

The ethical guidelines of the Polish Oral History Association

Introduction

Oral history requires not only knowledge and interpersonal skills, but also a high degree of ethical sensitivity at every stage of work. For this reason, the community of Polish oral historians has formulated the following guidelines, seeing the great need for written standards of conduct in this field. The presented set of guidelines is based on the knowledge and experience of members of the Polish Oral History Association, taking into account similar texts written in other countries or for the needs of related fields of study. This is not a set of instructions on how to conduct interviews or an official legal interpretation. These proposals set out a general framework for conduct and indicate the standards and values to be considered in oral history. In specific cases, you should use common sense and your own conscience, and where necessary, seek professional legal advice. When dealing with complicated or non-obvious situations, we recommend community supervision, i.e. talking to other people professionally involved in oral history.

Who are the guidelines for?

These ethical guidelines are intended for all those involved in oral history, regardless of their education or profession: for people and institutions recording, owning, storing and sharing oral history recordings, as well as for people and institutions that use such materials in their scholarly, educational or artistic activities.

Text of the guidelines

1. When we plan to record oral history interviews, we should familiarize ourselves with the oral history methodology and its specifics in order to be aware of both the advantages and limitations of this method.
2. It is our duty to improve our knowledge and skills as well as substantive preparation before each interview (historical knowledge on the issues that may be raised).
3. Preparation for the interview:

- a. We should arrange the place and time of the interview so as to ensure the comfort and safety of the person being recorded, while maintaining conditions allowing for the interview and recording;
 - b. Before the recording, we should explain to the potential interlocutor for what purpose we want to talk to him / her, how the interview will proceed, what will happen with the recording, and who will have access to it. This is also the time to clarify any issues, agreeing on the framework of the interview and its possible duration as well as the rights of the interlocutor (including refusal to answer any question asked, the right to resign from participation in the project at any stage, reservation of excerpts from the interview).
4. During the conversation:
- a. The interlocutor should be treated with respect;
 - b. as far as possible, we make every effort to ensure that the mental state and life situation of the recorded person are not worsened as a result of the interview;
 - c. during the recording, we pay attention to the condition of the interlocutor, if necessary, suggesting breaks or ending the recording on a given day and arranging another meeting;
 - d. we respect the dignity of the human being, human subjectivity and autonomy, as well as his / her right to his / her own life history, even if it is in conflict with our knowledge;
 - e. we have the right to stop the conversation if the psychological well-being of the interlocutor or ours does not allow for its continuation. In some cases (if the conversation was interrupted by us for personal reasons), it is recommended to propose a person who would be able to record the conversation;
 - f. when asking questions, we take into account the wishes of the interlocutor, expressed directly or indirectly, and his / her emotions. However, we have the

right to ask questions if we are convinced that it will make the interview richer and more interesting, and at the same time will not harm the recorder or third parties; as long as the interlocutor gives his / her consent to this. If he / she withdraws consent, this must be respected;

- g. we make every effort to ensure that the technical quality of the recording is good.

5. Confidentiality. Maintaining confidentiality in oral history means that personal information about the interlocutor, not resulting directly from the content of the recording (including address, health condition, possessions, content of conversations outside the recording) will not be disclosed to other people. Contact details should be available only to the extent necessary for the processing and archiving of the recording.

- a. if the interlocutor does not wish to appear under his / her own name and surname, a pseudonym may be used in the recording, when archiving it or making it available;
- b. the interlocutor may request information which persons will have access to the recording during its editing, archiving and sharing;
- c. the interlocutor may reserve parts of or the whole of the recording for selected people, and may also demand that a part of or the whole of the recording be deleted.

6. Consent.

- a. Under no circumstances should you record a conversation with another person without their knowledge and consent;
- b. To express informed consent, so-called "Interlocutor's consent" is required, which, depending on the needs, may be in the form of a written or oral agreement. The oral contract should be recorded, written and signed in at least two copies (for the interlocutor and for the person recording or the institution for which he / she works);

- c. The content of the consent should include the following elements specifying the rules and limits of using the recording:
 - consent of the person being recorded to the recording and use of the interview; information for what purposes the interview and the personal data contained therein may be used and processed. These goals should be mentioned: e.g. in academic work, at exhibitions, on the Internet, in education, etc. – consent covers only those spheres that are explicitly mentioned;
 - name and surname of the interviewer, their contact details, and, if applicable, the name and contact details of the institution for which the interview was conducted;
 - information that the interlocutor agrees to the archiving of the recording and in what form and in what place (institution);
- d. The interlocutor has the right, after agreeing with us, to stipulate additional issues, e.g. pseudonymisation, restrictions on sharing the recording (e.g. only with his personal consent, only after his / her death, etc.), areas where his / her relationship cannot be used, etc., which will be included in the text for "interlocutor's consent";
- e. Consent may be in the form of a written agreement between the recorder (or the institution he / she works for) and the recordee. In this case, it is worth using the templates of such consent forms proposed by PTHM or key oral history centres in Poland.

7. Archiving.

- a. It is good practice to give a copy of the recording to your interlocutor;
- b. We should ensure appropriate protection and storage of the acquired audio or video reports, documentation and sources obtained during the interview;
- c. As a rule, the interviews are archived in an unedited version. At least one backup of the recording should be made.

8. Publication and sharing of the recording.

- a. Making the recording public means that the entire conversation or some part of it will be available to everyone (e.g. in the form of a recording on the Internet, in a publicly accessible archive, in a book in the form of a transcript, at an exhibition, etc.). Sharing means that the conversation or its fragments will be available – once or repeatedly – to a selected recipient or group of recipients;
- b. When deciding to publish a recording, we should make sure:
 - we have actual or implied consent from the interlocutor for this form of publication,
 - what the purpose of this publication is and that we have chosen the best form for this purpose;
- c. Depending on the provisions in the "interlocutor's consent", authorization of the published content of the recording may or may not be necessary; however, it is good practice to provide information about the intended publication or dissemination of the recording and to submit for authorization the texts created on the basis of the recording;
- d. We are not responsible for the unauthorized re-use of oral history recordings or manipulation by third parties; however, we should consider such risks in our work and try to minimize them;
- e. Institutions (archives, museums, cultural institutions, educational institutions, etc.) should follow clear procedures when sharing recorded oral history. We recommend registering interested users in a manner analogous to the system in force in state archives or public libraries;
- f. People using the recordings, when deciding to share or make public the content of the report, should take into account the well-being of the person being recorded, their relatives and people whose data appear in the recording. In justified cases, one should refrain from sharing or publishing the

recording, even if the interlocutor has given his / her formal consent for this.

9. Copyright and personal data protection.

- a. We comply with the provisions in force in Poland on the protection of personal data and copyright;
- b. We assume that, according to Polish copyright law, the recording of an oral history interview is a work and its authors are – unless agreed otherwise – in equal proportions all those who have contributed to it. In practice, this means the interlocutor and interviewer and, if present, the cameraman and sound technician. All of these persons should be included in the description of the recording. The interlocutor usually resigns from his economic copyright, agreeing to use of the recording free of charge in the indicated “fields of exploitation” (scholarly, educational, Internet, literature, etc.);
- c. It is not permissible to use the personal data of the recorded or third parties contained in the content of the report for purposes other than those specified in the consent to the recording.

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