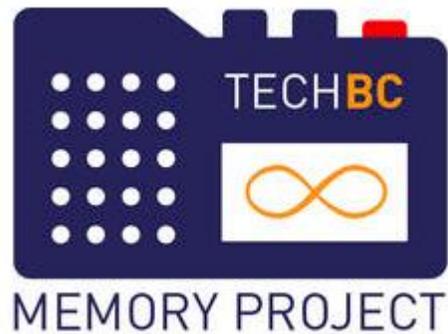


The TechBC Memory Project: From Summit to Digitized Collections



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February 2017

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Abstract

This document describes the process and workflow of the [TechBC Memory Project](#), a collection of oral history interviews that contributes to the historical record of SFU Surrey. The interviews were conducted in 2014 and 2015 and were initially uploaded to Summit, SFU's research repository. In 2016 the PI received a grant for transcriptions and indexing assistance and went on study leave to enhance the interviews' usability and accessibility. The transcripts were edited, indexed, and summarized offline, converted to XML, and uploaded to the OHMS (the Oral History Metadata Synchronizer) application. The collection then moved to SFU Digitized Collections on its new Islandora platform. The interviews now include the OHMS viewer, transcripts and photographs, as well as new searchable metadata fields including keywords, summaries, and a proper name index.

Phase One: Pre-Study Leave (October 2013-April 2016):

Project Background / Interviews

The Principal Investigator of this project is Holly Hendrigan, the author of this document and a liaison librarian at SFU Library. I was first inspired to begin the TechBC Memory Project in the fall of 2013, when SFU Library launched a professional development program that encouraged liaison librarians to spend ten percent of their time on special projects of their own choosing. I had always been fascinated by the Technical University of British Columbia, a startup university that operated for three years (1999-2002) before the government changed, offered it up for tender among neighbouring institutions, and chose Simon Fraser University to assume administrative control. I proposed interviewing members of the TechBC community--staff, students, faculty, and administration--and make the interviews accessible as open access research data.

I began teaching myself how to conduct an oral history project in the spring of 2014. I first consulted with the Head of SFU's institutional repository (hereafter referred to as [Summit](#)) regarding the preservation of my interviews, and was assured that Summit could host both the interview records and the audio files in MP3 format. I read books on oral history methodology,¹ listened to oral histories online, and completed the Research Ethics process. I studied the history of TechBC. Working within the "ten percent" parameters of the project, I began recruiting in November 2014, and by September 2015, I had conducted thirty interviews.² Within twenty-four

¹ Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Donna Marie DeBlasio, ed., *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History* (Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press, 2009).

² For further information and self-reflection on this stage of the project, I have written a paper that examined the interview process in light of my experience as a public service librarian. This essay, entitled "Naturals with a microphone: oral history and the librarian skillset" will be available in the *ACRL 2017 Proceedings*.

hours of each interview, I uploaded a record to Summit that included basic metadata documenting the name of the interviewee and interviewer, the date of interview, and a short summary of the interviewee's relationship to the university and current position. Some interview summaries were completed later with the assistance of a Langara practicum student. (See [Appendix A: Summit Record](#).) I ran the audio file through the background noise reduction effect in [Audacity](#), then attached the audio file to the record in Summit.

I recognized during Phase One that audio recordings as resource types are difficult for researchers to use, and my records lacked features that enhance their usability. Due to time constraints, I did not add substantive subject metadata or comprehensive interview summaries to the interview records. I had initially thought that I would simply leave the oral history for future researchers to discover and make use of, but I came to the conclusion that it was most appropriate that I, as Principal Investigator of the project, should analyze and report on the research data myself. However, completing a metadata upgrade and data analysis greatly exceeded the "ten percent" time limit I could devote to the project amidst my regular liaison librarian duties.

Study Leave Application / Early Transcriptions / Digitization Grant Application

In June 2015, I applied for, and was granted, an eight-month study leave that was to begin eleven months later. In order to maintain momentum on the project, I began transcribing the interviews myself. Each hour of audio took approximately four hours to complete; I completed seven transcripts. Transcribing some of the interviews was a valuable yet time consuming experience.

I discovered that the [SFU Library Digitization Fund](#) had been previously used by SFU research faculty for transcription services. I received an estimate to transcribe the remaining twenty-three interviews, which was within the range of the Fund's allotment. I was also planning to use an oral history application called [OHMS \(Oral History Metadata Synchronizer\)](#), which required further transcript analysis by applying summaries and index terms to the interviews. I added the transcription quote to my estimation of a librarian's labour required for indexing and summarizing assistance. I submitted the grant application on April 26th, 2016.

