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Whose project is this? Whose stories do we tell? Participatory frameworks for community-based oral history projects

Dr Andrew Flinn, University College London, a.flinn@ucl.ac.uk

Dr Julianne Nyhan, University College London, j.nyhan@ucl.ac.uk

This paper will examine community-related research incorporating oral history practice being undertaken by staff at UCL in the Department of Information Studies with the view to exploring the relationships between the interviewer and interviewee, between 'academic' researchers and community-based participants, and the extent to which collaborative and participatory approaches to community—based oral history practice can share control, authority and ownership equitably between the partners in such research, and further identify what are some of the challenges to such a approach.

A focus of much current research within UCL:DIS is participatory and collaborative approaches to knowledge production which seek to overcome the traditional barriers between academic and other knowledge professionals and different publics, but in particular this paper will draw upon and contrast the experience of working on two different projects with very different communities. First with HLF-funded community-based heritage oral history as part of the AHRC's Connected Communities Research for Community Heritage 'Dig Where We Stand' project (http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/dig-where-we-stand/), and second, 'Hidden Histories: computers and the humanities 1949-1980' (http://hiddenhistories.omeka.net/) which records the diverse stories of an international community of pioneers, radicals, leaders, and discordant voices to capture the birth and evolution stories of the emergence of the 'revolutionary' and 'transformatory' discipline of digital humanities. The speakers will describe and compare these projects so as to examine questions of what is 'community', where power and authority lies within different communities, how key community stories are developed and authenticated within the community, what is the relationship between the researchers and those interviewees, and whether these relationships can be developed so that interviewers and interviewees can share authority over the framing of the research, the stories told and their subsequent use and reproduction.