MESA 53

TABLE 53

Estímulo de la investigación en historia oral desde los archivos

Promoting oral history research from archives

CHAIR

Oriol Dueñas (Spain)

_____

Juliana Nykolaisyn (US):
“Voices from the archive: Promoting oral history collections at the Oklahoma State University Library.”

_____

Elizângela Carrijo (Brazil):
“El acervo del núcleo de investigación de historia oral de la Universidad de Brasilia: trayectoria y organización del NECOIM.”

_____

Hoda Elsadda, Maissan Hasan and Diana Ebd El-Fattah (Egypt):
“Documentation as Resistance: Egyptian Women’s Oral History Archive”
Voices from the archive: Promoting oral history collections at the Oklahoma State University Library.

Juliana Nykolaisyn
(US):

Abstract: The Oklahoma Oral History Research Program (OOHRP) at the Oklahoma State University (OSU) Library officially formed in 2007 with the purpose of documenting and making accessible the history of Oklahoma and OSU through oral history interviews. Since then, the Library has recorded hundreds of interviews based around projects which continue to fill gaps in the literature and provide insight into the rich history of the state. While many libraries house oral history collections, most often these resources are rarely highlighted beyond basic means. Over the years, the OOHRP has taken a proactive approach in terms of generating awareness of oral history efforts, with careful consideration to what happens after interviews are completed. A focus on multiple points of access to audio, video, transcripts, photographs, and other items generated from various projects allows the OOHRP to build interest and excitement beyond the physical walls of the library. This presentation will feature some of the ways the OSU Library promotes oral history collections including social media, radio, exhibits, QR Codes and developing community partnerships.

KEYWORDS: oral history, access, social media, technology, Oklahoma
As oral historians, we have the opportunity to ask questions, listen, and document the world around us. From the ordinary to the extraordinary, we are able to add to the historical record, fill gaps in information, and preserve memories for future generations. And while our work has great impact and meaning, sometimes our recordings become inaccessible, hidden, and lost from the world. Many factors can impact access, yet an archive should not become purgatory for our body of work. Archives continue to serve an important role in oral history preservation and in connecting users with content. Additionally archives should also be proactive in encouraging the creative reuse of oral history materials thus generating added awareness of collections, excitement, and the ability to challenge others in utilizing oral histories in new ways.

This paper will focus on the work of the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program (OOHRP) at the Oklahoma State University (OSU) Library. Through the years, the OOHRP has leveraged a variety of avenues in developing multiple points of access in an attempt to build awareness and encourage use of oral history materials.

Like many libraries, Oklahoma State University has traditionally served as a repository for extant oral history collections. These collections include materials donated as part of interview research surrounding scholarly activities such as the result of writing a book, class projects, or other local/community history efforts. In the early 2000s, the OSU Library took a turn in collection development with respect to the Women’s Archives housed in Special Collections and University Archives. This effort was to develop an oral history project with the goal of documenting the voices of women who survived the Dust Bowl in Oklahoma during the 1930s.

After exploring Dust Bowl research, it became evident that while women played an important role in keeping the family together, the disaster was almost always recorded from the male perspective. Thus work began in developing an oral history project to not only enhance the Women’s Archives at the OSU Library but also fill gaps in the literature regarding the experiences of women in the Dust Bowl. Over a period of two years, project investigators located and interviewed over one hundred women individually or in groups about what they recalled from living during the period of 1932 to 1940 in the areas of Oklahoma typically identified as the epicenter of the Dust Bowl. The women interviewed shared accounts of canning and home remedies, square dances and weddings, hobos, gypsies and bootleggers, rabbit drives, the killing of their cattle, and full details of coping with dust from what has been called the worst natural disaster ever. Interviewing on this project wrapped up in 2002. Transcripts were promptly produced, but the collection remained accessible on a limited basis until later years.

The OSU Library would eventually build upon these early interviewing efforts in developing a formal oral history program within the library. In 2007, the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program was officially founded with the purpose of documenting and making accessible the history of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University through oral history interviews. Since this time, the OOHRP has recorded hundreds of interviews across a wide variety of projects which continue to provide insight into Oklahoma history and culture. Major efforts include the Women of the Oklahoma Legislature Oral History Project, Oklahoma Women’s Hall of Fame Oral History Project, Oklahoma Centennial Farm Families Oral History Project, and The "Big Top" Show Goes On: An Oral History of Occupations Inside and Outside the Canvas Circus Tent, to name a few.

CONSIDERING ACCESS

When organizations or individual researchers engage in oral history interviewing, there is usually an outcome in mind. Oral history can help complement or expand collections. In addition, oral history can also be used as a method to engage in scholarly research resulting in books, journal articles, movies or documentaries, websites or multimedia presentations. More likely than not, the process of recording oral history interviews usually has a purpose or goal. Once the interview has served its intended purpose, the recorded materials are at the mercy of the researcher. While interviews may find their way into an archive
or cultural repository, there exists the possibility of recordings falling through the cracks, often lost or even destroyed.

Depositing oral history materials in an archive helps ensure not only long-term preservation, but also access into the future. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways from traditional avenues to incorporating new media technologies. While most repositories may include a record in their online public access catalog, sometimes these unique items still remain hidden to users. Thus, the notion of creating multiple points of access is important. By employing multiple points of access, a physical interview (or parts of it) can reach potential users through a variety of channels including social media, exhibits, radio, QR (quick response) Codes, search engine results, and emerging technologies on top of traditional in-house physical access.

**CREATING ACCESS**

Creating access begins with the original oral history materials. The OOHRP engages in a multi-faceted approach when designing levels of access to oral history content. First, materials are prepared for patron use. Full-text transcripts are readied as well as audio/video use copies. After interviews pass through various phases of processing, transcripts along with other materials (full audio, video segments, photographs, and/or other historical documents) are uploaded into the OSU Library’s content management system, CONTENTdm.

A project specific website is also developed featuring additional information such as brief biographies of narrators, listings of outside resources, and other helpful content. Visitors to OOHRP project websites will also find a variety of links which directly lead to transcripts, photographs, or audio within the content management system. Outside of the traditional web, the OOHRP has turned to social networking to add yet another level of access. By developing profiles on various social networking sites, the OOHRP is able to highlight oral history content and information to new publics and potentially new users of our rich primary source materials. Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and SoundCloud are all used in different ways and in combination with each other as compelling content is created from collections and subsequently repurposed across the different discovery platforms.

In addition to online efforts, creating physical oral history exhibits has also come into focus within recent years. With exhibit space increasing at the OSU Library, oral history content is regularly tapped as an important resource in helping to highlight our many unique collections. Oral history, unfortunately, does not tend to be visual appealing (especially if the recording is born digital). Visitors to a gallery may not be interested in reading a long string of text from an oral history transcript, but they could possibly be motivated to click on a QR Code and hear a narrator tell a story. Patrons may be moved by photographs that accompany or provide context to an oral history collection. Visitors may get excited about oral histories which feature a mix of elements, from short excerpts to other archival materials presented in a visual context. These include digital image scans of memorabilia, physical items or even photographs recorded by oral historians in the field. Additionally, the OOHRP has engaged in not only original exhibit creation but also participated in efforts organized by partner institutions looking for “voices” to accompany images in traveling exhibits or in art galleries.

