Folklore and Oral History within Heritage Studies:
Fieldwork Opportunities, Digital Technology, and IRB Compliance
in Public/Academic Collaborations

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Heritage Studies

Arkansas State University offers a doctoral program in Heritage Studies. The university takes an interdisciplinary approach to prepare graduates for careers in a range of professions, including work in archives, museums, historical societies, and arts organizations. The faculty uses multiple approaches from various disciplines to explore relationships between history, folklore, literature, geography, culture, and the environment in distinctive regions. The academic program is connected with the university's "Arkansas Heritage Sites." This organization develops and interprets historic properties in the Arkansas Delta. These include the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center in Piggott, the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum in Tyronza, the Historic Dyess Colony/Boyhood Home of Johnny Cash in Dyess, and Lakeport Plantation. Additional support from Heritage Studies is provided to the Arkansas State university Museum, Rohwer: Japanese-American Relocation Center in Rohwer, and Arkansas Delta Byways. Doctoral students work with faculty and staff to conduct research through these programs and at these sites, where they also complete internships to enhance their professional education. These sites not only serve as educational resources within the Heritage Studies program, but they also provide educational opportunities within eastern Arkansas' diverse communities as they serve fifteen counties in the Arkansas Delta.

ASTATE's Heritage Studies is complicit with international interests in Heritage Studies. The Heritage movement has coalesced from interdisciplinary interests in museum studies, historic preservation, archaeology, public folklore, and other related disciplines. The university's approach includes a substantial emphasis of fieldwork, and students complete a range of fieldwork-based documentation techniques as they complete their course of study. They also may use fieldwork in various internships within the region's Heritage Sites. In this respect, the graduate program integrates aspects of public folklore with academic research in an academic setting. The American Folklore Society provided support for professional development activities during September, 2013. AFS support provided opportunities to enhance projects at the Heritage Sites, update participants' knowledge of digital technology in fieldwork, and answer questions about fulfilling requirements for Institutional Research Board (IRB) policy, practice, and protocol.

Consultancy Activities

Heritage Studies contracted the services of folklorists who specialize in folklore and oral history projects within universities to enhance Arkansas State University's Heritage initiatives.   Dr. Barbara Truesdell of Indiana University and Dr. Douglas Boyd of the

University of Kentucky conducted short-term residencies to assist with faculty, staff, and students' professional development. They focused on ways to enhance documentation of resources identified as Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in order to support research and programming at the university.

Heritage Studies offers new opportunities for expanding public folklore and integrating folklore and oral history within academic institutions. Although some of the suggestions offered by Truesdell and Boyd apply specifically to Arkansas State University, their ideas are also valuable for folklorists working in similar public and academic partnerships. Their suggestions and insights address concerns that can arise when linking public folklore to broader approaches in Heritage Studies. Truesdell visited the Southern Tenant Farmers' Museum, the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center, and the Historic Dyess Colony/Boyhood Home of Johnny Cash in Dyess. She also met with Dr. Alyson Gill, Associate Professor of Art History and Director for the Center for Digital Initiatives at ASTATE. Gill provided a virtual tour of the Lakeport Plantation using Second Life, and she explained how the university is using digital initiatives in Heritage Studies. Boyd and Truesdell then conducted a two-day workshop titled "Digital Documentation" that provided resources for completing fieldwork using digital technology. During the consultancy, Boyd also completed a presentation on his award-winning book *Crawfish Bottom: Recovering a Lost Kentucky Community*.

Integrating Folklife and Oral History into Heritage Sites

At the completion of the project, Barbara Truesdell prepared a report from her visits to ASTATE's Heritage Sites. She met with full-time staff at these organizations, and she also met with Heritage Studies graduate students who are completing practicums at the Heritage Sites. Various oral history projects have been completed at all of these sites, and excerpts from audio and video-recorded interviews are part of the interpretation in these museums. Truesdell recommended that administrators, professors, and students continue to build on previous oral history projects and that they also develop additional ways to present results from fieldwork to the public.

Her work with "memory studies" at Indiana University is especially helpful and relevant to Heritage Studies. She recommended further use of fieldwork that is designed to preserve life histories in the area. These types of projects could be especially helpful as resources for strengthening community support at the Heritage Sites. They also can be useful resources for encouraging community members to visit the museum and gain a sense of personal investment in each of the organizations.

