



ORAL HISTORY MADE EASY

WEEK 1: Deciding what sort of an oral historian you want to be
Sunday 9th March 2025 14.00 hrs GMT

WITH DR ANGELA MAYE-BANBURY BA MSC PHD SFHEA
ORAL HISTORIAN & EMERITUS FELLOW IN ORAL HISTORY

Recording



in Progress

What we will have achieved at the end of today

Introductions and welcome



Explore the power of stories, why we need to preserve oral histories now and listening to the voice.



How we conceptualise oral history alongside other ways of recounting life experiences.



Your positionality as an oral historian: importance of beliefs and values on your practice as 'habitus



Sharing our hopes and fears thinking about the weeks ahead.



The power of experiential learning and reflective practice.



Tour of your virtual learning environment.



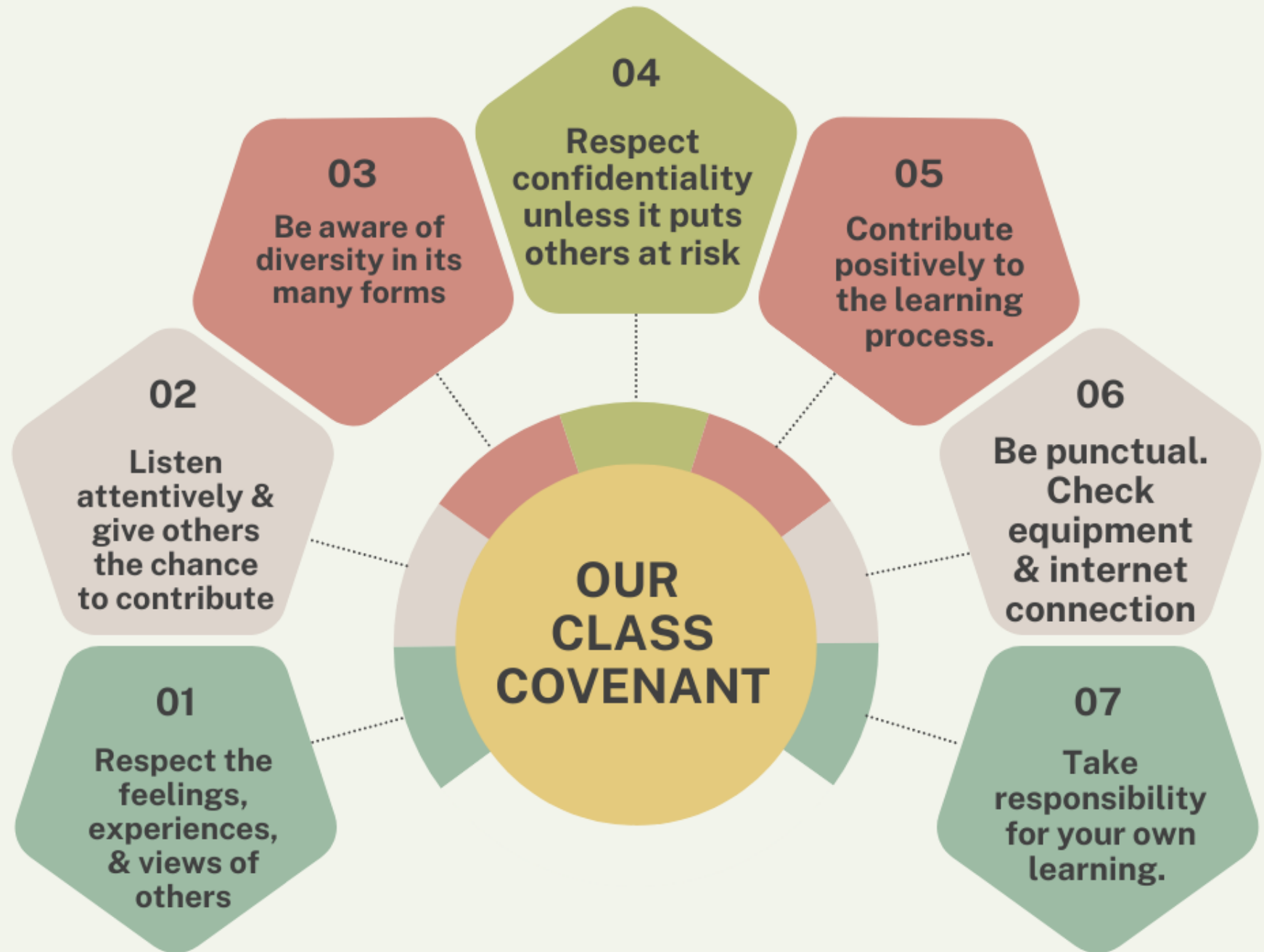
Introductions and welcome

*Welcome
&
Introductions*





Our class covenant



6 STEPS TO SUCCESS



to become an oral historian



STEP
01

DECIDE

what sort of oral historian you want to be.



STEP
02

RESEARCH

definitions of oral history & their application



STEP
03

APPLY

an ethical approach in your practice always.



STEP
04

GET READY

