

# Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

## WHAT'S YOUR STORY? THE GEORGIA O'KEEFFE MUSEUM RESEARCH CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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### ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT BEGINNING AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT? Here are some things to consider!

*Conduct a self-study and examine your institution before embarking on the project.*

- What is your institution's purpose and goals?
- What is the relationship between your archive and your larger institution?
- Is your archive organized around formats or topics?
- What types of resources do you have in terms of personnel, technology, finances, and physical space?
- Is the legal paperwork in place for an oral history project?
- How will the collection be tracked and cataloged?
- How many oral histories do you anticipate will be acquired each year?
- What kinds of recording media do you/will you have in the collection?
- Will you transcribe your oral histories?

*Establish the purpose of the interviews.*

- For example, the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum is interested in topics that include Georgia O'Keeffe's role in her community, her artistic practice, and her aesthetic.
- What type of interview will be utilized? A private interview for recollecting past events? A group interview to discuss and recount the lives of family or community members? A targeted and detailed interview about a specific aspect of an individual's life?

### *Legal considerations.*

- The importance of a legal consent form which transfers the ownership from the speaker and interviewer to the archives or to the project.
- Transferring the copyright to the archives makes it convenient for future users to access and quote from the interviews without tracking down the original creators for permission.
- Including a clause that exempts the speaker and interviewer from copyright restrictions continues their rights to use their own words for future published or produced works.
- Restrictions imposed by the speaker and interviewer are hard to manage in archives.

### *Other considerations.*

- The physical space of the collection, as well as its virtual/electronic space.
- Rights management such as restrictions, intellectual property rights, permissions for usage.
- Preservation issues and quality of the recordings.
- Guidelines and standards for consistency in transcribing the interviews.
- Access via transcripts and audio recordings.
- Outreach, publications, displays, and online exhibitions.

### *Oral history in Museum Interpretation.*

- Museums traditionally focused on the primacy of the object – i.e. a Georgia O’Keeffe painting, her paint brushes, or her letters.
- Museums, including the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, are moving towards more contextualization and increased storytelling. The oral history is a tool that fits into this museum-wide trend.
- In exhibitions, oral histories provide additional context and utilize another channel for conveying information if your institution is ready to display such content.
- Oral histories reach museum visitors who are attracted to the “people” element.
- Oral histories provide a deeper dive for those who want to learn more about the subject matter and extend the visitor experience through such vehicles as the Museum website.

### *Oral history as primary sources.*

- Oral histories open up the historic process.
- With conflicting narratives and many versions of a story, researchers have to evaluate sources and think about issues of authority.
- Oral histories can be utilized as a teaching resource for students to evaluate primary source materials.
- With multiple viewpoints from many different types of individuals, oral histories democratize the historical narrative.

Any questions?  
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