

An Overview: Oral history in the journalism classroom

Oral histories can be comprised of anything from video sessions with veterans, talking about their experience in World War II, to grabbing a cheap tape recorder and sitting with your grandma, asking her about growing up during the Great Depression. For oral historians, the thing that separates what they do from any other type of interview – including the journalistic interview – is going the extra step of obtaining permission for the raw recording to be archived in a location where it is accessible to the public.

To understand how and why some journalism professors use oral histories or oral history methods in their classrooms, I spoke with five of them from universities across the U.S. Some only have their students listen to interviews that were conducted by experienced oral historians. Others train their students to conduct oral history interviews and use the material gathered for multimedia storytelling. One professor only uses oral history-type interviews as a starting point for finding hidden stories.

Although each professor has a different method and outcome for using oral histories in their curricula, they all say that somewhere along the continuum of their journalism career, they fell in love with learning about and understanding the past. They feel that engaging with history helped them gain a better understanding of the here and now and present those connections to their audiences in a deep and meaningful way. They feel it is important to train their students to do the same and view oral history as a vehicle to do so. In the process, their students also learn valuable skills designed to make them better storytellers.

Skill 1: Dig deep in research

The professors talk about the importance of having students do extensive research in order to provide context for oral histories. Whether students only use oral histories as a supplement to primary documents or if they were building up a knowledge base in order that they may confidently go out and interview people themselves, the professors stress that their research has to go beyond typing in a few words in a search engine and reading a few articles. It is history, after all. Most of the professors assign extensive readings on the topic or period of history in question in order to help their students build a solid foundation of knowledge. For some of the professors, the research spans an entire semester, at the end of which students produce a comparative analysis between the information contained in oral histories and their study of primary documents by looking for parallels between past and current trends, events and issues.

For those professors whose students actually conduct interviews, the research period has to be condensed to fit the first few weeks of class and focuses on a broad overview of the topic at hand. Assignments generally include reading history books, having class discussions and organizing sessions with guest speakers so that students can become as familiar as possible with the subject matter. Their students may not delve as deep into the history as they would like but are equipped with enough knowledge to ask informed questions and raise points for clarification, if needed, during an interview. Given the time constraints of the semester within which they must work, it has to do.

Skill 2: Follow the conversation

Regardless of how the professor uses oral history in their curriculum, each believes that oral histories provide a platform for hands-on training in the art of interviewing. Most of the professors require their students to listen to and critique archived oral history interviews, making sure that students look specifically at things like the structure of the interview, the use of silence and the effectiveness of follow-up questions.

The professors whose students conduct oral history interviews themselves said the experience provides a rich yet safe environment for honing interviewing skills with interviewees both knowledgeable and willing to help students learn. These professors all mention how difficult it is to train students to develop a good list of questions and then determine when to deviate from the list. To help students become more comfortable with the process, some professors set up mock interviews in class with volunteers from their local community. One professor periodically sits in on his students' interviews and offers one-on-one coaching on how to improve their technique. Another professor listens to his students interview recordings and then evaluates their technique after the fact.

Skill 3: Find the hidden story

Rather than focusing on the technological aspects of producing a story, the professors turned their attention to helping students form the information they obtain from their interviewees into compelling, historically accurate stories. For the professors whose students actually conduct oral history interviews and use them for multimedia storytelling, the process is a way for them to bring shared experiences of history to the

attention of their communities. Students' edited work – in the form of material for interactive databases or voice-over slideshows – appears in museums, on the web and even on local PBS television stations in their region. One professor, Jim Sheeler, directs his students to conduct oral history-type interviews with the residents of a local nursing home as a means of gaining entrance into the lives of their story subjects. He says the location is a great place for students to establish relationship with people and be in place to capture the types of raw, intimate moments he loved documenting as a reporter.

Skill 4: Weigh ethical decisions

While most oral historians dispute the validity of including Studs Terkel in discussions of oral history because the raw interviews from his published works were not made readily available to the public, several of the professors mention including excerpts from Terkel's work in teachings on the ethics of editing and maintaining the integrity of stories that are shared during interviews. One professor even goes as far as doing side-by-side line edits and historical fact-checks with students on their stories before publication.

Skill 5: Explore “the other”

One benefit the professors hadn't anticipated with using oral history methods in their classes was that their students' perspectives would be enlarged through building relationship with groups of people with whom they would normally not choose to spend time – namely minorities, the elderly and war veterans. Most of the professors believe that prolonged exposure to these various groups open the door for their students to see and understand life lessons from another's point of view and build relationships with

members of the community. They hope that the experience will also diversify the voices represented in and depth of reporting of their students' future work.

