

Listening to the City: Oral History and Place in the Digital Era

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Abstract: This essay explores the development of a mobile interpretive project, Cleveland Historical, that draws on oral history theory and practice to emphasize aurality as a key element in digital (and especially mobile) interpretive projects. Developed at the intersection of oral history and digital humanities theory and practice, Cleveland Historical suggests a model of curation that emphasizes a dynamic, layered, and contextual storytelling endeavor. The resulting curatorial process transforms the landscape into a living museum, one in which the community actively participates in remaking understandings of place and community identity. Of particular note, this collaborative oral history project provides a transformative way of understanding “place” and of moving beyond an emphasis on visual interpretive practice, in order to provide a deeper way of building interpretive stories for public humanities exhibitions on mobile computing devices.

Keywords: Cleveland Historical, digital humanities, landscape, mobile devices, place, public history, urban history

The mobile computing revolution offers tantalizing possibilities to archivists, historians, and curators interested in reaching broader public audiences. Sales of mobile devices—phones and tablets—have eclipsed those for desktop computers, and immense flows of information are traversing wireless networks toward mobile devices. Although humanists, including oral historians, have embraced these technological trends, sometimes slowly, broad publics have incorporated mobile computing into their daily lives. Nearly 90 percent of Americans own cell phones and approximately 50 percent use smart phones, with high ownership rates among poor and minority populations, for whom cell phones have replaced

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landlines and perhaps even desktop computing.¹ Presently, as much as 20 percent of all Internet traffic occurs on mobile devices (a number expected to grow dramatically), and it has been predicted that by 2015 some 80 percent of all Internet calls will originate on mobile devices.²

In response to the mobile revolution, the Center for Public History + Digital Humanities at Cleveland State University developed the Cleveland Historical Project—a mobile application and mobile-optimized website available on the Internet—to curate the city through layers of interpretive storytelling, with a particular emphasis on multimedia and especially sound.³ Each story on Cleveland Historical (<http://www.clevelandhistorical.org/>) consists of several layers of information: images, sound (usually oral history), video, and a few hundred words of text. The stories are also geolocated and displayed on a map, allowing for easy navigation and way-finding. Importantly, geolocation allows the present physical context of the region to become part of the interpretive frame, transforming the landscape into a laboratory for informal learning. Stories can also be discovered and connected through faceted search and tagging, as well as through the “tour” functionality. Inspired by the neighborhood walking tour, Cleveland Historical’s tour feature connects stories (and their layers) to other stories, providing a historiographical, thematic, temporal, geographic, or human context, deepening the experience through making contextual meaning. Moreover, by utilizing easy-to-use archival software, the interpretive content and the connections between the various types of content can be changed dynamically, allowing the tool to be customized for local history events, community endeavors, or classroom learning. Lastly, Cleveland Historical has capitalized on this dynamism, engaging literally hundreds of students, teachers, and community members in storytelling, thus transforming the curatorial process itself. Presently, there are approximately five hundred stories, with three hundred thousand words, four thousand images, one thousand audio files, and one hundred videos available on Cleveland Historical. Yet, Cleveland Historical eschews existing models of urban encyclopedias (as well as Wikipedia) and

¹ “Mobile Access 2010,” Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project, July 7, 2010, <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Mobile-Access-2010.aspx>.

² “2010 Horizon Report,” The New Media Consortium, 2010, <http://wp.nmc.org/horizon2010/>; “Cisco’s VNI Forecast Projects the Internet Will Be Four Times as Large in Four Years,” The Network: Cisco’s Technology News Site, <http://newsroom.cisco.com/press-release-content?articleId=888280> (accessed January 4, 2013); Stacey Higginbotham, “The Mobile Tsunami Is Near: Blame Netflix & Apple,” GigaOM, January 31, 2011, <http://gigaom.com/2011/01/31/the-mobile-tsunami-is-near-blame-netflix-and-apple/>; “Mobile Devices Now Make Up About 20 Percent of U.S. Web Traffic,” AllThingsD, <http://allthingsd.com/20120525/mobile-devices-now-make-up-about-20-percent-of-u-s-web-traffic/> (accessed January 4, 2013).

