Advice on remote oral history interviewing during the Covid-19 pandemic

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Disclaimer: This guide is intended as no more than guidance based on the experience of the British Library Oral History team, with input from other members of the Oral History Society. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information brought together here from a wide variety of sources and experience, neither the authors, the British Library or the Oral History Society can accept liability for any consequences which may result from the use of this information for any purpose. This guide will be revised and updated, and the author welcomes comments and queries.

Executive Summary

This guide was written in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020-21 which has required the suspension of all face-to-face oral history interviewing. In response to increased interest in conducting remote interviews this document attempts to summarise the ethical, legal, methodological and technical issues that individuals and projects will need to consider before deciding whether or not to conduct a remote interview.

1. Introduction

Oral historians have traditionally favoured the face-to-face interview and discouraged remote interviewing. It involves a different skill set, and it is often difficult to build rapport from a distance, to be sensitive to mood changes, to provide non-verbal feedback, and to establish the relationship needed for a successful oral history interview. Interviews recorded via telephones and web services are often of poor audio quality, result in digital files that cannot be archived, and present challenges around data security, and signing and storing interview documentation. In addition, remote interviewing can tend to exclude or minimise many of the community building and 'process' elements of oral history projects, which are often as important as the 'product' itself. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has created an extraordinary situation where face-to-face interviewing would endanger the health of the interviewer, the interviewee and society as a whole. The Oral History Society has therefore recommended all face-to-face interviewing be postponed until further notice.

Postponing face-to-face interviewing does not mean that the work of oral history must also pause, and individuals and groups may take this time to work on content summarising, transcribing, editing, research, writing, webpage preparation or analysis, amongst other work. At the same time, we recognise in some cases it may be necessary for oral historians to continue with active interviewing, for example if a vital interviewee is unwell, if the project is documenting the pandemic itself, or if project deadlines cannot be postponed, and that in such situations the only option will be to make use of remote technology.

2. When to conduct a remote oral history interview

Remote interviewing is currently the only safe method of conducting an oral history interview, but we do not expect this situation to last forever. We do not know how long the Covid-19 pandemic and the global response will last, or what its long term implications will be for our practice. It may be that we are entering a 'new normal' for oral history, where a mixed in-person and remote approach will become the norm. Furthermore, we take inspiration from the disability justice movement and others for whom remote interviewing offers opportunities that in-person interviewing does not. We are still working under the assumption that social distancing will at some point come to an end and oral historians will be able to resume face-to-

face interviewing. If possible you should postpone your oral history interview until that point, and instead remote technology could be used during the period of social distancing to build a relationship with the interviewee or to check that they are healthy and safe, or perhaps to continue an interview you have already started face-to-face. If delay is not possible there are several criteria that should be considered before deciding whether or not to conduct a remote oral history interview:

2.1 The urgency of the interview

Can the interview be postponed? All of us are at risk, but the current pandemic presents a specific threat to some individuals and groups over others, for example some, but certainly not all, older or immuno-compromised people. Whilst we should avoid blanket categorisation of people as 'vulnerable' or 'at risk' due to assumed vulnerability, the first consideration in whether to conduct a remote interview is the degree of urgency and whether a face-to-face interview is likely to be possible once the pandemic has ceased. Urgency should also be judged on whether existing archived oral history interviews can be used as substitutes for new interviews, and whether existing research on the subject might provide an adequate evidence base. Finally, interviews might be seen as more urgent if they are specifically related to documenting the current situation or are interviews on the topic of infectious diseases.

2.2 The type of interview

What kind of oral history interview are you conducting? It will be difficult to record a long life story interview over remote technology, but it might be possible to conduct shorter and more focused research interviews. If you are recording interviews about the Covid-19 pandemic do they need to be conducted 'in the moment' or could they benefit from a time gap and a more reflective approach? We would encourage all future projects to include questions about Covid-19: both about everyday experiences during the pandemic, and reflections on its longer-term significance in people's lives. In larger projects this may help you in prioritising which interviews to conduct now and which to postpone.

2.3 The condition of the interviewee and the interviewer

How much of a priority is an oral history interview in the current circumstances? The Covid-19 pandemic has already left many people in financial, psychological and personal distress. Many people – and this could include both the interviewer and interviewee – are finding it hard to

pay for rent, bills and food, or are struggling with childcare; others are forced to remain in difficult or abusive households. Individuals, communities and society are dealing with 'anticipatory grief', as well as the loss of loved ones under extraordinary circumstances, and the subsequent psychological impact of mass bereavement.

In some cases an oral history interview might function as a coping mechanism for the interviewee and help them to process their experiences of the pandemic. In this case an interview might be beneficial. However, an oral history interview is different from a therapeutic encounter and oral historians should be aware of where their strengths and skills lie. Oral history should not be confused with therapy or emotional support, though there might be some interviews relating to traumatic memory and distress where the interviewer needs to shift their approach. It might be that such interviews should simply be delayed until a face-to-face encounter can better provide sensitive listening and support in cases where interviewees become distressed.

At the point of writing this guidance the primary concern for most people is ensuring that they and others are safe and supported, and the request for an interview may be seen as intrusive or insensitive. In addition, when interviewing healthcare or other frontline workers there is a danger that "single session interventions that require staff to talk about their thoughts or feelings" may increase the likelihood of PTSD (see this summary by the King's Fund). Can you be sure that individuals at this time have been fully informed about the process and are able to freely give their informed consent to taking part? Would a remote interview be the best legacy for that individual to leave in the historical record? Remember that continuing an ongoing oral history interview that commenced face-to-face will present fewer challenges than starting a new one, and that some oral historians maintain that during a period of crisis you should only interview people with whom you have a pre-existing relationship.

Finally, you should consider your own situation as the interviewer or project manager. The Covid-19 pandemic is a global pandemic and is affecting all of us, albeit in different ways. This is unique in living memory and differs from previous crisis situations documented by oral historians, which tended to apply only to specific localities, and often only affected interviewees but not interviewers (see bibliography below). Do you have sufficient time for pre- and post-interview work such as research and summarising? Can you suspend your own

experiences of the pandemic and allow your interviewee's testimony to take precedence during the recording? If you are working with volunteers do you have the staff and expertise to provide them with the necessary practical and emotional support?

