THE TRANSVERSAL ORAL HISTORY FRAMEWORK OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND SPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of oral sources features prominently amongst the critical developments in the South African historiography during the twentieth century. This development permeated from academy to public institutions and sites of memory such as museums, archives, libraries, heritage institutions, etc. Oral history has become a transformational mechanism through which past imbalances are addressed, as well as a therapeutical mechanism to deal with South Africa's turbulent past.

The proliferation of oral history methodology influenced various components of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport and other departments of the Western Cape Government to utilize oral history in order to accomplish their mandates and to ensure that their work was not divorced from current societal and academic patterns. While the use of oral history is well defined and structured in the academic environment, this has not come into fruition in the public domain in South Africa. As a result museums, archives and other institutions have not developed a framework to guide the production, utilization and storage of oral history material. The recording, storing and subsequent use of oral history by components of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport and other Departments of Government of the Western Cape has been largely haphazard, in certain instances incoherent, and not effective. This has resulted in a situation where oral history materials are not shared within the department and with other stakeholders. Issues of ownership, copyright and storage remain extremely obscure and unmanageable in terms of the records management regulations, the Western Cape Provincial Archives Act (Act 3 of 2005) and the National Archives of South Africa Act (Act 43 of 1996).

Oral history in South Africa is broadly categorized within the realm of living tradition. Sometimes this is referred to as living heritage or oral traditions. The South African National Archives has developed a database of oral interviews which contains useful information concerning their repository and main areas of the interview. While this demonstrates a certain level of coordination, more support and coordination is required from provinces in order for this database to maximize its potential.

This document aims to provide a strategic framework, develop minimum standards and guidelines for staff who are conducting oral history and processes associated with it; clarify the roles that various departments play in oral history processes; establish a transversal framework that regulates legalities that are associated with the oral history recording; and to establish a provincial database of oral histories which is linked to the National Automated Archival Information Retrieval System (NAAIRS) of the National Archives of South Africa.

This document is not intended to become a teaching tool on how to do oral history. Instead it will provide the minimum guidelines and ethical standards that must be adhered to when conducting oral history. It is essential for a document of this nature to take cognizance of South Africa's historical and socio-political context. Thus this framework uses the premise that the Western Cape's historical landscape is in a post-apartheid era. Therefore, those working in the field of oral history are often likely to deal with interviewees who are living with painful emotions and memories about the painful events of their past.   In addition, aspects of the history of some communities are still a matter of contestation and vigorous debate.

1.1 What is Oral History?

Oral history is a process where information is elicited through interviewing a person about his or her memories of past experiences. Field (2007: 3) defines oral history as a research methodology that records stories drawn from living memory. Vansina (1985: 12) defines oral history as reminiscences, hearsay, or eyewitness accounts about events and situations which are contemporary, that is, which occurred during the lifetime of the informant. He further draws a distinction between oral history and oral traditions. This is vital since the two terms are often used interchangeably as if they have similar meanings. Vansina states that while oral history is contemporary, oral tradition is no longer contemporary. Oral traditions have passed from mouth to mouth, for a period beyond the lifetime of the informants (Vansina 1985: 13). Vansina further argues that oral history and oral traditions are very different with regard to its sources as well as their analysis. Oral historians interview participants in recent or very recent events, often of a dramatic nature, when historical consciousness in the communities involved is still in flux.

Oral history as a methodology to research the past can be subjected to various ideological viewpoints. In the South African context, oral history has been widely interpreted within the post-colonial, liberatory and post-modernist epistemologies. This has positioned oral history as part of the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and its influence on liberating the voices of the narrators is emphasized. It is against this background that interviewees are sometimes regarded as grass-roots intellectuals. While this framework does not intend to legitimise a particular ideological viewpoint, it seeks to provide guidelines to protect both parties' intellectual property and copyrights. The framework empowers interviewees from being mere subjects of the interview processes and elevates their role in the production of historical discourse.

