



Building Memory Lane

A Guidebook to Caring For, Growing, Recording,
and Experiencing the History You are a Part of

Acknowledgements



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THANK YOU
FOR EVERYTHING



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Why We Built this Guidebook

While I didn't learn about oral history until college, I have always loved listening to people tell stories.

There has always been something special to me about listening to the cadence of a voice, the emotion, the active choice to share a story with someone else.

Listening to someone's story can be one of the most powerful things we can experience—stories move us, shift our perspectives, teach us, and inspire us.



Amanda Ong
she/her

My family's stories always piqued my interest the most. While I knew I was Chinese before I knew just about anything else about myself, there was so much I didn't understand as a teenager about what that identity meant to me. My grandparents immigrated through Hong Kong and Taiwan to raise my parents in the United States, making me a slightly strange, 2.5 generation Chinese American. Listening to my grandparents and parents' stories from when they were young taught me that our lives are a part of history.

More than that, their stories have been a way for me to make sense of my Chinese American identity and understand the experiences that have, eventually, made me. I was lucky to be able to conduct oral histories with all four of my grandparents, and as two of them have passed since, their oral histories have become all the more precious to me. As we find history in ourselves, we reach past the histories we are taught, which are often narrow and marginalize the majority of people. Before I understood *my* histories, I had internalized my "otherness," thinking there just weren't stories of, about, or for me. Our stories can be an incredible reminder of ourselves and the human side of history. They are not just facts and timelines, but an impression of how history actually impacts people and shapes our lives.

I often hear people say that they need to get their grandparents or an elder to write down their life story. Most people don't realize that recording a conversation is not only a much easier way to preserve their stories, but allows you to have a role in sharing their story and to create a memory with a loved one. A person telling you their story is a precious thing; it is something to cherish, and something that I am excited to share with all of you.

Why We Built this Guidebook

Ever since I can remember I tried everything possible to activate my hidden superpowers. I mimicked everything I saw to activate these powers, I tried to get bugs to bite me, I brewed magical potions, I picked up every stick and rock that caught my eye waiting for it to reveal its relic powers, I squinted my eyes and pointed my fingers, I wiggled my nose, and even tried talking to animals around me waiting for them to respond. I believed myself to be the main character of a classic hero origin story because my life has always been connected to grief, unlike my peers, but just like the heroes and princesses.



Kassie Procopio
she/they

My origin story starts in a small hospital in Montana, where a dying grandmother and her new born granddaughter met for the first and last time. To share a birthday with your grandma's death date creates a gravestone that's an opening scene to a hero story if I've ever seen one! So as I grew up like Bruce Wayne conquering the fear of grief and grief itself, instead of bats as my symbol I took on stories. Stories became the way to calm my fears but they were also the source of them, I was afraid of my stories never being shared and I grieved for the stories that were only shared when it was too late. These fears were fully enforced when I was eight and my father suddenly passed away. Once again stories of him were weighed in grief as I learned to tell them in the past tense. But like every hero arc, my fears drove me to tell stories of him, and I began to keep him present and alive through that.

I often think about my father, my grandmother, my friends that have passed away, about the stories I never got to learn more about, and often about the stories I don't get to tell them. But as I grew up and connected with other people, I heard these thoughts often echoed back to me with "would haves", "could haves" and "should haves". I would have written down the story if I would have known I wouldn't get another chance. I could have taken care of the albums before I lost half of them to moving. I should have sat down and asked more questions. I have these regrets too. But we aren't here to change the past. We are in the present, and we have the ability to do what we can with the people, places, and community we have in the time we have. We built this guidebook to make this process a little bit easier and little more fun.



Bigger Picture



Understanding the personal history, the community history, and the memory lane that has led up to you can be a cornerstone of your identity. When we don't know our histories, we are often left wondering: What came before me? Why was I raised how I was? How have I become who I am? Who you are, your values, and your sense of self are all clearly shaped by what you know about yourself and the people around you.

This is where family and community history become crucial to developing personal identity—and yet, many people still know just bits and pieces of these histories. People often don't recognize that our lives are a part of history as it is happening, that our stories are important for the next generation, and so these stories go unsaid. When this happens, we have to do the work ourselves to uncover our own histories.



But individuals who pursue this work are often left on their own, sorting through hordes of boxes, hundreds of old photos, struggling to find the stories behind them, and failing to make sense of it all. At the same time, the resources available are geared simply to help you create a family tree, or miss key details and use dry, clinical, academic language. Despite being intended to help you find your personal histories, these resources are bereft of real, human understanding. We wanted to create a guidebook that would allow you to make memories with your loved ones as you uncover and preserve your personal histories, and would be engaging, fun, and user friendly along the way.



For many people, this means starting with the clues they have. Your grandparent's old photos, your godmother's locket, a dear friend's painting, your favorite childhood stuffed animal—how do you preserve these things? These objects are more than objects, they are a part of us. More than that, they are a clue in drawing out our stories. A part of uncovering our histories is preserving the physical belongings that are a part of us.



Just as people have long used oral history to pass down stories, there is already a breadth of research about how oral histories can be an extremely impactful way to build community and identity. Oral histories with family, elders, and other loved ones can be especially impactful, revealing history and stories that otherwise would have gone unknown. As a practice, oral history can give individuals the agency to write their own community histories.

And while there are resources to learn how to preserve objects, conduct oral histories, and family history research, they are seldom connected to each other. Our guidebook has been made in mind of using all of the clues you have to put your community belonging and stories into a larger historical context. We include activities that invite you to make connections between what you have preserved and the larger history that shaped you. Our “Mapping Memories” activity for example, draws on defining your third place—the places that shape the social fabric of your community, that give you a sense of place.



How to Use this Guidebook

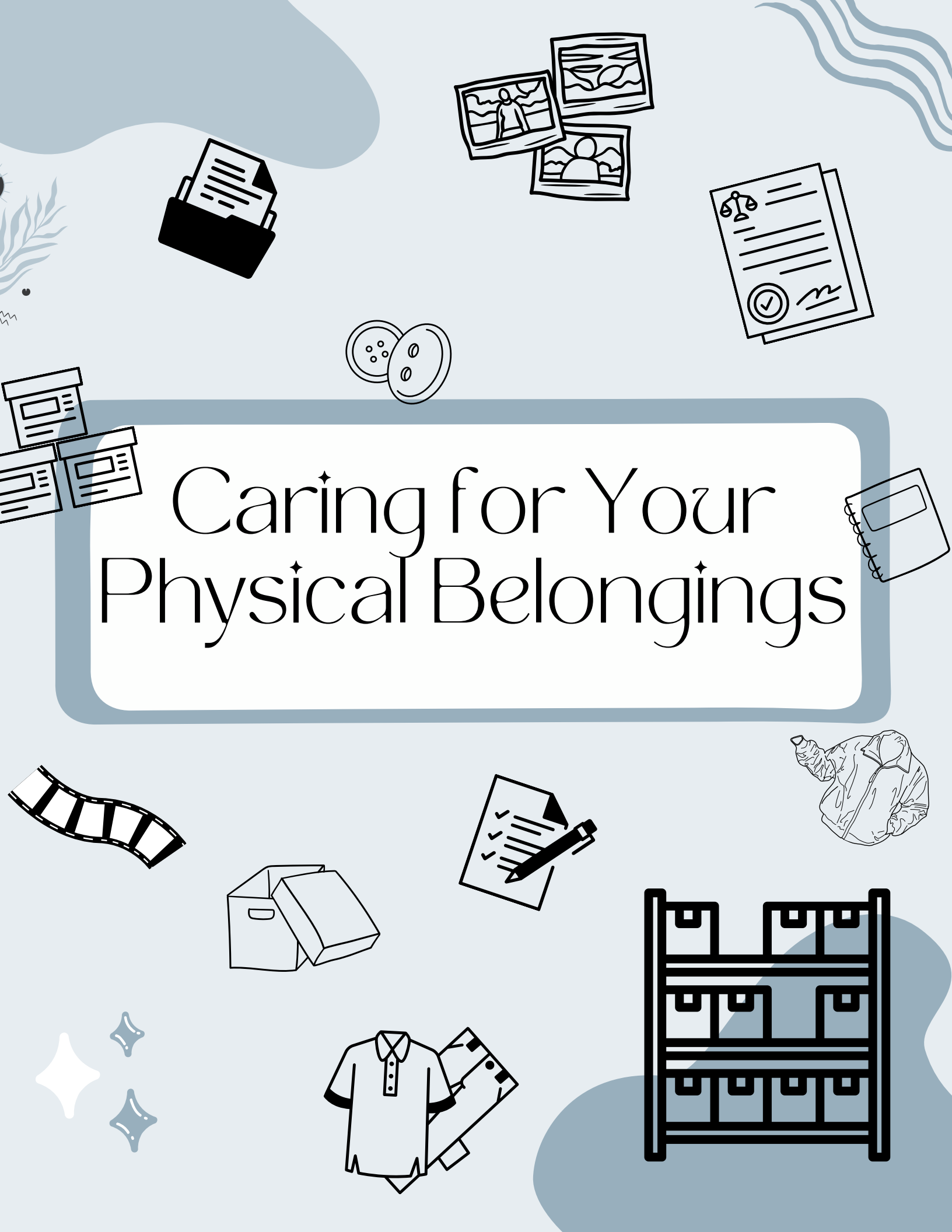
Pick it up, put it down, draw or comment all over it, doodle on it, print it out and cut it up—this guidebook was made to be usable for YOU! As museology students, we made this guidebook to bring the skills that collections specialists, oral historians, and conservators use to people who don't work in the museum field, so that you can preserve special memories within your own life. We have designed this guidebook to be as user-friendly, engaging, interactive, and fun as possible. In other words, we hope you use this guidebook in whatever way works best for you.

There are three sections at the heart of this guidebook: physical belongings (see page 9), oral histories (see page 51), & digitization (see page 91). The first section concerns preserving your existing physical belongings, while the second section will teach you how to record your loved ones' stories in oral histories, and digitization serves as a way to preserve both of these digitally.

Each section will include overviews of what each of these terms mean, break down any keywords, simple 3-step-prep before you start, check-ins, flow charts, and quizzes to determine your next steps, step-by-step guidance through the process of preserving and recording, and activities to help you make connections between your physical belongings and oral histories and YOUR story.

Whether you want to read through every additional tip, hop around from section to section, or just dive right in, there is space and flexibility within this guidebook for that. Happy memory-making!

Caring for Your Physical Belongings



Why are we using the term 'Physical Belongings'?

SHORT ANSWER

To me objects are lifeless, they are boring, they are things that are just biding time to be replaced or thrown away. **Physical belongings are the things that either invoke belonging and/or hold memories that belong to you.** My dad's necklace that he never took off sits warmly on my neck on the days I feel like I don't belong. The photos of my grandma near my mirror help me recall her scratchy floral couch and the way she taught me how to put on perfume, first at the wrist, then behind the ears and on the throat. My first pride flag from the first pride I attended as authentically me. These are more than objects, these are the physical belongings of my life.

LONG ANSWER

Institutions in the U.S. are systemically rooted in white supremacy and inherently enforce systems of oppression on marginalized groups. Because of this, institutions like museums, libraries, academia, repositories, etc. must reflect on why the existing rules and systems are in place. This is essential to uproot white supremacy and break the cycle of abuse. Part of this reflective work is done by recognizing the ways marginalized communities experience macro/micro-aggressions. One of the greatest techniques to continue the oppression of a group is to disconnect that group from their context, meaning their homes, communities, self-governance, and self-expression.

Institutions like museums, libraries, repositories, etc. use terms like "objects", "collections", and "artifacts" when referring to the physical items they are entrusted to preserve, research, and display. Though these terms are not going out of use anytime soon, many professionals have begun to raise the question of if these words disconnect the physical item from the context and meaning of the item.

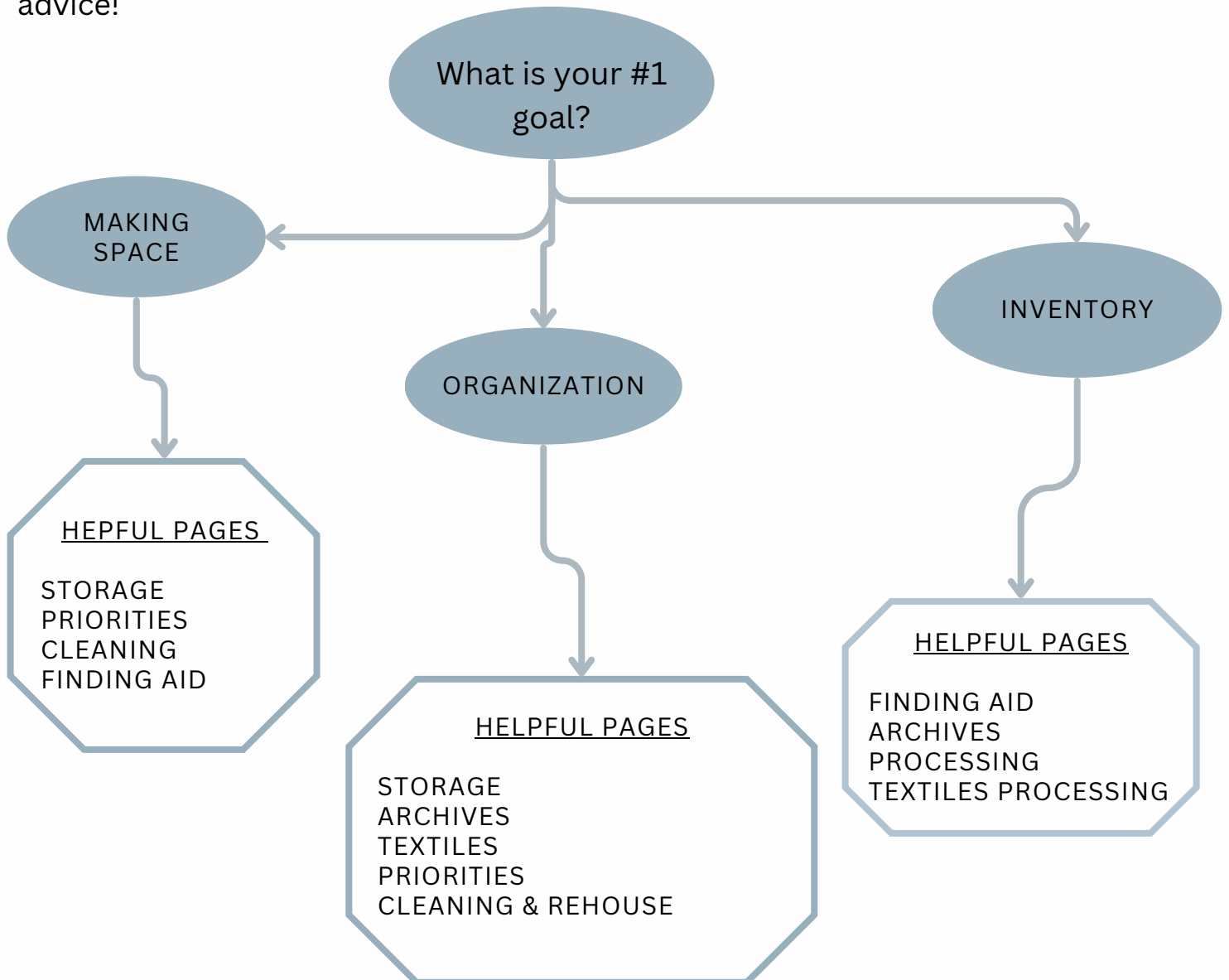
But how do these large systems and thoughts relate to this guidebook? Why does it matter what terminology institutions use versus this guidebook?

