ONLINE ACCESS TO ORAL HISTORY: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Background: The literature highlights an absence of discussion about the development of online oral history collections. Few studies exist in this area, with those that do focus on oral history in online environments often comparing institutions which house oral history recordings.

Aims: The study aimed to examine elements that had led to the British Library’s success in developing an online oral history collection, and to determine whether these practices would be appropriate for other institutions considering similar projects to use.

Methods: The study relied on various methods of data collection. Professional interviews were conducted with Mary Stewart, Oral History Curator at the British Library, as well as two other individuals who work with oral history recordings in their professional lives. A website analysis was conducted to better understand how the website worked. User tasks and post-task interviews were conducted with five individuals to determine how easy the Sounds website was to navigate for first-time users.

Results: The study determined various factors which contributed to the successes of the BL in developing online oral history collections, and which could be considered by other institutions. These included professional partnerships, effective policies to deal with legal and ethical issues, and strategies for promoting collections. Strengths and weaknesses of the Sounds website were identified, as well as underlying reasons for such weaknesses, such as a lack of resources to further develop the site. Despite these, user experiences were generally positive.

Conclusions: While the results from this study cannot be used to draw generalisations about the state of oral history across institutions, several models of best practice, which could aid other institution in their development of online oral history collections, were
identified. However, further studies are needed to develop a comprehensive understanding of the implications of online oral history collections, as well as to further develop leading models for practice.
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Chapter One: Introduction

This dissertation will examine how the British Library (BL) have developed an extensive online collection of oral history recordings, which are available via its Sounds website (http://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history). The focus of this dissertation is limited to the oral history collections on this site, although the Sound and Moving Image catalogue (available at http://cadensa.bl.uk/cgi-bin/webcat) will be also be mentioned at points.

1.1 Background

The relationship between oral histories (audio recordings of spoken interviews) and archives predates the 1960s, although was arguably most popular at this time (Swain, 2003). While historians, community groups and others continue to create oral history recordings, often these are not then made available for others to access through deposit in an archive or library (Wallot & Fortier, 1998; Thompson, 2000b), limiting validation of research and re-use for other purposes. However, funding providers are increasingly requiring that interviews be deposited in appropriate institutions for reuse (Heritage Lottery Fund, 2009; Smith, 2010).

Even when recordings are deposited with an archive, they often remain inaccessible due to poor cataloguing and a lack of resources within the institution to handle such media (Wallot & Fortier, 1998; Ulargiu, 2000). It is thus rare that these collections are well publicised, and easy to access and navigate (Bath, 2005). It is even rarer that they are made available online (Bath, 2005), despite the possibilities that the Internet offers for providing worldwide access to recordings. This is partially due to the difficulties mentioned above, as well as the need to digitise materials and secure permission to publish interviews over the Internet. However, some institutions are overcoming these obstacles and are making parts of their collections available online.

1.2 Research rationale

Few studies have examined the ways in which individual archival institutions are overcoming the difficulties associated with publishing oral history recordings online (Daniels, 2009). Existing studies have often considered a broader picture of oral history in
institutions, for example comparing website development between institutions (Brewster, 2000; MacLeod, 2005; MacKay, 2007).

It is hoped that studying the initiatives undertaken by a single institution will lead to a deeper understanding of the practicalities of providing online access, thus allowing models of best practice to be identified. This may in turn aid other institutions that are considering providing online access to their holdings.

1.3 Context

The BL was chosen for this study as it is often mentioned as a leader both in terms of oral history collection sizes and online access (Bath, 2005; Smith, 2010). The entire BL houses over 150 million items, and six million catalogue searches take place each year (BL, 2012a), making it the largest library in the UK and an internationally respected institution. Additionally, the BL Sound Archive is home to millions of recordings, and has played a fundamental role in various projects such as the Millennium Memory Bank, which is “one of the largest single oral history collections in Europe” (Perks, 2009, p. 77), and the National Life Stories programme (BL, 2012c).

The development of the BL’s Sounds website began in 2004 with Archival Sound Recordings 1 (ASR1), a JISC-funded project to make audio recordings, including oral histories available online (JISC, 2009). The initial project allowed recordings to be made available to higher and further education institutions. In 2007, Archival Sound Recordings 2 (ASR2) began, continuing for another two years (JISC, 2009). Further digitisation was performed, this time in-house, and again recordings and supporting documentation were made available online. Since this time, the website has been renamed “Sounds” and development has continued, although at a slower pace with new collections being uploaded individually. While ASR1 limited access to those within HE and FE institutions, ASR2 and more recent efforts have focused on providing public access to recordings when possible (JISC, 2010).
1.4 Research aims and objectives

1.4.1 Aims

This dissertation aims to better understand the specific issues that are associated with making oral history documents accessible to researchers and the general public through online access. This will be achieved through an in-depth study as to how the BL has dealt with these in the development of the Sounds website (sounds.bl.uk).

1.4.2 Objectives

- Examine current standards and practices in archiving and digitising oral history recordings
- Examine ways of facilitating access to both oral history recordings and the information contained on the recordings
- Understand issues related to copyright, permission and control, as well as the ethical issues that arise in the sharing of oral history recordings online
- Determine examples of best practice in making oral history available online

1.5 Dissertation structure

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. This chapter offers an introduction to the project and sets out the aims and objectives. Chapter Two looks at current literature about oral history, outlining key aspects of oral history collection management, and thus providing background context for this project. Following this, Chapter Three discusses the methodology used for this study. This includes the scope of the project and an overview of the decisions that were made throughout the study. Chapter Four discusses the findings of the study. These have been presented based upon the method of data collection. Chapter Five discusses the findings in relation to the development of the Sounds website and how this fits with existing literature, as well as identify best practice models which could be applied to other institutions. Chapter Six presents the conclusion, where the outcomes of the study are compared with the original aims and key findings are highlighted. Suggestions for further research are also made. Several appendices with further details about the methodology and findings are available at the end of the dissertation.
Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Oral history largely began appearing in archival literature in the 1960s (Swain, 2003). However, since this early interest the majority of publications have focused on specific projects rather than general issues of storage or electronic access (Ulargiu, 2000; Swain, 2003). The importance of depositing materials after creation is a growing presence in the literature (Truesdell, 2001; Heritage Lottery Fund, 2009; Smith, 2010), but in many cases still remains absent from discussions. However, even with the limited archival literature regarding oral history, several themes emerge regarding its presence in archives or libraries, and more specifically with regards to publishing recordings online.

2.2 General background

A prominent theme in the literature is the argument that oral history can provide alternative views of history and everyday life, and can be used to augment existing archival collections (Reimer, 1981; Fogerty, 1983; Wallot & Fortier, 1998; Swain, 2003; Smith, 2010). This extends beyond archival institutions, as Day (1999) and Humphries (2003) discuss the use of oral history in museums in the UK, finding that the Imperial War Museum and the Southampton Community History Unit among others have made effective use of recordings, demonstrating that there exists an interest in hearing the life stories of others.

Oral history recordings can be especially important within cultures where there is a greater emphasis on oral traditions than written documentation (Wallot & Fortier, 1998). Some authors predict that there will be less written material in the future as more information is transmitted via telecommunications. In this event, oral histories may prove to be especially beneficial in continuing to fill gaps in archives and providing a more holistic view of society (Wallot & Fortier, 1998; Swain, 2003).

The literature also stresses the necessity of making oral history available so that research using interviews can be validated by others (Ritchie, 1995; Wallot & Fortier, 1998; Feldstein, 2004; Smith, 2010). However, it is often the case that oral history recordings are not deposited in archives for long-term preservation and public access, instead remaining
with the interviewer (Thompson, 2000b; Smith, 2010) despite requirements from funding bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (2009). This may be due to an unwillingness to share research data in some cases as well as hesitancies to use that created by others (Thompson, 2000a). Thompson (2000a) found in a survey that while the majority of respondents claimed they would be happy to utilise recordings that they had not collected, few actually did so in practice. Furthermore, Bornat (2003) suggests that the re-use of interviews may lead to ethical dilemmas as the interviewee has no say in how the data is re-interpreted and used. However, she suggests that this can be overcome by researchers emphasising that there are different contexts in which a recording may be understood.

2.3 Current technical standards

There is some discussion of the current formats that oral history recordings take, suggesting that most recordings are in analogue format, as it is known that this is generally affordable and can be preserved for long periods of time (Ulargiu, 2000). Less is known about the long-term preservation needs of digital materials (Wallot & Fortier, 1998; Bath, 2005).

The need to digitise materials in order to preserve them is often highlighted (Swain, 2003; Bath, 2005; Millar, 2011), as are some of the advantages that digital recordings have over analogue formats. These include better sound quality which can be duplicated and edited without losing quality (Ulargiu, 2000), although it is also mentioned that compressed formats may not retain the same level of quality when converted to other formats (BL, 2011). Digitise recordings are also in danger of losing more information if damaged due to information compression compared with many analogue recordings (International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA), 2005). Despite these dangers, digitisation is still desirable due to the growing obsolescence of analogue carriers and playback equipment. However, necessary time and costs to digitise recordings (while decreasing) are often beyond the budgets of archives, and uncertainties about how technology will change may lead to hesitancy in taking action in this area (Ulargiu, 2000; Bath, 2005). Additionally, creating a digitisation schedule may be difficult for many archives with limited resources, although guides to prioritising this work exist (IASA, 2005). A further worry is the cost of storing digital materials, especially sound recordings, which may be prohibitive for smaller institutions and projects. While systems for mass storage are
currently used by institutions such as the BL, the use of several external hard drives may be more appropriate for these smaller institutions (BL, 2011).

Technological standards for creating and preserving oral history have changed frequently in the past few decades. Smith (2008) highlights a few of these changes, from magnetic carriers to cassettes, MiniDiscs and the current standard of solid state recorders, which are recommended by the Heritage Lottery Fund (2009) and the BL (2011) for recording interviews. Further recommendations involve using .wav format recordings for preservation and compressed MP3s for regular user playback (Heritage Lottery Fund, 2009; BL, 2011). While the preservation standards for recordings may last for longer than actual recording devices due to professional demand (IASA, 2005), Bradley (2007) advises that archives must always be looking forward and considering migration, even before new technologies are necessarily known.

2.4 Retrieval and cataloguing

Ritchie (1995) suggests that there are three main issues in retrieving oral history information from the user’s view. The first is locating a collection which contains relevant interviews. This issue is largely absent from other literature, although Ulargiu (2000) suggests that national oral history directories would be useful. The second issue is in choosing which interview(s) will satisfy ones needs, and the third is in pinpointing information within a recording. There is consensus that appropriate cataloguing and metadata are essential in overcoming these (Ritchie, 1995; Gustman et al., 2002; de Jong, Oard, Heeren & Ordelman, 2008, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, 2011). However, currently there is a lack of proper documentation and poor cataloging systems, which contribute to difficulties in navigating collections (Wallot & Fortier, 1998; Ulargiu, 2000; Swain, 2003; MacLeod, 2005; Perks, 2009).

While there are standards and programmes for creating and managing metadata that can be applied to oral history collections (Baylor University Institute for Oral History, 2011), these are not evenly followed across institutions (Wallot & Fortier, 1998). MacLeod (2005) suggests that a standard description process promoted by organisations such as the Oral History Society could ensure more consistency among collections, while King (2012) is more specific with the suggestion that the institutions housing recordings need to use library and
archival cataloguing standards. A catalogue which allows users to search by subject across interviews and other resources (as few researchers are solely interested in finding oral history recordings) has been suggested as an ideal navigation tool (MacLeod, 2005). However, it may not be feasible for many organisations to integrate various catalogues and allow in-depth subject searching as most interviews will focus on various topics throughout, (Daniels, 2009).

Many authors discuss the use of transcripts, as these can facilitate subject indexing and navigation (Thompson, 2000b; Bath, 2005; Daniels, 2009; King, 2012). In reality, recordings are often delivered to archives without this documentation (Ritchie, 1995). This is largely due to the substantial time and effort it takes to transcribe an interview, with estimates ranging from five to ten hours of transcription per hour of recording (Thompson, 2000b; Heritage Lottery Fund, 2009). While the use of transcripts as potential finding aids is often mentioned, so is a concern that written documentation may (and does at times) supersede the audio recording (Ritchie, 1995; Thompson, 2000b; Smith, 2010). Additionally, the transcribed words may lose the context of intonation and emotion, allowing them to be easily misconstrued (Read, 1998; Samuel, 1998), especially if the audio recording is not consulted in conjunction with the text.

