Introduction to the Oral History and Archives Kit

Community-Driven Archives materials are generously supported by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. For more information about Community-Driven Archives, go to library.unc.edu/wilson/shc/
Your backpack includes tools needed to begin preserving historical artifacts and for conducting oral history interviews.

The following slides will help you to get started!
The Oral History Archives Kit contains:

- Zoom Digital Audio Recorder
- Zoom Accessory Pack
- Archival Gloves
- Information Pamphlets
- Archival Sleeves and Folders
- Notebooks and Pencils
- Stamps
- Thank You Cards
- Memory Card
- Archival Sleeves and Folders
These are materials to help prepare and facilitate oral history interviews:

**Informational Pamphlets**
Tips to help you get started with your preservation and memory projects.

**Question Cards**
Suggested topics and prompts to guide you through a simple oral history interview.
Archival Containers for Photographs and Documents

- Protective 5x7” sleeves
- Protective 8x10” sleeves
- Document 11x14” sleeves
- Archival folders

Gloves

To handle photographic materials safely
Field notes, pencils, and note cards

Write important field notes and newly formed questions. Noted reminders may include: dates, times, names, places, significant occurrences during the recording, noises, etc.

A thank you note is a special way to let the interviewee know that his or her willingness to participate in this oral history interview was appreciated.
Unbox the Zoom recorder and locate the small MicroSD memory card.

Note: you will have two memory cards – **2 GB** comes in the Zoom box and **32 GB** is provided for more storage (the next slide will show you how to insert it).
How to insert the memory card in your Zoom

Identify the MicroSD port on the side. Gently lift the cover and insert the memory card in the slit. It will only fit one way. Do not force it in, since it will lodge fully in place with an easy push.
Inserting the battery

Remove the Zoom recorder from the packaging.

Gently press down and pull outward on the battery chamber cover.

Insert the battery according to the matching +/− polarization symbols.

Replace the battery chamber cover.

Note: Use alkaline or NiMH batteries.
Part names and functions

- **Parts of the unit**

1. Line/headphones output jack
2. Volume adjustment buttons
3. microSD card slot
4. LO CUT switch
5. AUTO LEVEL switch
6. REC FORMAT switch
7. Tripod mount
8. Battery compartment cover
9. Stereo microphone
10. Recording/peak indicator
11. Liquid crystal display (LCD)
12. Record button
13. Built-in speaker (mono)
14. Mic/lne input jack
15. Input level buttons
16. Fast forward button
17. Play button
18. Fast reverse button
19. Delete button
20. Power button
21. USB jack

**Parts of the unit**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Line/headphones output jack</td>
<td>Outputs sound to headphones or external equipment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Volume adjustment buttons</td>
<td>Use to adjust the output level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 microSD card slot</td>
<td>Insert a microSD or microSDHC card here for use with the unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 LO CUT switch</td>
<td>Use to turn the low cut filter (noise reduction) ON or OFF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 AUTO LEVEL switch</td>
<td>Use to turn automatic recording level adjustment ON or OFF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 REC FORMAT switch</td>
<td>Use to select the recording format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Tripod mount</td>
<td>Attach a tripod here to use the unit in a fixed position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Battery compartment cover</td>
<td>Install one AA battery under here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Stereo microphone</td>
<td>Record sound in stereo in a 20P fixed in front of the unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Recording/peak indicator</td>
<td>This lights during recording and blinks rapidly if the input signal is too loud (peak detection).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Liquid crystal display (LCD)</td>
<td>This shows various information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Record button</td>
<td>Use to start and stop recording, and to confirm file deletion, for example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Built-in speaker (mono)</td>
<td>Use to listen to recordings when not using the line/headphones output jack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Mic/lne input jack</td>
<td>Connect and record another device or microphone here. Mics that require plug-in power can be used with this jack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Input level buttons</td>
<td>Use to adjust the recording level manually.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Fast forward button</td>
<td>During playback, use to select files and to fast forward. On the home screen, use to set the recording format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Play button</td>
<td>Use to start and stop file playback. On the home screen, use to add track marks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Fast reverse button</td>
<td>During playback, use to select files and fast reverse. On the home screen, use to set the recording format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Delete button</td>
<td>Use to erase files that are not needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Power button</td>
<td>Turn the power ON/OFF. Set to HOLD to disable other keys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 USB jack</td>
<td>Connect to a computer to power the unit by USB or to transfer files between the computer and the card in the unit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Screen indications

1. Level meters
   These show input and output levels.

2. File/format information
   This area shows the recording format and the recording date
   and file number of the playing file.