Phase Two: Study leave (May - December 2016)

Part A: Early Study Leave Processes

My study leave began on May 1st, 2016, and I began applying [OHMS “level three” indexing](#) to the seven transcripts I had completed myself. "Level three" indexing entails dividing an interview into thematic sections, composing section titles and summaries, and assigning subject headings. I received word on May 26th that I had received a grant of \$3955.00 to fund transcriptions and indexing assistance. By this time, I had established workflow processes.

Part B: Transcriptions workflow

The [Transcription Ninjas](#) began transcribing the remaining twenty-three audio files in early July. The transcription workflow proceeded as follows:

1. The Transcription Ninjas downloaded the audio file from [SFU’s Vault](#) storage system and completed the transcription in a Word document. They also provided a second document in which they had copied name, place, and corporate bodies within each transcript. I also directed the transcribers to include time codes each time the interviewer asked a question.
2. I edited the transcript using the [Baylor University Institute for Oral History Style Guide](#). This work included deleting repeated or extraneous words, occasionally adding terms for further clarity, and correcting the spelling of proper names.
3. I then sent the transcript to the interviewee for further review. Some were returned with extensive revisions; some interviewees chose not to review.
4. I proofread the proper name document and created a spreadsheet of names for each interview. I converted the list to "last name, first name" format in Excel.

Part C: Google Docs Markups

I had worked in Google Docs marking up the seven transcripts I created myself prior to receiving the grant for transcriptions. When I secured extra funding, I hired Alison Moore, a reference librarian who was then working part-time on contract at SFU, and trained her in creating section titles and summarizing. The workflow went as follows:

1. After I received a transcript reviewed by the interviewee, or after the transcript review deadline had passed, I deposited the transcript in a Google Drive folder for Alison Moore.
2. Alison Moore divided the transcript into sections and provided segment and interview summaries
3. I assigned ERIC subject headings for sections (see "Indexing Process" below)
4. I proofread and edited the section titles and summaries
5. See: [Appendix B: Coded Transcript for XML Conversion](#)

Part D: Indexing Process

Since the main topic of the interview series was a university, I chose the [ERIC thesaurus](#) to apply to the collection rather than attempting building my own controlled vocabulary terms. The ERIC thesaurus worked reasonably well. This index was built and is maintained in the United States, so some terms needed to be modified for the Canadian context. I changed “College Presidents,” for example, to “University Presidents,” since “college” and “university” are not synonymous in Canada. In a similar vein, I modified “college freshmen” to “first year students” and changed the spelling to Canadian usage in some cases (eg, "Computer Centres.")

Alison Moore had broken up the interviews into sections which covered a specific topic area. I would analyze each section and consult the thesaurus for the most appropriate terms. Each time I used a term, I copied it to two spreadsheets: an alphabetical list of terms I used, and a “category/list” sheet that indicated the term’s placement within ERIC’s [broader categories](#).³ Some sections were easy to index, when concepts such as tenure were discussed. Other sections, especially those related to the actions and emotions preceding and following TechBC’s closure, were much more difficult to index. Occasionally I needed to search the ERIC database on similar themes in order to find its index terms; in some cases, I simply added my own terms. For example, “Shopping Malls” is not in ERIC, but this term was necessary in the context of my project, a university whose campus was initially located within a shopping mall.

Indexing transcripts initially required approximately two hours of labour as I familiarized myself with the ERIC thesaurus and came to understand how to index recurring concepts in the interviews. Toward the final transcripts, I was able to reduce the time commitment to thirty minutes per interview. I had underestimated the amount of time required for indexing and summarizing the transcripts in my Scholarly Digitization Grant application,⁴ so I continued indexing after Alison Moore was hired rather than delegating the work to her.

Part E: Google Doc Conversion to XML for OHMS

On July 12, 2016, SFU Library’s OHMS account was set up. While many OHMS users index and summarize transcripts and/or audio files within the application, I decided to continue working offline. This process worked well since the two of us were occasionally working on or looking at the same transcript simultaneously.

³ At one point, the PI harboured examining the similarities and differences between indexing (to enhance accessibility) and coding (for qualitative data analysis). I created the category/term spreadsheet to mirror the practice of creating categories and nodes in the grounded theory research methodology.

⁴ I had estimated that composing section titles, summaries, and indexing would require 1.5 hours/transcript. The actual amount of time required was closer to 2.5 hours.

OHMS allows users to import XML documents directly. Michael Rascher,⁵ a software developer, wrote a script in Ruby to assist with this process. This script is available on [Github](#). I downloaded the Google Doc as a .txt file, ran the conversion to XML, and uploaded it directly to OHMS.