There are elements of controversy in any heritage site, and the use of oral history to record family stories and individual life histories has potential to ameliorate some of the tensions. The Southern Tenant Farmers Museum interprets a controversial aspect of Arkansas history. One important aspect of the museum's interpretation is the history of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. The remembered past includes tension between planters and share-croppers -- as well as racial violence – and the staff have worked with mixed support from the community. Students, faculty, and staff have completed projects

that incorporate folklife studies, historic preservation, and oral history in the Tyronza area. The results of these projects can be further developed with subsequent fieldwork.

Other opportunities for using oral history and folklife fieldwork are connected to the use of natural resources in the region. Each site is situated in rural eastern Arkansas. The region has a history of timbering that was flourishing by the end of the 19th century. Large-scale cotton production began a century ago. This crop continues to be prominently grown, and the area is also a major producer of rice, soybeans, corn, and other crops. Some farmers continue to work small produce operations, and they sell their vegetables at farmers' markets and roadside stands. There also is a history of cattle and hog production in the region, and families continue to hold seasonal events such as sorghum making and hog-killings. Various projects that focus on the occupational folklife and oral history of these industries can be completed, and the results could be used in the heritage programming. Truesdell also recommended fieldwork on the musical and artistic traditions that characterize the regional and ethnic culture of these regions. The fieldwork could be used for enhancing existing events, such as an annual quilt show at the Hemingway-Pfeiffer Museum and Educational Center. Results also could potentially be used for museum activities including concerts, festivals, and workshops. Integrating fieldwork with museum programming can provide an important means for developing links between public folklore and academic research. Due to limitations in staff, it is essential that these links incorporate the interdisciplinary approaches that are associated with Heritage Studies. Overall, the approaches used at these sites are providing a living laboratory for using fieldwork for further integrating oral history and folklife into Heritage Studies projects across the globe.

Virtual representations of heritage sites could provide additional opportunities for further integrating folklife and oral history within Heritage Studies. ASTATE's virtual replicas of historic sites are constructed as Second Life projects. Some of these resources incorporate fieldwork material, but they've also been useful in conducting research for developing these sites. For example, Second Life replications have helped contributors and exhibits designers reconstruct the boyhood home of Johnny Cash in Dyess. This type of synergistic research involves not only documentation but also reconstruction of the house's interior as computer technology provided ways to spark memories about how the home was furnished and decorated. There are numerous opportunities for using fieldwork within virtual environments. Notable examples of sites that use this approach within folklife include the *FolkVine* and *ChinaVine* web-based projects. Approaches used in these projects may be adapted to a range of projects within the Heritage Studies rubric.

Fieldwork and Digital Documentation

Fieldwork is an important resource within Heritage Studies. The shift from analog into digital recording technology has created new opportunities and subsequent challenges for folklorists and other researchers. During the two-day workshop, Truesdell and Boyd covered some of the major issues that are facing fieldworkers who straddle public and academic interests in oral history and folklore. There are a number of promising avenues

for further integrating folklife studies into institutions that could be characterized as hybridizations between academic and public folklore that are complicit with the Heritage Studies movement. Truesdell described her work at Indiana University's Center for the Study of History and Memory in ways that show opportunities for connecting "Memory Studies" with Heritage Studies. Both Heritage Studies and Memory Studies share an interest in how the past is represented, and both are interdisciplinary approaches that involve consideration of the rhetorical elements inherent in representations of history and culture. Heritage Studies and Memory Studies examine the social construction of history, and their scholars share interests in memory as an active process of choosing what is meaningful in the present when considering what is commemorated in the significant past.

Because organizations such as ASTATE's Heritage Sites and IU's Center for the Study of History and Memory provide a base for researchers who share a common interest in making fieldwork results accessible to the public, there is a need for ensuring that the materials documented during field research meet standards for appropriate use within the new digital technology. The "Digital Documentation" workshop offered by Truesdell and Boyd was an excellent resource for the university's Heritage Studies Program. Organizations planning to integrate fieldwork into academic/public partnerships could greatly benefit from these types of intensive professional development opportunities.

