

# CENTRE FOR LIFE HISTORY AND LIFE WRITING RESEARCH ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

## Introduction

Life history and life writing research uses life story - from oral history or personal narrative to autobiography or biography - as a primary source for the study of history and culture. It is, of necessity, concerned with ethics and power relationships, and with the potential for advocacy and empowerment. It grapples with theories of memory, relationship and self-representation, and with debates about literacy and orality. It has evolved complex methodologies which use, as well as analyse, the life narrative in all its forms.

Many disciplines contribute to the field, including history, sociology, anthropology, literary philosophy, media & cultural studies and psychology. Researchers present their work in many forms, from academic publications to radio, TV and film, from auto/biographical drama and reminiscence work to digital and video presentations and exhibitions.

Sussex invites Research Centres to foster engaging research which connects universities and communities. The Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research designs events which:

- Support this goal and appeal to public audiences.
- Strengthen organisational, business and community partnerships.
- Create conditions which enable knowledge exchange and grant-making.

To further these goals we have proposed activities which:

- Could be run within a doctoral school or CHASE series event.
- Could be run tied to a funding opportunity and/or run as a show-and-tell within Research Portfolio templates.
- Could be pitched to the Sussex Festival of Ideas, or to a public partner with which the School has a relationship.
- Build relationships within the University and to other research centres.
- Support an oral history venture that showcases School and University expertise and connects with alumnae.
- Support research across the school in relevant areas.
- Build on regional identity and culture.
- Enable support for students/faculty who wish to use or learn about life writing, life history or oral history methods.
- Are publicised in the school newsletters and linked to school social media feeds; feed into the Research Institute site and programme.

We continue to work with The Great Diary Project, Strike a Light Community Heritage, the BBC, the British Library, the BFI and the Oral History Society. These are just some of the brilliant organisations for whom life narrative is a fascinating and core part of their business. This report gives some brief examples of our work over 2022/23, including:

- Ground-breaking research projects with diverse funding streams.
- Exciting, informative and free events, open to the public.
- Partnerships with community projects, businesses and organisations.

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## Events and project highlights 2022/23

### Standards for Digital Interventions in Holocaust Memory and Education with Viki Walden and Kate Marrison

**Sept 5th & 19th 2022:** Participatory workshops, organised as part of Viki's Digital Holocaust Memory project, and supported and attended by CLHLWR. Around 30 participants from different sectors including: Yale Fortunoff Archive, National Holocaust Centre, British Library, Freie Universtat Berlin, Centre for Life Narrative Kingston University. Helped promote our work to integrate Centres more closely with research projects and support grounds for future grant bids. Valuable practical and policy insights for knowledge exchange and impact.

### Narrating Feminist Lives in the Backlash Keynote by Margaretta Jolly

**September 2022:** At the Remembering Contentious Lives, Activist Memory Network conference University of Utrecht, Netherlands. Good strategic networking opportunity and connection with University of Utrecht.

### Blots, dots and spots in colour history: From Mary Gartside to Rana Begum Talk and presentation by Alexandra Loske

**March 2023:** A talk and presentation by Alexandra about the use of blots by women artists and colour theorists at the 5<sup>th</sup> Slade School of Art symposium **Colour & Poetry** (2023), with a forthcoming publication.



### Connected Histories of the BBC

with Margaretta Jolly, David Hendy, Alban Webb, Denice Penrose, John Hughes



**October 2022:** Joint event with prestigious partner institution, the BBC, at Broadcasting House, London, to publicise the Connected Histories of the BBC project: launch of digital catalogue of seven oral history collections, focus on nine themed BBC resources of curated clips, and a bespoke launch film. Also book event for *The BBC: A People's History*, by Emeritus David Hendy. Around 50 attendees from the BBC, AHRC and related networks: archivists, producers, historians, publishers, journalists. Attended and with a response by Prof Christopher Smith, Head of the AHRC.

### Life writing texts and contexts and the case of a publisher memoir Presentation by Margaretta Jolly

**October 2022:** For University of Oxford's Modern and Contemporary Literature Research Seminar. Networking with other speakers and hosts, including Prof Hermione Lee, Prof Patrick Hayes, Prof Max Saunders, King's College London Centre for Life Writing and Oxford's Centre for Life Writing.

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## Colour, Convalescence, Cosmos: The Late Watercolours of Dr Grace Pailthorpe Talk by Hope Wolf

**January 2023:** Online event for the College of Psychic Studies with around 25 participants. Hope presented on her long-standing research project. As with Alexandra Loske, Hope gives many public talks and CLHLWR/MAH seeks to boost publicity and audiences.

## Lives in Colour: Pioneering Women in Colour History Talks by Alexandra Loske

**February 2023:** In person event organised by the Eastbourne Arts Circle at Towner Gallery, a key partner for both School and University.

**March 2023:** Online event celebrating International Colour Day 2023 with around 50 participants. Organised by the Interdisciplinary Colour Association (ICA) Belgium.



