ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION newsletter

Volume IV, Number 2, April, 1970

SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARCHIVISTS CREATES AN ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

A committee to consider the problems of oral history that are of a special concern to archivists has been established by the Society of American Archivists. A principal effort of this Committee will be to work with the Oral History Association in emphasizing to oral historians the importance of certain phases of their work that become of critical importance when the products of oral history pass into archival hands for preservation and use.

Very often the oral historian and the archivist may be closely associated in the same institution, and, in fact, one principle that the Committee is studying is the conduct of oral history as a normal archival function. Among the elements that are particularly important to archivists are the initial agreement that is made with the interviewee as to the ownership and use of the tape and transcripts, the archival problems of the preservation and availability of tape and transcripts after they are completed, the access by researchers to the content of interviews and the limitations that may be placed on it, the extent to which duplicates of transcripts should be made available to other institutions, and the problems of libel connected with the use of tape or transcripts. The Committee will probably develop recommendations about the training of archivists to include emphasis upon these points.

The Committee contemplates a two year program, including a workshop at the Society of American Archivists meeting at Washington and the formulation of recommendations during the following year.

The membership of the Committee includes some persons who are members of both the Society of American Archivists and the Oral History Association. Committee members are: Mrs. Willa Baum, Director of the Regional Oral History Office at the University of California at Berkeley; Professor Seymour Connor, Department of History, Texas Tech College, Lubbock, Texas; David Larson of the Ohio State Historical Society; John Stewart, Acting Director of the John F. Kennedy Library; and Philip C. Brooks, Director of the Harry S. Truman Library, Chairman. Herman Kahn, Assistant Librarian for Archives and Manuscripts at Yale University and President of the Society of American Archivists, strongly endorses the importance of this Committee. Dr. Philip P. Mason, Director of the Labor History Archives at Wayne State University, who will be president of the Society next year, is actively engaged in oral history and is serving as a consultant to the Committee.

INTERVIEWS WITH ARTISTS NOW EXCEED 600

The **Journal of the Archives of American Art,** Volume 9, Number 1 (January, 1970) features as its lead article "A Preliminary Guide To Tape-Recorded Interviews—II," a description of 65 interviews recorded by the Archives of American Art Oral History Program. Editor Garnett McCoy notes in his introduction that "Most of the persons interviewed in the following list are painters and sculptors, and the majority of these were over 50 years old at the time of the interview. Three were represented in the Armory Show. The long experience and careers of many of the interviewees in this list, therefore, insures a richness of recollection covering both the 1930's and the immediate post World War II years—two periods especially interesting to contemporary scholarship. Three subjects in particular are dealt with in detail—the government arts projects sponsored by the New Deal; abstract art in the 1930's and the organization American Abstract Artists; and the movement after 1945 away from social realism and American Scene painting which dominated American art in the Depression."

The January, 1968, issue of the **Archives of American Art Journal** described 78 oral history interviews transcribed and preserved by the Archives. This project is now more than ten years old, and it has recorded over 600 interviews.

PRESBYTERIANS START AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Presbyterian Historical Society has recently inaugurated an oral history program designed to capture on tape the reflections and views of leading Presbyterian personalities concerning issues related to the Church. Most interviews in the early stages of this program will be conducted by members of the Society's staff because of convenient location and access to research materials in preparing for interviews. As the program expands, however, it is anticipated that others familiar with the careers of the persons selected for interviewing will participate.

The Society welcomes suggestions about potential interviewees who should be included in its master list. The Society has headquarters at 425 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19147

OHA COUNCIL HOLDS MID-WINTER MEETING AT ASILOMAR

The Council of the Oral History Association met on February 20, 1970, at the Asilomar Conference Center in California—the site of the 5th National Colloquium on Oral History this coming November 13 to 16. Unfortunately OHA President Oscar Winther of Indiana University was unable to attend because of illness, and Vice-President Peter Olch presided in his absence. 10 Council members and invited guests were present, and the agenda numbered 14 topics.