2. LEGISLATIVE MANDATES AND POLICY ENVIRONMENT

The White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage (1996) asserts that "attention to living heritage is of paramount importance for the reconstruction and development process in South Africa. The means must be found to enable song, dance, story-telling and oral history to be permanently recorded and conserved in the formal heritage structure."[1] It is this policy position that requires institutional mechanisms so that oral histories can be integrated into conventional knowledge management systems of the Western Cape Government.

South Africa has ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage which includes the protection of the following:
- Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- Performing arts;
- Social practices, rituals and festive events;
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and
- Traditional craftsmanship.

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[1] White paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Pretoria, 1996.

While South Africa has no legislation or policy that regulates the production, management and utilisation of oral history the following statutes have a direct impact on oral history:

- Culture Promotion Act, Act No. 35 of 1983)
- Culture Promotion Amendment Act (Act No. 59 of 1998)
- National Archives and Records Service of South Africa, 1996 (ActNo. 43 of 1996)
- National Heritage Council Act, 1999 (Act No.11 of 1999)
- Copyright Act, 1978 (Act No. 98 of 1978)
- Legal Deposit Act, 1997 (Act No. 54 of 1997)
- Western Cape Archives and Records Service Act, 2005 (Act No. 3 of 2005)
- National Library of South Africa Act, 1998 (Act No. 92 of 1998)
- National Heritage Resources Act, 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999)
- Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act No. 2 of 2000
- Protection of Personal Information Act, 2014 (Act No. 4 of 2014)

The following policies play a vital role in regulating Oral History practices:

- White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, 1996
- National Policy of South Africa Living Heritage, 2009
- National Policy on the Digitization of Heritage Resources, 2010
- Library and Information Services (LIS) Transformation Charter, 2009

3. MINIMUM STANDARDS OF CONDUCTING ORAL HISTORY FOR PROJECTS AND STAFF EMPLOYED BY THE WESTERN CAPE GOVERNMENT

Oral history projects of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport shall comply with the following minimum standards. No deviation without the approval of the Heads of Archives and Museum Services will be permitted. These standards are developed to ensure that material gathered during oral history projects can be properly referenced, researched and can form a substantial part in a publication of any form.

3.1 ROLE OF THE WESTERN CAPE ARCHIVES AND REPOSITORY SERVICES

The role of archivists as curators of collections or keepers of records is central to the oral history project. It is however essential to point out that this document does not intend to minimize the role of the Archives and is written at a time when debates about the role of the Archives in oral history have permeated all spheres of the archives services. It is also essential to be mindful of another school of thought that positions the Archives as places of historical research or cultural conservation, which emerges above arbitrary linear boundaries of the world of knowledge management that precludes the archives from participating in the creation of records. It is indeed undisputed that archivists possess the most knowledge about the collections' deficiencies and can best fill in gaps (Riemer 1981: 33).

Given the current distribution of material resources, the Western Cape Archives and Records Service does not have the required expertise to fill the gaps. Therefore, its role shall be in the provision of storage, conservation and management of the oral histories that are collected by other components. The Western Cape Archives and Records Services shall become the official repository of all original oral history material collected by staff of the Western Cape Government. It shall be responsible for storage, conservation and management of access, intellectual property and copyright of oral histories.

3.2 EQUIPMENT TO USE FOR RECORDING ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

All oral history interviews should be recorded with a digital voice recorder or a video recorder that is able to produce a digital master of the best quality and highest resolution possible to ensure that the recording could be preserved over a long period. The specifications of voice or video recorders and the relevant software used in these recordings shouldbe logged on the digital voice laboratory of the Archives Services when the recordings are submitted to the Archives Service.

3.3 PHOTOGRAPHS OF INTERVIEWEES

All interviewees should be photographed. Two (2) high definition portrait photographs of interviewees should be submitted to the Archives Service.

