

# Oral History

## Help Sheet 2: Preparing for an oral history interview

### Choosing your equipment

Ensure you have investigated what voice recording equipment (and, if appropriate, separate microphone) is available on the market at the time. [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) is probably a good place to start, as purchasers are likely to have commented on the effectiveness or otherwise of the equipment. Choose what seems best for your purposes, and what you feel will work best for the interviews that you intend to carry out.

For example, a one-to-one interview, where the recording equipment is picking up only your and the interviewee's voices, is likely to require a less robust microphone than a round table group discussion, where a direction sensing microphone would probably be necessary.

To ensure the quality of the recording, Gloucestershire Archives currently uses a Tascam DR-100MK II linear PCM recorder attached to a Sennheiser E945 dynamic vocal microphone but, depending on your project, you may not need equipment this powerful.

Make sure that you understand how to use the equipment and have tested its effectiveness before arranging to conduct any interviews.

### Making initial contact with the interviewee

- Introduce yourself and explain the basic aims, outcomes and outputs of the interview.
- Agree a venue, day and time for the interview to occur. Ask for directions if you're not sure where to find the venue.
- Explain the main topics that the interview would expect to cover, but make sure to invite the interviewee to indicate items or stories that they'd specifically like to mention. Note these thoughts down rather than committing them to memory.
- Confirm that the interviewee has taken a note of your name, and also mention the names of anyone else who will be attending with you.

## **Between the initial contact and the interview**

- Adapt your list of generic questions to take account of the specific areas or stories that you have agreed to cover with the interviewee. Slot them into relevant places in your interview plan, rather than just adding them to the end.
- Ensure that you know how to find the agreed venue, and that you know the maximum journey time required to reach it on time.
- Ensure that anyone attending the interview with you knows where and when it will occur, and make sure they also know how to reach the venue, and how long to allow for their journey.
- Ensure that your voice recorder is fully charged and clear of all previous interviews.