Voices of SJC:

Creating an Oral History Course Using the Archives

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Spring 2017 First Cohort members
How it all began: 2015/2016
Honors Program & Narrators: Spring, 2017
First cohort Interview sessions w/ video equipment Spring 2017
But first...Logistics

- How would the students use the archives?
- What would be the assignments?
- How much would the moderators intervene during the interview session?
- How much would the moderators intervene with finalizing the interview questions?
- How would we capture the interviews? iPhone was my thought…
- Where would we conduct the interview sessions?
- What kinds of tech equipment would we need?
- How would we set up the interview room?
- How long would each interview session be?
Getting Ideas from Readings
Fall, 2017: Formalization and Syllabus

1. Develop learning objectives
2. Students in this course will...
3. How much time will it take?
4. Questions to consider --
How the Syllabus/Assignments Evolved?

- Assignments
- Due Dates
- Reflection/Assessment
Students visiting the College Archives to research on their assigned decade - Fall 2017
Pre-Interview Meeting

Oral History Best Practices

- Contextualize questions and ask follow up questions
- Multiple oral historians - who will do what?
- Be prepared
- Dress professionally
- Thank narrator for their time
- Avoid informal language
Day of the Interview

- Consent form
- Record a “lead”
- Give narrator 100% of your attention
- Enjoy the unique experience!
Conducting the Interviews

First cohort interview session w/ video/lighting equipment - Spring 2017
Requirements at Interview Sessions

Minimum Requirements:
- Handheld audio recorders [H4n Pro]
- SD cards
- Small/quiet room
- Camera for still photos
- Two moderators (setting up the room, still photos, audio check etc.)

Good to have:
- Tripod if you want to raise up/stabilize the audio recorder
- Additional clip on microphone
- “5 minutes” + “Speak Up” + “Recording in session” signs
- Bottles of water (cups might be better, easier to drink from during the interview)
Preservation of Oral Histories

- Long term storage: Internet Archive
- Showcasing the interviews: YouTube Channel
- Dedicated LibGuide and SJCNY website
  - http://brooklyn.sjcny.libguides.com/VoicesofSJC
  - https://www.sjcny.edu/about/history/voices-of-sjc
- Photos hosted on Flickr
- In house preservation & editing:
  - Audio = wav
  - Video = mp4
Challenges

- Schedule wrangling
- Technological concerns
- Video capturing
- Editing
- Transcribing
- Sustainability of the project
Student Reflections

“After conduction my oral history interview with Sister Mary Florence Burns I discovered a new portion of my school’s history I would have never knew if I simply read a yearbook or newspaper article….After completing the interview with Sister Mary Florence, I realized this oral history project is just one piece in the puzzle that will help future generations better understand and connect with not only hardcore facts but personal stories, mementos, and experiences of past generations and how they can be related to today’s societies.” [Freshman - Spring 2018]

“I appreciated the consistent emails that gave reminders as to when things were due or what dates were important, especially since it is easy to lose focus with all of our classes. The last recommendation I’m suggesting would be to have the group doing the interview together.
Beyond the Interview

- Campus promotion
- LibGuide - website
- Panels with programs at SJC
- Students can add this to their portfolios
- Catholic Colleges and Universities Consortium
- Alumni engagement

ACES Program Panel Discussion Fall 2017
Voices of SJC: Sample