During this meeting "It was moved, seconded and passed unanimously that the OHA pay travel expenses to the Mid-year Council Meeting for all members of the Council and those individuals invited by the Council. One half payment will be made after the annual Colloquium, on approval of the Council. It was further moved, seconded and passed unanimously that effective November 1970, the travel expenses of all Council members will be paid to the annual Colloquia after their second year in office."

Another item, from the minutes, as recorded by OHA Secretary Alice M. Hoffman, notes: "Knox Mellon moved that no expenses should be paid for Council members except for specific events approved by the Council. Charles Crawford seconded. Passed unanimously."

Peter Olch passed on to the Council Jerome Stone's suggested addenda to the Goals and Guidelines Committee, and the Council decided to share two of these items with the OHA membership via this newsletter: (1) "As deemed advisable, collect information from OHA members and others about their present equipment, techniques for use thereof, advice pertaining thereto, requests for information about matters in this area, complaints, & etc."; (2) "Collect information from equipment manufacturers about new equipment, techniques, advice & etc. (equipment being a portmanteau term covering all technical materials for oral history); distribution, after evaluation, of this information to the membership."

Financial reports and other matters pertaining to OHA business were reviewed and discussed.

Plans for the Asilomar Colloquium in November were also reviewed. Already scheduled to appear on the program are Professor T. Harry Williams of Louisiana State University, author of the prize-winning recent biography of Huey Long, and Paul Bullock of UCLA's Black Studies program and author of **Watts: The Aftermath,** a book based largely on oral history interviews.

1970 NOMINATING COMMITTEE IS APPOINTED

The Executive Committee of the OHA announces the formation of a 3-member Nominating Committee to nominate candidates for election at the forthcoming Asilomar conference in November. Chairman of this committee is John Stewart, Acting Head of the John F. Kennedy Library, 380 Trapelo Road, Waltham, Mass. 02154. The other two members are Mrs. Willa Baum (Regional Oral History Office, 486 General Library, University of California, Berkeley 94720), and William Wyatt (Center for Western Studies, Augustana College, Sioux Falls, South Dakota 57105).

Section 7 of the By-Laws of the Association states: "There shall be a nominating committee composed of three members appointed by the Executive Council at least sixty days prior to the date of the election. This committee shall consult the membership for suggestions, shall make nominations for officers and members of the council, and shall promulgate its report at the beginning of the annual meeting at which the election is to take place. Other nominations may also be made from the floor by any member of the Association . . . Only individual members shall be eligible for election as officers or members of the council."

Each member of the Nominating Committee would be happy to hear suggestions from other OHA members.

NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION RECORDS INTERVIEWS ABOUT ITS POPE-LEIGHEY HOUSE

A house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and rescued from the path of Route 66 in Falls Church, Virginia, is having its history recorded by interviewers from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington, D.C. The Pope-Leighey House, relocated in 1964 and now preserved by the National Trust, on the grounds of its Woodlawn Plantation in Virginia, was designed and built between 1939 and 1941, and many of the prominent people associated with this property were willing to tell about it in oral history interviews. Those already interviewed include Mrs. Marjorie F. Leighey, the second owner of the house and donor of it to the National Trust; architect Gordon Chadwick of New York City who supervised construction and lived with the Pope family during that period; Loren Pope, who commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright to design the house; Howard C. Rickert, the master craftsman who built the house and later took it apart, moved it, and rebuilt it at the Woodlawn Plantation; Donald Myer, an architect in the National Capital Region of the National Park Service who supervised the moving and rebuilding of the house; Joseph Watterson, Chief of the Division of Historic Architecture of the National Park Service who assisted in selecting the new site as representative of the American Institute of Architects; and Robert R. Garvey and Mrs. Terry B. Morton of the National Trust staff who participated in the project. The story of the Pope-Leighey House is scheduled to appear as a series of essays in a volume published by the National Trust, 748 Jackson Place, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETIES: SUPPORT FOR ORAL HISTORY IN OHIO & SOUTH DAKOTA

In Ohio the State Emergency Board has granted $5,000 of a proposed $20,000 to the Ohio Historical Society for preserving and cataloging the papers of forty-two Ohio governors, senators, and congressmen now in the Society's custody, but some of this sum will be used to supplement the Society's oral history program. The South Dakota legislature has partially funded a request from the South Dakota Historical Society for an oral history program, and Dr. Joseph Cash will administer the program starting on July 1, 1970. A cooperative venture with the University of South Dakota, the first objective of this project will be to collect, copy, and transcribe tapes of interviews already recorded with pioneers in South Dakota's history.

