Door County SPEAKS

RESOURCES FOR ORAL HISTORY AND AUDIO PROJECTS

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THE DOOR COUNTY SPEAKS TEAM DREW ON A BROAD RANGE OF PUBLISHED MATERIALS AND BEST PRACTICES TO PRODUCE THIS PROJECT.
We wish to thank the following organizations for providing resources which we have adapted in this guide. Particular thanks is due to Troy Reeves of the University of Wisconsin Madison for his expert advice, and to Vicki Tobias of WiLS/ Recollection Wisconsin for her unstinting support and advocacy.

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THANK YOU
Door County Speaks would not be possible without the support of Door County's vibrant historical community. We wish to thank the members of the Heritage Alliance of Door County for their enthusiasm for this project, and hope that these materials inspire other libraries to pursue similar collaborations with local historical groups.

Heritage Alliance of Door County

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Table of Contents

Introduction 5

Oral History Guide

- Planning Your Project 6
- Choosing Your Narrators 7
- Preparing for Your Interview 8
- Interviewing Tips 9
- Sample Questions 12

Equipment Guide 13

- Using the Zoom H2n Recorder 14
- Recommended Settings 16
- Setting Up & Recording 19
- Uploading Your Files 24

Oral History and Copyright 27

Using and Preserving Oral History 28

- Preparing the Interview Folder 29
- Labeling Files 29
- Processing Your Recordings 30
- Working with a Repository 32

Appendix A: Sample Forms 33

Appendix B: Historical Organizations of Door County 37

Appendix C: Further Reading 41

- Online Resources 42
- Print Resources 43

Introduction

Thank you for checking out a Door County Speaks Oral History Kit from your local Door County Library branch!

Door County is a place where everyone has a story to tell. From the "good old days" of yesteryear to the dawn of the digital age, the personal stories and memories of Door County's residents are where our shared heritage comes alive. Oral History gives us a way to preserve those precious stories, sharing the times we have known with generations to come.

Door County Speaks is an ongoing effort by the Door County Library to make planning, recording and preserving oral histories easier for the public. Many people have a friend, neighbor or relative who has lived through important or interesting events. Through Door County speaks, you can now record those experiences professionally, with easy-to-use equipment. You can even choose to donate your interview to the Door County Archives, where it will be preserved and used to tell Door County's story.

For further information on donating to the Door County Archives, see page 32.

This kit contains everything you need to complete your own oral history project, including:

- A Zoom H2n audio recorder, with carrying case and accessories
- Professional-quality studio monitor headphones
- This binder, with a guide to oral history interviewing, a guide to using the Zoom H2n recorder, instructions for preserving and donating your oral histories, and a list of oral history resources to expand your knowledge.

When you are finished using this kit, please ensure that all components are as you found them, carefully pack them in their tote, and return it to the Door County Library branch you originally checked it out from.

The items in the kit are subject to special overdue fines and replacement policies, which are listed in the materials included with this kit.

If you have any questions about using this kit, our policies or the Door County Speaks program, contact us by e-mail at dcarchives@co.door.wi.us, or by phone at (920) 746-7137. We're here to help!

Planning Your Project

The most important step in a successful oral history project is the first step – planning. Clear goals, access to all the necessary resources, and a good understanding of the oral history process will help you avoid pitfalls, and ensure that everyone involved has a positive experience. Listed below are the key questions you should ask yourself before you begin your project:

Why Is This Project Needed?

- Oral history is time-consuming! Make sure that you have a clear idea of why you are starting the project, what you want the outcome to be, and why the project would be relevant to others.

Who Will You Work With?

- Everyone involved in an oral history project should be clearly identified from the start. Is this a one person project, or will you be working with a team? Is there one interview subject, or many? Make sure participants have a clear idea of their roles and are comfortable with them. Lay out a schedule of completion for the project.

What Will You Do With Your Oral History Recording?

- Who will use your oral history recording, and for what purpose? If you intend to donate your recording to a museum, archives or other repository, contact them before the project begins to get a clear idea of their standards, procedures, and the way they use their collections. Make sure everyone involved with your project understands your goals for the recordings.

What Information Do You Need?

- Don't forget to do your research! Review the best practices for oral history in this binder, and take a look at some of the additional resources listed at the end. If your project deals with a certain historical event, business, or other specific topic, do some background reading to bring yourself up to speed. Keep an eye out for any specialized terms or jargon that might come up during your interview.

What Legal Issues Exist?

- Anyone starting an oral history project should be aware of the legal issues in play. Review the relevant resources, decide how your oral histories will be stored and presented, and have a legal release form ready for both interviewers and subjects. See Oral History and Copyright on page 27 for more details, and Appendix A for sample release forms.

What Resources Do You Need?

- Do you need resources for your project beyond what is available in the Oral History Kit? Large projects may need additional equipment, volunteers, or specialized software. Creating a project budget is a good way to plan for future expenses. If you need additional funding, look into grant opportunities through local foundations and historical societies.

Later sections of this guide will cover copyright issues, interview preparation, equipment, and preservation of your audio recordings.

In general, do everything you can to plan ahead. Unexpected problems will emerge in any project, so do your best to make sure that all of your core needs are accounted for before you begin.

Choosing Your Narrators

Whether you are interviewing one or one hundred people for your project, thoughtfully selecting your subjects – your narrators, in oral history parlance – is very important. Who you choose as your narrators depends on the story you are trying to tell. The following are a few key factors to consider when selecting narrators for your project.

A Matter of Perspective

- There's more than one side to every story! Select narrators that balance a variety of perspectives. For instance, if you are recording an oral history of a local business, include narrators from both management and the workforce. If you are producing an oral history of your community, try to recruit narrators from a variety of age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds. Even if your project is focused on a single person, getting the perspectives of that individual's friends, colleagues and family members can create a richer portrait of your subject's life than personal recollections alone.

