ANNUAL REPORT

CENTRE FOR LIFE HISTORY
AND LIFE WRITING RESEARCH 2015
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 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.
DIRECTOR’S REPORT

STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS
This has been our second year based in the School of Media, Film and Music and we have continued to strengthen our research in the creative and critical arts and media. This includes two exciting practice-based projects: New Pathways: A Psychogeography of Lewes and True Tales from the Old Hill, an outstanding collection of new life writing, in partnership with Frogmore Press. We see such projects as springboards for research bids while also acting in the immediate term as opportunities for internships and publication opportunities for postgraduate students and staff across the university and community. We have also continued to provide a network for Sussex’s many outstanding life narrative research projects, ranging from Hendy’s oral history of the BBC to Rogaly’s cultural geography of migration stories; Thomson’s longitudinal studies of ageing to Hitchcock’s collective digital biography London Lives, 1690-1800. Such research provides important opportunities for public cultural and policy engagement. For this reason, the CLH LWR was pleased to participate in the University’s ‘Impact Day’ in June, showcasing the ways that life narrative research can contribute to social change. One area in which this has historically been vital has been Holocaust Studies and we have been pleased this year to collaborate with the Centre for German-Jewish Studies in three public research seminars on Holocaust memories and legacies. This was also our seventh year of partnering with the University of Brighton’s Centre for Memory, Narrative, History, Mass Observation Archive to host a postgraduate scholars’ conference. Our theme, The Internationalism of Life History, analysed the global force of the field. In another year of vigorous research exchanges within and without the university, through training, creative practice, research projects and bids, we celebrate Sussex’s distinctive and international reputation for life narrative work.

FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS
In line with other Research Centres funded by MFM, we received annual core funding towards events and running costs, for which we are very grateful. This also allows us to look forward to continuing a full programme of activities in 2015-16, particularly in relation to strategic partnerships that will generate further research. Dr Alexandra Loske, an art historian with specialisms in biography and life history documents has been a core member of the CLH LWR’s operations, while Dr Angela Campos stepped down to work on the oral history of the Science Policy Research Unit. We look forward to her return as we launch a CHASE-ESRC funded doctoral training programme in oral history next year.

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 working with the new Digital Humanities Lab in exploring digital 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, July 2015
SUMMARY OF YEAR’S EVENTS

Selected Sussex research projects in life history or life writing research

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

- New Pathways: A Psychogeographical Exploration of Lewes 2014/15
- True Tales from the Old Hill: Lewes Life Writing 2014/15
- Stanmer House Oral Histories 2014/15
- Public and Personal Archives: Creative Negotiations, University of Sussex, 4 April 2014
- Hearing her: Oral histories of women’s liberation in China and the United Kingdom
- Claire Langhamer: The English in Love: The Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution
- David Hendy: The BBC: a Century in British Life, an authorised one-volume history of the Corporation
- 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
- 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
- Archiving and Reusing Qualitative Data
- The Committee of 100: An Oral History research project
- Biodigital Lives: making, consuming and archiving the lives of techno-science
- Ivy Benson and Her All Girls Band - Jenna Bailey Project
- Women and Work: Progression Through Learning
- Deaf Life Histories
- The Genome Incorporated: Constructing Biodigital Identity
- Fifty Voices, Fifty Faces: The Oral History of the University of Sussex

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Bailey, J - Can Any Mother Help Me? (Faber and Faber, 2007)
- Einhorn, B - Citizenship in an Enlarging Europe: From Dream to Awakening, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)
- Hitchcock, Timothy, Crymble, Adam and Falcini, Louise (2014) Vagrant lives: 14,789 vagrants processed by Middlesex County, 1777-1786, [Dataset]
• Hunt, C - *Writing: Self and Reflexivity*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) (with Fiona Sampson)
• Newell, S - *The Forger’s Tale, The Search for Odeziaku* (Ohio University Press, 2008)
• Perks, R & Thomson, A (eds) - *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006)
• Sitzia, L - ‘Catching Stories: oral histories of the Brighton Fishing Community’, *Institute of Historical Research, on-line journal* (2005)
• Thynne, Lizzie (2013) *On the Border* [Video]
CROSS-UNIVERSITY SEMINAR SERIES

