



Creating Oral Histories Using Historic Photographs



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Curriculum Standards (Indiana 2023)

Bolded standards have a strong connection to the project. The others depend on questions asked during project and follow-up activities.

Grade 3

3.H.4 Give examples of people, events, and developments that brought important changes to your community and the region where your community is located. (E)

3.H.6 Use a variety of resources to gather information about your region's communities; identify factors that make the region unique, including cultural diversity, industry, the arts, and architecture.

3.E.3 Give examples of trade in the local community, and explain how trade benefits both parties

3.W.3 Write informative compositions on a variety of topics

3.W.6 Conduct research on a topic

3.CC.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) on grade-appropriate topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing personal ideas clearly. (E)

3.CC.5 Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.

Grade 4

4.H.10 Describe the transformation of Indiana through immigration and developments in agriculture, industry, and transportation.

4.E.5 Identify entrepreneurs who have influenced Indiana and the local community

4.W.5 Conduct research on a topic

4.CC.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) on grade-appropriate topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing personal ideas clearly. (E)

4.CC.2 Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others. (E)

4.CC.6 Create oral presentations that maintain a clear focus, using multimedia to enhance the development of main ideas and themes that engage the audience.

Grade 5

5.W.5 Conduct research assignments and tasks on a topic.

5.CC.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) on grade-appropriate topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing personal ideas clearly. (E)

5.CC.2 Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others. (E)

5.CC.5 Create engaging presentations that include multimedia components and visual displays when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

5.CC.6 Review claims made in various types of media and evaluate evidence used to support these claims.

Goal

By using historic images to create oral histories, participants will learn new methods of research and the importance of oral histories in preserving untold stories of the community.

What is Oral History?

Oral history is a record of someone's memories. They are gathered by interviewing an individual or sometimes a group of people about a specific topic, usually about a time period, historical event, or a specific person or place.

Before widespread use of written language, most history was passed down through oral traditions. Even today, parents and grandparents pass down stories connected to their family history. These stories just aren't widely shared. Researchers conducting oral histories aim to collect and share these stories. This allows future generations to learn from them.

Why is Oral History Important?

"In ideal terms, oral history interviews infuse the past with new life—from the memories and mouths of living sources of history."

– *The Heart of Oral History* pg. 21 <https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/33212.pdf>

Oral histories continue to be important today because they can fill in gaps in the written historical record. The stories of minority communities and lower- to middle-class people are often left out of the history books. Oral histories help tell those stories and provide a more well-rounded view of what life was like.

Everyone has their own stories to tell and their own unique perspective about life in a particular place, time, or event. However, they are also all people – people with the same emotions and basic needs that we all share. Not only do oral histories tell unheard stories, but they also tap into the emotions of the person telling the stories. These stories are often relatable – talking about a childhood friend, a sports game, or a strict boss. Relaying these stories can help students create personal connections to history which has been proven to increase student learning.

Creating their own oral history project will allow students to become more familiar with these important resources and get to know their town and/or family history better.



Using Photographs to Create Oral Histories

Photo elicitation is an oral history technique that involves showing the interviewee photographs and asking about what they see. Anthropologists use it by taking pictures of local people, places, and events then asking community members about them. According to education professor, Keith Barton, the community members' "reactions can reveal community values, attitudes, and beliefs, as well as the meaning that participants attribute to aspects of the local setting." It can also be used to find out more about local history and families. It doesn't matter if the photos come from a museum, archive, or a family scrapbook but you should choose photos that hold some meaning to the participant.

The Power of Photographs

Using photographs as part of an oral history interview can be a powerful tool. Photographs have been proven to trigger memories, sometimes very emotional ones. Even if the photograph doesn't include organizations or people directly tied to the interviewee, they can still spark memories about a time period, a topic (ex. nature, religion, childhood), and/or a place. This sharing of memories is reminiscent of flipping through a scrapbook or scrolling through images on a phone – common activities that can break down barriers between the interviewer and interviewee. This makes it easier to have a conversation and can put everyone involved more at ease.

Photographs can also make it easier to talk about difficult topics, such as segregation, union strikes, or other potentially traumatic events like a natural disaster. Photographs create a natural starting point and allow the interviewee to talk about what is happening in the image in general before talking about their more personal experiences. Looking at a photograph also allows them to break eye contact with the interviewer which can allow the interviewee to ignore the recording equipment and become more relaxed.

For those new to interviewing, photographs also provide an easy way to break awkward silences. When the conversation starts to dwindle, interviewers can ask about another aspect of the photograph or switch to a new one that might produce another perspective about the topic.