2.4 The purpose of the interview

Can remote interviews be archived? One of the biggest problems with remote interviewing is the quality of digital files that can be recorded. They may be poor audio quality (which will make any transcription or re-use in broadcast or web outputs challenging) or they might use low resolution and/or proprietary audio software which might not be forward-compatible. If the oral history interviews are being recorded with the intention that they be deposited for long-term archival preservation (which is a founding principle of the Oral History Society) this will be a key consideration in deciding whether or not to conduct a remote interview. Oral historians and projects should consult with their archival partners at the point they are considering remote interviewing to ascertain whether the archive would be willing to accept remote interviews as part of deposit. While we, in line with Oral History Society guidance, always recommend archiving recorded interviews, we acknowledge that in some cases interviews are only intended for immediate research purposes and not for archival preservation. In these few instances remote interviews will be a lot easier to record.

2.5 Project timescales

Can funded projects postpone their work? We strongly recommend you contact your funder or lead researcher before making a decision on remote interviewing. Most funding bodies (including the [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) and [UK Research and Innovation](#)) have suspended or extended existing deadlines for oral history projects, research projects and postgraduate research. At the same time this does not mean that these bodies will provide additional funding (though some have), therefore the timescales that predated social distancing may need to remain due to financial and practical necessity. If projects only have staff available to conduct interviews (or to supervise volunteers in conducting interviews) within a defined timeframe they may want to consider remote interviewing. However, if the project has not received training in oral history techniques then we would strongly advise against any remote interviewing until adequate training can be provided.

2.6 Technological capability

What technologies are available for remote interviewing? Section 5 of this document deals with the technical options for recording remote interviews. However, these options are only viable to the extent that interviewers and interviewees are comfortable in using them. If interviewers are not adept with the software themselves and are unable to guide their interviewees effectively, and if interviewees are not able to use any of the software options listed below, or have trouble using them, then a remote interview will be very difficult. For oral history projects, the project coordinator will also need to understand how to store digital files, and may need to acquaint themselves with audio editing software to mix and resample files recorded remotely.

2.7 Legal issues

What are the legal and data protection implications? Different providers of remote interviewing software will claim different rights over the audio recorded and there are security concerns about some. You must be especially diligent in reading the terms and conditions of any software you use in order to ensure you do not breach any data protection legislation which might apply to the country you reside in, the country your interviewee resides in, or the country that the software provider resides in. This is especially important since Brexit as UK data protection legislation has replaced EU legislation. You also need to consider whether the confidentiality of a remote interview can be assured if the software provider routinely records and retains content (rather as Google does with some of their applications), or exercises rights over anything that you record yourself. Importantly, you should check whether any files you record are being stored in cloud storage or are being recorded locally to your computer; the latter option will have significantly fewer data protection issues. If you are using software based in the United States of America, you should be aware of the Court of Justice of the European Union ruling 'Schrems II' (June 2020) which invalidated the EU-US Privacy Shield (which previously allowed personal data to flow freely between the US and the EU/UK). Since Brexit this ruling remains in UK GDPR legislation. When planning to use software based in the US you must be diligent in reading terms and conditions and privacy policies, and your institution must determine if using the software counts as an 'acceptable risk'. For sensitive, closed, restricted, or confidential interviews it might simply not be possible to use most remote interviewing options.

3. What to consider when conducting a remote interview

Remote interviewing presents technical and methodological challenges, some of which are not present in face-to-face interviewing. As it stands there is limited literature on the subject and we welcome further discussion. The following technical challenges may apply:

- If you are using the internet for remote interviewing you should be aware of the current stress on bandwidth due to the increased number of people working from home and using the internet for leisure purposes. Also remember there is poor internet and telephone provision in rural parts of the UK. When using the internet for remote interviews you will get better results if you switch off all other devices using your own Wi-Fi or internet network and ask interviewees if they can do the same. You are also likely to get a better connection by connecting directly to your router with an Ethernet cable as opposed to connecting by Wi-Fi.
- In-built microphones in computers and laptops will likely be of poor quality. If both you and your interviewee can use external microphones your interview will be of significantly better audio quality – in fact this may be the most important factor in ensuring you record good quality audio. For most methods of recording it is also preferable for you and your interviewee to wear headphones. We recommend the use of USB microphones as many pieces of recording software will not recognise microphones connected by audio jack, and if your computer has only one audio jack you will need to use it for headphones. There are a lot of different USB microphones on the market and even a low quality option will likely produce better audio than an in built microphone. Recommended brands include [Blue Microphones](#), [Boya](#), [Neat](#), and [Rode](#). Note that many firms have sold out of audio-visual equipment or have limited stock due to increased demand at the start of the pandemic, or later problems with supply chains.
- If you are recording only the audio channel of a video call remember that future researchers will not see the video. If you or the interviewee refer to documents, objects or non-verbal forms of expression make sure they are clearly described as well.
- If you are recording through a computer, ensure that all other audio and video playback has stopped and that any programs which might have audio notifications have been

closed. If you intend to record using a smartphone, we strongly suggest you [refer to Oral History Society guidance on recording with smartphones](#).

- If you are saving the recording on to your computer hard drive make sure there is enough storage space available for the file: as a rule of thumb ensure there is 1GB space per each hour of recorded stereo sound but some pieces of software will require more.

- The volume levels of the interviewer and the interviewee are likely to have greater variation in a remote interview than in a face-to-face interview. Consider how you can minimise this, for example by recording to a stereo track where the levels can be adjusted individually after the recording has finished (which is not possible in a mono track).

- If you are recording a phone call remember to ask the interviewee not to speak by speakerphone as this will affect the sound quality of the call.

- Remember there will likely be many distractions in both of your homes, including children, pets and neighbours, amongst others. Try to minimise these as best you can by seeing if both parties can find a quiet, softly furnished, comfortable and confidential space, a separate room if possible or by cordoning off space in a bedroom rather than a communal area.

- Interviewees may be more nervous than in a face-to-face session, as with many methods they will need to have an active role in setting up the recording, unlike in an in-person setting.

- The pace of the interview will likely be different to that of an in-person interview. Interviewees might find it harder to speak for long periods in a remote interview than in a face-to-face interview, and might need more frequent breaks.

- You may need to alter your interviewing technique and question approach, for example by asking fewer, shorter and more precise questions.

