

*Call for Papers: OHAI 7<sup>th</sup> Conference, March 4 and 5, 2022*

## **Oral History in the Digital World**

With the turn of the century, the transformation from the Oral to the Digital, in terms of practice as well as pedagogy had taken roots and is here to stay. Until recently, the work of oral historians resulted in taped audio or video recording stored in box on a shelf in a repository where a researcher had limited access. But modern expectations of immediate access are changing that practice; anyone on the Internet can listen to the recordings as and when desired. This is all the more evident as we stepped into the global pandemic in early 2020s.

The initial reaction to the Covid pandemic was to retreat, to slow down our work, reduce it to the essentials while we waited for the public health concerns to abate. As public spaces emptied and physical meetings ended, there was a sudden, panicked shift to the online, digital mode. Education and research, office work, trade and shopping, entertainment, all lurched in a panic – not just epidemiological but also moral – to a digitised, and sanitised, virtual world. The pandemic has taken its toll, not just in the loss of the “old” familiar ways of research and education, but in very real terms of illness and death.

And yet, over these two years the virtual and the digital have perhaps been domesticated. The virus has perhaps been the midwife of digitality as a state of being. As the waves of the pandemic have washed upon us over these two years, the tide has perhaps finally turned towards making the world virtual.

As oral history practitioners this is a good moment to pause and reflect on what the past two years have done to the field. Digital technologies and the practices they entail had been adopted by oral history practitioners for years now, and yet this moment can perhaps be seen as a watershed in how we self-consciously relate to the digital. What does it imply for oral history when the digital mutates from being a tool to being the ground on which we conduct our research? How does the structure, content, and context of the oral change in this pervasive digitality? What happens to oral history when the meeting of researcher and subject is irreducibly virtual? Does digitality erode the discursive power of the researcher, or does it entrench it? Can we think of the oral outside the digital anymore? How do we think of research practices which allow a more participative and democratic modes of oral history? How do we develop protocols which support those who find the digital turn overwhelming? How do we now work with questions of knowledge production, privacy, ownership and the global commons? How does Oral history practice deal with the digital panopticon?

In short, what happens, and has happened to oral history, both as practice and purpose, with this digital turn?

The 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Oral History Association of India calls for papers, presentations and panels to explore and discuss the varied relations between orality and digitality.

Not surprisingly, this conference too will be held online.

**Submission of abstract:** February 5, 2022

**Selection of abstracts:** February 14, 2022

**Final program:** February 21, 2022

**Last date of registration:** Not yet open

**Online login details sent to fully registered participants:**

**Abstract or session submission guidelines:**

Your submission can be in the form of an online presentation of a paper/poster/slides/film/audio documentary/art, organizing a panel or discussion forum, or any other online mode you want to explore. Abstracts must be within 200 words. Participants who wish to present papers are requested to provide their name, designation & institution and email id along with the title of the paper. The abstract should be sent to: [oralhistoryindia@gmail.com](mailto:oralhistoryindia@gmail.com) on or before the abstract submission deadline mentioned above.