for your first oral history interview.



STEP
05

ORGANISE

& curate your oral history collection.



STEP
06

NEGOTIATE

the next steps of your oral history journey.

Proprietary DRAGON FRAMEWORK



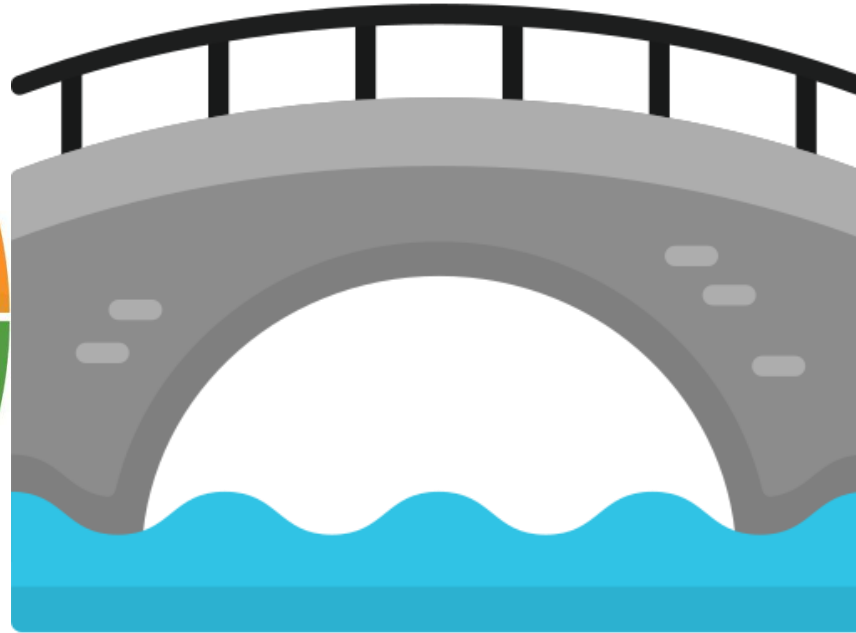
Completion of training needs analysis

1:1 Mentorship with AMB 30 mins x 2

Motivation hub meetings x 2

End point assessment (1,000 words)
Celebration event & award of certificate of participation

I AM AN ORAL HISTORIAN!



THE POWER OF STORIES



Oral history as ‘traces of history’ (1)

“Most human affairs happen without leaving vestiges or records of any kind behind them. The past, having happened, has perished with only occasional traces...And only a part of what was observed in the past was observed by those who observed it. Only a part of what was remembered was recorded. Only a part of what was recorded has survived. Only a part of what has survived has come to historian’s attention; only a part of what has come to their attention is credible” (Gottschalk, 1950, p 460).

“More history than ever is today being revised or invented by people who do not want the real past, but only a past that suits their purpose” (Hobsbawm, 2002: 296).