³ Cleveland Historical can be accessed at www.clevelandhistorical.org. It can be found on the iOS App Store at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/cleveland-historical/id401222855?mt=8> and on the Google Play Store at <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.dxy.clev.history>. Cleveland Historical is built using the Curatescape mobile publishing framework (<http://curatescape.org>) and the Omeka content management software (<http://www.omeka.org>).

comprehensive archival catalogues, choosing instead to emphasize the interpretive perspective so vital to humanities scholarship.⁴

Cleveland Historical emphasizes active human curation as being vital to understanding place and community identity. In this, it builds on more than two decades of scholarship premised on the argument that “place” matters. More than two decades ago, scholars began documenting communities in monographs and photographic anthologies, emphasizing the complex ways that place emerged from lived experience and everyday life.⁵ Recent scholarly and policy discourses have made this recovery of place a vital part of community and economic development. Indeed, these efforts have been inspiring innovators, designers, architects, and entrepreneurs to reimagine communities based on a sense of their past as distinctive human creations. Unfortunately, much of this work does not call forth rich historical contexts but picks and chooses which elements to sell to consumers.⁶ Likewise, place-based publishing efforts have proliferated around so-called hyper-local histories that “see” places as aggregations of archival materials, images, and textual statements.⁷ Too often, texts about place, like digital interventions, privilege sight over other senses—touch, smell, and especially sound—that provide meaningful and deep interpretive perspectives on past experiences that have often been overlooked.⁸

⁴ On the importance of curation to the digital humanities, see Digital Humanities Manifesto, 2009, UCLA, http://www.humanitiesblast.com/manifesto/Manifesto_V2.pdf. In Cleveland, we have an excellent print and online encyclopedia that has been a model for similar projects nationwide; see John Grabowski, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, <http://ech.cwru.edu/> (accessed January 1, 2013). Wikipedia, the online free encyclopedia that embodies the crowdsourcing ethos, makes wide use urban encyclopedias like these.

⁵ See, for example, Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997); Harm de Blij, *The Power of Place: Geography, Destiny, and Globalization's Rough Landscape*, Reprint (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 1st ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 1992); Michael Hough, *Out of Place: Restoring Identity to the Regional Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁶ See, for instance, the Project for Public Spaces, “What is Placemaking,” http://www.pps.org/reference/what_is_placemaking/ (accessed June 1, 2011); Steve Thorne, “Place-based Public Tourism: A New Paradigm,” <http://economicdevelopment.org/2012/10/place-based-cultural-tourism-a-new-planning-paradigm/> (accessed November 14, 2012); Bruce Whyte, Terry Hood, and Brian White, *Cultural and Heritage Tourism: A Handbook for Community Champions* (Quebec, 2012), <http://torc.linkbc.ca/torc/downs1/Cultural%20&%20Heritage%20Tourism.pdf>; D. Medina Lasansky and Brian McLaren, eds., *Architecture and Tourism: Perception, Performance and Place*, First ed. (Berg Publishers, 2004); Rick Snyder, “A Special Message from Governor Rick Snyder: Community Development and Local Government Reforms,” (March 21, 2011), http://www.michigan.gov/documents/snyder/2011Special_Message-1_348148_7.pdf.

⁷ See, for example, the hyper-local histories of Arcadia Publishing, <http://www.arcadiapublishing.com/>; in Cleveland, you can find dozens of these, such as James A. Toman and James R. Spangler, *Cleveland and Its Streetcars* (Arcadia Publishing, 2005).