Due to difficulties in knowing what documentation will be required by various archival institutions, several publications recommend contacting the place of deposit at an early stage in the project (Truesdell, 2001; Heritage Lottery Fund, 2009; Smith, 2010). Additionally, the Heritage Lottery Fund (2009) and Smith (2010) provide a list of basic details which should be documented with each interview. This should aid oral historians who have no knowledge of archival practice in ensuring that their recordings are accepted by an archive or library.

### 2.5 Ethical and legal issues

A related discussion is about the ethical and legal considerations of making oral histories widely available. Part of the problem arises from the fact that one recording will contain multiple copyrights which may need to be negotiated if the recording is to be made available for public access in an archive or via the Internet. Even more problematic is the fact that interviewers have often not sought signed consent to deposit or otherwise share
materials after initial use (Swain, 2003; Perks & Robinson, 2005). This may be due to a lack of realisation by academics that their interviews could be used more widely (Bath, 2005), as well as a lack of understanding about copyright laws. To address this, the Oral History Society in the UK provides a guide to UK copyright and informed consent that is both comprehensive and comprehensible (Ward, 2003). MacLeod (2005) suggests that there is evidence that more projects are following recommended copyright procedures although highlights that more needs to be done, especially in the case of community-run projects.

Even when copyright and permissions to share recordings and obtained, there remain questions of whether it is ethical to share them globally. This is especially true if the interview took place before the rise of the Internet as the informant could not have conceived of this level of access at the time of copyright negotiations (Daniels, 2009, Stewart, 2009). Again, there is no definitive answer to this although some authors highlight how various institutions have approached this, such as contacting informants who are still living or administering user agreements before audio access is permitted (Leh, 2000; Daniels, 2009).

2.6 Online oral history collections

The creation of online oral history collections is gaining prominence as an occurrence, although authors still highlight that there is a general lack of literature in this area (MacLeod, 2005; Daniels, 2009). While the Internet creates new opportunities for archives to reach users, Perks and Robinson (2005) and MacKay (2007) suggest that there has been a lack of discussion and practice about how to effectively get oral history online, which could have serious implications because, as Seubert (2007) suggests, libraries and archives need to take an active role in digitising materials and making them widely available or risk becoming obsolete.

Once recordings are digital, it is possible to make collections available online, allowing remote user access. Barber (2004a) suggests that this has the potential to increase usage, introducing oral histories to new users. Additionally, it could open discourse surrounding narratives and how they are presented. While some authors focus on the benefits of Internet access (Barber, 2004a), others highlight that this leads to an inevitable loss of control over recordings (Swain, 2003). Still others suggest that there are ways to reduce
this loss such as allowing audio streaming rather than downloading (Perks & Robinson, 2005; Daniels, 2009), and the implementation of site user agreements prior to accessing recordings (MacLeod, 2005).

Many Internet-based collections remain underdeveloped, often providing only excerpts or transcripts. This may be in order to avoid copyright or permission issues as short clips can be shared under ‘Fair Use’ laws in some countries (Brewster, 2000; MacLeod, 2005). Another reason that collections remain underdeveloped is that many websites which feature oral history do so as a method of drawing in interested parties who will then visit these institutions (MacLeod, 2005). MacLeod’s study (2005) found that few British institutions with websites which mentioned oral history were actually attempting to develop comprehensive oral history repositories for researchers or other users.

2.7 Use of computer technologies

Another strand of literature relating to oral history has origins in digital technology developments. The authors in this area focus on how technologies could contribute to the development of oral history collections, for example through the use of automatic speech recognition in creating transcripts (Gustman et al., 2002; de Jong, Oard, Heeren & Ordelman, 2008), the creation of an open source database which allows users to piece together clips from interviews deemed to be of interest (High & Sworn, 2009; Jessee, Zembrzycki & High, 2011), or barcoding transcripts at various points so that segments of video can be played back to a user upon scanning of the barcode with a personal digital assistant (Klemmer, Graham, Wolff & Landlay, 2003).

While significant developments are being made which could make oral history recordings more accessible and allow researchers to interact with them in new ways, these studies also highlight that further developments are needed before these technologies can be more widely applied to oral history collections, especially in small institutions. Additionally, the costs of implementing and running most of the technologies are likely to be prohibitive for already struggling archives and libraries.
2.8 Models of best practice

Another theme that emerges in the literature is that of best practice models. The University of Alaska Fairbanks is mentioned in several publications (Swain, 2003; Perks & Robinson, 2005; MacKay, 2007; Perks, 2009) for its Project Jukebox, which provides digital recordings, both audio and video, as well as supporting documentation online from various oral history projects across Alaska (University of Alaska Fairbanks, 2012b). The site has been pointed to as a model of best practice for including oral history in the library database (Swain, 2003), as well as for their user site agreement (Perks & Robinson, 2005). Presently, most collections contain a link containing copyright information which appears when entering into a specific project as well as through a link available from the home page (University of Alaska Fairbanks, 2012a).

Other projects, such as the Institute for History and Biography at FernUniversität Hagen or the Oral History Center at the University of Louisville (Leh, 2000; Daniels, 2009), are not mentioned as often as Project Jukebox. However, the description of how decisions were made at these institutions could be used by others who were considering the implementation of similar programmes. Stevens and Latham (2009) provide similar discussion about the library at Jacksonville State University and their experiences of digitising oral history recordings in order to provide them for online access. While none of these institutions has found a definitive answer to providing online access to oral history recordings, the emergence of such articles may foster discussion of various processes, thus allowing better models of practice emerge.

2.9 British Library reports

Although not part of the scholarly literature, several reports from the BL and JISC highlight the development of the Sounds website. One report (JISC, 2009) focuses on the ASR2 project, describing how its development emerged from ASR1 experiences. For example, it highlights how ASR2 used in-house digitisation due to the development of resources to conduct this process as well as difficulties which arose in outsourcing digitisation during ASR1. Additionally, it describes the difficulties in estimating time for both digitisation and IPR clearances. Another document (BL, 2007) highlights lessons learned from ASR1 such as digitisation standards, as well as recommendations for managing the selection and digitisation processes. These reports are not aimed at a scholarly or general audience, and
instead take the form of specialised internal reports. Nevertheless, they constitute a good source of information about the BL’s experience of creating an oral history resource.

2.10 Conclusion

This literature review highlights some of the main issues that arise in collecting oral history in archives, although others certainly exist. While some of these are potentially alleviated by making materials available online (such as a user’s ability to locate collections), others (such as permission agreements and the need to digitise materials) are in fact amplified. Additionally, as technology improves and supersedes previous recording and storage processes, updating files within archives will be necessary, especially if they are to remain available to users. While publications increasingly discuss online collections, such as Brewster (2000), MacLeod (2005), Daniels (2009), Stevens and Latham (2009), and Perks (2009), more research is needed into how archives and libraries are overcoming these matters and making oral history recordings widely available.
Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research design that was used in this study and the rationale for the various decisions that were taken. It will outline the scope of data-collecting activities as well as highlight how analysis was approached and various limitations that have affected the study.

3.2 Research strategy

It was decided that a case study would provide an understanding of the situation of oral history in online archival environments, as use of case study is appropriate to gain an in-depth understanding of complex situations (Yin, 2009; Thomas, 2011). Due to the many difficulties in working with oral history recordings, it is fitting to study how a single institution has worked at overcoming these. The BL is home to many oral history collections, and has made approximately 7200 recordings from approximately 1350 separate interviews available via the Sounds website. Thus, the BL provides a suitable outlier case study due to their growing online oral history presence, which few other archival institutions have been able to replicate (Bath, 2005).

The study aims to suggest explanations for the successes of BL Sounds. While Thomas (2009; 2011) suggests that it is not possible to draw generalisations from a case study, this is not considered to be a drawback as ways of working with oral histories vary greatly among archives. Few archives have made collections available online (Brewster, 2000; MacLeod, 2005), and thus generalisations would not be possible using any method of research. However, examination of the situation at one institution could lead to the identification of models of good practice that would be appropriate for others to consider.

3.2.1 Triangulation

Shipman (1997) and Yin (2009) suggest using various data sources in order to achieve triangulation, allowing an understanding of a situation from various perspectives, which in turn improves the study’s validity (Yin, 2009). Several qualitative data collecting methods have been used throughout this study to achieve the various objectives, allowing a greater
depth of understanding than would be possible if only one method of data collection were to take place.

3.3 Methods of data collection

3.3.1 Literature review

The study makes use of literature searches which were conducted using subscription databases, search engines and the websites of various organisations such as the Oral History Society. Additionally, reports relating specifically to the BL were used to develop an understanding of the services provided.

3.3.2 Professional interviews

Interviews were conducted with Mary Stewart, Oral History Curator at the BL, as well as with two individuals who work with oral history recordings, their experiences ranging from managing the creation of oral histories in the development of an online resource to digitising materials within existing collections. The interviews provided an understanding of the challenges of working with oral history from a professional perspective. All interviews were semi-structured and an approximate list of interview questions is included in Appendix A. Due to the varying natures of the projects that interviewees were involved with, some questions were re-formulated to be more relevant to the experience of the interviewee.

3.3.3 Website analysis

While searches were conducted to find literature pertaining to website analysis, it was found that the evaluation criteria often related to specific services offered by businesses. As Brooke (1996) suggests that it is not appropriate to compare usability across systems for which there are different functions, it was determined that the literature did not provide appropriate criteria by which to evaluate the Sounds website. Therefore evaluative criteria were established through oral history literature (Barber, 2004b; MacLeod, 2005), as well as through the interview with Mary Stewart, who spoke about the website. Various items relating to access were identified and then searched for on the website. These included information pertaining to the catalogue and how users can navigate this (e.g. use of finding
aids); availability of copyright information; troubleshooting help; and individual item information (e.g. interviewee names, recording dates and locations, etc.).

### 3.3.4 User tasks

A survey of user tasks was used to discover user perspectives about BL Sounds. Tasks were developed to test the difficulty in accessing various recordings, bibliographic information and using various website features (see Appendix B for tasks). The results were used as a basis for interviews with participants to gather further information about their experiences navigating the site, as Bach, Gauducheau and Salembier (2011) highlight that using interviews in conjunction with usability surveys offers information about emotional responses that is not necessarily apparent in surveys responses. The interview questions were influenced by the System Usability Scale (SUS), which gives a “global view of subjective assessments of usability” (Brooke, 1996, p. 3). There were not enough participants to calculate an SUS score, nor is it obvious how many participants would be needed to do so effectively (Schmettow, 2012). However, several SUS statements were phrased as questions to gather information regarding usability of the website (see Appendix C for interview questions).

Five participants were recruited as the intention was to gain a better understanding of initial user perspectives about the Sounds website rather than to make generalisations. Shipman (1997) suggests that no form of sampling is necessarily better than another, and this combined with the time restrictions of the study led to the decision that this small sample size was justified. Participants were recruited through from the Information School at the University of Sheffield.

Rotating tasks to guard against order bias was not considered necessary due to the small number of participants. The question formatting may have restricted participants’ answers to some degree as users were required to choose pre-determined answers (Shipman, 1997). However, the option of choosing ‘other’ and elaborating was often available. Additionally, Shipman (1997) suggests that discussion after such a task may reduce this limitation, and thus the use of post-task interviews hopefully overcame any limitations in this area.
3.3.5 Reflective practice

Memoing, a practice particularly suited to qualitative studies (Birks, Chapman & Francis, 2008) was used throughout the research to identify emerging themes, as well as to develop the codes that were used to analyse interviews (Saldaña, 2009; Gibbs & Taylor, 2010).

3.4 Piloting

3.4.1 Professional interviews

It was not possible to pilot the professional interviews due to the different experiences of those interviewed. Interviews were thus tailored to elicit information regarding each project specifically while maintaining a focus on the broader area of making oral history recordings widely accessible.

