University of Sussex Centre for Life History & Life Writing Research

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2018-2019

# CENTRE FOR LIFE HISTORY AND LIFE WRITING RESEARCH



About	Seminar series	Publications	Research and conferences
News and events	Courses and training	Links	People and contacts

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### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Life history and life writing research uses life story - whether in the form of oral history, personal narrative, autobiography or biography - as a primary source for the study of history and culture.

Research involves grappling with theories of memory, relationship and self-representation, and with debates about literacy and orality. Many disciplines contribute to the field, including history, sociology, anthropology, literary philosophy, media and cultural studies and psychology.

Life history and life writing researchers present their work in many forms. As well as academic publications, we contribute to radio and television documentaries, auto/biographical drama, reminiscence work, digital and video presentations and exhibitions.

Life history and life writing research is, of necessity, concerned with ethics and power relationships, and with the potential for advocacy and empowerment. It has evolved complex methodologies which use as well as analyse the life narrative in all its forms. Our general aims are therefore to:

- Develop a research agenda that address questions of both national and international significance through life narrative methods or through analysing life narrative as aesthetic, social or political object;
- Focus on research that draws in scholars, practitioners and curators from across the University community and beyond;
- Address research in partnership with external organisations and individuals;
- Support the next generation of life narrative scholars through postgraduate training and postdoctoral opportunities;
- Produce outputs that result in critical and ethical engagement with academe, government, policy makers, business and community.

#### Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research

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# **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

#### STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS

The year 2018-19 again saw collaborations across and beyond the University to push forward meaningful research on life writing, life history and life narrative, or which drew on methods associated with them. Such research is interdisciplinary in nature and it has been especially good to strengthen links between English and Media, Film and Music through our directorship. This report gives examples of this interdisciplinary collaboration and where it adds to individual research. I highlight here:

- Innovative research projects (see pgs 2-13)
- **Supporting grant capture** through advising on method, networking or being named in bids, this past year including Professor Sara Crangle's British Academy application for 'Recovering Post-War Women's Vanguardism Anna Mendelssohn: Artist, Activist, & Feminist Life Narrator (see p.10)
- **Exciting and informative free events**, open to the public and playing to capacity (see pgs 14-15, 17-18)
- **Partnerships with community projects and courses** including Sussex Traditions, Mass Observation and The Keep (see pgs 20-25)
- **Developing researchers' capacity** through supporting Visiting researchers, research fellows and postgraduates in projects and processes (pgs 2, 11, 15-19).

#### FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

We did not receive any core funding last year but are pleased that through careful saving, match-funding and partnerships, we were able to sustain our programme. We are glad that the **School of Media, Film and Music** has renewed its commitment to core funding for the year 2019-20. **Dr Alexandra Loske** has continued to be a key to operations, as has **Dr Hope Wolf** as the **CLHLWR's Associate Director**. This year we introduce **Hannah Ludikhuijze** as our new research student associate. Based in the School of English, Hannah will be involved in supporting events, building on her interest in the life histories of volontourists, about which she will be developing creative life writing. Read more about Hannah on page 2.

#### LOOKING AHEAD

Sussex invites all research centres to pursue impactful work. We have designed events which support this in engaging public audiences for research, strengthening public and community partnerships, and for creating conditions which enable collaboration and grant-making. Legendary publisher of black women's lives and writings, Margaret Busby, will present this autumn, while critical creative life writing pioneer Professor Nancy K. Miller will speak at our spring event series. We'll work with The Great Diary Project and inspiring diary-interpreters next summer, including film makers To Be Continued.... Oral history engagement with Berwick Church is also unfolding. Much to celebrate in times of struggle and change.

mergarette dolly

Professor Margaretta Jolly, Director, Sept 2019

# SUMMARY OF PROJECTS, PUBLICATIONS AND YEAR'S EVENTS

# The CLHLWR welcomes Hannah Ludikhuijze as life story doctoral research student and associate.

Hannah Ludikhuijze is a postcolonial PhD researcher in the School of English, working on voluntourism in rural Malawi, East Africa. She takes a literary perspective to this phenomenon and looks how voluntourism can be improved through reading practices among the volunteers and the hosting community. Her work is a combination of literary analysis, participant observation, oral history and several different interview methods, including the biographic narrative interpretative method (BNIM).



Hannah has recently finished her first chapter on identifying the voluntourists using autobiographies and memoirs written by the voluntourist and will now



focus her second chapter on the socio-political situation in Malawi. Here, particular attention will be paid to foreign oppression and the role of literacy education and volunteering within this.

During her last fieldwork trip, she interviewed in both rural and urban communities, as well as expats, anthropologists, volunteers and tourists. Further research will look at postcolonial literary perspectives, pedagogical effects within life-writing techniques and a readers-response project in which voluntourists read a Malawian autobiography to help them understand more about the culture and their place alongside it.

Having been a voluntourist herself, she deconstructs her own experience reflectively through critical autobiography, which will interweave throughout her PhD.

# SELECTED SUSSEX RESEARCH PROJECTS IN LIFE HISTORY OR LIFE WRITING

Full details of related publications, funding, partnerships and impact for members' research are at the links below and available through their faculty profile pages.

# Virus of Hate: Responses to Fascism in Psychoanalysis, Surrealism and Modernism, led by Dr Hope Wolf.

The Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research contributed to a Centre for Modernist Studies one-day conference hosted by the De La Pavilion, Bexhill, on 11th January 2018. The conference explored the relationship between creativity, psychic life and politics in the first half of the twentieth century. As part of the exhibition, Hope Wolf gave a tour of the exhibition *A Tale of Mother's Bones: Grace Pailthorpe, Reuben Mednikoff and the Birth of Psychorealism*. The exhibition, which was based on Hope's archival research, explored the lives and works of a couple who were not only experimental Surrealist artists and psychoanalytic thinkers, but also prolific life writers.



Installation still from A Tale of Mother's Bones: Grace Pailthorpe, Reuben Mednikoff and the Birth of Psychorealism, De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill. Photo: Andy Keate

The exhibition paired their autobiographical self-reflections, and biographical excavations of one another's inner lives, with their artworks for the first time since the 1930s. Other papers in the conference also explored life writing themes. Helen Tyson discussed Marion Milner's autobiographical works, Sally Alexander spoke about D.W. Winnicott's work with mothers, Keston Sutherland explored current and historical debates about 'free speech', and there were readings of writing by Virginia Woolf, Hugh Sykes Davies, Salvador Dali, W.H. Auden, Leonora Carrington and many more. Rosie Cooper, Head of Exhibitions at the De La Warr Pavilion, who worked on the exhibition with Hope, introduced the venue. Jacqueline Rose offered a concluding response to the conference. The exhibition went on to Camden Arts Centre, London, and will be touring again to Newlyn Art Gallery and the Exchange, Penzance, in October. A book has been published to support the exhibitions.