Douglas Boyd's contribution to the professional development sessions emphasized how to make and preserve recordings within the new digital environment. In the past, most analog recordings were played only by researchers. Reel-to-reel and cassette tapes originally were often valued mainly as repositories of sound that could be transcribed in print media – rather than as useful resources for electronic dissemination. Consequently, many of the older tapes are not broadcast-quality recordings. They can be digitally enhanced, but the sound quality of many analog recordings does not meet the digital generation's expectations. The content from the workshop is too extensive to summarize in this written report. However, specific information is available on the Web supported by the University of Kentucky's Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History and on the Web site *Oral History in the Digital Age.*

Some of the main points raised in the workshop focused on the need to know how to make a high quality recording and how to process a recording's content so that the information is accessible for public use. These points are especially important in digital recording because more archives are moving into open-access storage. Boyd explained that in the analog era, 500 annual visitor-uses of an entire oral history archive's holdings was considered heavy use. As more material is available on-line through streaming audio or video, podcasts, and other formats, the use of archival holdings has increased exponentially. One consequence of this shift is that a fundamental change has occurred in reasons for completing oral history and folklife research. The focus on preserving information in an archive is still present. But fieldworkers recognize that their recordings may be easily accessible to the public. With the expectation that actual recordings will likely be made public, fieldworkers will need to recognize that their recordings' audience

has been conditioned to expect high quality recordings and sophisticated media productions.

There are various guides for sorting through the great variety of high quality audio and video recording devices. The Vermont Folklife Center features a column written by Dr. Andy Kolovos that provides reviews of digital equipment. Boyd also runs an "Ask Doug" feature in *the Oral History in a Digital Age* Web site that contains extensive information on using digital equipment. During the workshop, Boyd summarized important guidelines for selecting equipment:

* Confirm that microphone types and recorders are compatible
* Use a recorder with a high quality preamp and analog to digital converters
* Record digital audio in the following settings: uncompressed, wav, 24-bit, and 96 kHz sample rate
* Recognize different capabilities between dynamic and condenser microphones
* Understand a particular microphone's recording pattern: cardioid, omnidirectional, or shotgun-patterns predominate
* Invest in a variety of microphone types to suit various recording situations

The workshop also explored the use of video recording technology. Even though video is ubiquitous on the internet, high quality video equipment is expensive. Making a video documentary of a professional quality requires high quality cameras, recorders, lighting devices, and auxiliary equipment as well as a specialized production team. Some of the challenges can be surmounted in academic/public partnerships through the use of college and university equipment and personnel. Boyd noted that fieldworkers doing video documentation should consider the following points:

* Data file storages requirements much larger for video rather than audio
* File types constantly change and are proprietary
* A video camera that can record with XLR microphones will produce higher quality recordings than will other systems
* Have a professional level light kit available for video recordings
* Use a camera that generates a common or ubiquitous format such as AVCHD or a DV or HDV based format. This will ensure compatibility with the computer-based video processing platform and allow for easy access when developing preservation strategies

A substantial workshop session was devoted to metadata. Boyd emphasized the importance of asking for interview-generated metadata. His presentation showed how adapting audio-recording logs into metadata provides a useful way for developing strategies for finding material. Whereas the focus on metadata in many projects often have involved keyword searches, using a system that is based on audio-logs provides a more accurate way of finding useful and relevant information. Boyd demonstrated how this approach is used in the *Oral History Metadata Synchronizer* (OHMS). This model is further explained in the article "OHMS: Enhancing Access to Oral History." It is a system that can be adapted within various archives and repositories of recorded material. Boyd also explained the potential for linking OHMS with other systems. Furthermore,

the use of this system also has the potential for use in museums and at other heritage sites. Links to archival holdings around the globe, can provide searchable resources that enhance the interpretive resources at various sites. For example, linking Second Life to on-line oral history collections could provide users of the virtual site with recordings and images that enhance how they experience computer simulations of sites actual Heritage Site such as Lakeport Plantation.

