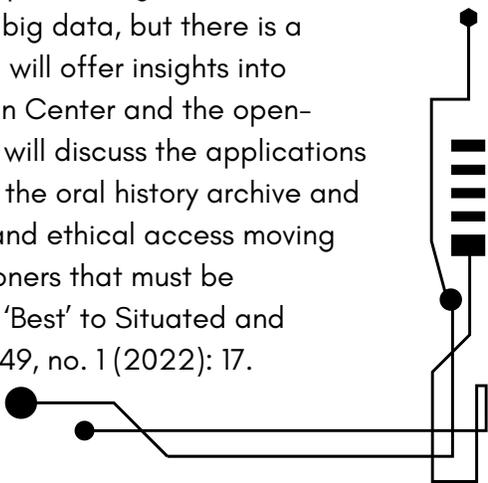
10AM-12PM (CDT)

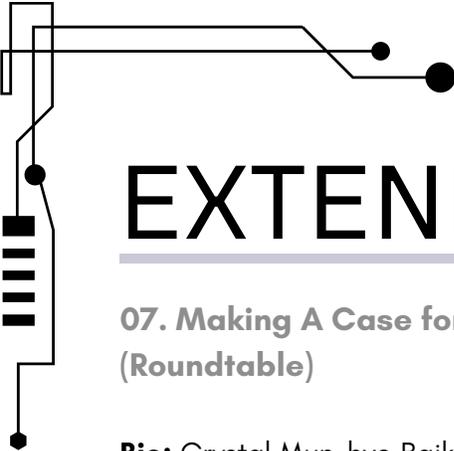
07. Making A Case for the Humans: The Ethics and Politics of AI in Oral History (Roundtable)

Chair: Anna Sheftel

Participants: Crystal Mun-hye Baik, Doug Boyd, Anna Sheftel, Graham Smith, Katrina Srigley, & Stacey Zembrzycki

Abstract: This roundtable will explore the ethical considerations of AI in oral history practice, dissemination, and archiving, focusing especially on the question of how technology moves us further away from the very relationships that guide this collaborative and deeply humanistic discipline. Crystal Mun-Hye Baik has rightly asserted that a focus on guidelines and best practices has created a culture of settler proprietorship that marginalizes Indigenous and racialized communities. To this end, she argues that we must view our work as “situated and relational,” while “draw[ing] on and/or develop[ing] parallel paradigms that insist on the sociality of information.”^[1] How we care for the stories we hear must be understood within the relationships through which they are told. In her remarks, Baik will build out from this premise, by problematizing our definitions of “artificial intelligence” and the implications of viewing the production of knowledge through non-human or non-sentient means. She will suggest how we might develop a parallel language and/or terminology that addresses this shift while actively pondering the tensions, challenges, and anxieties generated in relation to authorship and voice. Katrina Srigley’s work continues in this vein, asserting, as do the authors of the AI Decolonial Manifesto, that “AI as a technology, a science, a business, a knowledge system, a set of narratives, of relationships, an imaginary,” extends colonial violence and erasure. As an oral historian committed to storytelling and story sharing practice, which mobilizes Nishnaabeg epistemologies in the recording, sharing, and stewarding of stories, she will consider the dangers of AI and how it fails to recognize our shared humanity. Collaborative, humanistic approaches are vital to aligning human relations, and from a Nishnaabeg perspective, relations in all their forms - with land, water, spirit, “all our relations” - notions that are central to decolonization. Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki will return to Baik’s “sociality of information,” speaking to how AI has impacted their work with Holocaust survivors in Montreal, and the dissemination of their narratives through “interactive biographies,” (holograms). Graham Smith will then turn to AI and teaching, and how it is actively shaping our working practices, as well as our epistemologies. Students, he has observed, are developing critical responses to AI and the claims made by big data, but there is a potential crisis in replicability and equity of access looming. Lastly, Doug Boyd will offer insights into archival practices and workflows vis-à-vis his long-standing work with the Nunn Center and the open-source and free Oral History Metadata Synchronizer (OHMS). In particular, he will discuss the applications and implications of AI and how it may change the roles and responsibilities of the oral history archive and the archivist and reflect on how AI potentially complicates informed consent and ethical access moving forward. The future is exciting but presents challenges for oral history practitioners that must be addressed now, as the technology is evolving. [1] Crystal Mun-Hye Baik, “From ‘Best’ to Situated and Relational: Notes Toward a Decolonizing Praxis,” *The Oral History Review*, vol. 49, no. 1 (2022): 17.