When objects and artifacts are given context and meaning, they become physical belongings. They become physical pieces that represent the fleeting memories of a person's life. So when you sit amongst the physical pieces of your family's or community's history, calling them 'objects' or 'artifacts' removes them from the memories and value that they belong to. Recognizing that these 'objects' belong to you. Making efforts to preserve your belongings with their context intact plays a vital role in combatting systems of oppression that use subtle erasure tactics like language to devalue marginalized communities. To value stories, culture, and community is a form of resilience.

How to Use this Section

This chapter on physical belongings provides guidance on storage, terminology, cleaning, and tips for understanding your personal priorities and needs. This chapter includes two sections: Archives and Textiles. These are some of the most common types of physical belongings. These sections provide direct guidance on processing and organizing, putting your belongings on display, and includes an activity to do with your belongings!

We recommend paging through all sections of the book at your leisure so that you become familiar with the topics and advice provided. But below is a small flow chart for when you are planning your session and may need a quick reminder or advice!



Before You Start 3 Step Prep

Plan

1

This is the time to sit down and figure out what you want to do, what needs to get done, and how to keep yourself on track.

Make Space

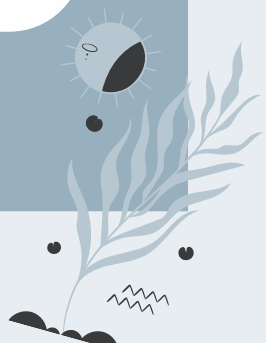
2

It's easy and exciting to just jump in and begin rummaging through everything, BUT take the extra time to make sure your space is ready for what you want to do!

Gather Materials

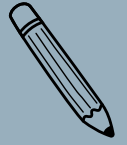
3

Make sure to gather up all the materials you may need.





1. Plan



Planning out your work session is a great way to maintain sight of the end goal and be able to refer back to what you did in previous work sessions. This is the time to sit down and figure out what you want to do, what needs to get done, and to keep yourself on track.

Grab your notebook and pencil and let's get to planning!

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:

1. In today's session I have _____ hrs/min to work.
2. Today I want to focus on _____.
 - a. Suggested: research, inventory, organizing, rehousing, oral history, etc.
3. I will work in ____ min. time increments and then take a ____ min. break.
 - a. Suggested: 20, 30, 45 min increments with 5, 10, 15 min breaks
4. If I go over or under my allotted work time, I know I will be done with this session today when _____.
 - a. Suggested: When three out of the five piles are placed in archival folders, when my finding aid is updated, when I am hungry, etc.
5. For the session after this one I want to be done with _____ and ready for _____.
 - a. Suggested: Done with organizing piles and onto researching each pile, done with timelines and ready to fill out the finding aid, etc.)
6. At the end of this session the archives I work with will go _____.
 - a. Suggested: a specific spot I have in mind, rehousing into an archival folder, to their original box, etc.

Reminder:

Every task you start will create numerous side tasks. That is COMPLETELY normal! planning out your current task will help keep you focused. We recommend creating another list of side tasks so they can be planned for your next session.

2. Clearing Space ✨

The key to creating a functional space for processing or organizing archives is that it is functional for you. So if you notice your space is lacking, uncomfortable, or stressful, you may want to reevaluate how you can improve your space.

What makes a good work space?

- Flat surface that has enough space for you to unpack, spread out, or clean up.
- Dry & clean surface
- Room to sit down, stand up, move around
- Covering your work surface with paper or a thin covering will help protect your memories and ensure your work surface also stays clean
- Designated area away for water, liquids, or snacks
- If doing research or digital documentation, create a designated computer area
- No large bursts of wind, avoid areas near frequently opened doors, close the windows, turn around or off any fans.
- Attempt to limit sunlight exposure
- Good overhead lighting or individual work light
- Cannot be accessed by or is away from any pets



3. Materials



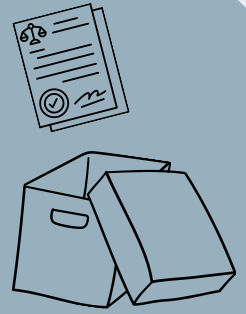
It is easy to just get started, but make sure to gather up all of the materials you need first. Sometimes after planning out your session and clearing your space, you may realize there is a light you need to replace, or that all of your notebooks are in your car, or that you misplaced your archival supplies. So take the time to gather your materials and make sure you are prepared to begin!

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Notebook/legal pad
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2-3 pencils (no pens/ink)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sticky notes or note cards
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Water
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Timer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Good lighting



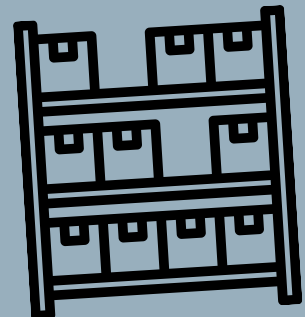


Storage



Storage is the first line of defense to ensure that your photos, documents, films, and family memories are able to withstand long term preservation. Proper storage can provide physical support and environmental protection for your belongings.

Archival storage ensures that the storage material and location that holds your belongings will not contribute to or enhance deterioration or damage. Archival storage takes into consideration access, storage and material type to ensure that belongings are cared for in the long term.





Archival Storage



Storage will stop...

Light

Source: daylight, overhead light, infrared radiation, visible light

Damage: discoloration, yellowing, fading, embrittlement

Solution: limited exposure to light, use UV protectant sleeve, covering with cloth or folder away from light when not in use.

Pollutants

Source: natural gasses, aerosoles, dust, dirt, liquids, cleaning chemicals, chemical off gassing

Damage: embrittlement, discoloration, abrasion

Solution: non abrasive and chemical free cleaning, regular environmental check

Mold

Source: humidity/moisture, water damage, low air circulation

Damage: eats away and destroys material

Solution: remove from current location then place into a dry and open air area, lightly dust off mold and may need to contact a specialist, rehouse in new storage containers

Pests

Source: insects, rodents

Damage: eat through the material or defecate on materials

Solution: Do regular checks, remove any infested materials from the others and safely clean off the material, consider changing the storage location, bug traps around the storage area but not with the materials.

What makes good storage?

Good Storage = Safe Storage

- ✓ Stable Environment
 - Dry (<60% Humidity)
 - Cool (<70 F)
- ✓ Off the Floor



A good rule of thumb for most is **if you wouldn't want to be in the room, then neither should your belongings.**

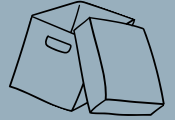
Archives VS Archival

Archives: A place that holds primary sources like letters, reports, journals, photos and videos, often used to conduct research to understand the past.

Archival: A material of suitable quality* to be used in preserving archives.

*note: "Suitable Quality" standards can vary, make sure to keep their environment stable and check regularly for bugs.

ARCHIVAL TERMINOLOGY



WHY DOES ACID-FREE AND LIGNIN-FREE MATTER?

Acid and lignin naturally occur in paper and cardboard but cause chemical degradation. Archival quality products are acid and lignin free and may also come as buffered or unbuffered, meaning that they also help neutralize naturally occurring acids.

BUFFERED VS UNBUFFERED

As mentioned above most archival quality products will be listed as buffered or unbuffered, but how do you know which one to use? Buffered products are meant to balance out acidic material by containing more alkaline properties within the material. But not everything should be stored in buffered containers and doing so can cause higher damage. It is safer to use unbuffered products overall. When specific acidic material like newspaper, paper, and photographs are being stored then buffered storage boxes and folders are recommended.

3 TYPES OF PLASTICS FOR LONG-TERM STORAGE

Polyester (mylar)- clear, smooth, rigid, provides support and allows viewing of material inside

Polypropylene (untreated, avoid if it has surface coating)- Clear, more affordable and can be used for viewing, less rigid/ less supportive than polyester

Polyethylene- the least rigid and least amount of clarity, but is as protective

The plastics above are ideal for long term storage and vary in price, rigidity and transparency. These factors should help determine what is best for you, if you know there are documents that will need to be used often, pulled out and handled, or are flimsy then a higher price material like polyester(mylar) sleeve will provide the best use. But if you are looking for general protection and won't be needing to use them often then one of the less expensive ones will do the job perfectly well.

POLYESTER VS COTTON

Understanding the type of material of your textile will help you understand the type of pests to be aware of and can help you better understand the best type of care for it.

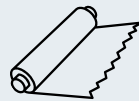
- Polyester fabrics will bleed and deteriorate at different rates than cotton
- Cotton is more susceptible to damage and pests because of its more untreated and natural material.

DIY ACID FREE ENVIRONMENT

Sometimes you just can't get around the fact that the storage you have is the storage you have to use. But that doesn't mean that you are helpless in making it a new environment for your belongings. **The main goal of creating an acid-free environment is to limit the amount of chemical reactions happening within your storage.** This is done by creating a "Micro-Environment" which means creating a specific space that can be controlled or adjusted to provide a more stable environment.

A way of doing this is by creating a **barrier** and an **absorber** within your storage. The barrier's purpose is to create an extra layer that makes it difficult for the outside environment to interact with the contents within the container. Then the absorber is a secondary layer to absorb and occasionally provide a visual cue of any chemical reactions happening (i.e. deterioration, off-gassing, etc.)

This method can be used for any size and shape! You may need to adjust the amount of material needed. You can also add to this method by possibly putting in components that are relevant to better preserving your belongings. Like dehumidifying packets for items that need a more dry environment or humidity packets for items that need a slightly humid environment like woods or unfired clays.



MATERIALS

Structurally sound container

Aluminum foil

Unbleached/
untreated cotton cloth

or
White cotton that has
been washed at least 3
times

PROCESS

1

Line your container with aluminum foil.

You want to ensure that the foil is as smooth as possible, there are no tears/holes, and that it goes over the lip of the container. If possible, line the lid as well. If you line the lid make sure the lid closes fully on the container.

2

Layer your uncolored/white cotton cloth on top of the foil.

You can attach the cloth at the top with paper clips or staples, ensuring that the metal bits won't be in contact with the contents. IF necessary you can use a tape, but adhesive should not be used inside the box. Tapes/glues release gasses that can be reactive.

3

Regular Checks!

The uncolored/white fabric can be a great visual indicator of yellowing, rust, or bug droppings. Regular checks on the storage environment can be done visually.

Prioritize, Clean Up, & Rehouse



Whatever state your belongings are in, let's just assume that, like most families, they're a mess. It isn't always affordable, practical, or fun to begin putting your family belongings into archival safe materials. But don't despair! You don't have to do it all at once and you don't have to store everything with archival quality storage before you can start processing and organizing. It takes time!

When it comes to storing your memories and belongings, always keep in mind that you have options! Buying archival supplies can really wipe out the bank, especially if you consider the money it may take to send in videos or albums to get digitized. But there are things you can do before taking out your wallet. The number one thing you can do to ensure your belongings are protected is store them in the right location and in a stable environment (see page 17.)

There are also many other ways to fortify your storage quality. Though these methods do not replace the quality and protection that high-grade archival material provides, they do allow for longer preservation for the time being.

Priorities



First things first, understand your priorities. When you look at your archives, what do you want to prioritize? Doing this may really help you direct your budget to the top priorities or help guide you on where to start. Either way, understanding what you want to prioritize can help you make decisions.

Keep in mind that priorities can also change, so be flexible! One year you may really need to focus on rehousing some older albums that are falling apart with archival materials, and the next year you need to get those loose baseball cards into their own album. Priorities change and that's okay!

Creating Priorities

- What is important to you?
- What is the most in danger?
- What is the most inconvenient?
- What is taking up the most room?

What do you value?

Informational Value: A record or paper that contains persons, places, subjects that do not hold a direct connection to the individual or family.

- I.e. Report cards. If the information is of value, like the teacher, the student, the year, the school, and the grades, this information can be written down, scanned or documented, but the original report card does not necessarily need to be kept to maintain its value.

Intrinsic Value: If the qualities and characteristics of the document cannot be reproduced without it losing crucial qualities and characteristic value, then the original physical document must be kept and archived.

- I.e. Deed. Yes the information can be copied and scanned but the value of the deed remains with the original paper, signature and style. Therefore the original document needs to be kept to maintain its value.

Clean Up vs Rehouse

One of the best ways to protect your belongings is to go through their current holding structure and clean it up or decide if it is time to rehouse the item. Rehousing is when you decide to move over the contents of a holding structure to a new/better holding structure. The best way to understand if you need to clean up or rehouse belongings is by smell, sight, and touch.

Should you clean up or rehouse?

1. Do you see yellowing?

- a. Yes
- b. No

2. Do you see other colors bleeding off/on?

- a. Yes
- b. No

3. Do you see signs of water damage?
(i.e. water stains, bubbling, etc.)

- a. Yes
- b. No

4. Do you see dirt or crumbs in the holding structure?

- a. Yes
- b. No

5. Do you smell mildew?

- a. Yes
- b. No

6. Do you smell something off?
(mothballs, vinegar, etc)

- a. Yes
- b. No

7. Does it look dried out or cracked?

- a. Yes
- b. No

8. Does it look like it is beginning to warp?

- a. Yes
- b. No



Mostly A's...

If you answered **mostly As** then you are going to need to **rehouse** your belongings! (See page 23.)



Mostly B's...

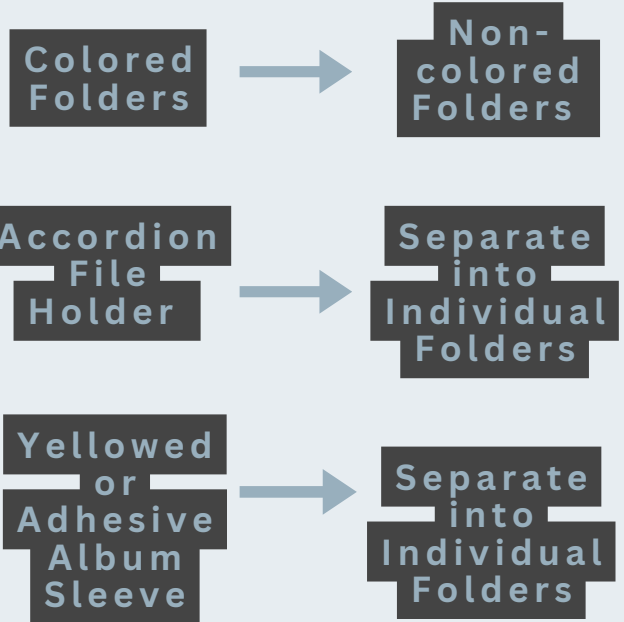
If you answered **mostly Bs** then you are needing to **clean up** your current storage structure! (See page 23.)