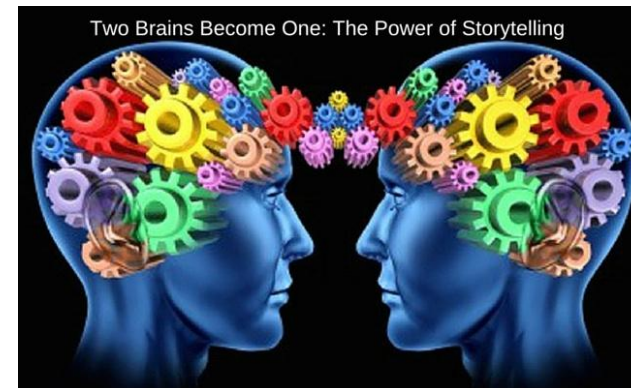
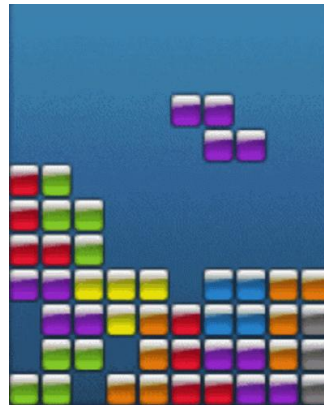
INFORMATION – MISINFORMATION – DISINFORMATION – QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE

Oral history as 'traces of history' (2)

- ✓ Infinite amount of oral history material. Yet only a small proportion of this materials end up being properly curated, analysed and disseminated in one form or another.
- ✓ Lack of knowledge, skills and attributes to collate and curate oral histories.
- ✓ Need to embed analysis and dissemination into your oral history project plan.

The power of stories

- We are hard wired to share our stories .‘Neurons that fire together, wire together.’ When we hear a good story, **whether factually based or otherwise**, our brains actually light up causing the neurons to fuse together. This process is known as ‘neuron coupling.’
- Stories are memorable. Who remembers Pythagoras’ theorem over the stories we were told as children or adults? Our brains crave a sense of order and an ability to assign meaning to past events.
- The ‘Tetris effect’: enhances empathy, intergenerational understanding, cohesion and harmony.





The importance of one to one interaction for empathy building

- One to one dialogue equals ‘onesness’ and ‘overlap of selves’ (Ciandini et al , 1997; Ocejja, 2014).
- Our ability to show empathy and change the way we act and what we believe **decreases** the more people are involved: ‘compassion fade’ (Butts et al, 2019).



Are we
Listening?

We need to preserve our stories – NOW!

- Estimated that 'born digital' information will not be accessible in 10 years time. We need to preserve personal testimonies NOW in future proof formats.
- Technological and human challenges: who is in charge of preserving internet content? What sources will future generations use? What impact does subjective decision making have on what is preserved and what is lost forever?
- The internet is an inherently volatile environment: unlike the preservation of oral histories, web pages are intended to be dynamic. How many web pages have you tried to access that have been unavailable?
- Many examples e.g. Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online (SUCHO) when web content is an initiative involving over 1,500 international volunteers who are collaborating online to digitize and preserve Ukrainian cultural heritage.



The death of ‘born digital’ sources?

“It cannot be stated clearly enough that born-digital records are highly ephemeral and, like paper records, must be consciously preserved over time. Without continual stewardship, the pace of technology advancement in software and hardware can render such records inaccessible in under 8-10 years. Beyond that point, the skills required to resurrect and interpret data from obsolete hardware, operating systems and software applications approaches those of digital forensics. This is a highly specialised and expensive field. Most data may be deemed not worth the effort” (National Archives Advisory Council, 2020, p 10).



I want to hear your voice

- The voice has much more impact on us than reading text.
- Hearing someone's voice has a profound emotional impact on us. This is because the brain first processes speech for the emotion in sounds in the amygdala. Those sounds then become the words that create a connection between speaker and listener (Brück et al 2011; Seydell-Greenwald et al 2020).
- Interpersonal communication where the voice is present creates stronger social bonds than where just text (SMS; email) is used.



Exercise 1

Read the [transcript of Tom Johnson's interview](#) from p 1, start of para 1 “It’s very vague really....” until p 2, end of para 1 “common throughout the village.”

What impression have you formed of Tom just from **reading his transcript?**

Now listen to [Tom's voice Part 1 to 3 mins 05 secs](#)

What impression do you now have of Tom having heard his voice?