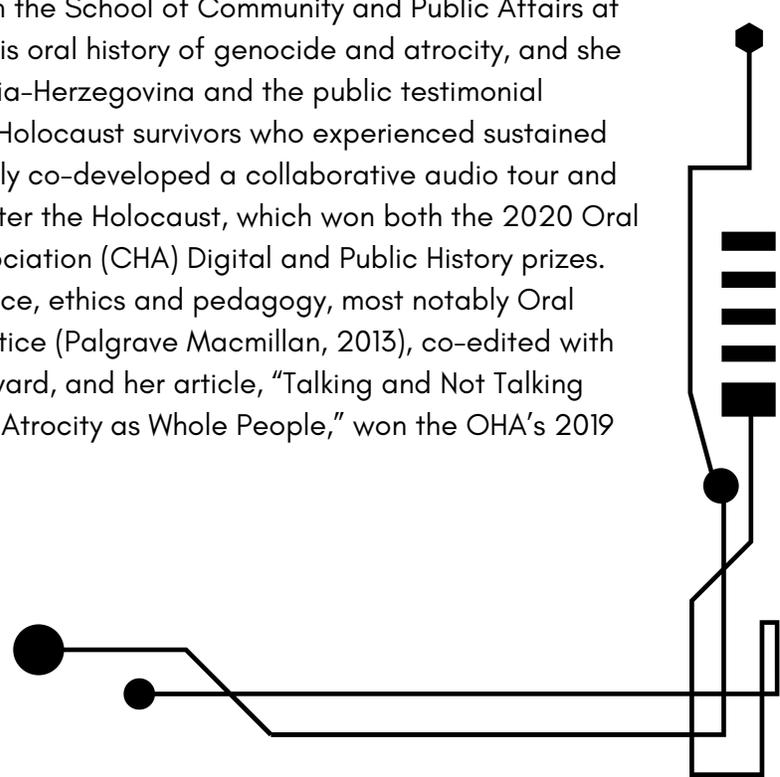
EXTENDED PROGRAM

07. Making A Case for the Humans: The Ethics and Politics of AI in Oral History (Roundtable)

Bio: Crystal Mun-hye Baik (she/her) is Associate Professor of Gender and Sexuality Studies at the University of California, Riverside, and centers anticolonial feminist approaches in her memory and oral history work. She is the author of *Reencounters: On the Korean War and Diasporic Memory Critique* (Temple University Press, 2020), which explores the consequences of the Korean War through cultural forms including oral history. She is a co-editor of the *Detours: A Decolonial Guide to Korea* (Duke University Press - Detours Series), and is also working on two book-length projects, including a creative non-fiction work titled *The Grief Archive*. Professor Baik is a founding member of the Ending the Korean War Teaching Teaching Collective and a co-editor of the Critical Militarization Studies book series at the University of Michigan Press.

Bio: Doug Boyd directs the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky Libraries. Boyd envisioned, designed, and implemented the open-source and free Oral History Metadata Synchronizer (OHMS), which synchronizes text with audio and video online. Boyd is the co-editor (with Mary Larson) of the book *Oral History and Digital Humanities: Voice, Access, and Engagement* published by Palgrave MacMillan in 2014, and he is the author of the book *Crawfish Bottom: Recovering a Lost Kentucky Community* published by the University Press of Kentucky. Boyd served as president of the Oral History Association in the United States in 2016-2017 and conducted research in Australia as a Fulbright Scholar in 2019. Boyd managed the Oral History in the Digital Age initiative, authors the blog "Digital Omnium," produces and hosts "The Wisdom Project" podcast, and has authored numerous articles pertaining to oral history, archives, and digital technologies.

Bio: Anna Sheftel is Principal and Associate Professor in the School of Community and Public Affairs at Concordia University in Montreal. Her field of expertise is oral history of genocide and atrocity, and she has done research projects on wartime memory in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the public testimonial practices of Holocaust survivors in Montreal, as well as Holocaust survivors who experienced sustained socioeconomic inequality after immigration. She recently co-developed a collaborative audio tour and website, *Refugee Boulevard: Making Montreal Home After the Holocaust*, which won both the 2020 Oral History Association (OHA) and Canadian Historical Association (CHA) Digital and Public History prizes. She has also published extensively on oral history practice, ethics and pedagogy, most notably *Oral History Off the Record: Toward an Ethnography of Practice* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), co-edited with Stacey Zembrzycki, which won the OHA's 2014 Book Award, and her article, "Talking and Not Talking about Violence: Challenges in Interviewing Survivors of Atrocity as Whole People," won the OHA's 2019 Article Award.



EXTENDED PROGRAM

07. Making A Case for the Humans: The Ethics and Politics of AI in Oral History (Roundtable)

Bio: Graham Smith is a Professor of Oral History at Newcastle University. After studying oral history at Essex, Smith returned to Dundee, Scotland, where the first affordable home computers were being made. The ZX81 and Spectrum, manufactured in the city by Timex, were readily available and very cheap if one knew who to ask. The consoles drove the gendering of computer games with Dundee at its centre, from Lemmings to Grand Theft Auto. It was during this time that Smith founded the “Dundee Oral History Project” with a group of unemployed friends. He then worked as an oral history researcher at Essex (1,000 Families) at Sheffield (‘Ukrainians in Britain’) at Glasgow (an oral history of primary care physicians) – all on precarious contracts. He was appointed as lecturer in oral history in the medical faculty at Sheffield before becoming a lecturer at Royal Holloway, University of London, developing a new public history programme and coordinating oral history-funded projects (including within the Changing Families, Changing Food research programme). Smith has been at Newcastle since 2017 where he leads the Collective – a mix of community and university oral historians who aim to produce co-created oral histories that cross disciplinary boundaries. Together they work locally in some of the most deprived areas of the UK on food, agriculture, mutual aid, deindustrialisation, and health histories. They also work with communities internationally on environmental oral histories in India, Vietnam, and Bangladesh. Smith continues to be an active trade unionist and has held elected positions in three major unions. He no longer plays computer games

