**Oral Histories: Unlocking Our Community’s Voice**  
SEAALL | 2018

**Synopsis in SEAALL Program:**

What is the role of oral histories in a law library setting? Why should you collect oral histories? What are the best practices for conducting an oral history? How much are the start-up costs? What software makes sense for this project? This program will focus on the basics of an oral history project. My discussion will center on a small collection of alumni oral histories completed at the University of Kentucky. I want to encourage librarians to capture their community’s history in audio files. Getting people to talk is step one. The real work comes once you have the oral history recorded. Making the data available to researchers in a responsible manner is the journey.

**Presenter:**

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[https://uknowledge.uky.edu/law_oralhist/](https://uknowledge.uky.edu/law_oralhist/)

**Portions of Transcripts:**

**Julius Rather (Class of 1960)**  
0:48:05 – 0:50:10  

But I was so happy to graduate. And back then, you took the exam in the old House of the Representatives, three days of essay questions. They didn’t have air conditioning. It was done in July. Hot. People would tie handkerchiefs around their head to keep the sweat from messing up your papers and everything. And announcements were reserved... Results were announced in September, but they always came out in a Courier-Journal. And I was living in Bowling Green, the truck from Louisville brought the papers to Bowling Green, but it arrived at four o’clock. Well, I was down there waiting for the truck, and for three or four days. My hand was shaking so hard when I raised up the paper and I saw my name. I went home, woke up my mother, and both of us cried. Maybe my emotions get too much for me, but I stayed in school when probably I shouldn’t have. No money... But I was determined that someday my picture would go up on the plaque that said “Class of 1960”.

Then they had a student come there at UK, black. And that was a black mark on the university in my book, or the law school, whoever's idea it was, was wrong. They would not let that young man go to law school with me. His first quarter, they made him go to law school as a student sitting in the room, singled by himself in Frankfort. His classroom was the house chamber or the law library for the Court of Appeals down there in Capital Building, and they sent professors down there to teach him. Here he is as a man, I’m not sure... I don’t think he was a veteran, I don’t know that, but he’s singled out for his color and treated differently in a way that he had to recognize that they were doing that to him.

**Outline of this Presentation:**

Why should a library collect oral histories?

What are good resources for starting this project?

Who should you interview? How do you convince them to agree to an interview? Benefits and risks?

What type of paperwork do you need to complete with an interviewee?

What equipment do you need?

What are some best practices during the interview?

How do you create a transcription of your audio file?

What is the best platform for hosting the finished product? What metadata is useful?