

Southland Oral History Project

Strategic Plan 2015 - 2020

Oral histories not only add new perspectives to already documented events, they also allow for the creation of a record where none previously existed. To the Southland Oral History Project (SOHP) the capturing of everyday life and traditions are just as important to our collective memory as recollections of significant events in our provincial past.

Mission

To capture and safeguard stories of Southland and its people through the medium of recorded oral histories.

Vision

- To capture a collective memory of Southland, as told through our own words and with our own voices.
- To gather a broad range of stories that reflect our everyday way of life and traditions.
- To record recollections of historic events that have shaped our provincial history.
- To identify and be responsive to the needs of the Southland community.
- To ensure that all facets of our community feel welcomed and involved in the Project.
- To preserve and organise the recorded interviews in such a way that a valuable, useable resource is available for present and future generations.

Values

- Community inclusive
- Useable and accessible resource
- Volunteer based
- Future focus

Governance

The SOHP is led and supported by two organisations under a Memorandum of Understanding.

Heritage South:

- guidance and direction (through the facilitation of a steering group)
- funding for training and equipment
- promotion
- co-ordination
- support

Invercargill City Libraries and Archives (ICLA):

- preservation of interviews
- administration of interviews
- Co-ordinator funding
- support
- access and rights management
- promotion

The **Southland Oral History Project Steering Group** provides overall guidance and direction for the Project. The Steering Group is comprised of:

- Cathy Macfie – Chair, Heritage South
- Rebecca Amundsen – SOHP Co-ordinator
- Rebecca Smith – Invercargill City Libraries and Archives
- Marianne Foster - Invercargill City Libraries and Archives
- Linda Te Au - Invercargill City Libraries and Archives
- Bruce Cavanagh – Hokonui Heritage Centre
- Alternate: Stephanie Herring – Hokonui Heritage Centre
- Paul Horner – Southland Museum and Art Gallery
- Jo Massey – Southland District Council Roving Museum Officer
- Jenny Campbell – Northern Southland Oral History

The SOHP Co-ordinator will provide ICLA, Heritage South and the SOHP Steering Group with regular reports on progress in relation to the Strategic Plan.

Strengths of the SOHP

The core strength of the SOHP is the commitment to the Project of both Heritage South and the Invercargill City Libraries and Archives.

As the SOHP is heavily reliant on volunteers another key strength is the community in which this Project takes place. Southland is full of like-minded people willing to volunteer their time and energy to a worthy cause.

The SOHP enjoys the use of quality equipment including 8 Marantz recorders, 2 video cameras and 2 digital cameras.

Challenges for the SOHP

A key challenge for the SOHP is the expectation that everyone can be interviewed. This is a common expectation held by those involved with the Project as well as those outside of it.

Another pressing challenge for the SOHP continues to be the time intensive nature of oral histories – not only the time required for training, interview preparation and recording of the interviews, but also the time required to give adequate effort to promotion, abstracting and the completion of administrative tasks such as cataloguing.

A flow-on challenge to the time intensive nature of oral histories is interviewer retention. There have been five training sessions provided by the SOHP since 2006. From these sessions 52 people have been trained to undertake oral history interviewing. By the end of 2013 fifteen interviewers had been active in the previous twelve months. By the end of 2014 eight interviewers had been active in the previous twelve months. While the SOHP continues to average 23 new interviews each year (including full-life and topic based interviews), consideration does need to be given to how we can encourage further involvement by those trained but currently inactive.

Strategic Objectives

Objective One

“Develop a collection that meets our community’s needs”

Be flexible in the types of interviews we support

- acknowledge the need for both full-life and topic based interviews in the collection
- acknowledge that time is the biggest barrier to undertaking interviews
- a variety of interview types and styles are undertaken
- a number of interviewers are able to participate in some way

Have a responsive approach to collection development

- build an interview candidate list based on suggestions from the community
- encourage suggestions for topic based interview projects
- identify interviewers best suited to complete these interviews and projects
- special requests are considered on a case by case basis e.g. the lending of equipment and the providing of basic training to empower groups in the community to undertake their own interviews

Build a comprehensive collection

- ensure Southland's defining stories are captured
- support and partake in worthwhile community projects where possible
- gaps in the collection are identified and addressed

Objective Two

“Support interviewer development and engagement with the Project”

Support interviewer engagement with the Project

- provide annual opportunities for the interviewer team to meet and discuss their involvement
- acknowledge barriers to interviewer involvement e.g. training seen as intense and interviewing is time consuming
- suggest alternative ways to be involved e.g. small special projects or abstracting
- regularly correspond with interviewers, keeping them informed of the Projects progress and upcoming projects

Support interviewer training and development

- identify training needs within the interviewer team
- provide training opportunities and regular refresher courses where possible
- encourage the development of interviewing skills e.g. best practice attributes for the production of quality interviews
- encourage the development of other skills e.g. abstracting, audio book project

Objective Three

“Make the collection accessible and useable”

Access to interviews is provided in a timely manner

- interviews are added to the Archive catalogue as soon as possible
- the public is made aware of how they can access the collection e.g. via the Archive Research Room
- remote reference enquiries are responded to in a timely manner
- abstracts of the interviews are created as soon as possible
- opportunities for other methods of access are investigated e.g. online access to catalogue details and abstracts

Access and Use agreements are upheld

- terms and conditions of use are adhered to as stipulated on individual Recording Agreement Forms
- special permission requests are considered and responded to in a timely manner e.g. requests for use in an exhibition

Objective Four

“Raise awareness of the collection and its value to the community”

Promotional talks and presentations

- undertake outreach talks and presentations in the community as requested
- Oral History conferences
- produce informative and promotional material e.g. flyers, posters

Encourage use of the collection in other projects

- initiate special projects with the interviewer team e.g. audio book project
- collaborate on projects with the wider Library and Archives team e.g. foyer T.V. displays, social media clips
- encourage use of the collection by third parties e.g. Venture Southland, Southland Museum and Art Gallery, community groups

Identify future opportunities for promotion

- celebrate the 10 year anniversary of the Project (2016)
- annual Heritage Month events
- Oral History conferences
- exhibition opportunities