

Visiting OSU Librarian Conducts Research At Baylor Institute For Oral History

In April 2007, Dr. Tanya Finchum, associate professor and documents librarian at Oklahoma State University's Edmon Low Library, completed two weeks of research at the Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

Finchum studied the Baylor institute's methods, from conducting oral history interviews to transcribing, processing, preserving and cataloging memoirs. She also studied options for involving students in oral history and talked with Baylor's oral historians about budgeting and funding opportunities.

Finchum's collaboration with the Baylor institute was funded by OSU as part of the 2007 Big 12 Faculty Fellowship Program, which exists to increase scholarly collaboration between universities in the Big 12 Conference. The initiative allows faculty members to travel to other Big 12 universities to conduct research and exchange ideas.

Finchum said she chose Baylor because its Institute for Oral History is well-recognized as a leader in the field of oral history. "As I researched schools in the Big 12 in regards to oral history programs, Baylor's kept rising to the top. It was more than just a project or two; it was more than institutional-related oral histories. And it had been in a leadership role for most, if not all, of its 30-plus years," she said.

Having developed a women's studies program over the past several years, OSU has increased its focus on preserving its existing oral history archives, which primarily consist of projects related to women's issues. OSU's past oral history projects cover

topics such as women of the Dust Bowl and women who worked in manufacturing jobs during World War II (collectively known as “Rosie the Riveter”).

Finchum’s goals are to increase the visibility of OSU’s existing oral history collection and to expand the collection by conducting new oral history projects and creating a Web presence for the oral history program. “After two weeks with experts, I can envision many more possibilities for our program,” Finchum said.

Finchum considers her time at Baylor to have been well worth the effort. “Every person that shared their knowledge and time with me at the Institute made me feel welcome and comfortable. Actually seeing the workflow and how all the pieces were interlocked to create a smooth operation and a nationally respected project was the culmination of many hours with the entire staff. I could not have asked for anything more,” she said.

Founded in 1970, the Baylor University Institute for Oral History is a sponsoring member of the national Oral History Association and is home to the Texas Oral History Association. Memoirs created through the Institute for Oral History are housed in The Texas Collection, one of Baylor’s special collections libraries.