

The Oral History Review: Guidelines for Non-Print Media Reviews

Because readers of the Oral History Review come at oral history from a variety of scholarly disciplines and professional interests, reviews must consider both the substantive content of the work as well as its use of oral history and/or its value to oral historians. The following guidelines will assist authors in fashioning their reviews. However, authors should adapt them as necessary to the work under consideration and to exercise their own imagination and judgment.

In addition to writing the non-print media review, at the time of submission, please also let the editor know if there is additional digital content to link to the review (e.g. webpages, videos, audio, slideshows, apps, etc.). "Non-print Media" includes, but is not limited to, documentaries, performances, symposia, digital or physical exhibitions, websites, podcasts, radio programs, DVD components linked to books, and apps. If your media is not listed here, please contact the editor for further direction.

I. Basic Criteria for Reviews

A. Please adhere to the established word count for your review. If you are reviewing one item, the count should be approximately 750 to 1,200 words. If you are doing a dual review (two items), you will have 1,500 – 1,700 words. The review editor will establish the length of essays dealing with more than two items.

B. Deadlines are important. Please let the review editor know if you will not be able to complete your work by the established deadline. Failure to meet deadlines may result in a review not being published in the journal.

C. Reviews should include a concise summary of the contents of the work as well as indicate the extent to which it integrates or utilizes oral history interviews or methodologies, or otherwise interacts with oral history. For example, is it an interpretive study that draws upon oral material as one of several sources, or is it a work based almost entirely upon oral sources with some interpretive comment by the author/editor, or is it a documentary consisting only of oral histories? In the case of apps, platforms, and other tools, what does the thing do, how do users interact with it, and how does it utilize oral history?

D. Review authors might also appropriately comment upon the creator's organization of the content, as well as style, including the use of language and non-text based content.

E. Reviews should also locate and critically evaluate the product within the context of

existing work on both the subject matter and oral history methods and theories. In other words, how does the media presentation contribute to our knowledge of the subject at hand, and what insight does it give to oral history as a mode of inquiry?

F. If the work is a performance, exhibition, or film, what online components are available? Please briefly summarize and evaluate.

II. Suggested Criteria for Evaluating an Item's Use of Oral History

A. A good portion of the review should address the author's use of oral history material: What do the interviews document? How are they presented? How does oral history open new questions/ add new insights to the subject at hand? What new or interesting questions does the use of oral materials suggest?

B. A further consideration is the skill with which the author has mastered the methodology and technical skills of oral history—indeed, the extent to which he/she has discussed the methodology. *Possible* important points here include:

- The provenance of the interviews
- Selection of interviews and the representativeness of the selection
- Context (including when and by whom) in which interviews were conducted and the possible impact on content, including the degree to which interviews follow the Oral History Association's ethical guidelines
- Extent to which interview material was edited and the criteria used in making editorial decisions
- Extent to which interview material has been processed and archived and provisions for access to the interviews

A word of caution here, however: please be judicious in evaluating non-print media according to these above criteria. Sometimes reviews tend to read like litanies of complaints about minor methodological points. While professional oral historians rightfully are concerned with such procedures, others—journalists, anthropologists, folklorists, sociologists, local historians—who also use interview may have other methodological concerns. So, it isn't entirely appropriate to hold them to circumscribed standards. Rather, focus on what oral historians might learn from another practitioner's use of oral materials.

C. Did the producer of the work make effective use of the oral history material in an integrated way, or does it appear that the oral material was added as an afterthought? Is the interview material (however it is used) an important part of the final product?

D. What advantage did the format have (be it podcast, documentary, app, performance, etc.) over the more traditional use of a print format? Did the creator of the work

effectively utilize the format to create a context for the oral histories? What does this form add to the oral history assets?

E. Constructively evaluate the presentation of materials: (e.g. audio quality; site navigation)

F. Please try to use sample excerpts from the work to support the claims you make in your review.

III. Mechanics

A. The heading should include the following information (depending upon the format of the work):

TITLE (all caps). Author/producer. Publisher/distributor, contact information for distributor. Web site URL (if a Web production). Year. Price to purchase or rent (if applicable).

- Before submitting your review, please check on the accuracy of the above information.
- When a work is not published by a major publisher, please note in the heading the address from which copies can be ordered.

B. Please type reviews with double spacing in Times New Roman. Place page numbers on each page.

C. Place your name and institutional affiliation on the right-hand side of the last page, along with the review author's mailing address.

D. The Oral History Review conforms to the Chicago Manual of Style. Please consult that text for all questions of punctuation, citations, etc.

IV. Caveats

A. Please be fair in your review, and avoid digressive essays that do not address in a forthright manner the work under consideration. Also, please avoid *ad hominem* criticisms.

B. Please refrain from listing minor errors ("nitpicking") unless they substantially detract from the product's quality.

C. Please advise the review editor if you do not think the item is suitable for review.

V. Revision Policy and Release Form

A. The editors will make minor corrections (spelling, grammar, etc.) without consulting the

author. We will submit more substantial copyediting to the author for approval. The editors will make an effort to submit reviews to authors for revision and review as necessary and as time permits. However, the final decision to print any review rests with the editors.

B. We reserve the right to not publish a review that does not meet these standards.

C. Once the editors have revised and accepted a review and sent it on to the publisher of the journal, the publisher will send release forms to the reviewers. To have any review published, the reviewer must sign and return this release form in a timely manner.

VI. Off-Prints

The publisher will send each author a pdf file of his/her review from The Oral History Review in which it appears.

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