3.4.2 User tasks

User tasks were piloted with one respondent and shown to two researchers prior to data collection. Changes to several of the questions were made at this point to rectify initial difficulties. The lack of extensive piloting was considered acceptable due to both the small number of respondents and the researcher’s availability in the event that any problems arose during the tasks. As the interviews were based on the experiences that each participant had in completing the tasks, these were not piloted separately.

3.5 Analysis

3.5.1 Professional interviews

Several types of analysis were needed for the collected data. Interviews were analysed qualitatively through transcription and coding. Codes were largely decided beforehand from themes identified in the literature. However, there was an inductive element as well as unidentified themes were also considered in the analysis of interviews. Interviews were initially approached using a combination of In Vivo and Initial Coding, before moving onto more analytical coding in the form of Focused and Axial Coding (Saldaña, 2009).
3.5.2 Website analysis

Criteria for the website analysis was largely drawn from the oral history literature, some of which focused specifically on website development (Barber, 2004b; MacLeod, 2005), as well as through the interview with Mary Stewart. BL Sounds was then accessed throughout July and August to investigate how well these criteria, such as search functions, subject indexes, access restrictions, legal information and bibliographic details were integrated.

3.5.3 Post-task interviews

The user task results were used as a basis for interviews with participants. As with the professional interviews, analysis was largely completed through In Vivo and Initial Coding, before being further refined using Focused Coding (Saldaña, 2009). However, in this instance codes were not decided beforehand.

3.5.4 Memos

These were collected and categorised into various themes. They were in turn used to further develop the coding processes for the professional and user task interviews.

3.6 Limitations

Due to the focus on the BL, it is not possible to draw generalisations about the way online oral history collections are currently handled at other archival institutions. However, this does not limit the study’s usefulness as an opportunity to uncover issues that may be relevant to other institutions, as well as practices that may be worth considering for those developing oral history websites.

There were several practical limitations to this study, largely related to time restrictions. For example, it would have been ideal to gather user perspectives from participants who use the website in their own time, or to have the user tasks completed by a much greater number of people which would allow one to calculate an SUS score for the website. However, these were not possible due to the time and resource constraints of this study.
3.7 Ethics

This study was deemed to be low risk through the ethics review procedure at the Information School (see Appendix I). While it included participants in both user tasks and interviews, questions and activities did not involve sensitive information or require participation of high risk individuals. Interviewees were informed of their rights to refuse or withdraw from participation and had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. Participants were given information sheets explaining the project, the selection process and their rights (see Appendix F for professional interviewees and Appendix G for user task participants), and were asked to sign a consent form confirming their willingness to participate (see Appendix H). While all participants were offered anonymity, Mary Stewart, Oral History Curator at the BL, suggested this was not appropriate in her circumstances as she would be easily identifiable due to the few individuals working in this area at the BL. Therefore her name has been included in this dissertation. Her quotes were confirmed with her prior to publication.
Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the findings from the data collection. Due to the differing perspectives in each form of data collection, which included professional interviews, website analysis, and user tasks with post-task interviews, the results of each were analysed separately. They are thus presented separately in this chapter.

4.2 Professional interviews

Professional interviews were conducted to better understand the roles of libraries and archives in preserving and making accessible oral history recordings, and obstacles faced in doing so. Interviews were conducted with Mary Stewart, Oral History Curator at the BL, and two other professionals working with oral history materials. Interview questions can be seen in Appendix A.

4.2.1 Codes

Interviews were initially analysed using In Vivo and Initial Coding before further analysis took place using Focused and Axial Coding (Saldaña, 2009). This led to the development of five codes: professional, technical, legal, managing resources, and user. The findings from the interviews are discussed below, divided by theme.

- Professional

One theme that emerged during analysis was that of professional issues, such as experience and support available to those working with oral history recordings. All interviewees identified models that were used for guidance in their professional endeavours. This guidance was sought for determining best practices regarding legal and ethical issues, as well as technological guidance: “we modelled those [consent forms] on the Oral History Society recommended ones” (Interviewee 2); “JISC Digital Media put out lots of general guidance that you can just get off their website” (Interviewee 1).
Additionally, partnerships and professional experience were identified as key factors in helping to manage oral history collections. Mary Stewart identifies BL staff members as working “within the Oral History Society within the UK. We have strong links to the American Oral History Association, and also to the International Oral History Association”. Stewart also highlights that members of the Sound and Vision Technical Service Department within the BL are “all highly connected into the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives”, allowing information pertaining to the most up-to-date technological standards to be disseminated within the BL. Also identified are the lessons learned from working with various organisations: “working with the Hearing Link organisation was very good for our deaf awareness. Working with the Alliance for an Inclusive Education is very good in terms of working on a project with multiple types of disability and our need to make our materials and processes accessible to them” (Mary Stewart).

- **Technical**

A second theme which arose involved information pertaining to digitisation formats, as well as standards for documentation, and has been coded under ‘technical’ issues.

All interviewees highlighted that .wav formats were used for preservation versions of recordings, suggesting that information regarding format standards was freely available and agreed upon. However, doubts about the size of long-term maintenance of these files were also raised. This is perhaps a bigger issue for smaller institutions as the BL is able to maintain “multiple backups of large amounts of data” (Mary Stewart). Also emphasised is that digitisation is not a final step for audio recordings: “it’s not a guarantee just because it’s digitised that it’s always going to be accessible. There’s a lot of work needs to go into rolling it forward all the time, and to keeping up with new formats” (Interviewee 1).

Another aspect which falls under the category of ‘technical’ relates to catalogue descriptions. Mary Stewart emphasises the importance of having content summaries for recordings as “we aren’t able really to catalogue any material to a useful level without at least the briefest content summary”. All interviewees suggested that transcripts were not a priority, due to time needed to transcribe recordings and a lack of resources. Mary Stewart
also highlighted that “there’s also a wider question of whether transcripts make people read rather than listen. We’d rather people listen”.

Legal and ethical

Legal and ethical issues were another important theme which emerged in the interviews. This includes data relating to copyright, restrictions and the ethical use of recorded materials.

Copyright was not found to be a serious obstacle in developing online resources for all participants. Mary Stewart states that “copyright for these recordings is generally not a problem, because we’ve asked people to assign copyright to the British Library as part of the recording process, which is included in our standard form”, and Interviewee 2 suggested that the consent form used in gathering oral histories “transferred all the copyright over to us, without any further qualifications or exceptions”. However, this is certainly not the case for all professionals working with oral history. Interviewee 1 suggests that copyright is “probably the main factor because it’s not a quick job to digitise, so we need to be sure we’re going to be able to do something with it, if we’re going to bother to digitise it”.

Even when copyright is not viewed as an obstacle by interviewees, ethical matters are still a primary concern: “obviously the law is one thing and ethics is another” (Interviewee 2). Stewart highlights that the BL is “very mindful of our ethical duty, to maintain the trust of our interviewees past and present, and in the future. And so that’s why at the moment, as this is still quite a new type of access, we are trying to find and inform our interviewees before the materials go online”. Thus, even when copyright is cleared, interviewees highlighted the need to contact individuals who are featured in interviews to “inform interviewees of new types of access, even if they’ve signed a form saying ‘you can use this material however you wish’” (Mary Stewart). This process does not always have a clear end point, leading Interviewee 1 to ask “how far is enough, how much do you have to try?”. Another issue that arose was that of defamatory or otherwise inappropriate comments in a recording. While this is a concern for professionals in the field, Mary Stewart suggests that “most interviews that have material that’s really sensitive, someone will have closed them anyway, so they wouldn’t even consider them for Internet access”. Additionally, both Mary Stewart and Interviewee 1 highlight that rapid takedown may alleviate this issue: “there’s a
clear takedown procedure, so people can activate that if they see something on the site about them or which mentions them which they’re unhappy about” (Mary Stewart).

Attitudes to restrictions on recordings varied amongst the interviewees. While all interviewees advocated that recordings would ideally be available for public listening, Interviewee 2 proposed that the use of streaming rather than downloading was important for keeping control, suggesting that “it comes back to this ethical thing. It’s one thing to say can we put this stuff online, but we didn’t necessarily want people to be able to download copies of them”. On the other hand, Interviewee 1 suggests that “from my point of view I don’t have a problem with it being available for downloading. I think it’s for the academic community or the family history community or whoever”.

Managing resources

A fourth theme was that of resource management, which includes operational decisions such as managing workloads, motivations for developing oral history collections and how projects may be disseminated for wider access.

All interviewees mentioned the development of oral history collections in terms of creating a resource for scholars and other individuals. Interviewee 1 suggested a main motivation in digitising recordings was to “make them more widely available, either to academics or students here, or to the wider community”, while Mary Stewart points out that a goal is to “collect material about parts of British life that might not otherwise be so well represented within national collections”.

Balancing workloads with user needs was identified as a key issue by both Mary Stewart and Interviewee 1 in terms of selection for digitisation and online access. For example, Stewart suggests “there’s a whole raft of things we have to weigh up in terms of is it tying into something? Is there some press coverage or something that’s going to get it known about, or a particular set of students or members of the public who we can target the material for? And then there’s balancing that up against all of the internal work and time it’s going to take, and that includes writing to participants”, while Interviewee 1 suggests “there’s no point in doing something if nobody’s going to use it, so you’re balancing against impact and usefulness”. In addition to these issues, interviewees highlighted the need to
consider preservation: “although online access is a way of getting material out there, it also does fulfil a preservation need, because we digitise the material. So we need to be mindful, and we are mindful, that we digitise closed material” (Mary Stewart). Interviewee 1 suggests that this is increasingly important for archives as “the materials themselves are deteriorating all the time however well you store them, but also the equipment to play them on is getting harder and harder to get hold of”.

All interviewees had considered various ways of promoting the collections with which they were involved. Interviewee 2 highlighted that they had “used the university system by having them put out a press release”, while Interviewee 1 suggested a primary strategy was to “work with interested academics, particularly within the university”. The BL have also adopted other approaches in creating collections based around current events. For example, they launched “the Sport package in time for the Olympics, as part of the British Library’s offering for Olympic-related material” and “the Disability Voices package was launched in November, in time for Disability History Month” (Mary Stewart). This is in conjunction with maintaining a social media presence through blogging and Twitter. The BL also makes use of both external and internal website links to highlight materials (Mary Stewart).

○ Users

The final theme focused on the users of oral history recordings. This includes the users whom collections are aimed at and questions of how accessible the recordings are.

All three interviewees highlighted that while providing resources for researchers was a priority, so was reaching wider audiences: “our own students and academic staff are obviously our priority, but as with all archives, we’re not just serving a local area. It [Internet access] would allow them to listen to it, see it remotely” (Interviewee 1); “within ASR2 we launched the Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust package, and we did make that fully worldwide accessible to listen, not to download, and that’s the way we’ve been pushing everything since then” (Mary Stewart).
Difficulties in providing access to recordings were also a recurrent theme. Interviewee 1 highlights the difficulties of providing user access due to a lack of some playback equipment. It also became clear that “access” encompassed several factors as Mary Stewart suggests that “for some projects such as the disability projects we do need to think about it [transcription] in terms of access for people who can’t hear”.

4.2.2 Key findings

The professional interviews were useful for gaining an insider perspective to the issues faced when archiving and promoting oral history recordings. Five key themes emerged from the interviews: professional issues, technical issues, legal and ethical matters, management of resources, and users. These interviews led to several key findings. Forming partnerships and drawing from the experiences of external organisations allows an archival institution to develop their own processes in line with current standards, as well as develop new ways of engaging with access issues. The difficulties in balancing preservation needs and user wants with manageable workloads needs to be considered, as does the need for continuous foresight in terms of preservation needs. Further standards are needed in ensuring copyright and informed consent have been acquired, and institutions should consider various accessibility needs and how they are working to aid users in this respect.

4.3 Website analysis

Website analysis was conducted to gain an understanding of how BL Sounds makes oral history recordings available. This was accomplished through examining the site for browsing and searching capabilities, item information, restrictions, legal and ethical information and availability of help. Factors for analysis were influenced by the literature, specifically Barber (2004b) and MacLeod (2005), as well as through the interview with Mary Stewart, who spoke about various features of the Sounds website.