⁸ The Project for Public Spaces does an excellent job of highlighting how place has been imagined by a variety of professional groups, including architects; see, for example, Project for Public Spaces, “Architecture of Place,” <http://www.pps.org/reference-categories/architecture-of-place-2/> (accessed December 15, 2012). The best extant expression of place in terms of sound is City Lore, *City of Memory*, <http://www.cityofmemory.org/map/index.php> (accessed November 10, 2010).

With this in mind, we sought to recover those sensory experiences, especially sound, by curating the city through voice, as well as text. Cleveland Historical is premised on the core of oral history; we have eschewed the overemphasis on the visual—both image and text—employed in many digital endeavors. Instead, wherever possible, Cleveland Historical emphasizes oral history as the key component of the interpretive process. Oral history practice, of course, is more than the voice, and Cleveland Historical seeks to channel oral history's emphasis on subjectivity and collaboration—values that are fundamental to the digital humanities and that have been described as “qualitative, interpretive, experiential, emotive, (and) generative.”⁹ Not surprisingly, oral history and digital practice share an underlying activist endeavor, one that breaks down traditional power relations and reimagines communities as part of the process of scholarly production. Building on this common core of innovation and activism, Cleveland Historical seeks to integrate public history, oral history, and digital humanities practice. Indeed, integrating three key elements—oral history; a layered, story-based approach to mobile interpretation; and dynamic collaborative storytelling process (facilitated through open-source software)—offers a suggestive direction for digital public humanities.¹⁰

Listening and the human voice, in particular, evoke place in visceral and profound ways. Human voices call forth memory, time, and context; they provide interpretive dimensions.¹¹ In Cleveland Historical, for example, we listen to a story about the Hough neighborhood (<http://www.clevelandhistorical.org/items/show/7>) in which Larry Rivers asks of the 1967 Hough Riots: “Was it good?” In a video featuring Rivers (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eCgmKd9bSg>), we hear Rivers's ambivalence in the tone of his voice, followed by a pregnant pause, which offers an interpretive perspective that would not have been possible without oral history. Of course, such voices and community soundways have long been fundamental precepts at the core of oral history as a historical endeavor. Oral historians have argued that the voices we capture as part of our scholarship and public projects should be a vital element of our interpretive work. In particular, oral historians working in media contexts, along with radio producers using voices to evoke emotional response to audio storytelling, have led the way in exploring the capacity of sound to evoke place, offering a model for public historians to emulate. Yet prior to the emergence of the digital age late in the 1990s, film, radio, or recording programs would have been among the only ways to bring voices to mass audiences beyond one-off

⁹ Quoted in the Digital Humanities Manifesto.

¹⁰ On orality, see, for example, Alessandro Portelli, “On the Peculiarities of Oral History,” *History Workshop Journal*, 1981, no. 12, 96–107.

¹¹ On the import of authoring “in sound,” see, for example, Charles Hardy, III, “Authoring in Sound: Aural History, Radio and the Digital Revolution,” in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (New York: Routledge, 2006, second edition), 392–405.

public programs, printed books, or interview transcripts (the latter often buried deep within print archives). Thus, the digital age has changed the field in dramatic ways, in particular by extending the possibilities for using voices both in research and public interpretive projects.¹²

By embedding the work of oral history into the tools and techniques of digital history, Cleveland Historical seeks to bring oral histories and human voices to the fore in efforts to make place. We listen as two former campers from the 1950s, Brenda Mathews and Leslie Witbeck, sing the Camp Mueller song in a video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBmsj3Nx2M&feature=g-user-a&list=PL41140D89A4A99B99>), remembering their experience at one of the nation's first summer camps for urban African American children. Their voices carry the joy of first-time campers, offering an acute history lesson about hope and possibility and providing an interpretive frame for a story about the work of the pioneering Phillis Wheatley Association (<http://www.clevelandhistorical.org/items/show/19>). Likewise, we hear Henry Loconti's recollections of an Iggy Pop show at the Agora (<http://www.clevelandhistorical.org/items/show/1>), set against the context of the musician's music, and we understand something about the experience of club-goers in the 1970s. Indeed, music itself often provides an aural backdrop that provides the most acute interpretive frame for a story. For example, exploring the music of Dvorak's New World Symphony, as played and explicated in the story about Cleveland Cultural Gardens' Czech Garden (<http://www.clevelandhistorical.org/items/show/107>), reveals the Czech nationalist ambitions that were embedded in the Gardens, as well as the music and artistry of Dvorak.¹³ Thus, sound brings the physical landscape into sharper relief, building a richer sensory and material context for understanding place.