RECENT MEETINGS INCLUDE TALKS ABOUT ORAL HISTORY

The Annual Meeting of the Arkansas Historical Association, held this spring at Hot Springs, featured two talks about oral history. Paige E. Mulhollan of the University of Arkansas discussed "Oral History At The Lyndon B. Johnson Library," and Waddy Moore reviewed "Oral History At The State College of Arkansas." In early March a conference on "Historical And Bibliographical Methods In Library Research" at the University of Illinois featured a talk about "The Uses Of Oral History" by Thomas A. DePasquale, Director of the Oral History Program at Chicago State College. 125 teachers attended a February conference on "The Role Of Oral History In The Classroom" sponsored by the Department of History at St. Mary's University of San Antonio, Tex., and co-sponsored by the American Historical Association. Dr. Joe B. Frantz gave the keynote address about "The Oral History Project of The University of Texas."

ORAL HISTORY IN EUROPE: A NOTE FROM NORWAY

The Norsk Folkemuseum in Bygdoy, Norway, harbors an oral history collection, largely the autobiographies of retired workers and trade unionists.

WHO SHOULD BE INTERVIEWED?

Respondent-Selection Problems in Oral History Research

By Jon Fackler
Department of History, University of Vermont

Oral historians frequently discuss the techniques of their trade: the different methods of preparing and training interviewers, conducting the interviews, transcribing the reminiscences, and making the material available for research. There is, however, an important problem that has received less exposure than it deserves. In a very real sense it occurs prior to most other problems in this particular research process: deciding who should be interviewed.[1]

In some projects, of course, respondent-selection problems do not exist. Researchers interviewing a single individual, the few surviving members of a particular cultural group, the intimates of a certain public man, or the men responsible for a particular political decision seldom have to face the question of respondent-selection, for by virtue of the small numbers of people involved, they can often interview them all. But these projects are not typical of the kinds of work being done by many oral historians today. Often the number of people who thought they were intimates of an important public figure turn out to be several hundred rather than a handful. Studies of the members of some occupational groups offer a potential pool of thousands of interviewees. And the people remembering recent shattering events, like a great depression or the assassination of a president, number in the millions. The problem of deciding whom to interview is—or should be—very real in these cases.[2]

Some oral history researchers have hinted at the problem in one way or another. A few published reports contain some statement on how the interviewees in a given project were selected. For example, in discussing the United Auto Workers project in a 1964 article in *Labor History*, Jack Skeels listed the three criteria he used: "Interviewees were selected upon the basis of 1.) having played an important role in the development of automobile unionism, 2.) being recommended as being able to articulate their experience, and 3.) being available." With a few changes in wording, this statement probably describes the criteria most commonly used in the larger projects.

At Penn State, Alice Hoffman relies upon a special "steel workers advisory committee," composed of several district directors and of assistants to the presidents of all the locals, to recommend prime candidates for interviewing. In addition, she uses another time-honored technique: respondents often suggest others with something important to say.

Gould Colman at Cornell has used what is probably the most sophisticated approach to selecting interviewees. In his project dealing with decision-making among twenty farm families in New York State, he built a preliminary pool of respondents by asking county agents to suggest families on the basis of such criteria as the type of farming in which they were involved, how economically well off the family was, and the stage in the "family circle" that a particular family was in. Since this is a long-term project, another important factor was a family's willingness to stick with the project. For at least one variable, the type of farming operation, Colman tried to represent dairy farmers selected for study in roughly the same proportion to their numerical strength in the state.[3]

The fact remains, however, that despite some scattered suggestions on ways of selecting interviewees, most of the published research reports give few clues about other ways in which the job might be done.