Another way the OOHRP has worked to highlight collections and reach new audiences is through our partnership with public radio. The strength of a station rests with local broadcasting and oral history provides a great way to introduce diverse voices from our collections to a larger audience. Radio has also helped generate overall awareness of the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program which has opened up avenues of collaboration with others across the region.

A form of awareness that cannot be overshadowed is that of the OOHRP’s outreach mission. As a land-grant institution, OOHRP faculty members regularly engage with organizations throughout the state of Oklahoma in helping to not only educate others about oral history methodology but also in promoting collections housed at the OSU Library. Workshops, presentations, and classes are all important pieces of
the puzzle. In addition, we have worked with educators to create curriculum and lesson plans which encourage collection use with grade school level children, worked with partner agencies in developing print resources such as posters and newspaper supplements which specifically highlight OOHRP collections. All of these elements, from the physical to the virtual, adds to the growing network the OOHRP utilizes ingenerating awareness and creating access for potential users beyond the physical walls of the library.

**BEYOND THE INTERVIEW**

While access is usually an afterthought, it is an important component of oral history when we think about the legacy and longevity of an interview recording. As an interviewer, I am in the moment... ready to listen, ask informed questions and record history that may not be found in the books housed in my institution’s library. Access helps interviews not only live on, but provides the opportunity and the potential for others to learn from these rich materials now and into the future. We are at a unique time, technologically. We have the ability to not only reach our own patrons within the confines of our institutions, but also connect with others around the world. By highlighting our audio and video collections, such as oral history content, in traditional or not so traditional ways, we will be able to connect with new users, interested researchers, and provide important primary source materials to a new generation.
El acervo del núcleo de investigación de historia oral de la Universidad de Brasilia: trayectoria y organización del NECOIM.

Elizângela Carrijo
(Brazil):

Resumen: El Núcleo de Estudio de la Cultura, Oralidad, Imagen y Memoria (NECOIM) de la Universidad de Brasilia (UnB) existe desde 1987. Posee un acervo compuesto por más de 20 metros lineales de documentos procedentes de investigaciones universitarias sobre historia oral. Está constituido por fuentes sobre el patrimonio cultural de la ciudad y de Brasil. El objetivo de este artículo es presentar la trayectoria histórica de dicho núcleo y compartir los procesos y resultados de la organización de ese acervo, que pretende garantizar el acceso a la información por medio de la democratización de su contenido a la sociedad.

Abstract: The University of Brasilia’s NECOIM (The Study Core of Culture, Oral Communication, Image and Memory) was founded in 1987. Its collection has over 20 linear meters of documents coming from higher education researches and actions concerning Oral History. It is built by sources regarding Brasilia’s and Brazil’s cultural heritage. The purpose of this article is to present the core’s historical path and share the methods and results of this collection’s organization, which aims to provide access to information through the democratization of its content to society.
INTRODUCCIÓN
Los términos Documentos y Gestión de Documentos demandan aclaraciones sobre sus posibles sentidos cuando son evocados. Sin adentrarse en los debates teóricos, adoptamos algunos puntos de partida para fundamentar los análisis expuestos en este artículo. Así, la palabra “informar” es, en su significado etimológico, “dar forma a”. Esa acepción nos convida a pensar que “toda información presupone un soporte, ciertos trazos materiales (tinta, ondas sonoras, puntos luminosos...) y un código con el cual es elaborada” (MARTINO, 2010, p. 17). Es ese soporte el que denominamos documento, o sea, una unidad de registro de datos que se materializa en diversos soportes o formatos, según sugiere el diccionario de terminología archivística (2005, p.73) y las generaciones de historiadores afinados con los debates posteriores a la Escuela de los Anales.

Bajo esa perspectiva, el Archivo Central de la Universidad de Brasilia (UnB), enseña que la Gestión de Documentos puede ser un conjunto de procedimientos que garantiza un mayor control sobre las informaciones que determinado lugar produce y/o recibe, asociado a una guarda adecuada y segura y un rescate rápido de la información de manera que atienda adecuadamente a sus usuarios. La gestión documental actúa en todo ciclo de vida de los documentos, y debe definir normas y procedimientos técnicos referentes a la producción, tramitación, clasificación, evaluación, uso, archivo y destinación. Los Objetivos de la Gestión de Documentos: Racionalizar la producción de documentos; Mayor control del flujo de documentos y de la organización de archivos; estandarización de los procedimientos archivísticos; Aumento de la eficiencia administrativa; Asegura el acceso la información. (CEDOC/UnB, www.cedoc.unb.br, acceso 11 abr. 2013).

Ese entendimiento institucional ha dirigido el proyecto de gestión documental del Núcleo de Estudios de la Cultura, Oralidad, Imagen y Memoria (NECOIM/ UnB), aunque éste no esté administrativamente subordinado al Archivo Central.

En realidad, conocer y definir los propósitos de ese sector responsable de la regulación de los trámites documentales de la universidad ha sido relevante desde el inicio del proyecto, en 2011, no solo para demostrar respeto a las normativas institucionales y al conocimiento de aquellos que actúan en las áreas de la Documentación y de la Información, sino también para consubstanciar acciones y reflexiones en relación a la propia organización del acervo. Porque una de las características centrales de ese proyecto de gestión documental es la interdisciplinaridad, procedente del hecho de que los integrantes que constituyen el equipo con sus formaciones en Historia, Biblioteconomía, Archivística, Museología y Ciencia de la Información. El proyecto aún sigue en desarrollo y el propósito de estas páginas consiste en presentar el núcleo, el acervo y parte de los caminos recorridos por el proyecto.

EL NÚCLEO Y SU ACERVO
El Núcleo de Estudios de la Cultura, Oralidad, Imagen y Memoria (NECOIM) nace en 1987, con el nombre de Núcleo de Estudios del Centro-Oeste (NECO). Desde entonces es una unidad de enseñanza, investigación y extensión de la Universidad de Brasilia (UnB), vinculada administrativamente al Centro de Estudios Avanzados Multidisciplinares (CEAM). Tiene el objetivo de congregar profesionales de la comunidad académica, de instituciones públicas o privadas, así como miembros activos de la sociedad civil en torno a los aportes de naturaleza teórico-metodológica para trabajos que envuelvan las temáticas de la imagen, oralidad y memoria en sus interfaces con los domínios de la Historia y de la Cultura.