Listening to human voices on a mobile device allows users to experience memory within the landscapes where the stories were lived.¹⁴ For example, listening to Rick Calabrese recount the story of his family's produce stand in the West Side Market (<http://www.clevelandhistorical.org/items/show/67>), while standing in that context, underscores and evokes the sensory and experiential context of the market, which remains a vibrant commercial center for individual and commercial consumers in the region. When experienced in situ, these stories enhance our sensory experience of the market: its red brick architecture, claustrophobic stalls, the wafting aroma of kielbasa. If history can be seen and smelled in the market's close confines, listening to the stories of Rick Calabrese, Marilyn Anthony, or other market vendors and customers renders that history

¹² For a recent essay on this subject, see Sioban McHugh, "The Affective Power of Sound: Oral History on Radio," *Oral History Review*, 39, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2012): 187–206.

¹³ On the narrative of the Czech Garden, see Mark Tebeau, "Sculpted Landscapes: Art & Place in Cleveland's Cultural Gardens, 1916–2006," *Journal of Social History*, 44, no. 2 (2010): 327–50.

¹⁴ For the theory of "locative media," see Jason Farman, *Mobile Interface Theory: Embodied Space and Locative Media*, 1st edition (Routledge, 2011).

more legible. It reconnects people to the market's changing fortunes over the course of the twentieth century, dating to when the market was originally built for a city teeming with European migrants. Listening to such stories might even encourage people to reminisce about their own family's stories of the market or of their family's food traditions more broadly.

If geolocating oral history offers a new dimension to oral history narratives, it is not entirely clear where a story should be geolocated or whether geolocation even provides the best way to contextualize historical stories. In fact, advocates for geospatial technologies sometimes overstate the salience of maps as vehicles for interpretation. At times, it is not entirely clear that the map provides the richest context from which to understand a story. Some stories, such as the burning of the Cuyahoga River (<http://www.clevelandhistorical.org/items/show/63>), transcend any single location. Moreover, placing the story at an abandoned railroad bridge along the Cuyahoga River (as we now do) may be physically accurate but remote from a location where its interpretive connections are richer. How and where should deconstructed buildings be interpreted? Where they were located or perhaps in locations more clearly related to broader redevelopment strategies? Should we "pin" the story of Rockefeller (<http://www.clevelandhistorical.org/items/show/328>) and the origins of Standard Oil to a brownfield along the Cuyahoga River or connect it to the rise of the city's economic fortunes through geolocating that narrative downtown (which is what we do now)? Our experience with Cleveland Historical suggests that taking location too literally can make a story less accessible intellectually than layering such stories within broader historical contexts where their meaning is clearer and more accessible.

Moving oral history into the public context of the streets demands that we accelerate our reconceptualization of oral history and digital humanities as a more community-oriented endeavor. Just as the mobile revolution has fractured further the power relationships that have long guarded information, so too the Cleveland Historical Project team felt the need to build the project collaboratively. Inspired by the promise of social history and the radical ways that oral history can restructure power relations, we moved toward curating the city in collaboration with the community, rather than curating it for the city's many constituencies. Inspired by crowdsourcing but mindful of its many limitations, we developed a collaborative method that might be called "community sourcing."¹⁵ We train the community in documentary techniques, including oral history collection, and we support them with a team of student and volunteer