- Conference: <u>https://www.dlwp.com/event/virus-hate-responses-fascism-psychoanalysis-</u> <u>surrealism-modernism/</u>
- Book: <u>http://shop.dlwp.com/product/a-tale-of-mother-s-bones-exhibition-catalogue</u>

# Reanimating data: Experiments with people, places and archives, led by Professor Rachel Thomson

Funded by the ESRC Transforming Social Science initiative and undertaken in collaboration with Niamh Moore (Edinburgh), Sharon Webb & Ester McGeeney (Suees) and Alison Ronan (Feminist Webs), the project concerns 'Archiving, revisiting and reanimating the data from the 1988-90 Women Risk and AIDS'. What changes and what stays the same over 30 years for young women, feminism and sexual health?

The Reanimating Data project is a collaboration between academics, archivists and activists interested in young women's sexual health and empowerment. The aim is to archive, share and reanimate this material as way of exploring change and continuities in intimate lives over a 30-year period. The project is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and involves the Universities of Sussex and Edinburgh and the community archive Feminist Webs.



Rachel Thomson is a sociologist by discipline whose research

interests include the study of the life course and transitions, as well as the interdisciplinary fields of gender and sexuality studies. She is a methodological innovator and is especially interested in capturing lived experience, social processes and the interplay of biographical and historical time.

# Jill Craigie: Film Pioneer, led by Professor Lizzie Thynne

Since Autumn 2018, Lizzie Thynne, Professor in Film, has been leading an exciting project on the life and work of Jill Craigie (1911– 1999) in collaboration with Co-Is, Yvonne Tasker (UEA) and Sadie Wearing (LSE).

*Jill Craigie: Film Pioneer* is a three-year research project exploring the career of Jill Craigie, one of the first women to make documentaries in the UK. Her work, often overlooked in film history, encompassed innovative films, a feature, journalism and writing for the screen and as well as a passionate history of the women's suffrage movement.

Craigie's career as one of the UK's earliest women documentary makers, and suffrage historian, has long been eclipsed in public memory by her role as the wife of former Labour leader, Michael Foot. The project has been awarded £723,000 to explore what her life history reveals about the social and industrial factors which



constrain and sometimes, enable, women's involvement in film production and how her career might interrogate exiting histories of British documentary.

Key outputs will include an experimental film biography, directed by Thynne and a book, co-authored by Tasker and Wearing. The project builds on Lizzie's previous work in creative film biography including in her film *Playing a Part: the Story of Claude Cahun* (2005) and *On the Border* (2012).



I 'Jill Craigie (seated to left of camera) on the set of *Out of Chaos*, 1944) from the director's scrapbook, Women's Library'

# The Business of Women's Words: Purpose and Profit in Feminist Publishing 2018-2021, led by Prof. Margaretta Jolly



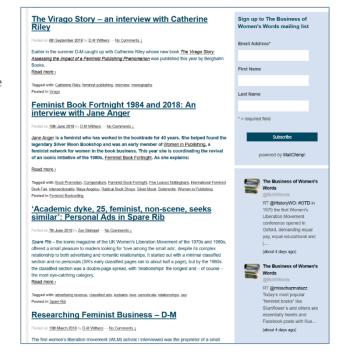
The dramatic story of the feminist publishing revolution during the UK Women's Liberation Movement [WLM] of the 1970s and 80s is our focus in a research project funded by the Leverhulme Trust at £401,000. The study looks at the contrasting histories and fortunes of Virago Press and *Spare Rib* and explores how WLM activists called upon cultural and creative business activities to help promote

their aims despite feminists' general antipathy and sometimes hostility to capitalist methods and ideologies.

This groundbreaking account of feminist enterprise and business is led by <u>Dr Margaretta Jolly, Dr Lucy</u> <u>Delap</u>, Reader in Modern British and Gender History at the University of Cambridge and Dr Polly Russell, Lead Curator of Contemporary Politics and Public Life at the British Library. Research Fellows <u>Zoe Strimpel</u> and <u>D-M Withers</u> bring further expertise in feminist and women's history and culture.

This year's work has included interpreting oral history archives at the British Library and collecting twelve new interviews of key figures in feminist publishing history.

Our summer Symposium at Cambridge University stimulated new conversations about lives in publishing. Read more about it on our blog: <u>http://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/businessofwomenswords/</u>



# Merchants and Miracles: Global Circulations and the Making of Modern Bethlehem led by Dr Jacob Norris

*Merchants and Miracles* is an AHRC funded project exploring modern Bethlehem and its history of global connectivity. The project will produce a book on the life of one merchant from the town, and an archive that makes publicly available a large collection of digital objects relating to Bethlehem and its global diaspora. It is a collaborative project led by historian Jacob Norris.

*Merchants and Miracles* documents the transformation of Bethlehem in the 19th and 20th centuries as a result of its residents' global circulations. In this period merchants from the town travelled to all corners of the world selling devotional objects and souvenirs produced in Bethlehem.

**Update on the project:** The Planet Bethlehem Archive project held an

international symposium at the University of Sussex on 24 April 2019 titled "Digital Arab Diasporas". The conference brought together archivists, artists, academics and activists from across the Arabicspeaking diaspora to discuss the ways they are preserving and sharing the stories of Arab migrants and diaspora communities. The event will include a keynote speech from Prof Akram Khater of North Carolina State University, as well as speakers from Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Somalia, Algeria, UK, USA and Sweden.



**Workshop:** Over the course of June and July 2019, the Planet Bethlehem Archive team trialled a series of educational workshops at the University of Sussex titled "Making History with Digital Archives". These



workshops were held in partnership with the Sussex Widening Participation team which works to improve access to higher education. The Planet Bethlehem workshops invited year 10 students (aged 14-15) to the University of Sussex to take part in interactive sessions in which they explore the Planet Bethlehem Archive using tablets, and work collaboratively to reach their own interpretations of the materials they find.