Las investigaciones y demás acciones académicas de los integrantes vinculados al núcleo resultan en documentos y datos que constituyen el acervo. El contenido de las fuentes producidas por el NECOIM se distingue por los abordajes teórico-metodológicos de la historia oral que se especializa en personajes y escenarios culturales no siempre valorizados por los medios de comunicación de masas en general.

Ese material del núcleo es constantemente usado en las aulas de los programas de graduación y post-graduación de algunos cursos de la UnB, así como en eventos científicos de asociaciones nacionales e
internacionales y balizadores de los actuales proyectos de investigación como, por ejemplo, los de la comunidad de los Kalungas/ Goiás bajo el liderazgo de la profesora Nancy Alessio Magalhães; los de la comunidad de los Pomeranos/ Espírito Santo bajo la mirada del profesor José Walter Nunes y de la comunidad de la Serra de la Mesa/ Tocantins con las profesoras Ana Lúcia de Abreu Gomes y Maria Lidia Bueno Fernandes.

En esos veintiséis años de existencia, el núcleo ha constituido un acervo cultural con más de 20 metros lineales de documentos. Hoy, distribuidos en dos salas de 9m² cada una, en el edificio del CEAM del campus Darcy Ribeiro/ UnB, el fondo congrega diferentes soportes: libros, periódicos, documentos académicos, fotos, films en cinta betacam, cinta u-matic, cinta VHS, entrevistas en cinta K-7, DVD, CD, disquetes, archivos digitales y otros.

Hasta 2011 ese material estaba almacenado, sin tratamiento, en cajas de cartón, estanterías de madera, cajones de mesas, carpetas de gomas, bolsas plásticas y otros varios recursos que de modo provisional se transformó en la práctica efectiva de guarda del acervo. La nítida dificultad para encontrar información y/o documentos; los inadecuados acondicionamientos y la precaria posibilidad de atender las demandas del grupo y de las comunidades en general promovieron las condiciones para la creación y ejecución del proyecto de gestión documental.

A lo largo de esos años de existencia del núcleo se produjo, se publicó y se guardó mucho. Sin embargo, poco se organizó, trató y/o promovió acceso público al material producido. De cualquier manera, en este proceso de evaluación que apunta ricos horizontes del contenido del acervo y, al mismo tiempo, límites del almacenamiento de la producción del NECOIM, es preciso recordar que no se trata de un cuadro aislado de las otras realidades de archivos, núcleos o centros documentales de otras tantas instituciones académicas, sean públicas o privadas, sean de la propia UnB o de fuera de ella. Una investigación sobre gestión documental e informacional en el ambiente universitario, realizada en la Universidad Estadual de Londrina (UEL) afirma que hay en esas instituciones el dilema de grandes masas documentales acumuladas, sobre todo en soporte de papel, guardadas sin tratamiento adecuado. En ellas están depositadas fracciones significativas de los registros de la historia de las organizaciones y no es raro, también, que existan valores técnicos, científicos, jurídicos, probatorios, y otros mezclados con una cantidad enorme de documentos sin valor alguno. [CALDERON et al, 2004, p. 100].

Ante ese contexto, la gestión documental es presentada como una acción necesaria en los espacios que producen y almacenan cultura, en especial cuando esos espacios son los de las universidades públicas ancladas en las responsabilidades democráticas y sociales, como es el caso de la UnB y sus núcleos de investigación, o más específicamente como es el caso del NECOIM con sus investigaciones. Con la intención de transformar ese cuadro el núcleo resolvió asumir los desafíos de realizar el proyecto de gestión documental en las condiciones del ambiente universitario.

GESTIÓN DOCUMENTAL: PROYECTO “ABRIGOS DE LA MEMORIA”
Desde 2011 el objetivo del proyecto de gestión documental del NECOIM ha sido organizar, tratar y preservar los documentos de contenidos culturales para diseminar y democratizar el acceso a la sociedad. Para ello, realiza las actividades por medio del Proyecto de Extensión de Acción Continua (PEAC), del Decanato de Extensión de la Universidad (DEX/ UnB), titulado “Abrigos de la Memoria en la Región de Brasilia”. Aunque las actividades no sean realizadas con la implicación de las comunidades externas a la universidad, el proyecto tiene su foco dirigido a ellas como público directamente beneficiado.

En ese sentido, en esos dos años el PEAC ha envuelto a profesionales voluntarios y estudiantes universitarios del curso de Museología (Mariana de Souza Santos – participante desde el inicio del
proyecto) y Archivología (Samantha Soares dos Santos y Naiara Ribero Gonçalves) para planear y realizar las actividades de gestión de más de 20 metros lineales de los documentos del núcleo. Obedeciendo las normas de la extensión universitaria, el proyecto cuenta con el apoyo continuo de la profesora Ana Lúcia de Abreu Gomes y ha recorrido a los conocimientos especializados y voluntarios de la bibliotecaria Edina Rodrigues Lima y de los archivistas Luciene Carrijo y Cleuter Godinho do Nascimento (con su equipo del Archivo Central de la Policía Militar de DF - PMDF). Esa acción multidisciplinar y la aproximación con variados profesionales de la Ciencia de la Información buscan crear camino de diálogo entre las áreas y garantizar calidad a los procedimientos técnicos en los diversos soportes informacionales del acervo (tesis, disertaciones, libros, periódicos, documentos administrativos, fotografías, films y otros).

Para alcanzar ese objetivo las actividades del proyecto fueron divididas en dos etapas: biblioteca y archivo. La parte de tratamiento de la biblioteca está en fase final, con la construcción de la política de colección, normalización de uso y división de responsabilidad entre los integrantes. Los procedimientos de organización, evaluación y selección de los documentos archivísticos aún están en pleno desarrollo. El comprometimiento y buena voluntad de los profesionales voluntarios son admirables, así como el apoyo e implicación de los investigadores del núcleo.

No obstante, incluso con esas personas envueltas no resulta fácil. Primero porque al tratarse de actividades realizadas con estudiantes, éstos precisan cumplir criterios y exigencias de los boletines académicos del Decanato de Extensión de la Universidad. Cuando son seleccionados son sensibilizados frente a las responsabilidades del proyecto y reciben capacitación para desempeñar sus actividades dentro del cronograma. Con todo, no todos atienden a las exigencias o consiguen permanecer durante mucho tiempo en el proyecto. Ese hecho obliga a que el ciclo de selección, entrenamiento y puesta en marcha sea reiniciado y los plazos ajustados a la cambiante realidad. Además de eso, la falta de presupuesto y de equipamientos; los trámites burocráticos lentos y la estructura precaria de los ambientes físicos y de los muebles de la universidad tornan aún más desafiantes los procedimientos y las etapas metodológicas de la gestión.

De cualquier modo, incluso en ese contexto con desafíos constantes, el proyecto ha avanzado. Los resultados parciales se muestran de la siguiente manera:

---

1 Otros estudiantes también colaboraron en este proyecto: Antônio Ferreira Maques Neto; Bruna Baldez Marques da Silva; Ida Carolina Camargo Vecchi Pacheco; Juliê Pena de Oliveira; Mônica de Souza Andrade y Thais Biancca Ferreira da Silva.