Lack of systematic attention to the problem is not a result of disinterest. There is, in fact, fairly widespread interest. For example, at the third annual colloquia of the Oral History Association, at least four participants in the open session on "Oral History Projects" mentioned the problem of respondent-selection in one form or another. John Stewart talked about the over-representation on some topics in the completed interviews for the John F. Kennedy Project. Robert Eckert mentioned that the Air Force follows the chain of command in eliciting information for its project. Peter Olch explained one of the problems he has had in selecting interviewees: involvement by superiors in the selection process. And John Stewart asked Joseph Cash, who was describing interviews in his American Indian Research Project, "How do you select the 'just plain Indians' who are to be interviewed?"[4]

There is some professional tension over this question. This is so because the problem of deciding who to interview is part of a larger question of elite vs. non-elite (or of chief vs. "just plain" Indian) orientation in historical study. At one end of this question stand the researchers whose main interest lies in "the great, persons who knew the great, and those who have participated in great events . . . ." At the other end are those who call for much more attention to be paid to those who are less-than-great, to the typical people, to the "common men" of a given era. In one form, this non-elite approach results in a call by a scholar like Staughton Lynd to practice "guerrilla history." Guerrilla history, or history from the bottom up, Lynd argues, is needed to provide a usable past for activists among the rank-and-file; to help supply history denied to members of certain groups in the standard versions; and to provide a basis for writing the non-official histories of corporations, labor unions, social movements, or whole cultures. In another form, this approach involves a clear warning to elite-oriented historians to realize that they face real problems of inference in using sources like interviews with the great men of their time, newspaper editorials, and letters to an editor or to a congressman to assay the content of attitudes, beliefs and opinions among the general public.[5]

Given this obvious interest in the problem of respondent-selection, it is worth asking whether there is a systematic approach to it. I believe that one logical approach is for oral historians to begin to pay the same sort of attention to the quantitative approaches to data analysis as some of their colleagues working in "traditional" political, social, and economic history have begun to do.[6] And in quantitative terms, the respondent-selection problem is a sampling problem.

An oral history researcher might resort to some form of sampling when the number of people he is interested in interviewing is so large that he could not possibly interview them all. But the forbidding size of a particular population is not the only factor which might shape the decision of whether or not to draw a sample. Limitations of time, money, or size of staff might also be critical. If he decides to sample, the oral history researcher would probably want to draw a sample in which the members are as typical of the parent population as possible. Perhaps he would want the members of the sample to be present in roughly the same proportions as they are in the whole population. That is, if he were studying the formation of political allegiance, he might want the same proportion of Democrats, Republicans, and other significant groupings in the sample as there are in the population from which the sample was drawn. But this is part of the problem: he may not know what those proportions are, and in fact one of his main interests might be in getting some estimate of the true proportions of particular types of partisans in the population, using the sample proportions as the basis for his inference.

Since in many cases it is impossible for the researcher to get exact data on these population values, or parameters, he can use a strategy that will minimize the chances of his drawing a sample which is not typical of its parent population: he can give each member of the population an equal chance of being included in the sample. Drawing such a sample is generally an easy operation. If the members of the population can be identified and numbered, the researcher can use a device like a table of random numbers to select his respondents.[7] If the sequence of random numbers selected is, for example, 0040, 1938, 8922, 1076, 1490, and 2452, in a hypothetical population of 3,000 individuals, he would select the 40th, 1938th, 1076th, 1490th, and 2452nd individuals for inclusion in the sample. Since this process is left to chance, the likelihood of drawing a sample which is grossly atypical of the population is remote. It is possible, but it is not likely.

On paper, simple random sampling is a sensible approach. In practice, it can be very difficult to carry out. Lists of the population of interest may not be available. Or they may be out of date. They may be prohibitively large and cumbersome to use. In some cases, the lists themselves may not accurately represent a population. Telephone books, for example, often under-represent low income groups. In other cases, sampled individuals may live far apart—so far apart that it might be impossible to complete the desired number of interviews in the time available.

Despite problems in some cases, however, there are obvious advantages to simple random sampling that commend it to the oral history researcher. It is, as its name implies, simple to learn and use under the right conditions. It leaves selection

to chance, and thereby increases the chances that the sample will be representative of the population from which it was drawn.