# Connected Histories of the BBC, led by Professor David Hendy

Connected Histories of the BBC is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The project's core aim is to bring into the public realm some of the hidden treasures of the BBC's own oral history archive – some 600 or so interviews with former members of staff, few of which have been available for researchers or members of the public until now. BBC Connected Histories is also working with other three other partners - Mass Observation, the Science Museum Group, and the British Entertainment History Project – so it can enrich the BBC's own story by providing a new level of access to a wide range of other material and resources.



As part of this, it supports **100 Voices that Made the BBC**. This now includes six websites: Elections, The Birth of TV, Radio Reinvented, People, Nation, Empire, Pioneering Women and The BBC and World War Two. Two more will be created before 2021, the BBC's centenary year. Each website feeds into debates about the BBC's role in and through public life, and this year focus on the BBC and the 'long war' from World War Two to the Cold War and beyond. Listen here to oral history clips and share your own memories of the BBC. https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/100-voices/ww2/memories

The project is based at the Sussex Humanities Lab (SHL) in the University of Sussex and is led by Professor David Hendy. Other University of Sussex researchers on the project include Dr Alban Webb of SHL, Professor Margaretta Jolly, the Director of the Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research, Dr Anna-Maria Sichani, Tim Hitchcock, Professor of Digital History and Denice Penrose, Project Administrator. The project blog is here;. https://connectedhistoriesofthebbc.org/

# Women in Colour History, led by Dr Alexandra Loske

# Colour and Cruelty: Honoring artist and colour theorist Carry van Biema and Marvellous Mrs Merrifield

CLHLWR researcher and administrator Dr Alexandra Loske continued her research into women in colour history, in particular early examples of colour writers and theorists, such as the little-known British artist Mary Gartside (active 1780s-1810), Victorian translator and polymath Mary Philadelphia Merrifield (1804-1889) and Carry van Biema (1881-1942), a Dutch-Jewish artist and art historian, whose life and work were obliterated by the Nazis.

An article by Loske on three women colour writers, including Mary Gartside and Carry van Biema, was published by the ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne, as part of the <u>http://colorlibrary.ch/</u> project.



Carry van Biema aged 15, picture: www.joodsmonument.nl

Following a display about Brighton-based Merrifield at Brighton Museum in 2017/18 Loske has curated a second, smaller display on her life and research into colour and natural history at the Booth Museum of Natural History in Brighton for duration of 2019.

Loske has included the stories and legacies of Gartside, Merrifield, van Biema and other women in her substantial book Colour: A Visual History (Tate/Ilex/Smithsonian, 2019) and has been invited by the University of Edinburgh to present a research paper on early women colour historians in January 2020. In September 2019 Loske gave a talk on Merrifield as a Brighton pioneer at a public event hosted by the Regency Society of Brighton and Hove.

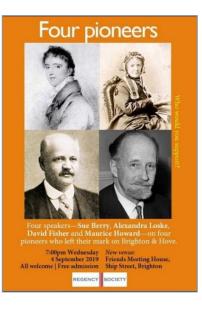
#### The Marvellous Mary Merrifield

May to December 2019 Free admission

Mary Philadelphia Merrifield (1804-1889) was a remarkable self-taught artist, naturalist and writer who spent most of her life in Brighton. She made a significant contribution to colour and pigment research in the 1840s. Later she was actively involved in the creation of the natural history collections at Brighton Museum and became an expert in marine algae.

This small display celebrates Merrifield's contribution to scientific research by women in the 19th century.





# The Afterlives of Protest, 2018-2020

This AHRC-funded network, led by **Dr Joanne Garde-Hansen**, with coinvestigator **Dr Red Chidgey and Workshop Lead Dr Pollyanna Ruiz**, brings together archivists, curators, heritage managers, artists, activists and researchers to explore the preservation of protest memories as civic, cultural and personal resources. The project takes a memory studies perspective on social justice struggles in order to understand how protest images, texts, materials and actions are recirculated and



remembered. This interdisciplinary network is a collaboration between the University of Warwick, King's College London, the University of Sussex and the University of Loughborough.

# Recovering Post-War Women's Vanguardism – Anna Mendelssohn: Artist, Activist, & Feminist Life Narrator, Prof Sara Crangle

Professor Sara Crangle in the School of English has applied for a British Academy Mid-Career fellowship to develop her exciting work on the Anna Mendelssohn archive, which she brought to Sussex's Special Collections. If the funding application is successful, the project will include oral history work and attention to Mendelssohn's unique approach to autobiographical writing.

# **Further selected Sussex research projects**

- <u>Creative Interruptions: marginalized communities, arts, oral history</u>
- <u>New Pathways: A Psychogeographical Exploration of Lewes</u>
- True Tales from the Old Hill: Lewes Life Writing
- Hearing her: Oral histories of women's liberation in China and the United Kingdom
- <u>Claire Langhamer: The English in Love: The Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution</u>
- Sacred Communities: Connected Practices Across Place and Time
- Places for All? A Multi-Media Investigation into an English City
- Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project
- 'Deprived White Community'? Social Action in Three Norwich Estates.1930-2005
- Integrating history and ecology to sustain a living landscape

# **VISITING RESEARCHERS**

# Visiting Researcher Simone von Büren

Our new visiting researcher in 2018-19 was Simone von Büren, critic and a lecturer at the Swiss Literature Institute and also the theatre department of Berne University of the Arts HKB. Her visit was funded by the Swiss–European Mobility Programme.



Simone studied English and American Literature (MA) and Developmental Psychology (BA) at Berne University as well as Devised Theatre (BA) at Dartington College of Arts in Devon.

As a dramaturg she has worked in opera, among others with director Christof Loy (*Alceste*, Aix-en-Provence 2010), and in contemporary devised theatre with several Swiss theatre companies and choirs for whom she often wrote texts. She has recently collaborated with the composer Christian Henking on a staged composition based on poetry and letters by Austrian poet Georg Trakl ("In eines Spiegels Bläue", Basel, February 2019). And she is currently working with artist

Mats Staub on his latest long-term project *Death and Birth in my Life,* which opens in Basel on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2019, continues in Hanover on 20<sup>th</sup> June and will be shown in Manchester in September 2019.

Since 2007 she has been a lecturer and mentor in the writing and theatre departments at Berne University of the Arts where she is currently co-directing an institution-wide project on sexism, power and the arts, offers numerous trans-disciplinary projects on text and performance, and where she started a research project on co-authorship and unstable dramaturgies in contemporary performances of biography.