Institutional Review Boards and Public Partnerships within Heritage Studies

A major concern within academic institutions that sponsor fieldwork projects is the need to be in compliance with Institutional Review Boards' policy on the use of research involving human subjects (IRB). Barbara Truesdell led an important discussion on what constitutes research that is subject to IRB review, and she provided useful resources for keeping fieldwork projects in compliance with IRB policy. Using an academic institution as a base for creating public programs involves some complex issues in IRB compliance. In general, exhibits and programs that present results from oral history interviews, folklife fieldwork, and other documentation of intangible cultural resources to the public are outside of the scope of IRB review. Furthermore, the legislation that authorizes the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations as 45 CFR 46.102(d) specifically excludes certain activities from the purview of IRB review. There are numerous projects that folklorists and oral historians complete that, according to most interpretations of the law, do not constitute human subject research:

*   Art projects developed from fieldwork
*   Most documentary films or video productions
*   Most dramatic representations that involve presentations of interview material
*   Most oral history research
*   Non-systematic research: For example, simply taking photographs or rolling video at most cultural events is non-systematic if used purely for creating a document for archival holdings
*   Journalism -- including photojournalism
*   Informal communication such as asking questions in a phone call or via e-mail
*   Gathering information from family members is usually excluded from IRB review
*   Use of published information from interviews and observations
*   Reviews of artistic, musical, and dramatic performances
*   Interviews with public officials, elected or appointed
*   Collaborative writing projects and collaborative artistic productions

One challenge is that oral history and folklife fieldwork can fit between various categories as designated within IRB policies. If fieldwork is completed for developing an exhibit, then it's generally not regarded as "research" according to Health and Human Services' standards.   Most non-published work is considered to be either excluded from IRB review or it will likely be ruled "exempt" during the review process. Fieldwork completed for events such as folklife festivals, workshops, and other public programs often doesn't fall under the rubric of research -- as defined in the law -- because the work may be defined more as a collaborative art project rather than as generalizable research.

Determining what constitutes "research" that requires IRB review, however, is a challenge. Many universities specifically exclude oral history from the purview of IRBs, for example, but some of the methodology used in oral history interviews may include working with populations beyond the "minimal risk" category. For example, oral histories that pertain to health and medical practices may require IRB review as would fieldwork with potentially vulnerable populations such as children, people with disabilities, or the incarcerated.

There is considerable openness in interpreting the legislation, and various universities have their own policy about what constitutes research with human subjects. Truesdell recommended the use of decision trees for helping to determine what constitutes "human subject research." I've attached the decision tree that is used at Indiana University to this report. Additional information on IRB decision trees is available at: http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/checklists/decisioncharts.html.

Although most fieldwork in public folklore does not specifically qualify as "Human Subject Research," the blending of public folklore with academic folklore can create ambiguous situations in which fieldwork would require IRB clearance. If the results of following a decision tree place a project into the category of "Human Subject Research," then it's important to follow the protocols that will clear the project with a university's IRB.

Folklorists may face challenges with what's termed "IRB overreach," as the HHS guidelines come more from a medical research model than from the humanities. In working with IRB committees that may not understand the nature of oral history and folklore fieldwork, it could be necessary to show how not every interview, let alone interpersonal communication, constitutes generalizable research with human subjects. It also is important to show how distinctions between "publishing" and "reporting" are relevant to the scope of fieldwork for public projects. Furthermore, the use of photographic and video documentation also can be potentially subject to IRB overreach. Members of IRB committees may come from a background in medical ethics or behavioral sciences. Their use of photography or other visual media may be more connected with standards established in the physical sciences rather than in fieldwork practice. In determining what can be documented visually, it may be useful to refer to standards used by photojournalists and fine arts photographs and then develop practices and protocol that is accepted by a college or university's IRB committee. Truesdell explained that many of the questions associated with the use of photography are actually covered more by copyright regulations rather than by Human Subjects protocol.

Some ethnographic research, especially projects that incorporate theory and methods from social psychology, may require more extensive IRB review. These types of projects aren't likely to be undertaken through projects that involve collaborations between academic and public folklorists. However, if these projects are developed, it is important to keep communication open between fieldworkers and those who administrate IRB practice. There also is a need for folklorists and oral historians to contribute to continued review of IRB policies within the US Department of Health and Human Services.