Rehouse

If you need to rehouse, it means that the current holding structure and/or storage location will need some adjustments, and that you may need to take a deeper look at the contents of the holding structure to better understand possible damage. Rehousing is done by replacing the current storage folders, sleeves, envelopes or boxes for storage structures that properly fit and store your belongings. This can be a great time to process and organize the contents while you rehouse (see page 25.) It would of course be best to rehouse belongings into archival quality storage (see page 17) but that is not always practical. There are other swaps and steps that can be made that will help preserve and protect your belongings.

Ask yourself..
'What can I easily swap out?'



****Make sure to keep as close to original order as possible. Original order is helpful context clues to unknown contexts. ****



CLEAN

Try to Avoid:

Wet Products

Scented Products

Colored Products

Strong Chemicals

The best way to clean your storage is to safely empty out the contents away from the cleaning area and to wipe down the storage surfaces, corners, and handles with a dry unbleached cotton cloth. If there are large stain marks, recurring wet areas, or structural issues, you may want to look at the rehousing section below to prevent future damage. If there are difficult nooks and crannies you can use a compressed air can or low suction vacuum to clean off harder spots that a cloth can't get.

What are Archives?

Archives are often associated with big libraries, museums, or city offices. But your shoe boxes of photos, overstuffed accordion files of documents that clutter your desk, and Facebook family photo albums are all archives of you. Some may refer to archives as the “paper trail” of a person’s life. Archives provide windows into the way someone lived by showing the prices, demands, actions, priorities, or lifestyle of time. You may not view your grandma’s journals and postcards as the same type of archives as the ones at big places like the Smithsonian, but the archives you have are the paper trail of stories that directly point out how you came to where you are now.

Archives are records like letters, reports, drafts, manuscripts, and photographs. These records can be of a singular person, a community, a business, or government. The purpose of archives are to provide evidence of past events. These documents may not be a direct insight into the past but can be used to better understand and interpret history.

The absence of physical archives does not mean there is no history. Documents, photos, and other physical records are a treasure and a privilege to own. Many people have been forced to hide and/or destroy their archives through fear of persecution. Some were never recognized as human enough to be provided a record like a birth record, a birth name, or be listed in the population census. But the absence of someone's records/documents/photos does not mean they did not live, that they did not have family or friends, that they were not married. It simply means that history has tried to erase them. But your memory, your life is a record of theirs. So if you do not have the physical belongings of theirs, begin to make your own records that have their name, their history and their story.



Processing & Organizing



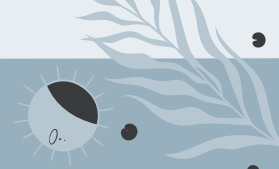
Archives are a big world of small things, each of which encompasses tons of information and material. Photos and documents are just some of physical belongings that happen to accumulate in the corners and folds of a persons life. But this can leave boxes, filing cabinets and miscellaneous shoe boxes filled to the brim. It can be overwhelming!

When looking at your archives at home, the two most important things to think about are:

1. Which archives have the highest value to you
2. What you want others to know about the archives

Processing and organizing your archives is about closely inspecting what you have and creating a system of organization. This may take a long time because in the process you will realize which secondary tasks you need to do to better care for and organize your archives. But remember to follow your plan! There is no rush or deadline you have to meet, so take your time and enjoy the process.

Processing



1 PREP

✓ 3 Step Prep (page 12)

✓ Wash hands



2 UNPACK

Begin to unpack documents in layers (if belongings are stored in one large bin or bag). Try to maintain the original order as much as possible, this may provide context in the future.



3 SURVEY

Look at each piece and try to skim the big pieces of information about the belonging.

1. What is the specific or general date range?
2. Do you know the person that the archive connects to?
3. Are there names, locations, or subjects you don't know?
4. What type of media is it?
5. Are there a lot of repeats or copies?
6. Are there other physical belongings that are connected to these?



4 INSPECT


Inspect the holding structure/container and note if it needs to be replaced or cleaned up. Note this on the finding aid (see page 84.)





Your survey notes will be helpful when you are ready to organize!




Organizing




After you survey and inspect your content, begin to organize your belongings.




Create and fill in your finding aid (see page 84) as you reorganize. This can help you note future subjects to research or which belongings have overarching connections.




Group by type:


- Date range
 - Maker
 - Previous owner
 - Type of material
 - Size
- 

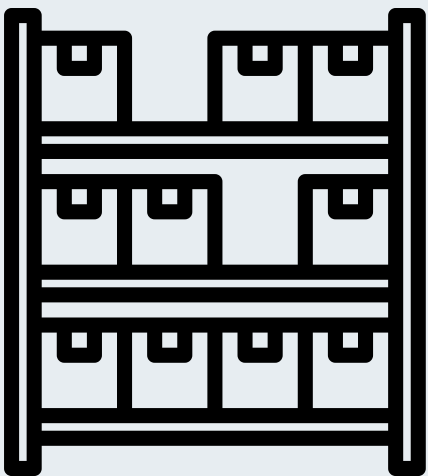
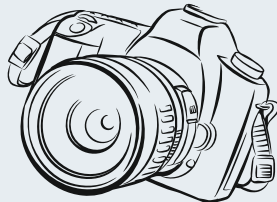
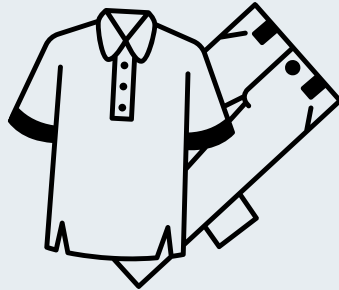
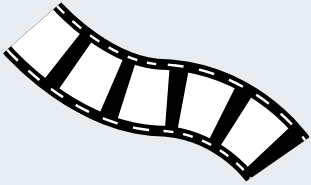
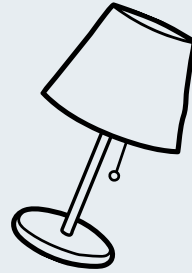
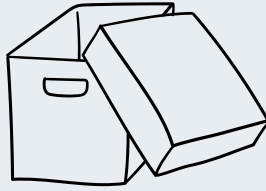
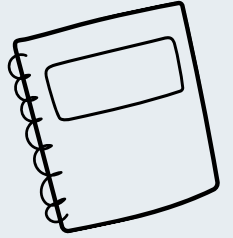
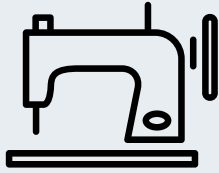
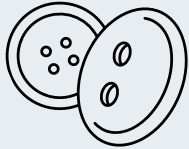
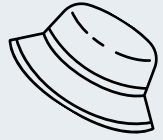
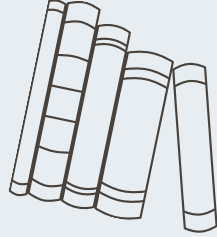
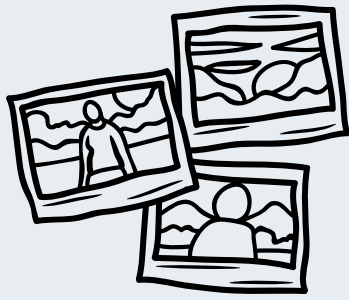


As you reorganize, this is a good time to clean or rehouse your belongings (see page 23.)



While organizing your archives, make sure to remove any paper clips, staples, or rubber bands. Using the finding aid (see page 84) to help you keep track of organization groups and to be able to easily search relating themes. It can be really easy to get side tracked during this stage. Make sure to stick to your 3 Step Prep plan!







Making Connections Activity

One of the most beautiful and rewarding pieces of doing historical work is getting to connect and relate to the world around you in a deeper way! Because of the desire to share that joy, you may start acting like a mini tour guide, announcing new facts as you pass by a landmark or building, or text bombing your friends and family links to newly discovered connections!

This activity is inspired by the connection to your memories and physical location.

Mapping Memories

1 Choose your map format. Digital or physical?

*If you are planning on mapping more than one town or a specific travel route, digital maps will be easiest.

2 Circle/highlight significant locations on the map

*Add notes like date ranges, what memories are associated with the location, why is this location significant, etc.

3 Take it off the map!

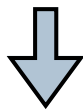
*Take a walk, drive, or digitally present the memories and stories that you mapped out!

Digital Maps

Using digital maps can be a great way to easily layer multi-generational memory mapping. They also provide places for text, images, or videos to be added and allows for a more in-depth digital memory map. Digital maps can also provide a way to map inter-state or multi-national stories.

Physical Maps

Using physical maps can be a great way to repurpose unused folded maps. There are also some well designed local maps that can be used for event or location specific memories. Physical maps can also provide decade specific region map.



Try Google's Free Map Creator!

- Create and view them at <http://mymaps.google.com>
- Add custom pins, layers, directions, and now distances!
- Maps can then be shared just like Google Docs and edited by multiple users simultaneously
- Maps can even be made "public", where anyone in the world can have access to it.
- Add images, videos, and/or paragraphs to each placemark or polygon.



Make sure to record the memories your mapping on a finding aid! (See page 84)

Examples

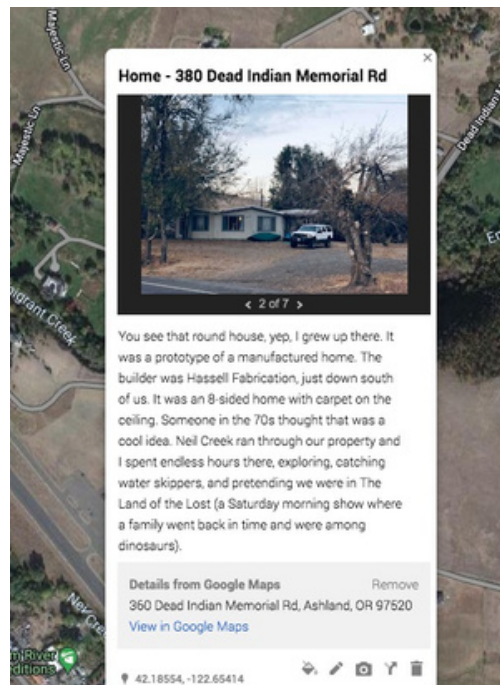
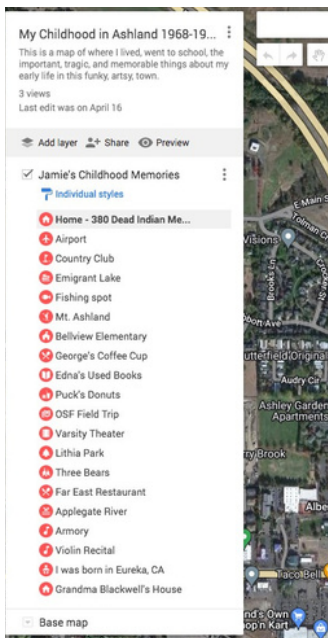
Mapping out the childhood memories.

In this example the physical memories of this person's childhood were kept in multiple tubs and photo albums (photos to right). They were able to take the physical contents of the box and map the memories that the physical belongings represent. They were also able to use this time to digitize and organize the contents.



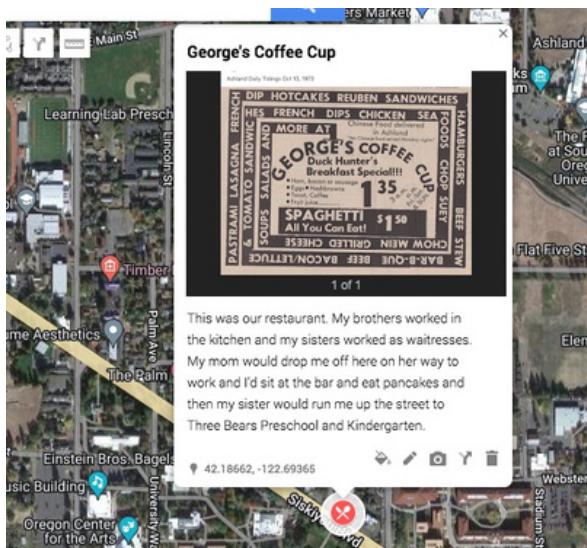
My Childhood in Ashland 1968-19...

This is a map of where I lived, went to school, the important, tragic, and memorable things about my early life in this funky, artsy, town."



Home

"You see that round house, yep, I grew up there. It was a prototype of a manufactured home. The builder was Hassell Fabrication, just down south of us. It was an 8-sided home with carpet on the ceiling. Someone in the 70s thought that was a cool idea. Neil Creek ran through our property and I spent endless hours there, exploring, catching water skippers, and pretending we were in the Land of the Lost (a Saturday morning show where a family went back in time and were among dinosaurs)."



George's Coffee Cup

"This was our restaurant. My brothers worked in the kitchen and my sisters worked as waitresses. My mom would drop me off here on her way to work and I'd sit at the bar and eat pancakes and then my sister would run me up the street to Three Bears Preschool and Kindergarten."

Examples

Mapping out your neighborhood

Your favorite local shops, your daily walking paths, local cats and dogs you see, the places you pass by day to day that bring joy into your life--all of those can be included in a map! It may be easier to include these as a physical map or drawing. **Bonus: Come back to your map every year with a different colored pen and add your new neighborhood discoveries to the map!** Map credit to Allison Ong.



Mapping out immigration journeys

You can also use maps to chart out the places that have been apart of your life internationally-- here Jasmine include a multi-generational map that spanned her grandparents' childhood and immigration to the United States to her present.

Vejalpur

"This is where my maternal grandfather (Aroon) was born in 1939. He was a trouble-maker from a young age -- he loves to tell the stories of how he kicked a tiger as a young boy and how he drank kerosene to impress a girl."

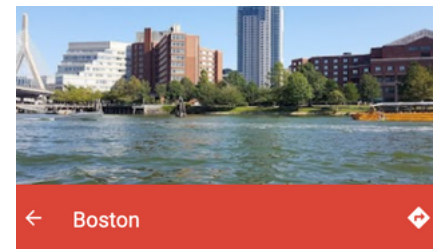


← Vejalpur

name
Vejalpur

description

This is where my maternal grandfather (Aroon) was born in 1939. He was a trouble-maker from a young age -- he loves to tell the stories of how he kicked a tiger as a young boy and how he drank kerosene to impress a girl.

