

# Training document for Collecting Stories & creating Digital and Pop-up exhibitions

## INTRODUCTION



*Our grandmothers and their stories have been with us throughout our lives.  
How to share their lives and experiences to others?*

Our lives are made up of unique stories, which we may not always pay much attention to. Grandparents often tell us intriguing tales about what has happened in their family throughout history. The material provided here helps you to record your grandmothers' migration stories. By gathering knowledge about how and why they moved from one place or country to another, we can better understand the patterns of history, the story of our own family and begin to comprehend the political processes involved. Collecting family stories develops new skills, gives new knowledge, creates stronger bonds between different generations and within communities. An understanding of history also helps young people develop tolerance and teaches them how to connect the past with the present. Whilst collecting stories, young people will experience and develop skills in research and analysis.

# TASK

This material gives instructions on how to collect and later showcase the stories of our family members and ancestors. Your task here is to collect your grandmother's migration story and to think how you might later on present it to others in order to share her experiences. Various stages and methods to help you do all this are described below. Interviewing within the family differs from regular interviews or storytelling and the relationships between researcher and interviewee. Therefore, there are different sides highlighted here. Our broader goal is to involve young people from diverse cultural backgrounds in the local community and society and give them skills to collect, interpret and present their cultural heritage.

## **Training material consists of the following topics:**

1. Peculiarities of collecting stories within one's own family.
2. Methods for collecting stories.
3. Bringing up memories, which could be used to present in exhibitions.
4. Recording stories and the technical side of interviewing.
5. Overall principles for exhibiting stories.
6. Different ways to present a story.
7. Additional materials.

## PROCESS



*Everyday interaction within family members is so usual that we don't give it a lot of attention. The situation of an interview differs from it in many ways.*

### Process:

- Read through the instructions on interviewing your own family on page 6.
- Prepare thoroughly for the interview by reading the sections on pages 7-9.
  - Preparing for the interview
  - During the interview
  - After the interview
- Look at the additional information provided here about conducting oral history interview.
  - Guide to making interviews:  
<https://folklife.si.edu/resources/pdf/interviewingguide.pdf>
  - Interviewing family members:  
<http://www.library.ucla.edu/destintion/center-oral-history-research/resources/conducting-oral-histories-family-members>

# PROCESS

- Look at the examples of similar projects:
  - Stories collected by schoolchildren on how their grandparents reached New-Zealand:  
<http://www.livingheritage.org.nz/Schools-Stories/Personal-migration-stories>
  - Stories from people migrated to the States:  
<https://myimmigrationstory.com/>
- Read the text about participant observation on page 10.

## **To enhance your interview you can also take into account using additional material:**

- Instruction on using photos on page 11-12.
- Instructions on using maps on page 14.
- Instructions on using objects on page 13.
  - Read more about exhibiting history and stories through objects:  
<https://museums victoria.com.au/website/discoverycentre/websites-mini/small-object-big-story/planning-your-project/index.html>
- Or go on a walking interview, instructions are on page 15.

# PROCESS

## **While collecting stories from your own family members keep in mind:**

- Family members trust each other.
- The situation of collecting and recording stories differs from everyday interaction.
- You have probably already heard some stories and are familiar with the theme.
- You know how and when to ask more detailed questions.

## **Suggestions:**

- Don't hesitate to ask about the stories that you have heard before. Encourage your grandmother to tell those stories once more!
- While collecting and sharing stories keep in mind, whether you want to share it all with the wider public (family members might share very personal stories with each other).
- Talking about negative experiences could be difficult, but this might also be therapeutic for the talker.

# METHODS FOR COLLECTING STORIES



*The most common way for gathering information is conducting an interview.*

## **Interview**

An interview is a dialogue between two or more people, during which questions help the participants to remember their experiences and give more detailed answers to the questions. The method of asking questions and conducting interviews is important all through the project and they will come in handy while talking about objects, photos and journeys.

## **How to prepare for an Interview?**

- Think about your goals, why are you doing this?
- Set up a date for the interview.
- Do some research on history - what happened during the time your grandmother moved? What was happening in her birthplace and in her destination country at that time?
- Think, how and why is sharing her migration story useful for your grandmother? (Would it give her an opportunity to discuss about her experiences, remembering that part of her life?)

# METHODS FOR COLLECTING STORIES

- Think about what you want to know and about what you are going to talk.

Prepare some key questions.

- Think about the stories you have heard a lot. Could you use them while conducting the interview or ask additional questions about them?
- Think what are you going to do with the material later on, how are you planning to present it?
- How are you going to record the stories? Test your devices before interviewing.

## During the interview

- To begin with – explain why you are conducting the interview and how you are going to use it later.
- Ask permission to record the story and make notes.
- Check that your equipment is working, and you have additional batteries.
- Give attention to the sounds surrounding you, choose the quietest location and if possible ask to turn off devices like radio or television.
- Start with broader questions or topics, it helps to get into the theme. For example ask about her childhood, parents, where she was born.
- Ask one question at a time, so that it would be easier to answer.
- Don't be afraid of silence and longer pauses - sometimes people need some time to think after they have heard the question.
- Always prefer open-ended questions (for example, start with how, why, what kind, describe).
- Avoid questions, which could be answered with simply yes or no.
- An interview should develop as a conversation; when needed lead it with questions.



