MOORLANDS: PEOPLE, PLACES, STORIES

A brief guide to interviewing

Arranging the Interview – Ethics and Consent

When you contact someone to arrange an interview make sure they fully understand:-

- what the project is about
- what you want them to talk about
- that the interview will be recorded
- that the extracts from the recording will be used in a book, a public talk or on a website

Preparation

Documentation to take with you to the interview

- Participant information sheet - Provides interviewee with full details about the project and how their interview will be used
- Consent Form – document to be signed by the interviewee giving permission for the interview recording to be used for research/publication

Before the interview

- Do your research – on the subject, and the interviewee
- Be clear about your purpose
- Prepare a list of questions or subjects you want to find out about
- **BUT Remember -** Some of the best things you find out will be unexpected so also be prepared to listen and follow up points of interest

Don't forget…

- Check your equipment – pens (and pencils), notebook, recording equipment, batteries – and take spares
- Dress appropriately
- Set off in good time – don't be late
- **Make sure you take a participant information sheet and consent form and get it signed before the interview!!**

Setting up

- Make sure there is no or little background noise
- Place the microphone/recorder as close to the interviewee as possible and is directed at them
- Make small talk – formalities first? Or last?

Interviewing
How do we get people to talk about their experiences of the things that interest us?
Make the interviewee feel relaxed and able to talk and ask questions that encourage open and informative responses.

Questions

- Ask questions that encourage open and informative responses.

  What's the difference between:
  "Is this talk useful?"
  And
  "Tell me, what have you found most useful about this talk?"

- Have some questions worked out
- Use these to introduce subjects rather than to search for specific answers
- Keep your own contributions to a minimum
- Listen carefully and follow things up
- Within reason, be prepared to let the interviewee guide the interview and introduce subjects that are important to them – remember it's their story we want to document

So…

- Use open rather than closed questions to introduce subjects such as
  - What do remember about…?
  - Could you describe....?
- And follow up points of interest with further questions such as -
  - What was that like?
  - Can you tell me more about that?
  - Don't ask multiple questions – eg 'What are you wearing? Where did you buy it? How much did it cost?'

Interview structure

- Don't rush people, or be afraid of silence - maybe they're just thinking
- Keep verbal asides (Yeah, right, OK) to a minimum
- Keep a shape to your interview – plan it and don't let it drift all over the place
- Do we want to hear your views?
- LISTEN!!!

Before you say goodbye

- Re-cap the main points – gives you time to think
- As a bucket question – "Is there anything else you would like to add?"

Resources
East Midlands Oral History Project
www.youtube.com/watch?v=jTCzxWt1RQk

University of Leicester – How do I conduct an Oral History Interview?
www.le.ac.uk/emoha/training/no2.pdf

Oral History Society – Getting Started
www.ohs.org.uk/advice/getting-started/