Currently, HHS is continuing a review of the "Common Rule" to determine a more precise statement of what constitutes "research" as it relates to oral history – and by extension folklore. Various organizations have offered statements on this review process. They include:

American Association of University Professors
http://www.aaup.org/report/research-human-subjects-academic-freedom-and-institutional-review-board

American Folklore Society
http://www.afsnet.org/?page=HumanSubjects

American Historical Association
http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2008/0802/0802aha1.cfm

Oral History Association
http://www.oralhistory.org/about/do-oral-history/oral-history-and-irb-review/
http://www.oralhistory.org/bibliography-human-subjects-and-institutional-review-boards/

Society for Ethnomusicology
http://www.ethnomusicology.org/?PS_IRB

Recommended Reading

Alivizatou, M. (2012) *Intangible Heritage and the Museum: New Perspectives on Cultural Preservation,* Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.

Baron, R. and Spitzer, N. (eds) (2007) *Public Folklore,* Jackson: University of Press of Mississippi.

Blank, T. (ed) (2012) *Folk Culture in the Digital Age: Vernacular Expression in a Digital Age,* Logan: Utah State University Press.

Boyd, D. (2013) "OHMS: Enhancing Access to Oral History for Free," Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Oral History Association.
http://ohr.oxfordjournals.org/content/40/1/95

Karp, I., Kartz, C., Szwaja, L, and Ybarra-Frausto, T. (eds) (2006) *Museum Frictions/Global Transformations,* Durham: Duke University Press.

Neuenschwander, J. (2009) *A Guide to Oral History and the Law,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rubin, H. and Rubin, I. (2012) *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data,* 3rd edition, Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Smith, G., Messenger, P., and Soderland, H. (eds) (2010) *Heritage Values in Contemporary Society,* Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.

Smith, L. (2006) *Uses of Heritage,* London: Routledge.

Smith, L. and Akagawa, N. (eds) (2009) *Intangible Heritage*, London: Routledge.

Stefano, M., Davis, P. and Corsane, G. (eds) (2012) *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage,* Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer Ltd.

Stipe, R. (ed) (2003) *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century,* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Web Sites Relevant to Project

Arkansas Heritage Sites
http://arkansasheritagesites.astate.edu/AHS/

Arkansas Heritage Studies
http://www.astate.edu/college/humanities-and-social-sciences/departments/heritage-studies/

ChinaVine
http://chinavine.org/

FolkVine: Florida's Art and Artists On-Line
http://folkvine.umbc.edu/

Oral History in the Digital Age
http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu

Vermont Folklife Center
http://www.vermontfolklifecenter.org/archive/archive-fieldguides.html

Decision Tree for Determination of Human Subjects Research

Is your project research?

The intent of the proposed project:

- **Operational activity** of an organization (e.g. customer service initiative, teaching evaluation, disease outbreak investigations, auditing)

- **Journalism**

- **Political poll**

- **Oral history**, **biographies**, or **medical case history** that is not generalizable beyond that individual

- **Classroom or training activities** where the only objective is to teach a student proficiency on a topic

- **Quality Improvement or Quality Assurance**
  - program initiated by an institution to compare performance to established standards or measure the value of a program to its participants

                            AND

  - information will only be distributed to those directly involved in its planning, management and implementation

The intent of the proposed project:

- **Systematic investigation** intended to develop or contribute to **generalizable knowledge**.

  - Systematic investigation means carried out using step-by-step procedures organized according to a set of interrelated ideas or principles.

  - Generalizable knowledge may include**:**

    - Benefits that extend beyond immediate population- to society, other researchers, scholars, or practitioners in field

    - Drawing conclusions, testing or generating a hypothesis

    - Publication or presentation to inform the field of study

    - Contributes to a theoretical framework or body of knowledge

- **Test a new device, product, drug or biologic material-** [Requires COMIRB biomedical review]

If YES, proposed project is research

Are human subjects involved?

If yes, proposed project is not research

The proposed project involves:

- **Individuals that are not living**
  - data or information on the deceased

- **Animals**

The proposed project involves:

- Data about one or more living individuals

If yes, human subjects not involved

NOT HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH-
HSRC Submission
Not Required

YES, human subjects involved

Submit to HSRC for determination