Bio: Katrina Srigley (she/her) lives and works on lands protected by the Robinson Huron Treaty of 1850. She is a Professor of History at Nipissing University, co-editor of the award-winning collection *Beyond Women’s Words: Feminisms and the Practices of Oral History* (Routledge 2018) and author of the award-winning monograph *Breadwinning Daughters* (U of T 2010). Her current research, developed in partnership with Nipissing First Nation (NFN), examines the history of Nbisiing Nishinaabeg territory through Nishinaabeg ways of knowing, recording, and sharing the past. Dr. Srigley is currently co-authoring a book with Glenna Beaucage (NFN) titled *Gaa Bi Kidwaad Maa Nbisiing/The Stories of Nbisiing*. Anna Sheftel is Principal and Associate Professor in the School of Community and Public Affairs at Concordia University in Montreal. Her field of expertise is oral history of genocide and atrocity, and she has done research projects on wartime memory in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the public testimonial practices of Holocaust survivors in Montreal, as well as Holocaust survivors who experienced sustained socioeconomic inequality after immigration. She recently co-developed a collaborative audio tour and website, *Refugee Boulevard: Making Montreal Home After the Holocaust*, which won both the 2020 Oral History Association (OHA) and Canadian Historical Association (CHA) Digital and Public History prizes. She has also published extensively on oral history practice, ethics and pedagogy, most notably *Oral History Off the Record: Toward an Ethnography of Practice* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), co-edited with Stacey Zembrzycki, which won the OHA’s 2014 Book Award, and her article, “Talking and Not Talking about Violence: Challenges in Interviewing Survivors of Atrocity as Whole People,” won the OHA’s 2019 Article Award.

Bio: Stacey Zembrzycki (she/her) is an award-winning oral and public historian of ethnic, immigrant, and refugee experiences. She is the author of *According to Baba: A Collaborative Oral History of Sudbury’s Ukrainian Community* (UBC Press, 2014) and its accompany website, and is co-editor of *Oral History Off the Record: Toward an Ethnography of Practice* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) and *Beyond Women’s Words: Feminisms and the Practices of Oral History in the Twenty-First Century* (Routledge, 2018). Most recently, she directed the SSHRC-funded multi-media project *Refugee Boulevard: Making Montreal Home After the Holocaust*.

EXTENDED PROGRAM

THURSDAY, JULY 18TH

2PM-4PM (CDT)

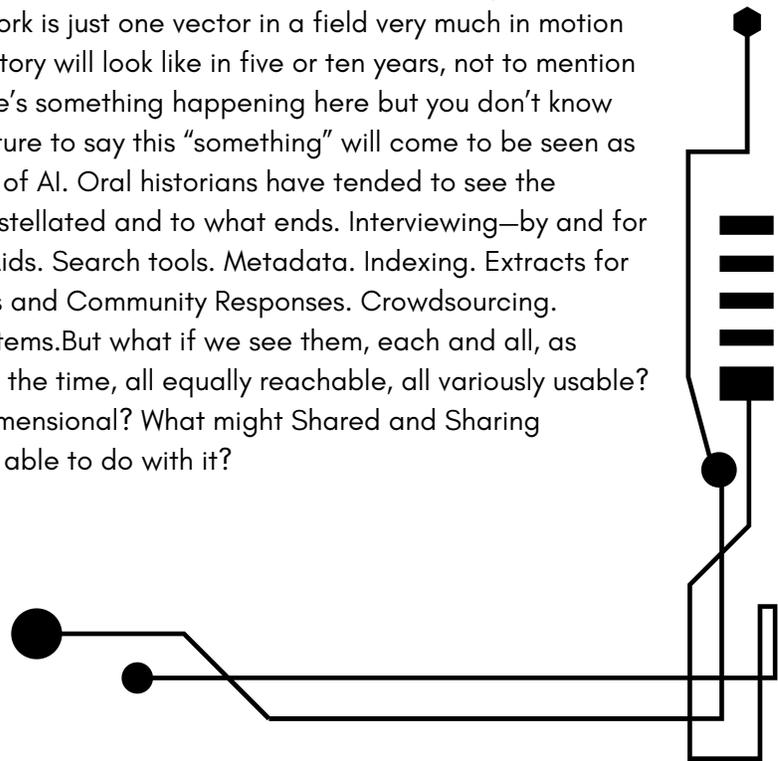
08. AI's Impact on Oral History Indexing (Panel)