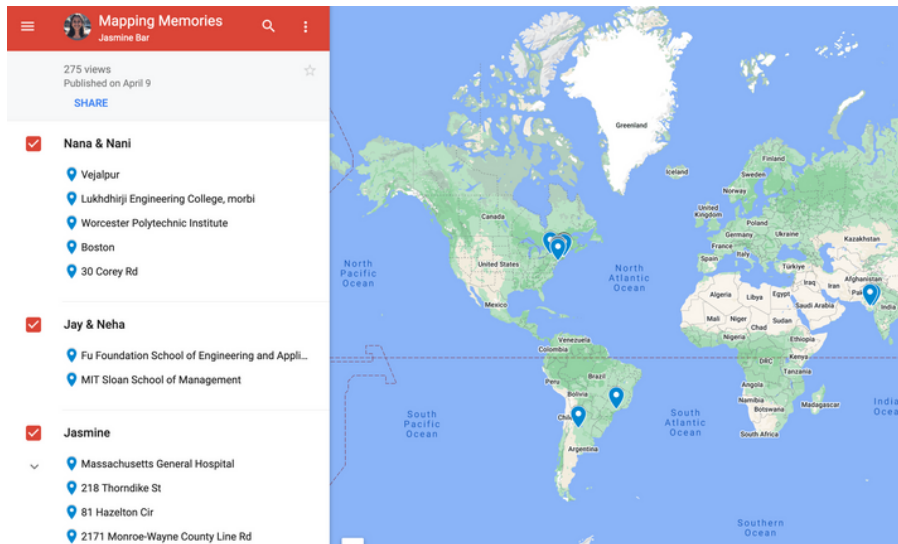


← Boston

name
Boston

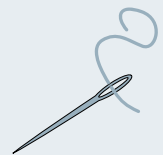
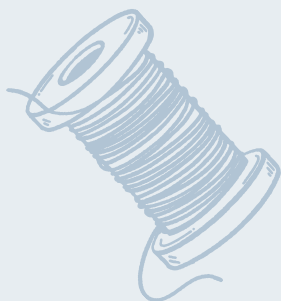
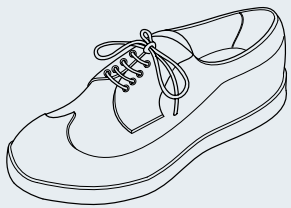
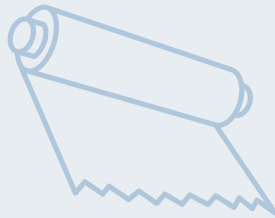
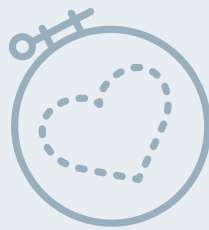
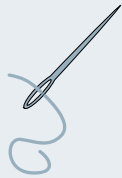
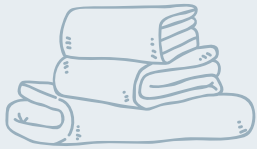
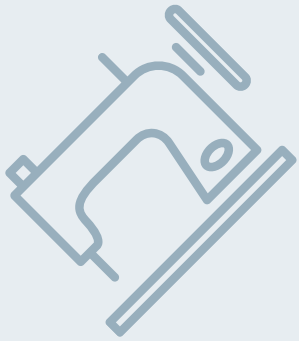
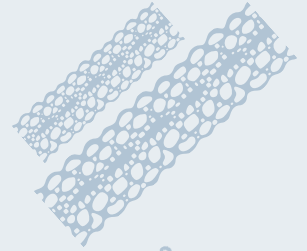
description

My maternal grandparents (Asha and Aroon) immigrated to Boston in 1968 and lived there for 52 years. They built an incredible community and literally ruled Boston's Brown-town.



Boston

"My maternal grandparents (Asha and Aroon) immigrated to Boston in 1968 and lived there for 52 years. They built an incredible community and literally ruled Boston's Brown-town."





What are Textiles?



In the most basic definition, textiles are fibers and threads created from natural or artificial materials. But what does that mean? Textiles are any size, any color, any purpose, and any thread-like material. There are specific textiles like cotton, linen, wool, silk, and synthetic, that are most commonly recognized. Textiles can range from clothes, flags, quilts, fabric samples, and less commonly considered textiles include threads, buttons/fasteners, and decorations.

Some textiles like clothes, blankets, quilts, or flags hold so many memories and so much meaning that it is difficult to decide what to do with them when they aren't in regular use. It can be disturbing to feel like your favorite quilts or grandfather's jackets are just rotting in the corner and only get pulled when moving or cleaning, just to get thrown back into the corner again.

These things are too meaningful to throw away but can feel difficult to revive. How can you revive these textiles? Does that mean using your mom's quilt? Or hanging up the flag that used to sit in your parent's basement? Does your space have to start looking like your parent's or grandparent's place in order to keep these textile memories alive? (For some, like me who have parents with questionable style, that thought might have you a little scared.)

Quick answer: NOPE. You do not have to do anything you don't want to do. Your desire to preserve your textiles does not have to directly interrupt into your house decor or wardrobe, or put the textiles at risk of further deterioration! This section will go over proper storage needed to preserve your textiles, how to develop a finding aid, and activities to preserve your memories and history of your textiles.



Storing & Handling Textiles

Rolled Storage

The best way to store a textile is to roll it onto an acid free structure with acid-free tissue paper between the layers. This allows the fabric to air and stores it horizontally, so that it is away from the floor and takes up less space. Then cover these rolled textiles with a tube or cover to protect them from dust and light.

Hanging Storage

Hangers put a low level of constant stress on the threads of the textile and offer minimal support. If a hanger is mandatory then there are some things you can do to help protect your textiles.

- Pad your hangers with archival foam to help lessen direct stress and give the textile more support.
- Make sure to wrap the hanger/padding in acid free tissue paper to create a barrier between the hanger and the textile, or use the same technique in creating a micro-environment (see page 19).
- If your textile is in a garment bag, you can boost the protection of the garment bag by wrapping your textile or lining the garment bag with acid free tissue paper.

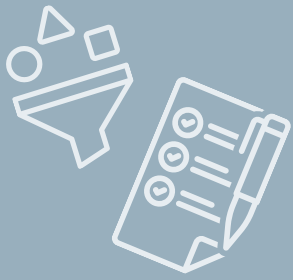
Flat Storage

The second best storage is flat storage. Store the textile in a flat acid free box and fold flat or with as few folds as possible. Make sure to weave acid-free tissue paper between any layered textile.

- Try to limit the amount of folds made. Try to place folds along seam lines.
- You can create supported shapes for shoulders, waists, collars, etc. with acid-free tissue paper or by shaping a structure like cardboard or foam to fit or creating a little structure yourself (see page 19 for a DIY option).

Handling

- Older textiles that have looser threads, ripped seams, or very thinned fabric will need some planned and structured handling.
- Some large textiles or really delicate textiles like handkerchiefs, lace, antique quilts, or large flags should be carried with support from a box or with a stiff flat board.
- If your textile is extremely delicate or you are worried about causing damage, wait and recruit a friend to lend a hand if necessary.



Processing & Organizing

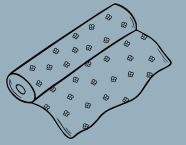


The world of textiles is vast and the conversation around them can go on forever. The material, styles, designs, and techniques used can be unique to each textile. But the two most important things to think about when you look at your textiles at home are:

1. What is the value of the textile to you
2. What you want others to know about the textile.

Processing and organizing your textiles is about closely inspecting what you have and creating a system of organization. This task may take you a long time because it will reveal all of the tasks needed to better care for and organize your textiles. But remember to follow your plan! There is no rush or deadline you have to meet, so take your time and enjoy the process.

Processing



1

PREP

- ✓ 3 Step Prep (page 12)
- ✓ Wash hands

2

UNPACK

Begin to unpack in layers (if textiles are stored in one large bin or bag). Try to maintain the order as much as possible, this may provide context in the future.

3

SURVEY

Look at the tag, seams, details, any symbols or logos, the way the textile was constructed, etc.

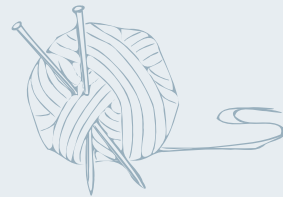
1. Was this handmade? By who?
2. Where was it from/where was it made?
3. Does the pattern/logo/symbol design have meaning?
4. Who was the owner of this textile and how did they obtain it?
5. Is there any damage?
6. Does it still have its original color?
7. Are their pieces missing? Is there patchwork?

Your survey notes will be helpful when you are ready to organize!

4

INSPECT

Inspect the holding structure and note if it needs to be replaced or cleaned up. Note this on the finding aid (see page 84).





Organizing



After you process your content, begin to organize your belongings.

Create and fill in your finding aid (page 84) as you reorganize. This can help you note future subjects to research or which belongings have overarching connections.

Group by type:

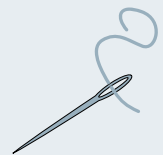
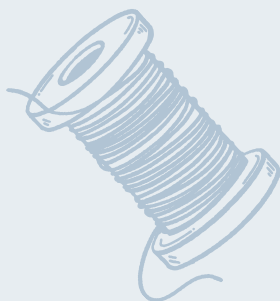
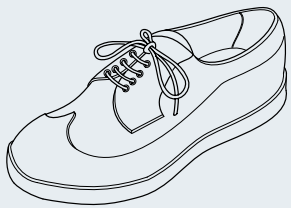
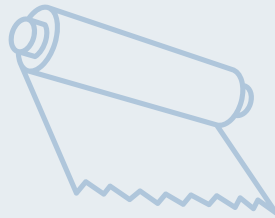
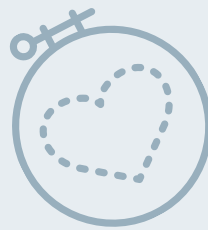
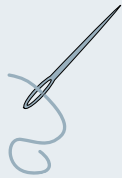
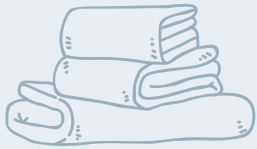
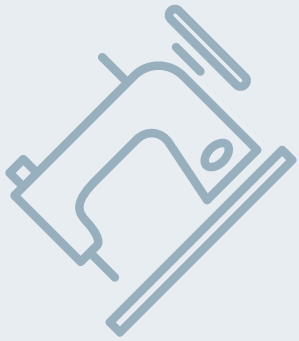
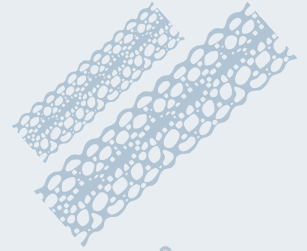
- Date range
- Maker
- Previous owner
- Type of material
- Size

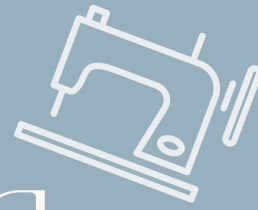
As you reorganize, this is a good time to clean or rehouse your belongings (see page 23.)

While organizing and placing your textiles back in storage, you may notice some repeat textiles, or realize that you may not need all the lace scrap from grandma's cookie tin. In this case, you may want to revisit your priorities and decide to give away or throw away some of your textiles.

Before throwing them away, take a look at the textiles activity at the end of this section. See if there are any ways you can Recreate or Reinvent some of these textiles!







Making Connections Activity!

Clothes, flags, cultural designs... these types of textiles are essential to the lives of everyone in this world. Preserving them and the memories and the meanings they have come to represent can be a difficult task, especially when you have to process the emotions that the textile may bring up.

This activity aims to alleviate some of those difficulties and inspire some ways to keep those memories and meanings present.

Finding ways to Recreate & Reinvent

Does your textile's original/intended form need to be maintained?

NO

YES

NO

Are you able to physically manipulate the textile?
(i.e. cut, frame, set)

YES

Recreate

Figuring out how to recreate a piece can be difficult when you've only known your textile in the state it is in now. Here are some prompts to help you figure out how the textile can be recreated to maintain its importance.

- What are your favorite memories of this textile?
- Do you want it to take up less or more space?
- What do you wish you could do with it?
- Who in your family/community would like to hear or can share memories of the textile?

Reinvent

Figuring out how to reinvent a piece can be difficult when you've only known your textile in the state it is in now. Here are some prompts to help you figure out how the textile can be reinvented to maintain its importance.

- What are your favorite memories of this textile?
- What is your capacity and ability to take on a project?
- Who in your family/community could you get involved?
- Are you looking to share the activity or do you want it to be more personal?

Examples



Jessi's Jerseys

Jessi has always had sport jerseys, posters, and game ticket stubs lining her childhood, teen, and college walls. When she graduated from college she was trying to find the balance of her love of sports and her love of a cute, clean house decor aesthetic. She still wanted to incorporate sports into her home in some way but couldn't figure out what to do with her favorite jerseys. After a fun girls night and brainstorming session, we grabbed three plain white canvases from Hobby Lobby and found some safety pins. We tucked and pinned the jerseys into the canvas. This helped recreate her love of sports but in a more functional and aesthetic way.

Materials Used:

- Textile in need of recreation (jerseys)
- Safety pins
- Canvas Boards
- Optional: paint/backing to create background color

Ning's Qipao Art

Ning had always seen images of their mother and grandmothers in elegant qipaos (Chinese dresses). One day, their mother showed them some of the qipaos their family had worn over the years. Each had beautiful and unique patterns, like magnificent and graceful birds, blooming flowers, even instruments. The extra fabric was used to make miniature qipaos for Barbie dolls. While these qipaos are delicate and should be worn sparingly to preserve, Ning still wanted to be able to remember their beauty and artistry when not wearing them--so they recreated the patterns of the qipaos into quilted wall art. Now, they are reminded of the beautiful qipaos of their family every day!



Materials Used:

- Textile or image of textile in need of recreation (qipao)
- Gouache paint
- Embroidery thread
- Paper

Examples

Dad's pajamas for the next generation

Jennifer's dad passed away 7 months before she gave birth to her first son. As her family processed their grief and learned to continue to live, they also had to process the physical belongings that remained of her dad. Some of these belongings were the pajama sets that their dad received as gifts every year on birthdays and holidays. These pajamas can be seen in numerous living room photos and hold familiar memories of happy mornings and peaceful nights. Unable to give away or toss these pajamas, Jennifer's close friends were able to take some of his pajama pants and shirts and reinvent them into a baby blanket for their newborn son. This reinvention has allowed these textiles to still be a part of the new memories her son will have.



Materials Used:

- Textile in need of a reinvention (pajamas)
- 1 yard of main fabric
- 1/2-1 yard of accent/design fabric
- Fabric scissors
- Ruler
- Sewing machine
- Pinterest or google: Easy sew baby blanket pattern



Baby Blanket to Baby Stuffie

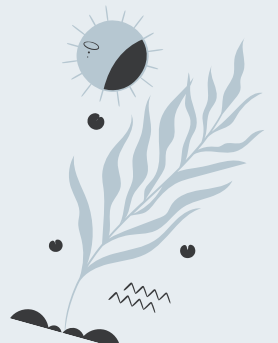
Sometimes favorite baby blankets become tattered, torn, and goodness knows what else. But this can also lead to the need to reinvent a shrinking baby blanket. Making a small stuffed animal or numerous stuffed animals can help bring the same comfort and fun that a kiddo needs and still wants. but can also help bring peace of mind that they won't be carrying around a tattered ribbon of a blanket.

Materials Used:

- Textile in need of a reinvention (blanket)
- Buttons (eyes, can be drawn)
- Stuffing (or scrap fabric)
- Fabric scissors
- Ruler
- Sewing machine
- Pinterest or google: Easy sew stuffed animal pattern



Frequently Asked Questions



FAQ



WHAT DO I DO WITH LARGER ITEMS?



Sometimes you find yourself sorting through large items that are connected to your history. Items like large signs, large decor pieces, trunks, wooden furniture, wagon wheels, etc., are difficult to move around and can take up more space than you have available. Or you may even be housing smaller items within these large items, like a wood trunk with your quilts in it, a wooden armoire with all your families wedding dresses, etc. Sometimes using these larger items as a holding structure is inevitable. If this is your case look at page 19 of the Archives section to understand how to archive-proof a holding structure. I would also recommend placing a thermometer and humidity sensor inside these structures to better monitor the fluctuations. These can easily be bought together or kept separately if you already have one. Using these monitors with large items that hold other objects will allow for better insight into the environmental stability.