The Perfect Match

- The chemistry between interviewer and narrator makes a big difference. Whoever is conducting your interviews should be a good fit for the narrators you choose. Are they the same age? The same gender? Do they already know each other? There is no hard-and-fast rule for these dynamics – what works well for one pairing may not for another. It is up to you as the one in charge of the project to gauge the relationship between interviewer and narrator, and match them accordingly.

Keep Things Reasonable

- It can be tempting to overload your project with narrators, especially when you are dealing with a complex topic. Remember that oral history interviews take time and care, and that a well-executed project with a small number of interviews is far better than a rushed or incomplete project. A good rule of thumb is to have no more than three narrators assigned to a particular interviewer. If your project needs more narrators to tell the full story, it might be time to consider bringing in additional team members.

Careful research is the best way to target potential narrators for your project. If you understand your topic well, you will be better able to find individuals with special expertise, or a unique story to tell. Take your time, consider both the topic and the personality of the narrator, and make sure that each narrator is fully informed about the nature and intent of the project. A biographical form, such as the one provided in Appendix A, can help you assess how a potential narrator fits into your project plan.

Preparing For Your Interview

Once you have identified, contacted and developed relationships with your narrators, it is time to prepare for the formal oral history interview. This process can seem intimidating at first; it can also be a deeply rewarding and even transformative experience. The key, as with every step of the oral history process, is planning ahead. The following guidelines will help you prepare successfully for your interview.

Refine Your Research

- By this point, you should be familiar with the broad outlines of your project topic. Use this research to prepare for your narrator's specific perspective. Review their biographical sheet and cross-reference it with what you know about your project topic. Make note of any important names, places or dates which might jog your narrator's memory. It can be helpful to make a list of these key terms for you and your narrator to refer to.

Write an Interview Outline

- Think about the topics you want to cover in the interview, and write them down ahead of time in an interview outline. This can be as detailed as a list of specific questions or as general as a series of broad categories or topics. Use your interview outline as a reference and a reminder of important points to cover, keeping in mind that your narrator's recollections will guide the pace of the interview.

Contact Your Narrator

- Before the interview, contact the narrator to finalize any last minute details and go over the interview process. This is a perfect time to field any last-minute questions and share the interview topics you have developed in your interview outline. It is best not to share specific questions with your narrator ahead of time: this can lead to rehearsed or stilted answers.
- As you finalize your interview appointment, give your narrator a sense of the time required for the interview. In general, plan for approximately 20 minutes of set-up time, 60 to 90 minutes for the interview, and another 20 minutes to pack your equipment and wrap up. Make sure your narrator is comfortable with the schedule. The interview process should be productive but relaxed, with time budgeted for unexpected pauses and digressions.

Double Check Everything

- The day before your interview, make sure that all of your equipment is in good working order and your release form, interview outline and other supplementary materials are prepared. A well-organized interview makes for a more relaxed environment, and better oral history!
- It can be helpful to assemble a kit of handy supplemental items to bring with you to your interview, such as: bottled water, tissues, post-it notes, cough drops, and an extension cord. Getting these items together can help you deal with unexpected happenings during the interview with a minimum of fuss.

Interviewing Tips

Oral history interviews are different from the media interviews most people are familiar with. The goal of a good oral history interview is to clearly capture the narrator's thoughts in as unfiltered a form as possible, with minimal interruptions from the interviewer. As an interviewer, your job is to gently guide the narrator's recollections in a logical direction without adding your own voice or opinions. Here are some key guidelines that will help you conduct a well-managed oral history interview; see the following section for specific examples of questions, phrases and techniques you can use.

Set Up Properly

- Before you begin, make sure that all of your equipment is properly set up. Interviewer and narrator should be sitting approximately four feet apart, with the audio recorder placed approximately two feet from the narrator and angled toward them. Do everything you can to minimize outside noises or distractions. Connect your recorder to A/C power, put on your monitor headphones, and perform a sound check. Make sure that the narrator is comfortable.
- A key step in every oral history interview is ensuring that both interviewer and narrator have given formal permission for the recording to take place. This usually involves signing a pre-prepared release form, outlining who owns the recording and how it may be used. You can choose to address permission forms before or after the interview. If you choose to wait until that recording is completed, make sure that you have at least briefly described the contents of the form to the narrator before the interview begins, and that they are comfortable with its terms and conditions. Do not begin the interview without first obtaining, at the very least, the narrator's verbal permission to record.
- Answer any last questions the narrator may have.

Introduce Yourself

- Begin the recording with an identification statement. State the name of the project, the institution sponsoring it (if any), the names of interviewer and narrator, and the date, time and location where the interview is taking place.

Ask the Right Questions

- Ask only one question at a time. Use follow-up questions to clarify any important details.
- Make your questions as general and open-ended as possible. Avoid questions which can be answered with a “yes” or “no”.
- Keep your questions neutral, and don’t lead the narrator in a particular direction. For example, “What was it like living in Sturgeon Bay in 1930?”, rather than, “Why was Sturgeon Bay in 1930 a difficult place to live?”
- If your narrator uses specific terms or jargon, ask them to clarify.
- Allow your narrator to digress, then gently bring them back on topic with a refocusing question.
- Ask questions the narrator can reasonably expect to answer from personal experience. Do not ask your narrator to speculate.
- Take note of any specific names or unusual spellings, and ask the narrator to clarify. This will come in handy for anyone transcribing the interview.

Maintain a Good Interview Environment

- Use non-verbal signals like eye contact, smiling or nodding to interact with your narrator as they speak. Try not to interrupt the narrator or use vocal reactions like “Uh huh” or “I see”.
- Do not state your personal opinions.
- Keep track of time, and suspend the interview if the narrator becomes distracted or fatigued. You can always schedule another session.
- Finish your interview with an open-ended “thought” question, inviting the narrator to sum up their experiences.
- At the end of the session, thank the narrator for sharing their story.