The tension between the two fields

The similarities between oral history and certain types of journalism, like immersion nonfiction storytelling, make building a bridge between the two fields sound like an ideal endeavor. I, however, have found a few distinctions between them in my own research and experience with conducting oral history interviews that might create a bit of tension for journalism professors.

First, journalists and oral historians have different end-goals for their interviews, which may affect how they are conducted. For oral historians, the archival of raw material that can act as a supplement to historical manuscripts and data makes an interview oral history. For the journalist, however, the story that will be published based on the material gathered is usually the end-goal. Deadlines and time constraints are an additional layer of complication to be factored in as they can affect the quality and quantity of information gathered.

Second, the intended audiences for oral history and journalism differ, which may influence the type and scope of information gathered. Journalists are challenged in today's immediate information society to present interesting information for a specific, known audience. Oral historians collect remembrances of historical events, eras and trends for current and future researchers. If interviewers keep their audiences in mind – and they should – the information they obtain could widely vary.

Third, perceptions of who controls the information vary between the two fields. On the one hand, oral historians generally view the interview as a collaborative effort where interviewees, through conditions explicitly stated on the release forms that are necessary for archival, have the final say about how their stories are used. Journalists, on the other hand, generally maintain control of how stories about their interviewee are presented to their audience. The expectations arising from this point of intersection between oral history and journalism can create tension with questions about where responsibilities and loyalties lie.

Suggested future research

The interviews conducted with professors barely grazed the surface and provided an overview of how and why a few of them were using oral history in their curricula. For a more effective and in-depth understanding, I would suggest conducting case studies that involved actually sitting in on class sessions to learn how professors used oral history to cultivate interviewing technique and develop storytelling skills. These case studies would allow researchers to examine student-professor interactions and evaluate techniques used to teach the various aspects of research, interviewing and storytelling.

Another possible area of study includes learning how being attached to a larger oral history project affects a professor's involvement and investment in student participation and the collection of stories. Two of the professors interviewed for this project were directors of oral history projects at their respective universities. Questions to consider include:

- What similarities and differences exist between the goals of the classes?

- How these professors structure their courses and the journalism their students produce?

Third, I would be interested to hear from the students themselves. What motivated them to take the class? What perceived impact, if any, did learning about and conducting oral histories have on their storytelling? Specifically, I am curious to know how their experience with oral histories has been incorporated into their understanding of interviewing and the development of their interviewing style. Also, how did their encounter with history impact their storytelling? For an added layer of complexity, a researcher could also conduct a study with students from multiple universities and compare and contrast the findings between them.

In spite of this tension between journalism and oral history, journalism students have much to gain from engaging with communities and the past through oral history. Like many other fields of study, each field can benefit from learning from the other.

A Storytelling Training Ground:

Oral history in the journalism classroom

The idea of oral history can conjure up images of anything from conducting video recording sessions with veterans, talking about their experience in World War II, to grabbing a cheap tape recorder and sitting with your grandma, asking her about growing up during the Great Depression. Most journalists don't think of oral history as a rich training ground for newbies to learn the basic skills necessary for good journalism – research, interviewing and storytelling. I spoke with five journalism professors from universities across the U.S. who do in order to understand how and why they use oral history methods in their classrooms.

So, what is oral history? According to Dr. David Dunaway, professor of English and Communications at the University of Albuquerque and one of the editors and contributors to “Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology,” it’s “the tape-recorded reminiscence of eyewitnesses to historically significant events or trends.” Although this may sound remarkably like the work that journalists do every day in order to file stories on deadline, one of the key attributes that distinguish oral history interviews from journalistic ones is the archival process. “Oral history is not considered by oral historians to be oral history until it is accessible to the public in unedited, raw form - either tape or transcript or both,” Dunaway says. These first-person narratives of experience act as supplements to the “official version” of history. They are also a rich breeding ground for authentic storytelling. According to Dr. Earnest Perry, associate professor at the Missouri School of Journalism who was

recently recognized by the American Journalism Historians Association for his efforts in engaging students with journalism and mass communication history:

If done correctly, it's one of the truest forms of historical knowledge available. It can provide the narrative that you may not get from documents and archival materials – not saying those things aren't important; they're very important because you can use them to verify some of those stories. But the combination of those oral stories and the documents, including newspaper articles, that can back that up? Powerful.

