ANNUAL REPORT

CENTRE FOR LIFE HISTORY AND LIFE WRITING RESEARCH

2014
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 and has evolved complex methodologies which use as well as analyse the life narrative in all its forms.

Our aims are therefore to promote the study of life history and life writing; to promote the use of life narrative-based methodologies; to encourage practice-based research where appropriate; to foster ethical relationships and empowerment through informed uses of life story work.

Selected current and past research projects

- Hearing her: Oral histories of women’s liberation in China and the United Kingdom
- Sacred Communities: Connected Practices Across Place and Time
- Places for All? A Multi-Media Investigation into an English City
- Our Hospital, Our History: Voices from Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals
- Ivy Benson and Her All-Girls Band
- ’Deprived White Community’? Social Action in Three Norwich Estates, 1930-2005
- Integrating history and ecology to sustain a living landscape
- Archiving and Reusing Qualitative Data
- Biodigital Lives: making, consuming and archiving the lives of techno-science
- Deaf Life Histories
- Fifty Voices, Fifty Faces: The Oral History of the University of Sussex
DIRECTOR’S REPORT

STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS
This year we have relaunched from the School of Media, Film and Music after many years in the Centre for Continuing Education. This has allowed new colleagues and research synergies, including in sound studies, public culture and documentary practice. We have also strengthened ties with Gender Studies, Art History and History, cooperating on research events and developing a postgraduate network with school representatives. The longstanding partnership with the Mass Observation Archive and Special Collections has also been invigorated, with a new short course and masterclass series. Our Visiting Fellow this year, Dr Jenna Bailey of the University of Lethbridge, has brought cooperation with Canadian scholars, and her work in the area of public and literary life history affirmed our ongoing community engagement.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS
The budget for the CLHLWR remains healthy. We brought forward a balance, accrued through research funds generated by the Director, and profit made from conferences. In line with other Research Centres funded by MFM, we also received annual core funding towards events and running costs, for which we are very grateful. Careful management and separation of rollover from annually given funds means that we look forward to continuing a full programme of activities in 2014-15, particularly in relation to strategic partnerships that will generate further research.

OPERATING HIGHLIGHTS
Stable funds and support from MFM has enabled hire of two part time administrative assistants this year, Dr Alexandra Loske, an art historian with specialisms in biography and life history documents, and Angela Campos, an oral historian with specialisms in the history of war. Their work has been invaluable to the flourishing of the CLHLWR this year, including in developing a social media presence.

LOOKING AHEAD
In addition to our regular programme of seminars, short courses and conferences, next year will see the renewed development of research bids, including developing the oral history of the BBC, to cooperate further with Chinese scholars who partnered with us in 2012-13, and to strengthen our research on human rights and life narrative. Our annual conference will be on art historical uses of life narrative. We welcome all who would like to get involved in the challenge and fun of life story-based art, method and analysis.

Dr Margaretta Jolly
Director
June 16, 2014
CROSS-UNIVERSITY SEMINAR SERIES

Tuesday 28 January, 12.30-2.00pm, A108
Dr Jenna Bailey, CLHLWR Visiting Fellow:
‘Playing on the Margins of History’: Ivy Benson and Her All-Girls Band.
This event was co-sponsored by the Department of History.

Wednesday 12 February, 12.30-2.00pm, Richmond Lecture Theatre
Dr Stephen Weiss: ‘War, Death and Second Chance’
Presented in association with the Centre for the History of War and Society.
Introduction by Professor Rod Kedward.
Thursday 6th March, 12.00-1.45pm, SB 309
Professor G. Thomas Couser: ‘Why Memoir Matters’
Prof. Couser is the author of *Memoir: An Introduction* (OUP, 2011) and a leading author of many books on family memoir, disability and the ethics of life writing.

Wednesday 19th March 12.30-1.45pm, Friston 117
Professor Paul Thompson and Dr Margaretta Jolly, ‘Feminist Pioneers of Social Research and of Everyday Experiment: An Oral History Perspective’

Wednesday 9th April 2014, Jubilee Building Room G22, 16.00-17.30pm
Professor Joe Moran: ‘Television and the History of Everyday Life’
This seminar was organised in conjunction with the Public Culture Research Hub.

Thursday 22 May 2014, 12.30-1.45 pm
Dr Kate Murphy: ‘Woman’s Hour: Telling History, Being History, Making History’. This event was co-sponsored by the Centre for Gender Studies.
CLASSES, COURSES AND CONFERENCES

Wed 19 March 4-5.30pm, Silverstone SB 121
Postgraduate Masterclass: ‘Oral History Interviewing From the Inside’
A Conversation with Paul Thompson and Joanna Bornat.

This masterclass was organised as an open discussion of classic oral history methods and themes, including the particularities of oral history interviewing, ethical issues, themes for research, reanalysis and archiving.

Friday 4 April 10.30 – 5.30pm, Creativity Zone, Pevensey III, Room C7.
Public and Personal Archives: Creative Negotiations
This free workshop explored the relationship of public and personal in different life story projects which prioritize listening, sound and voice. The aim of the event was to generate discussion around the work by allowing hour-long slots for each presentation.
Presentations: Nicky Bird (Glasgow School of Art), Melanie Friend, Ed Hughes, Lizzie Thynne and Margaretta Jolly. Presented by the Family Ties Network and Centre for Life History and Life Writing. Supported by the Leverhulme Trust.
What students said… “lateral thinking, finding the tiny details of lives” …
“superb primary evidence, ideal for a writer” … “thoroughly enjoyable, enriching”

Friday 2nd May 2014, 1.30pm, The Keep
The Mass Observation Diaries with Penny Summerfield and Dorothy Sheridan
This event comprises two talks by Penny Summerfield and Dorothy Sheridan, along with a chance to look at some original diaries from the Mass Observation Archive.

Friday 6 June 2014, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m., The Keep
‘Researching Uniqueness’: How Life History Research Entails Singular Questions and Special Outcomes
The 6th annual Brighton-Sussex postgraduate conference
Jointly organised with the Centre for Memory, Narrative, Research, University of Brighton.
## CLHLWR Working Party 2014

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Social Media

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 is proving a very useful tool indeed and the followers are increasing steadily.

Facebook ‘likes’: 72 (as of 16 June 2014)
Twitter followers: 182 (as of 16 June 2014)
E-listserve: 428 members (as of 16 June 2014)
The CLHLWR team

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TO SEE WHAT WE’RE PLANNING FOR 2014, VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR FOLLOW US ON TWITTER

@CLHLWR

The Centre for Life History & Life Writing Research at the University at Sussex explores life narrative as art, history and social practice.

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/clhlwr