Wrapping Up

- Always show consideration for your narrator and your space. If you rearranged the space in order to set up the interview, put everything back in proper order.
- Double check that both you and the narrator have signed the legal release form.
- Thank the narrator for their time. Ask if they wish to receive updates about the project. Tell them where they can view the project's final output.
- Make sure that your equipment is turned off and properly stowed.
- Take a photo of the narrator for the interview file. Make sure to include any extra materials you used during the interview, such as your notes or interview outline.

Preprocessing

- When you return to your workspace, prepare a formal thank you letter and send it to the narrator. If it is appropriate under your release form, include a copy of the interview.
- Upload and label the digital file of the interview. Create and label a working copy in addition to a master copy.
- Scan and label any documents related to the interview and include them in your interview file folder. Keep the master copies in a secure storage area.

Sample Questions

Use these sample phrases and forms to develop core questions, follow ups and refocusing questions during your interview. Always strive for a light touch; oral history is about the experiences and unique voice of the narrator, not the cleverly worded questions of the interviewer!

Open-Ended Questions

- Tell me about ____.
- Talk a little bit about ____.
- Why___? Why not___? How___?

Probing For Details

- Describe__.
- Explain___.
- Tell me more about___.
- Could you go into more detail about...?

Backtracking

- You mentioned…tell me more about that.
- I want to clarify that last point. You said…is that correct?

Defining Terms or Jargon

- You used the phrase…could you clarify what that means?
- What is…?
- I know what…is, but for the record, what does it mean and how was it used?

Following Up

- Who else___? What else___?

Pushing/Turning the Tables

- Some people have said___. What do you think about that?
- At the time, it was claimed that____. Do you agree with that?

Thought Questions

- How would you sum up your experience at___?
- Looking back, how has your experience shaped your life?

Special thanks are due to the Baylor University Institute for Oral History for developing the method used in this section

DOOR COUNTY

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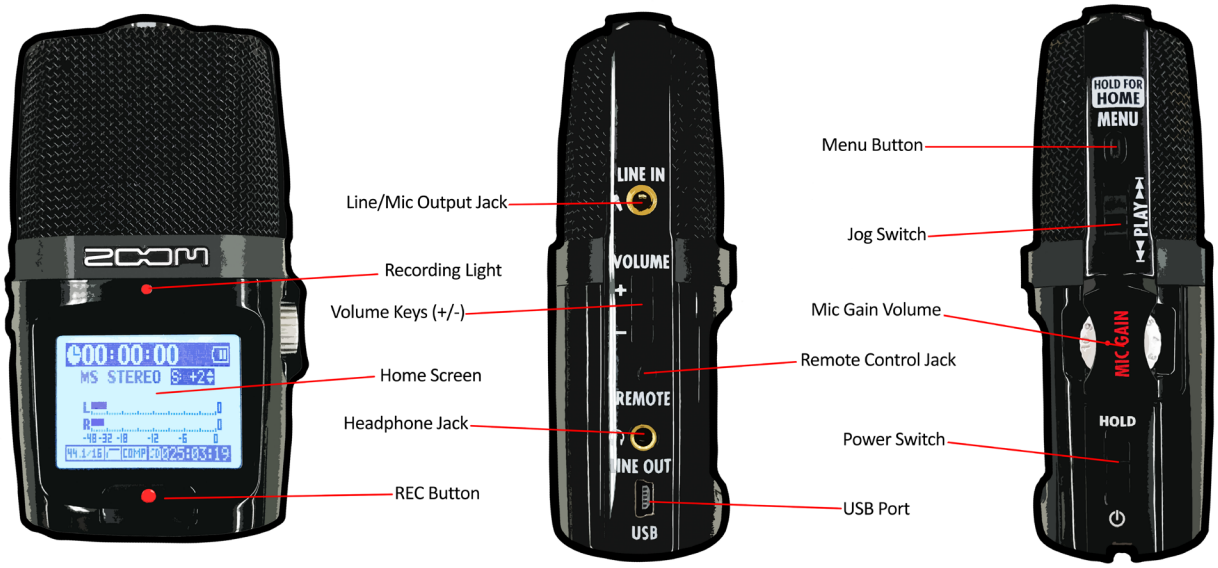
EQUIPMENT GUIDE

Using the Zoom H2n Recorder

The Zoom H2n Handy Recorder is an easy-to-use, compact tool for audio projects of all kinds. This guide will focus on the basic functions needed to conduct an oral history interview. Consult the H2n user manual for a full breakdown of the recorder's features and capabilities.

The Control Layout

The instructions in this section will refer frequently to the elements in this diagram. Take a moment to familiarize yourself with the recorder.



The Kit

Inside the soft case you will find the Zoom H2n recorder and the charging cords.

Batteries are not provided.

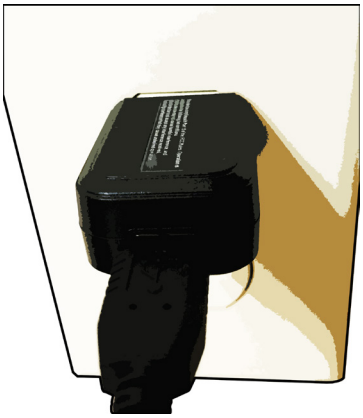
A Kit Checklist with an itemization of equipment can be found in the Oral History Binder.

Powering the Zoom H2n

The Door County Library does not provide batteries for the Zoom H2n. To use the recorder, you will have to either plug in to an external power supply using the included USB AC Adapter, or supply two AA batteries.

To plug into AC Power:

- Attach the **Power Adapter** to the **USB Power Cable**. Plug the power cable into the **USB Port** on the lower left side of the recorder. Plug the power adapter into a wall socket or extension cord.



To use AA batteries:

- Press firmly but carefully down on the stippled portion of the Zoom H2n's front panel. Maintaining pressure, pull the panel gently downward. The battery cover should come free.
- Insert two Alkaline AA batteries according to the instructions inside the battery compartment.
- Re-seat the battery cover and press upward. The battery cover should snap into place.