- It will be harder to deliver non-verbal feedback remotely than in a face-to-face interview. Additionally, it will be harder to identify non-verbal cues and body language that might indicate either an opportune moment for a follow-up question, or the need to pause if the interviewee becomes upset. In face-to-face interviewing there would usually be time to talk after the recording ends; we suggest you try to build in at least a few minutes of time to chat after ending the remote recording, which will help both parties.

- Consider carefully how you will store the audio recording of your remote interview at home. Ideally the interview should be kept on secure and encrypted local drives and you should use checksum software whenever you move your audio to a new location (the British Library Oral History department uses Blackbush checksum software and it can be provided free on request). Remember to keep multiple copies and that 'one copy is no copy'. Consider whether you can securely transfer audio data to someone with access to archive storage, perhaps via WeTransfer Pro, which enables password protection.
- If possible, use this remote interview as one session amongst others, to be continued when social distancing measures are relaxed and you can meet face-to-face.

4. Documentation

A difficult aspect of remote interviewing is arranging how interviewees can sign a Participation Agreement prior to the interview and a Recording Agreement afterwards, and how to ensure they understand the forms they are signing. See Oral History Society guidance on UK GDPR for more information. If you are interviewing individuals who have electronic signatures you can ask them to complete forms in this way. If your interviewee has access to a printer/scanner they could print and sign documents and either post them back to you or send a scanned copy or a photograph of the form. Finally, if you have access to a printer and they do not you could consider printing the form to send to them and asking them to post it back to you. Remember that approaches you take during social distancing might just function as stopgap solutions, and additional documentation could be signed in the future.

Signing the post-interview Recording Agreement can be deferred until social distancing measures are relaxed, but in order to be compliant with UK GDPR the interviewee will need to explicitly agree with the Participation Agreement prior to the interview. While a signed agreement always carries more weight, if this is not possible the position of the British Library is that the interviewee should state on the recording that they have received, understood and agreed to the Participation Agreement. This form of verbal agreement should only be relied on during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic and should be supplemented with a signed agreement when possible. If you are working for an organisation with a Data Protection Officer we suggest you consult them before following this approach.

We also recommend having a phone or video call before the interviewee signs, or agrees to, the Participation Agreement in order to make sure they understand both the form and the interview process. Once you have received documents in paper or digital form you will need to have a process in place for secure storage of the documents containing people's personal data in order to be UK GDPR compliant, and this should be described on the Participation Agreement itself.

As with all oral history interviews the usual rules around reasonable adjustments for disability apply, and alternative methods for indicating and recording ethical agreement for those unable to write are encouraged. Refer to the [Oral History Society Legal and Ethical FAQ](#) for more information.

5. Options for recording a remote interview

Having considered all the issues in sections 1-4 of this document, there are numerous technological options available for anyone who wishes to proceed with a remote interview. Many will be unsuitable for oral history recordings, especially those that you might want to archive, so when choosing a method we would suggest you consider the following factors:

- Ease of use: Is it a method you and the interviewee can both understand and make use of?
- Copyright, data protection and safety: Does the provider claim any rights over the recording or the words spoken? Do they retain any data and if so where is it stored, how is it accessed and is it UK GDPR-compliant? How susceptible is the provider to hacking and how can you protect against this? Popular VoIP services like Skype or Zoom [might be more susceptible to hackers](#) and claim more rights over your calls than open source options like Jitsi. If the service offers encryption make sure you [know how it works](#).
- Audio or video: Do you want to record an audio-visual interview, or the audio channel of a video conversation, or simply conduct an audio phone call? A video call will have the advantage of visual cues, but a telephone call will have fewer issues around rights, data security, and data protection.

- Time constraints: Does the provider cut you off after a certain period of time? Are there maximum running times?
- Cost: How much does the equipment, software or phone call cost, and might you be locked into a contract? Should you, or your organisation, undertake any contract with a software or service provider? Are there cost savings (or risks) for multiple users?
- Format: Does the method chosen produce a highly compressed file (such as mp3, mp4 or a proprietary file) or a format suitable for archival preservation (such as wav)? For audio, the wav format has become a de-facto standard for preservation due to its simplicity, widespread compatibility and ability to hold lossless audio data. This format is officially recommended by the [IASA Technical Committee](). Mp3 and mp4 files may present greater challenges for archiving due to their more complex makeup and implementation of proprietary codecs. However, even if you can save your recording as a wav file this does not necessarily mean the audio captured has come from an uncompressed source. <u>It is unlikely that any method of remote recording will produce an audio file of similar technical quality to what can be achieved in a face-to-face interview</u>. If you are planning to archive your interviews the quality of the audio will likely be the most restrictive criterion and it is crucial you discuss this with any archival partner you are working with.
    - Note that all VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) services (for example, Skype, Zoom or Jitsi) and telephone calls (mobile or landline) employ some degree of audio compression. The level of compression employed will depend on internet speed and bandwidth, as well as [the codec (compression software) used](). The audio will be compressed even if the audio file you save on your recorder or export from audio software is a wav file.
    - If possible you should still record the interview as a wav file, and note that recording as mp3 or mp4 and then converting to wav will not produce an audio file with equivalent quality to recording directly as a wav file. Saving any audio file in a lossy compressed format (e.g. mp3 or mp4) will result in a reduction in file size and in quality. This reduction applies even if the source material (e.g. a VoIP call) is already compressed in the first place. By saving already compressed audio in a compressed format, you are essentially 'double compressing' the file, further reducing its quality. The reduction in quality when compressing already compressed audio will be less than the reduction in quality when compressing

uncompressed audio, but from an archival standpoint 'double compression' should be avoided in favour of saving in an uncompressed, lossless format. Saving already-compressed source material (e.g. a VoIP call) in an uncompressed format (e.g. wav) will ensure there is no further loss in quality.

With these factors in mind we list some potential options below, all of which are summarised in tabular form in Appendix A; remember that with all these options there are many variables to balance and there will never be a 'one size fits all' solution to recording remote interviews. It should be stressed that this list is not meant as exhaustive and other options, if they meet the criteria in this document, could be used for a remote oral history interview. Furthermore, most of the options listed in section 5.2 are only a method of recording an interview, not the means by which you are able to make contact. For a successful remote interview you will need to consider **both** the means of making the call (double-ender recording, telephone, VoIP software) **and** the way in which you will record the audio (capture by audio software or by a digital recorder). Whatever method you choose we strongly recommend you conduct a pre-interview call with your interviewee using the same technology you plan to use for the interview itself, recording some test files to review and later delete.