30 September 2014 - UK film première 'With God Against Man' with discussion.

‘With God Against Man’ is a documentary film by Russian-American filmmaker Semyon Pinkhasov. Tracing the footsteps of the refugees of 1940, the film follows a group of families who received visas from Aristides de Sousa Mendes – Portuguese consul in Bordeaux in June 1940 – on a June 2013 remembrance "journey on the road to freedom" from Paris to Lisbon. This documentary raises important questions about how, beyond public commemoration, the events of June 1940 remain for many an integral part of an intensely experienced private family memory. The following discussion was led by Dr Angela Campos.

This film screening was sponsored by the CLHLWR, with the support of the Centre for the History of War and Society and the Sousa Mendes Foundation.
Dr. Shivaun Woolfson travelled to Lithuania to trace her ancestry and discovered the story of a people. *Holocaust Legacy in Post-Soviet Lithuania: People, Places and Objects*, the wonderful new book she has written about her experience, uncovers the lives of a remarkable group of elderly Holocaust survivors against a backdrop of ongoing Holocaust dismissal. She invited us to look through the lens of their stories and memories, their biographical objects and their ‘special’ places with deeply moving results. Incorporating psychology, anthropology and ethnography, the book has, at its core, a deeply spiritual approach which marks it out from conventional historical treatments of the subject. To launch the book,
Shivaun delivered a short presentation highlighting the remarkable histories of the individuals at the heart of her research, including slide-show, video clips and short readings from the text.

This free event was sponsored by CLHLWR and the Centre for German-Jewish Studies.

25 November 2014 - Progressive/Traditional: Two sides of Boarding School
Mikey Cuddihy & Professor Judith Okely discussed their memories of schooldays

Chair: Professor Sue Thornham

Mikey Cuddihy is an American born artist and writer. After the death of both her parents when she was nine, she was sent to England where she attended Summerhill, a small progressive school, run by A.S. Neill, in Suffolk. She left school at 16, and studied art, eventually settling in London. She recently wrote her memoir *A Conversation About Happiness* (published by Atlantic Books in 2014), based on her childhood, her time at Summerhill in the 1960s and early years as an artist.

Professor Judith Okely is a Research Associate at the School of Anthropology, Oxford, and the author of *The Traveller-Gypsies, Simone de Beauvoir: a re-reading, Anthropology and Autobiography* and *Anthropological Practice: fieldwork and the ethnographic method*. She recently revisited the all-girls boarding school she attended on the Isle of Wight. Aspects of this were explored in *Own or Other Culture* and subsequent publications, including 'The filmed Return of the Natives to a Territory of Terror'. One lasting memory was being told by the headmistress that she would be 'selfish' to go to university because this would be 'depriving a more worthy person of a place'.

A recording of this free event was made available on the CLHLWR website.
28 January 2015 - Autobiographical Performances of Memory

This three-part talk looked at performances of memory in film, writing and oral history. We examined the ways in which the narration of personal memory reveals aspects of gendered social and cultural histories from the post-war period to the UK women’s movement of the 1970s and 1980s.

We focused on how subjectivity is formed and performed through the construction of narratives of family history, particularly in relation to material objects – photographs, clothes, places, home movies. Material explored includes Stories We Tell (Polley, 2012) Clothes Pegs, (Thomas, 2013) (an autobiographical text on class and identity as recalled through clothes) and interviews from Sisterhood and After: The Women’s Liberation Oral History Project’ (a major oral history project led by Margareta Jolly, archived at the British Library). This was a joint Sussex Centre for Cultural Studies and CLHLWR event.

24 March 2015: Uncomfortable memories? On being German and not Jewish

Chaired by Dr Andrea Hammel, University of Aberystwyth.
This hugely popular event explored a number of questions dealing with family history and childhood memories in the context of twentieth century Germany.