In the event where an interviewee refuses to be photographed, a note should be recorded indicating that the interviewee has declined to be photographed. Care should be taken to obtain sufficient information about the interviewee to identify the person in future, e.g. identification number or full names.

3.4 TRANSCRIBING OF ORAL INTERVIEWS

All oral history interviews must be transcribed. It is the researcher's responsibility to transcribe the oral interviews and submit the transcription together with the recorded interview to the Western Cape Archives.

3.5 TRANSLATION OF THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Where appropriate and necessary, the Language Service of the Department shall be requested to translate interview transcripts in order to ensure that they are available in at least two official languages of the Western Cape.

3.6 DEVELOPMENT OF THE WESTERN CAPE ORAL HISTORY DATABASE

The Western Cape Archives Service shall develop and maintain the database of oral history interviews and link it to the existing national database of oral interviews. Transcripts of such interviews are to be made accessible electronically.

3.7 RESTRICTED ACCESS

Certain informants might want access to their interviews to be restricted. In certain instances the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport may decide that restrictions be imposed on certain materials in terms of the Western Cape Archives and Records Service Act. Proper channels to access these interviews shall be established through PAIA and POPI.

4. PHASES INVOLVED IN ORAL HISTORY

Oral history involves various processes that are all important for a particular story to live in the narrative domain. It is pertinent to point out that oral history processes involve phases that make the story lose its oral nature when it is transcribed into a document that gets classified in the archives or library. Any component of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport involved in oral history must adhere to the following phases:[2]

4.1 PRE-INTERVIEW PHASE
This phase involves the following stages:

4.1.1 Identifying the need to conduct an interview:

It is important that before any researcher embarks on an oral history project proper planning is done. This should include forecasting of possible outcomes, availability of interviewees for your area of interest and availability of resources and support. Where necessary, approval from a member of a Senior Management Service or the Head of Department may be required, depending on the nature of the subject.

4.1.2 Identifying potential interviewees:

Before you start the interviewing process a researcher must decide on who they are going to interview. This list cannot be fixed as it might snowball during the process. Field (2007:9) believes that usually there are more people to interview than there is time and resources available. It is therefore vital that

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[2] It is essential to point out that the abstract and technical phase overlaps. Any researcher contemplating to conduct oral history interviews must use his or her discretion to employ these phase and stages.

choices be made about interviewees. He further provides the following guidelines on the selection of interviewees:

- How many years have they lived in a particular community;
- How many years have they worked (associated with) on a particular site (subject);
- Will you select an equal number of male and female interviewees;
- Will you select interviewees according to race, ethnicity and culture; and
- Will you select interviewees according to their class or economic position.

4.1.3 Desktop research of written sources (including any previous interviews given by the same person or the same subject):

Hoopes (1979:72) argues that interviews should be honest, accurate, and searching. Too often the interviewee is not challenged or not allowed to speak freely because the interviewer does not know enough about the subject to ask intelligent questions or to recognize significant answers. Hence the importance of desktop or preliminary research on the subject of your interview is crucial so that a researcher is not only familiar with the subject but can also ask relevant questions.

Background research also enhances the researcher's efficiency. Having a limited amount of time with the interviewee, you do not want to spend it learning information that you can acquire elsewhere, before the interview. Furthermore, if the researcher has not done extensive research on the subject this limits the interview as it is bound to become more of a series of superficial questions and answers. This further limits the interview process as the research in unable to ask follow-ups questions based on the existing literature. Thorough background research makes it possible to recognize misleading or incorrect information or, dishonesty and instances of poor memory in an interviewee's answers.

Often, different researchers interview the same person on the same subject. This is due to the dearth of a coordinated and updated database of oral histories in South Africa. As stated above, this framework envisages to ensure that it provides such a service against the backdrop of digitization of the Archives Service in the province and nationally. Once this tool is available it will give researchers access to all oral histories that have been conducted in the Western Cape.