Getting Started

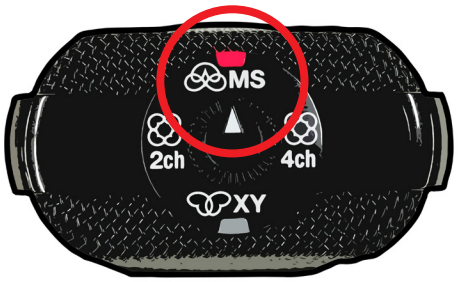
To begin recording with the Zoom H2n, press down on the **Power Switch** on the lower right side of the recorder. You will see a brief loading screen, followed by the **Home Screen**:

This is the screen you'll be staying on for most of your oral history interview. If you need to return to the home screen, press and hold the **Menu Button** located on the top right side of the recorder:

Recommended Settings

Every recorder used for Door County Speaks has its settings automatically set to the best configuration for oral history – you should be able to begin recording immediately after setting up. However, you should always review the following checklist before beginning an interview:

1. On the top of the recorder, make sure that the selector dial is set to **MS (Mid-Side) Mode**.



2. Press the **Menu Button**. Using the **Jog Switch** on the right side of the recorder, scroll down to the **INPUT** menu. This menu allows you to change the microphone settings of the recorder.

3. You can see the status of each of the recorder's microphone settings in the lower right corner of the Input menu.

Scroll down through each of the settings to check its status:

a. **LO CUT** set to **ON**
b. **COMP/LIMITER** set to **COMP2(VOCAL)**
c. **MONITOR** set to **HOME AND REC**
d. **AUTO GAIN** set to **OFF**
e. **PLUG-IN POWER** set to **ON**
f. **MS-RAW MONITOR** set to **STEREO**

If any of these settings need to be changed, select the relevant setting by pressing the Jog Switch, navigate to the correct setting, and select it.

4. Press the Menu Button to return to the main Menu screen. Scroll down to the **REC** menu and select it.

5. On the **REC** menu screen, make sure that **REC FORMAT** is set to **WAV48kHz/24bit**. Press and hold the Menu Button to return to the Home Screen.

The H2n is ready to record! It's time to set it up for an oral history interview.

Setting Up & Recording

A good oral history setup will let interviewer and narrator interact comfortably and naturally, while capturing the best possible sound quality. Remember, the narrator will be doing the majority of the talking. Their story is the purpose of the interview, and your top priority is to capture it accurately.

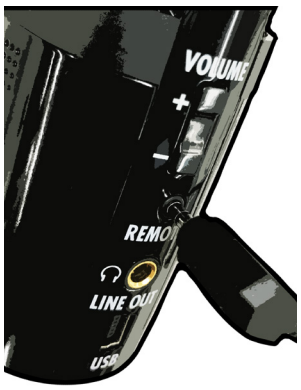
Any outside sounds in the recording area will interfere with the quality of your interview. Touching or bumping the recorder will also create unwanted sounds. Make sure that everything is set up to your satisfaction before beginning the interview!

- Sit at a table across from your narrator, no more than four feet apart if possible. Get as comfortable as possible.
- Screw the **Tripod Attachment** into the threaded slot on the bottom of the Zoom H2n. Spread out the tripod legs, pull out the retractable foot on each leg and stand the recorder upright.

- You can change the orientation of the recorder by slowly loosening the ball joint screw near the top of the tripod. Adjust the recorder so that the screen is facing you and the unit is angled toward the narrator. Tighten the screw down firmly, and make sure the recorder is securely seated.

- Attach the **Power Adapter** to the **USB Power Cable**. Plug the power cable into the **USB Port** on the lower left side of the recorder. Plug the power adapter into a wall socket or extension cord.

- Plug the H2n Remote into the Remote Control Jack on the left side of the recorder. The remote will allow you to control the recording without touching the recorder.



- Plug the Monitor Headphones into the Phones/Line Out Jack. Adjust the headphone cups to fit comfortably over your ears.

- Position the recorder no more than two feet from your narrator. Turn on the recorder.

Adjusting Gain

The final step of the setup process is adjusting the gain, or microphone sensitivity, of the Zoom H2n Recorder. Ask your narrator to speak their name or a simple test phrase. Use the Mic Gain Volume Dial on the right side of the recorder to increase or decrease gain while listening to the recording quality using the monitor headphones. If the recording level is set too high, the Mic Active Light at the top of the recorder will flicker. As the narrator speaks, you will notice the left and right channels displaying the decibel level on the recorder's Main Screen. Aim for an average decibel level of -6.

Setting gain too high will pick up more outside noises and lead to distortions in your recording. If the recording seems faint, move the microphone closer to your narrator before increasing gain.

Recording Your Interview

When you are satisfied with your setup and your narrator is ready, you can begin recording. Using the H2n remote makes this easy.

- Press the **REC** button on the remote to begin recording. The red **REC Indicator** lights above the screen and on the remote will turn on.

- When you need to take a break, adjust your gain, or wish to omit something from the recording, press the **PAUSE** button; the REC indicator light will begin flashing. Press the pause button again to resume recording. **Note: Do not press the REC button to un-pause your recording! This will stop the recording entirely!**

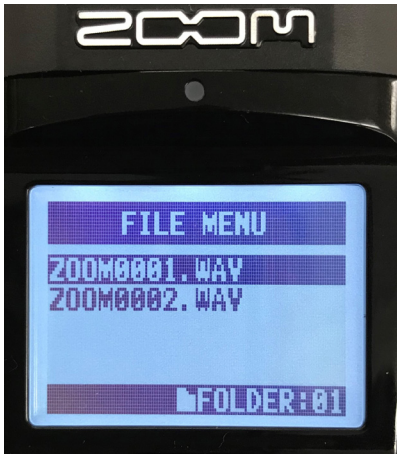
- If there is an important point you want to emphasize during later playback, press the **MARK** button. This creates a “digital bookmark” in the audio file which you will be able to see later. The screen will flash a message indicating that a Mark has been created.