If you have large items like signs, large decor pieces, etc., please glance at page 21. This page introduces the ideas of informational value vs. intrinsic value. You may need to reflect on the value and priority of these large items to decide how best to care for the,

Page 40-43 discuss ways to recreate or reinvent textiles, but these methods could also be used in a situation like this if you are looking for other ways to preserve the memories associated with these large items without them taking up too much space. Get creative and recreate or reinvent the meaning/purpose of the item.

If you are looking to store large items, you can protect your item from environmental damage by wrapping the item in a layer of acid free tissue paper and custom building a box or finding a box to house the item. If you cannot use archival safe material for the box or for covering the item then look at page 19 for suggestions on what to use at home.

Finally, if the large items are limiting your space or are not of great personal value to you, reach out to the community like a Facebook group, a local museum, a local historical society, or donate it to another organization that can repurpose the item.

FAQ

WHAT DO I DO WITH THIS COLLECTION OF OBJECTS? (BOBBLE HEADS, CARDS, BUTTONS, PINS, ETC.)

Collecting items like sport cards, game cards, buttons, enamel pins, coins, etc. is something many of us do. While collecting can be one of those traits that we adore in others, putting someone else's collections in order and housing them is a tedious task. But what are you supposed to do with them? If you just want to store these collections and stop worrying about them, then there are plenty of archival safe storage boxes and sleeves just for cards, buttons, and pins that you can purchase. Make sure to fill out a finding aid (see page 84) for anyone else who wants to look at these or maybe even organize them. If you still have access to the original collector you can even ask them to organize the collection and create a finding aid so that their passion and love for their collection can be seen and respected through its storage.

If you know that you do not want to keep them for yourself but aren't sure what to do with the collection, reach out to the community like a Facebook group, a local museum, a local historical society, or donate to another organization that may reuse or repurpose the items.

DOES ANYBODY WANT THESE THINGS OR DO I JUST THROW THEM AWAY?

Short answer, ask around! Don't assume anything--just because you may not see any immediate or obvious value of the belongings it never hurts to ask around before deciding what to do with them. Ask your family members, local community groups like children's clubs or senior homes, and other institutions like libraries or museums. Provide a deadline for response or sign of interest so that you do not need to keep the objects in the house without intention. Belongings like postcards, stamps, clothes, logos, old files, etc. can be reused, reinvented or contribute to building more insight into the styles, imagery, or usage of belongings from the past. For example, you may not see the value in keeping a bunch of old canvas bags that were used in the everyday life of a loved one. But these canvas bags have phrases, political campaigns, event logos, local business logos, that may now be incredibly rare evidence of such images. Reaching out to a local museum, library, or historic society with these canvas bags may provide a second life for the old belongings.

FAQ

HOW DO I DISPLAY PHOTOS, NEWSPAPERS, FLAGS, UNIFORMS, ETC. AND LIMIT DAMAGE?

Displaying pieces of history is a beautiful way to keep memories alive, to remind yourself of an amazing moment, or to honor the past. But putting these pieces on display exposes them to a higher possibility of damage. For more information on types of deterioration see page 17.

Displaying pieces of your history is similar to creating your own acid-free storage environment (see page 19) but with a couple of tweaks. To create your own acid-free storage, double line your structure with a barrier and then an absorber/smoothen. For your display case/frame use a similar technique, but line the support board or the walls of the structure with either acid free tissue paper or use the double lining method. This will help protect the inner environment of the display case/frame and provide you a gauge of any yellowing or water that may be developing inside.

Some of the greatest concerns when displaying objects come from environmental exposure like light, fluctuating temperatures, and humidity. Direct sunlight and a fluctuating environment can be some of the most damaging factors regardless of the situation. So make sure that you place the display in a stable environment with minimal to no direct sunlight. If sunlight is unavoidable, like when displaying a newspaper or flag in a living room with large windows, practice a cover or rotation system to give the belongings time away from direct sunlight.

Example:

Newspaper

- Line your newspaper frame with acid free tissue or use the double lining method
- Cover newspaper when gone from the house all day with a sheet or close blinds
- Rotate every couple months with another newspaper of significance

Flag

- Line flag case with acid free tissue or use the double lining method
- Turn the flag case around to the back when gone or close blinds
- Refold the flag every few months so that the portion displayed gets rest away from light exposure

FAQ

HOW DO I RESEARCH AN ITEM?

Sometimes it's hard to figure out where to even start when it comes to researching family belongings. Difficulties include finding out names, the creator, how your family member even obtained the item, etc. But to some people, this is research is the most fun, like solving one big puzzle! So like any great puzzle, start with the edges and work your way in!

Develop Keywords

Keywords are the words you use in your search bar. These usually will consist of a location, time range, notable pattern, cultural origins, object purpose and/or material type. Keywords can always be very specific, but when you first search you can use keywords just to gain general knowledge. Later you can refocus your search to be more and more specific.

To **develop your keywords** inspect, question, and recall information about your object.

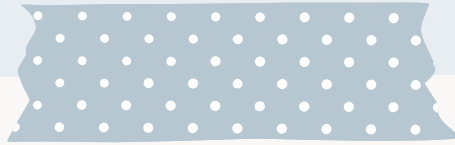
Inspect: Look at the pattern used, look for any maker's marks or company names, look at the material used (metal, wood, fabric, etc.). **Question:** What was the purpose of this object? Does it have an obvious purpose or is that part of the mystery? When was this object in use? If the object is something obvious, like a metal cigarette case or jewelry box, then that makes research much easier! If you don't know the original purpose of the item, then think about how it was possibly used prior or if it could be a piece of a larger object. **Recall:** It may be helpful to gain insight into details like how the owner came into ownership of this object, if they bought it on a trip or if it was given to them as a gift, and more related info.

Begin Your Search

Using the keywords you develop, begin searching. If you feel like your keywords are lacking, try using a reverse Google Image search to gain vocabulary you may not know. Reverse google image searches involve taking a photo of the item, and pasting that image into Google Image search. This can help bring up images that are similar to the item you are researching and can provide helpful contextual words to search, such as specific cultural eras, regions that used the item, or a similar items that you can use as a launching point.

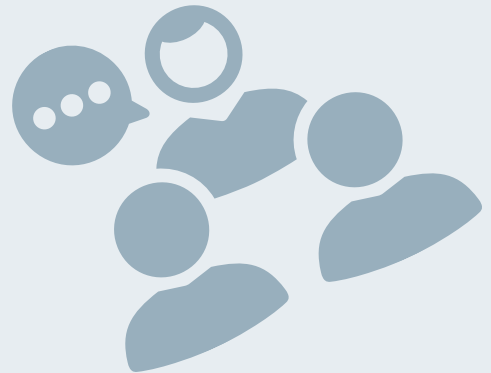
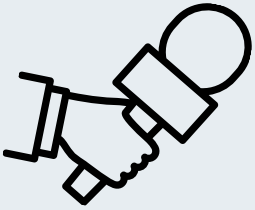
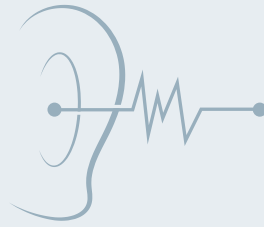
Keep Records

Though it is easy to just click through everything and take some notes here and there, try to keep a record of the pages that provide you with your most vital information. Then you can put these into the finding aid so that you can easily recall where you found your information.



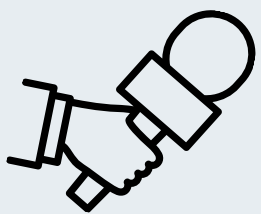
Keywords to Search:

A series of 15 horizontal lines for writing, each preceded by a silver spiral binding on the left side.





Recording Oral History

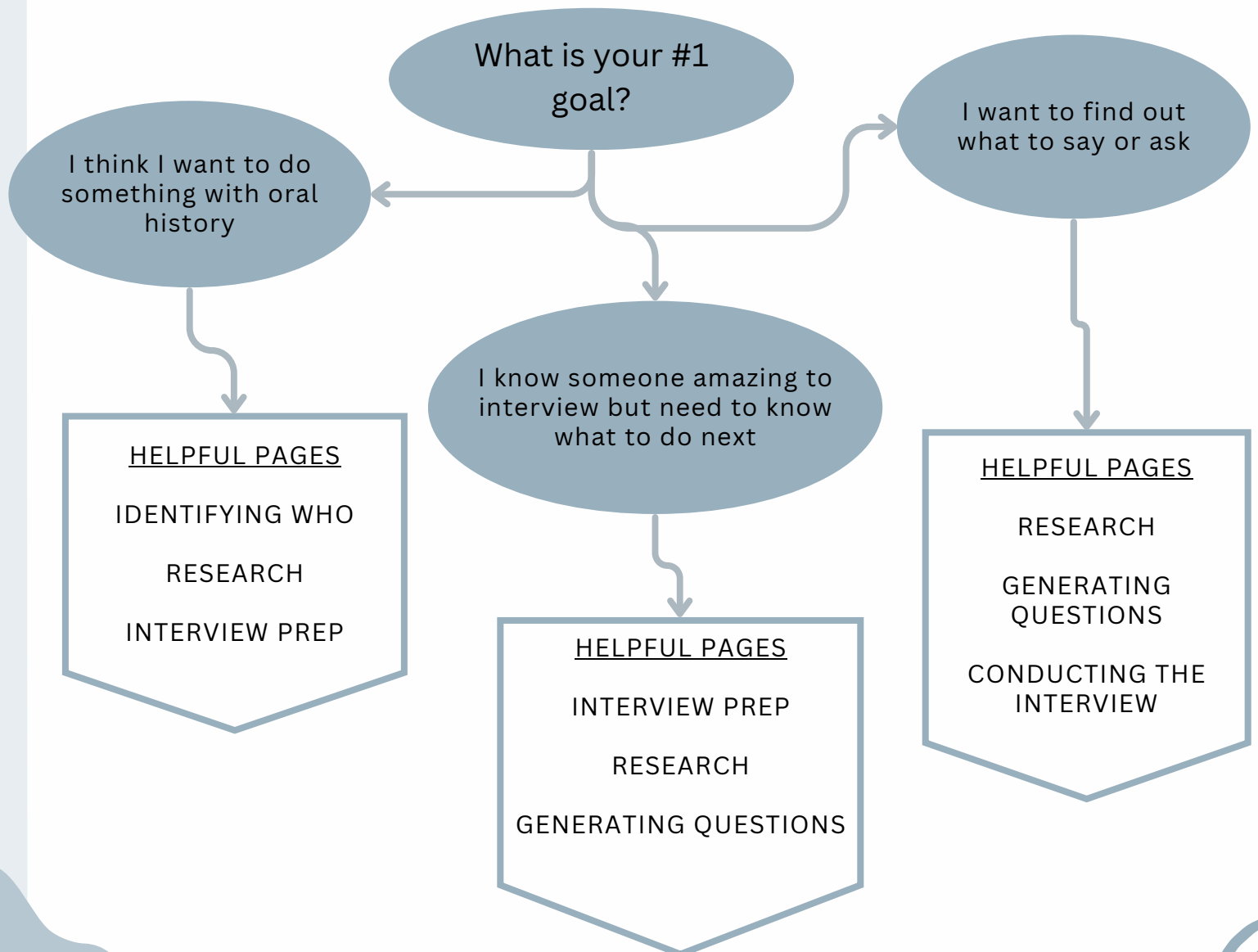


How to Use this Section

This chapter on oral history provides guidance on how to start, continue, and preserve oral history. We have broken down this process into 6 main sections: 1. Identifying Who to Interview (page 58), 2. Research (page 59), 3. Generating Questions (page 60), 4. Interview Prep (page 61), 5. Conducting the Interview (page 63), and 6. Preservation & Reflection (page 64). These sections cover what to consider when collecting oral histories, advice for setting up, structuring, conducting, and recording your oral history interviews, as well as an activity for what to do with your interview afterwards!

We recommend paging through all sections of the chapter at your leisure so that you get familiar with the topics and advice provided. But below is a flow chart to find which sections will be most helpful to you when planning your oral history!

Where to start?



What is Oral History?

In its most literal sense, oral history is the verbal passing down of history. But more than that, it is a practice that has existed for as long as language has, far before it became a more accepted form of recording history in the 1940s after World War II. Indigenous groups have been using oral history for thousands of years, as well as many Polynesian and African cultures. Whether through cultural stories, spoken word, songs, or chants, oral history has long been a way of recording and sharing our history for generations to come.

Despite being a common practice across the world, for a long time oral history was not accepted as a legitimate form of recording history in the West because it was not seen as an objective account of history. But it has value in another way—in capturing the human story of history, the emotions, the experience, and the impact of history on human lives. And what if anything is the point of understanding history if not to understand how it has affected real people?

A few things to caution with oral history: traditional oral histories can be many hours long, and are often recorded in soundproof, confined rooms. Oral historians have also practiced concerning habits, like making assumptions, using leading questions, and putting the words they want to hear in their interviewee's mouth. This is not an accessible way of recording, nor is it equitable. While these practices are something to be aware of, trust yourself, and this guidebook will also provide some insight on how to make your recording the best experience it can be for all parties!

For recording history in your own life, oral history can be helpful for its convenience—the only equipment you need is a partner and recording device! It is also more accessible when there are language barrier or literacy challenges involved. More than that, oral history can be ideal as it comes out of conversation, so that it can contribute to personal relationship and identity building. Instead of making a family member write down their history, you will share a memory of them telling their story to you, and have it recorded forever. So let's get started!

Before You Start 3 Step Prep



Plan

1

This is the time to sit down and figure out what you want to do, what needs to get done, and how to keep yourself on track.

Make Space

2

It's easy and exciting to just jump in and begin rummaging through everything, BUT take the extra time to make sure your space is ready for what you want to do!

Gather Materials

3

Make sure to gather up all the materials you may need.





1. Plan



Planning out your work session is a great way to feel prepared to tackle the interview and recording beforehand. This is the time to sit down and figure out what you want to ask, what you need to research, and to keep yourself on track.

Grab your notebook and pencil and let's get to planning!

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:

1. In today's session I have _____ hrs/min to work.
2. Today I want to focus on _____.
 - a. Suggested: research, writing questions, building trust, etc.
3. I will work in ___ min. time increments and then take a ___ min. break.
 - a. Suggested: 20, 30, 45 min increments with 5, 10, 15 min breaks
4. If I go over or under my allotted work time, I know I will be done with this session today when _____.
 - a. Suggested: When I have finished writing my questions, when my finding aid is updated, when I am hungry, etc.
5. For the session after this one I want to be done with _____ and ready for _____.
 - a. Suggested: Done choosing an interview partner and ready to research, done conducting research and ready to write questions, etc.)
6. At the end of this session the archives I work with will go _____.
 - a. Suggested: A specific spot I have in mind, on a set of CDs, onto my shared family Google drive..

Reminder:

Every task you start will create numerous side tasks. That is COMPLETELY normal! planning out your current task will help keep you focused. We recommend creating another list of side tasks so they can be planned for your next session.