3. Battery level indicator
   This shows the remaining battery charge. It does not appear
   when power is being supplied by USB.

4. Time display
   This shows the remaining recordable time of the inserted
   microSD card, the playback time or the name of a file that is
   about to be erased, for example.

5. Status indicators
   These show the current operating state.
How to turn on your recorder

Locate the power button on the side. Slide and hold this in position until you see “Hi” in the LCD panel.
Set the recording format and bit rate.

1. Select MP3 or WAV format.
2. Use ◀ and ▶ to select the bit rate and press ●.
   - The screen shows the remaining recording time for the current bit rate.

MEMO
Since the MP3 format uses data compression, its sound quality is not as good as WAV format, but it uses less microSD card capacity. For both formats, higher rates provide higher quality.

For better quality recordings:

Audio settings:

- Bit rate: 48/24
- Format: WAV
- Auto level: OFF
- LoCut: OFF
Setting the Date and Time in your new recorder

Set the date and time on the unit.

1. While pressing ( ), turn the power on.
2. Use ( ) and ( ) to set the value, and press ( ) to move to the next item.
   • Press ( ) to return to the previous item.
3. After setting the last item (seconds), press ( ) to finish.

MEMO
If the date/time setting is initialized, this screen opens automatically.
Start with an input level of 37 to 40. See online information and videos to learn more about these settings.
How to start and stop recording

The LCD panel changes automatically to an elapsed time mode for recording.

Press the red button to start and stop recordings.

After turning on the unit, you can start recording from the home screen with the press of one button.

1. Press  to start recording.
   - The recording time appears on the screen.

2. Press  again to stop recording and return to the home screen.

MEMO
If no microSD card is in the unit, you can still record one file of up to 35 seconds using the unit’s built-in memory. Be aware that record- ing again without a card will overwrite the recording already in the built-in memory.
**Play**

Play back recorded audio.

- **Press** [ ] to play the last recorded file.
- The remaining playback time appears on the screen.
- **Main button functions during playback**
  - [ ] Press during playback to select files
  - [ ] Press to pause/resume
  - [ ] Press to return to the home screen

**MEMO**
Playback automatically stops after all files have been played.

**Delete**

You can delete recorded audio files.

1. Press [ ] during playback of the file that you want to delete.
2. Press [ ] to confirm. Press [ ] or [ ] to cancel deletion.
NOTE:
When you format a memory card in any device, everything is erased and gone forever!
Stop and think when you see the word “Format” on your storage system.

Prepare Formatting microSD cards

If a microSD card that is not properly formatted is inserted into this unit, the format confirmation screen opens.

1. Press ◎ to format the card. Press ◄/►, ◄/►, or ◄ to cancel.
2. After formatting completes or is cancelled, the home screen reappears.

MEMO
You can also open this screen by pressing ◄ while turning the power ON.
Connecting with a computer

With this unit’s power off, connect it to a computer running Windows or Macintosh OS using a USB cable. This allows the unit to be used as a microSD card reader.

Files recorded to the microSD card are saved in the “FOLDER01” subfolder inside the “STEREO” folder on the card. If a file has been recorded to the unit’s built-in memory when a microSD card was not in the unit, that file will be saved in the “BLT-IN” subfolder inside the “STEREO” folder.

Remember to safeguard your recordings as soon as you can! Back them up by storing the files . . . preferably in two locations.
ZOOM Recorder Accessories Kit contains:

- USB Cord
- AC adapter
- Tripod
- Windscreen
- Padded-shell case
- Mic-stand adapter
How to transfer your Zoom MicroSD memory card recordings to your computer using a USB cord

The USB cord can directly connect the ZOOM recorder and your computer for downloading audio files. Copy Zoom files and paste them in a folder of choice on your computer.

