

Indexing oral histories

An oral history is a sound and/or video recording. With the proper technology and training, an oral historian may edit a recording to incorporate it into a museum display, Web site, documentary film, or other sound/visual production.

A first step toward making an oral history useful for future editing is to create an index or log of the recording, providing the location of subjects on the tape or digital file by minute and second. An index also serves researchers who study the content of the oral history by providing information about the topics covered in the interview in the order in which they appear on the tape.

Why index?

- ◆ Indexing makes information on recordings accessible by subject.
- ◆ Indexing helps the researcher identify information gaps to cover in future interviews.
- ◆ Indexing allows the researcher to spell out names and terms mentioned in the interview, thereby enhancing the accuracy of the information for future users or transcribers.

Indexing tips:

- ◆ Index soon after the interview.
- ◆ For tapes, use a stopwatch rather than the digital counter on the tape recorder to create a more accurate index by minute and second.
- ◆ Digital playback software usually provides a time log for the sound files.
- ◆ Index by obvious breaks in the topic or by time (every five minutes or less).
- ◆ The more details included in the index, the better.

Name: Arthur Louis Santos
Date of interview: January 15, 2008
Location: Santos home, 2222 West Drive, Waco, Texas
Interviewer: John Sutcliffe
Project: Waco History Coalition: Sandtown
Recording no. 0778; compact disc

H/M/S	Topic
00:00:03	Introduction
00:01:05	Description: between Brazos River and South 1st, below Clay St. to city dump; shotgun houses mixed with frame structures; railroad tracks; meat packing plants; unpaved streets
00:08:08	Name origin: not sure; speculates it is from sandy, unpaved streets
00:09:25	Came when he was a baby (he was born in 1930) family moved there from Coahuila, Mexico, because several uncles lived there; provides names of family members: father, Juan Reyes Santos; mother: María Zapata Lopez Santos; uncles, Julio and Ernesto Lopez
00:15:33	Childhood games, fishing and swimming in river, walking past city square to attend Sunday mass at St. Francis Catholic Church