¹⁵ Crowdsourcing as a term is widely used, with Wikipedia being the most noted example; for an overview of the concept, see Enrique Estelles-Arola and Fernando Gonzalez-Ladron-de-Guevara, "Toward an Integrated Crowdsourcing Definition," *Journal of Information Science*, 2012, 1–14; James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds*, Reprint (Anchor, 2005).

facilitators and interpretive storytelling workshops. Not only has this built sustainable projects through enhancing collaborators' command of the oral history craft, it also has allowed our research team to collect a large number of oral histories on a wide variety of subjects. Then, those same collaborative teams log interviews, index them, and select audio segments as building blocks for interpretive stories about the city and its communities. Finally, we often publish the stories developed by partners, usually on Cleveland Historical, and also encourage them to extend and build their own audiences. We have also extended our community to include teachers, through professional development workshops. Many of the K–12 teachers who have participated have taken their oral history and digital skills into the classroom. Some teachers use the mobile application in teaching and learning history, asking students to explore their region and its various stories through Cleveland Historical; others are working with students to build stories for the app, such as the work of St. Ignatius High School students on the brewing industry (<http://www.clevelandhistorical.org/items/show/311>) in Cleveland's Ohio City neighborhood. This mode of collaborative work has fueled the expansion of the Cleveland Regional Oral History collection and provided content for Cleveland Historical.¹⁶

Collaboration is but one aspect of the digital revolution that has forced scholars to reimagine their relation to public audiences and the curatorial process itself. First, as argued above, the openness of the digital revolution has made knowledge production more democratic, challenging traditional power relations between scholars and their audiences. Such an increase in "shared authority" captures the spirit of the oral history method but challenges disciplinary foundations, as publics have greater access to digital tools for capturing and publishing oral history.¹⁷ Inspired by this challenge, our research team has invited multiple and diverse constituencies to become involved in documenting their lives and communities. This has generated wide-ranging stories related to neighborhood-based communities, cultural institutions, and municipalities. Other groups, associated with a broad swath of Cleveland's diverse population, have also participated: African Americans, Native Americans, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered individuals, various immigrants, former Japanese internees, women, working-class, and various professional groups. It is perhaps not surprising that this range of stories is not always represented proportionally on Cleveland Historical. The different capacities of partners to execute oral history and digital storytelling projects, as well as matters related to funding and

¹⁶ See, for example, "St. Ignatius High School," <http://clevelandhistorical.org/items/show/157> (accessed January 1, 2013); Sara Ziemnik, (TriSarahTops2198), Twitter post, "@urbanhumanist Just had a great lesson Cleveland in the Gilded Age using #CLEHistorical in my APUSH class!"

¹⁷ Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990).

organizational priorities, have shaped various partners' and potential partners' participation in the project.¹⁸ Such challenges, however, are surely endemic to the digital age, as reflected in the persistence of a "digital divide," in which poor, working-class, and minority communities lack full access to the digital era. Indeed, if it is not clear on its face that community-based knowledge production automatically produces greater societal equity, we have engineered Cleveland Historical in a manner that addresses such challenges through an active curatorial process.¹⁹

Collecting information is not enough, however. Digital curation is, and should be, more than merely aggregating content or crowdsourcing the production of knowledge, both of which have been fetishized by the technologists promoting the digital age.²⁰ In a world where the volume of information being produced is extraordinary, we must find new ways to make sense of that data, especially because this era of "big data" has not necessarily improved our ability to analyze and interpret information, although it holds many promises.²¹ With this in mind, the Center for Public History + Digital Humanities has moved toward an activist model of curation in which team members develop interpretive stories that introduce historical and cultural contexts that challenge audiences to understand history in a new fashion—a practice in line with the process of historical research and thinking.²² Moreover, we have engineered Cleveland

¹⁸ For example, through several separate and ongoing funded oral history initiatives, including the Re-Imagining Cleveland and the Phillis Wheatley Projects, the Center for Public History + Digital Humanities has collected stories about the African American experience. This has resulted in multiple narratives related to the African American experience, approximately eighty stories at this writing (just less than 20 percent of the total).