2. Clearing Space ✨

The key to creating a functional space for processing or organizing archives is that it is functional for you. So if you notice your space is lacking, uncomfortable, or stressful, you may want to evaluate how you can improve your space.

What makes a good work space?


- Flat surface that has enough space for you to unpack, spread out, or clean up.
- Dry & clean surface
- Room to sit down, stand up, move around
- Covering your work surface with paper or a thin covering will help protect your memories and ensure your work surface also stays clean
- Designated area away for water, liquids, or snacks
- If doing research or digital documentation, create a designated computer area
- No large bursts of wind, avoid areas near frequently opened doors, close the windows, turn around or off any fans.
- Attempt to limit sunlight exposure
- Good overhead lighting or individual work light
- Cannot be accessed by or is away from any pets



3. Materials



It is easy to just get started, but make sure to gather up all of the materials you need first. Sometimes after planning out your session and clearing your space, you may realize there is a light you need to replace, or that all of your notebooks are in your car, or that you misplaced your archival supplies.

	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Notebook/legal pad
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2-3 pencils (no pens/ink)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sticky notes or note cards
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Water
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Timer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Good lighting



Identifying Who to Interview

So you want to record an oral history, but you have a million questions and don't know where to start. First, let's identify what makes someone a good fit for an oral history before moving on to what else you need to know.

Is oral history right for me?

- Do you want an account of lived history, even knowing that some facts might be incorrect?
- Do you have living family/community members or found family members who you feel comfortable having a conversation with?
- Do you have access to speak with them, whether in person, over FaceTime, or over the phone?
- Do they, and you, have the capacity to understand your questions and speak intelligibly?
- Do they, and you, have the capacity to sit through a conversation, ideally for 40 minutes or more?
- Are there stories, histories, etc. from them that are not already recorded and that others may want to know?

Consider their needs

Access can look different for everyone! You can shorten conversation, take breaks, provide language access, etc. Their needs are essential to creating a comfortable conversation. See our FAQ (page 82) for more info!

Let's identify!

1. Make a list of possible people to interview.
2. Check if these people are good matches for oral history with the questions above.
3. Once you have 2-3 persons identified, sit down and write out what you do know about them.
4. Finally, reflect on what you want to know about their story.

Research

Historical research can come with many rewards and many terrifying truths. As you navigate your research, it can be really difficult to determine what information is credible, trustworthy, and relevant to you and your history. This is especially true when you hold identities with histories of marginalization and oppression. For your oral history, any historical research can make an impact. But if you're struggling with your research remember, this is ultimately about a conversation, not a research report!

Be sensitive

Always be careful to ensure that the research you find also influences how you can be sensitive to your partner. Be careful not to overstep any boundaries, you always want to remember that your partner is a human first, **not an object of history.**

What do you know now?

Are you comfortable going into this conversation with how much you know about your person's life now? You can totally start doing some research based on what you know. You can also recall your own memories, stories your interview partner has shared before, other details they have told you, and general facts you know about them.

Research is broad!

Your research can be as in depth or broad as you want it!
Even if you feel lost, starting with organizing what you know so far is a great place to start, and utilize resources like the internet, librarians, local museums, etc.

Review physical belongings

This is a great time look over your physical belongings and consider if they bring up questions you can use during the interview. Take a look at the Physical Belongings chapter (see page 9.) If your partner is okay with it, it can even be helpful to physically have these objects out during the interview and see if they can help jog memories and prompt more questions.

Ask Yourself:

- Were there any relevant years I know connected to this person?
- Are there any relevant names I know?
- Do I know where this object originated, and where it has been?
- Do I know what was going on in this photo?
- Is there anyone I can learn more from about my interview partner?
- What related history do I know about?

Generating Questions



At a loss for questions? Don't worry, it gets easier! Start off with some easy, warm up questions. These questions are important to help your partner warm up and feel more comfortable with any more personal questions you might want to ask later. You may even know the answers to these questions, but they still can surprise you!

You don't need hundreds of questions. Too many questions can result in a very long conversation or a lot of questions unanswered. You may need anywhere between 5-15. End with time and space for reflection.

Warm Up Questions

Where were you born?
Where did you grow up?
Who consisted of your family?
What are your hobbies?



Use Your Research

Based on the questions you can answer in the research section, what new or deeper questions were raised during your research?

End with Reflections

End your question list with a few reflective questions, and see if you can wrap up by asking your partner what they learned or what they would like you or people in the future to know.



Still struggling? We got you covered—flip to the end of this section for our suggested question pamphlets.

Interview Prep



What to prep?

You're almost ready for your interview, but it feels like all of your thoughts are scattered or the research you have isn't enough. Remember it is just a conversation, so take a deep breath and check in to see what needs to be prepped further!

Self Check-in

Will Do

Have done

Use this as an opportunity to check where you are and what you want to prioritize next.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtained consent to interview person
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scheduled time with interviewee
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have found/explored related physical belongings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Researched their life events, historical events, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Written questions for interviewee
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussed and planned access needs
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Picked out a recording device

Material Check

- Recording device
- Notebook/legal pad
- 2-3 pencils
- Water
- Timer/clock
- Release form
- Other access needs

Space Check

- Quiet space
- Comfortable seats
- Good air flow
- Good lighting
- Comfortable temperature



Interview Prep



Creating Trust

It's best to first make sure that your partner understands what the recording will cover and who it will be shared with. Though small, missing this step can lead to disagreement, mistrust, and personal tension. If your partner doesn't want their family to know about a certain event but you haven't discussed it beforehand, it may be a huge breach of trust for you to share that information.

Go through the following questions with your partner before recording. Even a verbal conversation about these questions is better than nothing at all. Ask them to sign off or verbally when they agree on everything!

1. I want this recording to be shared:

- a. Publicly
- b. Privately with whomever you (the historian) wish
- c. Privately with people I approve of
- d. With only you (the historian) and archived until ___ date.
- e. Other:

2. Circle one: I am okay with my story being shared in full or I would like _____ part of my story omitted if shared publicly or with certain people, including _____.

3. I am okay with:

- a. My story being archived with a public archive
- b. My story being archived with a private archive
- c. My story being archived within private, individual means, i.e. on the historian's drive, laptop, etc.

Participant Signature: _____

Your signature _____

Or:

Verbal agreement (not recorded):

Verbal Agreement (recorded):

Date: _____

You can have this discussion at any point in the process. Personal history can be emotionally loaded and may trigger some unwanted emotions. To ensure everyone remains on board emotionally, mentally and physically, make sure to regularly check in on the interviewee's needs and boundaries, even after the interview.

The Interview



Let's Start

Opener: 5 Minute check to review the release form and ensure that anything shared can remain between you two.



You Got This!

- Interview prep
- Materials check
- Test recording device

It's Just a Conversation!

Start with the warm up questions and allow the conversation flow!

As you get into deeper questions, follow your interviewees comfort.

Have 5-10 questions ready (or use the question guides in the back of this book!).

Use open ended questions, but follow up with clarifying yes or no questions!

Don't worry about deviating from your set questions—follow the conversation.

If they mention something or someone, ask them to explain who, what, or where!

Wrapping Up

Check In! Check if/what they are still comfortable sharing. Remind them they can change their mind anytime.

Gear Check! Check the quality of your recording, save and upload it as a digital file.

Reflect! Turn to the next page for tips on reflecting on the process.

Reflection



What did you learn?

Conducting oral history is a learning process. Some interviews go better than others, and some turn out better than anticipated! After you record, try and reflect on the process and the material gained. Doing this after the interview can also really help you develop your skills.



Ask yourself



Something that I learned was...

I was surprised by...

The things that went really well were...

The conversation could have been improved if...

The questions I still have are...

The questions I am happy I got answered were...

I thought the conversation went really well when...

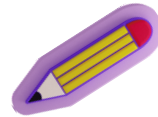
Next conversation I am going to add _____
to my prep list.



Oral History Practice

Try a quick practice oral history with a friend or partner. It doesn't have to be too in-depth, you can learn a lot even from a fifteen minute conversation! You don't have to record, just try to put what we've talked about into practice. But first find a friend and ask them if they're up for a chat! Plan your questions in sections 1-3 here.

1 My Friends Name is _____



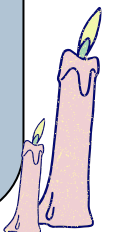
2 Here is what I knew about _____ before this interview:



3 These are the 3-5 questions I want to ask _____:

Example Questions:

- Where did you grow up?
- What was your childhood like?
- If you could interview anyone from your life living or dead, but not a celebrity, who would it be and why?
- What is your first memory of me?
- Was there a time when you didn't like me?
- What makes us such good friends?
- How would you describe me? How would you describe yourself?
- Where will we be in 10 years? 20 years?
- Do you think we'll ever lose touch with each other?
- Is there anything that you've never told me but want to tell me now?
- Are there things about me that you've always wanted to know but have never asked?
- If you could talk to a younger version of yourself, what would you say?
- What were your first impressions of me? How did they change?





Making Connections Activity!

Throughout our lives, there will always be fleeting conversations and stories lost as people age. Oral history helps with that, but creating ways to keep a record of conversations, videos, and other types of oral history can result in hours of isolation, transcribing or recollecting memories, and trying to write them out coherently.

This activity encourages you to share and create with your community a record that can be more sensory than just typed transcripts.

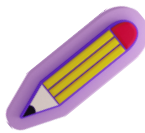
Visually Connecting To Oral History

Your interview itself is a memory you share with your partner, with even more memories within it. But what are some ways that you can continue to reflect and share what you learned without having to repeatedly listen to your recording? It can be really helpful to make a visual representation of your experience! This could be a **comic** or **mini magazine** explaining the conversation, a **collage**, or **scrapbook** page.

You also don't just have to work from an oral history. You can simply reflect on a meaningful conversation you had with a loved one, create something out of voicemails a loved one has left for you, or a podcast you like! If you would like to try something else, you can also try editing your audio into a podcast, cutting audio and recording yourself as a broadcaster introducing your favorite quotes.

1

QUOTES



Pulling out your favorite quotes from the conversation! Listen back and type them out, or use a transcription service.

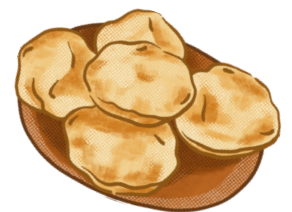


2



THEME

Write out some of the major events and themes that came up in your conversation.



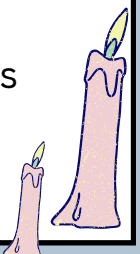
3

ADD SOME FLARE

Create some writing or visuals of some of your favorite stories that came up in the conversations



Pair these with any related photos, images, or documents that you can find, or even draw your own images.



Examples



Creating a timeline based on your oral history

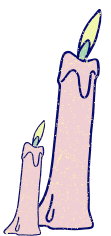
When Rohan's family was trying to convince his maternal grandfather to write down his life story, Rohan decided to conduct an oral history with him instead. But the interview was almost an hour long, and Rohan wanted to make sure he remembered and could share the core facts of their conversation.

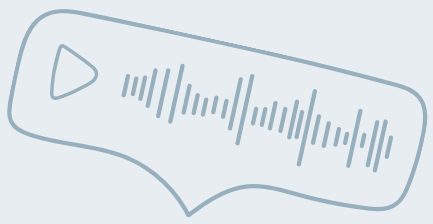
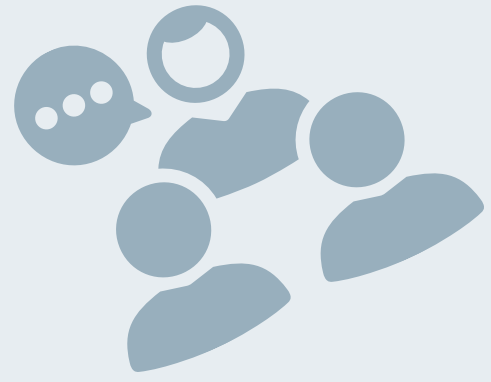
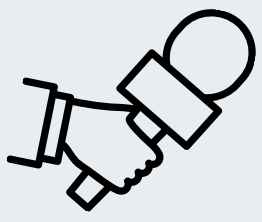
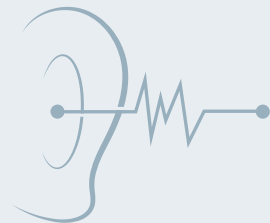
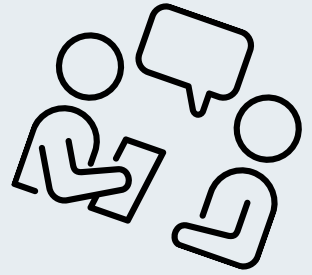
Rohan and his grandfather are both fact oriented people, and his grandfather shared his stories with him as a timeline. Rohan chose to honor that and created more points of reference visually by adding photos. He also included some of his grandfather's words as quotes, making an easy to share timeline of what he learned!



Using a website to share your oral history

After I recorded oral histories with my grandparents, I wanted to be able to share them alongside photos from the times they were speaking about alongside my own writing, as I reflected on my feelings on recording with them and what I learned. I created a website using a free website building platform, like Wix or Weebly, and edited my recordings into short, two minute clips of audio. I added these clips onto the website along with archival photos I had of my grandparents and my writing. I shared the website link with all of my family members so it was easy for them to access and read!







Question Guide



QUESTION GUIDE



GREAT QUESTIONS FOR ANYONE

- CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THE IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE?
- WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF THE HAPPIEST MOMENTS IN YOUR LIFE? THE SADDEST?
- WHO HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON YOUR LIFE? WHAT LESSONS DID THAT PERSON OR THOSE PEOPLE TEACH YOU?
- CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT A MOMENT WHEN A PERSON'S KINDNESS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR LIFE?
- WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSONS YOU'VE LEARNED IN LIFE?
- WHAT IS YOUR EARLIEST MEMORY?
- WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY OF ME?
- ARE THERE ANY FUNNY STORIES YOUR FAMILY TELLS ABOUT YOU THAT COME TO MIND?
- ARE THERE ANY FUNNY STORIES OR MEMORIES OR CHARACTERS FROM YOUR LIFE THAT YOU WANT TO TELL ME ABOUT?
- WHAT ARE YOU PROUDEST OF?
- WHEN IN LIFE HAVE YOU FELT MOST ALONE?
- IF YOU COULD HOLD ONTO MEMORIES FROM YOUR LIFE FOREVER, WHICH WOULD THEY BE?
- HOW HAS YOUR LIFE BEEN DIFFERENT THAN WHAT YOU'D IMAGINED?
- HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE REMEMBERED?
- DO YOU HAVE ANY REGRETS?
- HOW DO YOU IMAGINE YOUR FUTURE?
- WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR ME?
- WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR MY CHILDREN?
- IF THIS WAS TO BE OUR VERY LAST CONVERSATION, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D WANT TO SAY TO ME?
- FOR GENERATIONS LISTENING TO THIS YEARS FROM NOW, IS THERE ANY WISDOM YOU'D WANT TO PASS ON TO THEM? WHAT WOULD YOU WANT THEM TO KNOW?
- IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU'VE NEVER TOLD ME BUT WANT TO TELL ME NOW?
- ARE THERE THINGS ABOUT ME THAT YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW BUT HAVE NEVER ASKED?
- IF YOU COULD TALK TO A YOUNGER VERSION OF YOURSELF, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?
- WHAT WERE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF ME? HOW DID THEY CHANGE?