Another valuable sampling approach is stratified sampling. It involves separating the members of a population into a series of strata, and sampling proportional to the size of the components of the various strata in the population. Using Colman's study of decision-making in farm families as an example, stratification on a variable like type of farming operation would entail including 65 per cent dairy farmers and 20 per cent corn and beef farmers in the sample if those were the proportions of the types in that particular stratum in the population. Or, sampling on another stratum, if 18 per cent of the farm population of New York State were people whose children had grown up and left the farm for some other occupation, 18 per cent of the sample, on that stratum, would be of that type. The obvious problem here is the difficulty of stratifying simultaneously on more than two variables. It might be relatively simple to find out the proportions of New York farm families who are both dairy farmers and semi-retired parents of children who have left the farm and farming. It would be much less easy to get proportions for four or five interacting variables.[8]

A third type of sampling is multistage sampling. Multistage sampling is best defined by an example. If researchers were interested in interviewing this year's college seniors for their reactions to the events of the 1960's, they would probably first draw a simple random or some form of stratified sample of colleges and then another sample of students within that sample of colleges. Some multistage samples are quite elaborate, such as the one drawn by the staff of the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan to represent the national electorate.

This brief cataloging of sampling approaches does not exhaust the range of options available to the oral historian who is interested in using sampling in his research. There is an extensive literature available on the subject.[9] Some of it is well worth reading for additional material on the approaches mentioned here, as well as for material on other techniques like cluster sampling, which in some cases can be used to minimize travel costs. It is also important to seek good first-hand advice when preparing a sample design. Most universities have at least one applied sampling statistician in residence, and generally they are willing to offer advice and help.

Sampling, then, is a useful tool for the social historian of the rank-and-file members of a population—an historian who might be put off by the apparent problems of selecting a sample group from a large population. But it is also a useful tool for the elite-oriented historian who might find an approach like random sampling a useful "rule" for picking interviewees when another theoretically interesting method (such as proximity to a certain public figure, involvement in making a certain political decision, or whatever) is not readily available. A useful side benefit of such a sampling approach is the ability to gather information from an entirely different kind of individual, with different background, life style, and ways of looking at the world than the usual college president, secretary of state, or neurosurgeon. Whether we can learn as much about human behavior and about our own times by studying the reactions of a group of sixth graders to John F. Kennedy's assassination as we can by studying the responses of the members of his cabinet—or whether we can learn most by studying the reactions of both—is a question which researchers with different theoretical interests will probably answer differently. But the issue is not, it seems to me, that the only history worth studying is the history of great men, or that guerrilla history is the only worthwhile enterprise because all "establishment history" proceeds from elitist assumptions. Rather it is that as students of human behavior, we need all the understanding we can get, and should be thankful for the insights, from whatever sources they come.

In conclusion, sampling is a useful tool, but there are times when it obviously should not be applied. Common sense usually dictates the approach. An instance where sampling would not be a sensible approach would be in interviewing in a community which is rigidly hierarchical, where certain community spokesmen are defined by status, role, or both. If sampling were used in this case, and one or more of the spokesmen were not included in the random draw, the consequences for the project might be disastrous.[10] Another instance is when a prime informant is readily available. Does the researcher forget about him because he did not fall into the sample, or does he make every effort to interview him too? The answer is obvious. It would be just as foolish to ignore an informant like Margot Pringle Liberty's John Stands-in-Timber as it would be to consider such an informant typical or representative of his culture.

In any kind of research, then, the appropriate techniques are those that best help get the job done. It is the thesis of this essay that for work in oral history, statistical sampling is one of those tools that deserves wider application that it now has.

[1] Some consideration of interviewee selection will appear in the forthcoming published *Proceedings* of the 4th National Colloquium on Oral History held in November, 1969.

