



Oral History in the Liberal Arts is a faculty development initiative for community-based learning through interview methods & digital storytelling

What does OHLA do? OHLA supports faculty and students who engage in community-based learning and undergraduate research using best-practice interview methods and a curated set of digital tools. OHLA helps to build and host public-facing digital exhibits, and provides training to faculty in pedagogical strategies, best practice methodology, experiential reflection and assessment,

With a Global focus and bilingual capabilities, OHLA has provided support to more than 70 projects across the GLCA and a number based in AMICAL institutions. In 2023-24, OHLA is opening a new CFP in partnership with the Global Liberal Arts Alliance Institute and Shared Course Connections to support international projects across collaborating GLAA campuses.

Why Oral History? OHLA treats oral history as a research methodology that can be easily harnessed in undergraduate fieldwork. OHLA participants are not oral historians per se, they are literature professors or environmental scientists looking to engage students in highly experiential ways of exploring the themes in their courses. With the encompassing ethical notion of “informed consent” and basic best practices, this form of interviewing can be quickly learned and employed to provide structure for student inquiry outside of the classroom— while generating primary source material with diverse communities to bring back into the classroom.

Why Digital Scholarship & Digital Storytelling? Research suggests that students more fully engage in their learning when they have a meaningful audience for their work, when their findings have an impact beyond their course, and when they are active participants in designing the learning process and its outcomes.

Tools for digital scholarship such as the Oral History Metadata Synchronizer provide a platform for close listening and controlled exposition that synthesizes and thematizes interview segments. Digital storytelling tools such as Storymaps or Timeline JS support multimedia assemblages featuring narrative, place data, and imagery. When the multimedia work developed in these tools is published as a capstone digital project, faculty-mentored student research realizes multiple audiences, completing a “high impact” loop of participatory inquiry and meaningful assignments that animate course-level and program-level learning outcomes.

Selected Templates, Tutorials & Essays from OHLA's Resource Hub

- Visit the OHLA homepage at www.ohla.info for a wide variety of resources and reflective essays written by participating OHLA faculty, students, digital librarians, and instructional technologists. Expect frequent new content— second year project teams are building their projects and resources currently behind the scenes, while third year project teams are just onboarding. We recommend scrolling the homepage or “Explore” at the upper left of the site.
- [Locating our Practice](#) is a series of essays written by faculty who discuss their disciplinary backgrounds, teaching and research interests, and how they came to engage in community-based learning with interview and digital tools. Start here for inspiration on how the OHLA method might impact your teaching and learning or structure the undergraduate research you support.
- Project Design: You can download and edit OHLA's project statement, release form, and metadata log to use in your own project planning [here](#), or view a sample OHLA microgrant application by OHLA co-director Ric Sheffield and a student interested in documenting Latinx experience at Kenyon [here](#).
- Find out how OHLA co-director Brooke Bryan uses the project statement and release form to structure her student's projects, read up on the differences between informed consent and copyright release, and how to approach your campus IRB in the monumental post [Interviewing 101: A few resources for teaching undergrads how to interview for public-facing digital projects. Within one term](#). This post includes resources to teach her Abbreviated Life Story Method that emphasizes managing the time-space of the interview and preparing a minimal number of deliberate questions.
- See through the eyes of undergraduates as they reflect and share advice for doing community-based interview projects like how to [identify interviewees](#) for an emergent project, [reaching out](#) to a potential interviewee by email, [preparing](#) for a good interview, and [taking fieldnotes](#).
- Consider what kind of digital tool might serve the project you'd like to build with [this tool overview](#), and check out an innovative use of Excel for [indexing interviews](#) you want to work with but don't wish to publish or archive. Jump into our massive collection of Oral History Metadata Synchronizer (OHMS) tutorials with the first of a student-produced video training series [here](#), and consider how can OHMS can support the visualization and navigation of your bilingual projects [here](#).
- See ongoing and emergent [Faculty projects](#) & [Student Projects](#) here.