

MuseumEdu 2

Museums and Education - Oral History

INTRODUCTION

MuseumEdu 2, *Museums and Education - Oral History*, is the second volume of the online, open access, peer-reviewed international journal **MuseumEdu**, published by the University of Thessaly Museum Education and Research Laboratory in Autumn 2015.

It mainly includes papers that first appeared in Greek, as chapters in the collective book *Oral History in Museums and Education*, which was published in Greece by Nissos Publications in spring 2015, under the auspices of the Greek Oral History Association.¹ Their publication in English in the second volume of the Journal **MuseumEdu**, based on the authors' and the Greek publisher's positive response, is grounded in our consideration that these articles as a whole discuss important issues related to the use of oral history in museums and education, and they are worth addressing wider - English speaking- audiences.

Addressing both Greek and English speaking audiences, **MuseumEdu** includes papers written in English or Greek, accompanied by abstracts in Greek or English, respectively, along with an introduction to each volume in both languages.

The rationale

MuseumEdu 2, *Museum and Education - Oral History*, was edited with a view of oral history as a very active field which allows for fertile cooperation among different disciplines (history, sociology, anthropology, psychology, education, museology, etc.), which enables the recognition and promotion of social variety through the dissemination of diverse voices, and leads to a more realistic and democratic approach to the past and the present, thus supporting the humanization of history and our ideas about it.

Our basic aim was to discuss contemporary theoretical trends and research questions as well as practical issues that relate to the use of oral history in museums and education. More precisely, we wished to shed light on the affordances and the limitations -even the dangers- of the use of oral history, and to highlight the point that successful practice can only be grounded in a deep understanding of oral history's historical, social, political, communicative, educational and representative dimensions.

The structure

MuseumEdu 2, includes 9 articles. Despite their different orientation -the first articles mainly focus on the use of oral history in museums and the following articles on the use of oral history in education- they all communicate with each other, since, as a whole, they discuss oral history from different -albeit not irrelevant- perspectives. More precisely, this volume includes the following articles:

ANDROMACHE GAZI & IRENE NAKOU

Oral history in museums and education: Where do we stand today?

Gazi and Nakou offer a detailed overview of the use of oral history in museums from the 1950s to the present, and discuss basic issues concerning its application in education -both formal (in schools and universities) and informal (as in museums). Using a variety of international examples, they discuss how museums gradually moved away from a traditional view of oral history as a mere supplement to traditional exhibits to innovative contemporary uses which aim at active community participation and engagement, and exploit digital technology to its fullest, in order to offer poignant experiences. Furthermore, the authors argue that the use of oral history in all types of education -as in museums- may potentially aid the gradual deconstruction of conventional historical, social, cultural and political preconceptions that still exist in many societies, especially in the area of traditional approaches to (history) education and historical representations.

SAM SMITH

Representing diversity through oral history at the Museum of Croydon

The collection and display of oral history has always been an integral part of the Museum of Croydon's work, making the museum an exemplary model for similar work. In this article, Smith looks at how identity is represented, regulated and consumed within the museum galleries, on the basis of both statistical and qualitative analysis of the borough's demographic profile and the museum's visitor profile, visitor feedback from questionnaires and comment cards, and the contents of the galleries (oral histories). Discussion is based on innovative research carried out by the Museum in 2013.

AMY BARTOW-MELIA & MAGDALENA MIERI

Enlivening history through personal stories at the National Museum of American History

Bartow-Melia and Mieri argue that since the 1970s, as audio and video technology has become more advanced and widely available, the practice of gathering oral histories has become a common practice in museums worldwide. In addition, the framework created by the New Museology movement has privileged the role of first voice as a

compelling tool to interpret difficult and memorable historical facts and processes. The authors discuss, how, in this vein, the National Museum of American History is using oral histories to foster collaborations with communities across the nation and share those stories with a wider public. On the basis of the description of 2 relevant Museum projects, the *Bracero Oral History Archives* and *Our American Journey* project, they highlight how the Museum is using oral histories as both an archival and research tool and avenue for public engagement and dialogue.

LUISE ZARMATI

Echoes from the past: Oral history in the National Museum of Australia

Zarmati argues that when the National Museum of Australia opened in 2001 it was severely criticised by right-wing politicians, historians and journalists for being too negative and ‘too politically correct’, especially in its depiction of Aboriginal history. The target was the *Contested Frontiers* display in the *First Australians* gallery which presented the view that particular frontier conflicts had resulted in massacres of Aboriginal people. In this article, Zarmati shows how the National Museum of Australia responded to criticisms of its use of oral history, and how it used this negativity in a positive way to educate the public, particularly school students, not only about Australia’s frontier conflict, but about the problems of using oral history as a source of evidence in museums.

MAKITO YURITA

To think of the knowledge in history education: Teaching history through museum exhibitions

Yurita argues that the pedagogical potential of oral history lies in its being approached as a historical source for historical inquiry. Oral history could set a stage where people can do what historians do in their profession. In order to demonstrate such an application of oral history and oral testimonies, the author uses the example of two museums in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park which refer to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, albeit employing different approaches to the atomic catastrophe. The author uses audience research in order to measure the pedagogical impacts generated by each museum’s exhibition and the affordances of oral history as a tool that enables museum audiences to understand the past and its meanings in historical terms and to get personally involved in the quest for peace.