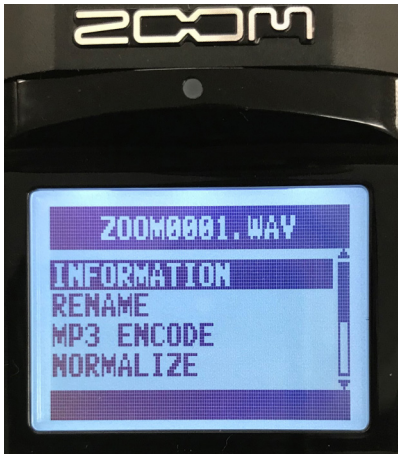
- When you are finished recording, press the **REC** button again to stop.

Listening to Your Recording and Viewing Your Files

The Zoom H2n can play back your recording immediately after it finishes. To hear it, simply press down on the jog switch/play button. The recorder will begin playing the last audio file it recorded. You can use the jog switch to fast forward, rewind, or advance to the next file. When you are finished listening, press and hold the MENU button to return to the home screen.

If you want to rename, delete or alter your audio files, press the MENU button and select the FILES menu. You will see a list of the audio recordings currently saved on the Zoom H2n. Selecting an individual file with the jog switch will bring up another menu, with options to Rename, Delete or MP3 encode the selected file. Select the desired operation and follow the onscreen instructions. Press and hold the MENU button to return to the home screen when you are finished.

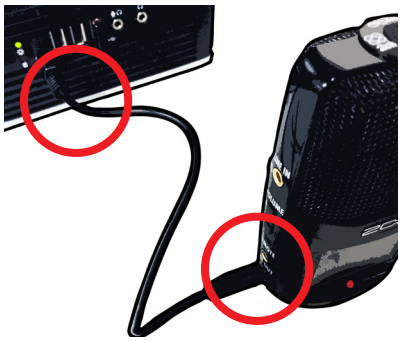




Uploading Your Files

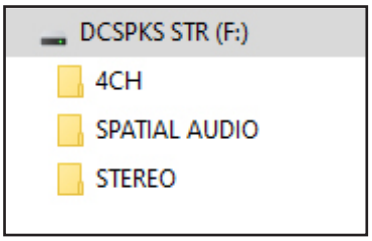
Once you have finished using the Zoom H2n for your oral history interview, you will need to upload the audio files to a computer for storage and processing. Uploading is quick and easy with the included USB connector cable.

1. Turn off the Zoom H2n and plug the micro USB plug into the USB input on the lower left side of the recorder.
2. Plug the standard USB plug into any free USB slot on your computer.



3. A prompt will appear on the H2n screen with two options: **SD CARD READER** and **AUDIO I/F**. Select **SD CARD READER**.

4. The H2n screen will display a graphic showing a file transfer in progress. A folder will automatically open on your computer's desktop, displaying the contents of the H2n memory card.



5. Select the **STEREO** folder, then select **FOLDER01**.
   Note: If you have changed the recording settings from the defaults described above, your files may be in a different folder.

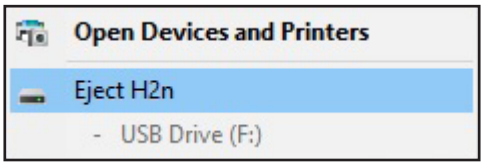
Name	Date modified	Type
4CH	1/30/2011 9:02 PM	File folder
SPATIAL AUDIO	2/21/2011 9:49 PM	File folder
STEREO	1/30/2011 9:03 PM	File folder

Name	Date modified	Type
FOLDER01	1/30/2011 9:03 PM	File folder
FOLDER02	1/30/2011 9:03 PM	File folder
FOLDER03	1/30/2011 9:03 PM	File folder
FOLDER04	1/30/2011 9:03 PM	File folder
FOLDER05	1/30/2011 9:03 PM	File folder

6. Your audio files will be displayed. Move or copy them to your computer's desktop, or any other destination you wish. When you are finished transferring your files, please delete all files from the **H2n file folder** to free space for the next user.

Name	Date modified	Type
ZOOM0001.WAV	10/17/2019 12:00 PM	WAV File
ZOOM0002.WAV	12/19/2019 12:04 PM	WAV File

7. Right click on the small flash drive icon on the task bar in the lower right corner of your screen. Select **Eject H2n**.



8. Unplug the Zoom H2n and USB connector cable.

Final Reminders

- When you are finished recording and uploading your files, carefully replace the Zoom H2n and all accessories in their padded carrying case.
- If you have altered any recorder settings during your project, please reset them to the recommended settings outlined above.

Oral History and Copyright

A Strong Foundation

A successful oral history project rests on a strong legal and ethical foundation: understanding the nature of copyright ownership, respecting the rights of both interviewer and narrator, and obtaining permission to use their words. This may seem like an intimidating process. Don't be discouraged: following a few simple steps will put you in a position to fully share your project with the public.

Who owns the copyright on an oral history?

- Every individual owns the copyright on their own recorded words from the moment of recording. Therefore, both interviewer and narrator own the copyright to an oral history. In order to use your interviews freely, and ensure that future generations can do the same, it is important to secure binding legal permission from everyone present on the recording.

How do I get permission to use the recordings?

- Both the interviewer and the narrator should sign a legal release form before an oral history interview begins. Ideally, this form will transfer the copyright on both the interview and any supporting materials – photos, transcripts or notes – to you or your organization in perpetuity. Everyone involved with the interview should be made aware of every intended use of the recordings, including any plans to present them online.

Where do I find a legal release form to use?

- There are many examples of release forms for oral history freely available on the internet. Most have been used in specific oral history projects for government agencies, universities or historical organizations. Choose a form to use as a template before you begin your project, and review it carefully to make sure it fits the needs of your organization. See Appendix A for an example of a release form for oral history.