CONCEPTUALISING ORAL HISTORY





Oral history in a continuum of stories

-  Oral history is...
-  Storytelling is...
-  Nostalgia work is...
-  Reminiscence work is...
-  Life story work is...
-  Personal narratives are...
-  Eyewitness accounts are...

Conceptualising oral history (1)

 **Oral history** is the systematic recording, preservation and curation of people's accounts of life in audio format so they may be accessible to current and future generations often as part of a public archive.

 **Storytelling** is the interactive art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener's imagination.

 **Nostalgia work** is a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past often triggering high level emotion

Conceptualising oral history (2)

 **Reminiscence work** is a facilitated discussion about the past often using photos, objects and music to stimulate mental activity wellbeing.

 **Life story work** is a way to reconnect people, often those who are vulnerable, with their past to empower them in the future.

 **Personal narratives** are an account of past events written in the first person about a particular period or event in history.

 **Eyewitness accounts** (or testimonies) are descriptions given by someone who was present at an event.

YOUR POSITIONALITY AS AN ORAL HISTORIAN: HABITUS



Decide what sort
of an oral historian
you want to be



Importance of ‘habitus’ & your ‘positionality.’



The importance of habitus in oral history

Who do we think we are? A 'hard habitus to break'.

Habitus: socialised norms and tendencies that guide the way in which we act and behave.

Conceived by Pierre Bourdieu,
French philosopher and sociologist.



1930 - 2002

What are the beliefs and values which have drawn you to oral history?

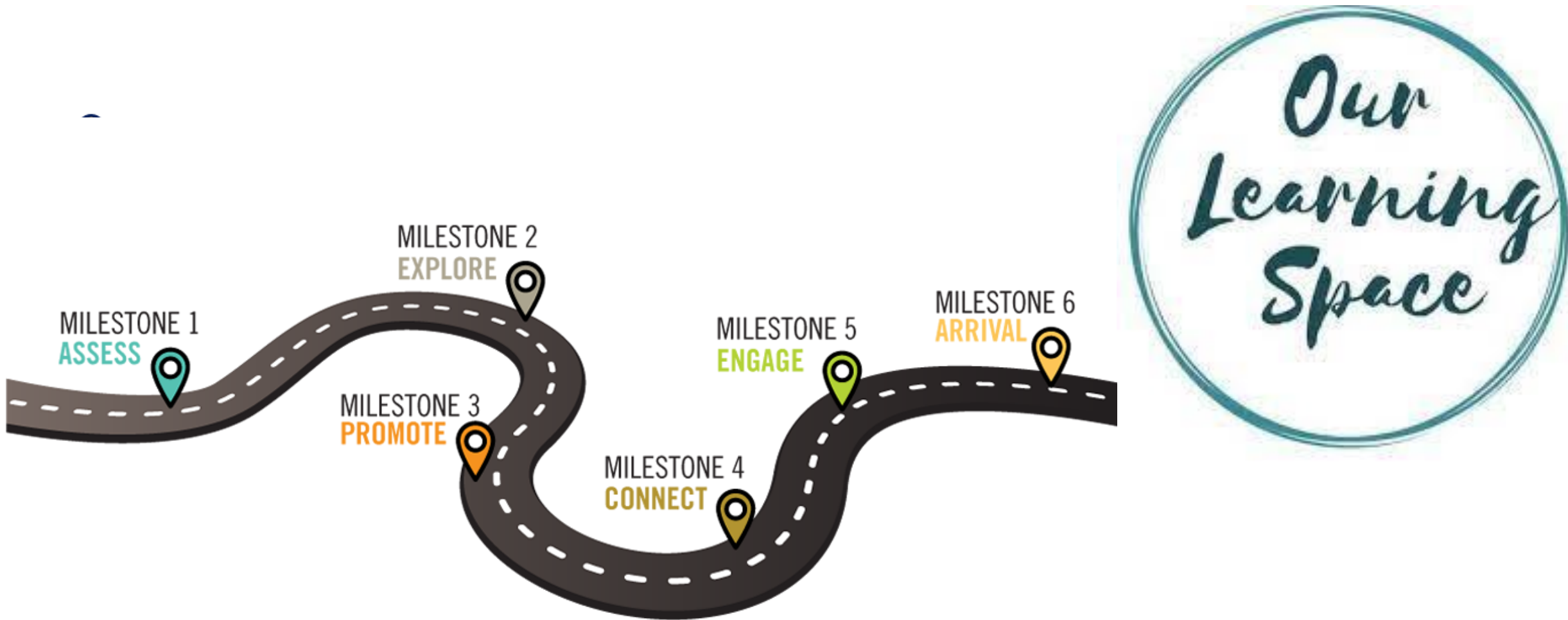
The life experiences which have drawn me closer to oral history are...