Through courses with names like “Multimedia Storytelling,” “Oral History as Journalism” and “Storytelling and Civic Engagement,” this handful of journalism professors from around the country are using oral history techniques to invite their students to engage with history, communities and untold stories that are waiting to be shared. The focus isn't on learning how to create highly polished pieces for a public audience, but rather on obtaining valuable, transferable skills that enable students to dig deep and bring greater context to their storytelling. The skills – things like conducting in-depth research, learning to truly listen and crafting compelling stories – are part of every good journalist's skill set. Dr. Perry believes that the use of oral history techniques move educators toward training students to “tell their stories from the perspectives of the people living them,” rather than from “the narratives that we've created that fit into a nice, little, neat box where all we need to do is plug in the facts that don't necessarily fit this story of this particular person.”

In addition to providing a training ground for students to hone their research, interviewing and storytelling skills, the conversation about using oral history as a teaching tool centered on themes like community engagement, building historical-mindedness in students and exposing them to “the other.” Dr. Joel Beeson, associate professor at West Virginia University’s P. I. Reed School of Journalism who also directs West Virginia’s Veteran’s History Project, views bringing oral history into his journalism courses as an opportunity to encourage students to branch out into new territory. He says, “I don’t look at everyone anymore as, ‘You’re going to go to work in a newsroom.’ It’s not really about oral history being used in journalism in a traditional way. It’s [about], ‘How can that be used to fashion a new role for people [for whom] journalism is their calling?’”

Although each of the journalism professors had a different method and outcome for the use of oral history in their curriculum, they all use it as a method of encouraging students to engage with the past in order to understand the present. In the process, their students are able to hone the skills every journalist needs for authentic, in-depth storytelling.

Digging deep in research

Research is a fundamental skill that every student – especially journalism students – should learn to do well. Dr. Perry, whose research focuses on media and civil rights history at the University of Missouri, describes himself as an “archival historian.” During his reporting years, his interest in and knowledge of history helped him find sources, develop questions and churn out story ideas. Now, Perry

strives to communicate the value of understanding history to his students and encourages them to take more than a cursory glance at the history behind issues that capture their interest. He draws on oral historians' responsibility to know "the political, cultural, social and economic" factors of their chosen subject as an example of what immersion journalism could look like and why that level of interest is beneficial. Oral historians, he says, immerse themselves in the history of their subjects in order to ask multi-faceted, well-rounded questions and help narrators relive an experience, rather than simply retell an experience. When journalists immerse themselves in the history around the subjects they're reporting about, he contends that it enables them to help interviewees tell their story from their perspective and in that context, rather than explaining how they feel, today, looking back on those occurrences.

Since a semester isn't long enough for this type of immersion, Perry pushes for the master's students in his Historical Methods course to listen to, critique and use interviews that were conducted by experienced oral historians to complete research projects, rather than try to conduct them on their own. Through extensive reading assignments and topical research, students are able to produce a comparative analysis between the information contained in oral histories and what their study of primary documents has produced. By doing so, they learn to draw parallels between past and current trends, events and issues.

For the professors who do have students conduct oral histories, the research period only spans a few weeks of the semester and focuses on a broad overview of

the topic at hand. Assignments generally include reading history books, as well as participating in class discussions and sessions with guest speakers so that students can become as thoroughly familiar as possible with the subject matter. This enables them to ask informed questions and raise points for clarification, if needed, during an interview.

Dr. Beeson, who oversees the West Virginia Veteran's Oral History Project, also teaches his students to compare the official documents with individual and collective experiences captured through oral testimony. He provides scenarios and examples from his work with the veteran's project to show how the official record can be colored by social and political viewpoints. Speaking specifically about military records that were used to reconstruct history for the African American World War II Veteran's Project, Beeson explains that officers generally wrote reports for their superiors and would only include certain kinds of information in those missives. Beeson views oral history as a way to supersede the social and political purpose of the "official version" of history that researchers tend to rely on for understanding. He believes that neither should be taken at face value but rather both should be examined in context for a more comprehensive interpretation of the past.

Learning the art of interviewing

The professors viewed oral history interviews as an excellent tool for teaching in-depth interviewing skills. In general, the professors said they quickly move from the initial "fumble with the equipment" lessons to the meatier subjects of

developing questions and practicing the art of conversation through critiquing and conducting oral history interviews. These practices provide students with the opportunity to learn how to use questions as a guide for reconstructing memories.