Chair: Steven Sielaff

Emerging Directions in Interview Processing and Collection Management: AI Auto-Transcription, Timecode Indexing, and "Multi-Dimensional Content" in Oral History

Michael Frisch

Abstract: The last few years have seen seismic changes in the landscape of oral history, earthquakes throwing off two AI aftershocks shaping my recent work. Automated transcription can produce an initial transcription with up to 80-90% accuracy. And it provides embedded time-codes precisely connecting transcript and recording. But this presents a paradox: the more accurate the auto-transcribing, the more it requires aggressive correcting and formatting, filled as it is with every speaker utterance, every speaker change broken out, and time codes everywhere: editorial intervention is needed to make transcription--a translation from voice to text--readable and browsable. Discussions of AI often reduce to unhelpful either/ors --John Henry vs. the Steam Drill, so to speak. In the real world of oral history practice, especially archivally, the real action involves hybrid approaches-- leveraging AI so that human/historian judgements can, together, producing value beyond what either can alone. My recent AI hybrid project work suggests an emergent new conception of "multi-dimensional content" in oral history--the same oral history interview engageable through different iterations, lenses, or dimension. With recent technology platforms, this is infinitely easier than producing a one-dimensional transcript just a few years ago. In one smooth processual arc, we can involve partner communities in producing a sequence of media-linked text iterations-- from a corrected, formatted transcript to concise digests of 10-15-minute units, all in the speaker's words, to usable highlight digests and verbatim transcript clips with in/out points. All iterations are time-code linked to each other and the recording; each can be keyworded to control-vocabulary thesauri easily reached by searches. Each iteration is a "view" of the one interview thing--- each with distinct value and uses, each saved, each always accessible, nothing "left on the cutting room floor." Our work is just one vector in a field very much in motion across many platforms and tools. Who knows what oral history will look like in five or ten years, not to mention fifty? We're all in the boat with Bob Dylan: "You know there's something happening here but you don't know what it is, do you Mr. Jones?" I don't know either, but I venture to say this "something" will come to be seen as a paradigm shift broader than the transformative impacts of AI. Oral historians have tended to see the building-blocks of the field as free-standing, however constellated and to what ends. Interviewing--by and for whom. Recordings. Transcriptions. Catalogs and Finding Aids. Search tools. Metadata. Indexing. Extracts for publication, research, or documentary production. Exhibits and Community Responses. Crowdsourcing. Searchable on-line Databases, Content Management Systems. But what if we see them, each and all, as facets or views of the same oral history thing--all there, all the time, all equally reachable, all variously usable? What if oral history content itself is reimagined as multi-dimensional? What might Shared and Sharing Authority in oral history look like then, and what will we be able to do with it?



EXTENDED PROGRAM

08. AI's Impact on Oral History Indexing (Panel)

Bio: Author of *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (1990) and *Portraits in Steel* (1993), Michael Frisch was for many years Professor of American Studies and History at the University at Buffalo, SUNY. He is also former President of both the American Studies Association and the Oral History Association. In recent years, through his consulting office, The Randforce Associates, LLC, he has focused on new tools and approaches for oral history multimedia content management and indexing—ways of “putting oral history to use(s)”

Oral History Indexing through the Lens of AI

Douglas Lambert

Abstract: Oral history indexing (OHI) is a set of practices for audio/video (A/V) content management that emerged with computer-based media in the 1990's and 2000's. Through thematically defined passages within recordings, OHI provides electronically linked, timecode-level access to online oral history interviews and collections. Several institutions have developed multimedia OHI interfaces that, like an indexed book, allow cross-referencing to specific points within media documents, describe content through natural language, and promote browsing and exploring modes rather than literal text searching. In a recent article in the *Oral History Review* (OHR), I described the OHI work of seven pioneering institutions through case studies, highlighting a range of methodological approaches and system attributes, and examining the OHI phenomena through the lens of oral history best practices. Just months after coining “OHI” in the OHR, the concept already requires qualification: The OHI I talked about is “Classic OHI,” where software tools were involved, but 100% of the segmenting by timecode and text markup was manual work, performed by human indexers. The next 25-year phase of OHI will undoubtedly incorporate forms of AI to enhance the practice. It is unclear the extent to which new AI-driven forms of indexing might incorporate Classic OHI. The value of automatic speech recognition (ASR) transcriptions in OHI was already apparent to Zack Ellis (TheirStory) and I in 2020, when we included ASR transcripts in the TIM software and began to use ASR outputs as the first drafts for creating indexes in OHMS and Aviary. ASR transcripts have been improving in accuracy in recent years, and the inclusion of timecodes affiliated with every word is particularly significant: it means that ASR synchronized transcripts are essentially free, and likely be preferred over other, more labor-intensive indexing processes. More recently, the power and programmability of ChatGPT has arisen and introduced additional access means to oral history. This brings important questions for OHI practitioners: Can AI learn from our OHI enterprise? What might the handshake between humans and the machines look like? How do we communicate the elements of our practice for optimal benefit and gain from technology? In this talk I will reflect Classic OHI as a remarkable technical and aesthetic achievement for better processing, presentation and access of A/V content, comprising a depth and quality unparalleled in other fields. Institutions like The Shoah Foundation, The Randforce Associates and University of Kentucky embraced its robust architecture: comprehensive collection indexing, timecode access created carefully and diligently by hand and ear, precise content mapping through summaries, application of natural language and controlled vocabularies, and interfaces optimized for both indexers and users. Weaved into that high quality, high impact work are models, templates, database and metadata structures, interface concepts, and conceptions of multilayered users and access points. I will highlight these and other elements, emphasizing ways in which oral historians might refine and enhance the remarkable standing body of OHI work—one that is unique to oral history—with new tools.