[2] For examples of large projects currently in the works, see John Stewart's remarks on the Kennedy project in *Third Annual Colloquium on Oral History* (New York, 1969), p. 158; the news release on the Civil Rights Documentation Project in Oral History Association *Newsletter*, III (October 1969), p. 4; and Owen W. Bombard, "A New Measure of Things Past," *American Archivist*, XVIII (April 1955), pp. 123-132, for a discussion of the Ford Motor Company Archives oral history project.

[3] Jack W. Skeels, "Oral History Project on the Development of Unionism in the Automobile Industry," *Labor History*, V (Spring 1964), pp. 210-211. Other published comments on respondent-selection are in Bombard's article, cited above, p. 127, and what amounts to a rejection of any sampling approach in R. G. Hewlett, "A Pilot Study in Contemporary Scientific History," *Isis*, LIII (March 1962), p. 36. Alice Hoffman's comments are from a telephone interview of February 11, 1970, while Gould Colman's are from a telephone interview of March 24, 1970, and from the *Bulletin of the Cornell Program in Oral History*, I (July 1967), pp.1-2.

[4] *Third Annual Colloquium*, pp. 158-178, *passim*, especially pp. 158, 160-161, and 177-178.

[5] Columbia University's approach to respondent-selection is perhaps the best example of an elite-oriented approach. See their *Oral History Collection of Columbia University* (New York, 1964). The quoted material on an elite orientation is from Vaughn D. Bornet, "Oral History *Can* Be Worthwhile," *American Archivist*, XVIII (July) 1955, p. 241. For examples of the other approach, see Staughton Lynd, "Guerrilla History in Gary," *Liberation* (October 1969), pp. 17-20, and suggestions in Saul Benison, "Reflections on Oral History," *American Archivist*, XVIII (January 1965), p. 75, Donald Swain, "Problems for Practitioners of Oral History," in the same issue, pp. 67-68, and in Charles T. Morrissey, "Truman and the Presidency—Records and Oral Recollections," same issue, p. 57. The best article on problems of using elite sources for inferences about mass behavior is Philip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David E. Apter (New York, 1964), pp. 206-261.

[6] Suggestions for a quantitative approach are now numerous, but good programmatic essays are William O. Aydelotte, "Quantification in History," *American Historical Review*, 71 (April 1966), pp. 803-825, and Samuel P. Hays, "History as Human Behavior," *Iowa Journal of History, 58* (1960), pp. 193-206, or Hays's "Quantification in History: the Implications and Challenges for Graduate Training," *AHA Newsletter*, IV (June 1966), pp. 8-11. One of the most interesting articles by an historian showing an application of sampling and inference techniques is Murray G. Murphey's "An Approach to the Historical Study of National Character," in *Context and Meaning in Cultural Anthropology*, ed. Melford E. Spiro (New York, 1965), pp. 144-163.

[7] Random number tables are in the RAND Corporation's *A Million Random Digits*. Abbreviated tables are included in the appendices of nearly all elementary statistics books. See, for example, a text like Hubert M. Blalock, *Social Statistics* (New York 1960).

[8] Note that stratified sampling is not strictly a random operation. Once the various strata are defined, sampling is random within those strata, but not before.

[9] For some introductory material on sampling, see any of the following: Leslie Kish, "Selection of the Sample," in *Research Methods in the Behavioral Sciences*, eds. Leon Festinger and Daniel Katz (New York 1953), pp. 175-239; or Angus Campbell and George Katona, "The Sample Survey: A Technique for Social Science Research," in the same volume, pp. 15-55; William G. Cochran, "Design and Analysis of Sampling, in *Statistical Methods*, 5th ed., George W. Snedecor, ed. (Ames, Iowa, 1956), pp. 489-523); Isidor Chien, "An Introduction to Sampling," in *Research Methods in Social Relations* (New York 1959), pp. 509-545; Leslie Kish, *Survey Sampling* (New York 1965); and Frederick Stephan and Philip J. McCarthy, *Sampling Opinions: An Analysis of Survey Procedures* (New York 1958).

[10] For some sensible remarks on when a strict sampling approach might not be appropriate, see Kenneth Goldstein, *A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore* (Hatboro, Pa., 1964), p. 33 and *passim*. This book, an attempt to systematize the techniques of collecting folklore, might be of considerable interest to some students working in oral history research. For a study of one community where a sampling approach that ignored certain key individuals would not work well, see John Hostetler and Grace Huntington, *The Hutterites in North America* (New York 1967).

