



ANTIOCHIAN ARCHDIOCESE ORAL HISTORY INITIATIVE

Proposal/Strategic Plan



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ST. STEPHEN'S PROGRAM GUIDED MINISTRY PROJECT
Spring 2018 Unit IV

Antiochian Archdiocese Oral History Initiative

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Purpose of This Strategic Plan: To create an outline for a possible oral history initiative for the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese for implementation at a parish, diocese, or archdiocesan level.

Vision: To preserve the histories of important Antiochian Orthodox parishes, individual Orthodox Christians (both lay and clergy) who have contributed to parishes, dioceses, and the Archdiocese, as well as the memory of important events in the history of parishes, dioceses, and the Archdiocese, especially from neglected perspectives (i.e. parish perspectives of given time periods or events, etc.)

Introduction: Preserving the past is something that many people intend to do, until it is too late. How many times have you heard someone say, "I always meant to ask my grandparents about their lives, but they passed away before I did. I wish I had." At the time of writing (2018), the Antiochian Orthodox presence in North America is approximately 120 years old, tracing back to the turn of the 20th century. Its age has exceeded the maximum lifespan of a single life. Unfortunately by 2018, living memory of the earliest time period has perished. However, second-hand memories of the early 20th century and living memories of the 1930s and onward still survive. The time to preserve them is now. The purpose of this project is to outline a possible initiative to preserve the earliest extant living memories of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America *while there is still time.*

How often in our older parishes do we have memorial plaques dating back half a century or more, or dusty photos stored in a box in a back closet? How often do we pay attention to those names and faces? How much do we know about those people? Who were they? What were their hopes, dreams, struggles, victories, and defeats? What was their life in the parish like? I am willing to wager that many of those now-impersonal people may have spent their entire lives in a particular parish. These plaques serve as pseudo-ossuaries in our parishes, reminding us “What we once were, you are now. What we are now, you will be.” At the same time, we believe them to be alive in Christ, and through the love of Christ we meet them at the chalice at every Divine Liturgy. We are called to pray for our beloved departed, but for so many parishioners- especially non-Arabic converts in large Antiochian parishes- do the names of the distantly departed mean anything? Who were these people? *Who* were they?

Who were they? This oral history project proposes an effort to preserve memories of our past- both corporate and individual, lay and clerical- in an attempt to remember the struggles and joys of the past, honor their efforts and sacrifices, and to preserve the personhood of those who have gone before us, without whom we would not have the good things we enjoy today.

As proof-of-concept, two different types of completed oral histories accompany this proposal. The first is a completed formal oral history interview of Mr. Eugene Khorey. Eugene is the grandson of Fr. Meletios Koury, first priest at St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church in Homestead, PA, and later pastor emeritus at St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church (now Cathedral) in Pittsburgh, PA. The second is a short video of Ms. Sophie Farah telling the story of how much effort her family would expend every Sunday traveling to the old St. George Church in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, PA.

Scale: This initiative could be implemented on an individual, parish, diocesan, or archdiocesan level according to need, interest, commitment, and funding. Oral histories can be preserved both locally (at a parish/diocesan level) and centrally at the Antiochian Village (AV) Heritage Museum or Library and even city/regional history centers. As of June 2018, the Archdiocesan website listed approximately 280 parishes, which illustrates that there would be ample material for a regional or national initiative.

Number of Parishes:

- Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic - 30
- Eagle River and the Northwest - 26
- Los Angeles and the West - 34
- Miami and the Southeast - 40
- New York and Washington, D.C. - 15
- Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York - 18
- Toledo and the Midwest - 51
- Unaffiliated - 6
- Wichita and Mid-America - 50
- Worcester and New England - 11
 - Total = 281 parishes

Constituents:

Primary:

- Antiochian Village Heritage Museum & Library
- Julia Ritter/Katie Strevig at Antiochian Village Museum & Library
- Subdeacon Michael Janakis, MLIS
- Metropolitan Joseph
- Auxiliary Bishops
- Interested parties at individual, parish, diocesan, and archdiocesan levels

Secondary:

- Eleana Silk, Librarian at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary:
<https://www.svots.edu/content/eleana-sonnie-silk> - Eleana has spoken much about oral histories throughout her career in the Orthodox Church in America (OCA).
- Matthew Namee and the Society for Orthodox Christian History in the Americas (SOCHA): <https://orthodoxhistory.org/>
- Order of St. Ignatius (helps fund Antiochian Village Library)

- The Antiochian Heritage Foundation: <http://ww1.antiochian.org/heritage>

Targeted Populations:

- Clergy
- Lay leaders
- Clergy Emeriti
- Community elders
- Children/descendants of former clergy, lay leaders
- *Particularly pious or holy people

*Could potentially be problematic. How does one define this? The goal of this project would be to record *histories*, not *hagiographies*.