## Trade Union Travellings: Your Next Life Writing Challenge Organised with Brighton Centre for Memory, Narrative, Histories



**March 2023:** In-person event with around 15 participants, including undergraduates and two members of the public.

Aimed to build on work of current Visiting Associate Rosalind Eyben, and connect with LPS and the Centre for Memory, Narrative and History at University of Brighton. With Jonathan Moss, Rosalind Eyben, Christian Høgsbjerg, Nathalie Thomlinson, Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, Sundari Anitha.

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

**March 2023:** In person, with participants from the school from ECRs to professors plus two members of the public. An initiative to explore 'work in progress', including memoirs, biographies, oral history or documentary methods, challenges of inheriting family archives, autoethnographic art history. The open house format worked well and has potential to promote more ambitious grant bids or collaborations.

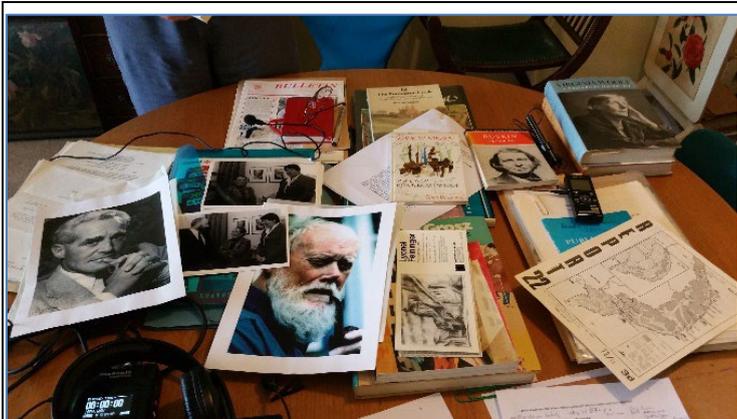
## Let's start with Fi Glover: Oral history and the Connected Histories of the BBC Presentation by Margaretta Jolly

**March 2023:** Online seminar for University of Oxford's Centre for Life Writing postgraduate seminar series. An excellent opportunity to promote the Connected Histories of the BBC project and archive, and to network with Oxford's Centre for Life Writing.

## It's Not Just About Pictures: The Oral History of Art History at Sussex Launch of archive collection, deposit of oral history archive in Special Collections

**June 2023:** Celebration and launch at The Keep, with Flora Dennis (project director), Alexandra Loske (interviewer to the project), Hope Wolf (interpreter/commentator) and Margaretta Jolly (advisory board member). Response by Maurice Howard (Emeritus) and Alice Corble (Library). Panel responses from three Art History undergraduates who had listened to the oral histories,

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chaired by Ben Burbridge. 35 participants including distinguished alumnae Julian Bell and other interviewees, Jane Harvell and Karen Watson from the Library. The Oral History of Art History at Sussex project started in 2016 and the archive will help promote Sussex's heritage and intellectual history. The CLHLWR aims to support archival work and oral history collections. These are often the interests

of professional bodies and institutions, as seen when the University's own oral history (2013) attracted specific interest in university oral histories. This event was featured in the Sussex Summer of Research programme.

## Let's start with Joan Bakewell: Women's Television History in the Connected Histories of the BBC project Talk by Margaretta Jolly

**June 2023:** At Doing Women's Film and TV conference at University of Sussex, directed by Professor Lizzie Thynne, with around 40 participants.

## Boyz 2 Men Sponsored headline event for the Brighton Book Festival 2023



**June 2023:** With authors Yomi Sode, Okechukwu Nzelu, Stephen Buoro, Nikesh Shukla, Brandon Taylor, Obiomo Ugoala, at Sallis Benney theatre, University of Brighton. The Brighton Book Festival grew out of a knowledge exchange event organised and led by Margaretta Jolly as part of her Business of Women's Words research project. The Boyz 2 Men

event offered community engagement with a non-academic audience (paid entrance) and Black/feminist creative and literary communities. It featured literary life narratives from a brilliant panel of Black authors. Two Brighton booksellers were involved – the Feminist Bookshop and Afrori Books. Both are key potential collaborators for the CLHLWR and the School. This event was featured in the Sussex Summer of Research programme.

## Angelica Kauffmann: Trailblazing Artist in Georgian Britain Lecture by Alexandra Loske

**July 2023:** Organised by the Eastbourne Arts Circle at the Towner Art Gallery (a key partner). An excellent community engagement opportunity with a non-academic audience (paid entrance).

## Consultancy Margaretta Jolly

**Sept 2022/May 2023:** Adam Matthews engaged Margaretta Jolly in 2021 as consultant to Women's Life Writing, a digital resource needing advice on archival resources and content. Involved online meetings in 2022 and an in-person meeting at the British Library in 2023. The CLHLWR's profile and platform supports such engagements, clearly part of school strategy.

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## In the pipeline for 2023/24

We've exciting plans and ideas for the new academic year. Here's a few to tempt you!