What if my narrator wants to restrict access?

- Oral history interviews can contain sensitive or embarrassing information. A good release form will include a section for narrators to outline restrictions on difficult material. Remember, a hidden oral history is useful to nobody. Encourage narrators to set a specific end date for any restrictions they may place on material from their interview.

What if I'm only interviewing a friend or relative?

- No matter how casual your project may be, you should still secure a legal release for all material you record, and inform your narrator of your plans for the project. The ethical responsibilities of oral history apply to every interview, and will help put your project on a strong legal footing. Remember, what starts out as a simple family activity could be of real historical importance in the future.

Using and Preserving Oral History

Preparation and Preservation

Oral history projects don't end when the recorder turns off! Through your oral history interview, you've created a vital, first-hand record of past experiences. Your next priority is ensuring that your narrator's words are usable by future researchers, and that your recordings are preserved for the future. This section will cover the common methods of processing an oral history interview, discuss best practices for digital preservation, and conclude with recommendations for finding a repository to house your recordings. Each project will approach these issues differently, but keep in mind that both preservation and access are responsibilities that come with doing oral history.

Principles of Digital Preservation

Digital technology has opened up amazing possibilities for recording, sharing and preserving oral histories. However, it is important to understand the limitations of this exciting tool. Despite the huge advances in storage capacity and portability in recent years, digital files are significantly less durable that most traditional media. Hard drives have a life span between three and five years before data begins to break down. Flash drives can fail at any time. Media considered cutting-edge today can become obsolete and hard to access in only a few years.

Following a few simple rules of thumb will help you overcome these challenges and ensure the preservation of your digital files.

- How many copies should you have? Follow the 3-2-1 Rule:
  - » 3 copies of your files
  - » 2 different types of media
  - » 1 copy located off-site
- Which types of media are appropriate?
  - » External hard drives, internal computer storage, network storage and cloud-based storage services are all acceptable preservation formats. Be aware that external hard drives have a set lifespan, and not all cloud storage services are created equal. Do your research!
  - » Never store important files on thumb drives, CDs or DVDs.
- How should you use your copies?
  - » Use a local copy as your access copy: the copy you modify and work with.
  - » Use your on-site backup to restore your files in case of everyday mishap.
  - » Use your off-site copy as a "cold storage" copy: use it only in case of disaster.
- Update your backup copies on a regular schedule, depending on how frequently you modify your files.
- Where can you find more information?
  - » Digital preservation is a constantly evolving field. See Appendix C for additional reading.

Preparing the Interview Folder

Your first priority after uploading your oral history recordings to a computer hard drive is to ensure that you have secure back-up copies of all materials from the interview process. This means consolidating your recordings, notes and supplementary documents into a single folder, both physically and digitally.

- Using a document scanner, create digital copies of your release form, the biographical sheet, and any written notes from your interview. Include these in a “documents” sub-folder of your interview folder.
- Include a photograph of your narrator. It’s important for future researchers and the public to put a face to the voice in your recordings.
- Label your folder with the name of your narrator and the date of the interview.
- Don’t forget to save the physical copies of your work in a traditional file folder!

Labeling Files

When you are working with multiple interview subjects, it is important to name your files clearly and concisely. The key is to include essential information in a way that is easily searchable and not too wordy. For example, here is the interview file for Mr. John Doe:

DOE_JOHN.INT.2019-09-05.1.WAV	5/24/2011 5:48 PM	WAV File	1,074 KB

This file name contains the narrator’s name, a file identification abbreviation – “INT” tells us that this is an interview without having to open the file – date of interview, and recording number. Note that the narrator’s last name is listed first, and that the interview date begins with the year: this will ensure that multiple files will be sorted in alphabetical and chronological order. Here is a complete interview folder for Mr. Doe; in this case, three different audio files. Note the different dates and timestamps:

Doe_John.Int.2019-09-23.01.WAV	9/23/2019 3:26 PM	WAV File	5,342 KB
Doe_John.Int.2019-09-23.02.WAV	9/23/2019 3:26 PM	WAV File	2,670 KB
Doe_John.Int.2019-10-07.01.WAV	10/7/2019 9:12 AM	WAV File	2,062 KB

Whether you use this naming scheme or come up with your own, remember to keep it clear, concise and sortable, so that future researchers will be able to understand your work.

Processing Your Recordings

Processing is the series of tasks required to turn your oral history recordings into a usable resource. How you approach this stage of the process will depend on what you want your project's outcome to be. If you are planning on creating a multimedia presentation, incorporating photos, video clips, music and portions of your interviews, your post-processing work could be the most time-consuming part of your project – more ground that this guide can cover! Simple projects may only wish to create a basic time-subject index to include for future researchers. Regardless of your goals, this section will give you a basic idea of the options available to you.

Indexing by Time and Subject

The simplest way to make your oral history recordings accessible is to create a **Time-Subject Index**. This is a simple textual reference that lists the subjects covered during the interview and the time in the recording when they were discussed. Play back your recording and note important themes, subjects and areas for further exploration. Note the time of subject changes in the recording. Refer to your notes for spellings of unusual terms.
Here is an example of a Time-Subject Index for John Doe's interview about working at Lake Shipbuilding Company during World War II:

Name: John Doe

Date: May 4, 2011

Location: Doe home, 100 Lost Lane, Walleye Bay

Interviewer: Bill Blank

Project: Lake Shipbuilding History Project

Recording #: 001

00:00:03 – Introduction

00:01:05 – Walleye Bay in the 1930's; sketch of his childhood; interest in boats; discussion of his parents and siblings – Ralph, Annie, Timothy.

00:10:08 – Early memories of the shipyard; atmosphere in town at the beginning of World War II; boats built at the time – fishing boats and "little troop boats"; discusses trying to get hired; describes company President James "Bud" McGuff.