THE TOOLS OF AFRICAN HISTORIANS

Africa in Time-Perspective: A Discussion of Historical Reconstruction from Unwritten Sources. By Daniel F. McCall. New York: Oxford University Press, 1969. Pp. xix, 179, illus. Paper.

This small but valuable volume emerged out of a series of lectures given by Daniel McCall, Professor of African Studies at Boston University, at the University College of Ghana in 1960-61. First published in 1964, but only now available in paperback, the lectures were intended "to encourage history students to try new approaches."

The lectures are concerned with the problem of reconstructing history in societies where the historian finds few or no written documents. For much of Africa, the advance of the European frontier introduced an age of literacy and the use of written documents. McCall turns away from the written source and focuses on non-literary evidence and the "pre-literary history" of African peoples.

Six of the ten chapters are devoted to introductory discussions of six disciplines—archaeology, oral history, linguistics, ethnology, ethno-botany (with ethno-zoology and physical anthropology), and art history—all vital to the reconstruction of Africa's past. Each suggests profitable approaches or useful techniques which the African historian, in designing his strategy of research, may choose to employ through multidisciplinary or collaborative research. Over the past few years, there has been ample evidence of the vital place of these "auxiliary" disciplines and of the need for the collaboration of disciplines and the correlation of evidence in the reconstruction of African history. Perhaps the most prominent example of achievement has been in the attempt to reconstruct the patterns of migration, expansion, and dispersal of Bantu-speaking peoples from a source area north of the Congo forest to and throughout east, central, and southern Africa. Here, evidence thrown up by all six "auxiliary" disciplines has been correlated and the general outlines of a vast historical development beginning perhaps 2000 years ago and continuing even into the present century (and for which there are virtually no written sources) are fairly clear.

This type of correlation of evidence, however, is perhaps more likely to be possible on the larger questions of African history—migrations on a continental or regional scale, dispersals of political ideas or institutions, the origins and spread of food crops and domestic animals, the origins of iron-working, the diffusion of art styles and physical effects. At a more local level, oral history has become the main route to the evidence and is likely to continue as such for many years to come. Since the original McCall lectures, there has been something resembling an explosion of interest in **oral history** as a tool, and as the principal tool, for historical reconstruction of the pasts of African peoples and of significant events both pre-colonial and colonial. The History Departments of the three university centers in East Africa—at Dar es Salaam, Kampala, and Nairobi—have encouraged numbers of students to undertake oral history research projects of a limited scope, and the results have been excellent. Oral history projects on the district or "people" level are numerous, yet the other "auxiliary" disciplines are receiving less attention. This is a development that McCall did not predict ten years ago; it seems to be a consequence not only of the leadership of McCall, Jan Vansina, Roland Oliver and others, but also of financial resources and basic priorities. Oral history is a relatively inexpensive branch of historical research—the tape recorder is cheaper than the computer or scintillation counter —and the "heritage of the ears," as McCall labels oral tradition, is likely to be lost first. As oral history becomes something of a new orthodoxy in African historical research, McCall's appeal for historians to use the evidence of the related disciplines once again becomes important. African universities, and centers outside Africa, are producing a generation of historians skilled in recovering and

(continued in next column)

FROM TAPE TO PRINT: PUTTING ORAL HISTORY INTO BOOKS

As this newsletter goes to press we learn that **The Saga of Coe Ridge: A Study In Oral History** (258 pages, $8.95), by William Lynwood Montell is scheduled for publication by the University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, Tenn. 37916.

From California comes news of a book entitled **Printing As A Performing Art,** edited with introductory material by Ruth Teiser and Catherine Harroun, and published this spring by the Book Club of California in San Francisco. This volume is composed of excerpts from interviews with eight well known fine printers in the San Francisco Bay Area: Edwin Grabhorn, Robert Grabhorn, Lawton Kennedy, Lewis and Dorothy Allen, Jack Stauffacher, William Everson (Brother Antoninus), Adrian Wilson, and Mallette Dean. The interviews were conducted by Miss Teiser and Miss Harroun, interviewers for the Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.