One of the greatest obstacles professors face with asking students to develop a list of questions in preparation for an interview, however, is getting them to deviate from the plan of using them all. Before students come face-to-face with narrators, several of the professors said they provide ample opportunity for students to experience first-hand the nuance of interviewing. Dr. Beeson, whose students archive their interviews with the West Virginia Veteran's Project he directs, shares that he uses in-class demonstrations with volunteer interviewees to coach students through the interviewing process. He recalls one interaction between a Vietnam veteran and student interviewer in which the student simply started to go down the list of questions provided by the Library of Congress for its veteran's oral history project. In response to the first question on the list, "Were you drafted or did you enlist?" the veteran said, with much attitude, that he enlisted and wasn't a "draftee." When the student moved on to the next question, Beeson yelled, "STOP! What did he say? Ask him to define it. What do you mean a 'draftee'?" He says, "I'm always telling them, bring along some questions or topics but don't follow those. You want to listen to threads and encourage storytelling."

Dr. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, associate professor at the University of Texas School of Journalism who directs the "VOCES" (which means "voices" in Spanish) Oral History Project she started in 1999 that seeks to capture the stories of Latinos

of the World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War generations, is also a firm believer in what she calls “controlled practice.” Before sending her students out to conduct individual interviews, she has them listen to and critique interviews archived with the “VOCES” project. Students are asked to pay attention to the interviewer’s technique, evaluating its strengths and weaknesses, as well as to draw attention to what information was missing or what points needed to be clarified. Students must also write a story from the oral history recording.

Dr. Rivas-Rodriguez also has students set up and break down equipment at least five times before going out on an interview on top of doing practice interviews with one another. “The reason for that is I don't want anybody getting to an interview and fumbling with their equipment, [then] starting to get flustered when the main thing that they need to really worry about is the interview.” Once students become comfortable with their research, equipment and interviewing skill level, they take part in a large-scale, day-long production called “M.I.I.S.” (“Multiple Individual Interview Session”). During these out-of-town events, six students conduct simultaneous, individual interviews with Latino veterans and civilians who contributed to the nation’s history. During each morning and evening session, another group of students are scanning documents, photos and records brought in by interviewees for archival.

Dr. Dunaway, who has produced several radio documentary series in addition to publishing books on history and biography, listens to student interviews on tape and evaluates their interviewing techniques after the fact. He says he’s

looking for things like their use of prompts, how they redirect narrators and how they build rapport before asking tough questions. These post-interview critiques are also useful in evaluating how they contextualize the information they receive during an interview.

In addition to deviating from a set list of questions, Dr. Perry, who teaches history of mass media courses at the University of Missouri, says he notices a couple trends with his students: they don't understand the importance of silence – the discipline of letting people process their thoughts before interjecting – and they tend to do more talking than listening. According to Perry:

Journalists have an innate inability to shut up and listen. That's what I tell them all the time: 'Sometimes you just need to shut up and let them talk.' Listen. Stop and listen to what they're saying. How does that fit in with the information that you've gathered, your knowledge of the issue?' And then, 'What are they saying about themselves that either matches that or does not match that?'

He believes this propensity to talk too much stems either from a lack of interest or not listening in order to ask meaningful follow-up questions – or both. To remedy the situation, Perry tries to limit the number of questions his students have written down. This, he says, means they'll have to listen and be engaged in the conversation, rather than rely on their predetermined agendas.

Crafting the story

When it comes to teaching storytelling, the professors said they focus more on the art of constructing stories and less on the technological aspects of the craft. They reason that technology changes rapidly but the strength of good storytelling never does.

Dr. Perry pointed out that journalism professors face more and more pressure to teach students how to put a story up as quickly as possible, and following that with multimedia content – a standup, audio piece, slideshow, etc. This, he says, makes it difficult to focus on teaching students how to place information in context and tell authentic stories. He believes it's a necessary practice, however, because without context and authenticity, journalism becomes shallow and loses credibility. "We tell the story in ways that fit the paradigms that we've structured and not necessarily the way in which people actually live their lives," he says, which fits a "common narrative" that journalists use to simply fill in the facts. Eventually, audiences will stop paying attention.

