

Co. Roscommon Folklore & Oral History Network – Best Practice Guidelines

Oral Consent

- You must get oral or written permission from the people you wish to record. Oral permission is sufficient.
- Make a note of the date you received oral/written consent.

The Interview

- It is best to meet with the person first or get an introduction to them and see what their interests are and what they wish to speak about. Then you can be informed about the topic before you begin recording. If you are recording folklore consult ‘The Handbook of Irish Folklore’, for guidelines and customs. There is a copy in Roscommon County Library.
- Let them tell their story but have a list of questions prepared, it will be of benefit to you both. Remember it is their story/account. You can ask open- ended questions, avoid loaded questions.
- Try to keep to topics you have already discussed with the narrator or to topics you know they are knowledgeable about.
- You could bring something e.g. a photo or a book to stimulate people talking.
- If you take a break or stop the interview for any reason e.g. the interviewee may not wish to have some material recorded, record that you have done so. There is no need to explain the reason.
- Try to keep to the length of the cassette or within the memory capacity of your recorder.
- If they do not wish to be taped, ask if you may take notes.
- State the interviewee’s name, address and age (if given) at the beginning as well as the date of the interview.
- There is no need to play the recording back immediately after the interview unless they request that you do so.
- When you have made a copy of the original recording, give a copy to the narrator or their family, so that they can listen to it. If they wish to have any material removed, you must comply with their wishes. If they are happy about the content etc. then proceed to transcribe the recording. Make a note of the date you got permission from them. If they are unhappy with the recording you can not proceed.
- You may give a copy of the transcript to the narrator if you wish. If you are giving a copy of the CD there is probably no need.

Equipment

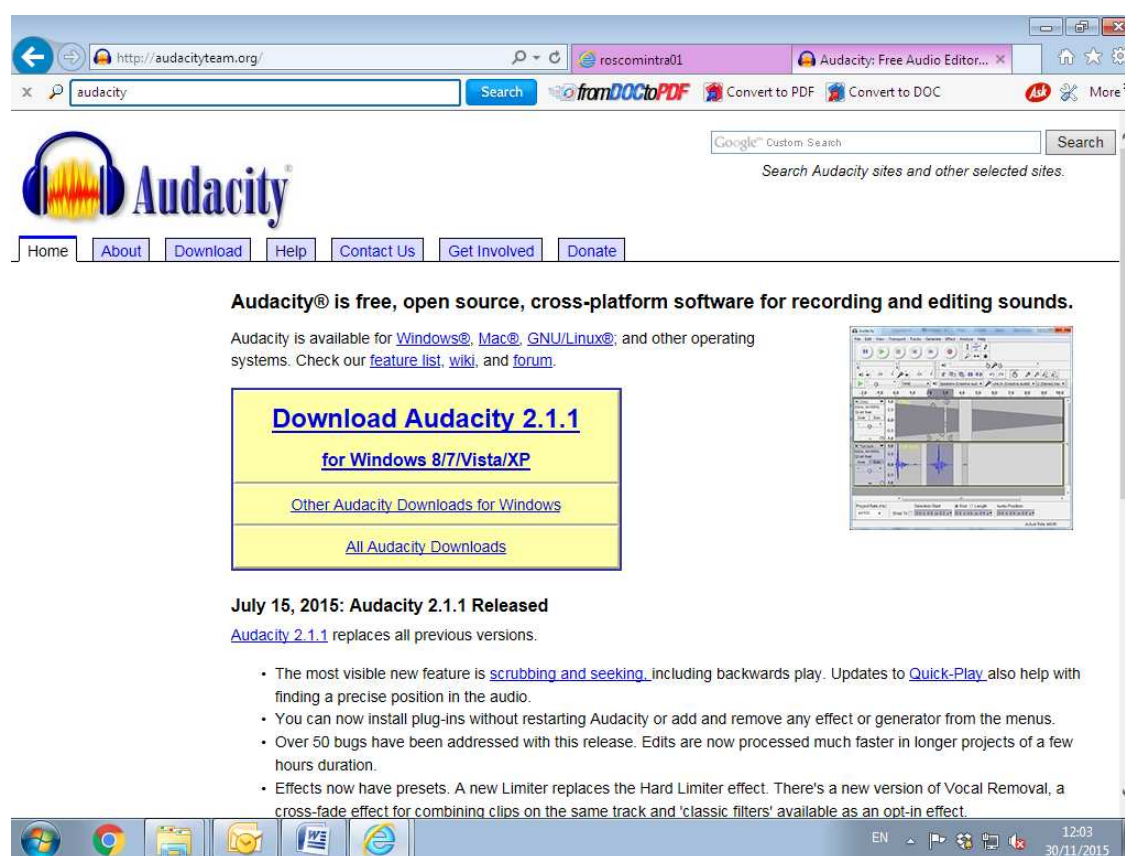
- Use a recorder that has a microphone socket and a standard line-out socket, with a microphone plugged in. After the interview the recordings can be easily transferred for cropping, hiss-removal etc.
- If it is possible to record digitally use a Creative Zen hard disc mp3 player, a mini disc recorder, or a handy recorder device. Anything that has a microphone-in socket.
- It’s important to transfer and archive in CD-format.
- Get to know the equipment before the interview. Check the batteries and carry spares or a power cable etc.

