Planning considerations when shaping an oral history project.

What are your purpose and your goals?

How will you fund and access the human resources to accomplish it?

- Specific planning will make the execution of the project easier
- Plan on involving your community in the stages of the project
- Grant applications are great tools for planning

I. What is the Focus for your project?

A. Narrow is easier and better -- depends on purpose and goals
   - 2004 - Summer reading program for teens (4 interviews)
   - 2004-2006 - H.S. English class participate in the Library of Congress Veterans History project (17 interviews)
   - 2005-2007 - geographic location of county (8 interviews)
   - 2009 - Patchwork of Dependency: The Effects of World War II on Edwards County, Kansas (22 interviews)
   - 2011 - Patterns of Change: Edwards County, 1950-1970 (23 interviews)
   - 2012 - Tractorcade to D.C.: Edwards County Farmers & the American Agriculture Movement, 1979 (14 interviews)

B. Make the project significant: to institution, to geographic area, to historical time, etc.

C. Determine the goals of the project. How will this project enhance knowledge, appreciation and understanding of the history, traditions, and ideas that shape lives and build community.

D. Decide if there are other institutions or entities that could partner with you to enhance the project, e.g. Libraries and historic institutions are good partners, schools, churches, etc.

II. How will you preserve the Oral Histories - Technical aspects of recording?

A. Who is available that has or can acquire recording skills? Who can teach you how?

B. How will you digitally record?
   1. Audio? Video? Both? Will you use one recording device or two?
   2. Where will you get equipment?
   3. Recorded in your facility or in the interviewee’s home or another location?
   4. One interviewer or more than one?
   5. Store on archival CD and/or DVD;
   6. Back up to other servers/ other physical or online location
   7. Archive in another organization, i.e. State or Local Historical Society

C. Transcripts – Must have a transcript to make interview accessible.
   1. Who will do it? Someone in your organization, a volunteer, local transcriber, or other?
   2. Transcripts cost money – budget, donations, grants?
   3. Who will proofread interview before the interviewee does a final proof?

D. Images - Do you want to have images and if so who will do it?
   1. Picture of the subject on the day of Interview?
   2. Borrow and scan pictures from the subject’s personal album?
   3. Scans of documents or photographs from subject or other collections?
III. How will you carry out the project?
   A. Create a list of questions that explore your focus and meet your goals
      1. Do background research
         ➢ Talk to people within and without the community
         ➢ Research local resources, e.g. newspapers
         ➢ Consult a scholar
         ➢ Research in print and media resources
      2. Will you give participants the questions before the interview or not?
      3. Stay open to where the interview leads – some good stories come about when the subject feels comfortable to just tell his story
   B. Decide on who is available to interview that will meet your focus and goals
      1. Seek suggestions from others for possible interviewees
      2. Determine if people are willing and able to participate
      3. Communicate with participants so they will know what to expect
      4. Generate a release form for participants to agree to and sign
      5. Will you give the participant the finished interview?
   C. Develop a timeline for the execution of project
   D. Develop a budget to fund the project and know where the funds will come from

IV. How will you share the project with the community? What people can become involved in these activities?
   A. Create a display in your institution or other community meeting place
   B. Issue press releases when you begin the project, during the project, and at the end
      1. A particularly effective example was running in the local newspaper one participant’s Tractorcade diary over 4 weeks corresponding with the weeks of the current year and leading up to the open house. Everyone in town, anxiously awaited the next week’s paper and the progress of the Tractorcade and protest.
      2. Highlight a participant in a feature article or run a series on several participants
      3. Share images with captions from the project in your local paper to garner interest
   C. Host an Open House to honor the participants and their life-experiences
      1. Decide on a date and notify your participants as early as possible so they will be available
      2. Create invitations to be sent to participants, relevant people in your organization and the community, your state and federal legislators, representatives of your granting entity and project partners, and any other people who have an interest
      3. Create posters and flyers to advertise the event
   D. Seek opportunities to speak and share the project with community organizations, i.e. Rotary, PEO, etc.

V. How will you make the project accessible outside of the community?
   A. Seek media outside your community – e.g. regional newspapers both big and little, television news, regional magazines, and relevant organization newsletters
   B. Feature project and make the oral histories accessible on your institution’s website
   C. Share results with other institutions, i.e. libraries, historical organizations, State Historical Society
   D. Find a way or partner to enter interview keywords (subjects) into an online, searchable catalog or as keywords, i.e. on YouTube

Joan K. Weaver, Director Kinsley Public Library
208 E. 8th St., Kinsley, KS 67547 Phone: 620-659-3341
Website: www.kinsleylibrary.info Email: director@kinsleylibrary.info