2 Estamos finalizando las negociaciones para llevar a cabo el contrato de Cooperación Técnica entre el Archivo Central de la Policía Militar del Distrito Federal (PMDF) y el Necoim/CEAM de la Universidad de Brasilia (UnB).
BIBLIOTECA

- Organización espacial del ambiente de trabajo (Mobiliarios específicos para biblioteca; bancos y mesas de trabajo; disposición del acervo y distribución de las estanterías).

- Adquisición de nuevos equipamientos tecnológicos (computadores; monitores; softwares para tratamiento y edición de imágenes y de sonidos; máquina filmadora y micrófonos).

- Conclusión del tratamiento del acervo bibliográfico con catalogación en base de datos (excel) y etiquetaje (CDU) de 825 obras impresas (322 libros; 217 periódicos; 203 documentos académicos (monografías, disertaciones y tesis); 45 folletos; 40 obras vinculadas a eventos como seminarios, conferencias, forúms).

- Visualización y evaluación de las 105 cintas VHS, de las que, tras descartar algunas, 46 restaron etiquetadas, guardadas y catalogadas en base. Organización, higienización y etiquetaje de 118 cintas betacam; 46 cintas u-matic (129m/423ft – Sony kCs-20brs – back coated enve enduit) y 51 DVD.

- Digitalización de 5.490 minutos de filmaciones grabadas oriundas de 99 cintas betacam. A medida que surja financiación, las demás cintas serán también digitalizadas.

* ARCHIVO


- Etapas de organización y almacenamiento documental (selección de los documentos de la institución Pro-memoria por tipología; ordenación por cronología; organización en carpetas-colgantes y cajas-archivadoras etiquetadas).

- La Etapa de evaluación documental está en desarrollo y hasta el momento ha aplicado tabla de temporalidad (formación y organización del acervo corriente; Cumplimentación del listado de transferencia de documentos al Centro de Documentación de la Universidad de Brasilia – Cedoc/UnB, indicando los documentos que ya pueden ser eliminados; Identificación de documentos que, a pesar de no poseer ya valor primario, pueden integrar el acervo permanente del NECOIM.

- Cumplimentación del listado de transferencia del acervo Pro-Memoria al Archivo del Instituto del Patrimonio Histórico y Artístico Nacional – IPHAN.

- Inicio de las siguientes actividades: organización e identificación de las cintas K7, CDs y disquetes; Ordenación de las grabaciones/transcripciones acumuladas en carpetas de papeles; Comparación del material en formato audio con los impresos en las carpetas).

- Reconocimiento y descripción de todos los proyectos realizados a lo largo de la existencia del núcleo con el fin de percibir con precisión su estructura y todo su contenido acumulado.

---

4 Pro-Memoria: Institución vinculada al ya extinguido Ministerio de Educación y Cultura de Brasil – MEC, antigua área destinada a realizar investigaciones sobre la cultura y la educación brasileña. El Cedoc/UnB y el IPHAN/DF decidieron que esa documentación debería estar bajo la responsabilidad del Archivo Central del IPHAN/DF. De ese modo, los documentos fueron transferidos al final de 2013.

5 El Instituto del Patrimonio Histórico y Artístico Nacional (IPHAN) es el órgano, responsable en Brasil de toda documentación del extinguido Pro-memoria (ver nota 5).
Esos resultados se suman a los esfuerzos de la UnB en elaborar e implementar políticas de gestión documental para toda la institución. Además, en ese sentido, el NECOIM encabeza y afronta el desafío de realizar, en la medida de sus posibilidades y dentro de las directrices oficiales, la gestión de sus producciones culturales, no solo con respecto a la ley de acceso a la información, sino también en la creencia de que la democratización del saber proporciona un excelente canal para la maduración entre el mundo académico y la sociedad en general.

CONSIDERACIONES FINALES

Durante más de dos décadas el NECOIM mantuvo como prioridad producir nuevos conocimientos sobre la cultura oral de Brasilia y de Brasil, así como garantizó su preservación con la guarda de ese material en estantes, archivos y cajas, tal vez del mismo modo que tantas otras unidades de información académicas diseminadas por el país. Entretanto, por medio de los debates sobre dispensación de la información, democratización del saber y comunicación entre sociedad y universidad, los integrantes del núcleo, desde 2011, han transformado sus hábitos y concentrado los esfuerzos en la realización de la gestión documental del acervo, aprendiendo la importancia de producir conocimiento científico y conjugándola con la necesaria técnica de convertir esa producción en algo accesible para la sociedad.

A lo largo de ese proceso, ha sido saludable, - si no axial-, la aproximación y el diálogo con profesionales de la Ciencia de la Información. Por medio de los debates teóricos y de las experiencias prácticas que esas distintas maneras de trabajar promueven en el PEAC “Abrigos de la Memoria en la Región de Brasilia” (DEX/UnB), hemos aprendido cuán importante es la gestión documental de las producciones científicas. Creemos que mediante esta gestión el núcleo ampliará la maduración de sus relaciones con el mundo académico y con la sociedad.

A pesar de los variados desafíos encontrados, creemos que al final del PEAC todo contenido del NECOIM podrá ser puesto a disposición de las comunidades académicas y de todos en general. Esas fuentes, cuando constituyen datos recuperables, proporcionarán nuevos debates y enriquecerán a los propios investigadores. Es de esa manera como el NECOIM ha percibido el sentido de la acción de haber guardado las propias producciones en el acervo: con la intención de poder divulgarlas y compartirlas con todos.

En definitiva, si es necesario que los investigadores produzcan nuevos conocimientos, también debe ser obligación suya y de la institución poner en marcha procesos que garantizan la organización, el tratamiento técnico y la divulgación del saber a la sociedad. Es compromiso de todos para no perder el sentido democrático de aquello que se produce con el dinero público; para respetar y preservar la memoria administrativa de las universidades y para valorar y poner en práctica los conocimientos generados en ese ámbito académico.