Finally, it should be noted that the British Library's oral history team is also learning to use these technologies as we write and update this guidance. You are recommended to consult user communities and share your own practice. We welcome comments on your experience of using these methods in the current pandemic.

5.1 Double-ender recording

A 'double-ender' recording is one where all audio is recorded locally. This means that both the interviewer and the interviewee will each be recorded as they sound, and not as their voice is heard after being compressed through a VoIP or telephone call. A double-ender will give you lossless audio, which is of a higher quality than the options listed in section 5.2, but bear in mind that the quality of each voice will depend on the equipment available and an external USB microphone will greatly improve audio quality. Another benefit of a double-ender is that, because the audio is recorded locally, it will record uninterrupted audio even if the internet connection is disrupted. Any disruption you heard in the call itself will not be heard in the recorded sound.

5.1.1 Participant managed double-ender

[It is possible to manage a double-ender call yourself using simple software, such as Audacity](#). However, this will require that both you and your interviewee are able to use the software and you will subsequently have to stitch the two files together, where you may encounter audio drift or delay. This method of a participant managed double-ender call will produce a good quality audio file but it is **only** recommended if you are confident in the technical ability of both you and your interviewee.

5.1.2 Zencastr

There are also pieces of software that will manage a double-ender call for you. [Zencastr](#) will record audio locally and provide it to you as uncompressed 44.1 kHz 16 bit wav files. It has an in-built post-production option but can only export the synched audio as a mono mp3 file. If you want a wav or stereo file you will need to export each track individually and sync them yourself in audio editing software [see Appendix B]. Zencastr can only be used for audio calls and can't be used for video conversations, however it can be used at the same time as a muted VoIP video call. For example you could run Zencastr at the same time as Zoom or Jitsi with the latter on mute and only used to enable the interviewer and interviewee to see each other. Zencastr offers a 14-day free trial but it will then cost $20 a month for unlimited recording.

→ [Oral History Society instructional video: **Zencastr**](#)

5.1.3 Squadcast

[Squadcast](#) can also record a double-ender call but unlike Zencastr it can export the call as a synced 48 kHz 16 bit wav file. This will be a mono track and if you want a stereo file you will still need to export each file separately and sync them yourself in audio editing software [see Appendix B]. Squadcast also has in-built video functionality which can be used to allow you to see your interviewee but only record the audio channel. You can also record and export video recordings as mp4. Squadcast has price options starting at a monthly fee of $20 to record five hours of audio per month, and rising to a monthly fee of $150 to record 25 hours per month. Prices are higher for recording video. All price options come with a 7-day free trial.

→ [Oral History Society instructional video: **Squadcast**](#)

5.2 Recording a VoIP or telephone call

As opposed to recording a double-ender, you may choose to record a VoIP or telephone call. While this will result in lossy audio (compressed by the VoIP or telephone service) there are likely to be advantages in terms of cost, ease of use, and video technology. Many VoIP services such as Zoom have in-built options for recording calls but we do not recommend using them as they tend to record poor quality files (see this [Oral History Society instructional video](#) for more information). Instead, here are some other options:

5.2.1 Audio Hijack

[Audio Hijack](#) can record in stereo and to wav. It can extract the audio directly from any VoIP service; thereby meaning you won't record any additional sound which might be playing from your computer. You should make sure you wear headphones or else you will hear an echo on the recording. Audio Hijack also has a volume overdrive tool and can be used for in-call peak monitoring. However, it can only be downloaded for Mac OS and not for Windows. Additionally, the free version of Audio Hijack will only allow you to record for 10 minutes; to record a longer oral history interview you would need to purchase a licence key for $71 (approx. £58).

5.2.2 Hindenburg Journalist Pro

Audio editing software such as [WaveLab](#) or [Audacity](#) will allow you to record directly into it, however most will only allow you to record one channel at a time. This presents difficulties in recording an interview as you cannot record both speakers at the same time. [Hindenburg Journalist Pro](#) has the option for multitrack recording and like Audio Hijack it can record directly from any VoIP service. Hindenburg will record in stereo and to wav, and has the benefit of recording directly into editing software. Hindenburg Journalist Pro costs £299, however there is a 30-day free trial and it can be rented for three months at a cost of £34.

5.2.3 Cleanfeed

[Cleanfeed](#) makes use of an in-built VoIP service. The audio will still be compressed through the Opus codec but some users have found it more reliable than more popular VoIP services. It can only conduct audio calls and can save them as 48kHz/16-bit wav files. Cleanfeed offers a discounted rate for "individuals, educational or charitable use" which costs £15 a month.

5.2.4 Connect phone or computer to an audio recorder

As opposed to downloading software for your computer it may be preferable to record directly into a digital audio recorder. This approach allows you to record directly from a phone-to-phone call as well as from VoIP software. You will be able to record to the format your audio recorder normally uses as well as monitor recording levels. To do this you will need an audio recorder with XLR inputs, we recommend the [Zoom H5](). To record the interviewee you will need to connect your phone or computer to one of the XLR inputs on your audio recorder using a 3.5mm stereo jack to XLR male cable, and a lightning adapter if using an iPhone, both of which will need to be purchased separately. In our experience it is important to try and source high quality cables and adapters, as low quality cables can significantly affect the quality of the call. To record the interviewer's voice you will need to connect an external microphone to the other XLR input. Any external XLR microphone – such as the one you'd normally use for face-to-face interviews – will work. The British Library Oral History department currently recommends the BOYA BY-M4OD.

You should then plug headphones into the audio recorder and use the phone or computer to make the call. The audio recorder will record a stereo file that can be recorded to wav, by picking up your voice from the external microphone and the interviewee's voice from the phone or computer connected to the other XLR input. You should listen through the headphones while the interview is in progress.

> → [Oral History Society instructional video: **Connecting phone to recorder**]()
> → [Oral History Society instructional video: **Connecting computer to recorder**]()

5.2.5 Olympus TP-8 telephone pickup microphone

Providing you have access to a digital recorder, the Olympus TP-8 microphone is a quick and affordable way to record a phone call. You simply need to insert the microphone in your digital recorder and then conduct a phone call as usual with the TP-8 ear bud in your ear. The TP-8 microphone will pick up both sides of the phone call and record directly into your digital recorder. However, the microphone on the TP-8 is not the best quality and this method precludes you using any other external mic. Furthermore, the TP-8 can only record a mono file

and as it often has trouble balancing the levels of the two speakers on the phone call this can make it difficult to adjust the volume levels at a later date.