00:15:32 – Describes an average workday; different tasks and "shops" around the shipyard; talks about his friends at work, Joe Monroe and Dick Jones; comments on female workers at the shipyard.

00:23:33 – The ships built during the war; lengthy discussion of electronics and armament in destroyers; remembers launching of frigate "Botany Bay".

00:30:18 – Talks about first meeting his wife Jane at the shipyard

00:34:19 – End of session

Note the way in which the narrators changes of topic are logged, and specific names and terms are recorded. Using the Mark feature on your H2n recorder is a good way to indicate subject changes in the audio file.

If you choose to create a Time-Subject index, include it with the other documents in your interview folder. It is always a good idea to send a copy to your narrator, who can correct any details or misspelled words.

Transcribing Interviews

The most detailed way to document the contents of your interview is to create a transcription: a word-for-word text record of the session. There are several advantages to this approach:

- Transcripts put the informational content of the interview at a researcher's fingertips. Reading a transcript is much faster than listening to a recorded interview.
- A full transcript allows a narrator to review the entire content of the interview and correct any errors in spelling or content.
- Transcripts provide a complete record of the interview, in case the original audio file is lost.

Transcripts have two major drawbacks: time and cost. Producing a transcript yourself – listening to and dictating the entire content of an interview – can take many hours of work. One alternative is to use a paid transcription service, but this option can be costly. Speech-to-text recognition software, while it can speed up the process significantly, comes with its own costs and can produce inaccurate transcripts. Weigh these factors carefully before committing to creating transcripts of your project.

Links to resources for transcription can be found in Appendix C.

Working with a Repository

The final step in the oral history process is ensuring that your recordings will be preserved, and ultimately presented to the public. Whether you are engaged in a long-term oral history project with dozens of narrators, or simply interviewing a relative, your effort is adding to our understanding of the historical record. Donating your recordings to a repository – a museum, archive, historical society or other institution – will place the memories you have collected in a broader context, keep them safe for future generations and use them to spark the imagination of the general public.

If you intend to donate your oral histories, work closely with your repository throughout your project. Make sure you are collecting the information that the repository will need to interpret your work. Record your interviews in the file format the repository prefers, and include all of your supplementary materials, such as your notes, photos and release forms, with your donation. Finally, make sure that every participant in your project is aware that you intend to donate, and agrees to the proposed use of their words.

One option for those looking for a repository for their oral history projects is to donate them to the Door County Archives. Founded in 1988, the Archives is dedicated to preserving and presenting the unique history of Door County, Wisconsin for generations to come. With an extensive collection of oral histories spanning fifty years, the archives is well prepared to care for your audio recordings and use them in future programming to enhance the historical understanding and appreciation of the community.

For more information on donating to the Door County Archives, contact the Archives Manager at (920) 746-7137, or at dcarchives@co.door.wi.us.

Door County has a rich and varied historical community. Whatever your historical interests, getting involved with your local history group can be a great way to bring your oral history work to a wider audience. See Appendix B for a list of historical organizations active around the county.

DOOR COUNTY
SPEAKS

APPENDIX A
SAMPLE FORMS

DOOR COUNTY
SPEAKS

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW RELEASE FORM

Interviewee Name (please print):_____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____ Email: _____

By signing the form below, you as an interviewee and/or an interviewer give your permission to be recorded by audio, video, film, photograph, written transcript, or any other medium. You acknowledge that these recordings may be used whole or in part by researchers and the public for educational purposes including, but not limited to: publications, exhibitions, promotional material and presentations, in all formats and media including the Internet. Limited restrictions on access may be specified below.

By signing the form below, you as an interviewee and/or an interviewer irrevocably assign to _____, and any official assignees and designees thereof, any and all copyrights you control on any recordings, notes, transcripts and/or photographs made during this project.

Interviewee's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Specify any limited restrictions on access: _____

_____

Term of Restrictions: _____

Interviewer Name (please print): _____

Interviewer's signature: _____

Date: _____

This form is provided as an example only. Individuals and groups conducting oral history projects should seek legal advice before using this, or any other, legal document. By using the above form, in whole or in part, you release Door County, its sub-units (including the Door County Library and Door County Archives), its employees, its appointed officials and its elected officials from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of this document.

DOOR COUNTY
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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW INFORMATION FORM

This form may be made public

Full name of person interviewed: _____

Nickname, if any: _____

Date and Time of interview: _____

Place of the interview: _____

Interviewer's name: _____

Information about the interviewee:

Where the interviewee grew up, how many years in the community, other places lived, etc.

_____

_____

Names of family members: _____

_____

Occupation / Jobs: _____

_____

Education (when, where, major): _____

Skills and activities: _____

_____

Hobbies, interests: _____

_____

This form is provided as an example only. Individuals and groups conducting oral history projects should seek legal advice before using this, or any other, legal document. By using the above form, in whole or in part, you release Door County, its sub-units (including the Door County Library and Door County Archives), its employees, its appointed officials and its elected officials from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of this document.

DOOR COUNTY
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Other: _____

_____

Notes about the interview (key themes, points of discussion):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Other documentation (tapes, photos, newspaper articles, etc.):

_____

_____

_____

_____

This form is provided as an example only. Individuals and groups conducting oral history projects should seek legal advice before using this, or any other, legal document. By using the above form, in whole or in part, you release Door County, its sub-units (including the Door County Library and Door County Archives), its employees, its appointed officials and its elected officials from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of this document.