EXTENDED PROGRAM

08. AI's Impact on Oral History Indexing (Panel)

Bio: Douglas Lambert is cross-disciplinary research scientist specializing in qualitative methods for recorded interviews applied to both the social and natural sciences. A thought leader in direct-to-timecode thematic indexing for long-form audio/video recordings, he has helped advance new methods for oral history content management since 2003 with Michael Frisch at the Randforce Associates, LLC, in Buffalo, NY. He later applied the same qualitative analysis approaches to the field of environmental engineering for his 2018 dissertation, studying the problem of groundwater contamination based on stakeholder interviews. In 2018-20, as a postdoc at the University of Luxembourg, he co-developed the TIM software (Timecode Indexing Module), a unique text-and-timecode editing interface for segmenting and adding metadata to multimedia A/V indexing displays, including for OHMS (Oral History Metadata Synchronizer) and using other indexing formats in the Aviary Platform. Lambert is currently Project Manager and environmental engineering consultant for a multidisciplinary urban water quality study at the University at Buffalo, SUNY. He continues to engage in the ever-changing theory and practice of Oral History Indexing (OHI) in his spare time. OHI was the topic of his 2023 article in the Oral History Review, which inventoried institutional practices in that field from the 1990's through 2023.

Training AI through Oral History Workflow

Daniel McMullan

Abstract: Oral history practitioners play a pivotal role in instructing artificial intelligence (AI) with specialized insights tailored to the nuances of oral historical narratives. Within the realm of oral history, each digital file represents an invaluable opportunity to capture and safeguard the intricacies of local history, dialect, vernacular, customs, and community perspectives. Addressing concerns related to AI biases and objections is paramount, and a symbiotic feedback loop is proposed as an effective means to influence AI in providing accurate and culturally sensitive representations. The same AI tools employed to optimize oral history workflows can be leveraged to furnish structured and precise data for subsequent AI consumption. Throughout the natural workflow encompassing transcription, indexing, content management, preservation, and website updates, each manual adjustment serves as an opportunity to seamlessly generate rulesets for AI integration. This approach facilitates a harmonious coexistence between human intervention and AI efficiency. The objective of this roundtable discussion is to build upon the foundational work of distinguished oral history experts, Michael Frisch and Douglas Lambert, as presented in their disruptive 2012 paper, "Mapping Approaches to Oral History Content Management in the Digital Age" The paper, though forward-thinking, faced limitations in data management due to the absence of AI assistance in 2012. With the recent availability of the OpenAI Assistants API for commercial-grade use, the prospect of substantial and dynamic mapping of data points has become attainable. Recognizing that public access to oral history collections depends on a fluid, flexible, responsive, and on-demand approach, traditional cataloging and indexing methods can be enhanced. The proposed multi-dimensional, multi-field approach to data mapping, as outlined in the 2012 paper, easily created with the aid of these AI technologies. These technologies can seamlessly present audio/video or text transcriptions, interchangeably, in part or in whole, while suggesting relationships with segments from other interviews. Such flexibility of data sets the stage for developing many diverse projects. By establishing a key-value pair format in common with dynamic datasets for training the AI, the datasets have additional benefits for the development of local website projects through a common API. This same formatting should be used for secure storage on a peer-to-peer distributed blockchain, guaranteeing the immutability of data. It is crucial to emphasize that this proposal for discussion harnesses AI for data matching and nearest neighbor-matching processes, with AI predictive processing generating data mapping suggestions for human approval only. Use of AI as a supportive tool for oral history practitioners will enhance user-friendly website access to oral history recordings and transcripts on-demand.

EXTENDED PROGRAM

08. AI's Impact on Oral History Indexing (Panel)

Bio: Daniel McMullan Computer Programmer 45+ years. Worked with 100+ small companies building custom web-based data-handling tools. 2 years active participant in Blockchain and Web3 communities. 3rd place blockchain hackathon winner in 2022. Several projects with AI integration. Oversees collection 400+ Oral History Interviews.