Finding Photographs

Finding the right images to use is a key part of the process, and considerations for selecting the right images are noted further below, but where do you find images in the first place? In addition to personal collections that family or friends might have, museums, libraries, and archives often hold hundreds or thousands of photographs that could be useful. Some businesses, churches, and newspapers maintain photo collections that might also be available for educational use.

The IU Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (IUMAA) has more than 40,000 images that cover a range of topics including historic Bloomington buildings. Please consider contacting IUMAA or your local museum or archive as you begin planning your project.

Suggestions for photographs cared for at IUMAA are included in the example lessons. Find out more about IUMAA's photography collection at <https://iumaa.iu.edu/collections/ethnographic-collections/index.html>.



Photo Elicitation Techniques

There are a variety of photo elicitation techniques. We will cover selected ones here, but more can be found in the articles referenced in the bibliography.

Using a Single Image

If you know the people you are interviewing or know about their background, it is possible that you could choose a single image that you can use for the entire set of interviews. For instance, if you are trying to collect stories about a specific place, such as working in a factory, going to a school, or attending a church, you might be able to find an interesting image that everyone you are interviewing can relate to. This might also work if you are asking about what people used to wear by using an image that shows several outfits from an era. Or if you are interviewing people from one family, images connected to their home or from a reunion might bring back memories for everyone being interviewed.

Using Multiple Images

Most of the time, if possible, it is better to use multiple photographs or to at least have multiple on hand in order to prompt deeper discussions. To use the previous examples, having an image of a factory's work area and the boss's office would probably evoke different emotions and stories. And having images of multiple family members and events allows for more stories to be told.



Interviewing Someone You Don't Know

If you don't know the person you are interviewing very well, there are a couple of techniques you can use to find images that are relevant to them as well as your topic.

1. You can ask them to bring their own images or send them to you ahead of time. For this to work it is important for you to tell them what topic(s) you want to cover in the interview.
2. Bring multiple images. There are several ways you can use them:
 - a. Flip through the images in a designated order until you reach one that is relevant to the interviewee. This can be good when you are trying to identify and gather stories about specific people or places, but make sure there is a strong chance they will be able to relate to many of the images.
 - b. Give all the images to the interviewee and ask them to sort them. After they have been sorted, pick up the pile that is relevant to your research and choose an image to explore with them.
Some suggestions on how to ask them to sort the images:
 - i. Images they relate to and images they don't
 - ii. Places/people they recognize and ones they don't
 - iii. Images they feel an emotional connection to
 - c. Give them all the images and ask the interviewee to order them either by their interests, importance or in chronological order. This can help you choose which image to start with and get a richer story.

A Caution about Oral Histories

One thing to remember is that oral history relies on a person's memory, and nobody remembers everything. Memories are most reliable when they are our own, not a retelling of a story that someone else told us. Like the game Telephone, stories often get distorted the more they are retold. So, the most reliable memories are ones that someone experienced recently. Even if the information the interviewee is telling you is wrong, you will still gain valuable information about how they feel about a subject and their thoughts on the matter. All this to say that, as with all forms of research, it is important to double check the information you receive during an interview as much as possible.

Conducting Photo Elicitation Interviews

There are many resources on how to conduct oral history interviews. Very few involve the use of photographs, but they do provide great advice on how to make the interviewee comfortable, what kinds of questions to ask, and other tips. If you still have questions about the process after reading the Pre-Interview Preparation section, we recommend you check out some of these resources:

- Oral History Society: <https://www.ohs.org.uk/for-beginners/>
- Baylor University The Institute for Oral History: <https://www.baylor.edu/library/index.php?id=974438>
- The American Folklife Center: <https://loc.gov/folklife/familyfolklife/oralhistory.html>

Preparing for the Interview

1. Identify Goals

- a. What do you hope to learn by doing this oral history project?
- b. Examples:
 - i. How the city has changed over the last 60 years
 - ii. What people wore in the past and what their outfits said about their identity
 - iii. The history of the school/church/factory/etc.

2. Choose images connected to your goal.

- a. Not all images are good. Make sure they relate to your goal and portray something the person you are interviewing can relate to. It is helpful if the image isn't something they see every day. Images from a unique perspective can help people think about things in a different way.
- b. Don't be afraid to use images other than photographs. Postcards, advertisements, and even maps can provide new ways of looking at a topic.
- c. Decide how many images you want to use and if you are going to use the same images for each person you interview. This is especially important to decide if multiple people (i.e. students in a classroom) are conducting the interviews.
 - i. You want to use images that help get the interviewee talking about the topic. The importance is in the story they are telling not the photographs used.
 - ii. For simplicity with large groups, if you are using multiple images in each interview, it would be a good idea for everyone to use the same group of images and have interviewees talk about the ones they most connect to.

3. Research the topic you are studying.

- a. Researching the topic ahead of time helps you ask intelligent questions during the interview and can reduce nervousness. It also gives the researcher a heads-up about any potentially controversial topics.
- b. For kids interviewing grandparents about their childhood, they might ask their parents what they know about the grandparents. This lets them know what kind of topics might come up in the interview and help them craft their questions.

4. Create a list of questions, but be prepared to ask them out of order.

- a. We recommend creating a list of questions to explore, but it is important to let the participants lead the conversation. You will often have to ask questions out of order. Because of this many professional oral historians do not have a list of questions. However, for people new to interviewing, it is good to have a list to fall back on in case you get nervous or the conversation stalls.
- b. In general, you will want to ask a specific question and then progressively broader questions. Or the opposite! Whichever works best for your image and topic. Throughout the interview you will use open and closed questions to work your way from specific to broad questions and back again. See the Crafting Good Questions section to learn more about creating questions.

5. Ask to interview someone.

- a. Be sure to say what the interview is going to be about, how the interview will be used in the future (put into an archive, to create an exhibit, put on a website, etc), and about how long it will take (typically 30 min to 1 hour).

6. Gather Equipment and TEST IT!

- a. For most people the most convenient way to record someone is with their smartphone or tablet. There are many apps that will allow you to record audio only or you can set up a tripod to make a video as well. It is important to make sure you have enough storage space on your device and that your microphone can pick up voices clearly. You may want to test this with the person you are interviewing before you start the actual interview. Other options include a voice recorder, video camera, and a virtual interview over Zoom or Facetime.
- b. It is not recommended to rely on pen and paper. You will not be able to write down everything said and it often breaks up the flow of conversation during the interview. However, taking notes during the interview is helpful, especially if you have ideas for follow-up questions that you want to be sure you ask.
- c. Be sure to practice with your equipment. Know how to start, stop and pause the recording.
- d. Take extra batteries or a charger.

7. Print an oral history release form (pgs 24 -25) to have the interviewee sign.

8. Print your images.

- a. Don't trust technology to work at the interview locations. You may want to show images on an iPad, but it is good to have printed versions as backup.
- b. Make sure that the images are as clear and crisp as possible. Larger images will be easier to look at than smaller ones. Consider taking a magnifying glass and/or flashlight. Reproductions, or copies, of images are often safer to use than originals.

During the Interview

- 1. Make sure the interviewee is comfortable and that you can see and hear each other.**
- 2. Before you start recording, introduce yourself and chit chat a little bit to make everyone more comfortable.**
 - a. You may also want to test your equipment at this time.
- 3. Have them sign the release form.**
- 4. Tell the person you are going to start the recording and let it run for 3-5 seconds with no one talking.**
- 5. Say who you are, the date, who you are with, and where you are.**
- 6. Ask the person to introduce themselves.**
- 7. Ask if you have permission to record this interview. NEVER record someone secretly!**
- 8. Show the interviewee the image or ask them to sort the multiple images and begin your interview.**
 - a. See pages 12 - 17 for a series of sample interview questions and scenarios.
- 9. When you are done with the interview (either out of questions or out of time) continue to record and thank them for sharing their memories and answering your questions.**
 - a. Ask if there is anything they would like to add before you end the recording?
- 10. On the record tell them how the stories they shared are going to be used and have them give a verbal acknowledgement.**
 - a. Let them know that you will give them a chance to review the final edit and make any changes to the release form.
- 11. Turn off recording and thank again.**

Tips and Trick for Conducting an Oral History

- 1. It is important to use active listening skills and be visibly be engaged in the conversation .**
Nodding and saying things like “oh, really?” or “tell me more about X.” at the appropriate times can go a long way in encouraging them to speak more on a subject.
- 2. Don't be afraid of silence. It is hard to do, but silence lets people gather their thoughts. Asking a question too soon will stop someone from expanding more on a subject.**
- 3. If the interviewee responds with a long story, don't be afraid to ask for clarification. You can also recap the story and then ask them to elaborate on a section.**
- 4. Ask only one question at a time and keep it simple. Multifaceted questions are hard to answer and understand.**
- 5. Start with easy questions and work your way up to harder more controversial questions after you have gained the interviewee's trust.**
- 6. Don't interrupt or contradict what someone is saying. They might be saying something you know to be wrong, but it is how they feel about the subject and how they remember it. Contradicting them can break trust and cause them to want to end the interview. You can always mark in your notes that they misremembered something and double check with other sources.**



After the Interview

1. Make a backup copy of the original. Use the backup to do all editing.
2. Listen to the audio clips and do any sound editing you need to.
 - a. Audacity is a free audio editing software and there are YouTube videos on how to use it.
 - i. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkpzHJGE4Dk>
 - ii. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rj7sbBng-T8>
 - b. You can also use Adobe Audition with YouTube tutorials:
 - i. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZsSWItYFGs>
 - ii. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbaJmref8GU>
3. Send the finished audio to the interviewee and allow them to review it.
 - a. Ask them if there are any changes they want to make to their release form.
 - i. Sometimes embarrassing or deeply personal stories come out during the interview process. They may request that a portion of the interview not be used or only be used after their death. It is important to honor their wishes and make those notes on the release form so future researchers know as well.
4. Write a summary of the oral history that gives highlights and provides basic biographical information about who you interviewed.

Crafting Good Questions

The best way to get a lot of information about a subject is to ask “**open-ended questions**.” These are questions that can have multiple answers. They ask why, how, what happened, and “tell me about X.” The other type of questions are “**closed questions**” which only have one answer. They can be yes/no questions, but also can include questions like “when did you move,” “who did you work with,” and “what did you eat.” During the interview process, you will need to use both open and closed questions: Open to get the big picture, closed to understand a detail, and open again to know how someone felt about that detail.

For example you could ask:

- Is this house similar to the one you grew up in? (closed question)
- How is it the same/different? (open question)
- What was your favorite part about living there? (open question)
- Who lived there with you? (closed question)
- Tell me about them. (open question)

It is important to make sure you don't ask leading questions – questions that make the interviewee answer a certain way or disagree with the interviewer.

For example: Why was Bloomington a great place to grow up in the 1960s?

This forces the interviewee to agree that Bloomington was a great place to grow up when that might not have been their experience. Instead, you can ask “what was growing up in Bloomington in the 1960s like?”

If you need help creating questions related to your pictures. Try this worksheet from the Library of Congress: https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Analyzing_Photos_and_Prints.pdf



Sample Oral History Questions

The following samples are based on images found in the IU Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology's collection. You do not have to use these images or questions. They are meant to be a jumping off point to help you envision what your oral history project could look like. Please feel free to use your own images and modify or create new questions. You can find a blank questions worksheet on page 18.

Additional image resources in Bloomington include the Monroe County History Center and IU Archives.

Sample: Growing Up in the 1960s

Goal: To learn how it was to grow up in the past. How is it the same/different than it is now?

Process: Before handing them the photographs, explain that you are trying to learn how people grew-up in the past and how that is the same and different from now. The interview is going to include a mix of asking questions and looking at images. To start, ask them where they grew up and how long they lived there. When the conversation winds down, say thank you for sharing. Tell them, now I am going to ask you about some of the activities you did as a kid and I have some image to hopefully jog some memories. Start asking the questions on your worksheet and show them images as topics come up. Example: if they mention being outdoors show them the park and bike images.

Remember these questions are just suggestions. It is likely you will not ask them in order and you might not ask them at all. Follow the flow of the conversation and ask related questions. If you get stuck or nervous the questions are there to help you.



Growing Up in the 1960s Oral History Project

Interviewer: _____

Date: _____

Interviewee: _____

Location: _____

Questions/Topics

1. What did you do for fun as a kid?
 - a. Who did you do those activities with?
 - b. Did you go to the park a lot? Show image of park.
 - i. What would you do there? Who would you go with?
 - c. What was a real treat to get to do? What made it special?
 - d. Where did you like to go? Why? How did you get there?
2. Did your parents teach you any skills? (Gardening, music lessons, sewing)
3. Were you a part of any clubs or teams? (band, scouts)
4. What holidays did you celebrate with your family?
 - a. What was your favorite tradition?
 - b. What kind of gifts did you get?
5. What about your school? Was it similar to any of the ones in these photos? If so how?
 - a. Did you enjoy going? Why or why not?
 - b. Is there a teacher who stands out in your mind? Tell me about them.

Research Notes

- No cell phones or computers until the 1980s
- Indiana schools were segregated until 1954, but the process of desegregation began in 1949.

Images Used

Sample: What did people wear?

Goal: To learn what people used to wear and how they express themselves through clothing.

Process: Before handing them the photographs, explain that you are trying to learn about what people used to wear, why they wore it, and how that might have changed over time. The interview is going to include a mix of asking questions and looking at images. Hand the interviewee photos showing people wearing many outfits from the last 60 years. Ask them to sort the images into three piles: outfits they relate to themselves, outfits that remind them of someone else, and ones they don't connect to. Say that we will start by looking at the ones they related to themselves.

You could also ask them to put the outfits they related to in chronological order and talk about how what they would have worn has changed over time. Start at the earliest image and work your way to more recent images.

Remember these questions are just suggestions. It is likely you will not ask them in order and you might not ask them at all. Follow the flow of the conversation and ask related questions. If you get stuck or nervous the questions are there to help you.



What did People Wear Oral History Project

Interviewer: _____

Date: _____

Interviewee: _____

Location: _____

Questions/Topics

Research Notes

1. What made you connect to the outfits in this image?
 - a. If they wore something similar:
 - i. Where would you have worn it? (can ask more about where they wore it – like if they say they wore it on a night out. Ask about where they would go on a night out)
 - ii. What would you wear to a similar place now? – If different, why?
 - iii. How did you feel wearing it?
 - iv. What did this outfit say about you?
2. How have the outfits you have worn changed over time? Why?
3. Who does this outfit remind you of?
 - a. Why do you associate this outfit with that person?
 - b. Can you tell me more about them?
 - c. Repeat as needed for images.
4. Are there any outfits or styles missing from these images
 - a. Tell me about them?
 - b. Where would you have worn them?
 - c. Who would you be with when you wore them?

Images Used

Sample: How has Bloomington Changed

Goal: To learn about Bloomington's history and how the town has changed over time.

Process: Before handing them the photographs, explain that you are trying to learn about people's experiences in Bloomington and how the city has changed over time. Explain that the interview is going to include a mix of asking questions and looking at images. Tell them it is ok if they don't have anything to say about some of the images. We will just skip them and move on to the next. To start, ask the interviewee how long they have lived in Bloomington and what made them come here. After that conversation winds down show them the first image and begin asking the questions. We recommend starting with an image of the square since most people have been there.

Alternatively, you could ask them to sort the photos into places they have been/recognize and ask questions about those.

Remember these questions are just suggestions. It is likely you will not ask them in order and you might not ask them at all. Follow the flow of the conversation and ask related questions. If you get stuck or nervous the questions are there to help you.



How Has Bloomington Changed Oral History Project

Interviewer: _____

Date: _____

Interviewee: _____

Location: _____

Questions/Topics

Research Notes

1. Bloomington Square Images
 - a. Have you been here before?
 - b. Can you tell me about the first time you visited the square? (If can't remember 1st, one of the earliest or a favorite memory)
 - i. Who was with you? What did you do there? How did you get there?
 - ii. During that time how often did you visit the square?
 - iii. Do you still visit the square? When and why?
 - c. Do you recognize any of the stores? (might need list because tiny signs, be prepared to answer what stores are currently there)
 - i. Can you tell me about them? What did you do there? Who did you go with? Who worked there?
 - ii. Are they still there? If no, do you remember what replaced them?
 2. Other Places Around Town (ask if recognize before asking questions)
 - a. What did you do here?
 - b. How often would you visit?
 - c. Who would you go with? Tell me about them.
 - d. Does it still exist? Do you still visit? Where do you go now to do the same task?
 - e. Repeat as necessary.
- Non-Image Related
3. What do you think is the biggest change in Bloomington sense you have been here?
 - a. How do you feel about those changes?

- No cell phones or computers until the 1980s
- Indiana schools were segregated until 1954, but the process of desegregation began in 1949.

Images Used

Oral History Project

Interviewer: _____

Date: _____

Interviewee: _____

Location: _____

Questions/Topics

Research Notes

Images Used

Expansion Activities

Present to the Group

Have each interviewer present about who they interviewed and key takeaways from the interview that help answer the research question. After everyone has presented, discuss results as a group.

Ask...

- Are there recurring themes? (places everyone visited or how a place/outfit made them feel)
- Did anything surprise you?
- Remember, memories aren't perfect. Did anyone contradict each other? What would be the next steps in finding out who was right? (Don't ask follow-up question if the contradiction is an opinion/feeling)
- Are there different opinions/perspectives about the topic? What do you think caused that? (Think about if they lived in the same area, knew the same people, are of the same race and/or socio-economic status)
- Can you draw any conclusions about ____? (the time period, how identity impacts what you wear, how the town has changed)

Bonus: You can ask students to write down their own thoughts/predictions before they conduct the interviews. After, you can discuss if they were right/wrong, if anything surprised them, and how the interview made them think differently about the topic.



Research a Topic Further

Have students research a topic that came up during the interview. Have them write a paper or present their findings to the class.

Write a Creative Story

Have students write a fictional story based on their interviews and research. It could be a day in the life of a kid in the 1950s, attending an event inspired by one of the outfits, or taking a walk through town in the past. Ask them to include as many details as possible. What would they see? Who would they be with? What would they be doing?

You could also have them imagine what they would tell their grandkids about their life. What is important for them to know? What would they leave out?

Create a Mini Exhibit

Creating a mini-exhibit for your classroom, school, or community center can be a fun way to share your research with more people. Below you will find instructions for how to make a cheap-temporary exhibit. For more robust exhibits consult sources such as the Smithsonian Exhibit's Guide to Exhibit Development, Smithsonian's Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design, and the Museum of New Zealand's exhibition development guides.

Step 1: Choose Themes and Subthemes

You should already have the goal/research question for the project, but you still need to decide how you are going to organize your exhibit. For this project, it is easiest to either break it up by the people you interviewed or by the photos you used.

Once you have decided that you can create subthemes. How are you going to arrange your people or places. You could arrange people by neighborhood, age, or some other similarity. For places you can organize by each location in the images you talked about.

Step 2: Write Your Labels

Decide if one person is writing the labels or multiple. If each person is writing about the interview they conducted, create a template or clear instructions about what they need to write about. This way the exhibit is cohesive and makes sense to people viewing it. For this project, we suggest the following information:

- Biographic Information of Interviewee (Name, age (if relevant), number of years in Bloomington, etc)
- A key quote from the interview
- A short paragraph discussing key takeaways
 - Make sure this is related to the subtheme and research goal.
 - This should be less than 100 words. No one wants to read long exhibit labels.

You will also need an introduction label that sums up the project and goals. If you have subthemes, each theme's section should also have a short introduction paragraph. Again, the shorter the better on these. No more than 150 words each.

There are lots of tips for creating good exhibit text, but the most important is make the text conversational, interesting, and short.

For more tips check out this three-minute YouTube video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyhnYcumI98>

or for a more complete understanding read this

guide produced by the British Columbia

Museums Association: [https://museum.](https://museum.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/BCMA-Exhibit-Dev-The-Art-of-Writing-110.pdf)

[bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/BCMA-Exhibit-Dev-The-Art-of-Writing-110.pdf](https://museum.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/BCMA-Exhibit-Dev-The-Art-of-Writing-110.pdf).

Remember, all labels should be reviewed by the interviewee to make sure you are not misrepresenting them!



Step 3: Gather Images and Create Graphics

You should already have the images you used to interview with, but do you also want images of the person you interviewed? If so, it is easiest to take one at the time of the interview, but you can always reach out again.

The other visual components you will need besides photographs are your printed exhibit labels. It is important these are designed in a way that makes people want to read them. Here is a quick diagram with some tips: https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/sites/default/files/tips_for_making_effective_labels.pdf.

Each should have clearly defined sections. The tile should be large and catchy. The paragraph text average size, but no smaller than 20 pt font. And the quote should be called out in some way, either bolding it, making it a fun color, or making it extra large.

You can simply print black type on white paper, but if you have the resources adding color and a simple border can make the labels much more appealing. You can separate subthemes by making each theme have a different background color.


Remember, it is important to make sure there is enough contrast between the foreground and background colors you use. If you don't people won't be able to read any of your text. Here is a link that lets you test your colors and make sure everyone can read it: <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>.

If you have the time and budget, printing out your designs and gluing them to foam board gives them more dimension and can create a more official looking exhibit.

When your designs are done, print them out to hang in your classroom, hallway, or gathering place. You can also glue them to a trifold board for a tabletop display (example below).

Title: An Arts Hub

Subtitle: The Buskirk-Chumley Theatre



William Jones
Retired Store Owner

“A meaningful quote here. Example, when I was a kid, every weekend we would go to the square to pick up skittles from the candy shop on the corner. We looked forward to it all week.”

Subtitle Here

A brief paragraph of text from the interview only. No more than 100 words. Example: William Jones did not know how to read when he was 10 years old. He learned to read by listening to his father read the newspaper to him every day. He learned to read by listening to his father read the newspaper to him every day.

- Did Jones talk about anything else for his...
- Jones talked about...
- Jones talked about...
- Jones talked about...
- Jones talked about...
- Jones talked about...

Samantha Martin
Music Teacher

“A meaningful quote here. Example, when I was a kid, every weekend we would go to the square to pick up skittles from the candy shop on the corner. We looked forward to it all week.”

Subtitle Here

A brief paragraph of text from the interview only. No more than 100 words. Example: Samantha Martin did not know how to read when she was 10 years old. She learned to read by listening to her mother read the newspaper to her every day. She learned to read by listening to her mother read the newspaper to her every day.

- Did Martin talk about anything else for his...
- Martin talked about...
- Martin talked about...
- Martin talked about...
- Martin talked about...
- Martin talked about...

Susan Smith
Travel Agent

“A meaningful quote here. Example, when I was a kid, every weekend we would go to the square to pick up skittles from the candy shop on the corner. We looked forward to it all week.”

Subtitle Here


A brief paragraph of text from the interview only. No more than 100 words. Example: Susan Smith did not know how to read when she was 10 years old. She learned to read by listening to her mother read the newspaper to her every day. She learned to read by listening to her mother read the newspaper to her every day.

- Did Smith talk about anything else for his...
- Smith talked about...
- Smith talked about...
- Smith talked about...
- Smith talked about...
- Smith talked about...

“A Cathy Quote Here - We used to go here every Friday night”

Major Take-Aways

- one
- two
- three
- four



Jose Rodriguez
IU Professor

“A meaningful quote here. Example, when I was a kid, every weekend we would go to the square to pick up skittles from the candy shop on the corner. We looked forward to it all week.”

Subtitle Here

A brief paragraph of text from the interview only. No more than 100 words. Example: Jose Rodriguez did not know how to read when he was 10 years old. He learned to read by listening to his father read the newspaper to him every day. He learned to read by listening to his father read the newspaper to him every day.

- Did Rodriguez talk about anything else for his...
- Rodriguez talked about...
- Rodriguez talked about...
- Rodriguez talked about...
- Rodriguez talked about...
- Rodriguez talked about...

Melissa Oliver
Doctor

“A meaningful quote here. Example, when I was a kid, every weekend we would go to the square to pick up skittles from the candy shop on the corner. We looked forward to it all week.”

Subtitle Here

A brief paragraph of text from the interview only. No more than 100 words. Example: Melissa Oliver did not know how to read when she was 10 years old. She learned to read by listening to her mother read the newspaper to her every day. She learned to read by listening to her mother read the newspaper to her every day.

- Did Oliver talk about anything else for his...
- Oliver talked about...
- Oliver talked about...
- Oliver talked about...
- Oliver talked about...
- Oliver talked about...

David Clark
Bank Teller

“A meaningful quote here. Example, when I was a kid, every weekend we would go to the square to pick up skittles from the candy shop on the corner. We looked forward to it all week.”

Subtitle Here

A brief paragraph of text from the interview only. No more than 100 words. Example: David Clark did not know how to read when he was 10 years old. He learned to read by listening to his father read the newspaper to him every day. He learned to read by listening to his father read the newspaper to him every day.

- Did Clark talk about anything else for his...
- Clark talked about...
- Clark talked about...
- Clark talked about...
- Clark talked about...
- Clark talked about...

Template Links:

If you are new to graphic design, we have created a series of templates on [canva.com](https://www.canva.com) that you can use for free. Simply pick the design you want, change the text, images, and color, and print. You can also share these templates with each person in the group. Just remember to specify which layout you are using so that everything looks consistent.

To use the templates, you will need to have a canva account. Click on the link and hit the three dots in the bottom right corner. Then select “edit document” to make the templates your own.

People Focused Layout: <https://go.iu.edu/4QTf>

Image Focused Layout: <https://go.iu.edu/4QTg>



Step 4 (optional): Figure Out Audio Components

Since you worked really hard to collect your oral history, a fun thing to add to your exhibit would be audio. If you want to do this, you will need to trim your audio down to three minutes or less. Any more than that and people won't listen to the whole thing, especially if they are not able to sit down and listen. You can easily do this using either Audacity or Audition and looking up tutorials on YouTube (see the After Interview section for some links)

Once you have trimmed your audio there are several ways to add it to your exhibit.

1. Upload your audio to YouTube or another website. Create QR codes that people can scan in the exhibit to listen to it.
 - a. Note: This does assume all your guests will have the ability to scan a QR code. It is best practice to have an extra device to lend to people whose phones don't have this capability.
2. Upload audio to YouTube or another website. Have an iPad or computer in the exhibit with headphones and allow people to choose audio to listen to.
3. Purchase a cheap CD player and headphones and burn audio to a CD.
 - a. Note: If you only have one CD player, this forces audience to listen to all the audio in order and they probably won't listen to all of them. If budget allows, we recommend purchasing multiple CD players. You can often find cheap ones at thrift stores.

Step 5: Install and Invite People to Your Exhibit

Print your graphics and install. You can tape or pin them to a wall. Or glue them to a trifold board to create a tabletop display. Invite people to come to your exhibit and show off all your hard work. Be sure to share pictures with the education team here at IUMAA!

Oral History Release Forms

Oral history release forms let both the interviewer and interviewees know what is going to happen to the oral history collected, how it is going to be cared for, and how it is going to be used. They also give organization conducting the interviews legal ownership over the collected materials.

It is important for both the interviewer and interviewees to fill out the form, so that the organization has permission from everyone involved in the interview to use it for the stated purposes.

The following is a blank version of a release form as well as the two-page oral history release form that we use at the IUMAA. You will need to tweak it to fit your organization and needs.