# Former Visiting Researcher Phyllis Dannhauser

Phyllis Dannhauser is a lecturer in the Department of Journalism, Film and Television at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa, where she obtained a PhD, on autoethnography of using storytelling and filmmaking to overcome marginalisation in both social and academic contexts.

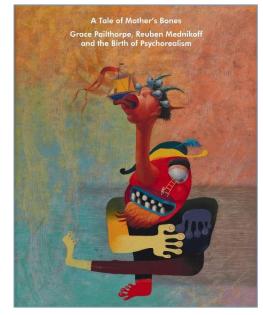
Phyllis was a Visiting Research Fellow at MFM, supported by the CLHLWR during the Spring term of 2018. Dannhauser is currently writing up her research as: 'Finding your place through story: an autoethnography of a storyteller and filmmaker in academia'.



# **SELECTED PUBLICATIONS in 2018/19**

For a more comprehensive list of publications see: <u>http://www.sussex.ac.uk/clhlwr/publications</u>

- Best, Clare (2019), *Each Other* (Waterloo Press)
- Best, Clare (2018), *The Missing List A Memoir*. (Linen Press)
- Callaghan, Joanna and Kerrigan, Susan (2019) The impact of filmmaking research. Media Practice and Education, 19 (3). pp. 229-242. ISSN 2574-1136
- Jolly, Margaretta. *Sisterhood and After: An Oral History* of the UK Women's Liberation Movement, 1968-Present. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Jolly, Margaretta. "Survival Writing: Autobiography Vs. Primatology in the Conservation Diaries of Alison Jolly." *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 34, no. 4 (2019).
- Hendy, David (2018) *Afterword radio modernisms: features, cultures and the BBC.* Media History, 24 (2). pp. 283-287. ISSN 1368-8804
- Hitchcock, Timothy (2018) Digital affordances for criminal justice history. Crime, History & Society, 21 (2). pp. 335-342. ISSN 1422-0857



- Hughes, Ed and Thynne, Lizzie (2018) *Symphonic Visions: music for silent films by Ed Hughes*. [Video]
- Langhamer, Claire (2018) 'Who the hell are ordinary people?' Ordinariness as a category of historical analysis. Transactions of the Royal Historical Society. 28. pp. 175-195. ISSN 0080-4401
- Langhamer, Claire (2018) *Mass observing the atom bomb: the emotional politics of August 1945.* Contemporary British History. ISSN 1361-9462
- Langhamer, Claire (2019) 'Trust, authenticity and bigamy in twentieth century England,' In: Barclay, Katie, Meek, Jeffrey and Thomson, Andrea (eds.) *Courtship, marriage and marriage breakdown: perspectives from the history of emotions.* Palgrave, London. (Accepted)
- Langhamer, Claire, Noakes, Lucy and Siebrecht, Claudia (2019) *Introduction: total war: an emotional history.* In: Langhamer, Claire, Noakes, Lucy and Siebrecht, Claudia (eds.) *Total war: an emotional history. Proceedings of the British Academy.* Oxford University Press, Oxford. (Accepted)
- Loske, Alexandra (2019) *Colour: A Cultural History* (Tate/Ilex) [with chapters on Mary Merrifield and Carry van Biema]
- Loske, Alexandra (ed.) (2019) Pale Fire New Writing on the Moon (The Frogmore Press)
- Loske, Alexandra and Robert Massey (2018), *Moon Art, Science, Culture,* London: Octopus Books.
- Loske, Alexandra (2018), 'Trois femmes cherchent la quadrature du cercle chromatique vers 1800-1930 / Three Women Squaring the Color Circle between ca. 1800 and 1930', in Under the Rainbow, ECAL/University of Art and Design Lausanne, pp.223-267.

- Newport, Emma (2019),'Intimate publics and post-hum[an]ous life writing: Digital Dismembering and Remembering in Cyberspace' Life Writing & Death Cluster for the European Journal of Life Writing, ed. by Clare Brant (2019).
- Newport, Emma (2019), 'Brief Encounters: Curating GIFs, Memes and Social Media for Short Story Life Writing', *New and Unusual Ways of Writing Lives*, ed. by Jo Parnell (University of Newcastle, Australia), Palgrave-MacMillan (2019)
- Newport, Emma (2018), 'The Fictility of Porcelain: Making and Shaping Meaning in Lady Dorothea Banks's "Dairy Book".' Eighteenth-Century Fiction, vol. 31 no. 1, 2018, pp. 117-142. Project MUSE, muse.jhu.edu/article/704845. ECF: https://muse.jhu.edu/issue/39139
- Norris, Jacob (2018), 'Saint Marie-Alphonsine and the Resurrection of Jubra'il Dabdoub', Jerusalem Quarterly 73 (Spring 2018), pp.10-41.
- Page, Jeremy (2018) *London Calling and Other Stories* (Cultured Llama)
- Robinson, Lucy (2018) '*Thoughts on pride: no coal dug.*' Open Library of Humanities. ISSN 2056-6700
- Thynne, Lizzie (2018) 'Memory, subjectivity and maternal histories', in *Un'Ora Sola Ti Vorrei* (2005), *Histoire d'un Secret* (2003) and *On the Border* (2012). In: Arnolde-De Simine, Silke and Leal, Joanne (eds.) *Picturing the family: media, narrative, memory*. Bloomsbury Academic, London, UK, pp. 41-65.
- Thynne, Lizzie (2018) 'Unravelling family fictions: stories we tell, daughter rite and my life without me'. In: Marchevska, E (ed.) *The Maternal in creative work: intergenerational discussions on motherhood and arm*. Taylor Francis, London, UK.
- Thynne, Lizzie and Hughes, Ed (2018) *Brighton: symphony of a city*. [Video]
- Thomson, Rachel, Berriman, Liam and Bragg, Sara (2018) Researching everyday childhoods: time, technology and documentation in a digital age. Bloomsbury, London. ISBN 9781350011748
- Wolf, Hope (2018), <u>Scaling war: poetic calibration and mythic measures in David Jones's In</u> <u>Parenthesis.</u> In: McLoughlin, Kate and Das, Santanu (eds.) The First World War: literature, culture, modernity. British Academy.
- Wolf, Hope (2019), A Tale of Mother's Bones. Gail Pailthorpe, Reuben Mednikoff, and the Birth of Psychorealism.

