Contribution Details

Submission Type / Conference Track: Panels

Archiving and Preservation of Oral History: Recorded Voices of the Past in the Digital Age

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Organization(s): 1: DANS-KNAW; 2: University of Amsterdam; 3: Oral History hub 'Sprekende geschiedenis'; 4: SURF; 5: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam; 6: CLARIAH-NL

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Topics: Digital Archiving and Preservation
Keywords: Oral History, interview data, archiving, re-use
✔ I can confirm that the presenting panellists will be able to attend in-person at the DARIAH AE 2025

Abstract

A panel arranged under the aegis of CLARIAH-NL and SSHOC-NL

Oral History holds great potential to unlock the experiences and knowledge of the past, and to collect perspectives which do not emerge from traditional historical sources, such as archival records and printed sources. Oral History, dealing with digital audio and video content, has also enthusiastically embraced the digital methods and infrastructure developed in the past two decades. Online archiving facilities, increased computing performance, and applications for annotating and analysing audio and video content hold tremendous potential to boost the use and re-use of interview recordings. With the advent of AI, yet a new phase in valorising Oral History materials has already begun. With all these developments, however, also come concerns regarding the long-term management, the accessibility and the responsible use of Oral History sources.

In the span of a couple of years, several projects in the Netherlands have started to look into these various aspects of Oral History in the digital age. These projects aim to develop generic research infrastructure for the management and analysis of Oral History data, but also to reflect critically on their use and to give guidance to researchers. They contribute to the following developments:

- Infrastructure for archiving and publishing Oral History data is being built to support long term preservation and re-use in a legally sound way.
- Workflows and standards (metadata and files) are being identified for making Oral History data findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable.
- AI-tools are being experimented with for enriching Oral History data with automated transcripts, subtitles and topical keywords.
- An ethical code is being developed, for academic researchers, heritage professionals and community archives to work with Oral History data and supporting facilities in a way that does not harm the interviewees or the communities to which they belong.

Partners which collaborate in these projects comprise a wide range of academic institutes, heritage organizations and infrastructure providers operating both at a local and at a national level, including CLARIAH-NL and ODISSEI (the national infrastructures for the Humanities and Social Sciences, respectively). The goals of these Oral History projects complement each other. Together they should provide the variegated user groups feeding into the Oral History community with firm footing to collect data and conduct research in an advanced and responsible manner.

In this panel, representatives of these Oral History-oriented projects will present the various perspectives mentioned above:

- Sanneke Stigter (UvA) and Jetze Touber (DANS-KNAW): "Developing infrastructure for Oral History data archiving and reuse: the OH-SMArt, OH-CORE, SSHOC-NL projects"
- Marijn Braam (Oral History Hub): "The Hidden Stories Project: Mapping Bottlenecks in Digital Infrastructure with Local Oral History Initiatives to Increase Accessibility and Reusability"
- Annette Langedijk (SURF): "Meaningful Memories: AI-Powered Annotation for Discovering and Connecting Concepts in Interviews"
- Maarten Heerlien (VU) and Norah Karrouche (VU): "Drafting an Ethical Code for the archiving and reuse of Oral History data: the StoRe project"

Together, these presentations will showcase how the complementarity of the various Oral History projects advance responsible practices of managing, sharing and analysing interview materials in a careful manner. They illustrate how national coordination of infrastructural initiatives for the support of research into the past can generate added value, which goes beyond the sum of individual projects. Throughout the panel, the audience will be invited to join in the discussions of these projects. Interaction with the audience will bring out possible cross-connections with initiatives elsewhere in Europe, as well as potential challenges and prospects currently not addressed. In this way the panel engenders a collaborative exploration of potential transnational collaborations on the ethical, legal, organisational and technical aspects of archiving and preserving Oral History.

Submitted File(s)

1st file **No upload.**