- **10 Oct [Class histories, university histories, oral histories](#):** part of the new Education Enhancement series, featuring the Mapping Mithras oral history project.
- **16 Oct [Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research Open House Autumn](#)** and Spring Terms: Building on the pilot in 2023, these will offer an accessible space for anyone wishing to talk about their project. This may build greater participation and Centre membership and support more targeted or ambitious aims such as bids, partnerships or skills-enhancement.
- **13 Nov [Algorithmic Autobiographies](#):** led by Dr Tanya Kant and Sandra Nelson with the Sussex Humanities Lab.
- **29 Nov [The Great Diary Project](#)** Dr Polly North, Director of The Great Diary Project, Bishopsgate Institute, will present, with response by Andrew Hadfield/Margaretta Jolly. In collaboration with English Colloquium and inviting participation from other diarists.
- **6 Dec [Making Something from Nothing](#):** with Susie Scott from Narratives of Nothing and Augusto Corrieri on lives unlived.
- **17 Jan [Fantasy Bid writing workshop](#):** A discussion and workshop with the DRaKE for grants, with guests also from Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth and the Centre for Modernist Studies.
- **6 Feb (tbc) [When does biography begin?](#)** Life writing workshop: We ran a well-attended afternoon workshop/talk in 2019 with our then Visiting Fellow under this title. A lighter-touch reprise is proposed as part of the Research Institute themed 'Beginnings' series.

Faculty in general are developing projects with life narrative content or methods include Helen Tyson (notebooks); Joanna Callaghan (autobiographical documentary); Piotr Cieplak (testimony, memory and film); Adrian Goycoolea (biomythography/VR film of Quentin Crisp); Alban Webb (BBC World Service Centenary); Rob Sharp (testimony/migrant lives, BA small grant); Mimi Haddon (Music for Girls); Jill Kirby (Menopause network); Tanya Kant (algorithmic autobiographies). We are always glad to be named as a supporter or help to develop bids.

We will continue our work to develop and strengthen international partnerships, such as with:

- International Auto/Biography Association (IABA) as Director Exec member.
- IABA-Europe including new connection with Centre for Storytelling, Turku, Finland.
- Ecrit-Soi, University of Rouen <https://ecrisoi.univ-rouen.fr/accueil> Margaretta Jolly and Hope Wolf were interviewed for a project comparing French with British and other European life writing research centres and practices.

We aim to update the CLHLWR website and enable it to be viewed via mobile devices. We will maintain our social media presence and links with, for example, the Mass Observation and Brighton Museums Group feeds. Thanks to Alexandra Loske for her diligence with this work. We will continue to use our Canvas site 'Oral History Methods'. It is open to anyone at the university and has been supported by postgraduate student Hannah Ludikhuijze.

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## Some of our members

<b>Director/s</b>	Prof Margaretta Jolly (Director) Media, Cultural Studies and Journalism Dr Hope Wolf (Associate Director) English	
<b>Core Members</b> (generally University of Sussex staff who regularly contribute to activities)		
Dr Alexandra Loske	Associate Researcher/Administrator	Art History; Curator of the Royal Pavilion
Dr Victoria Walden	SL; Memory/Testimony Studies	Media, Cultural Studies and Journalism
Prof Sara Crangle	Prof; Biography writing; archiving	English
Prof Lizzie Thynne	Prof; Auto/biography, film	Film/Creative Practice
Prof Ivor Gaber	Prof; Fictional auto/biography; witnessing	Media, Cultural Studies and Journalism
Prof Ben Rogaly	Prof; Migration life writing; oral history	Geography/School of Global Studies
Prof Rachel Thomson	Prof; life course studies; children/youth life writing; archives	Education/School of Education and Social Work
Dr Jonathan Moss	SL; Mass Observation; oral history; labour history	Politics/School of Law, Politics and Sociology
Prof Susie Scott	Prof; life history; narrative methods	Sociology/School of Law, Politics and Sociology
<b>Associate Members</b> (generally research students, external partners and visiting fellows)		
Rosalind Eyben	Visiting Associate Researcher	MAH/History
Ali Ramsey	Phd student; documentary; oral history	Film/Media Practice
Hannah Ludikhuijze	Phd student; prosopography; education	English/Media Plus
Prof Lyn Thomas	Professor Emeritus; editor of Life Writing Projects on REFRAME	Media, Cultural Studies and Journalism
Jessica Scantlebury & Kirsty Patrick	Mass Observation Archivist/Outreach	Special Collections; Library

We've previously advertised formally for Doctoral Associates, with a role description, support and platforms for presenting work, but students are busy and increasingly remote. We have had more success engaging doctoral students in occasional paid work, such as for the Oral History Methods canvas site, running oral history workshops and documenting events. As far as possible, this will continue. In 2022/23, Haley Moyse-Fenning was paid to support the Sisterhood and After oral history webpage update (from Jolly's consultancy fee), and we thank her for her work.

If you would like to join or be listed as a core member, please contact [clhlwr@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:clhlwr@sussex.ac.uk)

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