# METHODS FOR COLLECTING STORIES

- Listen carefully even when it seems that the story is far from the theme you are interested in. Give your grandmother some time to think about the question and talk it through.
- Ask about the stories that you have already heard or what are commonly told among your family.
- Don't interrupt the storytelling. If you have additional questions, write them down and ask later.
- Use non-leading questions, don't tell the interviewee what you want them to think.
- In addition to facts and opinions ask about descriptions and interesting stories.
- When your grandparent is showing signs of weariness or the topics get too emotional for her, finish the interview. If needed, reschedule and continue the interview another time.
- Thank her for the interview!

## **After the interview**

- Listen to the recording and write everything down, so that you could ask additional questions if needed
- Before you share or present the story, show it to your grandmother to get her feedback.
- Write down what surprised you the most and whether the interview questions worked or didn't work as you expected. Did you find out something new about your grandmother?
- If you wish to give the stories to a museum or to an archive, talk about it with your grandmother and ask, whether she wants to set any restrictions on using them. Get in touch with a museum to set those terms.

## PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION



*Working together gives good lead on telling stories to each other.*

Participant observation means experiencing, viewing and analyzing everyday actions or events. The aim is to understand culture from the point of view of the person who lives in this culture. Being a member of a family, you are conducting full participant observation every day and have been doing it throughout your life. You are familiar with doing things together with your family members and you share similar experiences. We all have participated and observed our own family, heard the stories of our relatives and ancestors.

### **While conducting participant observation more knowingly think about the following topics:**

- In what kind of situations does your family talk about migration/travelling to other countries? Who talks about this and when?
  - What do they talk about it?
  - What kind of comparisons and comments come up? To what themes are the comments and comparisons connected with?
- Take a closer look at the traditions and home decorating: can you notice your grandmothers origin at her home? How does the heritage show?
- Keep in mind that while collecting stories about your family you partly take the position of a bystander and don't interrupt the process.

**Take notes - the observations you have made can be very useful later when doing interviews.**

# PHOTOS



*The purpose of photos is mainly remembrance, but they are widely used as home decoration as well.*

An effective way to bring up memories is through photos. Nowadays taking pictures is a part of our everyday lives, but it hasn't always been the same. In recent history photos weren't taken on everyday basis and also there were stages of life that weren't photographed. Still, when it came to celebrations and important life events like baptizing, confirmation, wedding, funeral or birthdays, pictures were gladly taken.

## **While looking at the photos with your grandmother:**

- Ask her to describe the actions going on on the photography. Who are there, what is happening and when?
- Ask about the noteworthy features on the photos for her, is there anything important missing? Why?
- What is the photo telling about the time: what kinds of clothes are people wearing, what are the emotions, what is the surrounding?
- Who and how are interacting on the photo?
- A photo is commonly seen as a reflection of events. Ask about what preceded and followed the situation of taking a photo.

# PHOTOS

- Are photos used as home decorations? How?
- When looking at a photo album, ask your grandmother about the interaction of different photos – why are they placed next to each other? How does the album share grandmothers' story?
- Ask, whether you could use the photo later on the exhibition or for illustrating her story.

## **When talking about photos, keep in mind, that their author has had a purpose.**

So, a photo might have a different meaning for the photographer, viewer and to the person on the photography.

## OBJECTS



*What would you take with you if you had to pack your belongings in a few suitcases right now? What did your grandmother take with her*

Objects are significant symbols from the past. Probably your grandmother didn't have a chance to take everything she had with her while migrating from one place to another, so the keepsakes she still has with her are very important. In addition, there might be real importance to the objects she first bought from the country she migrated to. Keep in mind that if you wish to present your grandmothers' story, objects are a great way to illustrate it.

- Ask your grandmother to describe an important object. Why does it have significance for her? How has she gotten it? What kind of a story does it tell?
- Ask more about the things she took with her.
- Are there any heirlooms in your family that goes down from generation to generation?
- Ask her to remember the first things she bought from the country she migrated to.
- Pay attention to postcards, letters and documents.
- Look around her room, what kind of objects do you see? How are they positioned? Is there anything hidden or put away in a box? How does it all relate to her story?
- Ask whether you could use some objects to illustrate and present her story.

# MAPS

**Maps help us to restore and remember the paths of moving from one place to another. Look at the maps together and find out:**

- Which paths did your grandmother use to migrate?
- What does she remember best from the journey? Why?