QUESTION GUIDE

GREAT QUESTIONS FOR FRIENDS OR COLLEAGUES

- IF YOU COULD INTERVIEW ANYONE FROM YOUR LIFE LIVING OR DEAD, BUT NOT A CELEBRITY, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?
- WHAT IS YOUR FIRST MEMORY OF ME?
- WAS THERE A TIME WHEN YOU DIDN'T LIKE ME?
- WHAT MAKES US SUCH GOOD FRIENDS?
- HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE ME? HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF?
- WHERE WILL WE BE IN 10 YEARS? 20 YEARS?
- DO YOU THINK WE'LL EVER LOSE TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER?

GREAT QUESTIONS FOR GRANDPARENTS

- WHERE DID YOU GROW UP?
- WHAT WAS YOUR CHILDHOOD LIKE?
- WHO WERE YOUR FAVORITE RELATIVES?
- ARE THERE ANY EVENTS THAT CHANGED YOUR LIFE?
- DO YOU REMEMBER ANY STORIES YOUR GRANDPARENTS TOLD YOU?
- HOW DID YOU AND GRANDMA/GRANDPA MEET?
- WHAT WAS MY MOM/DAD/PARENT LIKE GROWING UP?
- DO YOU REMEMBER ANY SONGS THAT YOU USED TO SING TO YOUR CHILDREN? CAN YOU SING THEM NOW?
- WHAT WERE YOUR PARENTS LIKE?
- WHAT WERE YOUR GRANDPARENTS LIKE?
- HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE REMEMBERED?
- ARE YOU PROUD OF ME?

GREAT QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL

- DID YOU ENJOY SCHOOL?
- WHAT KIND OF STUDENT WERE YOU?
- WHAT WOULD YOU DO FOR FUN?
- HOW WOULD YOUR CLASSMATES REMEMBER YOU?
- ARE YOU STILL FRIENDS WITH ANYONE FROM THAT TIME IN YOUR LIFE?
- WHAT ARE YOUR BEST MEMORIES OF GRADE SCHOOL/HIGH SCHOOL/COLLEGE/GRADUATE SCHOOL? WORST MEMORIES?
- WAS THERE A TEACHER OR TEACHERS WHO HAD A PARTICULARLY STRONG INFLUENCE ON YOUR LIFE? TELL ME ABOUT THEM.
- DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITE STORIES FROM SCHOOL?

QUESTION GUIDE

GREAT QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT WAS GOING THROUGH YOUR HEAD WHEN YOU FIRST SAW ME?
- HOW DID YOU CHOOSE MY NAME?
- WHAT WAS I LIKE AS A BABY? AS A YOUNG CHILD?
- DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE SONGS YOU USED TO SING TO ME? CAN YOU SING THEM NOW?
- WHAT WERE MY SIBLINGS LIKE?
- WHAT WERE THE HARDEST MOMENTS YOU HAD WHEN I WAS GROWING UP?
- IF YOU COULD DO EVERYTHING AGAIN, WOULD YOU RAISE ME DIFFERENTLY?
- WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE ME ABOUT RAISING MY OWN KIDS?
- WHAT ARE YOUR DREAMS FOR ME?
- HOW DID YOU MEET MOM/DAD?
- HOW DO YOU THINK WE ARE ALIKE? HOW DO YOU THINK WE ARE DIFFERENT?
- ARE YOU PROUD OF ME?

GREAT QUESTIONS FOR GROWING UP

- WHEN AND WHERE WERE YOU BORN?
- WHERE DID YOU GROW UP?
- WHAT WAS IT LIKE?
- WHO WERE YOUR PARENTS?
- WHAT WERE YOUR PARENTS LIKE?
- HOW WAS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR PARENTS?
- DID YOU GET INTO TROUBLE? WHAT WAS THE WORST THING YOU DID?
- DO YOU HAVE ANY SIBLINGS? WHAT WERE THEY LIKE GROWING UP?
- WHAT DID YOU LOOK LIKE?
- HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS A CHILD? WERE YOU HAPPY?
- WHAT IS ONE OF YOUR BEST MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD? WORST?
- DID YOU HAVE A NICKNAME? HOW'D YOU GET IT?
- WHO WERE YOUR BEST FRIENDS? WHAT WERE THEY LIKE?
- HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE A PERFECT DAY WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG?
- WHAT DID YOU THINK YOUR LIFE WOULD BE LIKE WHEN YOU WERE OLDER?
- DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITE STORIES FROM YOUR CHILDHOOD?
- WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD, WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GREW UP?

QUESTION GUIDE

GREAT QUESTIONS FOR HISTORY

- WERE THERE ANY MAJOR EVENTS YOU REMEMBER FROM CHILDHOOD?
- WHAT LARGER NATIONAL/GLOBAL EVENTS HAVE AFFECTED YOUR LIFE?
- HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE THE WORLD WAS ENDING?
- DO YOU REMEMBER ANY EVENTS HAPPENING IN YOUR HOMETOWN?
- WHAT ABOUT ANNUAL OR REGIONAL EVENTS YOU LOOKED FORWARD TO?
- HOW HAVE YOU DEALT WITH DIFFICULT TIMES FOR WAR, SICKNESS, HISTORY, AND FOOD?
- WERE THERE ANY TIMES YOU HAD TO DO THE UNEXPECTED BECAUSE OF LARGER EVENTS HAPPENING?

GREAT QUESTIONS FOR RAISING CHILDREN

- WHEN DID YOU FIRST FIND OUT THAT YOU'D BE A PARENT?
- DID YOU ALWAYS KNOW YOU WANTED TO BE A PARENT?
- CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE MOMENT WHEN YOU FIRST SAW YOUR CHILD?
- HOW HAS BEING A PARENT CHANGED YOU?
- WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF FROM BEING A PARENT?
- WHAT ARE YOUR DREAMS FOR YOUR CHILDREN?
- DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOUR LAST CHILD LEFT HOME FOR GOOD?
- DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITE STORIES ABOUT YOUR KIDS?

GREAT QUESTIONS FOR LOVE & RELATIONSHIPS

- DO YOU HAVE A LOVE OF YOUR LIFE? HOW DID YOU MEET?
- HOW DID YOU KNOW THEY WERE "THE ONE"?
- WHEN DID YOU FIRST FALL IN LOVE?
- CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FIRST KISS?
- WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST SERIOUS RELATIONSHIP?
- DO YOU EVER THINK ABOUT PREVIOUS LOVERS?
- WHAT LESSONS HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM YOUR RELATIONSHIPS?
- WHO WERE THE "ONES THAT GOT AWAY" IN YOUR LIFE?
- WHAT WAS THE HARDEST BREAK UP YOU'VE EVER EXPERIENCED?
- DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR FIRST DATE? HOW YOU ASKED THEM OUT?
- WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUNG COUPLES?
- DID YOU EVER GET ENGAGED? HOW DID YOU/YOUR PARTNER PROPOSE?
- DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITE STORIES FROM YOUR MARRIAGE OR ABOUT YOUR SPOUSE/PARTNER?

QUESTION GUIDE

GREAT QUESTIONS FOR SERIOUS ILLNESS

- CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOUR ILLNESS?
- DO YOU THINK ABOUT DYING? ARE YOU SCARED?
- HOW DO YOU IMAGINE YOUR DEATH?
- DO YOU BELIEVE IN AN AFTER-LIFE?
- DO YOU REGRET ANYTHING?
- DO YOU LOOK AT YOUR LIFE DIFFERENTLY NOW THAN BEFORE YOU WERE DIAGNOSED?
- DO YOU HAVE ANY LAST WISHES?
- IF YOU WERE TO GIVE ADVICE TO ME OR OTHERS IN OUR FAMILY, WHAT WOULD IT BE?
- WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM LIFE? THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS?
- HAS THIS ILLNESS CHANGED YOU? WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?
- HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE REMEMBERED?

GREAT QUESTIONS FOR FAMILY HERITAGE

- WHERE ARE YOUR PARENTS' FAMILIES FROM?
- HAVE YOU EVER BEEN THERE? WHAT WAS THAT EXPERIENCE LIKE?
- WHAT TRADITIONS HAVE BEEN PASSED DOWN IN YOUR FAMILY?
- WHO WERE YOUR FAVORITE RELATIVES?
- DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE STORIES THEY USED TO TELL YOU?
- WHAT ARE THE CLASSIC FAMILY STORIES? JOKES? SONGS?

GREAT QUESTIONS FOR WORKING

- DESCRIBE THE WORK THAT YOU DO.
- TELL ME ABOUT HOW YOU GOT INTO YOUR LINE OF WORK.
- DO YOU LIKE YOUR JOB?
- WHAT DID YOU THINK YOU WERE GOING TO BE WHEN YOU GREW UP?
- WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GREW UP?
- WHAT LESSONS HAS YOUR WORK LIFE TAUGHT YOU?
- IF YOU COULD DO ANYTHING NOW, WHAT WOULD YOU DO? WHY?
- DO YOU PLAN ON RETIRING? IF SO, WHEN? HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT IT?
- DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITE STORIES FROM YOUR WORK LIFE?

QUESTION GUIDE

GREAT QUESTIONS FOR REMEMBERING A LOVED ONE

- WHAT WAS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO _____?
- TELL ME ABOUT _____.
- WHAT IS YOUR FIRST MEMORY OF _____?
- WHAT IS YOUR BEST MEMORY OF _____?
- WHAT IS YOUR MOST VIVID MEMORY OF _____?
- WHAT DID _____ MEAN TO YOU?
- ARE YOU COMFORTABLE/ CAN YOU TALK ABOUT _____'S DEATH? HOW DID _____ DIE?
- WHAT HAS BEEN THE HARDEST THING ABOUT LOSING _____?
- WHAT WOULD YOU ASK _____ IF _____ WERE HERE TODAY?
- WHAT DO YOU MISS MOST ABOUT _____?
- HOW DO YOU THINK _____ WOULD WANT TO BE REMEMBERED?
- CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE BIGGEST OBSTACLES _____ OVERCOME IN LIFE?
- WAS THERE ANYTHING YOU AND _____ DISAGREED ABOUT, FOUGHT OVER, OR EXPERIENCED SOME CONFLICT AROUND?
- WHAT ABOUT _____ MAKES YOU SMILE?
- WHAT WAS YOUR RELATIONSHIP LIKE?
- WHAT DID _____ LOOK LIKE?
- DID YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITE JOKES _____ USED TO TELL?
- DO YOU HAVE ANY STORIES YOU WANT TO SHARE ABOUT _____?
- WHAT WERE _____'S HOPES AND DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE?
- IS THERE SOMETHING ABOUT _____ THAT YOU THINK NO ONE ELSE KNOWS?
- HOW ARE YOU DIFFERENT NOW THAN YOU WERE BEFORE YOU LOST _____?
- WHAT IS THE IMAGE OF _____ THAT PERSISTS?
- DO YOU HAVE ANY TRADITIONS TO HONOR _____?
- WHAT HAS HELPED YOU THE MOST IN YOUR GRIEF?
- WHAT ARE THE HARDEST TIMES?

QUESTION GUIDE



**Choose your questions
and write them down
here!**

A spiral-bound notebook page with 15 horizontal lines for writing. The spiral binding is on the left side.

QUESTION GUIDE



**Choose your questions
and write them down
here!**

A spiral-bound notebook page with 15 horizontal lines for writing. The spiral binding is on the left side. The page is cream-colored and has rounded corners. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page.



Frequently Asked Questions



FAQ

HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH A PARTNER WHO JUST DOESN'T WANT TO TALK?

Before you think that your partner is simply silent, consider the questions that you're asking. Are you respecting what they want to talk about? It's always best to find out about touchy subjects beforehand, but if they hadn't mentioned anything beforehand and during the interview they aren't talking about a particular subject, perhaps there's a reason. When someone is hesitant to talk about something, check in with them first and check yourself—are you trying to get them to talk about something they aren't comfortable with? It's important to remember that anything a person wants to share with you, even if you wanted to ask about something else, is a story. While they might not want to talk about wars or important historical events in their life, the hobbies they have, the music they like, and the games they played growing up all tell a story.

If they still don't want to talk, or perhaps were always reluctant, consider that you may have hit a sore spot and it may be best to talk about lighter things. If even that doesn't work, consider taking a step back for the day and try another day. Remember that these conversations are relationship building and trust building within themselves. This means you also must trust yourself, and gauge what is comfortable for your partner—you can certainly just ask them too! You can also consider if they would do better talking to another person they're close to, or if you should work with them over more time.

HOW DO I MAKE SURE THAT THESE CONVERSATIONS ARE PRESERVED AND REMEMBERED?

Try referring to the Digitization section of our workbook (see page 91) for preservation methods! There are many ways, depending on your goals, that you can address preserving and sharing the conversations you have recorded. If you're looking for a way to create a shareable, digestible overview of what you can take away from your conversations, look to our Oral History – Making Connections section (page 66).

FAQ

WHAT IF I HAVE OR MY PARTNER HAS SPEECH ISSUES/ACCESS NEEDS THAT MAKE RECORDING A CONVERSATION DIFFICULT?

When considering your own and your partners' access needs, if speaking is an issue, consider how to record conversations as you would have them in your daily lives. You can always have multiple shorter recorded conversations with your partner, or use a video recording to record American Sign Language, or if you know who you would like to hear the story of but you wouldn't be comfortable speaking together, you can pass this guide on to someone who they might have a more comfortable conversation with. If there are further access issues, written histories are always an option as well, and many of the same ideas apply.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE GOOD QUESTIONS?

Step one is don't overthink it—ask the questions that speak to you and that feel comfortable to your partner, and remember that every conversation has a story. If you're not happy with your conversation or want to learn more, remember you can always schedule another conversation and talk with them again!

WHAT IF I WANT A MORE FACTUAL HISTORY?

If you want a more document-based history, you should probably consider that oral histories might not quite be what you're aiming for. Oral histories are dependent on human memory, which can easily shift and change over time and can often be very inaccurate. But oral histories can get to the emotional core and personal impact of historical events, and are still a great starting point to do further research. Just make sure you ask questions that will help point you in the right direction.

Finding Aid





Creating a Finding Aid



What is a finding aid?

A finding aid is a helpful tool and can be an excel spreadsheet, table, or just a set of columns in a notebook. Finding aids list objects and files along with information about location, preservation needs, background history, and other notes. Finding aids can help you understand your collection of physical belongings and oral histories and can help you locate them. They also help others to easily navigate the contents and context of the storage. A professional finding aid can consist of any and all pieces of information relevant to the collection.

Making it easy for you

Start a Tab! As you create your finding aid, create a secondary document like an excel sheet or a folder that helps identify items that may need new storage, items that have some damage, and questions that might pop up like "who was this person", "where did they live before/after this", etc. Creating this tab allows you to create a running list of new things to start or begin next!

What do I put in a finding aid?

The related history, people, information, details about the person like their hobbies (i.e. sewing, photography, wood work, etc), specific event or time period, school, etc.


Why should you making a finding aid?