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the bombing of Dresden in February 1945, the liberation of Auschwitz in January 1945, and in the wake of the British Museum’s hugely successful exhibition Germany—Memories of a Nation, which focused on ‘memories’ rather than ‘narratives’ precisely to capture the troubled and conflictual nature of German history, this event will feature three Germans of non-Jewish background and of different ages discussing their memories of growing up in post-war Germany and what being German means to them. In doing so, our intention is not to ignore or suppress the vital significance of German-Jewish memory but rather to foreground the question of responsibility and difficulty that those of non-Jewish descent carry with them, as inheritors and makers of Germany today. We addressed a number of questions, for example: How do different generations of non-Jewish Germans deal with Germany’s recent history? What effect do the events of the twentieth century have on attitudes to family history, memoir writing and identification with a nation’s history? How does one – indeed how should one – remember family members who were involved with the Nazis? How does one conduct ancestral research in the shadow of historical fascism? And what does it feel like to have grown up in a divided and then reunited country?

Prof. Edward Timms wrote the following report of the event for the Centre for German-Jewish Studies newsletter and has offered to work further with Alexandra Loske on the project:

Uncomfortable Memories?

On 24 March, at a seminar hosted by the University’s Life History Centre, the experience of ‘Being German but not Jewish’ was discussed by four German-born speakers now living in the UK. The picture that emerged was of a gradual normalization, with the anti-German attitudes of the Second World War (experienced by Sybil Oldfield while growing up as the child of a German mother and British father) giving way to the acceptance and indeed respect that Germans enjoy today in the eyes of a younger generation, not least for being so ‘efficient and punctual’. The art historian Alexandra Loske, who migrated to Britain in 1997, represented a middle position. While feeling completely at home in England, knowing that her father strongly approved of her move, she was aware that members of an older generation could never forgive or forget the bombing by the RAF of non-military targets like Dresden. A year researching the testimonies of Nazi perpetrators proved so stressful that she switched to a more rewarding subject (she has been awarded a doctorate at Sussex for her art-historical study of the Brighton Royal Pavilion). Presiding over the seminar (punctually and efficiently) was Andrea Hammel, warmly remembered as a former Research Fellow at the German-Jewish Centre, who is now Reader in German at the University of Aberystwyth. Andrea’s research has foregrounded the experiences of Jewish refugees, the ones fortunate enough to get away.
15 April 2015 Environment Stories: Double book launch with Centre for World Environmental History

Alison Jolly's THANK YOU MADAGASCAR and Simon Pooley's BURNING TABLE MOUNTAIN.

The CLHLWR, The Centre for World Environmental History and The Sussex Africa Centre at the University of Sussex organised a double book launch for Alison Jolly’s Thank You Madagascar and Simon Pooley’s Burning Table Mountain.

The books were introduced by Prof. Alan Lester and there were brief talks by Margaretta Jolly and Simon Pooley. Palgrave Macmillan publisher Jenny McCall introduced their new series Palgrave Studies in World Environmental History.

On 16 June 2015 The CLHLWR presented a panel at Sussex Impact Day:
Life Narrative and forms of impact

Life stories lie at the heart of journalism, heritage, human rights, medicine and more. This session consisted of a panel of researchers associated with the CLHLWR who use life narrative in their projects as object or method. Each speaker briefly outlined a project where life narrative has the potential for impact or has achieved impact, and to identify and discuss one key challenge and how it might be overcome, followed by further discussion of challenges, and potential solutions, with the audience. One aim of the session was to generate a good practice or FAQ document for future use by new projects.

The panel was chaired by Margaretta Jolly and comprised Lizzie Thynne (Reader in Film and Senior Lecturer in Media and Film Studies, University of Sussex), Claire Langhamer (Head of History and Professor of Modern British History, University of Sussex), Ben Rogaly (Head of Geography and Professor of Human Geography, University of Sussex) and Meg Jensen (Director of the Centre for Life Narratives, Kingston University).
CLASSES, COURSES AND CONFERENCES

1 October 2014: Content, Users and Communities: Going digital for who?
This was part of the MFM MA Masterclass programme. It was delivered by Siobhan Warrington, Director of Oral Testimony Works, chaired by Margareta Jolly, and co-sponsored by CLHWR.

