Oral History as High Impact Educational Practice

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To view the project visit: Beyondsuffrage.org

Project:
Beyond Suffrage Student Interns

Special Collections decided to explore the impact women have had on the local community from 1840 to current. Part of the project included conducting oral histories with women who are currently active in the community in a variety of capacities. The department wanted to give students the opportunity to learn how to conduct oral histories and to use them in further research. We hired three students that showed interest in working on the project. We provided them training in the best practices and offered support in crafting questions.

Oral histories are a useful pedagogical tool. They help students move beyond a theoretical concept to a personal experience. Evidence has shown that when this happens, learning in improved.

By interviewing women of various generations and backgrounds, the students were able to connect to historical themes and bring the interviewee's experiences into their own education and lives.

Oral history exposed the students to historical inquiry through the process of collecting the stories. They also conducted background research into the period of history of the interviewee's lives.

Student Experience

The students were able to help conduct 75 oral history interviews from May-November 2019. They also helped to edit the transcripts and compiled biographical data that was used in the exhibit "Beyond Suffrage: A Century of Northern Utah Women Making History."

The students were asked to reflect on the experience.

“This has been one of the most rewarding projects I have had the pleasure to be a part of. Throughout my academic career I have been shown over and over the need for women’s life stories to be documented and the need to bridge gaps in history. This project gave me an opportunity to give women in my community a platform in which to have their voices heard. I was completely amazed by the contributions that women have made.”

~Sarah Tooker

“These skills will transfer to my continuing research as I apply to grad school. Learning how to connect and extract valuable information from others is a great skill and I have been able to use this skill as an adjunct teacher. Being able to connect with people, especially students is the first step in making a big impact.”

~Sarah Storey

Lessons Learned

- Offer additional training in conducting oral histories
- Better communication.
- Streamline the paperwork needed for the oral histories.

“Overall, this was a great experience and I am truly thankful that I had the opportunity to be a part of this project.”

~Sarah Storey