Creating findings aids for your family history is a way to ensure that your family history is easier to navigate without you. Filling out a finding aid is also a great way to consolidate information and better understand the extent of your family history.

Your finding aid can be as extensive or as simple as you would like. Think of finding aids as road maps for anyone to be able to gain insight on relevant information topics, quickly glance at the physical/digital items you have, and locate or figure out where the items are.

Finding aids can include background history, family history, object name/type, storage location, physical description, size, dimensions, photos, documents, textiles, and other objects connected to the topic.

Where does a finding aid go?



Use digital suites like Excel, Google Drive, etc. These can be helpful for keeping your information accessible and easily shareable.

Creating Your Finding Aid

Suggested Outline

Title:

Create a title that clearly states what the subject matter is of the Finding Aid.

Date Span:

This should be the date ranges that the subject consists of.

Location:

This should be the location that the subject/topic takes place, if multiple then list each.

Subject Terms:

These are terms associated with the finding aid subject matter. These can be organizations, geographical names, subjects, etc.

Background History:

Create a biographical note about the persons involved in this finding aid. This can provide background history on the persons as well as the physical belongings, oral histories, or materials that included. This section can always be a work in progress and a place to list future questions to research or notes to yourself.

Storage Location & Arrangement:

Note where the current storage location is for the materials, if they are being kept in multiple areas or different homes then note those areas/persons. Also include the date you are noting these locations.

Inventory of the contents of the collection:

The inventory is the list of the collection, belongings or materials. This is best kept in an Excel sheet or similar format.

Finding Aid Archives Example

Title: Leesha & Phil's Wedding

Date Span: August 15th, 1997

Location: Stir Crazy Filipino Restaurant in Great Falls, MT

Subject Terms: Wedding, Stir Crazy, Procopio, Jordan

Background History: Leesha Jordan and Felipe Procopio were married on August 15th, 1997 at their family owned Filipino restaurant “Stir Crazy” in Great Fall, MT. Their wedding was attended by their children Phillip (13), Nichole (11), Brittany (9) and Karissa Procopio (1), as well as family and friends from the community. (List friends from guest book)

Storage Location & Arrangement:

Filing cabinet 4, hall closet, downstairs wall, blue photo box and yellow album, maybe attic?

Inventory of the contents of the collection:

- **Categories to include**

- Belonging type
- # of belongings
- Storage location
- Brief description
- Condition
- Tasks to do with belonging
- Any related links relevant to the inventory list

Beloning Type:	# Of Belongings:	Location:	Description:	Condition:	Tasks:
Certificate	1	Filing Cabinet 4	Wedding Certificate,	good	n/a
Printed Photos	55+	Blue photo Box & Yellow Album	Photos of wedding Ceremony & After Party	fair some yellowing and glue on back	rehouse or clean
Canvas Photos	2	On basemnet wall	Photos of wedding Ceremony & After Party	good	n/a
Audograph ed Group Photo	1	On basemnet wall	Group photo of all wedding attendents	good, some fading ink	DIY rehouse the photo
Guest Book	1	Filing Cabinet 4	signatures & messages from all the guests at attendance	good, some fading ink	Interweave paper, digitize book
Wedding Dress & Accessorie s	5	Downstairs Hall Closet	wedding dress worn for the ceremony & after party	good, some yellowing and torn beads	n/a, maybe recreate/reinvent for future kid weddings
Wedding Tux	3	Downstairs Hall Closet	Tux worn for the ceremony & after party	good	n/a, maybe recreate/reinvent for future kid weddings
Dried Flowers	10-15	Blue photo box in envelope	Dried flowers of wedding flowers	Fair, getting brittle	Figure out if its better to hydrate them then restore them?

Finding Aid Textile Example

Title: Drag Persona 'Vanity'

Date Span: 2005-2021

Location: California, Montana

Subject Terms: Drag, glamour, performance, big queen

Background History: Vanity was created in 2005 in Southern California. She became the embodiment of glamour. She is best known for her sharp and extravagant wigs, thicc padding, choreographed performances of lips syncs and live singing performances. She brings high couture outfits to fierce and strong music styles.

Storage Location & Arrangement:

Storage closet and attic.

Inventory of the contents of the collection:

- **Categories to include**

- Belonging type
- # of belongings
- Storage location
- Brief description
- Condition
- Tasks to do with belonging
- Any related links relevant to the inventory list

Belonging Type:	# Of Belongings:	Location:	Description:	Condition:	Tasks:
Wigs	8	closet	wigs worn from 2015-2023	good	Kind of getting stinky
Dresses	15	boxes in closet & garment bag	Dresses worn from 2010-2013	good	reorganize
Hip pads	9	trunk in attic	hand shaped pads	bad	unsure what to do with the ones that smell-- maybe recreate
Photos	50+	yellow and red photo boxes	photos of performances, unsure of when?	unsure	need to process and orgnaize photos

Finding Aid Oral History Example

Topic: Early Immigration Stories

Date Span: 1958-1970

Location: Shanghai, Guangdong Province, Hong Kong, and New York

Subject Terms: Love, immigration, Sun, Chung

Background History: Boo Boo (Grandma) and Gong Gong (Grandpa) left for Hong Kong while it was a British colony amid political turmoil in China. They met there, started a family, then immigrated to the United States. In the following conversations, they talk about how they met, fell in love, built a family together, and made it work during all of the changes their lives took on.

Storage Location & Arrangement:

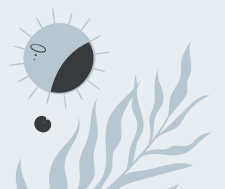
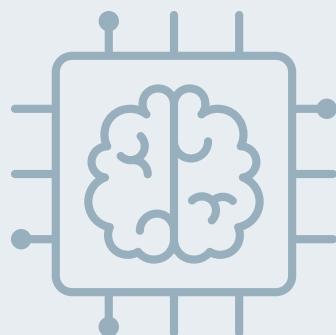
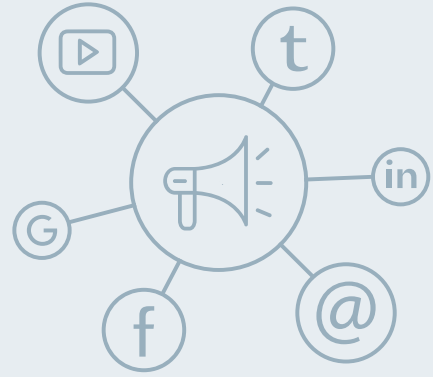
Digital files, one file each on the desktop, the blue USB, and Google Drive.

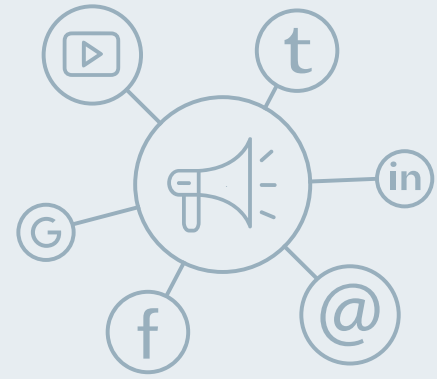
Inventory of the contents of the collection:

- **Categories to include**

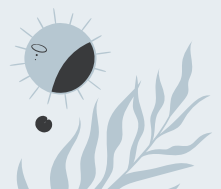
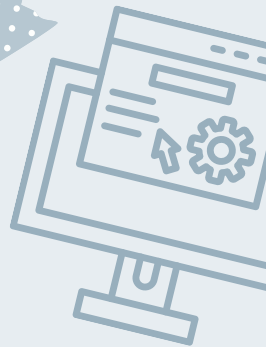
- Interviewee's Name
- Relationship
- File Name
- Description
- Transcription + File Name
- Digital Locations
- Time

Interviewee	Relationship	File Name	Description	Transcription + File Name	Digital Location 1	Digital Location 2	Digital Location 3	Time (min)
Alice Chung (Ah Boo)	Maternal Grandmother	ahboo_3_13_2021.mp3	Ah Boo speaks about meeting Gong Gong in Hong Kong	ahboo_3_13_transcript.pdf	ORAL HISTORY USB → Family → Ah Boo → ahboo_3_13.mp3 and ahboo_3_13_transcript.pdf	DESKTOP → Oral History Folder → Family → Ah Boo → ahboo_3_13_2021.mp3	GOOGLE DRIVE → Oral History Folder → Family → Ah Boo → ahboo_3_13.mp3 and ahboo_3_13_transcript.pdf	42:31:00
Ronald Sun (Ah Gong)	Maternal Grandfather	gong_gong_11_1_21.mp3	Gong Gong speaks about how he proposed, falling in love, and raising a family in the U.S.	TO OBTAIN	ORAL HISTORY USB → Family → Ah Gong → gong_gong_11_1_21mp3	DESKTOP → Oral History Folder → Family → Ah Gong → gong_gong_11_1_21mp3	GOOGLE DRIVE → Oral History Folder → Family → Ah Gong → gong_gong_11_1_21mp3	57:06:00
Ginger Sun	Mother	ginger_sun_7_12_2019.mp3	Mom talks about first years in the U.S. and what she admired in her parents' relationship amid hardship.	ginger_sun_7_12_2019_trans.pdf	ORAL HISTORY USB → Family → Mom → ginger_sun_7_12_2019.mp3 and ginger_sun_7_12_2019_trans.pdf	DESKTOP → Oral History Folder → Family → Mom → ginger_sun_7_12_2019.mp3 and ginger_sun_7_12_2019_trans.pdf	GOOGLE DRIVE → Oral History Folder → Family → Mom → ginger_sun_7_12_2019.mp3 and ginger_sun_7_12_2019_trans.pdf	48:29:00





Digitization



Digitization

What is digitization?

Digitization can be many different actions--but all of them are done with the aim to ensure access to digital materials over time. That way, even if we encounter unexpected issues in preservation, disasters, or other unforeseen circumstances, we can still have access to the memories and memorabilia we have preserved for years to come. This also involves planning and using preservation methods and technologies to ensure that collections can always be accessed, regardless of changes to technology.

Why digitize?

While this may feel like the place to stop, digitization may in fact be the most important part of preserving the memories you have made.

Even when physical preservation methods fail us, digitizing and maintaining digital upkeep can make your memories and memorabilia last far past their prime.

Do I need to digitize myself?

Yes and no—it depends on your needs! There are in fact many companies that will digitize your collections for you, especially photographs. Most companies will do so at a (hefty) price, though it may be worth it to check in your area.

How do I digitize?

It is worth noting that, if you have the interest and budget, there are many digitization tools with which you can ensure the quality of your preservation, and will be included in the Resources section (see page 99) if you would like to explore them!

But as many of these resources are made for professional archivists, they're quite complex for the average home-archivist to tackle. You can certainly make do with a scanner, a camera, a home computer or laptop, an Excel or other spreadsheet, and access to a web-based drive or "cloud". There are three basic principles to follow.

1. The first principle of digitization is to follow the 3-2-1 rule: There should ideally be 3 copies of the data, stored on 2 different media, with at least 1 stored off-site or in the "cloud". Your other media could be anything you like—like a folder on your personal computer, a flash drive, and a "cloud", or any similar combination thereof.
2. Anything you wanted to preserve physically while working through the previous sections of this book, you will want to preserve digitally. While you should prioritize what you want to digitize first, if you want to preserve it, digitization should be included in that.
3. Anything can be digitized! Well, you of course can't digitize your grandfather's woodwork, but you can and should keep digital records of it. Check our Finding Aid section (see page 84), as you will want to keep a digital finding aid or update your current finding aids to include your digital files.

Storage

Digital storage can take many different forms, and you have to keep track of yours. In the past, common digital storage has included tape recordings and floppy disks, and within the last 30 years has moved entirely to storage locations like Google Drive or the Apple iCloud.

Digital formats are constantly changing, and a crucial part of digitization is continuing to ensure that your file types keep up with contemporary digital storage even after you first digitize them. Someone might have preserved their collections in the 1990s using a disk operating system, but if they have never updated it since, while it was “digitized” it is still inaccessible as disk operating systems are obsolete. Make sure that your files are updated, moved properly, and remain uncorrupted, and continue to check and update over time. Here are the bare bones basics:

Digital Storage:

A collection of files that has been digitally preserved and is accessible on the internet or through software. May contain manuscripts, newspapers, books, journals, images, audio, and video.

Challenges to Digital Storage:

Even after digitization, failure of media and changes to technology can make digital storage difficult, and every digitization journey is unique. While it's no secret that the film on your 20-year-old-plus camcorder may be difficult to digitize into modern computer files, it's also important to remember to update your current files as technological change is happening before they become obsolete in 20 years.

TERMINOLOGY

Born Digital

If something was “born digital” that means that it is not based on a digital version of a physical object, but was “born” and exists as a digital file. For example, any new Microsoft Word document you write up is born digital, whereas a handwritten journal entry is not. If you record your oral history through an app or software on your phone or computer, it will be born digital.

Digitized

If something is not already born digital, it can be digitized. Something is digitized by transferring the physical belongings and/or oral histories informational value onto a digital file. For example, that handwritten journal entry? It can be photographed, scanned, and transcribed into a Microsoft Word document and saved digitally. All physical belongings can at least be photographed, uploaded using the 3-2-1 method, and those files can be noted in your Finding Aid (see page 84.) So get started!



Creating a Disaster Response Plan!



You can't stop what you don't know, but you can take some precautions for when the unexpected happens!

Disaster Response Plan

Preparedness:

ASSESSMENT

Let's assess the risk:

- Are your physical belongings stored in a safe location? (See page 17.)
- Have you arranged all of your most valuable physical belongings in one area for easy evacuation?
- Do you have digital backups of oral histories and digital belongings? (See page 91.)

PRIORITIZE

After your risk assessment:

- Prioritize your biggest worries and start planning ways to prepare
- Prioritize digitization for already very delicate belongings
- Prioritize recording oral histories while you still have the time and people available to you

PREPARE

Now with your priorities:

- Prepare action steps to address your priorities
- Prepare a list of contacts who can access your collections and digitize videos, journals, scrap books, etc.
- Prepare a list of contacts with historians, collection managers, librarians, and family members that may be helpful in recovery

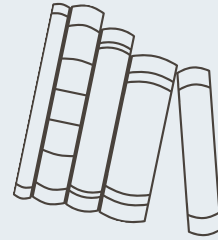
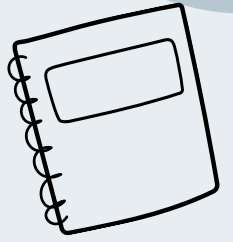
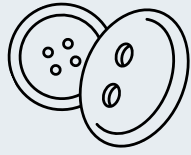
Response:

- 1. Your safety** is also number one! Do not risk your safety!
- 2. Ask professionals** before trying to salvage to ensure you are taking the correct precautions for water, fire, or chemical hazards.
- 3. Call** in your friends, family, and community to help process and assess your damages once cleared safe.

Recovery:

1. Recovering the loss or damage when a disaster hits is an incredibly difficult! Give yourself grace on being able to respond or jump straight into recovery.
2. Try to identify community resources that may lend help in providing resources for restoration or conservation for physical belongings.
3. Utilize the time to obtain new histories, oral histories or the chance to remember, revitalize, or recreate what was too damaged.





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