### **Cross-university events and seminar series**

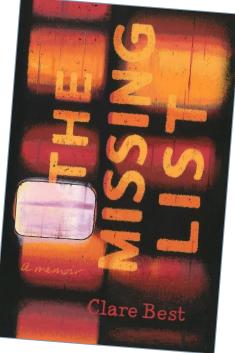
# Clare Best's *The Missing List* and *Life Writing Projects*: Quests for truth in the age of truthiness

#### Wednesday 17 October 2018

CLHLWR presented Clare Best and her new memoir *The Missing List.* Clare Best has been haunted all her life by dark family secrets. When she agreed to help her dying father record his memoir, she embarked on an urgent quest for the truth. This brought particular ethical and aesthetic challenges, weaving together her father's words, his cinéfilm footage, her own journal entries and scraps of childhood memory.

Clare's reading was followed by a presentation from Professor Lyn Thomas, curator of *Life Writing Projects* (see below), which publishes creative and experimental representations of lived experience.

Together, we debated questions of perspective, identity and art central to the task of life narration in any media, as well as the challenge of finding truth in an age when it is arguably threatened, paradoxically, by 'truthiness'.



This event was jointly organised by the CLHLWR and the School of Media, Film and Music at the University of Sussex. It was supported by the John Smith Bookshop and open access publisher REFRAME.

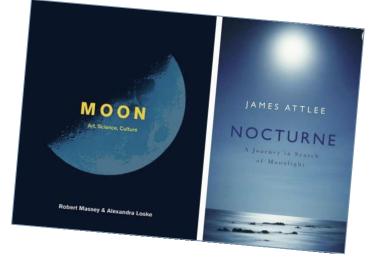


# Moon Life Stories - Psychogeography beyond Earth With James Attlee, Robert Massey, and Alexandra Loske

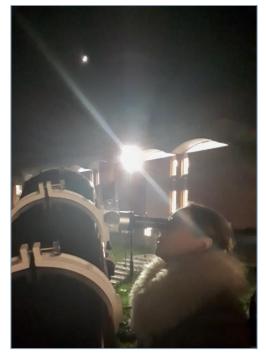
Thursday 13 December 2018, Arts A, University of Sussex

Writer James Attlee explored what humanity loses in the perpetual day of contemporary society, drawing from his acclaimed *Nocturne: A Journey in Search of Moonlight*, followed by considering the Moon's own history, from its violent birth to the moon landings, to a red Moon at the time of climate change.

This event also proudly featured art historian and CLHLWR researcher Dr Alexandra Loske in conversation with Dr Robert Massey, Deputy



Executive Director at the Royal Astronomical Society, celebrating the launch of their book *Moon: Art, Science, Culture.* The three writers discussed how the Moon influences our everyday life, its role in human history and culture, and how the Apollo Missions in the 1960s and '70s imprinted themselves on our collective and



individual memories.

Sussex University astrophysicist Dr Darren Baskill offered a response and invited speakers and the audience to have a look at the Moon through a professional telescope.



### **Classes, courses and conferences**

# Beyond the Family Tree: Writing, Curating and Presenting Your Family's Past

# The Keep Archives

This practical creative writing course was designed to help individuals work imaginatively with their family archives, which might include letters, journals, documents, photographs, artworks and objects. Led by author and life historian Shivaun Woolfson, the sessions enabled participants to develop a narrative approach and explore ways of telling their story, while Keep staff offered advice on finding, interpreting and caring for family archives.

This year's course followed up last year's pilot and attracted another really interesting group of people. As last year, they were inspired by their family 'archives', such as photographs and albums, but also objects including marionettes and a leopardskin hat worn by one participant's mother on her wedding day. Also as last year, the course ended with readings by all members with invited friends and family, and new this year, the group collaborated on the creation of display in The Keep's reference room , using some of their own archive material.

The CLHLWR supported funding and promotion of this course, which quickly sold out.



# When does biography begin?

# Led by Simone von Büren, Bern University of the Arts

11 June 2019, University of Sussex

How can we draw, shape, dramatize, and write about the lives of others? What events in a subject's life do biographies tend to privilege? And when does biography begin?



Inspired by the work of Swiss artist Mats Staub, Simone von Büren from Berne University of the Arts, Hope Wolf and Margaretta Jolly gave a four-hour workshop on *When Does Biography Begin?* 

Simone, who has collaborated with Staub as his dramaturg, presented his long-term, conversationbased Mats Staub '21 - Memories of Growing Up', Photo: ©Benno Seidel

video, audio and/or text installations and pointed out his interest in the process of remembering and narrating experience as such.

The workshop, attended by 26 people from different fields, combined the lecturers' inputs with practical exercises inspired by Staub's work. In one of them, participants were asked to answer questions with numbers only, which showed the nature of numbers as both deeply personal and highly abstract, as well as the relation between the said and the unsaid.

Responding to Staub's online collection *Ten Important Events In My Life* Hope Wolf drew on her own research on life writing to reflect on Staub's editorial work and the kinds of materials he put together. How does presenting interviews in an art installation rather than in an archive transform

how they are read, listened to and viewed? Can and should they be analysed and patterned, and what is gained and lost by doing so? Hope also reflected on the questions Staub asked. Are the most important events in our lives those we do not remember or think of as particularly significant?

Margaretta Jolly then reflected on interviews as a method of life writing and asked how far work like Staub's video installation 21 – *Memories of Growing up*, in which participants talk about when they turned 21, reveals universal life story patterns and in what ways contributions to his project were culturally specific? And how problematic and/or sensible might it be to apply one and the same approach to different cultural contexts?

A lot of questions came up in discussion: Are these installations for the participant or the viewer? Who gets to be interviewed and why? Is there a political dimension to these participatory projects that give a voice to people whose life stories would otherwise not be heard? What is the effect of Staub's poetic editorial work that makes viewers fill in the gaps in the narrative? Do these installations trigger participants' and viewers' self-awareness? And what is the importance of Staub's growing archives as oral history beyond the specific projects?

Mats Staub's latest project *Death And Birth In My Life* will be shown at Sick! Festival in Manchester, 18-25 September 2019.