The beliefs (our convictions drawing on learned experiences and contexts which do not need proof) which have drawn me closer to oral history are...

The values (the relative worth I attribute to something which transcends context) which have drawn me closer to oral history are...

YOUR HOPES AND FEARS

Your development journey, your way



Your past, present and future experiences

Hopes and fears

MY HOPES	MY FEARS

EXPERENTIAL LEARNING AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE



Experiential learning

The power of reflective practice

Our ability to engage
in deeper learning is
enhanced by
reflective practice



KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ATTRIBUTES

YOU NEED TO BECOME
AN ACCOMPLISHED ORAL HISTORIAN

The Six Step
Programme To
Success
DRAGON
Framework



6 STEPS TO SUCCESS



to become an oral historian



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STEP
06

NEGOTIATE

the next steps of your oral history journey.

1.
**Promote
your
confidence
and
capability in
oral history
through
experiential
learning**

2.
**Empowering
you to
practice oral
history
through
mentorship
and peer
support**

3.
**Promoting
ethical
practice are
present at
every stage
when
conducting
oral history**

4.
**Future
proofing
your oral
histories
through
digitisation**

5.
**Optimising
your oral
histories
through
dissemination**

**ORAL HISTORY
MADE EASY
PROGAMME
PRINCIPLES
2025**

ORAL HISTORY MADE EASY

Be transformed from novice to proficient oral historian in less than 30 hours. Here's how.

Attend six x 1.5 hr live sessions in person or hybrid = 9 hrs



Tutor guided & self directed learning = 9 hrs



Preparing, recording & transcription of one 60 min oral history interview = 4 hrs



Two x 30 mins mentorship sessions with Dr Maye-Banbury = 1 hr



'Light touch' assignment = 2 hrs



TOTAL = 27 hrs



Motivation
hubs: meet
twice in
weeks
ahead

TOUR OF YOUR VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



Accessing the student portal (1)

Two stage process

1. Log on the [Oral History Made Easy web site](#) and click on the 'Student Portal Log in 2025' in the top right hand corner. The portal is password protected. The password is Mystudentlogin1