ARTHUR CHAPMAN & CHRIS EDWARDS

The voices of history: Reflections on contemporary school based oral history in England

Chapman and Edwards explore the transformative potential of school based oral history by examining claims that have been made for it, in relation to three contemporary examples of the genre in English secondary schools reported in the journal *Teaching History*. The case studies show that school based oral history can be

powerfully transformative in a number of senses. It is argued, however, that not all of the aims that school based oral history can serve are equally historical, and that there may be risks, as well as opportunities, associated with oral history pedagogies. The article concludes by arguing that the aim of cultivating critical historical enquiry must remain central for school based oral history projects if they are to remain history and avoid becoming exercises in ‘heritage’ or ‘collective memory’ curation.

ALAN McCULLY in collaboration with Darren Scott, Donal O’Hagan and Sean Pettis
Oral history and understanding a troubled past

This article argues for the role that oral history might be playing in helping young people better understand the legacy of the recent past in Northern Ireland, a society that is emerging from nearly forty years of conflict. First, previous more benign uses of oral history in schools are described, and next, the challenges posed to civil society in general, and schools in particular, when trying to come to terms with the violent recent past are discussed. It is argued that the characteristics of oral history are investigative and that oral narratives have the potential to foster empathetic understanding for the other. Finally, a model for intervention is presented, a recent practical application evaluated and suggestions made as to how the work might be taken forward.

YONGHEE SUH, BRANDON BUTLER & SONIA YAKO
Integrating oral history into a social studies methods course: Lessons learned

This article offers an overview of the Desegregation of Virginia Education Project (DOVE), a nationally recognized oral history project in the United States, and discusses how the project was integrated into an elementary social studies methods course. The authors present an analysis of assignments that pre-service teachers generated for this course, including final versions of the oral history projects and peer feedback. The analysis of the final products and student feedback suggests that doing an oral history project allowed pre-service teachers to gain new knowledge on the issue of school segregation and helped relate their learning to real-world problems. However, pre-service teachers also experienced challenges in creating their own narratives of the time period, failing to weave together individual stories and other historical evidence.

NATASSA KARAKATSANI
In search of old memories in the city: The body of the city - Photographs

In this part, photographer Natassa Karakatsani’s work “The body of the city” is presented. It is a photographic work that was created during the educational research programme *Dance and Education: Body, Memory, City* (2011-2012), which took place in the city of Volos, in Greece, by the University of Thessaly Assistant Professor Maria Tsouvala. This photographic work sheds light on the interrelation between people and the city, which is conceived as a living body, capable to affect and inspire those who

feel it. The photographs are presented here accompanied by narratives of the University of Thessaly undergraduate students who participated in the Programme, searching for *lost* memories in the city of Volos historical monuments and buildings, and by the photographer's note, expressing her own experience.

The *MuseumEdu 2* Editors

Andromache Gazi Irene Nakou

¹ The collective book, *Oral History in Museums and Education*, was published in Greek by *nissos* publications (www.nissos.gr). It was edited with the aim to enrich the relevant discussion in Greece, and to reinforce oral history practices in Greek museums, schools and universities. Indeed, oral history has gathered momentum in Greece rather recently; note, for instance, that Paul Thompson's (1978) renowned book, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, was only published in Greek in 2002. Sporadic efforts to establish oral history as a field of study mainly in academia and research institutions, however, date since the late 90s. Courses in oral history were gradually introduced in Greek universities since 2000, while a number of conferences on oral history have been organized since 2005. The growing interest in oral history culminated in the foundation in 2012 of the Greek Oral History Association which has since actively sought to build a strong community of people working on oral history and to provide professional guidance at all levels. Following the success of its first conference, and acknowledging the growing interest in oral history by museums and educators, the Association invited us to edit a collective volume on oral history in museums and education, which was published under its auspices.

Besides the articles presented here, in the second volume of *MuseumEdu*, the collective book *Oral History in Museums and Education* includes also the following chapters:

- **Why oral History?**
ANTONIS LIAKOS, Professor in History, University of Athens, Greece.
- **Memory and remembrance: A new approach to museum collections.**
TETI CHADZINIKOLAOU, President of the International Council of Museums-Greece.
- **The city remembers: The Museum of the City of Volos and the contribution of oral history testimonies in its construction.**
RIKI VAN BOUSCHOTEN, Professor in Oral History and Social Anthropology, University of Thessaly, Greece.
- **Industrial buildings and public memory: The Industrial Gas Museum in Athens "narrates".**
YIANNIS STOYIANIDIS, historian and PhD candidate, University of Thessaly, Greece.
- **"From the survivors' side": Holocaust museums and oral history.**
ESTHER SOLOMON, Lecturer, University of Ioannina, Greece.

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- **Listening the story, speaking with memory: Psychotherapies and narratives of childhood.**
GRIGORIS ABATZOGLU, Professor in Children's Psychiatry, Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, Greece.
 - **Oral history as a research instrument in secondary education.**
Dr KONSTANTINOS BELSIS, Historian and teacher at the Zanion Experimental General Lyceum of Piraeus, Greece.
 - **Oral history approaches in history teaching in Turkey.**
GULCIN DILEK, Assistant Professor and DURSUN DILEK, Professor, Sinop University, Turkey.
 - **Museums, oral history and intercultural education: From the speech of the few to the voices of many and different people.**
MARIA VLACHAKI, Teacher in primary education, educationist (Med) and museologist (MSc), PhD candidate, University of Thessaly, Greece.