8-9 May 2015: Two-day conference: Researching Sex and Sexualities
Directed by the Sussex Centre for Gender Studies with support from the CLHLWR.

The Researching Sex and Sexualities conference aimed to open up new conversations about doing research and being a researcher on sexual practices, lives and subjectivities. Researchers from across the disciplines shed light upon the multiple problems, possibilities and questions that arise from the lived experience of exploring this ostensibly private and intimate area of social life. The CLHLWR sponsored Ken Plummer’s keynote, in honour of Plummer’s outstanding contribution to the history of life narrative studies in addition to sexuality studies.

Friday 18 June 2015, Brighton University: The Internationalism of Life History Research in the 21st Century

The 7th annual Brighton-Sussex postgraduate conference was jointly organised with the Centre for Memory, Narrative, Research, University of Brighton and was fully booked, with a waiting list for places.

Keynote Speaker: Joana Craveiro

"The Living Museum of Small, Forgotten and Unwanted Memories" - on the comfort and discomfort of the particular and the private.
Other speakers: Annemarie Valdes (Loyola University, Chicago), Maria Gebbels (University of Brighton), Julius Baker (University of Sussex), Lorenza Ippolito (Independent presenter), Magdalena Weighhofer (University of Ulster), Life history narrative as public performance: an ethnography from Northern Ireland., Fearghus Roulston (University of Brighton), Sleiman El Haj (University of Gloucestershire)

PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

The CLHLWR initiated and developed two creative life narrative projects in 2015:

New Pathways: A Psychogeographical Exploration of Lewes
The CLHLWR is preparing a special audio/visual online publication with REFRAME titled 'New Pathways: A Psychogeographical Exploration of Lewes'.
As part of this project CLHLWR created a Drifting/Walking Group which met in the historic town of Lewes during March & April. The group collectively deep mapped varied zones simultaneously and the psychogeographic data of the event (records in audio, video, photography, GPS and text) is being curated to form a map documenting our collaborative adventure in time and space. This project will contribute to Adam Whitehall’s doctoral research and form the basis for future experimental life/travel writing research networks or bids at Sussex.
In collaboration with the Lewes-based Frogmore Press, CLHLWR is publishing a collection of outstanding new life writing. We were interested in true stories that reveal the mysterious and unknowable forces at work in our lives, in our family histories, in our minds and bodies, in our souls. In other words, true stories that sound like fiction. We received nearly 90 submissions and two interns currently enrolled on the MA in Critical and Creative Writing at Sussex have been appointed to help with the editorial process. A cover artist (a character who appears in one of the stories) has been selected and publication date is November 2015.
Stanmer House Oral Histories 2014/5

Local company Inroads Productions was awarded R&D funding through the Arts Council England’s Grants For The Arts Scheme to develop Stanmer, a brand new play by Sara Clifford. The CLHLWR has partnered with Inroads as advisor and co-funder as an exciting example of oral history in the service of the arts and public culture.

Getting involved: There will be plenty of opportunities to get involved by either supporting reinterpretation of the existing University oral histories or by taking part in collecting new oral histories of local residents to collect their memories of the House and park, and particularly the early days of the university, as well as family stories about working at the House.

CLHLWR MEMBERSHIP
Working party 2015

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### CENTRE FOR LIFE HISTORY AND LIFE WRITING RESEARCH

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### STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES AND INTERNS

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6. John Riches
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   QueenSpark Books; Development Director; oral history, life writing in the community

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 and the followers are increasing steadily, having approximately doubled since last year’s report. Both social media accounts are managed by the Administrator Alexandra Loske.

Facebook ‘likes’: 183 (as of 30 June 2015) - up from 72 in June 2014
Twitter followers: 309 (as of 30 June 2015) - up from 182 in June 2014
E-listserve: 433 members (as of 30 June 2014)
The CLHLWR team

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TO SEE WHAT WE’RE PLANNING FOR 2016, VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR FOLLOW US ON TWITTER or Facebook
https://www.facebook.com/clhlwr

@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