EXTENDED PROGRAM

FRIDAY, JULY 19TH

10AM-12PM (CDT)

09. *Designing Switchboard: An Open-Source Chatbot That Collects Trans* Oral Histories* (Roundtable)

Chair: Molly Merryman

Participants: Alejandro T. Acierto, Ava Aviva Avnisan, Molly Merryman, Dana Middleton, & Dan Paz

Abstract: This roundtable will reveal the initial stages of research focused on the development of an open-source tool to help gather and share oral histories of currently and formerly incarcerated transgender and gender diverse people. Our overall project: The Switchboard: an Open-Source Chatbot That Collects Trans* Oral Histories will deploy human-centered design and participatory research to create an open-source, customizable AI chatbot accessible via telephone whose purpose is to aid in the collection of oral histories among the most marginalized and vulnerable members of society. Project members will discuss the varied theoretical and methodological approaches we bring to this inquiry, as well as the unique technical, scholarly, ethical and other challenges faced in initial project design. As transgender and LGBTQ-identifying scholars, activists, artists, creative technologists, and oral historians, we are united by the spirit of mutual-aid and LGBTQ+ solidarity, and in a shared commitment to improving the lives and amplifying the voices of currently and formerly incarcerated transgender and gender diverse folks. Our preliminary research suggests that the extreme isolation faced by incarcerated transgender and gender diverse people could meaningfully be alleviated by sharing their stories and hearing others', and that recent advances in generative AI technologies, harnessed responsibly, could help address the challenges of scale and access that oral historians are confronted with in their work. Numerous studies document the challenges that transgender and gender diverse prisoners face in overcoming isolation, both within and beyond prison. Within LGBTQ+ communities, oral histories and other storytelling models such as coming out stories have been and continue to be vital to our survival and resilience; we believe that giving incarcerated trans and gender diverse people the opportunity to share and hear each other's stories will meaningfully alleviate their isolation. In this roundtable, project team members will also discuss our approach, in which generative AI augments and extends oral historians' capacities, rather than replaces oral historians altogether, and which envisions building connections, trust and consensus from prospective interview subjects in group settings, with the interviews themselves being conducted via telephone by the AI chatbot, thus significantly increasing the number of oral histories that can be collected per person hour compared to traditional oral history collection methods. We will further discuss how, by training the chatbot on domain-specific knowledge including but not limited to, in our test case, prison studies, LGBTQ+ oral histories, transgender studies, gender and sexuality studies, and feminist studies, we hope to create an engaging experience for the interview subject that feels more like a conversation and less like a response to a rote list of predetermined questions. In addition to helping address the problem of scale, our approach also reduces access barriers by empowering interview subjects to share their stories at whatever time is convenient for them, requiring nothing more of them than access to a telephone (an approach especially important for incarcerated folks).

EXTENDED PROGRAM

09. *Designing Switchboard: An Open-Source Chatbot That Collects Trans* Oral Histories* (Roundtable)

Bio: Molly Merryman, Ph.D. (she/they) is an associate professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at Kent State University and is the research director for Queer Britain, the UK's national LGBTQ+ museum. Her doctoral training was based in Cultural Studies and gender studies. She co-founded the interdisciplinary LGBTQ Studies minor program at Kent State University and led the creation of Ohio's first Transgender Studies course. She established the university's Victimology concentration and has taught courses on corrections and restorative justice. She has been a leading voice in filmic sociology, co-creating the film stream of the International Visual Sociology Association and working with the Ethnografilm Paris festival since its inception. Her pioneering work in digitally-based oral-history work, documentaries and queer studies led to her appointment as research director for the Queer Britain museum, where she established (and still leads) the Virtually Queer oral history collection. Her documentaries and exhibition work has been featured in museums and at universities in the US and abroad.

Bio: Alejandro T. Acierto (he/him) is an artist, musician, and curator whose projects are informed by legacies of colonialism found within human relationships to technology and material cultures. Often taking shape within and across expanded forms of documentary, new media, creative scholarship, and sound, his works have been shown internationally at the Havana Biennial in Matanzas, Cuba, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (San Francisco), ISSUE (NYC), Radialsystem (Berlin), and MCA Chicago, among others. He manages the Archive of Constraint, a multimodal archive of photographic media depicting the Philippines during US occupation and the violences inherent within colonial incarceration at the turn of the twentieth century. He has also published works with Parse Journal, Dilettante Army, Journal for Asian Diasporic Cultures in the Americas, and Resonance: The Journal of Sound and Culture. He was an inaugural Artist in Residence for Critical Race Studies at Michigan State University, Core Faculty Fellow at Warren Wilson College in the MA for Critical Craft Studies, and is currently Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Arts and Performance at Arizona State University, New College on the occupied territories of the Akimel O'odham and Piipaash peoples.

