The Eighth in the East
Oral History
Summariser Training

Purpose
To summarise the oral history recordings by Eighth in the East volunteers of individuals recounting their memories of the Eighth Airforce in East Anglia.

Location
This role can be completed from home, but also at the Eighth in the East office or partner organisations if necessary.

Committed Time
Variable.
All oral history volunteers should be prepared to offer at least three hours each week, though this will depend on the number of recordings in need of summarising.

Length of Role
Approximately six months, with scope for a longer role if desired.

Expectations of your role
- To liaise with other volunteers for the transferal, and storage of digital audio.
- Handling digital audio to produce electronic typescript summaries using a word processor.
- If working from home you should have access to a computer, or the willingness to travel to a location with computer.
  These devices need internet access and a word processor too.
- Good organisational and time management skills.
- Clear and confident communicational skills.

Your Training

To help you achieve your full potential as an summariser, you can expect training from us in:

- The skills required to write a summary of an oral history interview
- How to work with digital audio

Writing an Oral History Summary

Why write a summary?

- Oral History interviews are unscripted pieces of research, this means that their content is unpredictable; the information collected may or may not be relevant to the research topic.
- Summaries therefore are created to isolate the important elements of the interview relevant to the topic, and which help to enhance the historical record.
- These summaries are also important elements of the archive process, enabling future researchers to quickly navigate the content of the interview for their interests without having to listen to the whole audio file.

What makes a good summary?

- Captures the main points of the interview in 1-2 pages
- Focusses on the content that is relevant to the research area

Permission Forms

- You cannot begin a summary without seeing the permission form signed and dated by the interviewee.
- The completed permission form for each interview should be found on the project Dropbox. If the form is not there, contact David Cain, Project Manager at Eighth in the East on the Contacts Page
- The permission form will help you to understand if the recording is closed or not, and may provide important details necessary to contextualise the summary.
    - If the recording is closed, it's important that when writing the summary you do not divulge the identity of the individual. You should, therefore, use their initials instead.

Key Points for Writing Summaries

- Try to provide a clear record of what is talked **about** in the interview, rather than detailing the nature of particular anecdotes, or opinions.
  This means that where an interviewee may focus on a topic for a long time, only a few words may be needed to cover this in the summary.
- Summaries should be guides to the content of the interview, not a paraphrase or transcript of what the interviewee said.
- Try to avoid over-elaborate and unnecessary sentence constructions
    - 'He was the eldest of five sons' → 'Eldest of five sons'
    - 'Next the interviewee goes on to mention' → 'Mentions'

- To indicate how much is said about a topic, person or event, there are some useful terms to indicate more or less substantial passages in the interview. Roughly in descending order:
    - description (for a long and detailed passage)
    - discussion (where interviewer contributes a lot)
    - story
    - anecdote
    - comment
    - remark
    - mention

The important thing is to be clear and consistent when using whatever terms are most suitable.

- Where a distinct aspect of an experience is referred to, it is helpful to make that clear
    - 'Describes search for work on airfield' → 'Describes **difficult** search…'

Stylistic Guidance for Writing Summaries

- All summaries must be created on a word processor such as Pages or Microsoft Word.
- Each 30 minute section of interview should ideally be a single paragraph not exceeding **250 words**.
- Please do not use ampersands (&), font formatting (**bold,** *italics,* underlining), keyboard mathematical symbols (%,+,=) or keyboard currency symbols ($,£,€) in your summaries as these do not always convert into other databases.
- If you need to correct facts given wrongly in an interview, put your correction in square brackets
- Where allusions to events (e.g. meetings, conferences, exhibitions) are unclear in the interview, as much clarification as possible should be provided, such as places or dates.
- Abbreviations
    - When abbreviating **names**, give the full name in the first instance, followed immediately by the abbreviation in square brackets. You must then use the abbreviation throughout.
        - Alex Reid [AR] father's shop in Framlingham
    - Use names for **countries/places**, not abbreviations
        - United States, European Union
        - If a location is given in England, try to specify the county as well as the location. This minimises confusion.
    - Well known abbreviations for **institutions** etc can be used, but the full name must be firstly specified
        - USAAF [United States Army Air Forces]

- Fonts and margins
  - Your word processor should be set to Times New Roman, size 12
  - Your margin should ideally be 1" left, right, top and bottom
- Time stamps are important in summaries for future researchers looking to quickly locate a particular interest in an interview.
  - When the interview moves to another subject, it is necessary to put the time stamp at which the transition this occurs.