The transcripts did not format properly--line breaks were a problem--so further treatment was required. I stripped the transcripts of their additional indexing and summaries, copied them to Text Wrangler, and re-uploaded them to OHMS as .txt files. See the [Nunn Center Recommendations for Preparing Transcripts for OHMS](#) for further information.

Part F: OHMS-Islandora integration

As mentioned earlier, I had originally deposited my collection in Summit, SFU's institutional repository. This platform works well for its intended use, a repository of primarily text-based scholarship such as theses, articles, and grey literature. While Summit did a commendable job as a platform for each interview's records and audio files, it lacked the features I needed to make the collection more usable, accessible, and attractive.

My colleagues in Library Systems agreed that I should move the TechBC Memory Project to SFU Library's [Digitized Collections](#). This is a large collection of unique local content that includes a wide range of resource types, such as historical newspapers, editorial cartoons, and digital images. Numerous other oral history collections conducted by SFU scholars or pertaining to British Columbia history are housed there as well. SFU Library migrated its Digitized Collections from the CONTENTdm platform to Islandora in 2016.

I required additional technical assistance to migrate the collection from Summit to Digitized Collections. I was able to take advantage of a new program at SFU, the [Digital Humanities Innovation Lab](#), which supports SFU researchers with digital humanities projects. I received word on August 8th, 2016, that Michael Joyce, the Lab's web developer, could turn his attention to my project for its migration and metadata upgrade.

Michael Joyce created a new collection, [The TechBC Memory Project](#), within the "Oral Histories" section of SFU's Digitized Collections. It includes a [landing page](#) that briefly contextualizes the collection and a [browse list](#) of interviews. The interviews are filed in chronological order.

⁵ Michael Rascher is the PI's husband.

Integrating the XML files from the OHMS application into Digitized Collections was a challenge. The OHMS application was developed to work as a standalone application, rather than within a content management framework like Drupal. Furthermore, the TechBC Memory Project is the first time OHMS has been integrated with the Islandora platform. Michael Joyce has provided the technical details for uploading OHMS interviews to Islandora on [Github](#). In short,

“The islandora_solution_pack_ohms module acts as a wrapper around the OHMS Viewer application. It uses the viewer to generate HTML, and then hands that HTML off to Islandora which provides the theming, navigation, and other features. The end user never interacts with the OHMS Viewer application directly - the Islandora module always acts as an intermediary.

To develop the module, we had to make some changes to the OHMS Viewer application. It was designed as a standalone application, producing complete, themed HTML documents for each page. Since we use Islandora for the theming, we only need partial output from the viewer. This was achieved by refactoring parts of the viewer.”

One particularly troublesome aspect of the migration was an issue with the OHMS and the audio file that linked to the Summit record. The ability to jump to specific locations on the audio file worked only in the Firefox browser, but not Safari or Chrome. This issue was resolved after the audio files were transferred from the server on Summit to Digitized Collections.

Part G: Enhanced metadata tabs

The first iteration of the indexed and summarized interviews in the OHMS viewer were migrated to Digitized Collections in early August 2016. It was apparent that the OHMS viewer takes up a great deal of "space" on a web page and the ability to include additional metadata on the same page is limited. I wanted to add features in addition to what was available on the OHMS viewer; I also wanted the transcript in PDF format readily available for researchers.

Islandora's tab feature made these enhancements possible. Each interview has three tabs (See Figure 1) and includes the OHMS viewer (the "View" tab,) an additional metadata tab ("Metadata"), and a final transcript tab.

1. The [View tab](#) functions as the audio player.⁶ This page is generated from the complete XML document exported from the OHMS application. It comprises two parts: the index and the transcript.
 - The index view includes segment titles, segment synopses, and ERIC thesaurus terms. The "Partial Transcript" field includes the question asked to begin the segment section. Users can click on a segment title and listen to individual sections of the conversation.
 - The transcript view is synchronized at every minute mark. Each minute is a clickable link that takes users to that point in the audio file.
2. The [Metadata tab](#) includes:
 - An interviewee photograph (when consent was provided)
 - A brief career biographical statement, initially created for the Summit record
 - The interview abstract, which was created during the Google Doc markup process
 - A list of names mentioned, created during the transcription process
3. The [Transcript tab](#) provides the edited transcript as a PDF file. The transcript's time codes were maintained each time the interviewer asked a question.

The collection's metadata is searchable via the box on the lefthand sidebar (See Figure 1.) The searchable data includes terms found in the collection's ERIC descriptors, proper names, segment titles, and summaries. Given the amount of labour invested in creating the thesaurus and indexing the interviews, this feature is much appreciated. Participants were given the opportunity to review both their audio files and transcripts before uploading, and to provide additional feedback after their interviews went public.