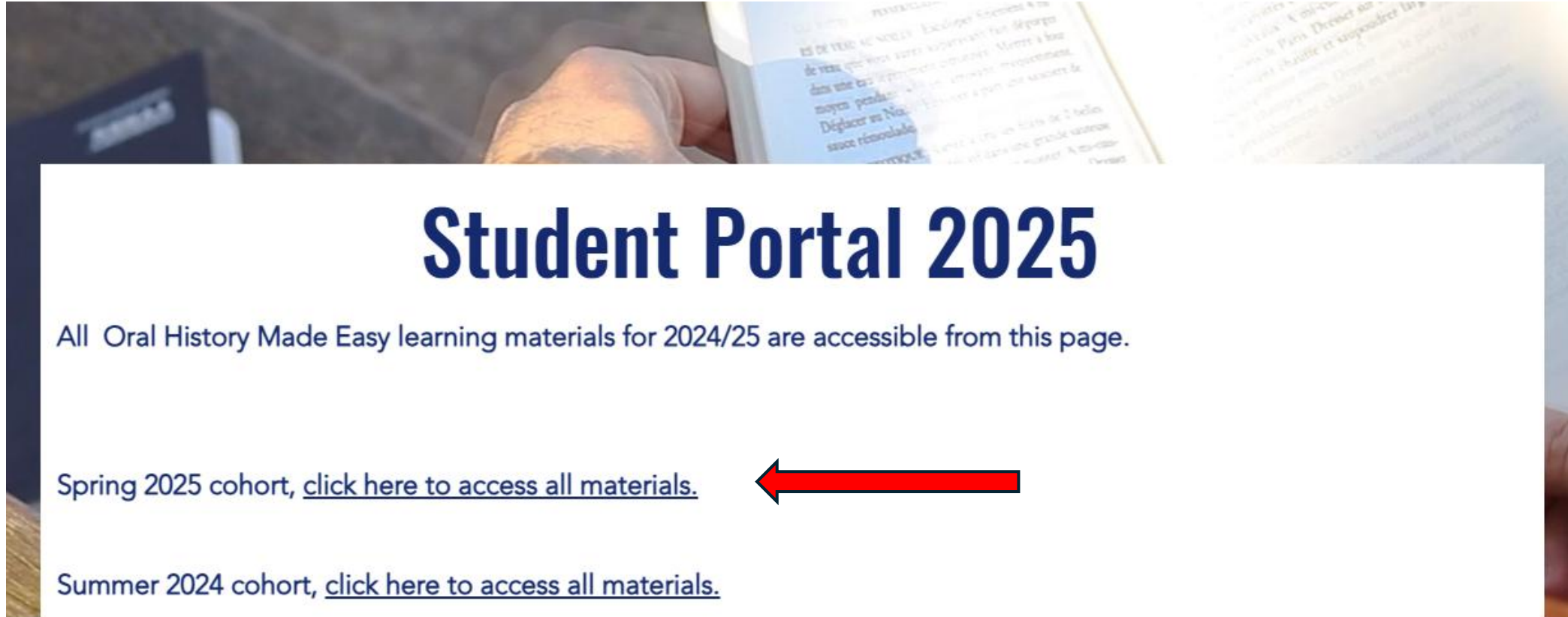


Welcome to
ORAL HISTORY MADE EASY™

The No 1 learning platform for oral historians

Accessing the student portal (2)

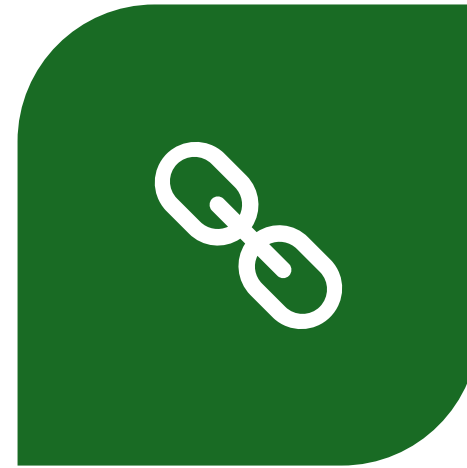
Now go to the 'Spring 2025 Cohort – click here to access all materials' tab and use the password Oralhistorian3 to log in.



Week 1 folder



**ESSENTIAL TARGETED LEARNING
MATERIALS SPRING 2025**



**ZOOM LINKS FOR ALL SIX WEEKS
SPRING 2025**

Tasks for week 2

Write around 100 words between now and next week which outline your hopes and fears for the completion of the course. NB Save your reflections safely as they really useful when you write the final 1,000 word report (or equivalent) in which you will chart your progress on the course and outline a future action plan for your ongoing development.

Read Linda Shopes' article 'Making sense of oral history' in week 1 resources. What is the value of oral history, according to the author?



What we have covered today

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References

Gottschalk, L. (1950). *Understanding history: A primer of historical method*. Knopf.

National Archives Advisory Council (2020) *Annual Report 2020, National Archives Advisory Council*: Dublin.

Sharpless, R. (2008). 'The History of Oral History'. *In Thinking about Oral History. Theories and Applications*. Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, Rebecca Sharpless (eds) Baylor University, 7-32.

Shopes, L. (2011). Oral history. *The SAGE Handbook Of Qualitative Research*, 451-465.