REID14082014AR: Summary

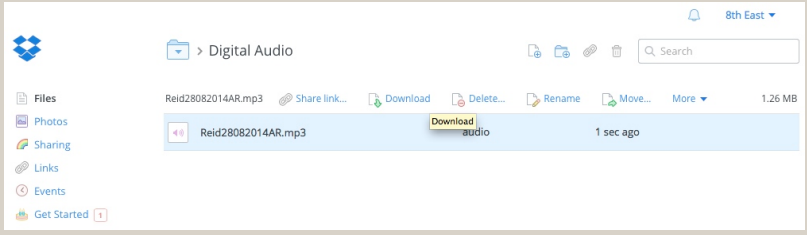
[00:00] Alex Reid [AR] describes Black Americans in Parham 1936-42, [00:36] Mother's family background, [1.14] AR's acquaintance with Lt. Benjamin Harris, [24.56] Influence of jazz musicians on pub

What to do with your completed summary

- Once you've completed your summary, send an appropriately named copy to your coordinator, and David Cain, Project Manager at Eighth in the East, via email. His address can be found on the contacts page at the end of this document.

Downloading your Digital Audio

- An oral history can contain sensitive material, and once an interviewee has been recorded, there is a possibility that they will have 'closed' their interview in an archive until their death or beyond. This means that you are in a position of responsibility when summarising an interview.
- An interviewer will be in charge of uploading their appropriately named recordings onto the project Dropbox in the folder 'Digital Audio', and this file should not be stored there for more than 48 hours.
- You should be contacted by another oral history volunteer to tell you that the file has been uploaded, and download it before the 48 hours elapses and the file is removed again.
- The audio file can be downloaded by clicking on the appropriately named file in the folder and using the pop up menu at the top to click on 'Download'. Please be patient with the downloading process, as these can be quite large files.



  - To download the file, you will need to create a Dropbox account. This is a simple process which you'll be guided through on the website, and you should have received a link to the Oral History Volunteers Dropbox via email when you began the project.

- Once you have downloaded the file successfully, it is always useful to let the individual who uploaded it know. This means the file can be swiftly removed.

Understanding File Naming

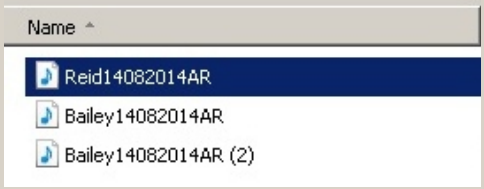
- Naming your recordings correctly is essential in oral history work.
- With all recordings correctly named, each member of the team can correctly identify them, and they can be confident there are no duplicates, and all accompanying documentation is present too.
- The file naming system for this project uses information which helps identify the interviewee, the date the interview was conducted, and the interviewer.

Interviewee: Reid

Date: 18/08/2014

Interviewer: Alex Reid

Reid14082014AR



- Using the details given to you about which recording you should be summarising, you should be able to easily locate the file on the Dropbox.

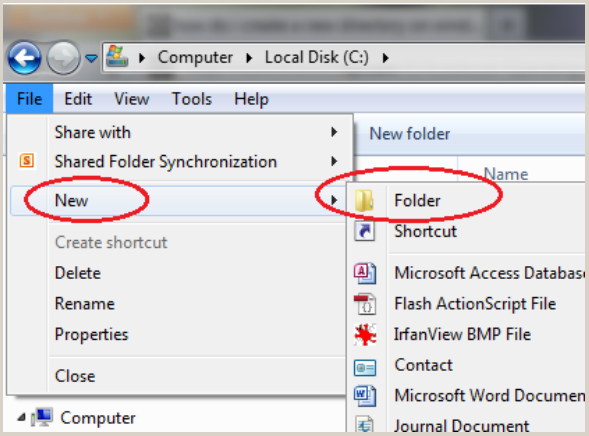
Organising Digital Audio

- Having downloaded your audio, it's useful to create appropriately named folders.

  This will help prevent the creation of duplicates, and make it easier to manage or locate any information necessary during the archive process at the end of your time as a volunteer.

Creating a folder

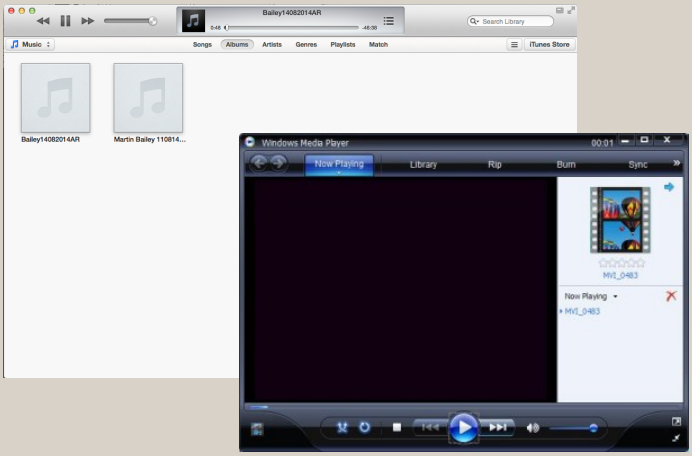
- Creating a folder on your computer is very easy, and will help you to manage your files.
  - Go to the location where you want to create a new folder.
  - Right-click a blank area on the desktop or in the folder window, point to New, and then click Folder.
  - Type the surname of the interviewee to name the new folder, and then press Enter.