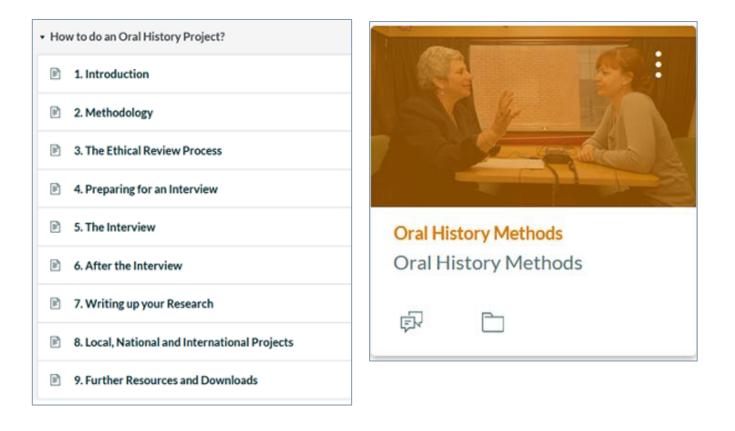


Mats Staub's Death And Birth In My Life, Kaserne Basel, June 2019

# **Oral History Methods: New Canvas site for all at Sussex**

This site is a guide to help undergraduate students, postgraduate students and researchers through the process of doing Oral and Life history research at the University of Sussex. It is meant as a brief introduction to help those who are thinking of doing an oral history project, and those who would like a refresher. It contains links to the University's Ethical Review Process, and to other online resources including the Oral History for Public Culture doctoral training course supported by CHASE funding and the CLHLWR in 2015.

Any one registered at Sussex can be given access to the site. Please contact <u>h.ludikhuijze@sussex.ac.uk</u> if you would like to be enrolled.



# **Projects and partnerships**

Life Writing Projects



Following on from *New Pathways: A Psychogeography of Lewes* (2016) *Life Writing Projects* is an ongoing collaboration between the CLHLWR and Reframe. It was devised and is curated by Professor Lyn Thomas and designed by Dr Tanya Kant with the invaluable support of Reframe Managing Editor Professor Catherine Grant.

*Life Writing Projects* is about creative representations of lived experience that set their own rules rather than following the conventions of genres such as memoir or biography. The projects selected for publication here all involve writing, but they may also explore the relationship between writing and photography, sound or visual art, film, or video.

Our contributors, who include new and established writers, artists and poets, embrace the concept of lifewriting as a project, working within a set of self-imposed constraints, in order, in Michael Sheringham's words 'to allow something unforeseen to happen'. They explore their lives and the lives of others through the lens of clothes; body; books and place.

The site was published in early September 2017 and continues to evolve. In 2018-19 Lyn Thomas has published a new array of creative and experimental representations of lived experience as curator of *Life Writing Projects.* This includes Jenni Cresswell's 'The Black Beaded Dress', Clare Best's multi-media *Breastless* and an excerpt from Lyn's <u>Clothes Pegs</u>, in which stories of class and gender identity are 'pegged' onto items of clothing.

http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/lifewritingprojects/

# Sussex Art History at 50

The oral history of the art history department of the University of Sussex



Documents, publications, photographs and ephemera provided by one of the interviewees

Over the last two years the CLHLWR has been advising and working with the Department of Art History on carrying out an oral history of the department in preparation for its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The project is directed by Dr Flora Dennis with Dr Alexandra Loske as researcher, who has so far been interviewing twelve current and former members of faculty, support staff and students, including Marcia Pointon, Maurice Howard, Penny Jones and David Allan Mellor. The artist Julian Bell provided memories of his father Quentin Bell's time at Sussex University in the first years of the Department of Art History. The project explores questions such as the role of Sussex in the development of Art History over the past 50 years and the ways in which Art History at Sussex has been shaped by its interdisciplinary context. It asked participants to discuss what for them is distinctive about Art History at Sussex.

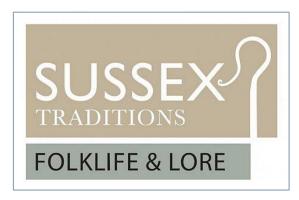
A celebratory event with an all-day symposium took place at the Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts at the university on 25 November 2017. Speakers included some of the interviewees, and a further interview, with Evelyn Welch, was recorded on the day.

Collectively and via social media the Department of Art History has been collecting photographic memories related to the department from current and former students and staff. The CLHWLR is now working with the Department of Art History on a related event about the Oral History project itself, which is scheduled for 2020. All interviews have been transcribed in summaries and Alexandra Loske is creating a web presence on the Art History website.

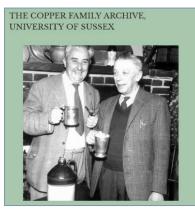
# Sussex Traditions - Folklife and Lore

Building on our successful joint conference June 2018, CLHLWR has committed to continuing support for this exciting the HLF-funded local community project and cultural charity "Sussex Traditions". We are currently planning a follow-on to the fantastic Locating Women in the Folk conference we co-produced in 2018.

Founded in 2015, Sussex Traditions aims to gather and share traditions handed down by the people of the county: arts and activities, beliefs customs and crafts, songs and stories. Sussex Traditions will connect local communities to their past, provide them with a fascinating learning resource, and encourage them to develop, nourish and sustain the culture of Sussex and its people into the future. The University of Sussex is proud to be custodians of The Copper Family Archive as well as the archive of Dr Reg Hall, folk and popular song collector and commentator,



both held in Special Collections and involving significant use of oral history.



The Copper Family, originally from Rottingdean, are deservedly the most famous traditional singers from Sussex, and their family archives contain numerous recordings of family members and friends from the last sixty years. Bob Copper was also a fieldworker for the BBC in the 1950s and recorded numerous singers in both Hampshire and Sussex. He was also an award winning writer and received an MBE in 2004. The photo shows the cousins Bob [L] and Ron Copper standing in front of the fireplace at the Central Club in Peacehaven.

www.thecopperfamily.com

With thanks to Sussex Traditions and the Copper family for use of this photograph

# Hastings Heritage and Art Trail

Hastings Heritage Trail launched in Autumn 2018. It is an interactive walking tour featuring ten central Hastings locations that have stayed largely unchanged for at least 25 years. The trail has been created by Hastings-born artist Maxine Beuret. Each place has been chosen for its fascinating history with a focus on design. The trail is supported by 10 signs, a leaflet with a children's brass rubbing and social media.



Beuret has photographed each location, with a research-based approach using elements of ethnography and design history, with an expressive response to place and aesthetics. At each trail location In Situ design collective has designed a unique cube display point featuring photographs & text – to create an engaging depiction of each place in its own special atmosphere. Inspired by the trail, users are encouraged to create their own videos and photographs, which will also be displayed along the trail and on the website.