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- Bring headphones and perform a sound check before each interview with all participants sitting in interview positions and speaking normally.
- A 'Handy Recorder' has been provided for network member's use. This is available through the Heritage Officer and must be signed in and out.

The Recording

- Connect from recorder device to computer using suitable cable and transfer to sound files.
- 'Audacity' is the programme used for transferring the recording to the computer. Once the recording has been transferred to 'Audacity' it can be edited.
- Do not over edit. The recording needs to be kept as close to the original as possible.
- When editing is completed the recording is then put on CD, for archiving. This first CD is the Master Copy. Write M.C. on it with a cd marker, and the interviewee's name and address and your own name and the date the recording was made. Make a second copy of the CD for use in the library.
- Keep the original recording as a master copy for the library.



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Transcribing

- Font size 14 for heading of transcript and index.
- Font size 12 for the interview.
- Transcribe as accurately as possible from recording to word document. Don't make grammar or pronunciation changes or corrections.
- If there are some historical facts, which you know to be inaccurate, you could write a footnote and initial it.
- Print name, address, age (if available) of interviewee at the beginning and your own name.
- Use initials of interviewer and interviewee for questions and replies for the remainder of the interview.
- Print out a copy of the transcript and index it.
- Identify keywords – to enable searching of database
- Save the Transcript and Index on to a CD for archiving and a print out one copy.

The following is an example of the transcript of an interview. Please follow this format when you are transcribing your material.

Recording of John Hayes, Clooncan, Ballinlough, Co. Roscommon, by June Cuff, on the 20th July, 2005.

Oral consent given 30th July, 2005.

Today is 20th July, 2005 and I'm at the home of John Hayes, Clooncan, Ballinlough. John is 78 years of age and he is speaking to June Cuff.

J.C.

John I'd like you to speak to me about your experience of emigrating to America in the 1950's.

J.H.

Well, I left Ireland in 1953, because there was no work for me, and the farm was small, and as I was the second youngest, I wasn't going to inherit anyway.

J.C.

How did you travel to America, and which part did you go to John?

J.H.

I went by boat from Cobh and it was hard to leave, but I had an aunt in Boston.

Font Size

- Font size 14 for heading of transcript and index.
- Font size 12 for the interview.

Photo

- If possible get a photograph of the person you are recording or a photo of the area or something relevant to the topics you have recorded.

Co. Roscommon Folklore & Oral History Network – Best Practice Guidelines

Archive/ Format required by Co. Library

- Keep your original tape or disc as the master copy.
- Copy the recording on to CD using ‘Audacity’, and make 2 copies of the CD.
- Copy the transcript and index on to CD and print out 1 copy of the transcript and index.
- All of the above are given to the Co. Library, in an envelope, with the details of the interviewee i.e. name and address, and your own name and address, and the date you recorded the interview. If you have a photo please include it.
- 1 CD of the interview and 1 CD of the transcript, with photo if available, will be sent from the Co. Library to Interleaf, for uploading on to the Roscommon Media Archive.
- The Library keeps the master tape or disc, the master CD and a print out of the transcript and index.

References

- Danaher, K. *The Year in Ireland*, Mercier Press, 1972. (Reprinted by Irish Books and Media, Minneapolis)
- Evans, E. Estyn, *Irish Folk Ways*, Routledge and Keegan, London 1972
- Lysaght, P. *The Banshee: The Irish Supernatural Death-Messenger*, Glendale Press, Dublin, 1986
- O’Suilleabháin, S. *Irish Folk Custom and Belief*, Mercier Press, Dublin 1977
- O’Suilleabháin, S. *A Handbook of Irish Folklore*, Jenkins Folklore Associates, 1963
- O’Suilleabháin, S. *Irish Wake Amusements*, Mercier Press, Dublin 1997
- Campbell, F. *Land and Revolution*, Oxford Press, 2005
- R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.) *The Oral History Reader* (London:Routledge 1998, several editions)
- Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford paperback, various editions since 1978)
- Stephen Caunce, *Oral History and the Local Historian* (Longmans 1994) might be out of print, check libraries.