(Recommend: Utilize the USB cord and do not remove the MicroSD card.)
Use of accessories with your Zoom:
THE AC ADAPTER

Instead of connecting to a computer the USB cord can also be inserted in the AC Adapter to save battery life.
Use of accessories with your Zoom: THE WINDSCREEN

Even if you do not audibly hear any wind noises, air conditioner hissing, or other sounds, your Zoom recorder may pick them up. Utilizing a windscreen may help to prevent some disappointing sound distortions.
Use of accessories with your Zoom: THE TRIPOD

Use the tripod to set the recorder on the table and conduct an interview hands-free. This small tripod can be attached, as shown, and both the legs of the tripod and angle of the Zoom adjusted to pick up the best sound.
Use of accessories with your Zoom: THE MIC STAND ADAPTER

This attachment is used for placing the Zoom recorder in a microphone stand. It may also be used to easily hold with your hands for an interview.
Use of accessories with your Zoom: THE PADDED-SHELL CASE

Your Zoom recorder can be protected by inserting it in this padded-shell case between use.
Instructional videos

Introduction to the Zoom recorder
https://youtu.be/CHW_jwFKtr0

How to update Firmware (software that is “built-in”)
https://youtu.be/cGVRRS2rPOM

How to import files to computer
https://youtu.be/aRJVE6JHnsA
Now the fun begins!

The following slides help you to conduct effective Oral History Interviews.
How many times have you heard someone say:
“\textit{I wish I had asked this or that person for information while they were alive?}”

It happens all the time!

Obviously, we cannot go back in time, but we can take stock of what is possible now and seek to preserve this record for the future.
Have you ever asked a person about his or her background?

If the answer is “yes,” then you have initiated an oral history interview!

Think of them simply as discussions to gain information about a person’s background. Be yourself!

There is no one way to do oral history interviews. Every interview is different.
Your goal for obtaining the oral history interview:

Generations from now . . . did you ask the questions people will want to know?
Prepare for the Interview

• Learn what you can about the interviewee (person being interviewed)
• Obtain biographical material / Google search / Archival and library research, etc.
• Conduct genealogy and family historical research
• Conduct any specialized research related to that individual or the community
• Prepare questions on note cards or a readable device – use chronological order
• Obtain consents / permission forms
Interviewing Techniques

• Remember the interviewee is the focus!
• Do not interrupt during answers. Periods of silence are okay
• Chronological questions are good, but may deviate with a flow of thought
• Actively listen and ask follow-up questions
• Ask broad questions for expanded answers
• Be open to hearing disturbing or unpleasant content
• Provide comfortable setting to discuss sensitive topics – ease into the question
• Ask for clarifications as needed
Question Topics

• Early background – childhood remembrances
• Parents and family / genealogy
• Neighborhood and Community – demographics, experiences
• Education – friends, favorite teachers, extracurricular activities
• Teenage Years and Adulthood
• Work / Employment
• Social Life / Relationships
• Children
• Church / Politics / Hobbies
• Effect of social events and historical events on the interviewees and their families
Equipment used to record:

• Audio recorder or audio-video recorder
• Lighting for videotaping, if needed
• Tripod for videotaping/small tripod for audio recorder, if needed
• Windscreen (foam cover) for microphone
• Lavalier (clip on microphone) or handheld microphone (optional)
• QUIET LOCATION!
Oral History Interviews
Practical tips for effective results
To start an oral history interview . . .

State for the recording:

• Date
• Name of interviewer
• Name of interviewee
• Location
• Anything of special note
It is important to ask the interviewee to say his/her/their own name(s)

Reasons:

• Verification of his/her/their identity
• The audio/video recording may be used for an edited production at some point
• Confirm how names are pronounced
Listening is as important as questioning

• Show interest in the answers
• Ask follow-up questions
Try to capture specifics and stories

• Every person has unique experiences
• Details recorded may only be known by this individual
• Research is enhanced by facts
• Stories often provide interesting narratives
Don’t let a question become an answer

• Don’t summarize before the question
• It is important not to lead with the answer you want or expect
Use local history to formulate some of your questions

- What event was this interviewee involved with?
- Capture descriptions of the event – when, where, how, etc.
- Who were the leaders dedicated in this effort?
- Specific remembrances and stories
Possible causes for audio problems

• Filming outside in the wind
• Poor equipment
• Microphone too far away
• Air conditioner vent blowing near the microphone
  
i.e. captured in a moving car

Note: Utilize an earphone device (plugged into the recorder) to check the quality of the audio being recorded.
It is important to be silent during the answers

• Interruptions can break the train of thought
• It is difficult to edit out these comments
• There are non-verbal ways to offer support and give silent feedback (i.e. nodding, facial expressions)
For Each Oral History Interview

Remember:

• Be curious!

• Follow up!

• Be yourself!