---

6 Entre algunas de las acciones de Gestión Documental realizadas por la UnB destacamos dos: un evento en 2012 y cursos de capacitación ofertados a lo largo de 2013. Son, respectivamente, el Seminario Gestión de la Memoria: Diálogos sobre Políticas de Información, Documentación y Comunicación para la Universidad de Brasilia, realizado por las Facultades de Ciencia de la información (FCI) y de Comunicación (FaC) los días 22 y 23 de octubre de 2012, y el Curso Gestión de Documentos de la FUB (Fundación Universidad de Brasil) ofertado a los servidores de la UnB por la Coordinadora de Capacitación (PROCAP), realizado en los dos semestres de 2013. Las dos iniciativas persiguen estimular el intercambio de conocimientos entre especialistas y servidores y difundir las propuestas de preservación de la memoria administrativa y científica realizadas por las unidades académicas y órganos gestores de documentación de la UnB. Para saber más a este respecto, contactar con la Profesora Dra. Cynthia Roncaglio, actual directora del Archivo Central de la Universidad de Brasilia. Email: roncaglio@unb.br

7 LEGISLACIÓN BRASILEÑA. Ley Nº 12.527 del 18 de noviembre de 2011. Regula el acceso a la información.

8 Estamos trabajando para divulgar ese acervo en medio virtual. El website aún está en desarrollo, pero creemos que antes de 2015 estará funcionando (www.necoim.unb.br).
BIBLIOGRAFIA


Documentation as Resistance: Egyptian Women's Oral History Archive.

Hoda Elsadda, Maissan Hasan and Diana Ebd El-Fattah
(Egipt):

Resumen: En Egipto, los recientes cambios políticos han creado nuevos espacios para la participación de la mujer, pero es esencial para discutir si estos cambios han contribuido al avance de los derechos de la mujer y si - y cómo - los roles de género y las representaciones están cambiando las nuevas estructuras políticas introducidas por los grandes movimientos de cambio en Egipto.

Desde abril de 2011, del Foro Mujer y de Memoria (WMF) ha estado trabajando en la documentación como Resistencia Archivo Histórico Oral; que documenta las historias de vida y relatos orales de papel de las mujeres como líderes y activistas, así como mujeres participadas en los grandes movimientos de cambio en el país. El ensayo destaca las cuestiones problemáticas teóricas, así como los desafíos que enfrentaron las iniciativas de catalogación de la revolución de enero en Egipto. Además, el ensayo proporciona una visión general del programa de Historia Oral en Foro de Mujer y Memoria (WMF), y los resultados preliminares de la documentación en curso, además del proyecto de investigación. Asimismo, el ensayo toca varias cuestiones problemáticas relativas a la conceptualización, implementación y gestión de archivos de historia oral.

Abstract: While recent political changes have created new spaces for women’s engagement, it is essential to discuss whether these changes contributed to the advancement of women’s rights and whether -and how- gender roles and representations are changing the new political structures introduced by major movements of change in Egypt.

Since April 2011, the Women and Memory Forum (WMF) has been working on the Documentation as Resistance Oral History Archive; which documents the life stories and oral narratives of women’s role as leaders and activists as well as participants in the major movements for change in Egypt. The essay sheds light on theoretical problematic issues as well as challenges facing documentation initiatives of the January Revolution in Egypt. In addition, it provides an overview of WMF Oral History Program and the preliminary findings of the ongoing documentation and research project. The essay touches upon several problematic issues regarding conceptualization, implementation and management of oral history archives.
Recent revolutions across the Arab region have raised new questions about power, democratic transitions and gender issues. While recent political changes have created new spaces for women’s engagement, it is essential to discuss whether these changes contributed to the advancement of women’s rights and whether—and how—gender roles and representations are changing the new political structures introduced by major movements of change in Egypt. In the last three years, documentation of personal narratives on the political situation has been attracting wide attention from academics, activists and artists in Egypt.

Since April 2011, the Women and Memory Forum (WMF) has been working on the Documentation as Resistance Oral History Archive; which documents the life stories and oral narratives of women’s role as leaders and activists as well as participants in the major movements for change in Egypt. WMF’s Egyptian Women’s Oral History Archive have shown that documentation of women’s voices, the preservation of their memories of political activism, constitutes an act of resistance against their exclusion from the political scene, as well as resistance against the cultural stereotypes that relegate women to the status of second-class citizens.

Interestingly, narratives of the recent and current movements of political change are still spaces for contestation of power and authority. Building an archive of women’s voices at this crucial moment in history has been instrumental in countering hegemonic narratives that undermine women’s rights movements and women’s political agency.

ARCHIVES AND MEMORIES OF REVOLUTIONS

There is no question that the first decade of the 21st century has witnessed significant developments in the recognition of oral history as an integral part of historical inquiry. This is a far cry from the 1970s and 1980s when oral historians struggled to gain credit for their work as they spearheaded the democratization of historical research by foregrounding the voices of the voiceless, and contributing to the creation of the oral archives of the marginalized and subaltern groups. Oral history projects occupied center stage in liberation projects in general, and the feminist movement in particular. Pioneering oral historians, such as Alessandro Portelli and Luisa Passerini, revised and reinstated concepts used to undermine oral history by giving them value and primacy. Emphasizing the subjectivity of the interviewer in oral history, they initiated a radical break with a positivistic paradigm that privileged the detachment and objectivity of the researcher/historian. Portelli argued that the alleged unreliability of oral sources was actually a strength, as “memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active creation of meanings” (Portelli 53). Oral historians subverted the pseudo-binary between the subjective and the objective and made a case for the value of subjectivity and the dynamic relation between individual memory and collective memory. They also demonstrated how oral history presented diverse points of view resulting in a more balanced view of history. Their interventions in intellectual debates about the relation between the social and the individual, the workings of memory and the construction of subjectivity, the relation between personal memory and collective memory, gradually gained credence and legitimated their field of inquiry.

In 1999, Sherna Berger Gluck noted a “major turnaround in the acceptance of oral history in the historical profession” (Gluck 6).

One of the most important developments that has impacted the field of oral history has been the ongoing technological revolution in digital media, social networking and open source software. Technology made available new tools for the collection, preservation and presentation of oral history records. Oral history collections once hidden from public view or open to limited circulation and viewing are increasingly accessible on websites that are user friendly and interactive. Oral historians who struggled in the 1970s and 1980s with the challenges of the preservation and access to oral history archives which required advanced expertise and sophisticated equipment are now operating in a technological environment that is much more user-friendly and amenable to non-specialists.

New technologies have made it possible for ordinary individuals and traditionally marginalized groups to record, edit and publish their own stories via the new internet platforms that have been made available, enabling these voices to reach new publics and forge new partnerships. Blogs, social networking sites,
Youtube, Google, Yahoo, Flickr, are all venues that encourage individuals to share their stories, be they in text form, audio or video. In fact, oral historians are taking notice of the rise of video as a medium of expression and communication of oral stories. In “Oral History in the Video Age” Peter Kaufman regards this development as an opportunity for oral historians who will be required to consider “new forms of engagement with the academy, with partners beyond the academy, and with the vast and teeming crowd that is the modern digital public” [Kaufman 1].

New technologies have also brought about a paradigm shift in debates on orality and literacy, in our relation to the world and to our subjectivity. A new literacy is rapidly growing as new generations master advanced technologies in communication and self-expression: the new digital literacy. The written word has not lost its primacy in intellectual circles, but the oral and the audio-visual are fast gaining ground as the medium for public debates and public engagement, as medium for interpersonal communication and expression, and not least, in academia and centers of knowledge production. Kaufman notes the changes in expression and knowledge production. He states that “The literate reader… has become a fluent auditor and a capable producer as well, a bard and priest of his own. Everyone now is not only his own historian … but his own oral historian” [Kaufman 2].