→ Oral History Society instructional video: **Olympus TP-8 microphone**

5.3 Recording Video Calls

At the British Library we primarily focus on conducting audio only oral history projects and have less experience in archiving video interviews. For this reason we are less qualified to offer advice on this topic. Squadcast can be used to record video calls, OBS Studio is a popular and open source option, and others are using Camtasia for screen capture. If you plan to save your interviews as video files it is essential you discuss this with your archive partner.

Appendix A – Technological options for recording a remote interview in tabular form - for further information see Section 5

Recording method	Compatible with interviewing method:		Recording format:			Technical requirements: computer software		Technical requirements: equipment		Cost (at Apr 2020 not including charges for VoIP/phone call)
	VoIP	phone-to-phone	audio/ video	stereo	uncompressed wav	for interviewer	for interviewee	for interviewer	for interviewee	
5.1.1 Double-ender recording: participant managed	✓	✗	audio	✓	✓	- Audio editing/ stitching software	- Audio editing/ stitching software	- Headphones - External mic (desirable)	- Headphones - External mic (desirable)	- Cost of audio editing/ stitching software
5.1.2 Double-ender recording: Zencastr	✓ (audio only)	✗	audio	✓	✓	- Zencastr user account - Audio editing/ stitching software	None	- Headphones - External mic (desirable)	- Headphones - External mic (desirable)	- 14-day free trial - $20 monthly
5.1.3 Double-ender recording: Squadcast	✓	✗	audio/ video	✓	✓	- Squadcast user account	None	- Headphones - External mic (desirable) - Webcam (if recording video)	- Headphones - External mic (desirable) - Webcam (if recording video)	- 7-day free trial - $20 to $150 monthly for audio recording - $40 to $300 for video recording
5.2.1 Audio Hijack	✓	✗	audio	✓	✗ compressed wav	- Audio Hijack (Mac OS only) - VoIP user account/ software	- VoIP user account/ software*	- Headphones - External mic (desirable)	- Headphones (optional) - External mic (desirable)	- Full licence $71

Table continued overleaf

*unless interviewer contacts interviewee using Skype-to-phone call

Recording method	Compatible with interviewing method:		Recording format:			Technical requirements: computer software		Technical requirements: equipment		Cost (not including charges for VoIP/phone call)
	VoIP	phone-to-phone	audio/ video	stereo	uncompressed wav	for interviewer	for interviewee	for interviewer	for interviewee	
5.2.2 Hindenburg Journalist Pro	✓	✗	audio	✓	✗ compressed wav	- Hindenburg Journalist Pro - VoIP user account/ software	- VoIP user account/ software*	- Headphones - External mic (desirable)	- Headphones (optional) - External mic (desirable)	- 30-day free trial - £299 for full licence / £34 for 3 months
5.2.3 Cleanfeed	✓	✗	audio	✓	✗ compressed wav	- Cleanfeed	None	- Headphones - External mic (desirable)	- Headphones (optional) - External mic (desirable)	- Business rate $34 monthly - Discount rate $22 monthly
5.2.4 (a) Connect phone to audio recorder	✓	✓	audio	✓	✗ compressed wav	None	None	- Recorder (e.g. Zoom H5) - External mic - 3.5mm stereo jack to XLR male cable - Headphones	- Phone - Headphones (optional) - External mic (desirable)	Free (phone charges only)
5.2.4 (b) Connect laptop to audio recorder	✓	✗	audio	✓	✗ compressed wav	- VoIP user account/ software	- VoIP user account/ software*	- Recorder (e.g. Zoom H5) - External mic - 3.5mm stereo jack to XLR male cable - Headphones	- Computer - Headphones (optional) - External mic (desirable)	Free (VoIP charges only)
5.2.5 Olympus TP-8 telephone pickup microphone	✗	✓	audio	✗	✗ compressed wav	None	None	- Recorder (e.g. Zoom H5) - Olympus TP-8 mic - 3.5mm stereo jack to XLR male cable - Headphones	- Phone - Headphones (optional) - External mic (desirable)	Free (phone charges only)

