

Voices of SLA: An International Oral History
A Partnership between the Centennial
Commission and the Fellows
Status Report and Training Outline

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Washington, DC
June 15, 2009

History of the Project

- The Voices of SLA Committee is a group of volunteers from the Fellows working on the project for the last year
- Contacts at the 30 Year old MLA oral history project provided advice
- The Oral History Association website was consulted
- Several videos from the Veterans' History Project were reviewed

History Continued

- We expect there may be division or caucus interviews as well
- The Voices of SLA is the official oral history project of SLA
- Consult with Susan DiMattia before beginning a chapter or division project
- Consider creating oral histories as part of your professional development

Status Summary

- The committee has completed the first five interviews
- Transcripts of interviews conducted by Doreen Cohen in the 1990's are on the Centennial website. An update to Bill Fisher's is also on the Centennial website
- Special thanks to Gail Matthews-DeNatale of Simmons GSLIS for her help on this project

Challenges

- Budget – adequate for only one year of the project
- Hiring a professional trainer
- Remote training of interviewers is in uncharted waters
- Legal issues such as consent forms and storage of original tape are settled. Make sure you use SLA approved forms

Schedule

- Transcripts of the 1990's interviews are available now on the Centennial website
- Updates for those interviews are planned. Bill Fisher's update is already available
- The first five interviews of 2009 will be rolled out on the Centennial website
- Five new interviews are planned for Fall 2009

Goals for Next Review

- Demonstration of the Centennial website with the transcripts of all interviews at the January 2010 Leadership Summit
- A meeting will be scheduled at the January Leadership Summit for the committee, interviewers and interviewees as well as interested members
- Securing continued funding

Preparation for Doing the Interviews

- Consult questions approved by the Voices of SLA Committee
- Check the SLA membership record for awards, offices held by the interviewee
- Arrange the time and place of the interview – comfortable, convenient and quiet
- Review any publications and the interviewee's resume

Preparation Continued

- Practice with the technology making sure your voice and that of the interviewee are clear
- Use friends, colleagues, family for practice
- Check and recheck batteries, power cords, memory card
- The project director should send a consent form to both participants before the interview

Preparation continued

- The interview itself requires skill, patience, and ability to change direction if necessary
- If a document or article is mentioned identify the location of the material or summarize its content
- Group questions by topic

Preparation Continued

- Try to get the spelling of unfamiliar names, places or institutions during the interview
- Be an active listener without using your voice
- Make note of other questions during the interview without interrupting the flow

Technology

- The committee has the use of SLA's digital recorder
- The interview files are large and may require you to move them from your computer to a memory stick
- The Committee reimburses the interviewer for expenses. Chapters and divisions might consider the same

Recording

- Test the equipment again just before the start of the interview
- Announce interviewer and interviewee names, date of the interview and location
- Turn off the tape if there is distraction or either party needs a break

Transcripts

- The Voices of SLA Committee has a transcription service convert the digital file to a Word document
- Transcripts should be reviewed for accuracy by both interviewee and interviewer before going to an editor
- Make arrangements for the transcript editing and archiving of the transcript and original digital format

After the Interview

- Send a thank you note to the interviewee
- Mail the tape and release forms to your project manager
- SLA Headquarters archives the tapes, original transcript (digital and print), edited transcript, letters, consent form, and other pertinent materials