¹⁹ On the digital divide, see, for example, Kathryn Zickuhr and Aaron Smith, "Digital Differences," *Pew Internet & American Life*, April 13, 2012, <http://pewinternet.org/topics/Digital-Divide.aspx?typeFilter=5>.

²⁰ See, for example, the writing of Clay Shirky: Clay Shirky, "How Can Social Media Make History," May 16, 2012, <http://www.npr.org/2012/05/18/152868437/how-can-social-media-make-history>; Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*, Reprint (Penguin Books, 2009); Clay Shirky, *Cognitive Surplus: How Technology Makes Consumers into Collaborators*, Reprint (Penguin Books, 2011). Curation has taken on many meanings in the digital humanities, see, for example, *Digital Curation Guide: A Community Resource Guide to Data Curation in the Digital Humanities* <http://guide.dhcuration.org/contents/> (accessed December 7, 2012). The Oral History in the Digital Age project divided its work into three categories, including both "collecting" and "curation," which overlap in striking ways; see *Oral History in the Digital Age*, ed. Doug Boyd, Steve Cohen, Brad Rakerd, and Dean Rehberger (Washington, DC: Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2012), <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/essays/>.

²¹ For a generalist's overview of big data, see "Data, Data Everywhere," *The Economist* (February 25, 2010), <http://www.economist.com/node/15557443>; "Big Data's Mass Appeal: A Special Report," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (May 28, 2010) <http://chronicle.com/section/Big-Data/446/>; "Big Data," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_data (accessed December 14, 2012); Christa Williford and Charles Henry, *One Culture: Computationally Intensive Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Council on Library and Information Resources, June 2012). For the argument that the volume of information has not enhanced interpretive practice in the sciences, see Dominique Brossard and Dietram A. Scheufele, "Science, New Media, and the Public," *Science*, 339, no. 40 (2013), 40–41.

²² See, for instance, Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2001).

Historical to be dynamic and iterative, allowing us to alter stories rapidly so as to accommodate new sources, perspectives, and research. For example, systematically identifying shortcomings in the content—such as a dearth of suburban oral histories—has allowed the team to build a dynamic project whose strength lies not in its encyclopedic coverage but in a dynamic and iterative developmental process that represents new approaches to scholarship, as well as new interpretive possibilities in the digital age. Additionally, using open-source archival content management systems that are easily programmed and re-imagined allows Cleveland Historical to be transformed to meet emergent project obstacles.²³

Ironically, digital tools have presented us with new dilemmas precisely by presenting new possibilities, such as allowing us to more easily edit oral histories. As a result, we are brought closer to the human voice than ever before, no longer experiencing oral history as mediated by the transcript or interpretation. Thus, we now face more directly that tension between the “raw and the cooked” oral history interview. In some ways, the gap between interpretive oral history segments—whether audio clips or transcripts—and raw interviews have never been more profound because the digital context potentially allows us to have them both.²⁴ And the original interview matters! Indeed, decoupling an audio clip of an oral history from its broader interview context may diminish the interpretive richness of the interview. This problem is illustrated in the story of the Agora Theater and Henry Loconti, a unique local and national music venue and its founder. In multiple oral histories, Henry Loconti (<http://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/croh000/54/>) places the development of the Agora within the broader context of the development of the music business, including its origins in the “game” and jukebox business of the 1950s. If this context provides the best way to understand the development of the Agora, it is nonetheless told in a fashion that is difficult to bring directly into the exhibit context of Cleveland Historical because of its length and need for explication. As of this writing, our team has not chosen to layer this narrative into Cleveland Historical for several reasons, including the lack of availability of correlative source materials and our choice to emphasize other aspects of the Agora’s stories (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OblbMR2_tCw). However, our decision also was shaped by the format of the digital exhibit (and mobile) context of Cleveland Historical, which makes lengthy interview clips unwieldy. Of course, such tensions are not new to