The CLHLWR has been proud to support this project through offering oral history training with Sarah Hitchins from Spoken Memoirs. <u>See http://hastingsheritagetrail.co.uk/</u> Instagram: *hastingsheritagetrail* 

# The Crucible: oral histories of Royal Sussex County Hospital

Brighton & Sussex University Hospital NHS Trust and The Nimbus Group have launched a new initiative for collecting memories and stories about Royal Sussex County Hospital, to capture its heritage and share the role it has played in the lives of Brighton & Hove residents, including staff, patients and the wider community.

This opened as *The Crucible: A History of Royal Sussex County Hospital*, an exhibition at Jubilee Library in Brighton of archival materials that reviewed the history of the hospital from the 19th century to now. The exhibition brings together photographs, drawings, letters, oral histories and new artworks from across the hospital's almost 200-year history. It celebrates the impact the hospital has had on workers, patients and the community, and will be a unique opportunity to see some of these documents before they are archived at The Keep. Some celebratory refreshments will be provided. The hospital's history was also celebrated as part of a symposium taking place at Jubilee Library on 20 September: https://thecrucible.org.uk/events/.

Alongside this Strike a Light – Arts & Heritage are also holding events to gather oral histories from people about the Royal Sussex County Hospital, details here: https://strikealight.org/projects/current-projects/brighton-hospital-3ts-oral-history-project/bsuh-oral-histories-wanted/



The CLHLWR has supported this initiative drawing on its work with Our Hospital, Our History: Voices from Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals in 2010-2011, documented in: <u>Our Hospital, Our History: Voices</u> from Brighton and Sussex University <u>Hospitals</u>

# Highlights of Mass Observation activities over the year

 Protect and Survive: Britain's Cold War Revealed at The National Archives 4 April – 9 November. Material from the Mass Observation Archive is on display at the National Archives as part of their Protect and Survive: Britain's Cold War Revealed exhibition in The Keeper's Gallery until the end of November 2019. The exhibition marks the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. As part of the National Archives' Cold Season, Claire Langhamer (Professor of History at the University of Sussex and Mass Observation Archive Trustee) will be giving a talk on how Mass Observers responded to a Directive on the 1945 atom bomb.



• Mass Observation asked their writers about charities and the welfare state in the Spring 2018 Directive

and the responses to this played a significant part in the study. Mass Observation has been a partner in this 3-year ESRC funded project which has looked at two transformational moments of the welfare state; the time of the Beveridge Report in 1942 and the subsequent establishment of welfare service in Britain and then the 2010s at a time when welfare services were being re-shaped. 'In 2018 thoughtful, reflective and critical responses to Directive 111 by the Mass Observers have enabled us to compare the voice of the public in 2018 and 1947. The 1947 cohort of Mass Observers answered the same questions New Trustee for the Archive. 111'.

- The Mass Observation Archive is delighted to be working <u>Carers Centre for Brighton & Hove</u> on the <u>12th May project</u> this year. The Carers Centre for Brighton & Hove is the city's local, life-changing carers charity. They recently celebrated their 30th anniversary. Since 1988 they have been providing family carers with emotional support, advice and a well-deserved break from their caring role. They are a rich resource capturing their everyday lives. The diaries are also available for researchers at The Keep.
- To keep up to date on our activities and collections please visit <u>www.massobs.org.uk</u> and <u>www.thekeep.inf/events</u>

# **CLHLWR MEMBERSHIP**

The CLHLWR's Working Party involves scholars at different career levels across the University, with a growing number of professors. They participate in the Centre to promote publications, seek grant partners or share expertise, for example in creative life narrative practice, life history methods in education, or oral history projects. They also support the Centre as a network for postgraduate students. <u>http://www.sussex.ac.uk/clhlwr/people/list/group/centre-working-group</u>

Students are welcomed as 'student associates' and are encouraged to present at postgraduate conferences which we organise in collaboration with the University of Brighton's Centre for Memory, Narrative, Histories. <u>http://www.sussex.ac.uk/clhlwr/people/list/group/student-associates</u>

We also maintain a small group of external advisors with international reputations in the field, who may be called upon for further support in grant applications, conference planning, connection with the <u>International Auto/Biography Association</u> or <u>International Oral History Association</u>. http://www.sussex.ac.uk/clhlwr/people/list/group/advisory-group-contacts

Visiting Fellows may apply, subject to approval: <u>http://www.sussex.ac.uk/clhlwr/research/fellowships</u> We hold an Annual General Meeting at which year plans are presented by the Director for discussion.

1.	Dr Sara Jane Bailes	<u>s.j.bailes@sussex.ac.uk</u>	School of English and Drama; MO
2.	Jenna Bailey	jenna.bailey@gmail.com	Visting Fellow, Oral history, biography, memoir
3.	Joanna Callaghan	J.Callaghan@sussex.ac.uk	Deconstruction, Film as philosophy, Film production, Practice-based research
4.	Dr Sam Carroll	s.carroll2@brighton.ac.uk	Oral historian; Representative from Memory, Narrative, History Centre, University of Brighton
5.	Rachel Cole	R.S.Cole@sussex.ac.uk	The Frogmore Press, <i>True Tales from the Old</i> <i>Hill</i> , Editor, Sussex Centre for Language Studies
6.	Dr Fiona Courage	f.p.courage@sussex.ac.uk	Special Collections Manager (The Keep)
7.	Dr Sue Currell	S.Currell@sussex.ac.uk	Reader in American Literature (English, Sussex Centre for Cultural Studies, American Studies)