**Consider using Google street view to help her reminisce her journey and birthplace. Can you find the place she originates from? What does it remind her of? Has this place and the places from her journey changed a lot?**

## **WALKING INTERVIEW**

**Walking together brings up themes that might not come up during an interview. Stroll around the neighborhood and ask about the following things:**

- What places are important for your grandmother?
- What places were important for her as she arrived at her destination country? Have they changed? How? Why?
- What does your grandmothers' daily route looks like?
- How has the neighborhood greeted new arrivals?

## PRESENTING STORIES



*Your ancestor has her favorite objects, that symbolize different stages of life for her. It would be good to use them as examples to illustrate her life and journey.*

Having collected enough stories and memories, it is time to think whether and how you are going to present them to others. Before doing that, think back to the research process and all the material collected and try to find answers to the following questions.

- What are your purposes with your grandmother's story, what are you trying to tell?
- What is the best way to present your grandmother's story to others?
- How many and what kind of objects and/or illustrative material have you got to use?
- What issues were most important for your grandmother?
- What did she spend talking about the longest?
- Find powerful quotes from her text.
- How much resources do you need and where will you get it?



## DIFFERENT WAYS TO SHARE AND PRESENT THE STORIES



*Try to find objects that are important to your grandmother and add labels with information to them.*

### **You can present your interview and documentary information by developing your stories into:**

- An exhibiton - instructions are on page 18.
- Treasure chest - instructions are on page 18.
- Book - instructions are on page 19.
- Art project - instructions are on page 19.
- For inspiration you can look at the following examples:

- Presenting migration stories as comics:

[http://www.esri.mmu.ac.uk/resprojects/project\\_outline.php?project\\_id=180](http://www.esri.mmu.ac.uk/resprojects/project_outline.php?project_id=180)

- Telling a life-story through songs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vfm2H0pvR4Q>

- Making a video of one family's migrations:

<https://vimeo.com/68291245>

- Writing a speech

[https://www.ted.com/talks/tan\\_le\\_my\\_immigration\\_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/tan_le_my_immigration_story)

# DIFFERENT WAYS TO SHARE AND PRESENT THE STORIES

## Exhibition

- Think about the theme you are going to showcase.
- Categorize themes and put similar things together so that there would be a base for comparison with other migration stories (food, stores, moving, longing, migration trail, family, emotions - happiness, sadness, nostalgia, pride, etc.).
- Take into consideration different objects, photos and other materials you have collected. How do they tell your grandmother's story? Keep in mind, that it would be good to have pictures and objects from different time periods.
- Choose interesting quotations from the interviews.
- Think about the space for your exhibition.
- An exhibition could also be created in the internet:
  - Create a map application where the viewer could see your grandmothers path.
  - You can choose different topics (food, vehicles, clothes etc) and add pictures and stories next to them.
  - Use pictures of your grandmother from different time periods.
- Also take a look at the instructions on How to make a pop-up exhibition.

## Treasure chest

- Think about the theme of the box – do you want to talk about your grandmothers' life, one year/decade or just the process of migrating?
- What kind of objects and photos characterize this theme the best?
- Collect all the objects and pictures into one suitcase or box.
- Add explanatory signs. Are there some quotes from interviews that describe the objects or photos very apposite?

# DIFFERENT WAYS TO SHARE AND PRESENT THE STORIES

## Art-project

- Think how an art project would be the best to share your grandmother's experience.
- Decide, what you would like to portray with the artwork.
- Choose a genre which would be the best to share the experience and story:
  - A painting, comic, collage or some other means of visual art.
  - Scrapbook with pictures and texts.
  - Write a piece of music or a song.
- Find partners and perform a play in your community house based on local migration stories.

## Book

- Think what kind of book you would like to do (what genre) and who should be the audience:
  - Biography (story of one person, one street, one generation)
  - Children's book
  - Cookbook with your grandmother's favorite recipes and stories about them.
  - Some other type of book.
- Choose the most expressive stories.
- Find partners, publisher.
- Think about distributing your book.

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

While using this material, new skills will be developed, new knowledge will be found, the bonds within family will get stronger.

- Improved contact and mutual understanding between different generations.
- Better understanding of history and making connections between past and present.
- Increased knowledge about countries and borders.
- Increased tolerance.
- Improved competences in research and analysis.
- Interview planning skills.
- Knowing how to use different methods to encourage remembering and conversations.
- Better listening skills.
- Improved skills how to notice what is important to people.
- Better skills of noticing your surroundings and precious knowledge and to use this information in new situation.
- Skills to systematise gathered stories and information.
- Skills on choosing appropriate methods to share and present stories to others.
- Interview recording skills.
- Active participation in community.

## CONCLUSION

### **Getting to know history through our ancestors' stories and creating stronger bonds within family is a thankful procedure.**

Our world is developing fast and there is a constant flow of new information. In this context we might not understand the importance or relevance of grandmothers' and families' stories. Our societies are fragile, and we could never predict when we ourselves would be forced to move from our homes in order to find safety or better living conditions.

Conducting a research within your own family serves exactly this purpose. We wish to improve the connections within family and within community. In addition, after this process the young person should have the knowledge and skills to study culture and through teamwork with others, to publish and present their findings.

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