4.1.4 Developing questions or guides:

The interview can be a densely demanding and overwhelming process. It is therefore crucial to ensure that, before the interview, a researcher is well prepared and develops a set of questions or an interview guide. This may involve key issues the researcher wants to concentrate on and key historical aspects. The following are key aspects when asking questions:

- Questions should be simple and not too short;
- They should consist of a mixture of closed and open ended questions;
- Avoid leading questions;
- Avoid asking more than one question at a time;
- Avoid longwinded, abstract and academic questions;
- Researchers should remain neutral and not take ideological or political sides;
- Researchers must speak a simple language that is at a level of the interviewee; and
- Where possible, interviewees must be interviewed in a language of their own choice, unless they indicate their ability to be interviewed in another language.

4.1.5 Setting up the interview:

For any oral history project to be successful it must be treated with respect, especially those people whose history is being recorded. Therefore, it is essential that a project is introduced to an appropriate level of authority within a community or family. To a certain extent, the researcher should be mindful of the Promotion of Access to Information Act regulations, especially if

9

a researcher intends to use certain documents that relate to a history of a family or individual. Given the historical dynamics in South Africa, it is the responsibility of a researcher to develop a relationship of trust with his or her potential interviewees. When approaching potential interviewees, Field (2007: 11, 2010: 09) lists the following issues to be taken into consideration when setting up the interview:

4.1.5.1 Introduce yourself clearly: It is important to tell a person you are interviewing your full names and names that people call you. If this is not done when an interviewee hears it he/she might be uncomfortable or suspicious. Tell the interviewee what organization you represent and why such work is important.

4.1.5.2 Describe your project: Inform your interviewee of the nature of your project and its potential spin-offs. If the interview will inform a publication, ensure that the interviewee is made aware and clarify intellectual property and copyright issues. If need be, stress the fact that the project will contribute to shared history and add value to the heritage of the Western Cape.

4.1.5.3 Explain the methodology of interviewing: In order to ensure that potential interviews participate actively in the project it is important that they do not perceive an oral interview as intimidating. It is the responsibility of a researcher to explain the methodology. The researcher's emphasis should be on recording stories in a very relaxed and gentle manner. Field (2007: 12) and Hoopes (1979: 85) both agree that oral history interviews are about giving ordinary people a safe space to tell their stories. It is important that a researcher explains to an interviewee that he or she will use a voice or video recorder.

4.1.5.4 Decide on Anonymity and Confidentiality: The researcher should ensure that the permission to use the interviewee's name is granted (appendix A). Steinberg (2002:7) argues that it is essential, since

10

some interviewees might want to contribute to the project but remain anonymous. This may depend on the sensitivity of the project and level of access to the interview.

4.1.5.5 Establish the language to be used during the interview: Since a language carries ideological sentiments, it is essential to ensure that the interviewee is comfortable with the language to be used in the interview. The medium to be used should not be imposed on the interviewee. If the language to be used is not the interviewee's first language, consent must be granted to use a second language. If the interviewee chooses a language that is not understood by the researcher, the Department's language services must be consulted to offer translation during the interview.

4.1.5.6 Describe the Release Form to be signed at the end of the interview: The release form is a mechanism to obtain agreement from the interviewee to transfer copyright to the organization which is represented by the interviewer. It is the responsibility of a researcher to explain to the interviewee that at the end of the interview this form will be signed. The interviewee is not obliged to accede to the transfer of his or copyright to the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport. He or she may decide to grant use permission for a special project but not fully copyright. This must be respected.

4.1.5.7 Finalizing the appointment (date, venue and time): The interview time, date and venue must be negotiated with the interviewee. Where the interviewer requires that the interview must be conducted at a place that might require transport and logistics arrangements, the interviewer must be in a position to provide these. The time, date and venue must suit both parties. The interview's length shall be determined by the nature of questions and the ability of both parties. The interview subject might require

11

the interview to be conducted more than once. This must be clarified to the interviewee in advance.