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EXTENDED PROGRAM

09. *Designing Switchboard: An Open-Source Chatbot That Collects Trans* Oral Histories* (Roundtable)

Bio: Ava Aviva Avnisan (shey/they) is an interdisciplinary artist and creative technologist whose work is situated at the intersection of image, text and code. Using a host of emerging technologies including 3D scanning, augmented reality and virtual reality, she creates applications for mobile devices, interactive installations and technologically mediated performances that seek to subvert dominant narratives through embodied encounters with language. Ava's expertise in developing bespoke new media tools within a human-centered design and participatory research framework was developed through both her creative practice and her teaching practice. From 2017-19, Ava served as Artist-in-Residence at University of Washington Bothell, where she played a lead faculty role in the Interactive Media Design program. While there, she served as project lead on unARchived, an open-source, human-centered design project that uses augmented reality to empower marginalized local communities to share the underrepresented stories of their neighborhoods. From 2019-2023, she served as Assistant Professor of Emerging Media and Technology and Media & Journalism & Media Studies at Kent State University, where she played a lead faculty role in the Design Innovation Initiative, including regularly teaching project-based human-centered design courses. Ava's current role is Assistant Professor of Art & Design and Journalism & Media Studies at San Diego State University.

Bio: Dana Middleton (they/them) is an organizer, educator and writer focused on the intersections of queer and trans liberation and prison abolition. Dana has organized with currently and formerly incarcerated queer, trans and gender nonconforming people since 2016 and has sponsored Washington Department of Corrections facility programming as a volunteer since 2019. They are a co-founder and lead sponsor of the Gender Identity Awareness program and Gender Identity workshop series at the Washington Corrections Center for Women, which include a transgender support group and a certificate program aimed at improving social conditions for incarcerated trans and gender nonconforming people through peer education. They are also a lead sponsor of the Alliances/Unity LGBTQ2S+ program at Monroe Correctional Complex. In addition to having long-term working relationships with incarcerated trans people, dana brings a specialized knowledge of navigating prison bureaucracy and negotiating guest access to facility spaces. They are currently a lecturer in the school of Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences at the University of Washington Bothell.

Bio: Dan Paz (they/them) is an interdisciplinary artist working in lens-based practices across still-to-moving images. Their research is deeply concerned with the labor and lifecycle of images, spanning distribution and circulation, intellectual property, and the historical frames that encode information as metadata. Through material and archival research, as well as transnational projects, Paz examines the connections between Latine (and global south) diasporic relationships to the US, alongside the converging realms of capture, architecture, and abolition. Paz's work has been featured in internationally and nationally with recent solo exhibitions at Michigan State University and Entre Gallery in Vienna, Austria; and group exhibitions at Hayward Gallery London, UK; the 12th Havana Biennial, Havana, CU; The New Media lab and The Latinx Project at NYU, NYC; The Jacob Lawrence Gallery, Seattle, WA; Holding Contemporary, Portland, OR; and Stoveworks, Chattanooga, TN to name a few. With twenty-years of experience in the arts, education, and public engagement, Dan brings their extensive knowledge in production, installation, and exhibition, as well as skills in documentary photography, video, and filmmaking. Dan was a 2023 Public Scholars for the Future Fellow and is currently a Ph.D candidate in Cultural Studies and Science and Technology Studies at University of California Davis

EXTENDED PROGRAM

FRIDAY, JULY 19TH
2PM-4PM (CDT)

10. *Old Ways, New Ways: Archiving the Heirloom Gardens Project Using AI* (Roundtable)

Chair: Tessa Lowinske Desmond

Participants: Hassan Adeeb, Tessa Lowinske Desmond, & LuAnna Nesbitt

Abstract: The Heirloom Gardens Project collected over seventy oral histories during the summer and fall of 2023. We began processing those interviews for the archive in the midst of an explosion of interest in and consternation over AI. This paper will discuss the various tools that we tried as we established our workflow for processing and archiving the interviews. We have found utility in AI for help with transcription and cleaning up audio files but, worryingly, those tools have also made some crucial errors. Our workflow has evolved to use AI where it's helpful but also ensure checks on the tools to ensure accuracy and integrity of our audio and print files. In this paper, we will detail our process and share insights that we've learned. During the process of archiving the over seventy oral histories, we found that the use of AI could assist us with the interview editing process. Although helpful in many ways, such as editing out background noises, enhancing voices, and speeding the entire editing process up, AI has created difficulties for us as well, specifically within the video editing program Descript and its transcribing process. Within this platform, AI often jumbles voices in instances when the narrator is speaking quickly or slowly. Likewise, we have discovered that it struggles to understand accents and has an extremely difficult time transcribing other languages, often getting the words wrong or not transcribing them at all. We have found the use of AI in our oral history transcription to be beneficial in certain instances, while still ensuring its work is checked for precision. We will describe our processes and explore what we have learned while working with Descript's AI transcription software. Adobe Podcast is a simple tool to enhance the quality of audio. Essentially it removes background noises and makes the audio sound better. In this paper, we will discuss how we've used Adobe Podcast to improve audio quality of interviews.

Bio: Tessa Lowinske Desmond is a Research Specialist in the School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University where she directs The Seed Farm and co-leads the Heirloom Gardens Oral History Project and the Princeton Food Project. Desmond's research involved community agriculture, food politics, and community-engaged research methods. She also serves as a founding member of the Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance and serves on the boards of Native Roots Farm Foundation and the Northeast Organic Farming Alliance of New Jersey.