4.3.1 Collection information

Exploration of the Sounds website revealed that there are approximately 1353 separate interviews available for access via the website, divided into 7200 recordings across twelve collections (see Appendix D). Five of these collections containing approximately 687 interviews (50.77%) currently have access restrictions, allowing only those with HE or FE
credentials to listen to them. These were developed in the original ASR1 and ASR2 projects, the funding of which required restricted access. This leaves approximately 666 interviews available for public access.

Each collection has an introduction page highlighting who can listen to recordings within, as well as details about the context of the recordings or the projects which led to their creation. Many collection introductions also include details about ethical use of recordings and citation information, and highlight the scope of BL Sounds, which represents only a fraction of the recordings held in the Sound Archive.

4.3.2 Search functions

The keyword search function in the Sounds website searches the catalogue information of recordings and can be filtered to search for only publicly available recordings. However, it does not support advanced searches, which Mary Stewart suggests is “one of the frustrations with the site. It doesn’t allow such powerful searches as you can get using the Sound and Moving Image catalogue”. While it is possible to search for multiple terms, this will lead to results where the terms appear anywhere in the catalogue information regardless of their proximity.

4.3.3 Browsing

On BL Sounds, the categories used to subdivide each collection for searching vary (see Appendix D). Most are divided by interviewee name, with four collections also broken up by “rough categorisations to help people to understand a bit more what they were looking for. Because almost all of them are not famous names” (Mary Stewart). Within each subject, recordings are once again identified by interviewee name.

4.3.4 Catalogue information

The availability of catalogue information varies between collections. Generally this includes details about the interviewer(s) and interviewee(s), recording dates and locations, and descriptions and/or abstracts.
The level of detail in descriptions and abstracts on BL Sounds varied greatly between recordings, from a few lines with a brief description about the interviewee to an in-depth breakdown of the topics spoken of and time at which these occurred. This variation is largely to do with the original project. Mary Stewart highlights that “the projects we run in-house here at the library and all the partnership projects we work with should be giving us a fully time-coded content summary”. This catalogue information is essential in terms of accessibility, as “there are few enough words within them, even if some of them are quite lengthy, for them to be loaded onto either the catalogue or onto BL Sounds so that they can be text searchable”.

Transcripts are not available for the majority of recordings, although this “depends on the collection. All of the [Oral History of British Science] is transcribed, [as are] some of the Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust content package. There are some within the Art, Design and Architecture recordings, and there are definitely transcripts within the Hearing Link Project as part of Disability Voices, because that’s the main way that the interviews and interviewees will be able to access the interviews, because they can’t hear” (Mary Stewart). There are also some transcripts available in the Sport collection.

4.3.5 Legal and ethical information

Legal and ethical information pertaining to copyright, license agreements and ethical use of oral history recordings were clearly available on the site. This information was accessible through many of the content package descriptions as well as through a link under each recording.

4.3.6 Help

The site features a ‘help’ page with answers to various common questions, as well as an online contact notice should users need further information. This page gives information regarding restrictions and general troubleshooting, as well as using the interactive features such as tagging and playlist creation. Alongside the keyword search is a link for ‘search tips’. This explains the type of searches supported, as well as what is not supported.
4.3.7 Key findings

Key findings from the website analysis relate to the level of information available for collections, including project background, and recordings which vary a great deal. The lack of advanced search is considered a weakness of the site, although in some cases attempts to facilitate browsing have been made through the implementation of subject listings. Another important finding is that BL Sounds clearly displays information relating to copyright and ethical use of the recordings.

4.4 User tasks

User tasks and post-task interviews were used to better understand how easily users could access recordings and information pertaining to the recordings from the website. None of the participants had previously used the Sounds website specifically, although some had come across the BL’s general website.

4.4.1 Task results

Five participants were asked to complete sixteen tasks, which were designed to examine how easy it is to utilise various functions of the Sounds website, and the accessibility of various recordings and catalogue information from a user perspective. Tasks ranged from finding and downloading recordings to finding information using the catalogue or transcript (see Appendix B for full tasks). While there was no exact time limit, users were told not to spend more than a few minutes attempting to complete each task.

For the most part, users found the navigation around the Sounds website fairly easy (see Appendix E for complete results). For tasks 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9 and 13, which involved playing specific recordings, adding a recording to favourites, or finding information using the catalogue information, users rated the difficulty of each task between ‘easy’ and ‘average’. Several tasks warrant further examination due to the consensus in difficulty or variation in answers. The number of users who chose each response is shown in square brackets.

- Task 5 – Downloading a recording

This involved downloading a recording which required signing in using HE or FE credentials. Two users completed this task while three were unable to do so. All five declared this to be
“difficult” [2] or ‘very difficult’ [3]. In the post-task interviews, two of the users who were unable to complete this task suggested that they were unable to do so due to either an error on their part in finding the download button or that some recordings were not available to download.

- **Task 8 – Finding a recording by date**
  This task involved finding any recording which was about ‘athletics road events’ (one of the subject categories within the Sport collection) and which was recorded in 2006. Four users completed this task while one found a recording which did not meet all criteria. Perceptions of difficulty varied for this question, with it being found ‘very easy’ [1], ‘average’ [1], ‘difficult’ [2], and ‘very difficult’ [1].

- **Task 10 – Finding a recording**
  This task involved finding a recording titled “English Conversation: The Hotel”. Only two users were able to find this recording and rated the task ‘easy’ and ‘average’ in turn. The other participants rated the task ‘difficult’ [1] or ‘very difficult’ [2].

- **Task 12 – Downloading a recording**
  This task again involved downloading a recording. However, at this point users should have logged in using HE credentials. Participants found this task easier than the first downloading task, declaring it was ‘very easy’ [1] or ‘easy’ [2]. One user still rated this process ‘difficult’, and one did not complete the task or provide a difficulty rating.

- **Task 14 – Finding background information**
  This task involved finding information about an interviewee’s background (such as place and date of birth). Four users found some basic information about the interviewee through accessing the abstract [1], listening to the recording [1], and accessing the transcript [2] and rated the task ‘easy’. The participants who listened to the recording or used the transcript found more specific details regarding the interviewee. One user did not find the information and rated this task ‘difficult’.
4.4.2 Post-task interviews

Interviews with participants took place immediately after they had completed the tasks. These focused on the participant’s experiences using the website and the difficulty levels in doing so. Several questions were drawn from the System Usability Scale (Brooke, 1996) to better understand the usability of the site. The interview recordings were transcribed and coded, primarily using In Vivo Coding (Saldana, 2009). Initial codes were further analysed, leading to the development of three general codes: website features, user perceptions, and changes.

- Website features

This code applies to user comments related specifically to various features of the website, such as the searching and browsing facilities, functions such as downloading, the design of the interface and catalogue information.

Users suggested the keyword search was “quite straightforward” and that one “didn’t have to think of really complicated search terms” to find results. However, some seemed confused about the lack of support for advanced search capabilities: “searching for things with two words didn’t really work. I don’t know if you were supposed to put the Boolean ‘AND’ in it. I thought that would probably be assumed”.

Prior to logging in with HE credentials, downloading recordings caused confusion, with one user saying they “couldn’t see how to download at all” and another suggesting that some recordings “didn’t have a download button”. Several users discovered that downloading was possible, although still had trouble completing Task 5: “I went to the help file and it said that you could download it but it didn’t tell you how to download it”; “I tried a few different ways to do it. Eventually I logged in as student, and then the download thing appeared. But that took a long workaround to get that working.”

The design of the site caused mixed reviews, with some suggesting it was “quite clean” or “really nicely designed, and quite usable”, while another commented that “there is a lot going on and it’s extremely busy”. Two users suggested that they would have liked the inclusion of more visual material as one progressed further into the site.
Users generally appreciated the level of information available for recordings, although one commented of summaries with less detail that “it’s always better to have more detail, because some of the interviews are quite long, and you can’t spend forever listening to them all”.

- User perceptions

User perspectives were important in determining the accessibility of the website. Participants all agreed that the site was easy to navigate, requiring little previous knowledge in order to use it effectively. Registering was considered a simple task, and users felt that the website would become easier to navigate with more use. The interviews suggested that participants appreciated the amount of information available for recordings as well as the keyword search which was simple to use, although one suggested that “it would be nice to have a bit more sophistication in the search”.

Not all impressions were so positive. One participant commented that “it was difficult to find things that I might be interested in. For instance, I wanted to look and see whether there were any talks on atheism or something like that. I felt that was more difficult. I was actually just looking through a list of names”. Several uncertainties about using the site emerged throughout the interviews, particularly relating to the differences between the Sound and Moving Image catalogue and the Sounds website, leading one participant to say “I didn’t know the differences between the two catalogues, what should be in where and why”.

- Changes

Recommendations for change were fairly limited. Users suggested the use of more images, and more sophistication in the search functions. The lack of further recommendations may partially be due to the fact that none of the participants used oral history recordings and so were unsure as to whether those doing so would want specific information or functions to improve access.
4.4.3 Key findings

User tasks and post-task interviews provided a better understanding of how accessible recordings are and led to the development of three codes: website features, user perceptions, and changes. Users largely found the site fairly accessible and specific recordings easy to find, although at times some had trouble using the keyword search. One user suggested that browsing for interesting materials without subject categories was difficult. Users were also generally able to find information relating to the recordings in the content summaries or transcripts without difficulty. Tasks involving downloading were not so easily completed, and users felt the login process to download items was not obvious.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has summarised the results from the data collection. Key findings suggest that while copyright restrictions remain an obstacle for some institutions, ethical issues are prominent for all. Additionally, selecting materials for digitisation is a complicated process which necessitates balancing user demands with workloads and in some cases with copyright permissions as well. Professional interviewees highlighted various other issues which arise in relation to accessibility, such as considering users with special needs.

Findings relating to the website analysis and user tasks suggest that BL Sounds provides a fairly accessible website which promotes ethical use of oral history materials. Various strengths, such as ease of registering and finding specific recordings are highlighted, as are weaknesses such as the lack of advanced search capabilities and confusion for users as to downloading options. These elements will be further discussed in Chapter Five.
Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the key findings from Chapter Four in terms of how these have contributed to the BL’s development of an online oral history collection, whether these might be models of good practice for other institutions, and how the example of the BL can be positioned within existing literature. While this research cannot be used to draw generalisations about the state of oral history across institutions, the experience of the BL can provide lessons which others planning the development of an online oral history collection may wish to consider.

5.2 Operational factors

The interview with Mary Stewart and the analysis of the Sounds website reveal several relevant factors to the BL’s design and implementation of its online oral history collection, some of which have been touched on to an extent by existing academic literature and the BL’s own evaluations of its online oral history collection. This section will outline these areas and consider the BL’s management of them.

5.2.1 Professional

The interview with Mary Stewart revealed the benefits for an online oral history repository of liaising closely with relevant professional bodies. The BL are much larger than most archives that hold these recordings, meaning that staff members have access to support and experience both within and outside the institution. The benefits that the BL gets from its connections with professional associations and the in-house resources that it draws on cannot necessarily be replicated by other institutions. Nevertheless, there are beneficial effects to liaising with professional bodies, something which was confirmed by both Interviewees 1 and 2. This is not something that has been particularly well highlighted by current literature.

Additionally, lessons can be drawn from the partnerships that the BL have developed. Collaboration between institutions in digitisation projects is being encouraged, both within the UK and internationally (JISC 2007). This is important not only for financial and
experiential reasons, but also to avoid a silo effect which could lead to duplication of digitisation efforts across institutions (JISC 2011).

