



Long Distance Oral History Tips

Before Interview:

- Determine the goal of the interview and focus on 1-2 topics
- Do background research beforehand
- Develop brief, to the point, open-ended questions
- Develop signed release form for interviewee
- Share with the interviewee beforehand:
 - Purpose of the interview and set of proposed questions
 - Select time for undisturbed interview – no pets or other people to disturb the interview with background noise, etc.
 - Ask interviewee to select place for interview that is quiet and undisturbed (Room in house with a door that can close, let partners and children know not to disturb, etc.)
 - Share the length of the interview (30 minutes is the recommended length for oral histories)
- Make sure that the interviewer and the interviewee will have:
 - Strong, consistent internet during the length of the interview
 - Computers with webcam and microphone capability (Even if computer has a built-in microphone, headsets sometimes will have the better sound quality)
 - Both computers are able to run the recording software (Google Hangouts, Zoom, Skype, etc.)
- Do a practice run of recording equipment beforehand and, if possible, arrange a brief five-minute practice run with the interviewee a few days before the interview to make sure software requirements are met and to troubleshoot before the actual interview.

During the Interview:

- Make sure that all devices that use wi-fi are turned off if using a wi-fi connection for your computer during interview to ensure strong internet connection; sometimes connecting directly to the router with an ethernet cable is the best way to ensure a stable, strong connection

- Turn off all phones and computer alerts (such as email alerts) to make sure there will be no distracting noises during the interview
- Ask one question at a time
- Pause between questions or comments to account for lag over the internet
- Listen actively and intently
- Encourage stories and more details about the topic of the interview
- Clarify questions if needed
- Be flexible to explore topics the interviewee may introduce

After the Interview:

- Send an email to thank the interviewee along with an approximate timeline for editing, transcription, etc.
- Send them a copy of the interview to review and approve
- Make sure that they sign and return their release form

Long Distance Interview Software Options:

- Skype (<https://www.skype.com/en/>) – Free software. Free accounts will only let two people on a “call” or interview.
- Zoom (<https://zoom.us/>) – Can record interview but each session can only last 40 minutes with a free Zoom account.
- Google Meet (<https://meet.google.com/>) – Need paid account to record interviews. Cheapest subscription is \$6 a month.