

Editorial Note 31/2011

Welcome to Volume 31 (2011) of the *Oral History Forum d'histoire orale* – the journal of the Canadian Oral History Association (COHA). Last year was an exciting year for *Forum*: In January, we moved the journal to Athabasca University Press (AUP), where it received a much more stable electronic platform and a design overhaul. To everyone at AUP, especially Kathy Killoh and Sergiy Kozakov, a big thank you for making this an easy and successful transition!

Very exciting was also the launch of our first special issue at the meeting of the Canadian Historical Association in May 2010. Published as part of volume 29 (2009), it boasts ten articles, four book and media reviews, and an excellent and exhaustive introduction by guest editors Katrina Srigley (Nipissing University) and Stacey Zembrzycki (Concordia University). We thank them for producing a first-class collection of articles that will shape the Canadian discussion on oral history and family history for the coming years.

Our regular issue contained an interview with Karen Jungblut of the Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. The issue also offered nine book reviews and a conference report. The reviews were ably commissioned and edited by our reviews editor, Sharon Wall of the University of Winnipeg. Sharon has decided to move on to new projects. We want to take this opportunity to thank her for her dedicated work over the last two years. We are currently seeking two new review editors, one for English-language publications and the other for French-language publications. If you are interested, please send an email to forum@uwinnipeg.ca.

We start 2011 off with three very exciting additions: In the first week of January 2011, we published the special issue “Talking Green: Oral History and Environmental History,” commissioned by Kristina Llewellyn and guest edited by Alan MacEachern and Ryan O'Connor (both at the University of Western Ontario) (congratulations to Ryan for completing his Ph.D. while working on editing the special issue). This special issue is part of volume 30 (2010).

As part of our regular volume 31 (2011), we are publishing a masterly article by Linda Shopes on editing oral history for publication. The *co-editor of Palgrave's Studies in Oral History series* and widely published public historian is revealing some of the most important tips of the trade. She explains different requirements in editing and contextualization as well as the role of theory in three oral history genres: biographical narratives, topical interview compilations, and interpretive studies. So far, this knowledge was available only to those lucky enough to be able to attend one of Linda's excellent workshops. This piece will be a must-read for everyone who wishes to publish oral history.

As we said last year, both AUP and *Forum* are committed to open access: to making the results of our research available to everyone who has access to the

internet, whether a member of COHA or not. Open access is a major means of democratizing knowledge, and as oral historians we are committed to democratizing the production of historical knowledge. Using the Open Journal Software (OJS) at AUP is another form of open access. OJS is non-proprietary software. This means, AUP developers can adapt the software to its needs, something that is not possible for commercial, proprietary software that often does not give developers access to the source code.

We have made major strides in our goal to making *Forum* open access. Starting in 2006, we converted volumes 1-25 to PDF files and made them accessible on COHA website (www.canoha.ca). When we moved to AUP, we converted all past volumes into searchable files and integrated them into the Forum's Archive database of past issues. We made each volume open access after a one-year window that restricted access to COHA members. Furthermore, both special issues were openly accessible from the beginning, thanks to generous funding from the Abe and Bertha Arnold Fund and NiCHE: Network in Canadian History & Environment.

And here is the biggest news for 2012: Starting in 2012, we will, thanks to the Abe and Bertha Arnold Community Oral History Fund of the Oral History Centre at the University of Winnipeg make *Forum* completely open access! You will be able to access all articles immediately, whether you are a COHA member or not.

We are somewhat worried that this move to open access will result in declining membership numbers in the Canadian Oral History Association. Therefore, we wish to remind our readers that there are many reasons why they should continue to support COHA through membership fees:

- First, COHA and *Forum* need members and subscribers for our application to SSHRC for journal funding.
- Second, while funding allows us to make *Forum* open access, a solid base of membership fees allows us to develop both COHA and *Forum*, for example by sponsoring national meetings or the translation of oral history articles.
- Third, if COHA wants to participate in public discussions about the role of oral history in Canadian society, this can only be accomplished with a strong membership behind us.
- Fourth, oral history is a social movement to democratize history. Large organizations in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States as well as a strong international associations (IOHA) demonstrate this as much as the rapidly growing organizations in the Czech Republic, Italy, Japan, Poland, Russia, and many other countries around the world. Canadians can best be part of

this movement if we have a strong association, build networks, and connect more systematically to global oral history networks.

All of this requires not only funds (coming in part from membership fees), but also active participation. Please contact us at forum@uwinnipeg.ca if you would like to get involved in COHA!

Please renew your membership so that we may continue to develop the *Forum* into an energetic journal dedicated to the advancement of oral history in Canada and abroad. All correspondence regarding membership, including the payment of membership fees, will continue to be handled by Janis Thiessen, the treasurer-secretary of the Canadian Oral History Association. For more information, visit <http://www.canoha.ca/membership>.

We wish to thank Janis Thiessen (Westgate Mennonite Collegiate and University of Winnipeg) for her continued excellent work as the Canadian Oral History Association's secretary-treasurer. She has been instrumental in getting our members online and subscribed to *Forum*.

Alexander Freund
a.freund@uwinnipeg.ca

Kristina Llewellyn
kllewell@uwaterloo.ca

Nolan Reilly
n.reilly@uwinnipeg.ca

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P.S. If you are new to the journal, here is how it works: "The journal is published on an ongoing basis: a new volume is opened on 1 January of each year and closed on 31 December. We publish articles as soon as they have passed all editorial stages. The advantage for authors is a shorter turn-around time than print journals can offer. For readers, the advantage is that they do not have to wait for the publication of a complete issue but rather can read, listen to or watch contributions as they become available. The main reason for transforming *Forum* into an electronic journal was, however, to take advantage of the new media, which are particularly suitable to oral history."

"If you are thinking about submitting a contribution to *Forum*, please note that we publish a great variety of contributions. Next to academic articles that go through a double-blind peer review, we publish short think, discussion, and opinion pieces; works of art emerging from oral history (visual art, play scripts, poetry, fiction, etc.); annotated transcripts; and transcripts in the form of testimonies. If you have an oral history contribution that does not seem to fit any of our sections, please let us know. We cannot promise it, but you should not be surprised if we created a section just for your work!"

"If you would like to find out how to become a member of the Canadian Oral History Association and thus a subscriber to *Forum*, please email Janis at

JanisThiessen@shaw.ca. Our rates are fairly low: Institutional (Cdn\$ 30.00); Individual (Cdn\$ 20.00); Student (Cdn\$ 15.00).” (Alexander Freund et al., “Editorial Note 29/2009,” *Oral History Forum d’histoire orale* 29/2009: 1-2, 1).

For further information, visit the Canadian Oral History Association online at <http://www.canoha.ca>

If you did not view this editorial on our journal website, please visit it at <http://www.oralhistoryforum.ca>