The recognition of oral history as an integral part of scholarship in history and a powerful tool for voicing the voices of the silenced and the marginalized is reflected in the noted increase in oral history projects in the Middle East. This expansion has assumed a new life particularly in the aftermath of the wave of Arab revolutions that swept the region in the last three years. The power of stories to chronicle, document events, portray, paint, describe, record, present, subvert, provide insights when the picture is blurred, and expose what is hidden or is out of sight, especially at moments of deep divisions, unclear horizons, moments of grey visions and conflicting narratives.

Narratives of Arab revolutions are typically diverse and conflicting: they are sites of contestation. Questions range from what happened, to who made it happen, to did it happen? Was the 25th of January 2011 a revolution, a protest movement, a “revolution” as Asef Bayat called it? Was it a soft military coup? Is it ongoing? Has it ended? What is the role of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF)? What is the role of the Muslim Brotherhoood (MB)? What triggered the events? Was it the death of Khaled Said, a victim of police brutality? Did Kifaya [an informal political group that opposed the succession plan of the Mubarak regime] pave the way in 2004? Was it the workers strikes that started in 2006? How do we describe the events of the 30th of June 2013? A popular uprising against the rule of the MB? A military backed second revolutionary wave? Another coup? Specific memorable events are also sites of contestation: the prison break in January 2011; the demonstrations and clashes in front of Maspero Egyptian state TV building in October 2011; the Mohamed Mahmoud battle on the 19th of November 2011; the sit-in on Maglis Al-Wuzara Street in December 2011; Al-Itihadiya protests in 2012; etc., etc. These conflicting narratives are engaged in an outright war over the minds and hearts of all concerned our minds and hearts, over the memory of the period.

It is important to distinguish here between history and memory. Very generally, in this essay, history is used to mean official written history, the dominant narrative produced and disseminated by the status quo, authorities and in most cases men in power. This is the history that is written by the victorious, to paraphrase the words of Winston Churchill. Memory, on the other hand, consists of the narratives that have escaped history, that bring together a much more complex and multi-layered picture of a period and events. It is the backbone of the alternative narrative, or counter-narrative.

Until this minute, the official history of the revolution has not been written. We do not have a hegemonic narrative as yet that has been firmly established and institutionalized. The challenge is how to write and safeguard the memory of the revolution.

In an article entitled: “In Defense of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today,” [Representations, 37, 1992] Gyanendra Pandey argued for the importance of fragments in writing the
history of sectarian violence in India to counter the nationalist drive to homogenize and normalize by excluding the voices of minorities and marginalized communities. The fragments excluded from official histories are the personal accounts in diaries, oral narratives, poems, songs. They also include chants of the revolution, graffiti, collective writing and composition of songs (The Choir project), videos produced by citizen journalists. These fragments of history are the building blocks of memory and the source material for a counter-narrative, or alternative social history. Aleida Assmann, in her article titled "Canon and Archive", draws the attention to the processes of remembering and forgetting involved in constructing cultural memory (Assmann 102). Constructing narratives based on these "fragments" are subject to the processes of forgetting and remembering by individuals.

DOCUMENTING THE FRAGMENTS OF THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION

The 25th of January 2011 has been described as Revolution 2.0 in reference to the new generation of digital media technology that has allowed ordinary citizens to interact and publish accounts, news items and their own stories about what happened. Almost instantly, websites and Facebook pages were created to gather and collect documents, photos, statements, videos and various news items related to the revolution. Protesters and activists turned to social networks, Facebook and Twitter as alternative media to document and share photos, videos and testimonies of clashes and protests taking place in different Egyptian cities. Documentation efforts started during the 18 days of the Tahrir Square sit-in and have been evolving into collective initiatives that reflect the interest at memorialization of individuals’ and groups’ narratives of political events.

In the last three years, projects documenting narratives of activists and their accounts became very popular. While many projects depended heavily on new technologies and digital documentation, other documentation projects were displayed in a more traditional medium; printed books. For instance, Messages from Tahrir, published in 2011 and edited by Karima Khalil, is a book that features photos from the Tahrir sit-in throughout the 18 days. The book displays creative and sarcastic banners, posters, placards, and signs that the protesters wore, waved, or hung from buildings, fences, and lampposts day by day throughout the demonstrations (Khalil 2011). Another example is Fearless: Egyptian Women of the Revolution, a book by the photographer and multimedia documentarian Tatiana Philiptchenko that was published in September 2013. Fearless: Egyptian Women of the Revolution consists of interviews with women protestors and close to 50 photos of street activism, street art and daily life. She talked to the women who had participated in the uprising. Despite the ever-present dangers of harassment, sexual violence, Philiptchenko found a “fearless” attitude among the women reflecting the determination to make their voices heard and to change their society (Philiptchenko 2013). Interestingly, the project has also adopted digital online tools in addition to the offline printed media. A website with the same name of the book (www.egyptianwomen.info) was launched to display the content of the book. The interviews feature women from different classes, different political and religious backgrounds such as Samira Ibrahim; an activist, who initiated a lawsuit against SCAF (Senior Council of Army Forces) condemning the practice of virginity tests on female protestors during protests. Another interview tells the story of Nihal Saad Zaghlool, an IT officer and activist, who was not involved with politics before joining the protests on the January 28th. Afterwards, Nihal co-founded Imprints Group, a volunteer based group aiming to radically changing misconceptions on women in the Egyptian society. The stories on the website show how the interviewees’ lives were heavily influenced by the events of the Revolution. While the primary language of the website and the interviews is English, some interviews were conducted in Arabic.

CHALLENGES FACING DIGITAL ARCHIVES

Stories, eye-witness accounts, and testimonies are powerful modes of activism in the struggle over the collective memory of a particular group or country. As fragments of history, to use the words of Pandey, they complement and correct official narratives and, potentially, construct counter-narratives of dominant histories. There is no question that now, more than ever, marginalized groups, societies and individuals have more opportunities to reach wider audiences, to forge partnerships across the globe and to construct counter narratives and counter publics. However, the process of collection, documentation and ordering these stories, i.e. the archiving of these stories and accounts is not straightforward or innocent.
Archives have been described as “tools of the powerful” who seek to normalize, standardize and impose order. Many archivists and librarians will remind us that “archives are the manufacturers of memory and not just merely guardians of it” and “power is everyday practice in archives” (Harvey Brown and Davis-Brown 21-22). Archives are necessarily entangled in the construction of hegemonic narratives as well as counter-hegemonic narratives that potentially shape the future of a given group or country or nation. The Archive, as Assmann notes, is “what can be said in the future about the present when it will have become the past” (Assmann 102). Archives mean order, and order requires framing and framing consolidates a point of view. The question becomes: whose point of view controls the archive? Who decides what is worth preserving or not? Whose stories are represented and preserved? And finally, how do we address the ephemeral nature of the digital archive?