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APPENDIX B
HISTORICAL ORGANIZATIONS OF DOOR COUNTY

Historical Organizations of Door County

Baileys Harbor

Baileys Harbor Historical Society
PO Box 336
Baileys Harbor, WI 54202
(920) 839-2366
http://www.baileysharborhistoricalsociety.org/

Egg Harbor

Egg Harbor Historical Society
P. O. Box 264
Egg Harbor, WI 54209
http://eggharborwi.com/

Horseshoe Bay Farms
7212 Horseshoe Bay Road
Egg Harbor, WI 54209
https://www.horseshoebayfarms.org/

Ephraim

Ephraim Historical Foundation
3060 Anderson Lane
P.O. Box 165
Ephraim, WI 54211-0165
(920) 854-9688
https://ephraim.org/

Fish Creek

Gibraltar Historical Association
PO Box 323
Fish Creek, WI 54212
920-868-2091
https://www.historicnoble.org/

Jacksonport

Jacksonport Historical Society
4768 Hwy 57
Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235
http://www.jacksonporthistoricalsociety.org/

Sevastopol

Sevastopol Historical Society
P.O Box 501
Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235
https://townofsevastopol.com/sevastopol-historical-society/

Sister Bay/Liberty Grove

Liberty Grove Historical Society
P.O. Box 94
Ellison Bay, WI 54210
https://www.libertygrovehistorical.org/

Sister Bay Historical Society
P.O. Box 34
Sister Bay, WI 54234
920-854-7680
https://sisterbayhistory.org/

Southern Door

Belgian Heritage Center
1255 County DK
PO Box 173
Brussels, Wisconsin 54204
920-825-1199
http://www.belgianheritagecenter.org/

Sturgeon Bay

Door County Archives
107 S. 4th Avenue
Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235
(920) 746-7137
DCArchives@co.door.wi.us

Door County Historical Museum
18 North 4th Avenue
Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235
(920) 743-5809
https://www.co.door.wi.gov/166/Museum

Door County Historical Society
PO Box 71
Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin 54235 (920) 421-2332
https://doorcountyhistoricalsociety.org/

Door County Maritime Museum
120 N. Madison Ave.
Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235-3416
(920) 743-5958
http://www.dcmm.org/

Sturgeon Bay Historical Society Foundation
P. O. Box 827
Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235
https://sturgeonbayhistoricalsociety.org/

Sons of Norway # 5-549
H.R Holand Lodge
P.O Box 231
Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235
http://www.sonsofnorway5.com/lodges/details/53-Hjalmer-R-Holand-549

Washington Island

Friends of Plum & Pilot Islands
PO Box 61
Washington Island, WI 54246
https://www.plumandpilot.org/

Washington Island Archives
PO Box 220
Washington Island, WI 54246
(920) 847-3072
washislandarchives@gmail.com

Washington Island Farm Museum
1675 Jackson Harbor Road
PO Box 127
Washington Island, WI 54246
(920) 847-2156

DOOR COUNTY
SPEAKS

APPENDIX C
FURTHER READING

Online Resources

General Guidance

Baylor University Institute for Oral History. http://www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/
Detailed instructions for conducting an oral history project from beginning to end. Lots of helpful links, detailed explainers and a significant collection of searchable oral history transcripts.

Oral History Association. http://www.oralhistory.org
An exhaustive resource with up-to-the-minute information from the cutting edge of oral history research. OHA's site contains links to oral history guides, books and tools from groups across the country. OHA produces an Oral History Best Practices guide, updated annually.

Recollection Wisconsin. https://recollectionwisconsin.org/
Recollection Wisconsin is a digital heritage organization focused exclusively on Wisconsin history. An excellent source for information on planning and implementing digital projects, Recollection Wisconsin also offers hosting services. Recollection Wisconsin collects digital heritage materials from Wisconsin for the Digital Public Library of America.

Digital Preservation

Oral History in the Digital Age. http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/
Detailed guides to every facet of digital technology for oral history, from experts in audio and video recording and preservation.

Northeast Document Conservation Center – Digital Preservation.
https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/digital-preservation
The NEDCC is a cutting edge resource for information on any kind of cultural heritage conservation, including best practices for preserving digital objects. Comprehensive and geared toward professionals.

Transcription

Guilford College – Some Guidelines for Transcribing Oral Histories.
https://library.guilford.edu/c.php?g=111767&p=722621
A concise, thoughtfully written guide to some of the issues involved with transcription. Includes a link to free transcription software and a PDF guide to using it. Part of an excellent general guide to oral history.

Audio Projects

Listening to War: Digitizing Wisconsin's Wartime Oral Histories.
https://recollectionwisconsin.org/wioralhistory
An ongoing project sponsored by Recollection Wisconsin, a digital heritage organization focused on Wisconsin history. Highly recommended for anyone interested in oral history for veterans.

Wisconsin Sound Archive. http://content.wisconsinhistory.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/
Large collection of audio recordings related to Wisconsin history, including oral histories. Compiled and maintained by the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Print Resources

General Guides

DeBlasio, Donna M., Charles F. Ganzert, David H. Mould, Stephen H. Paschen, and Howard L. Sacks. *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History.* Swallow Press, Ohio University Press, 2009.

Ritchie, Donald A. *Doing Oral History.* 3d ed. Oxford University Press, 2014.

Writing Oral History

Brown, Cynthia Strokes. *Like it was: A Complete Guide to Writing Oral History.* Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 1988.

Resources for Educators

Wood, Linda P. *Oral History Projects in Your Classroom.* Oral History Association, 2001.

Legal Issues

Neuenschwander, John A. *A Guide to Oral History and the Law.* 2d ed. Oxford University Press, 2014.

Inspiration

Alexievich, Svetlana. *The Unwomanly Face of War: An Oral History of Women in World War II.* Random House Publishing Group, 2017.

Fayer, Steve and Henry Hampton. *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s Through the 1980*s. Bantam Books, 1991.

Klickstein, Matthew. *Slimed! An Oral History of Nickelodeon's Golden Age.* Penguin Books, 2013.

McNeil, Legs. *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk.* Grove Press, 2016.

Portelli, Allesandro. *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History.* Oxford University Press, 2010.

Taylor, Craig. *Londoners : the days and nights of London now—as told by those who love it, hate it, live it, left it and long for it.* Granta Books, 2011.

Terkel, Studs. *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression.* The New Press, 2005.