⁶ I requested that the View Tab be named "Interview" or "Audio," but renaming the default tab is not possible in Islandora.

Search our digitized collections

This collection

search

[Advanced search](#)

[Home / Our Collections / TechBC Memory Project](#)

Don Taylor - 2014-10-28 - SFU Burnaby

View Metadata Transcript

Don Taylor - 2014-10-28 - SFU Burnaby

Simon Fraser University Library
Holly Hendrigan, Interviewer |
SFU Library Oral Histories | Tech BC Memory Project

0:00 - Hiring at TechBC / Description of Surrey	TRANSCRIPT INDEX Search this Index <input type="text" value="Keyword"/> <input type="button" value="Search"/>
5:42 - Innovative Pedagogical Approaches	
10:37 - Research mandate and output of faculty	

Figure 1: Interview record comprising three tabs: View, Metadata, Transcript. The metadata search function is at the left sidebar.

Future Plans

Additional improvements to the collection are currently underway. I have submitted an application to extend DHIL support for the spring 2017 term for some minor improvements to the collection that include tagging metadata for harvesting in citation management software. I have been asked to speak at an SFU Research Commons workshop on transcriptions in late March. An SFU Surrey-based "lunch and learn" (which will act as the collection's de-facto launch) regarding the project is being planned for late spring 2017. I am also writing an article that analyzes the interviews in the context of British Columbia higher education policy.

Questions about the project can be addressed to Holly Hendrigan at hah1@sfu.ca.

Appendix A: Summit Record

TechBC Memory Project: Jane Fee

TechBC Memory Project

Author:

Hendrigan, Holly

Peer reviewed:

No, item is not peer reviewed.

Scholarly level:

Faculty/Staff

Date created:

2014-12-18

Keywords:

Tech BC Memory Project
Technical University of British Columbia
TechBC

Abstract:

Jane Fee is the subject of this interview. At TechBC, she initially worked as Academic Assistant to the president on the CAUT/CUFA-BC file, then served on various senior management roles including Facilites. She stayed on at SFU Surrey, working on TechBC's transition to SFU Surrey. She is now Deputy-Provost & Associate VP, Academic, at Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

Jane Fee discusses her initial role as one of the first administrative employees at TechBC hired to negotiate with CAUT and CUFA BC regarding TechBC's lack of a senate and tenured faculty positions. She then discusses the politics of securing an appropriate venue for TechBC and her role in that process, including the complicated lease with the landowner/developer ICBC. Finally she talks about the closing of the school and their merger with SFU, and what that would mean for her, for students and for the staff of both TechBC and SFU.

Description:

The TechBC Memory Project is an oral history project that seeks to document the

stories and experiences of the staff, faculty, administrators, and students who worked and learned at the Technical University of British Columbia during its operating years (1999-2002).

Language:

English

Document type:

Audio

Rights:

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File(s):

Jane Fee final.mp3

Appendix B: Coded Transcript for XML Conversion

XML ready Jane Fee ☆
 File Edit View Insert Format Tools Table Add-ons Help Last edit was on August 15, 2016

100% Normal text Arial 12 B I U A

1 2 3 4 5 6

Interview Metadata

Series title: TechBC Memory Project
 Participant: Jane Fee
 Interviewer: Holly Hendrigan
 Date of Interview: 2014-12-18
 Place of Interview: Surrey, BC
 Duration of Recorded Interview: 1:12:47
 Transcriber: Holly Hendrigan
 Transcript Review: Holly Hendrigan
 Media URL: <http://summit.sfu.ca/system/files/iritems1/14612/Jane%20Fee%20final.mp3>

Interview Summary

Interview summary: Jane Fee discusses her initial role as one of the first employees at TechBC in legitimating the institution in the eyes of CAUT and CUFA BC as a post-secondary institution without a senate, nor tenured positions. She then discusses the politics of securing an appropriate venue for TechBC and her role in that process. Finally she talks about the closing of the school and their merger with SFU, and what that would mean for her, for students and for the staff of both TechBC and SFU.

Section title and time code (00:00 -- 01:50) Introduction / Arrival at TechBC

Section Summary Summary: Fee came from a faculty position at Dalhousie University and applied at TechBC in order to assume an administrative position on the West Coast

ERIC descriptors Keywords: [University Administration](#), [Employment Experience](#)

Transcript

Holly Hendrigan: This is Holly Hendrigan of the TechBC Memory Project. Today is December 18th, 2014, and I am interviewing Jane Fee, Deputy Provost and Associate VP, Academic, at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. We are having a face to face conversation in Jane's office at Kwantlen's Surrey campus. Hi Jane.