4.1.5.8 Preparing the audio and visual material to be used: Any technical equipment to be used during the interview must be prepared and sufficient backups (like batteries, etc.) must be provided for. These must be tested prior to the interview and the research must be able to utilise these. If the researcher is unable to familiarise him or herself with these gadgets, technical assistance must be sought.

4.2   INTERVIEW PHASE

It is essential that the researcher must arrive early at the venue of the interview in order to set up his or her equipment and retest it. At the start of the interview the researcher must introduce the subject and indicate the researcher's name and date of the interview. The interviewee must indicate his or her name at the beginning of the interview. The following will become guidelines to the interview process:

4.2.1 Condition of the venue: The interview venue should be accommodative of the needs of both parties and should have a low level of noise in order to enable audio visual equipment to capture the interview optimally.

4.2.2 Questioning: A researcher must ensure that the interviewee hears the questions clearly.

4.2.3 Use of slang and code names: Slang should preferably not be used by a researcher. However, where slang is introduced by the interviewee to express colloquialisms or to express him or herself, the researcher should seek clarity as terms might vary from one place to another.

4.2.4 Breaks during the interview: The interviewee might need to take a break depending on his or her health. The researcher must allow for this in order to avoid a situation where the interviewee is depressed or under pressure.

4.2.5 Note taking: It is vital that the researcher takes some notes of the interview. This will help to probe certain questions and remind the researcher of certain aspects that might have been covered by the interview.

4.2.6 Provision of hygienic supplements: The researcher must ensure that refreshments such as water and juice are provided in order for the interview to run smoothly. Certain interviewees' health requires that they constantly take these.

4.2.7 Closure: When concluding the interview, the researcher must thank the interviewee for sharing his or her knowledge, patience and time.

4.3   POST INTERVIEW PHASE

This is the most important phase in ensuring an optimal lifespan for the interview. Should the researcher not adhere to specific precautions the interview might disappear into oblivion. It is necessary that the following be taken into consideration:

4.3.1 Interviewee data: A one page document should be created to record the interviewee data such as full names, contact details, date and place of the interview, duration of the interview, and subject of the interview.

4.3.2 Downloading and labeling the interview folder: The digital recording should be downloaded to a desktop or laptop computer as soon as the interview is done. The folder should be properly labeled.

4.3.3 Transcribing the interview: It is essential that the interview be transcribed while the researcher can remember the conversation. This helps when certain words are not audible on the voice recorder.

4.3.4 Use of interview material: Prior to interviews being used in exhibitions, publications or DVD's, the interviewees should be given the opportunity to see how their memories will be used.

4.3.5 Acknowledgement of the interviews: Persons and communities that are the subject of the interviews must be given access to the end results, whether it be in the form of exhibitions, publications or DVD productions. This might make the person feel empowered.

4.3.6 Payment in exchange of the interview: Interviewees should not be paid for their intellectual property or time spent on the interview. Oral history should remain voluntary and no expectations of payment must be made by researchers.

4.3.7 Release form: The release form must be attached to the interview.

Approved

Mr B C Walters
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

23\09\15
DATE

14

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Western Cape Government

Cultural Affairs and Sport

INTERVIEWEE'S NAMES:

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CONTACT DETAILS:

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ADDRESS:

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DATE OF THE INTERVIEW:

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I hereby grant to the DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND SPORT and its associated institutions, such as the affiliated museums of the Western Cape, the following rights and permissions with respect to all materials originating from the oral history interview, including, without limitation, photographs, films, or voice recordings, transcriptions, and biographical information of me, or of materials owned by me (collectively hereinafter the "Materials"):

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I certify that I have read and understand this Release, and I freely sign it, acknowledging the significance and consequences of doing so. I also acknowledge that I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction regarding the Materials and this Release.

_____   _____   _____
SIGNATURE   NAME PRINTED   DATE

INTERVIEWER/RESEARCHER:

_____   _____   _____
SIGNATURE   NAME PRINTED   DATE