#### Working party 2019

8.	Dr Flora Dennis	<u>F.Dennis@sussex.ac.uk</u>	Art and design, Domestic interiors, Early modern Italy, History of sound, material culture, Music, Dept. of Art History
9.	Prof. David Hendy	d.j.hendy@sussex.ac.uk	Oral histories of the BBC; media historian; sound studies
10	Prof. Ben Highmore	<u>b.highmore@sussex.ac.uk</u>	MO; everyday life; School of Media and Film
11	Prof. Tim Hitchcock	t.hitchcock@sussex.ac.uk	Digital lives; big data and life history; 18 <sup>th</sup> century working class lives
12	Dr. Rose Holmes	r.holmes@sussex.ac.uk	Postdoctoral researcher; History; Lives of German Jewish refugees
13	Dr Celia Hunt	C.M.Hunt@sussex.ac.uk	Life writing; Independent scholar
14	Prof. Margaretta Jolly	<u>m.jollγ@sussex.ac.uk</u>	Life writing, oral history; MO; MFM
15	Dr Tanya Kant	T.Kant@sussex.ac.uk	Digital lives; designer for Life Writing Projects
16	Dr Claire Langhamer	c.l.langhamer@sussex.ac.uk	MO, School of History
17	Dr Mark Leopold	m.a.leopold@sussex.ac.uk	Biography in social anthropology; demonology and writing dictators' lives.
18	Dr Alexandra Loske	<u>A.Loske@sussex.ac.uk</u>	Administrator CLHLWR, Researcher and Associate Tutor in Art History (School of HAHP)
19	Dr Liz McDonnell	e.j.mcdonnell@sussex.ac.uk	Sociology of personal lives; everyday life; asexuality and identity.
20	Dr Jonathan Moss	J.Moss@sussex.ca.uk	Politics; oral histories of women at work; Trade Unions
21	Dr Emma Newport	E.Newport@sussex.ac.uk	Therapeutic uses of life writing.
22	Dr. Jacob Norris	J.Norris@sussex.ac.uk	Global history, Imperial/Colonial History, Middle East and African history, migration studies, Palestinian history
23	Dr Kate O'Riordan	K.ORiordan@sussex.ac.uk	Multimedia life story; School of Media and Film
24	Jeremy Page	J.N.Page@sussex.ac.uk	The Frogmore Press, <i>True Tales from the Old</i> <i>Hill</i> , Editor, Sussex Centre for Language Studies
25	Kirsty Pattrick	K.Pattrick@sussex.ac.uk	Manager of Mass Observation (The Keep)

26	Dr Lucy Robinson	l.robinson@sussex.ac.uk	Digital documentary; life history; School of History
27	Prof. Ben Rogaly	B.Rogaly@sussex.ac.uk	Oral history; School of Geography
28	Dr Darrow Schecter	D.Schecter@sussex.ac.uk	Reader in Critical Theory (History) Director of Student Experience (School of History, Art History and Philosophy)
29	Dr Deborah Schultz	d.schultz@sussex.ac.uk	Visual life story; Holocaust history. Centre for German Jewish Studies
30	Prof. Dorothy Sheridan	<pre>dorothysheridan@gmail.com</pre>	MO Trustee and former director; life history; QueenSpark Books
31	Prof. Lyn Thomas	lynjthomas@sussex.ac.uk	Memoir and creative life writing; Annie Ernaux; School of Media and Film
32	Prof. Rachel Thomson	r.thomson@sussex.ac.uk	Life history methods; life course studies; School of Education
33	Lizzie Thynne	L.Thynne@sussex.ac.uk	Documentary; biography; filmmaker; School of Media and Film
34	John Walker	j.walker@sussex.ac.uk	Deaf life history; Sussex Centre for Language Studies
35	Dr Alban Webb	a.webb@sussex.ac.uk	BBC oral history; School of Media, Film and Music
36	Dr Russell Whiting	R.Whiting@sussex.ac.uk	Alternative Spiritualities/Religion; Use of life story in social work
37	Dr Hope Wolf	h.wolf@sussex.ac.uk	Modernism and Life writing; psychoanalysis; diaries; e-diaries

# STUDENT ASSOCIATES AND INTERNS

1.	Camilla Bostock	C.Bostock@sussex.ac.uk	Postdoc in History; oral history
2.	Laurence Clennett-Sirois	Graduated	Graduate in Digital Life Narrative
3.	Laura Catherine Cofield	lc397@sussex.ac.uk	PhD Student Representative
4.	David Geiringer	<u>Graduated</u>	DPhil in History; oral history
5.	Juliet Jacques/Georgina Buckell	Graduated	Fiction and/vs life writing; trans representation
6.	Benjamin Jones	Graduated	Graduate in Oral History
7.	Emily Priscott	ejp28@sussex.ac.uk	PhD Student Representative
8.	Yvonne Salt	<u>y.salt@sussex.ac.uk</u>	DPhil in Geography: Love Migration and Narrative Methods

9.	Hannah Vincent	h.vincent@sussex.ac.uk	Creative life writing; New Writing South
10.	Rosalchen Whitecross	rw306@sussex.ac.uk	Creative life writing in prisons; Sociology
11.	Adam Whitehall	a.whitehall@sussex.ac.uk	DPhil in MFM; psychogeography, film; Lead for New Pathways project
12.	Shivaun Woolfson	Graduated	DPhil in History; Holocaust studies
13.	Helen Dixon	h.c.dixon@sussex.ac.uk	Creative life writing; feminism; Nicaraguan/South American studies
14.	Matthew Jones	Mj301@sussex.ac.uk	Oral History/History
15.	Andrew Poole	a.c.poole@sussex.ac.uk	Education, oral history and life history
16.	Hannah Ludikhuijze	H.Ludikhuijze@sussex.ac.uk	Creative life writing, African studies
17.	Una Richmond	U.M.Richmond@sussex.ac.uk	Art history, oral history of women artists
18.	Helena Aziz	T.Aziz@sussex.ac.uk	English; Creative-critical life writing

# SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT

In December 2013 CLHLWR set up a Facebook page and a Twitter account in order to increase global networking, promote our events, widen our target audience, and to provide other channels for disseminating information about our events and related activities. It has since proven a very useful tool indeed, especially for promoting events and publications. Both social media accounts are managed by the Administrator Alexandra Loske.

The number of Facebook followers and general reach increased slowly but steadily, as is to be expected for an established social media network. As in the year before, there was a noticeable increase in Twitter followers in the last year, which suggests that Twitter is still a good medium for promoting specific events and for networking in general. Facebook activity increases at peak academic year periods and when we advertise specific events and dips in the summer vacation, as can be expected. We promote reciprocal retweeting with institutions such as The Keep, Mass Observation, Brighton Museum, local publishers, other University of Sussex groups and national and international Oral History groups and organisations.

- Facebook 'followers' or 'likes' (all organic, i.e. not paid for): 408 (as of 10 September 2019) as compared to 346 in September 2018
- Twitter followers: 678 (as of 10 September 2019) as compared to 534 in September 2018
- E-listserve: 444 members (as of 26 September 2019)



Facebook and Twitter page screenshots (10 September 2019)





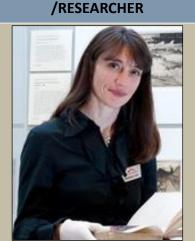
# DR ALEXANDRA LOSKE DR HOPE WOLF JOLLY ADMINISTRATOR ASSOCIATE

The CLHLWR team

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PROF









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