²³ Improvisation has emerged as a digital humanities theme; see Mark Tebeau, “Digital Humanities as Jazz,” <http://urbanhumanist.org/digital-humanities-as-jazz/> (accessed March 18, 2011). Cleveland Historical uses Omeka content management software; see Tom Scheinfeldt, “Omeka and its Peers,” September 1, 2010 <http://www.foundhistory.org/2010/09/01/omeka-and-its-peers/>; <http://omeka.org/> (accessed December 8, 2012).

²⁴ See Michael Frisch and Doug Lambert, “Case Study: Between the Raw and the Cooked: Notes from the Kitchen,” in *Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. Donald Ritchie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 333–48.

oral history practice, but they have been accentuated by the easy accessibility promised by the digital age.²⁵

Mindful of the importance of oral history contexts in conveying meaning, the project team has adapted the indexing approach used by Michael Frisch to build richly descriptive, minute-by-minute interview logs that build connections between interviews, both within a group of interviews and across the entire collection.²⁶ Connecting the interviews in this fashion enhances the curatorial process. It allows a broad community of interpreters ready access to segments of a wide array of interviews and, at the same time, allows our community of curators to create layers of meaning across interview collections. Such layering helps to accentuate oral history as a backbone to our interpretive approach, even as it informs the interpretive process. Additionally, as the complete oral histories have been archived, these minute-by-minute ledgers have been made available, giving public audiences a way of recontextualizing the interview clips that they've heard. Returning to the example of Henry Loconti and the Agora, interview logs have provided a way of connecting the development of the nightclub to its broader narrative context within the Loconti interviews. The next challenge will be to connect the original interview segments to the presentation on the mobile app and website in a manner that is well designed, both from a technological and user-experience perspective.²⁷

Ultimately, Cleveland Historical provides a window for oral and public historians into the possibilities presented by the digital era and the emerging mobile age. Through innovative deployment of mobile technologies, combined with best oral history practices, the project has worked to make the city the context for storytelling and oral history. In so doing, Cleveland Historical has experimented with a new way of building oral history projects—namely, community sourcing—and presenting that work to broad publics. Likewise, we have connected oral history to landscape in ways that enhance our understandings of place and the oral history segments themselves. No longer disembodied from its geographical and historical contexts, oral history grows more vital and explanatory. Cleveland Historical argues strongly for projects (and especially mobile interpretive projects) that emphasize auralty, thus making human voices vital

²⁵ Presently, a variety of researchers are exploring ways to annotate audio segments, making the pieces and parts of oral history and/or video more easily accessible. These include Annotator's Workbench, <http://www.eviada.org/element.cfm?mc=6&ctID=31&elD=1> (accessed December 21, 2012); OHMS from the University of Kentucky, <http://nunncenter.org/ohms-enhancing-oral-history-online/> (accessed June 15, 2012); and PopcornJS, <http://popcornjs.org/> (accessed December 21, 2012).

²⁶ See, for example, the project documentation for our work on the Cleveland Cultural Gardens; Erin Bell, Michael Frisch, Douglas Lambert, and Mark Tebeau, *Cleveland Cultural Gardens Oral History* (Buffalo, New York, Randforce Associates, November 2006).

²⁷ See especially PopcornJS, which provides a useful model for connecting oral history segments to large oral history interviews.

to the digital humanities endeavor. Likewise, at the intersection of oral history and digital humanities practice, we propose a model of curation that develops interpretive meaning through a dynamic, layered, and contextual storytelling endeavor. This dynamic curatorial process transforms the city into a living museum through which we can collaboratively remake our understandings of place and community identity.

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