5.2.2 Technical

The three professional interviews highlighted that digitisation standards are largely agreed upon in the profession. The BL are following international standards in their use of .wav format for preservation versions and MP3s for access recordings (Heritage Lottery Fund, 2009; Oral History Society, 2008; Stevens & Latham, 2009). This allows conservation of high-quality recordings, while supplying users with much smaller files which can be downloaded or streamed quickly (Stevens & Latham, 2009). These are important standards for those considering the development of an oral history site to conform to, not only in terms of providing access at present, but looking towards future access as well. As was highlighted by Interviewee 1, digitisation does not constitute an end point for the preservation of recordings. Formats will need to be continually updated as technology evolves. By following international recommendations in this area, it is more likely that archives and libraries will be able to update these recordings as needed. In this way, the BL sets a standard which should be followed by others whenever possible. This may be an area of concern for smaller institutions without mass storage systems to house multiple .wav recordings. However, smaller systems are gradually becoming available (IASA, 2005; Daniels, 2009), making it increasingly possible for all institutions to achieve these recommendations.

5.2.3 Legal and ethical

As was established in the literature review, legal and ethical questions relating to such matters as copyright and the privacy of participants are a key area of concern for those responsible for oral history collections, not only in terms of publishing material but also in terms of having rights to digitise materials for long-term preservation (Wallot & Fortier, 1998). In discussing the Sounds website with Mary Stewart, it became clear the BL have on the whole dealt with legal and ethical issues very effectively. Through having a clear copyright policy, the BL have minimised potential copyright difficulties as it has published its oral history collections online. They generally do not accept recordings without clear copyright documentation, and as standard the department
requests that copyright be transferred to the BL, although some interviewees and deposited projects negotiate different copyright and licensing arrangements (Mary Stewart; BL, 2012d). This may be in some ways what has allowed the BL to build up an online oral history presence where others have been unable to do so, as Swain (2003) highlights that in the past recordings were often produced without considering copyright. Additionally, Mary Stewart highlights that “the majority of people trust the British Library to look after their recording”. The BL’s reputation as a leading research institution may contribute to the willingness of interviewees to relinquish copyright.

The BL have a similarly comprehensive approach to the ethical questions that arise from disseminating oral histories online. Individual interviewees are contacted whenever possible before recordings are published online. This is an ethical issue rather than a legal one, and is in line with recommendations from the Oral History Society (Ward, 2003). Contacting interviewees for permission to publish interviews online greatly affects the workload of BL staff, as Mary Stewart suggests that it takes a substantial amount of time to carry out initial correspondence for a collection. However, if reasonable efforts have been made to obtain consent without results, the BL can legally put the materials online, meaning that effort has not been wasted. This practice highlights the importance of preserving paperwork used to contact interviewees for consent. In the circumstances that an individual is not found and later raises concerns that their interview is available online, this can be used to show them that reasonable efforts to contact them had been made prior to putting the recording online (Mary Stewart; BL, 2007). This is thus another practice which those considering online oral history collections should bear in mind.

Additionally, processes for handling complaints are addressed through use of a clear takedown procedure (BL, 2012b), which appears under the ‘legal and ethical use’ link available with each recording. This is consistent with the recommendation that websites should provide information should one wish materials to be removed, as well as guidance regarding ethical use of recordings (Barber, 2004b; Perks, 2009). The mechanism of the takedown policy also gives the BL an efficient method for dealing with potential defamation issues within the oral history content. Although the literature does not generally go beyond raising this as a theoretical issue (Ritchie, 1995; Wallot & Fortier, 1998), the interview with Mary Stewart revealed that occasionally concerns have been
raised by a participant or someone mentioned in a recording (though admittedly not many); through its takedown policy the library was quickly able to draw a line under them.

That its handling of legal and ethical issues is a successful aspect of the BL’s oral history collection is demonstrated both by the difficulties that other collections have experienced in areas such as copyright as outlined in the secondary literature (Brewster, 2000; MacLeod, 2005), and also the experience of interviewee 1 from the professional interviews. Therefore, through its comprehensive approach to copyright, its effective mechanisms for handling concerns or complaints and its practices in pursuing reasonable attempts to contact interviewees prior to publishing their recordings online, the BL sets a good example for other online oral history repositories to follow.

5.2.4 Resource management and implications for users and access

Interviewees 1 and 2 as well as Mary Stewart suggested that one of the key purposes of publishing oral history online is to widen access to existing collections using the Internet. However, the early experiences of the BL suggest that this objective can to an extent be limited by funding considerations. ASR1 and ASR2 were funded by JISC with terms of the funding largely limiting listening access to higher education institutions. Mary Stewart highlighted that this was not ideal, suggesting that “that way of funding and the way the project worked meant that we were quite restricted in terms of the access we requested for ASR1: higher education only. ASR2 recognised this and the access we requested for many of the collections in this phase was broadened”. This is not a best practice issue, but indicates some of the factors that those considering developing oral history collections need to be mindful of in terms of acquiring the resources to achieve wider access. It is likely that other archival institutions will need similar funding for initial stages of developing an online resource (Ritchie, 1995), as was the case with the Oral History Center at the University of Louisville (Daniels, 2009).

Despite restrictions, the ASR1 project played a pivotal role in establishing the Sounds website and served as a base from which to expand the online collection. This is certainly a model that could be adopted by other online oral history repositories. The success of this approach seems to be borne out by the experience of the BL’s own oral history collections. For them, JISC funding led to the development of the initial site, which was “seen as a way
of testing the water of whether people would be happy for their material to go online to a limited audience”. The website was then further developed in the JISC-funded ASR2 project, before becoming “a business as usual activity within the British Library” (Mary Stewart). This is not to suggest that it would impossible for an institution to put all of its collections online at once, but that the gradual method deployed by the BL seems to have been a success, and could thus be considered by others. Some institutions have made use of recordings to which they have clear copyright to begin building initial online collections (Daniels, 2009).

This strategy of long-term development is also consistent with the fact that the BL has to balance its aim of providing wider access to recordings with limitations to resources, which have become more limited in recent years. The need to balance workloads with access was highlighted by Mary Stewart, as was discussed in Chapter Four. It seems that the model being employed is consistent with the imperative of balancing the aim of improving access against available resources, which is something that virtually all institutions will share. This in turn makes the BL’s gradual approach to website development all the more relevant to other collections.

Although there may have been some obstacles to providing public online access to recordings in the early days of the website, it is clear that in other respects the BL have developed coherent strategies to attract the public to take an interest in recordings, for example uploading collections which relate to real world events and making use of social media. One of oral history’s problems has been a lack of public awareness of the field, with Ritchie (1995), Ulargiu (2000) and Bath (2005) all highlighting that finding collections of oral history is often not possible, let alone finding specific recordings within a collection. The BL’s promotional initiatives are complemented by the strategy of including oral history in existing catalogues and on websites, a strategy highlighted by Ritchie (1995) and Stevens and Latham (2009). As Mary Stewart points out “we’re given quite a bit of prominence within the main British Library website, so that also helps”. The success of this promotion is reflected in the fact that many organisations “link to ours to show the material that we’re playing” (Mary Stewart). Given that the goal of opening access seems to be widely held as a key goal of online oral history (Swain, 2003), it seems sensible for other institutions to follow similar strategies in this regard.
Directly related to the issues of resources management are those of user access. These are in many ways two sides of the same coin, as one is only able to broaden access if one has the resources to contact individuals to gain permission for public access to recordings, transcribe recordings or develop website features to allow more sophisticated searching for example.

The professional interview with Mary Stewart opened up an extra dimension to the concept of access, namely the efforts being made to allow users with hearing difficulties to access recordings. One method of facilitating access in these circumstances is through the provision of transcripts. However, efforts to do this are severely limited by resources as the transcription process is costly and thus not always possible. Nevertheless, Mary Stewart points out that the BL are mindful of considering various accessibility needs or difficulties. This is an issue that is not discussed in the literature but would clearly be beneficial for those developing online collections to consider in their own practices.

In all three professional interviews, transcription was not considered a priority, again due to the resources required, which Wallot and Fortier (1998) highlight as the main obstacle in providing transcripts. Additionally, it is interesting that few user task participants mentioned the use of transcripts. One task did result in two participants accessing the transcript to find more information. However, another participant suggested “I hadn’t thought of [using the transcript] myself, so I didn’t”. Therefore it seems that although a substantial proportion of the literature on oral history discusses the importance of transcripts (Thompson, 2000b; Daniels, 2009), as was highlighted in Chapter Two, it would appear that for the BL and the other interviewees this is not a pressing concern.

5.3 Users’ perspectives

Another important dimension to this study has been the users’ perspectives. Through analysing the data collected from the user tasks and post-task interviews, the interview with Mary Stewart, and the website analysis, certain features that could serve as models of best practice emerge from the Sounds website, as well as certain limitations from which future online oral history collections could learn. These themes partly address areas that have not yet been explored in the literature, while others add to previous studies.
5.3.1 Searching

Given how commonplace keyword searches are on websites, it is easy to overlook how a keyword search that can take users directly to an audio recording is a potentially powerful feature of placing an oral history collection online, and one which the majority of oral history collections do not benefit from due to them not being online. On a fundamental level the usefulness of this feature is demonstrated by the fact that those who completed the user tasks were able to make effective use of the keyword search to locate specific recordings using a one-word search term or shelf mark. It must be kept in mind that this feature may seem ordinary in the context of how websites generally work, but for oral history collections this is an important advance.

While this may constitute an advance, this is not to say there is no room for improvement on the BL's keyword search feature. While users generally found the search function easy to use, the lack of advanced search was found to be one of the main shortcomings of the Sounds website, leading one user to state “more sophistication in the search would be nice”. This was further demonstrated by the fact that all users had difficulty finding “English Conversation: the hotel” due to the complications of searching using multiple terms.

One possible way to improve in this area would be to allow Boolean search terms or other advanced search facilities on BL Sounds, as this would allow users to conduct more complex searches and thus more easily find relevant results. The BL are certainly aware of this drawback, with Mary Stewart suggesting of the development of advanced search features: “I would love to say that we were planning to do that, but I don’t think that that is going to be possible at the moment with limited resources that we have. However new developments and technologies may mean that by the later 2010s the BL can launch a different, more sophisticated solution for online delivery of audio-visual material”. Again, a lack of resources is one of the main impediments to improving user access.

The user task experience also highlighted a potential pitfall of incomplete integration between the Sounds website and the institution’s broader sound catalogues. Two participants briefly used the Sound and Moving Image catalogue instead of the Sounds website search facilities. This created confusion as audio cannot always be directly accessed from the Sound and Moving Image catalogue, although the BL is currently
working to resolve this. It is worth highlighting that the Sound and Moving Image catalogue does in fact offer the advanced search features not available on the Sounds website. However, because some recordings cannot currently be accessed directly from this catalogue, users may need to then return to the Sounds website to see if recordings are available remotely. This is a shortcoming that future online oral history projects would do well to address so that they do not alienate users with confusing or limited search functions. This is further highlighted in the literature by Swain (2003) and Stevens and Latham (2009), who recommend integration of oral histories into existing library catalogues, with links to remote recordings directly from the catalogue (Gronow, 2007). Mary Stewart suggests that “the Sounds website, in an ideal world, [would] merge in more with our catalogue so that we had less of a parallel system and more of a way for the whole of the collections within the Sound Archive to be highlighted” as well as for “people to be able to use the advanced search functions within the Sound and Moving Image catalogue, but also be able to play materials direct from the catalogue. We certainly hope that the successor delivery-platform to BL Sounds, possibly to be launched by the later 2010s, will encompass these features”. While developing a website is certainly a big undertaking, integrating it with existing catalogues is perhaps even more difficult, especially as oral histories do not easily fit into current cataloguing standards (MacKay, 2007). This may be an instance when the BL’s size is in fact a disadvantage in the respect that it has a much larger catalogue to manage than smaller institutions.

5.3.2 Browsing

Before considering the specifics of browsing the collections, it is worth considering the extent to which the initial presentation of the website encourages first-time users to explore and take an interest in the website. This is an important aspect of BL Sounds, and indeed any online oral history collection, as a good layout contributes to making the material more accessible, thus fulfilling the goal of opening up oral history to new audiences. Some of the interviewees had positive feedback about the the initial landing page of the oral history site, with one interviewee in particular saying “the images are quiet interesting. They kind of draw you in. So for browsing it seems quite nice really”. Additionally, the layout shows off the eclectic mixture of collections available, which is in itself an important attraction of BL Sounds. The layout of the Sounds website therefore seems to have at least a measure of success in engaging the initial interest of first time
visitors, though given the small sample of users consulted it would be unwise to draw firm conclusions about this particular aspect of it.