Funding Needs: Oral history interviews can be a relatively cost-effective method of preserving history/institutional memory, especially when collected by volunteers. Required equipment is minimal: an adequate audio recorder, a word processor, and a video camera. With current technology, most people have adequate audio recorders and video cameras on their mobile phones. The biggest commitment is time, in regards to preparation and especially transcription of the audio recordings. It is my belief that most parishes will have interested parties willing to devote the time to complete these tasks (generally 7-8 hours of transcription per 1 hour of audio recording). Also, with the now-ubiquitous nature of video-sharing sites such as YouTube, it can be safely assumed that most parishes would have young people able and possibly willing to help edit/upload video files of the completed oral histories. Despite the time commitment, it is my belief that for interested parties, the deep feelings of personal connection and fulfillment mitigate the amount of work involved.

As such, the likely potential costs associated with funding a project such as this on a diocesan or archdiocesan level would be 1) advertisement/promotion, 2) processing of the submitted oral histories, and 3) preservation and hosting of the completed oral histories.

Promotion: Initial promotion would involve a “Getting Started” workshop, either at Parish Life Conferences, the Archdiocese Convention, or asynchronously by video, as well as creating an online “toolkit” with resources, some of which are included in this guide (see “Appendix-Resources”). A “Getting Started” workshop would succinctly explain the goals of the Oral History Initiative, explain how to evaluate and choose suitable subjects for oral history interviews, as well as how to prepare and complete said interviews. As the oral histories would be “crowd sourced” by the individual constituents/participating entities, the onus would be on them to complete and submit the oral history interviews to the central repository for preservation/access. To ensure acceptable quality of the completed oral history interviews, standards/best practices would need to be clearly communicated during the “Getting Started” workshop.

Goals: An example time-flow could look like this:

1. Determine administrative/background needs
 - a. Determine scope and goals of initiative (whether individual, parish, diocesan, or archdiocesan)
 - b. Determine hosting site (central or diffused), hosting infrastructure (online, analog, or combination), and policies/procedures
 - c. Elaborate on strategic goals
 - d. Secure grants/funding if needed
 - e. Determine procedures for interested parties to participate/submit completed oral histories
2. Promote oral history initiative
 - a. Advertise start of initiative
 - b. Explain where and how interested people can get involved
3. Train interested people
 - a. Provide training and toolkit
4. Secure, preserve, and host completed interviews

Appendix - Resources:

Oral History How-To Guides:

Hunt, Marjorie. 2016. *The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide*.

Washington, DC: Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. Accessed June 18, 2018: <https://folklife.si.edu/the-smithsonian-folklife-and-oral-history-interviewing-guide/smithsonian>

Practicing Oral History Series. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.

Ritchie, Donald. 2003. *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Silk, Eleana. 1990. "Oral History for Parish Use." In *Orthodox Church in America Resource Handbook for Lay Ministries II*, no. 1. Accessed June 18, 2018. <https://oca.org/parish-ministry/parishdevelopment/oral-history-for-parish-use>.

Preservation/Curation:

MacKay, Nancy. 2016. *Curating Oral Histories: From Interview to Archive*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.

Smallwood, Carol, and Elaine Williams., eds. 2012. *Preserving Local Writers, Genealogy, Photographs, Newspapers, and Related Materials*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Phillips, Faye. 2017. *Creating a Local History Archive at Your Public Library*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Associations/Institutes/Libraries/Archives:

Oral History Association. <http://www.oralhistory.org/>

St. Herman Theological Seminary, Alaska – Archives:
<https://sthermanseminary.org/archives1.html#>

The Archbishop Iakovos Library & Learning Resource Center – Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology: <http://www.hchc.edu/library/>

Father Georges Florovsky Library & Archives – St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary:
<https://library.svots.edu/>

Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary – Library & Archives: <https://www.hts.edu/library.html>

Antiochian Heritage Museum - Antiochian Village: <https://www.antiochianvillage.org/museum-and-library/museum/>

Antiochian Heritage Library – Antiochian Village: <https://www.antiochianvillage.org/museum-and-library/library/>

Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Saints Cyril and Methodius – Library (Special Collections contain over 800 parish histories, including Orthodox parishes):
<http://www.bcs.edu/library/#1469037791085-5028694e-a991>

Saint Sophia Ukrainian Orthodox Theological Seminary Library:
<https://uocofusa.org/library.html>

Society for Orthodox Christian History in the Americas (SOCHA): <https://orthodoxhistory.org/>

Example Collections:

Centers and Collections Listed by the Oral History Association:
<http://www.oralhistory.org/centers-and-collections/>

The Maurice Levy Oral History of Music in Pittsburgh Collection. Available at:
<https://www.carnegielibrary.org/music-special-collections/maurice-levy/>

Historic Lawrenceville. Available at: <https://www.carnegielibrary.org/about/historic-lawrenceville/>

Italian American Oral History. Available at the Senator John Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: <http://www.heinzhistorycenter.org/collections/italian-american-program/oral-history>

Pittsburgh and Beyond: The Experience of the Jewish Community. Available at:
<http://exhibit.library.pitt.edu/ncjw/>

*Preserving & Resurrecting Orthodox Christian Voices through Digital Technology**. St.

Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary (SVOTS): <https://digi.svots.edu/index.php>

*These are not oral histories, but is a similar type of preservation project.

Grants:

- *National Endowment for the Humanities*: <https://www.neh.gov/>
- *Oral History Association Grants & Awards*: <http://www.oralhistory.org/award/>
- *Virginia H. Farah Foundation*: <http://www.farahfoundation.org/>
 - Recently involved in project at SVOTS to convert audio recordings to digital formats and make available online. See <https://www.svots.edu/headlines/svots-resurrects-renowned-orthodox-voices-through-digitized-recordings>

Blogs/Podcasts about Oral History:

List of blogs and podcasts compiled by the Oral History Association:

<http://www.oralhistory.org/blogs-and-podcasts/>

American Orthodox History (Podcast on Ancient Faith Radio, no longer in production):

<http://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/history>

Maddex, Bobby. 2011. "The Society for Orthodox Christian History in the Americas." Audio blog. Ancient Faith Radio. September 9.

http://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/features/the_society_for_orthodox_christian_history_in_the_americas.

Hosting/Curation Options:

History Pin. Available at: <https://www.historypin.org/en/>

CONTENTdm by OCLC. Available at: <https://www.oclc.org/en/contentdm.html>

Selected Books/Articles Related to Antiochian Orthodox History in America:

Allen, Joseph. ed. 2001. *And He Leads Them: The Mind and Heart of Philip Saliba*. Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press.

- Allen, Joseph, and Joseph Antypas, eds. 2006. *Ordained for Men in the Things of God: A Commemorative Collection on the 40th Anniversary of Metropolitan PHILIP*. Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press.
- Allen, Joseph, and Michel Najim, eds. 2006. *Antioch: Incarnational Theology & Ministry*. Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of New York and All North America.
- Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, and Riad Najeeb al-Rayess. 1999. *The History of Our Church, from Antioch to San Francisco*. Englewood, NJ: Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese.
- Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. 2000. *Our Father among the Saints, Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn: Good Shepherd of the Lost Sheep in America: November 8, 1860-February 27, 1915*. Englewood, N.J.: Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.
- Antiochian.org. n.d. "Orthodox Historical Society Brings the Past to Life". Accessed June 18, 2018. <http://ww1.antiochian.org/node/22325>
- Bender, Eleanore. 1945. "The Eastern Church as Found in Allegheny County" Master's thesis, University of Pittsburgh.
- Corey, George S. 1995. *The First One Hundred Years: A Centennial Anthology Celebrating Antiochian Orthodoxy in North America, with a Foreword by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Philip*. Englewood, N.J.: Antakya Press.
- Gabriel, Antony. 2012. *The Ancient Church on New Shores: Antioch in North America*. Englewood, N.J.: Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese.
- Gillquist, Peter. 1991. *Metropolitan Philip: His Life and His Dreams*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Haiek, Joseph, ed. 1975. *The American-Arabic Speaking Community Almanac 1975*. Los Angeles: The News Circle.
- Kayal, Philip, and Joseph Kayal. 1975. *The Syrian-Lebanese in America: A Study in Religion and Assimilation*. Boston: Twayne Publishers.

- Nasr, Constantine. 2012. *Antony Bashir: Metropolitan & Missionary*. Yonkers, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.
- Saliba, Najib. 1992. *Emigration from Syria and the Syrian-Lebanese Community of Worcester, MA*. Ligonier, PA: Antakya Press.
- University of Pittsburgh. 1941. *The Syria-Lebanon Room in the Cathedral of Learning, University of Pittsburgh*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh. Accessed June 21, 2018: <http://documenting.pitt.edu/islandora/object/pitt%3A31735051653941/viewer>
- Wakin, Edward. 1974. *The Lebanese and Syrians in America*. Chicago: Claretian Publications.
- Wilson, Robert, and Frank Zabrosky. 1979. *Resources on the Ethnic and the Immigrant in the Pittsburgh Area*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh.