

PROPOSAL FOR A SASKATCHEWAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

by Robert C. Cosby

INTRODUCTION

The following proposal for an oral history project was first developed in 1973-74 while I was on leave from the University of Regina. With the support of a Canada Council Leave Fellowship, I studied as a Visiting Research Professor at the Folklore Institute of Indiana University under the guidance of its Director, Richard M. Dorson.

After reading extensively about oral history in the admirable university library, I wrote to several oral history projects asking for descriptions of their methodology, and received generous and helpful replies from the Alaska Library Association, Bethel College, the University of California at Los Angeles, Public Archives Canada, the State Historical Society of Colorado, the Oral History Research Office of Columbia University, Cornell University Libraries, the Haglely Museum, the John F. Kennedy Library, the University of Michigan, the Ohio Historical Society, the Oklahoma American Indian Institute, the Pennsylvania State University, the University of South Dakota, the Southwest Collection, the University of Texas, the Harry S. Truman Library, Wayne State University, the University of West Virginia, and the University of Wisconsin.

I carried out a brief oral history project of my own, and then traveled to examine at first hand more complex and continuing projects at the Roosevelt University Oral History Project in Labor History, the Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies at the Museum of Man in Ottawa, the Archives of Folklore and Languages at Memorial University of Newfoundland, and the Northeast Archive of Folklore and Oral History at the University of Maine.

This Proposal is the result of my studies and observations. It has been revised to remove merely local or timely items, and can now be taken, I trust, as one model of how any oral history project might be initiated.

The Proposal in its original form was published in Conceptual Problems in Contemporary Folklore Study, ed. Gerald Cashion (Folklore Forum Bibliographic and Special Series, No. 12, Bloomington, 1974). Reprints of this first publication have been requested by initiators of projects in the United States and Canada, but reprints are no longer available and the publication itself is not to be found in most Canadian libraries. Hence, the present revision.

The reader may be interested to know that the admonitions in this Proposal were not entirely heeded by the Province to which they were addressed. A unified Saskatchewan Oral History Project has not yet developed. Rather, many local projects are active across the Province, several sponsored by museums and community colleges. The Provincial Department of Culture and Youth has an active program, in which it supplies equipment, training, and some financial support for expenses, to individual collectors. The Department has also published some of the collected materials and made them available to schools. The University of Regina has provided space and logistic support for my classes in oral history field techniques, financially supported by the Canada Council Explorations Program. The Provincial

Archives, under our new archivist, Ian Wilson, is acting as depository for tapes and is holding a conference to determine what the role of the Archives should be in oral history. Most of these groups have used this Proposal, in one way or another.

The major present problem, in Saskatchewan as elsewhere, is how to co-ordinate the work of various groups now in the field, and of the new groups coming into being.

It is important that initiators of oral history projects should know what is a sound, standard way of setting up such projects. I hope the Proposal will save them time and help them avoid some problems.

I. WHAT IS ORAL HISTORY?

The term "oral history" is in itself somewhat ambiguous, and in practice very different kinds of projects with little more in common than the use of tape recorders are called "oral history projects". But the decision about what, exactly, oral history is, will affect all subsequent decisions of organization, collecting methods, transcription and storage, and even selection of equipment, so anyone proposing an oral history project should start by explaining what he means.

The first impetus for an oral history project in Saskatchewan was the awareness that there are still old timers who remember significant segments of Saskatchewan's past, and the common agreement that it would be admirable to preserve somehow the memories of these older Saskatchewan people. A useful definition of oral history grows logically out of this practical starting point.

At least two kinds of oral history are practiced today. One, which has been developed by traditional historians, is the use of the tape recorder as an interviewing device to produce historical records which will be used in the writing of books of history. The other, which has been developed by folklorists and archivists, is the use of the tape recorder to preserve evidences of the folklife and oral traditions of a people such as would not be preserved by other means, which will be used by various kinds of researchers for varied purposes.

To illustrate the first: Allan Nevins, the American historian, began at Columbia University in 1948 an oral history project which has been the model for most such projects in the United States and has set the tone for the Oral History Association. In the age of telephones and rapid travel, more and more high-level decisions are made which are not recorded on paper (witness the recent interest in certain White House tapes). Therefore, in order to record how decisions were made, many oral history projects interview those people who were present or instrumental, and who can remember the pertinent facts. The interviews are usually recorded on tape, then transcribed onto paper, corrected and edited by the informants, and preserved as written records. The tapes are usually erased and re-used. Two of the largest projects in oral history, those of the John F. Kennedy Library and the Harry S. Truman Library, are examples of this approach. Typically, the chief of the Harry S. Truman project, James R. Fuchs, says in a letter: "You will note that we do not preserve our tapes and consider a transcript as the end product."¹ This approach is characterized, then, by the traditional concept of history as flowing from the actions and decisions of key people, and also characterized by the use of the tape recorder as one step towards a typed document. From oral history in this sense have come a series of history books with a new sense of liveliness, an

accuracy in small everyday details and in the words people actually used, seen in such works as James M. Burns' Roosevelt: the Lion and the Fox, Joseph P. Lash's Eleanor and Franklin, and William Manchester's Death of a President.

The other approach to oral history, which is folkloristic, uses the tape recorder to preserve two kinds of material: oral evidence about the informants' own lives and experiences, and oral tradition about events before the lives of the informants.

It surprises most of us to realize how remarkably tenacious, detailed, and historically accurate oral tradition can be. One of the most remarkable and moving examples of this is the story of how the oral traditions in an American black man's own family enabled him to return to the specific African village of his ancestors six generations back, and find there an oral tradition which confirmed his own.² If we record the reminiscences of pioneers and old timers, it is not only to hear stories about the good old days -- it is also to obtain real historical evidence. (Oral tradition is, like all other sources of history, subject to bias and distortion, but this is not to deny its validity, properly used.)

Oral history in this sense also preserves on tape the personal experiences, the daily lives and habits, of past times. Think of hearing, in her own voice, a woman's detailed account of keeping house in a sod shanty. The final product of oral history in this sense is not a typed transcript but the recorded tape itself (often supplemented by photographs or artifacts). Transcripts are likely to be thought of as a convenient means of finding out what is on the tapes.

Typically, the assistant archivist of the Southwest Collection at Texas Tech University, David Murrah, writes:

While many oral history programs furnish edited transcripts, we feel that the tape, and not the transcript, is and should be the finished document of our work. We are not attempting to make or produce books out of the oral reminiscences of witnesses: we are simply preserving the oral portion of history, that portion which in times past was either lost or distorted.³

Dr. Neil Rosenberg, Acting Head of the Department of Folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland, advises in a letter specifically about the proposed archives for Saskatchewan:

An oral history archive which keeps its tapes and doesn't edit its transcripts ... is also a linguistics, folklore, sociology, etc., archive, a multi-purpose place of use to a wide range of scholars. Hence it is not only useful to the people of the province, it is useful to scholars from a number of places.⁴

The products of oral history in this sense are varied. They include the same kinds of history books as grow out of the first approach. But they also include the dialect dictionaries and collections of local custom which are coming from Memorial University, the folklife histories of the lumberman and the lobster fisherman which are in progress at the Northeast Archive of Folklore and Oral History, and such published works as William L. Montell's The Saga of Coe Ridge and Studs

Terkel's *Division Street* and *Hard Times: an Oral History of the Great Depression in America*.

"Oral history" as the term is used in this report should be understood to mean the collection of evidences of the folklife and traditions of a people, recorded on tape and preserved for multiple use. It can be thought of as a general collection of the reminiscences of pioneers and old timers (which is what I shall recommend as the first phase of the Saskatchewan project), and equally as the collection of material on specific subjects: the history of the family farm, the history of political parties, the history of medical services, education, mining, forestry, inter-racial and inter-ethnic relations -- all from the points of view of a spectrum of participants.

II. WHY IS AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT NEEDED IN SASKATCHEWAN?

Saskatchewan is at a most interesting point in history. There are still old timers whose memories go back to the settlement of parts of the province, to major events in our history, and to details of folklife not elsewhere on record. Students in the OFY project "Chapters in Saskatchewan Spoken History" were surprised to find that even for the first practice tapes they made, with the first informants they could reach, a wealth of detail turned up about arrival in the province, about life in sod houses, about the Dirty Thirties. There is simply no doubt that a wealth of material is there, in the memories of people who are extremely unlikely to get their reminiscences down on paper.

There is, it is equally clear, a great urgency to immediate action, since many of the potential informants will not be available much longer. This is commonly true, where oral history projects have sprung up to capture the memories of old timers. Students at the University of Maine who are compiling material for a folklife study of the Maine lumbermen told me that when they went to the Penobscot Indians to get the story of the Indians' role in lumbering (which was quite significant) the Indians told them they were just three years too late: three years earlier they could have interviewed several Indian veterans of the log drives, but now none were left and the story was lost beyond recovery.

Similarly, Pierre Berton, whose *Klondike* was based in part on interviews with old timers, tells us in a note to the second edition:

Most of the material in the last chapter of this book comes from personal interviews with Klondikers, all of whom have died since *Klondike* was first published. ...If I had waited a few more years to write the book, such personal memories would have been impossible; indeed, before I finished the text a good many of my informants had already gone. Yet without these personal conversations, the book would be much less effective.⁵

This sense of urgency hangs over all who are concerned with the possibility of an oral history project for Saskatchewan. Léo La Clare, Head of the Sound Archives at the Public Archives of Canada, writes:

I would like to mention my personal interest in the oral history of Saskatchewan since one of my great grandfathers, Moise L'Heureux, was a pioneer rancher, farmer, and instructor at the Indian school of Delmas

in the late 1800's and early 1900's. I should record my grandmother's reminiscences of her father and of pioneer days....⁶

G.S. Jackson, Director of Audio-Visual Services at the University of Regina, after commenting on technical aspects of the proposal, added:

I just lost a chance to record a cousin who died at 107 last year.... The things she could remember...⁷

These are by no means uncommon observations, as anyone familiar with Saskatchewan knows. Even a casual check of the obituary columns will show that people in their 80's and 90's are rapidly dying off, taking with them memories we cannot recover. One of the first goals of the Saskatchewan Oral History Project must be to change "The things she could remember!" to "The things she got down on tape for future generations!"

It is true, of course, that some attempts have already been made to tape some of these resources. What is apparent, however, is that no coordinated project to send collectors into the field exists to take advantage of the present but fleeting opportunities. There are many dangers in undisciplined collecting: tapes may be inefficiently recorded, or haphazardly stored so that they deteriorate, or kept in scattered places so as to be useless. Collected information may be scrappy, incoherent or cryptic, or so poorly annotated as to be useless to historians. Collected material may be used in ways that violate the rights of informants and alienate them, making further collecting difficult. There is a very great need for professional supervision of collecting, for a common set of standards and procedures, and for a central and professional archive.

Once the project is systematically in operation, and the reminiscences of old timers are being made available in professional form to researchers, the Saskatchewan Oral History Project can be directed towards selective collecting in specific subjects. Perhaps the project will concentrate on certain towns or other points of historical interest. Perhaps it will compile histories of the family farm, or of medicine, or great social movements such as occurred during the Depression. In all such projects, the technique of oral history can produce materials unavailable through other sources.

Eventually, an oral history archives might be expanded or coordinated with museums or other archives to make available not only taped evidence but photographs, moving pictures, videotape, and such non-print historical materials as newsclips from television newscasts, etc., so that at some future time the student of Saskatchewan history could not only read about past events but to some extent see and hear them.

It is to be hoped that the urgency of getting recorded the reminiscences of our old timers will move us to set up an organization capable not only of making those reminiscences permanently available, but also of putting on record for future citizens many other collections of the kind that only a well-organized oral history project can produce.

III. PROPOSAL FOR AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT: (1) COMMITTEE AND DIRECTOR

One purpose of this report is to urge that a Saskatchewan Oral History Project be established as soon as possible, so that coordinated collecting can begin. There

is no need to set up an expensive or elaborate organization; indeed, the planners should quite properly demand to see some fruitful activity on a modest scale before recommending the allocation of funds, space, and effort on a relatively large scale. Two things are, however, urgent. First, a start must be made immediately. Second, the project, since it can be expected to grow, must be organized from the beginning in a way compatible to growth, so that later reorganization will not be necessary.

I recommend that the University of Regina invite the Ministry of Culture and Youth, and the Provincial Archives, to join the University in appointing members to a Saskatchewan Oral History Committee. The Committee's function should be to draw up a specific proposal, to recommend a candidate for the position of Director, and to approve all plans for collecting, archiving, and use of materials. I would hope that as one of its first items of business the Committee would study this report and recommend adoption of as much of the detailed proposal as seems fitting.

Such a committee will be needed not only to get the project started but to make difficult policy decisions as the work of the project grows. To cite only one problem: there is much more opportunity for collecting than we can take advantage of. What particular projects should be authorized or encouraged?

The Director. I was surprised, as I visited several oral history projects and read about others, to discover how many of them owe their inception or their continued existence to the time, energies, and devotion of single individuals. The Columbia University project was brought into being by the stubborn efforts of Allan Nevins. The Foxfire project was started by an English teacher looking for subjects his students would write about with enthusiasm, and sending those students out to report on their own folklife roots. The Northeast Archive of Folklore and Oral History was started by one folklorist in the Department of English. The Roosevelt University Oral History Project in Labor History is the product of one energetic historian. In many other cases, the same is true: one stubborn enthusiastic person has bulldozed through a program, often in spite of neglect or opposition, which has then been recognized as valuable.

In Saskatchewan, it is to be hoped that the pattern will be somewhat different, that several people already interested in such a project can come together and insist on its inception. But even so, they will need a director, and one with energy and dedication. He must coordinate the various collecting activities. He must see to it that wherever possible funds from LIP and similar programs are used for collecting. He will need to publicize rules for collecting, including the ethics of collecting and the use of materials. He must publicize the project and conduct surveys to find informants. He must see to it that specific proposals are drawn up in cooperation with groups interested in collecting or sponsoring collectors. He must see to it that the collected materials are properly indexed, catalogued and stored. He must encourage such use of the materials as will in the long run justify the whole project (and attract funds, incidentally, such as Canada Council funds).

The director is the key person. Although it is certain that in Saskatchewan an oral history program of any scope will come about soon only by the cooperative efforts of many people, it is equally true that a good director is needed to keep things coordinated and keep them moving.

IV. PROPOSAL FOR AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT: (2) COLLECTORS AND THEIR TRAINING

Who shall be the collectors of materials in oral history, and what training

do they need? In the oral history projects which serve traditional history, such as the John F. Kennedy Library and the Harry S. Truman Library, it is usual to have trained professional interviewers on staff. The advantages are obvious; the disadvantage is a matter of cost: very few projects can afford full-time professionals.

In many small projects, the one person whose energies keep the project going is also the only regular collector. If they are fortunate, such projects may from time to time obtain grants, but usually these are used up in hiring transcribers.

Where an oral history project has grown out of the activities of university classes, students have often been used as collectors, receiving credit for their work as part of the required class activity. Student collections, which can be quite reliable if the classwork includes proper theory and supervision, form important parts of the archive collections at the Folklore Institute at Indiana University, the Archives of Folklore and Language at Memorial University, and the Northeast Archive of Folklore and Oral History at the University of Maine. In all of these, the collecting is carried out as part of the work of classes in folklore.

To decide what is needed, we should first review what it is that a collector needs to know, what kind of training is fundamental.

(1) First, a collector must know as much as possible about the subject on which he seeks information. Professional interviewers spend many hours in research preparatory to each hour of interviewing. It takes information to get information. That was borne home to me dramatically when I sat in on a class in folklore at the University of Maine. The students had invited an old former lumberman to talk about the log drives on the Bangor River. They had prepared in advance a large model of the log-sorting boom on the river, at which the informant had worked in his youth, and had read everything they could find about it, and were full of intelligent questions. When the man heard their questions he was much excited, and poured out a wealth of detailed information about how the sorting operation was carried out -- information nowhere in print.

One of the devices of teachers of folklore is to send their students to their own home towns and to their own relatives for information, which gives them immediate advantages of access and background. At the 1973 meeting of the American Folklore Society, one of the papers presented to that professional body was an illustrated report on quilts, quilting, and the social customs associated with quilting in a small Georgia community. The author was an undergraduate student; the chief informant was her own grandmother.

If a Saskatchewan collector were going to interview people about life in sod houses, he would first need to read everything he could on the subject (starting, perhaps, with Roger Welsch's Sod Walls: the Story of the Nebraska Sod House, 1968). He would need to consult the Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society's roster of sod houses, and their committee reports. He would need to assemble 8 X 10 reproductions of typical photographs to show informants as the basis for questions and to stir memories. Thus prepared, he could ask intelligent questions, could avoid information already in print, could spot leads to follow up, etc. He would not simply be saying "Tell us about the old days", and turning on the tape recorder.

Before any collectors are sent out, the Committee or the Director should have drawn up a List of Questions, outlining the kinds of information to be collected in Saskatchewan, so that the collector will not neglect areas of information. Such a

list takes time to prepare but is very useful thereafter, not as a set form for interviews but as a reminder to collectors of areas of interest. A copy should be given to each collector, and he should know how to use it.⁸

(2) A collector needs to know his equipment. He must be so familiar with his tape recorder that he can use it casually, and seem to ignore it, so that it will not be forbidding to informants. He must know enough not to set the recorder and the microphone on the same table (where recorder noises will be picked up and the set look most formidable), unless he works with a built-in mike. He must know how to change reels or cassettes quickly and casually, how to adjust a microphone to avoid background noise, what to do about loud clocks, etc., which human ears ignore but the machine picks up, how to allow for low voice levels, when to leave the tape recorder running in silence to avoid pressuring a hesitating informant, how to key in discussion of a photograph or object so the interview will make sense to anyone listening to the tape -- dozens of other such points. He should know how to use a simple flash camera, to get photographs of informants and, if called for, of their tools, workspaces, etc.

(3) The collector must know the techniques of interviewing: how to prepare an informant by letter before the interview to give him time for recollection, how to break the ice and establish rapport, how to guide the talk without shutting off valuable reminiscences on other subjects, how to judge when to end the interview, and whether to return for more. He must know what field notes are needed for researchers who will use the tapes: what information about the informant and his history, also what notes to take for the transcriber of the tapes, such as spellings of proper names, etc. He must know how to elicit material which is controversial or charged with emotion, since a serious record of the past must certainly include such material, and how to draw it out without taking sides or rousing ill will.

(4) The collector needs to know the ethics of collecting and interviewing. He must make it clear to everyone that he is an agent of the Project, not collecting material for his own use or for commercial use, and that the informant has the right to determine what information he will give and what restrictions shall be placed on its use. He must use no trickery, and especially must never record without the informant's knowledge and consent. He must be able to explain the release forms by which the informant gives the Project the right to make material available to researchers, and the restrictions which will be put on the use of materials. He must be able to explain the informant's continuing rights to his own material even though the property rights to the tapes and their verbatim contents will belong to the project.

(5) The collector must know how to submit tapes to the Project: how to mark tapes and containers for safe identification, how to make out an accessions sheet including an index of the taped materials keyed to the counter of his own tape recorder, with a parallel set of notes to the transcriber on spellings, difficult passages, etc., in what form to submit field notes on the informant and the interview so the material will be useful to historians, how to submit a field diary with leads for future collecting. He must follow up any photographs, diaries, etc., loaned by the informant and be personally responsible for getting them back to the informant after they have been copied for the files.

Where shall we find such collectors? I recommend a number of steps. First, we must develop our own Handbook for Collectors of the Saskatchewan Oral History Project, as a minimum statement of the project and its methods. Such a handbook might well be modeled on Edward D. Ives' Manual for Field Workers, Northeast Archives

of Folklore and Oral History (1973), which is one of the best, but it should carry the name and description of the Saskatchewan Oral History Project, a statement of purpose, the Saskatchewan List of Questions for Collectors, and other detailed information needed by collectors, and samples of release forms, etc. This Handbook, as a minimum first step, should be given to everyone collecting for the Project, as a statement of expected procedure.⁹

Second, we should take maximum advantage of such funds as are available through LIP, etc. Experience has shown, both in Saskatchewan and elsewhere, that such funds can be made available for the collecting of oral history. Indeed, it should be a point in favour of those applying for such funds, that they will be working under the supervision of the Project, and contributing to the preservation of oral tradition in a regular archive.

Third, the University of Regina should offer a class in oral history for regular undergraduate credit, and collecting projects should be part of the work of the class. It should also offer a class in folklore, in which the illustrative materials will be as much as possible those of Saskatchewan, and in which collecting will be required. Such classes would be of value to many disciplines, of course, in their own right, besides contributing to the archives.

Fourth, an effort should be made to get summer scholarship funds for regular students in majors related to Saskatchewan, to enable them to spend time in collecting oral history (after proper training). Whether such funds are called scholarships or summer employment grants, they could be justified as such as well as contributing to the archives.

Fifth, the Oral History Project should enlist the interest of museums, libraries, history societies, and local groups around the province to sponsor collecting projects for the archives, and to send collectors to Regina for training sessions. The Project should develop a short course for such purposes, of about one week of intensive work.

Sixth, the Oral History Project should enlist groups interested in special aspects of Saskatchewan history (such as community clinics, wheat pools, labour organizations, women's movement groups), to subsidize collecting of the oral history of the groups, the collectors to be trained by the Project and the tapes to be available for research in the Archives.

In all such ways, and as many more as can be thought up and put into practice, we should be enlisting help in supporting collection, always insisting on the co-ordination of projects, the training of collectors, and the retention of tapes in the Archives.

V. PROPOSAL FOR AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT: (3) THE ARCHIVES AND THE USE OF RECORDED MATERIALS¹⁰

In this section, I recommend a specific system for the accession, storage, and use of collected materials. My suggestions are based on an examination of many oral history projects. Some I visited and studied on the spot; many others sent me descriptions of their procedures and samples of their work sheets, index cards, etc.¹¹ I have combined all I could learn from these systems into one system which would fit our needs as simply as possible, using as few forms and as few steps as possible, which would serve the needs of researchers efficiently, and would be logical enough

to be efficient no matter how large the Archives may in future become.

(1) The Collector Submits Material. In what form should collectors submit material to the Archives? This question must be considered in conjunction with another: what equipment will the collectors be using?

As to equipment, I find a surprising unanimity among oral history projects. If money were no object, we should use the latest model Nagra reel-to-reel tape recorders (and we should, in any case, try to obtain one such recorder for special use). Since the cost makes the Nagra impractical for our field use, we should consider the Sony TC 800B, a five-inch reel-to-reel portable recorder. Most oral history projects which have professional interviewers use this machine. However, since our collectors will not be professionals, it makes more sense to use as our standard field equipment the Sony TC 110 cassette recorder, a small, unobtrusive but very efficient machine. I shall assume, therefore, that recorded material comes to the Archives on cassette tape.

The collector will submit to the Archives his cassette tapes, with his name, etc. on a label on the cassette itself and on the container. He will also submit a release form signed by the informant, a photograph of the informant, any other photographs collected (all with identifying notes on the back), his field notes giving the background information about the informant (his age, places of habitation with dates, schooling, profession, etc.), and his field diary (giving notes useful to future collectors). He will also fill out, on the accession sheet, information about the tape, the collecting session, etc., and will enter on the accession sheet a brief index of the contents of the tape, keyed to the counter of his own tape recorder, with a parallel set of notes for the transcriber. The field diary, which is for the use of other collectors, is set aside in a special file. The other material is taken over by an accessions clerk.

(2) The Process of Accession. When a unit comes in from a collector, consisting of one or more cassette tapes and the other material noted above, that unit is given an accessions number, indicating the year and the item number. (Thus the accessions number 74-103 would mean the one hundred and third unit accessioned in the year 1974.) This accessions number is stamped on each page of all material relating to the unit: accessions sheet, field notes, photographs, etc. This is the base number, on which all filing and access will be based.

An accessions card is made out for each item, giving name of informant, name of collector, date and place of collecting, and a very brief indication of subject. The accessions cards, numerically filed, are the basic index of the archive materials, corresponding to a library shelf list.

At the same time, an accessions folder is stamped with the accessions number. This folder, which will hold all material about the tapes in one unit, is filed numerically. In it will go accessions sheet, informant's release form, collector's field notes, photographs and negatives. If a transcription is later made of the tapes, that is stored in this folder also.

The accessions sheet, on which the collector has entered basic information and an index of his tape, is also a work-flow sheet, on which the various steps to be taken with the material are checked off when completed, with the date of completion and the initials of the worker.

A collector index card is made, which bears the name of the collector and accession numbers of all items he has collected. These cards, filed alphabetically, form the collector index.

An informant index card is made, bearing the name of the collector, his place of habitation, and the accession numbers of all items for which he is the informant. These cards, filed alphabetically, form the informant index.

A place name index card is made, bearing the name of the place which is the locale of the taped information, identified according to a standard map of the Province, and accession numbers of all items concerning that place. These cards, filed alphabetically, form the place name index.

A number of subject index cards are made, based on the collector's index, one card for each subject, such as people mentioned, occupations, historical events, etc. Each card will contain one such heading and the accession numbers of all items containing material on that subject. These cards, filed alphabetically, form the subject index.

The cassette tape is stamped with the accession number. It is then dubbed onto master tape (preferably 3M Scotch Brand No. 208 Low Print/Low Noise quarter-inch Master Tape). The master tape is marked on the reel and on the box with the accession number. The tape, in its box, is stored standing on edge in a wooden cabinet (to prevent magnetic distortion), all the master tapes stored in order of accession number, under temperature and humidity control. The cassette tape is erased and made available for re-use in the field. (In practice, as will be seen, the use tape is dubbed from the cassette tape at the same time as the master tape.)

At this point, accession and indexing are complete.

(3) Making Materials Available for Use. The master tapes are unique. It would be dangerous to let them be used, just as it would be dangerous if users of the Archives have access to the accessions folders. Therefore, we need to reproduce materials for use.

The tapes, except for portions restricted by informants or judged unintelligible, are dubbed onto use tapes (such as 3M Scotch Brand AVC 176 Heavy-Duty tape). These tapes, marked with accessions numbers, are made available to researchers in a use area.

The contents of the accessions folder are xeroxed and the copies put in a use folder, marked by the accessions number, which is also made available in the use area. Where this use area will be is an important question. It should be physically separate from the storage area, to avoid confusion. For example, the archive storage area might be in the Provincial Archives, where the master tapes could be kept under controlled temperature and humidity, and the use area might be in the Audio-Visual Centre, where equipment exists for listening to tapes. I suggest that the researcher should come to the archives to consult the various indexes, then go to the use area to consult the use folders and listen to use tapes.

To what extent should tapes be transcribed? Transcriptions, which must be precise word-for-word records of what is on the tape, are very useful to people working with the material. Ideally, all tapes should be transcribed, and for such as are not in English there should also be a translation of the transcription into English.

But it can take up to fifteen hours to transcribe one hour of tape, especially if the speaker has any kind of accent, and a ratio of eight hours transcribing to one hour of tape is fairly standard. Transcribing can, it is clear, soon become very expensive. Therefore, it is necessary to propose that tapes be transcribed in order of their apparent usefulness, and to the extent that money becomes available. (Grant money from LIP, etc., has been available for this in some projects.)

When transcriptions are made, they will be deposited in the accessions folders. Xerox copies will be made and deposited in the use folders.

The use area must be controlled by some kind of supervisor. Perhaps this function could be given to some one in the Audio-Visual Centre. In any case, use must be supervised, because the materials on the tapes must be subject to certain restrictions. In library terms, these materials are not like books, but like unpublished manuscripts. Each user must sign an agreement sheet before using any material, stating that he understands and accepts the restrictions. The basic restriction must be that no material on tape or transcripts may be reproduced verbatim in any form without the written consent of the Director.

The ultimate use of the materials will, in the long run, justify the whole operation. With the set-up I have described, it would be safe to encourage wide use of the archive materials, by researchers undertaking historical studies, ethnic studies, geographic or linguistic studies, by students doing research for term papers, by members of the public interested in genealogy, or local history, or educational radio programs, etc. The widest possible use should be encouraged, at the same time that the archive materials (as distinct from the materials in the use area) are kept under tight security. It is to be expected that the results of such use would include books based on the materials, articles, reports, etc., and a wide understanding and appreciation of the oral tradition of Saskatchewan.

NOTES

1. Letter to the author, dated October 16, 1973.
2. Alex Haley, "Black History, Oral History, and Genealogy", Oral History Review 1973, 1-25. For the importance of oral tradition, see Jan Vansina, Oral Tradition: a Study in Historical Methodology (1965), also the Doris Duke Indian Oral History Project at the University of Oklahoma: a Final Report (1973) reporting on the collection of oral traditions which will, "it is hoped, lead soon to the publication of new historical material on the American Indian". (p.16).
3. Letter to the author, dated November 7, 1973.
4. Letter to the author, dated September 26, 1973.
5. Klondike: the Last Great Gold Rush 1896-1899, revised edition, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1972.
6. Letter to the author, dated August 18, 1973.

7. Letter to the author, dated September 25, 1973.
8. Before drawing up such a Saskatchewan List of Questions, it would be helpful to look through those handbooks which outline other cultural areas for the same purpose. The best of such handbooks are Sean O Suilleabhain, A Handbook of Irish Folklore (1963), which is based on Swedish models, George P. Murdock et al., Outline of Cultural Materials (3rd edition, 1950), and the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Notes and Queries on Anthropology (6th edition, 1951).
9. Other guides and handbooks which should be consulted as models before compiling the Saskatchewan Handbook for Collectors are: Procedural Manual for Oral History at the Ohio Historical Society (1972); Student Guide for Collecting with Tape Recorder (Memorial University, n.d.); Willa K. Baum, Oral History for the Local Historical Society (2nd edition, 1971); and Kenneth S. Goldstein, A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore (1964).
10. See also the article by Arlene Custer, the editor of the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections, Library of Congress: "Bibliographical Identification and Description of Oral History Records", Selections From the Fifth and Sixth National Colloquia on Oral History (1972), 99-102.
11. Most useful to me in this survey were Mr. Frank J. Gillis, of the Archives of Traditional Music, Indiana University; Dr. Robert B. Klymasz and Renée Landry, of the Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies; Dr. Neil Rosenberg of the Archives of Folklore and Language, Memorial University of Newfoundland; and Dr. Edward D. Ives of the Northeast Archive of Folklore and Oral History, the University of Maine. I have also benefitted by information generously supplied by many others.