

Search for Host Institution and/or Executive Director Invitation to Submit a Letter of Interest

The Oral History Association (OHA), the principal organization of practicing oral historians in the United States, is seeking a host institution and/or executive director beginning January 1, 2023 for a five (5) year commitment.

OHA will entertain a range of organizational options when it considers institutional hosts and executive leadership. Historical societies, museums, archives, independent administrators, colleges and universities are encouraged to submit proposals. Leadership might include an independently contracted executive director, or it might mean two people are co-directors.

OHA seeks an Executive Director with professional and scholarly experience with oral history, and demonstrated leadership, management, strategic planning, communication, and fundraising abilities. If applicable, the Executive Director works collaboratively with the host institution to foster a mutually beneficial relationship that includes new opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students, enhanced cross-disciplinary collaboration, and dynamic community engagement. The new Executive Director and/or host institution will inherit a financially sound organization whose membership is committed to oral history as a rigorous practice that embraces democratic values.

Among their many responsibilities, the host institution and/or Executive Director are responsible for providing logistical and operational support to the OHA executive office in carrying out its duties, including any necessary human resources management, office space and equipment, and communications infrastructure (telephone, internet, etc.). Additionally, the Executive Director works with the Finance Committee to prepare annual budgets for approval by Council.

Institutions interested in hosting the OHA's offices or individuals interested in serving as independently contracted Executive Director are invited to send an initial expression of interest to the OHA by October 15, 2021 (See details below.) Viable candidates will be invited to submit a full proposal, due no later than February 18, 2022. A final decision is expected by April 2022, with a transition from the current host institution to the new offices anticipated to begin in June 2022.

Background

For more than sixty years, the Oral History Association has enjoyed a national and international reputation as a leader in the field of oral history. Its members include more than 900 individuals from a variety of disciplines and professional fields; and more than 180 institutions, including university programs and centers, libraries and archives, museums, historical societies, and community-based programs. The association hosts an annual meeting in the fall with an average attendance of 500. It publishes the electronic OHA *Newsletter* five times a year and sponsors the *Oral History Review (OHR)*, the principal journal in the oral history field in the United States. Published by Routledge, the *OHR* editorial offices are currently located in and supported by the

Science History Institute in Philadelphia. The OHA is governed by a nine-member Council. It is a member of the American Council of Learned Societies.

The association is guided by its mission to “connect and inspire practitioners and support their work to ethically collect, preserve, share, and interpret memories which foster knowledge and respect.” The OHA and its members have been central to the evolution of public and digital humanities during the past several decades and to fostering an appreciation for public humanities work in diverse formats and media. As a field, oral history lies at the intersection of numerous academic disciplines and professional practices: history and public history; folklore, sociology, anthropology and other fieldwork-based disciplines; archival management and library sciences; communication/s, film, journalism, linguistics and performance studies; narrative and memory studies; trauma studies; and gerontology. Oral history has become increasingly international in scope, as recent decades have seen the formation of professional organizations throughout the world and the maturation of the International Oral History Association. To see the current organizational Strategic Plan and for more information about the OHA, visit www.oralhistory.org.

Since 2018 the OHA executive offices have been hosted by Middle Tennessee State University and its operations overseen by two co-directors and supported by a program assistant. Under new leadership, the OHA seeks to expand its membership, further strengthen its national office, and advance new initiatives in the field.

Letter of Interest

Initial expressions of interest, due October 15, 2021, should include a preliminary explanation of factors that would make you an appropriate executive director or your institution an appropriate home, such as your vision for the organization and the field, how the OHA's presence would benefit your institution, as well as a description of available resources, facilities, personnel, programs, and relationships. If applicable, letters of Interest should indicate support from appropriate institutional administrators. Final proposals will require formal letters of support from these administrators.

While the OHA is open to considering a variety of arrangements, either institutionally based or independently supported, it does expect a significant commitment of resources to the executive office and staff. To help guide prospective applicants, we include here a more detailed [Fact Sheet](#) describing the OHA's needs and expectations.

The Search Committee is committed to working with prospective applicants as they prepare Letters of Interest. Please feel free to contact Search Committee Chair Lu Ann Jones (luann_jones@nps.gov) and committee members Kelly E. Navies (naviesk@si.edu) and Zaheer Ali (mail@zaheerali.com) to indicate your intent to pursue this opportunity and to address any questions you may have. Potential Executive Directors and/or representatives of institutions and organizations submitting a Letter of Interest should plan to meet with the Search Committee in late October, about the time of its virtual annual meeting.

The Letter of Interest should be sent as an attachment to Search Committee Chair Lu Ann Jones with "Letter of Interest" in the Subject line.