



Oral History: A Guide for Teachers (and Others)

Thad Sitton, George L. Mehaffy, O.L., Jr. Davis

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More than a mode of gathering information about the past, oral history has become an international movement. Historians, folklorists, and other educational and religious groups now recognize the importance of preserving the recollections of people about the past. The recorded memories of famous and common folk alike provide a vital complement to textbook history, bringing the past to life through the stories of those who lived it.

Oral History is designed to introduce teachers, students, and interested individuals to the techniques, problems, and pleasures of collecting oral history. The authors, themselves experienced educators, examine the uses of oral history in the classroom, looking at a wide range of projects that have been attempted and focusing on those that have succeeded best.

Besides suggesting many possible projects, they discuss the necessary hardware and its use: recording equipment and procedures, interview outlines and preliminary research, photography and note-taking in the field, transcription and storage of information, legal forms, and more. For the teacher, the authors offer helpful advice on training students to be sensitive interviewers in both formal and informal situations.

How can oral histories collected in the classroom be put to use? The authors discuss their uses within the curriculum; in projects such as oral history archives, publications such as the popular *Foxfire* books, and other media productions; and in researching current community problems. Useful appendixes survey a variety of reference tools for the oral historian and describe in detail how a *Foxfire*-concept magazine may be developed.

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