How many liberties can an editor take with the taped recollections of an oral history interviewee that are being prepared for publication? A new book entitled **The Lumberjack Frontier: The Life Of A Logger In The Early Days On The Chippeway,** Retold from the Recollections Of Louis Blanchard by Walker D. Wyman with the asistance of Lee Prentice (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1969, 88 pages, $3.95) gives a liberal answer to the question. Walker Wyman writes in the Preface to this book: "With the help of a student from Cornell, Lee Prentice, who 'found' Louie, we interviewed him many times in the 1950's and taped his recollections. These reminiscences and answers to questions constitute the story told here. Not a line is as Louie said it or remembered it. Every paragraph has been pieced together from his scattered story. We have merely given unity, coherence, and orderly development to his life's experiences. Words have been put into his mouth many times, but never has an incident or a way of looking at life been invented. Although we have added 'g' to all his word endings and have given him some plurals and occasionally a change of tense, for the most part we have preserved his vernacular."

Tools of African Historian, *continued*:

utilizing oral evidence, but one which is unskilled in the handling of archaeological and linguistic evidence.

McCall devotes his other chapters to a discussion of historical evidence (the more interesting because his graduate training was in cultural anthropology), the problem of chronology, the question of process in history, and the problems of collaboration among disciplines and correlation of evidence. His writing is bright and engaging throughout. Illustrations drawn from African art and placed at the beginning of every chapter are seen by the author as capturing the essence of the chapter's theme. There is a bibliography which has been brought somewhat up to date with a brief essay on the more recent (post 1964) works on or using "unwritten sources."

While giving us neither methodological doctrine nor a handbook guide to African historical research, McCall has succeeded in capturing within 175 pages a valuable introduction to the related disciplines of African history and, moreover, has presented an eloquent appeal to the historian to exploit all the available sources. One may occasionally catch a glimpse of Marc Bloch peering through McCall's prose, calling upon us to go beyond the narrative written sources and probe the less explicit but crucial remains of the past.

David William Cohen
Assistant Professor of History
Johns Hopkins University

News in Brief...

Historians attending the 1969 annual meeting of the American Association For State And Local History, held last August in Saint Paul, Minnesota, were interested when former Vice President Hubert Humphrey remarked in his banquet speech that for 20 years he has directed his staff to make notes about his telephone conversations. Some critics of oral history cited this as an argument against the premise that oral history interviews are justified because busy men do not document their activities in an era of easy telephone communication and jet travel. But others cited Mr. Humphrey's remark as another example of how oral history interviews can be useful if conducted **after** the conventional written sources have been studied to determine what is already documented in a busy man's life.

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BERKELEY COMPLETES BENJAMIN LEHMAN INTERVIEW

The Regional Oral History Office of the Bancroft Library announces the completion of an interview with Benjamin Lehman, author and emeritus professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley campus. The interview was taped by Suzanne Riess between 1964 and 1968 under a grant from the Alumni Foundation of the University of California.

This is an account of Professor Lehman's childhood and education, of the Berkeley social climate in the 1920s and 1930s and the cultural growth of the University during those decades; the developing Bohemias of Carmel and Los Gatos; the history of early University departments of English and dramatic arts; and of University administrative work, in the budget and the library committees, and on the President's advisory committee during the loyalty oath controversy. Mr. Lehman also chronicles his friendship with and knowledge of many people in the social, theatrical, and literary worlds that he inhabited.

Further details about this interview and its deposit in research libraries may be obtained from the Regional Oral History Office, Room 486, the General Library, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720

GUIDE TO THE ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Correspondence about membership in the Oral History Association should be mailed to Prof. Knox Mellon, Department of History, Immaculate Heart College, 2021 North Western Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90027. Correspondence about editorial matters should be mailed to Charles Morrissey, Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier, Vermont 05602

The Oral History Association, Inc.
Editorial Office
The Vermont Historical Society
Montpelier, Vermont 05602