*unless interviewer contacts interviewee using Skype-to-phone call

Appendix B – How to synch audio files in Audacity

This is a basic guide on how to synch two audio files in Audacity, free editing software. This will allow you to create a stereo file if your recording method can only export speakers as individual mono files (for example options 5.12 and 5.13). This can also be done in any other audio editing software. The demonstration below is from a Mac but the process is almost exactly the same on Windows.
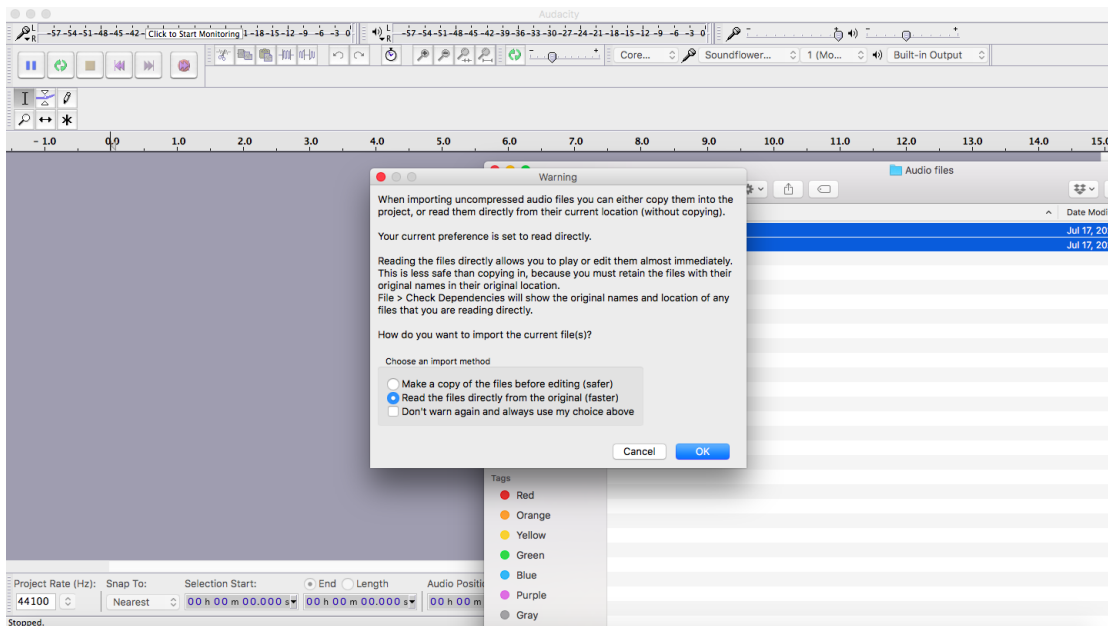
Step 1: Open a new blank session in Audacity, have the folder where your files are open at the same time.
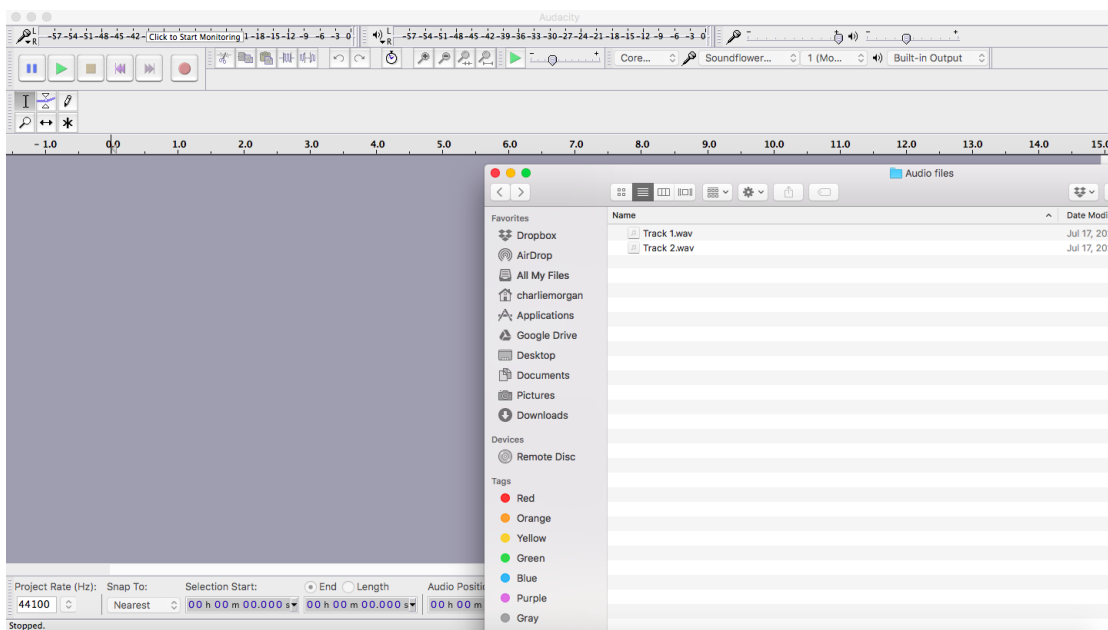
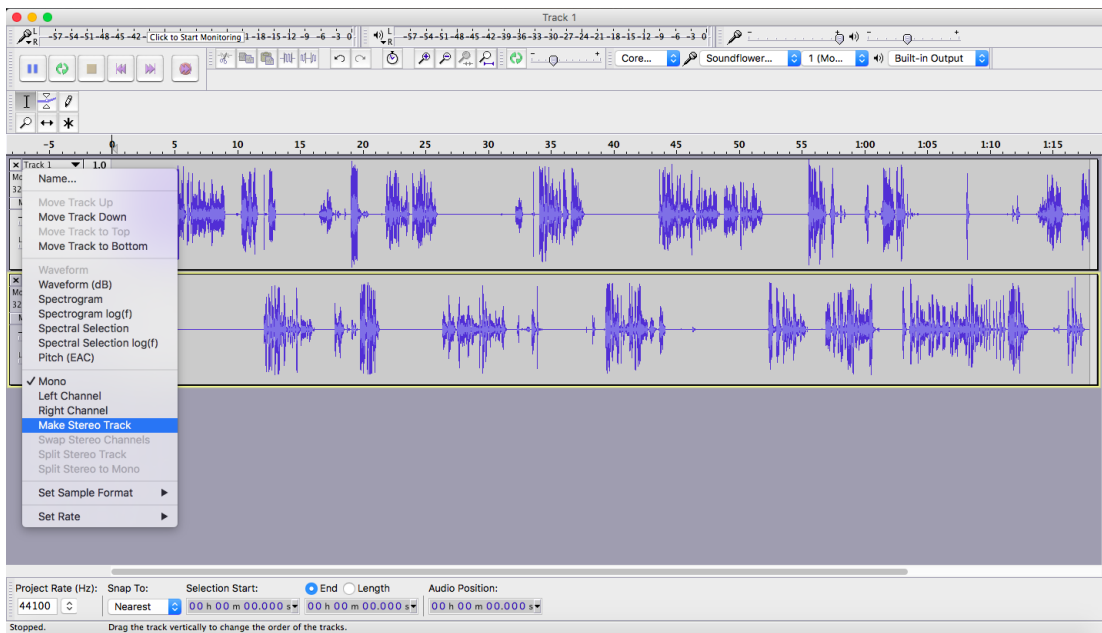Step 2: Drag the two files into the blank Audacity session.
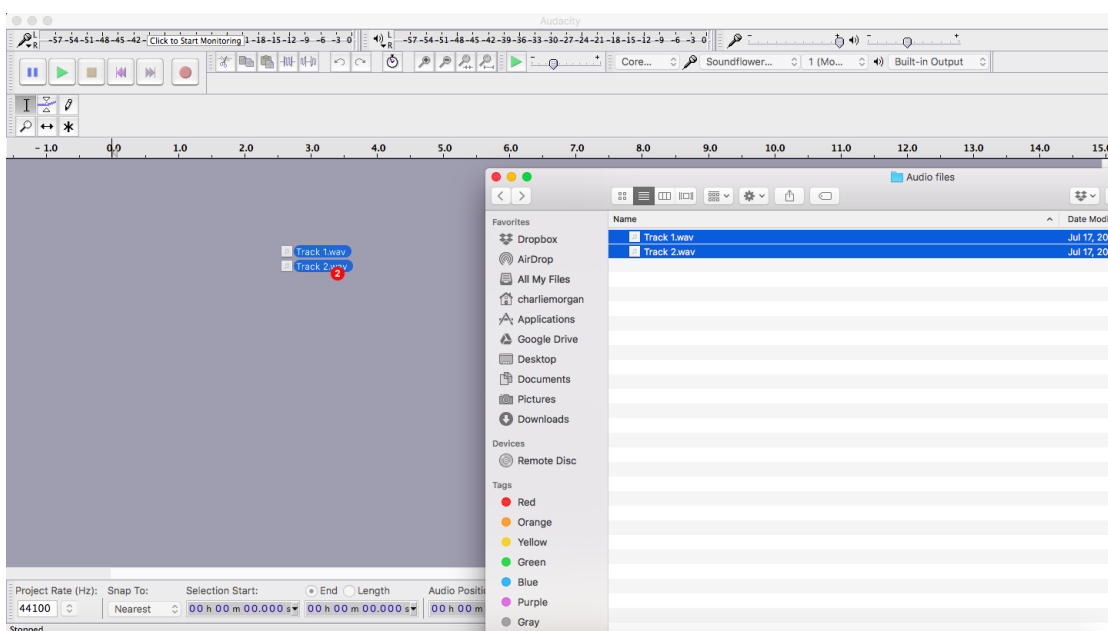
Step 3: Read the files directly (note: I suggest you make a copy of the files independently before this synching process)
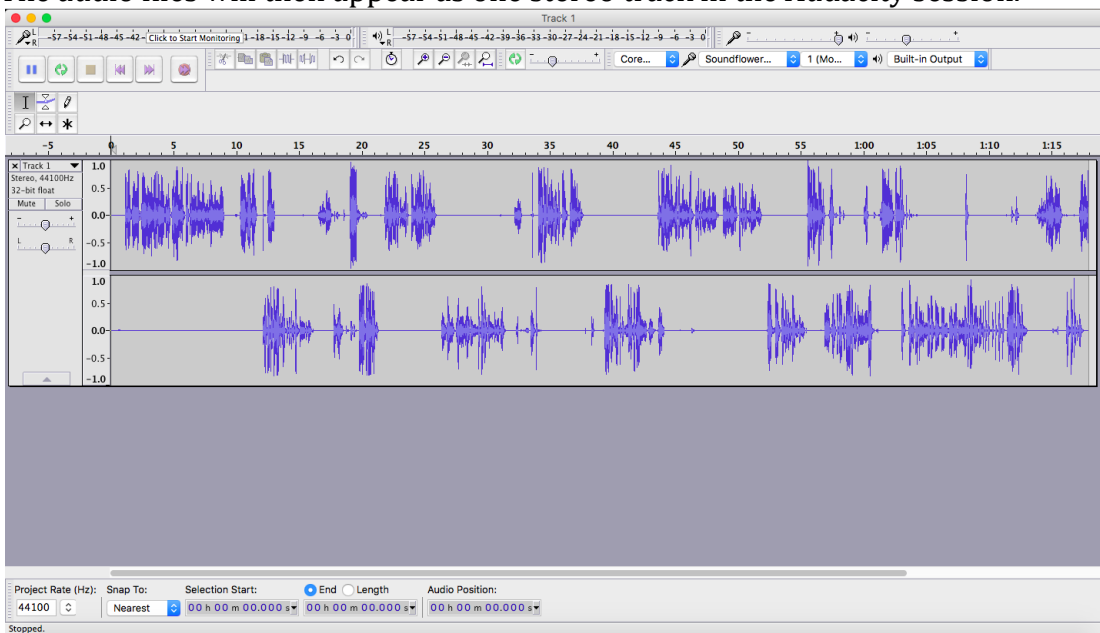