Moving your Digital Audio

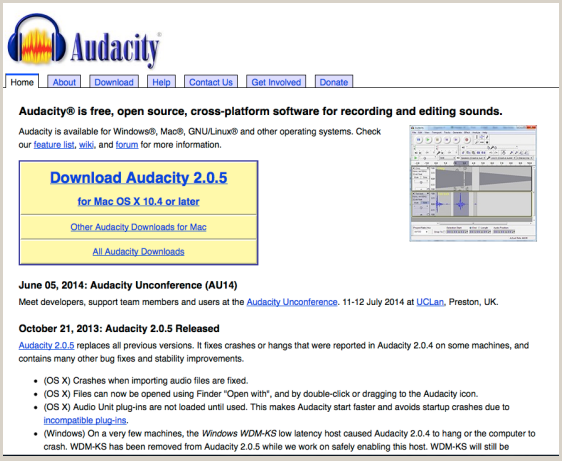
- You can move your digital audio in one of two ways, but please be aware that both may require allowing some time for the file to be transferred.
  - Your first option is to click and drag the file to your appropriately named folder.
  - Your second option is to use right-click, select copy, and then paste the file into the appropriately named folder.

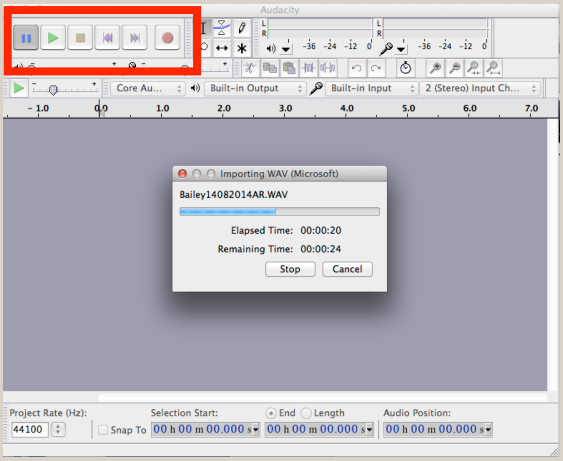
Listening/Playback Software



- There are many different programs you may choose to use when trying to listen back to your recordings.
- Some which you may be familiar with include iTunes and Windows Media Player.

- If you're more comfortable with these, or a choice of your own that you've used before for playback- please go ahead!





Audacity

- However, if you are unfamiliar with these programs, there is a free program which you can download from the internet called 'Audacity'.
- This can be found by typing 'Audacity' into google.com
- To import your recordings into Audacity, open the program and at the top of your screen select 'file' and then 'open'
- You can then open your recently imported recordings from their appropriately named folders.
- This will take a few seconds/minutes depending on the file size.
- Audacity, unlike most other programs, requires you to press Pause again, rather than Play, when you want to pause the audio, and recommence in the same position.
- By pressing Play or Stop, the audio will recommence from the beginning.
- For the help manual provided by Audacity, please see: file:///Volumes/Audacity%202.0.5/Audacity/help/manual/quick_help.html

- You may also find it helpful to use youtube.com to look up 'Audacity tutorials' if necessary.

Additional Information

Contacts

- These individuals are here to help and support you during your time as a volunteer.

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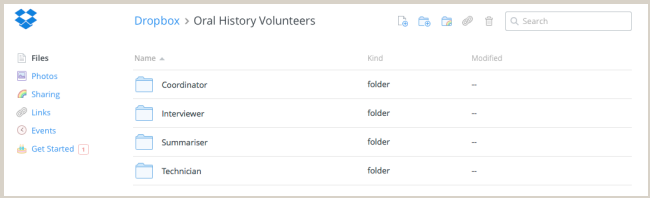
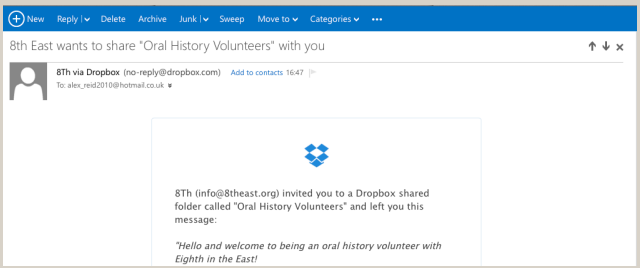
Additional Materials

- Any additional materials mentioned in this training document that are not included are most likely on the project Dropbox.
- When you joined the project as a volunteer, you should receive an email containing the link to this Dropbox
  - You'll need to quickly create a free account to see the folder.