So, while it's generally understood that students need to learn how to capture clean audio, how to take visually interesting photographs and the basics of using editing software to do multimedia storytelling, journalism professors who use oral histories in their curricula tend to focus on the skills set needed to tell these stories rather than on technological mastery. According to Dr. Beeson:

Instead of trying to learn how to use a \$6,000 high-def video camera and Final Cut, we focus more on how to create some kind of interactive narrative

that will contextualize the oral history interview. How do you contextualize someone's personal experience? What do you need to link it to? You need to link it to a document, a graph, someone else's interview or visual material.

His teaching focus at West Virginia University is less about "how to use that and make a product" than "how is the storytelling process created using database driven narratives" for the web, tablets and museums in the state. His students have even developed a manual to train people in the community to conduct oral histories and create content in an effort to have them join in the collaborative storytelling process.

At the University of Texas, Dr. Rivas-Rodriguez does a side-by-side, word-by-word edit with her students on the stories they write from oral histories collected for the "Voces" project or Oral History as Journalism class. Together, they look at things like fairness, word choice and accuracy. Students also have to do historical fact-checks before the story goes through an additional copy edit. She's currently working on a project called "PhotoVoz" (translated from Spanish as "photo voice") where students are recording audio of World War II veterans as they flip through archived photos on an iPad and tell stories based on those images. These hour-long interviews will be edited down to 5-minute Soundslides audio slideshows for public viewing as part of a collaborative project between the local PBS television station in Austin (KLRU) and the "VOCES" oral history project she directs.

For Jim Sheeler, professor at Case Western Reserve University who won a Pulitzer Prize for his immersion narrative nonfiction series titled "The Final Salute," about fallen military personnel and the people who notify families of their loved ones'

death for the Rocky Mountain News, an oral history-type interview is merely a launch pad for his students' storytelling. While teaching at the University of Colorado at Boulder, he found it difficult to create opportunities for his journalism students to immerse themselves in the lives of interviewees due to time constraints and lack of interest when publication wasn't guaranteed. The question, "Is it possible for me to get the students in those same sort of intimate, raw, special moments that I love witnessing and documenting as a reporter?" led him to build a relationship with a local nursing home. There, he says, the people have great stories and the time to tell them. They're patient and desire to help the students. It proved to be the perfect atmosphere for his students to immerse themselves in the lives of people who had hidden stories to share and learn how to uncover them.

When he moved to Case Western in Ohio, he took the teaching model with him and now encourages his students to use oral history interviewing techniques and questions as a gateway to life lessons held within. It is a means of finding the story behind the story – and the history. Sheeler says:

I tell them that I want them not to write about the story of who they are but why they are who they are. What made them who they are? How [did] those events in their lives influence them to become this person that they are at the end of their lives. That, for me, is the real lesson and that's what I want.

The students in Sheeler's immersion journalism/multimedia storytelling class spend an entire semester at Eliza Bryant Retirement Village. It is the nation's oldest continually operating African-American nursing home, situated in what he

describes as a “forgotten part of Cleveland.” Nurses at the home provide Sheeler with a list of ideal candidates and students spend an average of eight hours during the semester with each person. Through spending extended periods of time with the subjects of their stories, students are able to watch the story unfold in front of them rather than solely rely on interviews to build a narrative. As students record life histories, take photographs and just hang out with residents, they often gain entry into their inner worlds.

Sheeler uses Lynda.com or MediaStorm training modules as virtual textbooks for the technological basics of shooting video and editing. The bulk of his teaching and mentoring centers on finding and telling the story. Each student is required to produce a written profile with an audio slideshow and a two-to-three minute video story during the semester that not only lives up to the person’s life but also are pieces that people would actually enjoy.

Even though students from a wide range of academic disciplines take his journalism class – from nursing to biochemistry to engineering to English – Sheeler was able to cite example after example of how well the model has worked. He’s witnessed students go from being skeptical that they can produce a story worth reading to being excited about the amazing things people share with them. Over the course of a semester, he breaks students out of academic writing by using one-on-one critiques to help distinguish between a list of facts presented in a linear fashion and a real story. These individual coaching sessions help them shape stories into compelling profiles.

Considering ethics

No discussion of the intersection of oral history and journalism would be complete without addressing how the journalism professors tackle ethical issues, especially in regards to editing and archival. For many oral historians, Studs Terkel, the author, historian and broadcast journalist, is a controversial figure due to the fact that his published works were based on in-depth interviews that were highly edited and his raw interviews were not archived and made readily available to the public. Terkel himself didn't believe he was an oral historian, but rather an activist and "guerilla journalist" who cultivated a deep knowledge of the nation's history. According to a 2002 article by John DeGraaf and Allen Stein in the Oral History Review, his goal was to help the masses remember and not repeat America's greatest mistakes.