The audio files will then appear as two mono tracks in the Audacity session.
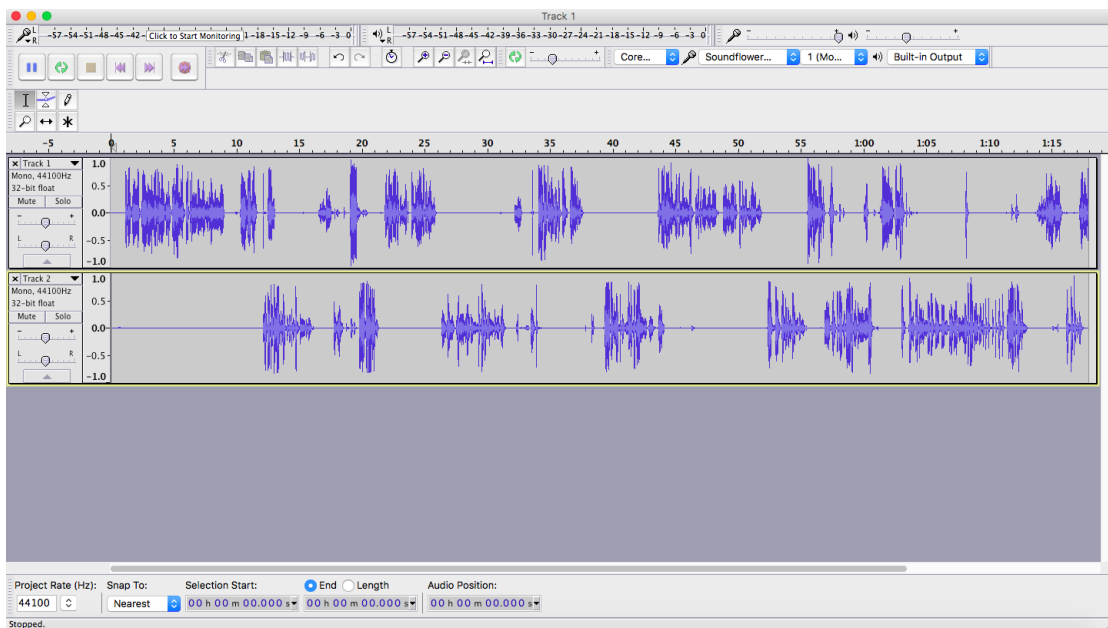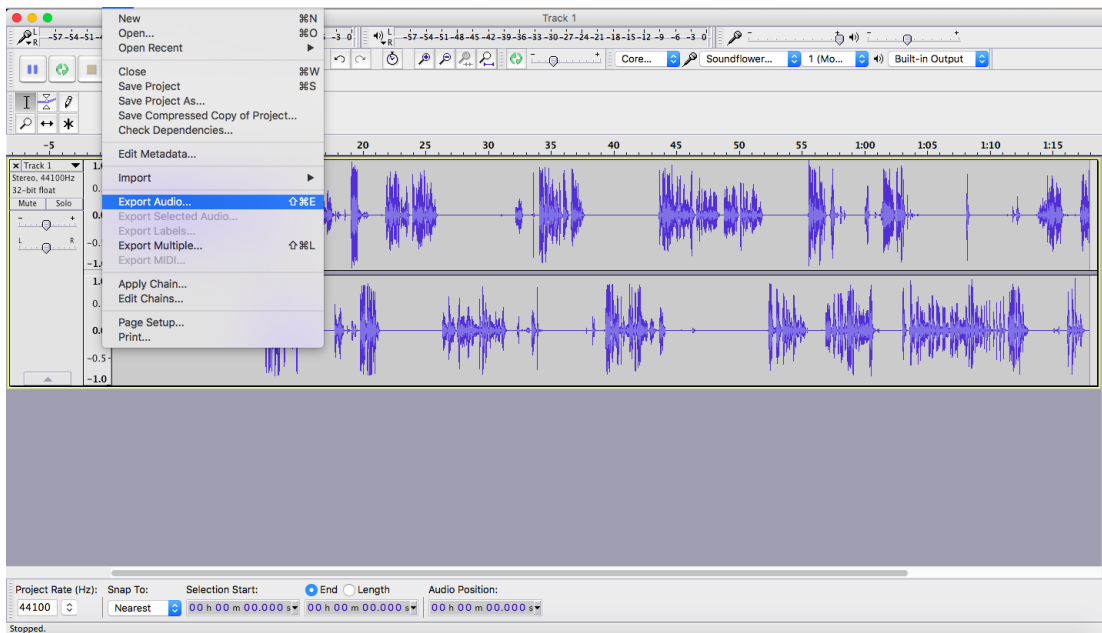
Step 4: Click the dropdown arrow next to first track and select the option 'Make Stereo Track'


