

Doing Oral History. By Donald A. Ritchie. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 368 pp. Index. Softcover. \$29.95.

When the first edition of *Doing Oral History* arrived on bookshelves in 1995, less than 15 percent of American households had access to the Internet.¹ By 2003, the year the second edition was released, oral historians and archivists in the United States had embraced emerging digital technologies (like CD-ROMs) to research, conduct, and share interviews, though they were only just beginning to experiment with making oral histories available online. In the two decades that followed, the Internet has transformed the field of oral history, simultaneously creating new possibilities and risks for archives. Donald Ritchie's latest edition of *Doing Oral History*, published in 2014, directly addresses these changes, while retaining the ever-practical approach first outlined in 1995.

Donald Ritchie, the longtime historian of the United States Senate, draws upon his extensive experience as a practicing oral historian and a leader within the community to create a straightforward and intuitive basic manual to oral history. Readers familiar with the previous two editions of *Doing Oral History* will note that the basic structure of the work remains the same. The question-and-answer format remains in the third edition, giving the book a workshop feel, and the chapter titles are almost identical to the second edition. At first glance, the updates appear to be superficial nods to the evolution of technology, such as changing the title of chapter 5 from "Videotaping Oral History" to "Video Oral History." Throughout, Ritchie is careful to replace older examples with contemporary projects, like StoryCorps, to demonstrate innovative approaches in the field. But the revisions go much further than simply removing all references to outdated technology and projects. Each chapter contains new sections, or expands on previous questions and answers, to update oral history best practices for today's technological and legal realities.

As one might expect, the sections relating to the technical aspects of oral history have been significantly overhauled since the last edition. For those readers seeking specific guidance, however, be aware that Ritchie wisely avoids providing equipment recommendations or technical specifications. Instead, his approach is to provide a general overview of current technologies available to oral historians, and to share best practices for their application and use. Oral history interviews can now be conducted via Skype, and software is available to automatically transcribe audio files, even if imperfectly, thereby reducing the barriers to making oral histories usable. That said, much of Ritchie's practical advice, such as the importance of microphone placement and his reminder to always bring extra batteries to an interview, is universally applicable, regardless of what recording technology is in place. While lighter and less expensive digital equipment makes oral history more accessible, these innovations also complicate matters for archivists tasked with managing oral history collections.

More than any other development, the Internet has transformed what it means to do oral history. Interviews are more accessible than ever before, but this exposure carries some risk for archives, as Ritchie points out. Legal and ethical questions addressed in this third edition range from practical guidance on drafting deed-of-gift agreements for the Internet age, to dealing with sensitive, or potentially libelous, interviews. Ritchie

advocates for incorporating Creative Commons licensing provisions into standard deed-of-gift templates, when applicable, and provides guidance on navigating the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. Readers will also be relieved to find a new section on the very common problem of orphaned legacy oral history interviews in archives. Ritchie's advice is brief, but sensible, encouraging archivists to make a good-faith effort to contact interviewees or their heirs. However, for problematic cases, Ritchie suggests limiting use to in-house only, or requiring researchers to sign a user agreement in advance acknowledging that they will independently seek permission from the interviewee's estate (p. 189).

The most significant updates since the last edition, however, concern the Boston College Belfast Project, the controversial project to interview former Irish Republican Army (IRA) members about their involvement in Northern Ireland's 30-year civil conflict. The Belfast Project first became news in 2011, when British authorities asked the United States Department of Justice to issue subpoenas for the oral history interviews in question, which were still protected under the original agreement with each interviewee to remain closed until his or her death. Ritchie devotes new sections to exploring whether confidentiality promises can be broken by courts, and if oral historians have a responsibility to report crimes that may be revealed in an interview, both directly inspired by the ongoing Belfast Project case. To reduce risk, Ritchie encourages archivists and oral historians to be upfront and transparent when dealing with sensitive interview subjects, explicitly documenting the interviewee's wishes concerning access, privacy, anonymity, and copyright. However, at the same time, practitioners need to ensure that interviewees understand that, while they will protect these wishes, they can only do so within the limits of the law. These questions weigh heavily on the minds of archivists today, as they grapple with how to handle problematic legacy collections or interviews dealing with sensitive subjects while also seeking to make oral history collections more visible.

On the whole, the core substance of *Doing Oral History* is essentially unchanged from its original form. While Ritchie mindfully touches on newer approaches to interviewing that incorporate narrative theory and memory work, he clearly emphasizes the value of putting practice into theory, rather than the other way around. Much of Ritchie's advice is timeless, such as planning to commit 10 hours of research for every hour of interview, and it serves as a reminder that even as tools change, the basics of oral history remain the same. By design, Ritchie seeks to include all possible questions that may come up during an oral history project, which can feel repetitive if read from cover to cover. The breadth of questions covered in this book necessarily requires brevity for each response, so those looking for a deep dive into theory would do well to look elsewhere. For archivists seeking general guidance on the practice of oral history, however, *Doing Oral History* is an excellent introduction to the field.

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1. History of U. Va. on the Web, "1994–2008—14 Years of Web Statistics at U. Va!," University of Virginia, accessed July 17, 2016, <http://www.virginia.edu/virginia/archive/webstats.html>.