Like any oral history collection, BL Sounds faces the difficult balancing act of creating a satisfactory categorisation system for its various collections. Most of the collections on the BL Sounds website are categorised using the speaker’s name (see Appendix D). In addition to this, some but not all collections have a thematic categorisation, which is recommended by Ritchie (1995) and Wallot and Fortier (1998). Although, as Ritchie (1995) identifies, categorising the recordings within a collection using interviewee name is the most common method of organisation, the post-task interviews suggested that this was not a particularly enlightening method of organisation. The process of creating an online oral history repository in this case has therefore not fully resolved the issue of creating meaningful subject headings for browsing. However, this is a difficult issue to address because, as Daniels (2009) points out oral history interviews rarely focus on one topic, especially when they span over the course of several hours. Additionally, this is an issue to do with the nature of oral history recordings themselves, and thus there is no reason that new ways of providing access to recordings would necessarily solve the inherent difficulties in assigning categories. Therefore, while the Sounds website does not appear to have fully resolved the question of multiple subject headings, it would seem that this is an issue for the wider oral history community to consider rather than one that is limited to those making collections available online.

5.3.3 Item information

The amount of detail provided for a recording will affect whether or not users deem it to be worth listening to. Thompson (2000b) recommends that summaries contain information pertaining to the various subjects, places, ideas and periods spoken about on the recording. As the website analysis revealed, BL Sounds provides some information for all of the recordings, although the level of detail varies. One user task participant suggested the level of detail was good, although highlighted that higher levels of detail were always desirable in order to facilitate the process of finding relevant recordings. Again, this is not an issue which is restricted to online oral history collections as institutions housing recordings will generally have to make do with documentation that was accessioned with the recording. The BL sets a good example in this regard as it receives time-coded summaries for
interviews created through its partnership programmes. The benefits of collaboration are once again clear as archives or libraries can request detailed information, which will allow them to make recordings more easily accessible for users.

5.3.4 Downloading and playing

Where recordings were universally accessible without a login, the user task participants had no problems in playing recordings. It is easy to take the extent to which this constitutes an important advance for granted. None of the user participants emphasised the ease with which they could listen to recordings, but this is perhaps a reflection of the fact that the Internet has made streaming audio embedded in websites seem like a commonplace, perhaps even basic feature. This should not obscure the fact that analysing this purely from the point of view of accessing oral history collections, this represents a much more convenient and accessible method of playback than visiting an archive and accessing either digital audio through an intranet page or a hardcopy through a playback device. The effortlessness of audio playback on BL Sounds is certainly something other online oral history collections should look to replicate.

However, problems did arise with regards to the question of downloading materials. Because downloading is restricted to users with HE access credentials, the issue of downloading materials is very much linked to the previously discussed issues of widening or restricting access to recordings. However, even for those with these credentials, the distinction that the website draws between unrestricted playback (at least for some collections) and restricted downloading of the interviews created confusion for the users. The user tasks and post-task interviews highlighted that it was not necessarily clear how one would approach downloading recordings prior to HE login, although once logged in this was no longer an issue.

Whether users should be able to download recordings or simply stream them through the website is a matter of debate on which there does not appear to be a consensus, either in the data collection or the literature (Swain, 2003; MacLeod, 2005; Daniels, 2009). One of the users explicitly cited her inability to download files as a reason why she would not use the website in the future as she could not listen to recordings offline when she is most likely to want to access them. However, this perspective must be contrasted with
Interviewee 2, who suggested that downloading was not supported due to a loss of control. As online oral history collections remain relatively new, it may be that this debate needs to mature before recommendations can be made. Therefore, the example of BL Sounds does not offer a clear cut indication of whether downloading files, either by all users or a restricted group, is or is not a suitable approach to take. In all likelihood, this will also be related to issues of copyright and permissions, and is thus something which individual institutions will need to determine based on their own circumstances.

5.4 Conclusion

An analysis of the findings reveals some key ways in which the BL Sounds website can function as a model of best practice for other institutions planning online oral history collections. It has a comprehensive approach to copyright and ethical issues; it has worked to very good effect with other professional bodies; it has followed recognised digitisation standards; it has developed strategies for engaging the public’s interest in the collections; and it has created a website that users found easy to navigate for essential functions such as streaming audio playback, basic keyword searches and finding information about the recordings.

However, it has also been revealed that the Sounds website has not resolved every unanswered question related to oral history management. Some of these issues, such as developing a satisfactory subject categorisation, existed prior to the advent of online oral history collections and will continue to pose problems. Others, such as implementing effective advanced search functions – something which it was established would be very helpful to users – and integrating access to digital recordings into existing institutional catalogues are more specific to online oral history and remain as yet unresolved. However, it emerged that many of these issues are due to a lack of resources for further developing the Sounds website – an issue with which most archives and library are familiar – and may be resolved with future developments to the site and its eventual successor. BL Sounds is, as Mary Stewart highlights, “pioneering in trying to make material available online”, and it should be taken as encouraging that websites on which to model best practice and promote discussion are emerging.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will synthesise some of the key findings of the study, as well as examine whether it has fulfilled its objectives. Highlighted below are suggestions for further research in the field that is needed to draw a more complete picture of the situation of oral history in archival institutions.

6.2 Fulfilment of research aims and objectives

The aim of this study was to understand various issues that arise in the course of making oral history recordings available online through in-depth examination of oral history collections on the BL’s Sounds website. Further objectives included to understand existing practices in archiving oral history recordings, specifically those relating to legal and ethical issues; ways to improve accessibility to recordings; and models of best practice in developing online resources.

This study has broadly fulfilled its aims, in that it led to a deeper understanding of existing archival practices in dealing with oral history recordings, some of the legal and ethical issues which arise in relation to publishing oral histories online, and some beneficial practices in developing online oral history collections. That being said, it must be recognised that the state of oral history recordings is diverse and complicated, and that various institutions or organisations will have or will have had different experiences in accordance with their own sets of circumstances. Thus, further studies are needed to gain a complete understanding of the obstacles that institutions housing oral history recordings face in their operations, especially as these relate to developing online resources.

6.3 Key findings

It was discovered that several factors have played a part in the BL’s successes of developing an online oral history resource through the Sounds website. Among these are the in-house and external resources from which the BL can use in terms of drawing on up-to-date knowledge of technical standards and oral history practices, and developing a wider understanding of various accessibility issues. This is certainly an area which other archival
institutions may wish to replicate. Following up-to-date technological standards in terms of digitising recordings will also be important for others to follow, and this is something which the guidance of others may aid with, as staying informed of developments will be difficult for overworked archival staff. Further areas which will need to be considered are the terms of funding and whether this will affect one’s ability to provide access (as was the case for the BL). However, this may be worthwhile if it means that initial development can take place upon which to build later collections.

Further developments that emerged from this study were the various ways in which collections can be promoted, which is essential to consider as Ulargiu (2000) and Bath (2000) highlight that often collections are difficult to find. Methods identified to promote recordings included use of social media, working with interested academics and liaising with other organisations that can help promote material. There is no one best method for promotion and archives would do well to consider a variety of approaches to ensure that users are aware of their resources.

Another area in which the BL was found to be setting a good example was in regards to legal and ethical issues. Copyright information is clearly highlighted on the Sounds website, as is information pertaining to the ethical use of oral history recordings. These are areas in which other institutions have been found to be lacking (Brewster, 2000; MacLeod, 2005). The BL thus sets a clear model of good practice which other institutions would do well to emulate in the development of their own online oral history collections.

The study also examined the Sounds site from a user perspective, with a focus on the searching and browsing facilities. While there were drawbacks in the lack of advanced search functions and incomplete integration with the Sound and Moving Image catalogue, users were still largely able to complete various user tasks. Browsing led to similar findings, in that further subject headings would be desirable although the site does facilitate a degree of browsing. While it is easy to encourage other institutions to develop more sophisticated search functions or index listings, it has been identified that these weaknesses result from a lack of resources to further develop the Sounds website. This is an issue which other archival and library institutions will need to contend with in the
development of online oral history collections, and thus making similar decisions may be necessary.

Interestingly, despite the focus on transcription processes in the literature, this was not a priority of the BL or other interviewees, largely due to availability of resources. Finally, it became clear through this study that there is no consensus on whether oral history materials should be available for downloading, or restricted to streaming. This is likely a decision that individual institutions will need to make in light of their own circumstances, at least until the field has developed to the point that best practice in this matter becomes clear.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

Further research is needed both to gain a wider understanding of how archives could make more of oral history recordings, as well as to develop more conclusive models of best practice which can be applied across institutions.

- A comparative study focusing on other leading websites in this area would help to build the overall context of online oral history, especially elements that lead to success in this area.

- It would be useful for an in-depth study to be conducted to determine how those using oral histories search for works created by others, which resources they use and how they navigate websites in their search processes.

- A study based around the perspective of those creating oral histories (those who formulate oral history projects and conduct interviews) could shed light on how the availability of oral history projects online may affect how projects are devised and the potential implications on factors such as the willingness of interviewees to share their stories knowing that they will be available for virtually anyone to listen to.

Word count: 14,895
References


Appendix A: Professional interview questions

1. How has the Sounds website developed since the ASR1 and ASR2 projects/ Can you tell me about the digitisation project?
2. What are the main goals of the audio digitisation? (preservation, dissemination, conservation, etc.)
3. Who do you see as the main users of the site?
4. How do you decide what to digitise and what to put online? Are certain materials more suitable than others?
5. What are your primary concerns in putting recordings online? (e.g. metadata, finding aids, other accessibility issues, copyright, permissions, other legal issues)
6. Have you had to avoid providing access to certain recordings due to potential legal matters (e.g. libel)?
7. Approximately how many recordings do you currently have? What proportion of these are available for public access/available online?
8. Are full transcripts available for any of the recordings? Are these available online?
9. Advanced search facilities and Boolean searching are not currently supported. Are there plans for this in the future? What will these look like? What do you see as the main complications in developing these search facilities?
10. How are the categorisation subjects decided for different collections decided (e.g. interviewee name, subject, map, date, name, contributor, county)?
11. What other finding aids do you use/ have you considered using?
12. What other standards (e.g. audio length, transcripts etc.) are used? How much do these vary?
13. How are the digitised collections being promoted for wider dissemination?
14. What are the average costs of digitising audio recordings (e.g. by hour of recording)? Do you have sufficient funding to digitise what you’d like or do you have to cut some recordings out?
15. On average, how long does it take to get a recording online (dealing with copyright, uploading, etc.)? Are there currently staff who deal with this specifically or is this everyone’s role?
16. There are some restrictions in place (e.g. some items are only available for those affiliated with higher education institutions). How are these decided and imposed?
17. Have you met with any problems? How did you handle these?
18. How do you deal with “accessibility”? For example if someone has hearing difficulties, is there another way they can access content?

19. What do you see as the future of the collection/website?

20. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments that you’d like to share?
Appendix B: User task survey

British Library Sounds Website User Survey

This survey is being conducted as part of an MSc dissertation in Information Management at the University of Sheffield. Questions have been designed to gather information regarding user experiences of accessing the British Library’s Sounds website (http://sounds.bl.uk/), especially in regards to the oral history section of this site (http://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history). The survey consists of 15 tasks and will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Please note that all responses will remain completely anonymous.

You do not need to precisely time how long it takes to answer any of the questions. However, with the exception of question 1, if you are unable to complete a task within approximately 3 minutes, simply indicate that you were unable to complete it (each task begins with the question “were you able to complete this task?”) and move on to the next task.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey.

1. Register for an account at sounds.bl.uk.
   a) How easy was this task?
      ☐ Very easy ☐ Easy ☐ Average ☐ Difficult ☐ Very difficult

   *Now proceed to the “Oral History” section of the Sounds website and take a few minutes to explore the sight if you wish. All subsequent tasks will be based around this section of the website. http://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/

2. Play any recording from the “Oral History of British Science” collection. You do not have to listen to more than the first 10 seconds of the recording.
   a) Were you able to complete this task? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   b) How easy was this task?
      ☐ Very easy ☐ Easy ☐ Average ☐ Difficult ☐ Very difficult
3. Play any recording from this collection about meteorology. You do not have to listen to more than the first 10 seconds of the recording.

   a) Were you able to complete this task? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   b) How easy was this task?

   ☐ Very easy ☐ Easy ☐ Average ☐ Difficult ☐ Very difficult

4. Locate and play recording with shelf mark C0410/094. You do not have to listen to more than the first 10 seconds of the recording.

   a) Were you able to complete this task? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   b) What was the name of the interviewee?

       Click here to enter text.

   c) How did you locate the recording?

       ☐ Browsing

       ☐ Keyword search (please specify search terms): Click here to enter text.

       ☐ Other (please specify): Click here to enter text.

   d) How easy was this task?

       ☐ Very easy ☐ Easy ☐ Average ☐ Difficult ☐ Very difficult

5. Download recording with shelf mark C0410/094. Check to make sure it has downloaded. You don’t need to listen to more than the first 10 seconds of this recording.

   a) Were you able to complete this task? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   b) How easy was this task?

       ☐ Very easy ☐ Easy ☐ Average ☐ Difficult ☐ Very difficult

6. Locate and play recording with shelf mark C459/149. You do not have to listen to more than the first 10 seconds of the recording.

   a) Were you able to complete this task? ☐ Yes ☐ No

   b) What was the name of the interviewee?

       Click here to enter text.
7. Find and play a recording by someone who was either in Dachau concentration camp or had a relative there. There may be more than one answer. You only need to provide one.

a) Were you able to complete this task?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

b) What is the shelf mark for this recording?
Click here to enter text.

c) How did you find this information?
☐ Browsing
☐ Keyword search (please specify search terms): Click here to enter text.
☐ Other (please specify): Click here to enter text.

d) How easy was this task?
☐ Very easy  ☐ Easy  ☐ Average  ☐ Difficult  ☐ Very difficult

8. Locate and play a recording about athletics road events that was recorded in 2006. There may be more than one answer. You only need to provide one.

a) Were you able to complete this task?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

b) What is the shelf mark for this recording?
Click here to enter text.

c) How did you find this information?
☐ Browsing
☐ Keyword search (please specify search terms): Click here to enter text.
☐ Other (please specify): Click here to enter text.
9. Add one of these recordings to your favourites.

a) Were you able to complete this task? ☐ Yes ☐ No

b) How easy was this task?
☐ Very easy ☐ Easy ☐ Average ☐ Difficult ☐ Very difficult

10. Locate and play recording “English Conversation: The Hotel” from the Early Spoken Word Recordings collection. You don’t need to listen to more than the first 10 seconds of this recording.

a) Were you able to complete this task? ☐ Yes ☐ No

b) How easy was this task?
☐ Very easy ☐ Easy ☐ Average ☐ Difficult ☐ Very difficult

11. Create a playlist from the following recordings found in the History of the Common Cold Unit: Thom, Audrey; Gee, Noel ‘Bill’ (recording 1 of 2); Stott, E.J. (recording 2 of 2); Clements, Michael.

a) Were you able to complete this task? ☐ Yes ☐ No

b) How easy was this task?
☐ Very easy ☐ Easy ☐ Average ☐ Difficult ☐ Very difficult

12. Download the recording with interviewee Michael Clements found in the History of the Common Cold Unit.

a) Were you able to complete this task? ☐ Yes ☐ No

b) How easy was this task?
☐ Very easy ☐ Easy ☐ Average ☐ Difficult ☐ Very difficult
13. Locate recordings with the interviewee Martin Anson in the Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust collection.

a) Were you able to complete this task? ☐ Yes ☐ No

b) How did you do this?
☐ Browsing
☐ Keyword search (please specify search terms): Click here to enter text.
☐ Other (please specify): Click here to enter text.

c) How easy was this task?
☐ Very easy ☐ Easy ☐ Average ☐ Difficult ☐ Very difficult

d) Who was Martin Anson? (e.g. place and date of birth, other general background information)

Click here to enter text.

e) Where did you find this information?
☐ Abstract
☐ Listening to recording
☐ Transcript
☐ Other catalogue information
☐ Didn’t find it
☐ Other (please specify): Click here to enter text.

f) How easy was it to find out this information about him?
☐ Very easy ☐ Easy ☐ Average ☐ Difficult ☐ Very difficult

14. Locate recordings with the interviewee Edgar Duchin in the Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust collection.

a) Were you able to complete this task? ☐ Yes ☐ No

b) How did you do this?
☐ Browsing
☐ Keyword search (please specify search terms): Click here to enter text.
☐ Other (please specify): Click here to enter text.
c) How easy was this?
☐ Very easy    ☐ Easy    ☐ Average    ☐ Difficult    ☐ Very difficult

d) Who was Edgar Duchin? (e.g. place and date of birth, other general background information)

Click here to enter text.

e) Where did you find this information?
☐ Abstract
☐ Listening to recording
☐ Transcript
☐ Other catalogue information
☐ Didn’t find it
☐ Other (please specify): Click here to enter text.

f) How easy was it to find out this information about him?
☐ Very easy    ☐ Easy    ☐ Average    ☐ Difficult    ☐ Very difficult

15. Locate recording with shelf mark C0410/012.
a) Were you able to complete this task?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No

b) Did the interviewee (Margaret Augstein) have any siblings?

Click here to enter text.

c) How did you find this information?
☐ Catalogue information
☐ Listening to the recording
☐ Accessing the transcript
☐ Other (please specify): Click here to enter text.

d) How easy was this?
☐ Very easy    ☐ Easy    ☐ Average    ☐ Difficult    ☐ Very difficult
16. Find a recording or collection that you would be interested in listening to.

Click here to enter text.

17. What were the best points about this website?

Click here to enter text.

18. What were the worst points about this website?

Click here to enter text.
Appendix C: Post-task interview questions

1. Which task(s) did you find the easiest to complete?

2. Which task(s) did you find the most difficult to complete?

3. [Look over survey] Were there any tasks that you were unable to complete?
   a. If yes, what was the problem in each one?

4. Did you refer to the Help page at any point?
   a. If yes, what did you need help with?
   b. Were you able to find information that helped?

5. Do you think the recordings and related information were fairly accessible overall?

6. Do you think you would use this system frequently?

7. Was the system easy to use?

8. Do you think you would need support of a technical person to use this system?

9. Did you find the various functions to be well integrated?

10. Did you think there were inconsistencies in the system?

11. Do you think most people would learn to use this system quickly?

12. Do you feel confident using the system?

13. Do you feel like you needed to learn a lot of things before you could get going with the system?

14. [Look at question 16 of survey] Can you tell me a bit about why you liked this aspect?

15. [Look at question 17 of survey] Can you tell me about why you didn’t like this?

16. Overall, what are your thoughts on the design and user interface of the website?

17. Are there any improvements or changes that you would make to the website?
## Appendix D: Sounds website oral history collections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Collection</th>
<th>No. of recordings</th>
<th>Actual no. of interviewees</th>
<th>Restrictions</th>
<th>Browsing categories</th>
<th>Subcategories (and no. of interviews)</th>
<th>Other notes</th>
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<td>2692</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>HE &amp; FE</td>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td>Architecture (23)</td>
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<td>Photography (107)</td>
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<td>97</td>
<td>Anyone</td>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td>Cerebral Palsy (31)</td>
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<td>Anyone</td>
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<td>HE &amp; FE</td>
<td>Interviewee</td>
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<td>Anyone</td>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td>Map highlights place of birth of interviewee</td>
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<td><strong>Opie Collection of Children's Games and Songs</strong></td>
<td>137</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Anyone</td>
<td>County</td>
<td>Highlight items</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oral History of British Science</strong></td>
<td>508</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Anyone</td>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td>Aeronautical engineering (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Atmospheric Science (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Biophysics (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chemistry (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td>HE &amp; FE</td>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral History of Jazz in Britain</td>
<td>548 107</td>
<td>HE &amp; FE</td>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral History of Recorded Sound</td>
<td>199 102</td>
<td>HE &amp; FE</td>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>307 67</td>
<td>Anyone</td>
<td>Interviewee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Highlight items**

- Climate change science (1)
- Climate History (1)
- Computer hardware (3)
- Computer software (5)
- Geography (2)
- Geology (3)
- Geophysics (5)
- Glaciology (3)
- Medicine (2)
- Meteorology (1)
- Molecular biology (2)
- Oceanography (3)
- Physics (4)
- Science management (1)
- Structural materials (2)
- Zoology (1)

**Subject**

- Athletics: field (9)
- Athletics: multi-events (2)
- Athletics: road events (11)
- Athletics: track (27)
- Canoeing (1)
- Coaching and teaching sports (2)
- Disability athletics (4)
- Fencing (1)
- Spectators’ experiences (6)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength events (2)</th>
<th>Swimming (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Mary-le-Bow Public Debates</td>
<td>619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>1965-1977 + misc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7200</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>687 HE &amp; FE</td>
<td>50.77% HE &amp; FE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: User task results

In some instances (Tasks 8, 10, 11 and 12) a user was unable to complete a task but did not give it a difficult rating. A rating of very difficult has been automatically assigned in these situations. Keyword searches are shown along with the number of participants who used a specific search in square brackets.

Task 1: Register for an account

![Difficulty level chart for Task 1]

Task 2: Play recording from “Oral History of British Science” collection

Completed

Yes: 5
No: 0

![Difficulty level chart for Task 2]
Task 3: Play recording about meteorology

Completed
Yes: 5
No: 0

Task 4: Play recording with shelf mark C0410/094

Completed
Yes: 5
No: 0
Task 5: Download recording with shelf mark C0410/094 (pre-HE login)

Completed
Yes: 2
No: 3

Task 6: Play recording with shelf mark C459/149 (restricted to HE institutions)

Completed
Yes: 5
No: 0
Task 7: Play recording by someone who was in Dachau

Completed
Yes: 5
No: 0

Keyword search:
“Dachau” [4]
“Dachau concentration camp” [1]

Task 8: Play recording about athletics road events that was recorded in 2006

Completed
Yes: 4
No: 1

Keyword searches:
“athletics road events” [1]
“athletics road” [1]
“athletics 2006” [1]
Task 9: Add recording to favourites

Completed
Yes: 5
No: 0

Task 10: Play recording “English Conversation: The Hotel”

Completed
Yes: 2
No: 3
Task 11: Create playlist

Completed
Yes: 3
No: 2

*It emerged in post-task interviews that participants who declared this ‘very difficult’ did so due to time restraints rather than the nature of the task.

Task 12: Download recording with Michael Clements (post-HE login)

Completed
Yes: 4
No: 1
Task 13: Locate recording with Martin Anson

Completed
Yes: 5
No: 0

Keyword search: “Martin Anson” [2]

Search method

Task 13d: Find background info about Martin Anson

Completed
Yes: 5
No: 0

Information location
Task 14: Locate recording with Edgar Duchin

Completed

Yes: 5
No: 0

Keyword search: “Edgar Duchin” [2]
Task 14d: Find background info about Edgar Duchin

Completed
Yes: 4
No: 1

Task 15: Find recording with shelf mark C0410/012. Did interviewee have siblings?

Completed
Yes: 4
No: 1

*Abstract [2]
Appendix F: Information sheet for professional interviews

1. Research Project Title: Online access to oral history: a case study

2. Invitation to participate

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

3. What is the project’s purpose?

This project aims to understand some of the difficulties involved with making oral history available online, and how the British Library’s Sound Archive has overcome some of these issues. This project will be conducted throughout the period of June to September 2012, with submission in September 2012 to meet the requirements of the University of Sheffield’s MSc Information Management programme.

4. Why have I been chosen?

Participants have been chosen through their professional connections to the British Library’s Sound Archive or other archival institutions.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason and there will be no questions asked or repercussions for doing so.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

Participation in this study will be via interview. The data collection will take place during one session, although you may be contacted via email or phone after the fact with follow up questions should you consent to this. Interviews should last approximately 40-60 minutes and will be conducted in a location convenient for you.