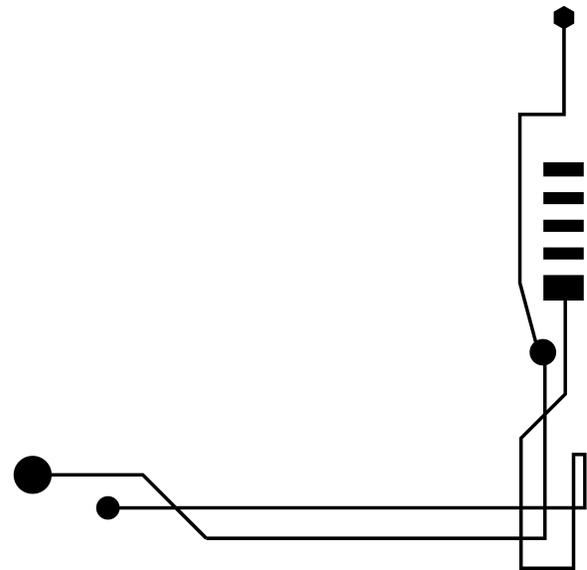
Bio: Hassan Adeeb is a creative professional with expertise in desktop publishing using Adobe InDesign, as well as film editing skills utilizing Adobe Premiere and Adobe Audition. Adeeb is a retired social studies teacher who he helped establish the Black Studies curriculum in his district and developed the website www.aahistoryk12.com which features resources on teaching African and African American History. Since retiring, Adeeb has refreshed skills from film school to serve as project director for the "More than Farming" documentary series and to assist HGP in editing audio and video.



EXTENDED PROGRAM

10. *Old Ways, New Ways: Archiving the Heirloom Gardens Project Using AI* (Roundtable)

Bio: LuAnna Nesbitt is a recent graduate from the University of Vermont's Food Systems Masters program. She currently serves as a Project Manager for the Heirloom Gardens Oral History Project. Nesbitt's past research involved regional seed systems, community development, agroecology, oral history, and participatory-action research methods. She is an agrarian, community organizer, and a member of the Appalachian Seed Growers Collective.



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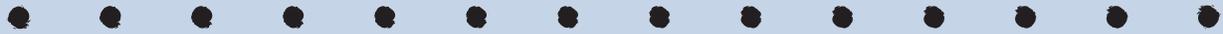
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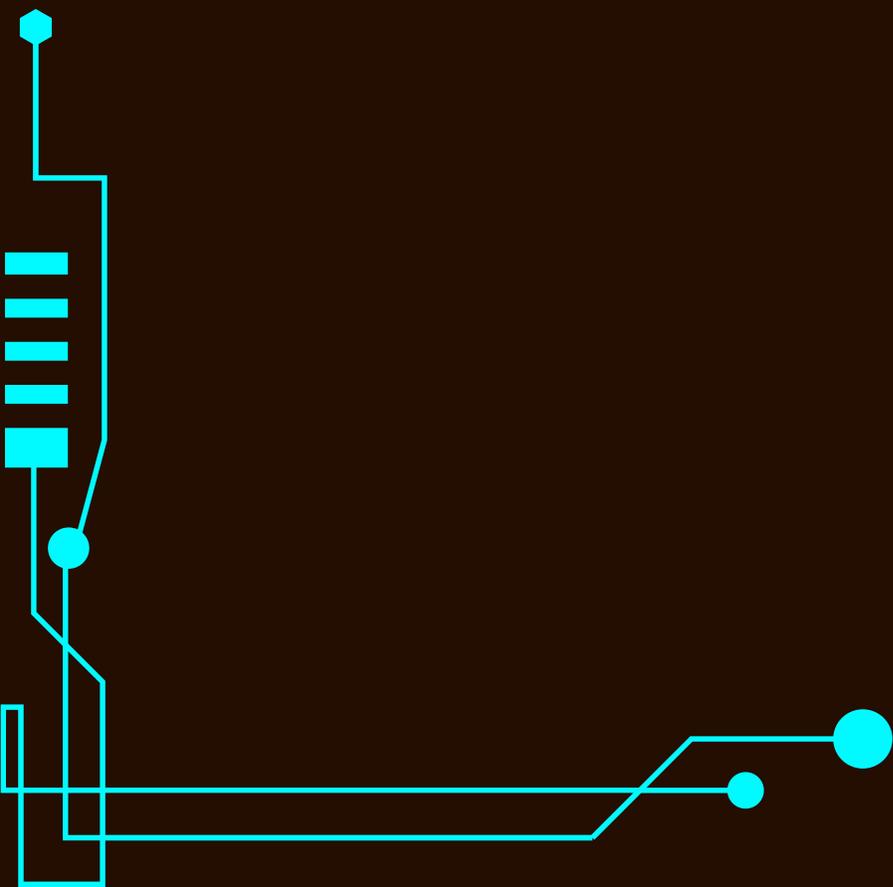
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