Several of the professors mentioned using the work of Studs Terkel as part of their students' introduction to oral history and the use of oral history interviews for storytelling. At West Virginia University, Dr. Beeson has students read excerpts from "The Good War," listen to files of Terkel's raw interviews found online and critique the editing process that led to the final published work. Beeson says that the conversation usually focuses on issues of representation and the ethical conundrum of editing and using interviews for journalism while maintaining the integrity of all of the information contained in those interviews. Where social scientists want to study the interviews in their entirety, weighing themes found within against theories, journalists seek to present the stories found within to their audiences.

“Nobody wants to sit and listen to 20 hours of raw ‘ums’ and ‘ahs’,” Beeson says.

“The journalistic thing is to distill it down to something that people would be interested in.” His role is to teach students to do so with integrity.

In addition to teaching students how to ethically navigate the editing process for radio and documentary production, Dr. Dunaway, who has produced several radio documentary series over the last 40 years, stresses the need for them to archive their raw interviews, thereby making them oral histories. He views conducting interviews within a community, then failing to complete the process of archiving those memories in a repository as “cultural theft” and using that community for academic gain. Unfortunately, getting students to complete this final step towards cultural preservation has proven to be one of his greatest challenges. In the busyness of wrapping up a semester, many students tell Dunaway that they will obtain the necessary release form and deposit their interviews. Many forget to do so.

Exploring “the other”

One unanticipated benefit of having journalism students conduct oral histories is that it pushes them to engage with and explore “the other.” For Sheeler’s students, spending time with the elderly residents of Eliza Bryant Retirement Village not only brings them face to face with members of another generation but also with those who are battling illness, facing the reality of death or carrying on after the loss of a spouse. The experience pushes them out of what’s referred to at Case Western Reserve University as the “Case bubble” where students tend to spend

all of their time and forces many to just “hang out” with people whose company they would not normally seek out.

Dr. Rivas-Rodriguez reports the same benefit in regards to the students who conduct oral history interviews for the “VOCES Oral History Project” at the University of Texas. “What I hadn't quite understood was how rarely my students have an opportunity to talk to somebody of another race and another generation,” she says. Many of her white students had never talked to a Hispanic woman in her 60s or 70s unless she worked as someone’s domestic, let alone had any kind of relationship with one, she says.

So, all of a sudden, these people are just relating to each other as human beings and my students who are, by and large, totally ignorant of segregation concerning Mexican Americans, all of a sudden their eyes are wide open and they're realizing, ‘Whoa! These people once did something that we never have seen before and they're not even bitter about it.’ That's kind of the most common thing that I would hear from them. ‘I can't believe they went through all this and they're not bitter about it.’

By introducing students to the diverse voices that she believes are largely missing from history textbooks, Rivas-Rodriguez seeks to encourage the inclusion of minority voices and perspectives in history. By doing so, she reasons that the predominant thought of the complexion of “our country” will begin to take on a different meaning. She hopes projects like hers bring greater understanding on a

national level of the contributions of the many diverse groups in America's history and changes how these groups are perceived on a national level.

Impact

Regardless of race, class or culture, people relay details about their life through telling stories. Social scientists use the framework of narrative theory to untangle the language of these stories and deconstruct the significance of meaning behind them, all in an effort to bring deeper understanding to why we live our lives the way we do and what makes us who we are.

Through providing opportunities for students to engage with history – the official written documents and oral testimony – these journalism professors are providing students with tools needed to decipher and re-tell these stories to the masses. Many of their students are becoming aware of a world they didn't know existed through oral histories that isn't presented in the popular media or their high school history books. Students are gaining the opportunity to come face to face with history and make linkages to the present. According to Dr. Dunaway, from the University of New Mexico:

Oral history, broadcast and used as journalism, can open up a broad, personal avenue into American history and culture. Driving down that avenue can be a whole new generation of recordists and interviewers dedicated to the idea that a community's history belongs to them and they should be the ones who collect it, use it and pass it on to another generation.

Through passing on this knowledge and experience, these journalism professors continue to train young journalists to create the kinds of stories that impact audiences while ensuring that the stories that explain, through personal experience, the webs of significance we've woven for ourselves for generations are preserved and shared.