The interview will be unstructured, and you will be invited to give your thoughts on a series of questions regarding different aspects of oral history within the Sound Archive. The researcher will conduct thematic analysis (analysing the data by looking for various themes and connections) on the collected data.

7. What do I have to do?

There will be no lifestyle restrictions beyond the commitment of your time.

8. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no foreseeable discomforts, disadvantages or risks associated with this project.
9. **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will provide a better understanding of the operations of the British Library’s Sound Archive, as well as add to the body of knowledge regarding accessibility of oral history recordings.

10. **What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?**

Should the study be stopped early for some reason or your data not be needed, you will be contacted and informed as to the reason why.

11. **What if something goes wrong?**

While we do not foresee any issues arising from this research, you are asked to contact Claire Burrows if you do have any comments or complaints. If you feel that this is not appropriate you can also contact the project supervisor, Barbara Sen. If you make a complaint and feel that it has not been handled to your satisfaction, you can contact the University’s ‘Registrar and Secretary’ at registrar@sheffield.ac.uk or 0114 222 1100.

12. **Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. It will not be shared with anyone outside of the project. You will not be able to be directly identified in any reports or publications.

13. **Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?**

The audio and/or video recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. When the project has been completed, the audio recordings will be destroyed.

14. **What will happen to the results of the research project?**

This project will be completed in September 2012 and will be submitted at this time as part of the requirements of the Information School’s MSc Information Management degree. Should you wish to access the final results, they will be available from the University of Sheffield’s website in the summer of 2013. You will not be identified in any report or publication.

15. **Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been reviewed and ethically approved by the Information School’s ethics review procedure.
16. **Contact for further information**

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Claire Burrows at caaburrows1@sheffield.ac.uk or leave a message at 0114 222 2630. You can also contact the project’s supervisor, Barbara Sen at b.a.sen@sheffield.ac.uk or 0114 222 2630.

Should you agree to participate in this project, you will be given a hard copy of this information sheet and a copy of the consent form to keep. Thank you for your time in reading this and for your interest in this project.
Appendix G: Information sheet for user tasks

1. **Research Project Title: Online access to oral history: a case study**

2. **Invitation to participate**

   You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

3. **What is the project’s purpose?**

   This project aims to understand some of the difficulties involved with making oral history available online, and how the British Library’s Sound Archive has overcome some of these issues. This project will be conducted throughout the period of February to September 2012, with submission in September 2012 to meet the requirements of the University of Sheffield’s MSc Information Management programme.

4. **Why have I been chosen?**

   Participants have been chosen through their enrolment in the Information School at the University of Sheffield.

5. **Do I have to take part?**

   It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason and there will be no questions asked or repercussions for doing so.

6. **What will happen to me if I take part?**

   Participation in this study will involve completing a range of tasks using the British Library’s Sounds website followed by a short interview. The data collection will take place during one session. The task will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete and the following interview will last approximately 20-30 minutes. Both the tasks and the interview will be conducted on the university campus.

   The interview will be unstructured. You will be invited to answer a series of questions regarding different aspects of using the Sounds website. The researcher will conduct thematic analysis (analysing the data by looking for various themes and connections) on the collected data.

7. **What do I have to do?**

   There will be no lifestyle restrictions beyond the commitment of your time to complete the tasks and participate in an interview.
8. **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There are no foreseeable discomforts, disadvantages or risks associated with this project.

9. **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will provide a better understanding of the operations of the British Library’s Sound Archive, as well as add to the body of knowledge regarding accessibility of oral history recordings.

10. **What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?**

Should the study be stopped early for some reason or your data not be needed, your data will be destroyed.

11. **What if something goes wrong?**

While we do not foresee any issues arising from this research, you are asked to contact Claire Burrows if you do have any comments or complaints. If you feel that this is not appropriate you can also contact the project supervisor, Barbara Sen. If you make a complaint and feel that it has not been handled to your satisfaction, you can contact the University’s ‘Registrar and Secretary’ at registrar@sheffield.ac.uk or 0114 222 1100.

12. **Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. It will not be shared with anyone outside of the project without your permission. You will not be able to be directly identified in any reports or publications.

13. **Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?**

The audio and/or video recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. When the project has been completed, the audio recordings will be destroyed.

14. **What will happen to the results of the research project?**

This project will be completed in September 2012 and will be submitted at this time as part of the requirements of the Information School’s MSc Information Management degree. Should you wish to access the final results, they will be available from the University of Sheffield’s website in the summer of 2013. You will not be identified in any report or publication.

15. **Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been reviewed and ethically approved by the Information School’s ethics review procedure which is in accordance with the University of Sheffield’s research ethics policy.
16. **Contact for further information**

If you require any further information please contact the researcher, Claire Burrows at caaburrows1@sheffield.ac.uk or leave a message at 0114 222 2630. You can also contact the project’s supervisor, Barbara Sen at b.a.sen@sheffield.ac.uk or 0114 222 2630.

Should you agree to participate in this project, you will be given a hard copy of this information sheep and a copy of the consent form to keep. Thank you for your time in reading this and for your interest in this project.
Appendix H: Participant consent form

Title of Research Project: Online access to oral history: a case study

Name of Researcher: Claire Burrows

Participant Identification Number for this project: _________       Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 25/07/2012 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

3. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research.

5. I agree to take part in the above research project.

________________________ ________________         __________________
Name of Participant Date Signature
(or legal representative)
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies:
Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project’s main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.
Appendix I: Research ethics application form

University Research Ethics Application Form
for Undergraduate & Postgraduate-Taught Students

I confirm that I have read the current version of the University of Sheffield 'Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue', as shown on the University’s research ethics website at: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy

A1. Title of research project: Online access to oral history: a case study

A2. Name of Student: Claire Burrows
Department: Information school
Email:  
Tel.:  
Name of Supervisor: Barbara Sen

A3. Proposed Project Duration:
Start date: June 2012  
End date: Sept. 2012

A4. Mark ‘X’ in one or more of the following boxes if your research:

- involves adults with mental incapacity or mental illness
- involves prisoners or others in custodial care (e.g. young offenders)
- involves children or young people aged under 18 years
- involves using samples of human biological material collected before for another purpose
- involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g. blood, tissue) *
- involves testing a medicinal product *
- involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g. blood, tissue) *
- involves additional radiation above that required for clinical care *
- involves investigating a medical device *

* If you have marked boxes marked * then you also need to obtain confirmation that appropriate University insurance is in place. To do this email insurance@shef.ac.uk and request a copy of the ‘Clinical Trial Insurance Application Form’.
It is recommended that you familiarise yourself with the University's Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue before completing the following questions. Please note that if you provide sufficient information about the research (what you intend to do, how it will be carried out and how you intend to minimise any risks), this will help the ethics reviewers to make an informed judgement quickly without having to ask for further details.

A5. Briefly summarise:

i. The project’s aims and objectives:
   (this must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)

   This project aims to understand the issues that make oral history recordings (recorded interviews about an informant's memories and experiences) that have been deposited in an archive difficult to access, especially in regards to making materials available on the Internet. This will involve studying the underlying reasons that this is the case, such as lack of funding, changes in technology, copyright issues etc. Additionally, it will look at examples of the effective practices that the British Library’s Sound Archives (SA) have implemented in sharing their oral history collections online. In doing so, simple but effective practices may be identified that would enable other institutions to also begin to share their materials in the online world.

ii. The project’s methodology:
   (this must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)

   This study will be formed around a single explanatory (finding explanations based on the depth of understanding that one can achieve by looking at a unit of study in a lot of detail) case study which will look at how an institution was able to make an oral history collection online, including the difficulties they experienced and what choices they took to overcome these.

   Due to the variations in the storage of oral history at different archives, an in depth study of a single institution which cannot be used for generalisation seems appropriate, as it would be difficult to generalise in any case. For this type of study, Thomas (2011) suggests a case study is appropriate.

   In order to achieve this, qualitative data will be collected through interviews of those working within the institution as well as user interviews, web site analysis, and any reports if available. Data will be analysed using theme mapping, which involves identifying various themes that emerge in data collection and attempting to draw connections both in terms of related themes and in terms of one theme being identified as a potential cause for another (Thomas, 2009).

A6. What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?

I do not believe that any physical or psychological harm can come from this study. There may be an element of inconvenience on the part of participants, although they will have the option of opting out of the study at any point if this is an issue. The focus of study is on professional practice and methods of storing archival documents, as well as discussion of perceived users of
these items. Other participants will simply be asked about their experience navigating the SA’s website. I do not foresee this causing any distress to the participants. However, if at any point this becomes an issue, the participant may choose to leave the study and any data will be destroyed.

A7. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project? (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)

Communication and interviews will be conducted in professional work places or via phone and email. The participant group do not pose a risk and the use of field equipment will be minimal (a recording device). Therefore I do not believe there will be a risk of personal safety for either the interviewer or participants involved in this project.

If yes, explain how these issues will be managed.

While no risk is foreseen, the participant details will be shared with another person (such as the supervisor) prior to the interviews.

A8. How will the potential participants in the project be:

i. Identified?

Potential participants will be identified through the websites and contact details of individual archives that I have found via the Internet, as well as organisations that are involved in oral history such as the Oral History Society.

ii. Approached?

I intend to email potential participants, explaining the purpose and scope of my study.

iii. Recruited?

In emailing potential participants, I will invite them to participate in the study and answer any questions they have regarding the outcomes.

A9. Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

YES X NO □

If informed consent or consent is NOT to be obtained please explain why. Further guidance is at: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent

A9.1. This question is only applicable if you are planning to obtain informed
consent:
How do you plan to obtain informed consent? (i.e. the proposed process?):

I will email (beforehand so that participants will have a chance to read and consider) and present a copy of the consent form in person prior to the interview. Any questions that the participant may have regarding consent or the aims of the study will be answered at these times, and they will be invited to contact me after the fact regarding any questions that arise later. They will be informed that they may withdraw from the study at any time, in which case their data will be destroyed if they so require.

A10. What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

Names of participants will only be used in the dissertation if the participant has consented beforehand. Otherwise names will be made anonymous. In some cases it may be helpful to state with which institution the participant is affiliated. This will also be discussed with the participant and if they have any objections, this information will again be kept anonymous in the dissertation.

A11. Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)

No

A12. Will the research involve the production of recorded media such as audio and/or video recordings?

YES [x] NO [ ]

A12.1. This question is only applicable if you are planning to produce recorded media:
How will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media may be stored, used and (if appropriate) destroyed?

Participants will be informed in writing about how media will be kept for the duration of the dissertation (it will be privately kept, only available to those involved in the project), and will be asked for permission to record the interviews. Once the dissertation has been completed (as well as accepted as a requirement for the Masters programme) the recorded media can be destroyed. However, transcripts of the interviews (or excerpts) may be submitted as part of the appendices of the dissertation. This will also be discussed with participants and consent will be attained prior to recording.

Guidance on a range of ethical issues, including safety and well-being, consent and anonymity, confidentiality and data protection are available at: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes
For Undergraduate & Postgraduate-Taught Students

Student Declaration

(The student completes Annex 1 if the Supervisor has classed the student’s proposed research project as ‘low risk’)

The Supervisor needs to receive an electronic copy of the form, and other documents where appropriate, plus a signed, dated paper copy of this Annex 1 ‘the Student Declaration’.

Full Research Project Title: Online access to oral history: a case study

In signing this Student Declaration I am confirming that:

- The research ethics application form for the above-named project is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Good Research Practice Standards’: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/good
- The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy
- Subject to the above-named project being ethically approved I undertake to adhere to any ethics conditions that may be set.
- I will inform my Supervisor of significant changes to the above-named project that have ethical consequences.
- I will inform my Supervisor if prospective participants make a complaint about the above-named project.
- I understand that personal data about me as a researcher on the research ethics application form will be held by those involved in the ethics review process (e.g. my Supervisor and the Ethics Administrator) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.
- I understand that this project cannot be submitted for ethics approval in more than one department, and that if I wish to appeal against the decision made, this must be done through the original department.

Name of Supervisor: Barbara Sen

Name of student: Claire Burrows

Signature of student: [signature]

Date: 22/05/2012