The audio files will then appear as one stereo track in the Audacity session.

Step 5: In the file drop down menu at the top of Audacity select 'Export Audio' (note: in Windows this is where you will select the file type).

Step 6: Select the original folder location of the two files and save the stereo file there with a new name (note: on a Mac this is where you will select the file type).
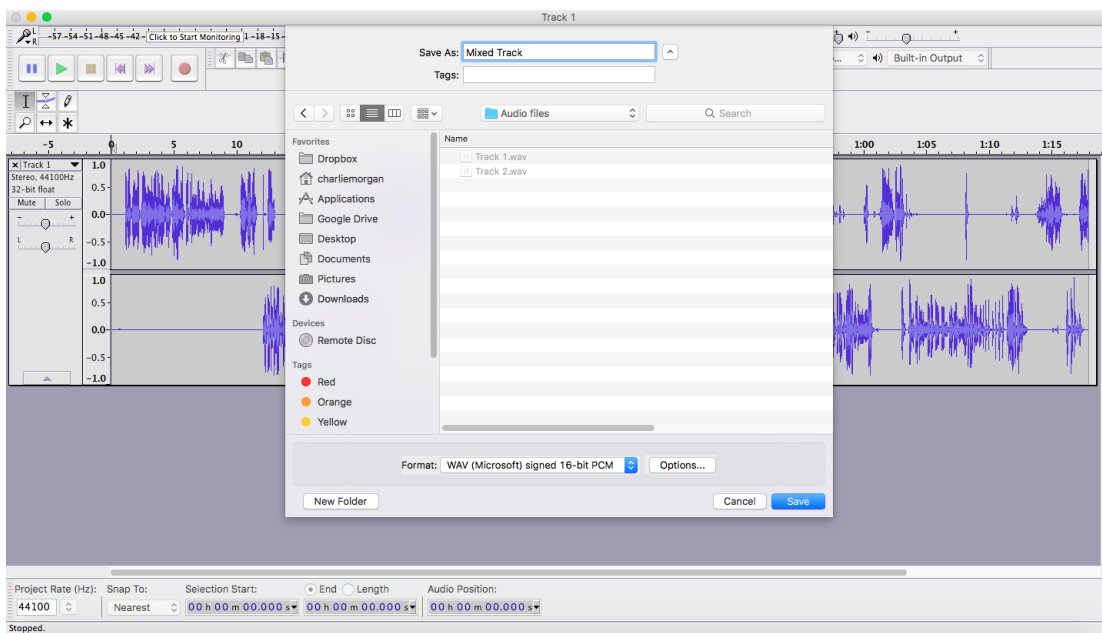
You will now have a synched stereo file of your two tracks.

Appendix C – Further reading and other resources

C.1 Online resources

Association of Internet Researchers Ethics Working Committee, 'Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research (Version 2.0)', http://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf

Archives & Records Association, 'Emotional Support Guides', https://www.archives.org.uk/what-we-do/emotional-support-guides.html

Center for Oral History Research at Columbia University, 'Resources for Covid-19 Interviewing', https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JhVCj1Vvc1hHsioMpna_0DITmY7Ad4Kv6ZrUojapVgI

COVID Trauma Response Working Group, https://www.traumagroup.org/

H-OralHist discussion thread, 'Conducting oral history interviews remotely', https://networks.h-net.org/node/16738/discussions/6031284/conducting-oral-history-interviews-remotely

London Transport Museum, 'Contemporary Collecting: an ethical toolkit for museum practitioners', https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/collections/projects-partnerships/documentary-curators

Museums Association, 'Covid-19: the ethics on contemporary collecting', https://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/03042020-code-of-ethics-covid-19-contemporary-collecting-statement

Oral History Association-Archives Interest Group [US] collaborative document, 'Resources, examples, group experience to draw on to prepare Guidelines for Remote Oral History Interviewing', https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PSTjlzQuqcADjFs6QWm7VZaNNtIjVJwg1AsN1EsrIyU

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