**WHOSE POINT OF VIEW?**

The Mosireen group (mosireen.org) consists of young citizen journalists who document events live on camera and publish their videos on YouTube. In a panel discussion at Cairo University in February 2012, members of the group showed video clips which documented violence perpetrated by the military against civilians. The group met in Tahrir square and organized to expose the stories untold in official media: “We think of ourselves as a propaganda machine for the revolution... we are not neutral... we give space to people without a voice.” The group organizes workshops to train citizens to document events with the view of creating alternative media channels. According to one analyst, the function of Mosireen is to bear witness as a means of resistance to official media campaigns to discredit protesters and protest movements. Gone is the media mantra about objective and distanced reporting. Emphasis is on the personal, the immediate, the fragment as an anti-dote to official dominant narratives, or counter-revolutionary narratives. This raises the issue of power: who or what side has the power to impose its version of the story, to disseminate stories and eye-witness accounts of what happened that corroborate an opposing narrative.

While Mosireen is an example of a documentation initiative by small scale non-governmental groups, documentation of the Revolution has been attracted attention of large institutions in Egypt such as the American University in Cairo (AUC). In February 2011, AUC announced the **University on the Square** documentation project, which was one of the first publicized documentation projects. The project documents oral histories, photographs, video recordings, and visual art of the January 25th Revolution. The digital collection preserves the history of the 18 Days in Egypt and beyond by collecting content from activists, participants, and observers from the American University in Cairo as well as members of the larger Egyptian and global communities. It is a participatory archives initiative developed by and the digital collection continues to grow as project contributors share their experiences through oral history interviews and donations. The collection is accessible via the website [www.aucegypt.edu/onthesquare/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.aucegypt.edu/onthesquare/Pages/default.aspx). Due to the financial and human capacity of AUC as an established academic institution, **University on the Square** has been one of the most sustainable documentation projects in the past three years. AUC has succeeded at utilizing its wide networks and resources to establish the archive. However, the project has raised various questions regarding institutionalized documentation projects and its potential to reflect multiple voices; in particular voices of the marginalized, within the highly politicized context of present Egypt.

**REPRESENTATION**

Who is represented? What is the process of selection of stories? Whose voices are heard?

Women and other marginalized groups are not necessarily fairly represented in the new generation of digital oral history archives. A gender lens is not always integrated in projects resulting in the marginalization of women and their voices. There is a need for dedicated oral history archives that are gender sensitive and that pay attention to issues of exclusion and discrimination. There are a number of archives dedicated to women’s stories which I am foregrounding in this talk. For instance, **“Words of Women from the Egyptian Revolution”**, foregrounds gender as a category of analysis and highlights the multiple roles of women in the revolution.
“Words of women from the Egyptian Revolution” is an oral history project that documents the stories of Egyptian women after the 25th of January revolution. The focus on women as well as the description of the project on the website as a “web-series documenting the participation of Women in the Egyptian Revolution.” An audio-visual Herstory project, to remind history” identifies the direction as clearly feminist in aim. The project consists of video recordings of women who reflect on the impact of the political transformation that took place in Egypt on their lives and their relation to the world. In August 2011, the project team launched a fund raising campaign to support the continuation of the project. Eleven videos have been made available via the internet, but more money was needed to edit another fourteen interviews and collect more. The crowd-funding campaign on Indiegogo.Com succeeded in collecting almost half of the targeted funds (Words of Women from the Egyptian Revolution).

The project is directed by Leil-Zahra Mortada, who describes himself on twitter as “a feminist queer Arab anarchist, among other not-so-nice things. Horribly addicted to cinema, politics, vegetarian food, open relationships and making noise.” The videos show individual women telling their stories to the camera and are interspersed with relevant real life scenes of clashes and protests.

Although the interviewer’s questions are muted in the video, they clearly encourage the interviewees to reflect on their status as women and to express their views on gender roles and women’s rights. Nada Zatouna, a twenty-three year old Nubian young woman who was detained and beaten during the protests, establishes a link between the discrimination against her as a Nubian, and the discrimination against women in society in general. In the same vein, she rejects the argument that women’s rights and Nubian rights are not priority issues in times of national crises and notes the oppressive nature of this line of thought. Her story reveals the gendered and racialized nature of the violence she was subjected to and, at the same time, her resilience and refusal to be silent. Mariam Kirollos, a twenty-two year old Coptic woman, acknowledges that “we” live in a patriarchal society and that women face restrictions and gender related constraints. Nevertheless she insists that women have power and can control their destinies. All interviewees come across as competent women who have agency and clarity of direction.

The oral project team is conscious of questions of representation. The interviews feature a diverse group of women from different classes, different age groups, and different religions and ethnicities. There is Rasha Azab, the twenty-nine year old hardcore activist who was arrested during the rule of Mubarak and spent time in prison; Umm Ahmed Gaber who had nothing to do with politics and activism but who became involved in protests after her son was arrested; Madeeha Anwar, a twenty year old student who wears a niqab and who insists on her rights as a citizen, and considers her niqab as her own personal choice that does not limit her freedom in any way. One video features a mother and her daughter, who joined the protests together on the 28th of January. The stories challenge stereotypical representations of women and contests ideological categorizations and assumptions based on modes of dress, on generations, on class or on religion.

The stories told by this group of women not only narrate their own personal experiences, but they also narrate the revolution. They constitute valuable interventions in topical political debates about what happened, what made it happen, who is to blame for the confusion and other relevant questions. The stories shed light on specific events they witnessed and participated in as well as their views on the wider political transformations.

THE EPHEMERAL ARCHIVE

The ease of establishing digital oral history archives comes with some disadvantages. First, many small research projects conducted by students at universities or at NGOs create a digital presence that very often, but not necessarily, disappears, remains incomplete, or ceases to be updated. In fact, digital archives floating in virtual space, have an ephemeral dimension that needs to be noted and considered. This ephemerality stands in opposition to the notion of archives as places for the preservation and safeguarding collective memories for future generations. While all archives, both material and virtual, are subject to extinction by accident or design, digital archives seem to be more susceptible to loss and
erasure. A casual browse of cyberspace reveals the beginnings and ends of many oral history archives that have either ceased to be updated or were removed from the web, and can only be detected through news items reporting on them. Digital documentation project have been adopting various acquisition and exhibition tools. I Marched Along is a project featuring a series of documentary-style interviews with Egyptian citizens, activists, politicians and public figures, discussing what they think the future holds for women post-revolution Egypt. Produced by Kirsti Itameri and Carmel Delshad, the project is an example of the problems arising from the ease. The interactive platform (www.egypt.imarchedalong.com) allows individuals to upload their stories. While online crowd-sourcing platforms reflect the importance of involving the public in the process of documentation and memorialization, such initiatives raise burning questions on the public’s willingness to share their stories with archives that are not perceived as trusted well-established archives. Sustainability of digital archives is to be determined by various external and internal factors. Therefore, the fate of projects such as I Marched Along remains to be seen.

