

2011 AGM/Forum

I begin this report by acknowledging and thanking the State Library of Western Australia for their generous sponsorship in providing rooms for our monthly executive meetings, general meetings throughout the year and the venue for this year's AGM/Forum.

Secondly, thank you to the many familiar and new faces who attended our AGM and Forum in September. It was pleasing to see everyone who joined us for brunch, poster presentations, a session on understanding the part new technology plays not only in our discipline but our lives in general, the wonderfully entertaining interview with Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Bolton and of course the Annual General Meeting.

The Great Southern Room was a buzz with people busily setting up their posters and displays before the meeting started. The fourteen poster presentations generated a lot of interest with the audience and provided an ideal opportunity for our members and grant recipients to talk about their projects. Our thanks are extended to the participants who produced their own posters which demonstrated the wide breadth of oral history taking place in our State.

There was a slight hiccup in the day when our Story Telling in the Digital Age presenter, Professor Duane Varan realised that he wouldn't be able to get back from the United States in time. His colleague, Dr. Jennifer Robinson generously stepped in at very short notice. The practice of collecting oral stories has evolved from taking notes to transcribing recordings done on tape to digital recordings and all that digital technology allows. Jennifer's talk on how technology has changed the way we participate and tell our stories was quite thought provoking. As the poster presentations demonstrated, there are many effective ways of interpreting individual and group stories. Technology and the digital age enable us to undertake work and make it available to a wider audience therefore preserving stories that might otherwise be lost in the mists of time.

The live interviews that have been conducted at our events the past couple of years have proved to be enlightening, entertaining and very popular. Criena Fitzgerald's interview with our patron, Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Bolton was of the same ilk. The interview centred on Geoff's approach to writing biographies. He made us all laugh when he said that he has never come to terms with technology and uses written notes to record interviews. We could all relate though when he said that oral history is a way to access the past, it is a way into peoples feelings and emotions. Listening to memories is a way of understanding how they reacted or dealt with events of the past. Criena's preparation and pre-interview with Geoff resulted in an interview that demonstrated a good interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Thank you to both Criena and Geoff for their participation.

Then there was the AGM, very capably run by our immediate past president, Denise Cook. As vice-president, Denise stepped in to carry the load when Jan Partridge resigned to move interstate. The committee expresses a huge thanks to Denise as she is undertaking her PhD and it is an especially busy time for her. We wish Denise every success. Many thanks also to Jan Partridge who took on the role of president when Mary Anne Jebb resigned to take up a position in Canberra. The resignation of three of our valued members from the committee has left very big shoes to fill.

However, the West Australian Branch has always been blessed with people who have been willing to volunteer their time to ensure that the branch runs to the benefit of our members and this year is no exception. I welcome and introduce the members of the present executive of the branch:

Kristy Bizzaca (Representative on Oral History Records Rescue Group (OHRRG))
Lynda Braddick (Secretary)
Reeti Brar (Committee)
Rosemary Fitzgerald (Treasurer)
Jan Gothard (Committee)
Gordon Hamilton (Committee)
Jan Mccahon Marshall (Equipment Hire co-ordinator & representative on OHRRG)
Hilaire Natt (Play Back Editor)
Elaine Rabbit (Committee – Regional Representative & Accreditation sub-committee)
Laurel Smith (Membership Secretary)
Lindy Wallace (President)

Non- committee members, who provide essential services for our branch:

Doug Ayre (Introductory and Digital Workshop Facilitator)
Ron Chapman (Digital Workshop Facilitator)
Dawn Palm (Web Manager)
Julia Wallis (Introductory Workshop Facilitator)

I also thank the many people who approached me after the elections to offer their assistance for projects or events we have planned for the coming year. I will most certainly take you up on your generosity.

Play Back has a new cover. The design is integral to an overall identification for the WA Branch. Those at the AGM would have seen the pull up banner with the same design, which we also have applied to our stationery and workshops certificates. It does not appear on our web site as yet.

Due to its popularity, we have recently changed the structure of our grant scheme. Applications will now be considered on a quarterly basis, when 25% of the annual grant/sponsorship budget of \$2,000 will be allocated. Application closing dates are: 31 January, 30 April, 31 July and 30 October. Our amended application forms and details of the new conditions are prepared and will be on the web site shortly. In the meantime I am happy to email them to anyone who is interested.

In the past year we have approved grants to: The Princess Margaret Hospital Project, who produced a book commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 4/60 intake of trainees; the Sisters of Mercy, West Perth, to record the lives of the Sisters of the West Perth Congregation; and a sponsorship grant to Julia Wallis to attend the National Oral History Conference in Melbourne.

I was extremely impressed on a recent visit to the State Library to view the facilities that have been provided for the digitisation of oral history tapes. As you are aware, funding from Lotterywest to the Oral History Records Rescue Group is to enable the digitisation of tapes held at the State Library and to make 200 of the voices available online. OHRRG and the State Library are to be congratulated for their work on this project.

Lindy Wallace