Oral History Participant Written Release Form

I, Participant's Name, am a participant in an Oral History collection project with Organization's Name. I understand that the purpose of the project is to collect audio recordings that will be How the recording will be stored/preserved. The deposited documentary materials may be used to How recordings will be used. I understand that Organization's Name plans to retain my interview as part of its permanent collection and disseminate it in multi-media products according to the following permissions

- I hereby grant to Organization's Name ownership of the physical property delivered to the institution and the right to use the property that is the product of my participation (for example, my interview) as stated above. The transcript of my narration will be archived with Organization's Name.
- I will have the opportunity to review and edit my transcript before it is accessioned into the Organization's Name permanent collection. After the transcript is accessioned, the interview in all forms will be available for research without restriction.
- I grant to Organization's Name my absolute and irrevocable consent for any photograph(s) taken of me in the course of my participation in the project to be used, published, and copied by Organization's Name and its assignees in any medium.
- I grant to Organization's Name any consent to use my narration and the transcripts of my narration for digital and/or online projects.
- I agree that Organization's Name may use my name, photographic image or likeness, statements, narration, and voice recording, or other sound effects without further approval on my part for theatrical performances.
- I understand that I can withdraw from this project at any time before the accession process is completed and the deed of gift is signed. If I choose to withdraw, any material associated with the interview will be destroyed.

Organization's Name agrees to provide me with a copy of the narration transcript and a copy of the audio recording. Organization's Name retains copyright to narration. In return, Organization's Name grants me a nonexclusive license to utilize my interview(s) during my lifetime.

Oral History Participant Written Release Form

I, _____, am a participant in an Oral History collection project with _____ . I understand that the purpose of the project is to collect audio recordings that will be _____. The deposited documentary materials may be used to _____. I understand that _____ plans to retain my interview as part of its permanent collection and disseminate it in multi-media products according to the following permissions

I hereby grant to _____ ownership of the physical property delivered to the institution and the right to use the property that is the product of my participation (for example, my interview) as stated above. The transcript of my narration will be archived with _____.

I will have the opportunity to review and edit my transcript before it is accessioned into the _____ permanent collection. After the transcript is accessioned, the interview in all forms will be available for research without restriction.

I grant to _____ my absolute and irrevocable consent for any photograph(s) taken of me in the course of my participation in the project to be used, published, and copied by _____ and its assignees in any medium.

I grant to _____ any consent to use my narration and the transcripts of my narration for digital and/or online projects.

I agree that _____ may use my name, photographic image or likeness, statements, narration, and voice recording, or other sound effects without further approval on my part for theatrical performances.

I understand that I can withdraw from this project at any time before the accession process is completed and the deed of gift is signed. If I choose to withdraw, any material associated with the interview will be destroyed.

_____ agrees to provide me with a copy of the narration transcript and a copy of the audio recording, _____ retains copyright to narration. In return, _____ grants me a nonexclusive license to utilize my interview(s) during my lifetime.

Oral History Participant Written Release Form

Accepted and Agreed

Narrator Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian if Interviewee is a Minor:

_____ Date: _____

Interviewers Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Location of Interview: _____

Notes:

IUMAA Oral History Participant Written Release Form

I, _____, am a participant in an Oral History collection project with Indiana University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, (hereinafter IUMAA). I understand that the purpose of the project is to collect audio recordings that will be deposited in the permanent collection of IUMAA. The deposited documentary materials may be used for scholarly, educational, and other purposes. I understand that IUMAA plans to retain my interview as part of its permanent collection and disseminate it in multi-media products according to the following permissions

I hereby grant to IUMAA ownership of the physical property delivered to the institution and the right to use the property that is the product of my participation (for example, my interview) as stated above. The transcript of my narration will be archived with IUMAA.

I will have the opportunity to review and edit my transcript before it is accessioned into the IUMAA permanent collection. After the transcript is accessioned, the interview in all forms will be available for research without restriction.

I grant to IUMAA my absolute and irrevocable consent for any photograph(s) taken of me in the course of my participation in the project to be used, published, and copied by IUMAA and its assignees in any medium.

I grant to IUMAA any consent to use my narration and the transcripts of my narration for digital and/or online projects.

I agree the IUMAA may use my name, photographic image or likeness, statements, narration, and voice recording, or other sound effects without further approval on my part for theatrical performances.

I understand that I can withdraw from this project at any time before the accession process is completed and the deed of gift is signed. If I choose to withdraw, any material associated with the interview will be destroyed.

IUMAA agrees to provide me with a copy of the narration transcript and a copy of the audio recording, IUMAA retains copyright to narration. In return, IUMAA grants me a nonexclusive license to utilize my interview(s) during my lifetime.

IUMAA Oral History Participant Written Release Form

Accepted and Agreed

Narrator Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian if Interviewee is a Minor:

_____ Date: _____

Interviewers Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Location of Interview: _____

Notes:

Oral History References

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- Smithsonian Exhibits. "A Guide to Exhibit Development." Landover, MD, n.d. exhibits.si.edu.