In an attempt to respond to the problematic issue of the ephemerality of digital content, AUC established the Egypt Revolution and Politics collection (www.archive-it.org/collections/2358) in February 2011. The collection is available at Archive It; a web-based archiving service aiming at collecting and accessing digital cultural heritage. The collection allows access to digital content such as tweets, blog posts, YouTube videos and other relevant websites’ content. The collection is maintained by AUC’s Rare Books and Special Collections Library and the content is guided by suggestions from AUC community; students, faculty and staff, as well as participants of the previously mentioned University on the Square project. The collection allows users to browse its content by using different tags, format and language. The collection reflects various narratives of the political events in Egypt as it includes content developed by professional media organizations, citizen journalists and different political groups.

THE WOMEN AND MEMORY ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVE
As a non-governmental research organization focusing on gender and women’s studies in Egypt and the Arab region, the Women and Memory Forum (WMF) has been collecting women’s oral narratives in an attempt to shed light on women’s experiences in the political sphere in Egypt. In April 2011, WMF launched a documentation project that aims at establishing an oral history archive to preserve the memory of women who have participated in the January 25th Revolution and political events afterwards. While women’s voices are usually marginalized in hegemonic historical narrative, documentation of women’s oral histories can be a powerful tool of resistance that memorializes women’s roles in democratic transitions. At the same time, documentation of oral histories allow the space for women to tell their stories; which are usually neglected.

Guided by the literature of feminist approaches to research methodology and oral history, the development and implementation of WMF oral history project requires continuous reflection and self-criticism from all members of the research team. In their article “Learning to Listen” published in Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History, Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jake note that conducting oral history requires new skills from researchers. Most importantly, feminist oral history requires a shift from focusing on data collection to a focus on the interactive processes between the researcher and the narrator (23).

WMF Oral History Documentation aims at highlighting the role of women as leaders and activists as well as participants in the major movements for change in Egypt. Documentation of women’s narratives and experiences contribute to challenging cultural stereotypes and prejudices that result in the exclusion of marginalization of women from the political sphere. Therefore, WMF Oral History project focuses on documenting the contribution and achievements of women who played a crucial role in formal and informal Egyptian political life.
DEVELOPMENT OF WMF ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

In April 2011, WMF research team initiated an exploratory phase of the documentation project. In this phase, WMF researchers documented more than 20 oral narratives of activists, members of youth movements and political parties. Most of the narrators were young women varying between 18 and 35 years old. The narrators belonged to various socio-economic backgrounds and they reflected a wide spectrum of political views and affiliations. In addition, the narrators expressed different views on issues of gender equality, women’s rights and feminism.

While the processes of analysis and interpretation are still ongoing, preliminary reflections on the documented oral narratives displayed several recurrent themes. For instance, the 18 days of Tahrir Square sit-in were central to most of the narrators. In April 2011, when the documentation starts, memories of the sit-in were still vivid in the minds of the narrators. Interestingly, the memories of the sit-in started to fade away in the interviews conducted in later months.

In addition, the representation of gender roles, in particular in the public sphere, is one of the recurring themes in the documented oral narratives. While some of the narrators told stories of gender equality in the “utopian” Tahrir Square, others were critical to these stories. For instance, Lina, a young feminist activist, expressed the contested views on the Square by saying that

“...yes, there was no sexual harassment in the square during the first 18 days. However, Cairo was the same Cairo and Egypt was still the same Egypt. Women were still sexually harassed.”

Violence was also a recurrent theme in the narrated stories on gender roles and representation in Tahrir Square. According to traditional gender roles, women are expected to be passive in violent situations while men are expected to protect and sometimes to fight back. Many of the documented stories challenge this traditional view of gender roles. The stories indicated how incidents of violence, including clashes with the state police, societal violence and sexual violence, play a major role in influencing the already problematic representation of gender roles in the public sphere in Cairo.

The exploratory phase was instrumental in developing the oral history documentation project. Guided by the preliminary reflections, WMF research team succeeded at identifying the scope of the archive and at developing the line of inquiry. The line of inquiry is a guide that provides the general themes to be covered during the interviews. Between January and April 2014, almost 50 oral history interviews were conducted. In the new phase of the project, WMF research team faced several problematic issues regarding oral history project management.

REFLECTIONS ON MANAGEMENT OF ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS

Several questions on transcribing and editing the interviews were raised. To what extent should the interviews be transcribed as literal and accurate as possible? The variance between colloquial Arabic (spoken Arabic) and classic Arabic (written Arabic) raised several questions regarding the processes of transcribing and editing. Should the text be represented in formal Arabic or colloquial Arabic? Should the interview be transcribed according to how the words are uttered by the narrator in the colloquial Egyptian Arabic or according to the original word in the formal Arabic? In addition, age, education and socio-economic background reflected in the spoken language are difficult to express in written classic Arabic.

Another challenge was to preserve the unique voices of the narrators while editing the transcript. In order to avoid the risk of negating the narrators’ voices during the editing process, WMF research team decided to draft a document of editorial policies. This document is to acknowledge the responsibility of the research team over emendation of transcribed oral history interviews.

In an attempt to promote a self-critical and reflective approach to the process of documenting oral history narratives, regular weekly meeting are being held. These meetings are spaces for discussion and sharing concerns and reflections. Several questions were raised during these meetings such as; How should
verbal and non-verbal communication be reflected in the written text? How would editing affect the narrator’s voice? And most importantly: How to allow the narrators to take decisions over their representation in the transcribed interviews?

In order to involve the narrators in the research project, two consenting forms are presented to the narrators; a pre-interview consent form and post editing consent from. The pre-interview consent form is to introduce the research project, its scope, different phases and objectives. On the other hand, the post editing consent form is to provide the narrators with the space to change approve and disapprove of the final version of the transcribed interview.

In addition, WMF research team is concerned with questions regarding public and WMF library users’ accessibility to the oral archive. One of the main objectives of the documentation project is to establish an oral history archive that disseminates feminist knowledge being a tool for advocacy for women’s rights and gender equality. As a result, questions of accessibility are in the heart of such documentation projects. Will full access to the oral narratives including transcripts and the audio/visual materials be provided? And to whom?

CONCLUSION
Individuals’ memories documented and preserved through oral history will never seize to be the building blocks of counter-hegemonic narratives that allow for diverse voices. In Egypt, hegemonic narratives of the political events since January 2011 are not yet institutionalized. Oral history provides the space for women, who have been usually silenced in mainstream historical narratives, to tell their stories and to participate in the processes of production of knowledge.
BIBLIOGRAPHY:


