

Erin Dickey. “Her Own Version of History”: A Case Study of the Guerrilla Girls Oral Histories at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. A Master's paper for the M.S. in IS degree. April, 2017. 63 pages. Advisor: Ryan Shaw

Broaching issues related to archives' ethical obligations to participants, transcripts as derivative documents, and web publication of archival materials, this case study explores the development of web access policies in oral history archives by examining the complications that emerged during the Archives of American Arts' (AAA) transcript review and web publication of a set of oral history interviews conducted in 2007-2008 with the Guerrilla Girls.

Using program documentation and interview and questionnaire data from current and former Archives staff members as well as from a user of the Guerrilla Girls material, this study compares the AAA's standard processes for oral history collection to the process of collecting the Guerrilla Girls interviews. Study participants discussed lessons learned from decisions made regarding web access to those interviews. Findings from this study bear a potentially transferrable relationship to policy review for oral history collections, archives' donor/patron relations, and web access to oral histories.

Headings:

Archives – Access control

Archives – Internet resources

Art Archives

Oral history

Transliteration

“HER OWN VERSION OF HISTORY”: A CASE STUDY OF THE GUERRILLA
GIRLS ORAL HISTORIES AT THE ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART,
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

by

Erin Dickey

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INTRODUCTION

Topic area

Oral histories recorded and preserved by collecting institutions straddle the line between textual (because transcribable) and aural primary source documents. They represent singular moments in time yet they persist. Their representation of individual, subjective, and contingent points of view undermines the purported objectivity of written historical narratives and evidential primacy of textual documents. Their seeming spontaneity gestures towards the constructed nature of history itself. For these reasons and others, oral histories can be challenging documents to collect and make accessible in a prudent and ethical manner. Accessing these documents online adds yet another level of immediacy and choice for users, of vulnerability for oral history narrators, and of concern and liability for archives and oral history programs.

This case study explores the recent development of web access policies in oral history archives by examining the complications that emerged during the Archives of American Arts' transcript review and web publication processes for a set of seven oral history interviews with the Guerrilla Girls, a feminist art collective. The interviews were recorded in 2007 and 2008 as part of a collection project conducted by the Archives' Oral History Program. At the nexus of archival access policy, repositories' ethical obligations to their donors and researchers, and issues involving the use of transcripts as the primary access format for oral histories, this case demonstrates a particular instance of

institutional archives' complex mediation between artists represented in collections and researchers using those collections to generate historical narratives. Issues associated with recordings that involve pseudonymous participants, archives' ethical obligations to participants regarding restricted access to recordings, transcripts as derivative rather than primary oral history documents, and web publication of and access to recordings and/or derivative documents can be complicated for archivists to negotiate, especially when oral history subjects are still living.

The Oral History Program (OHP) of the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (AAA) officially began with funding from the Ford Foundation in 1958, four years after the AAA's founding in Detroit and a decade after the 1948 founding of the influential Columbia Center for Oral History. The over 2300 recordings of in-depth artist autobiographies and art world documentary now archived at the AAA comprise the largest collection of its kind in the world, providing a trove of primary source material for researchers, students, and the general public (Kirwin, 2013, p. 85-86). Depending on project funding from grants or collecting initiatives, the AAA typically records 40-50 new interviews per year with noted artists, gallerists, collectors, and scholars (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017). The process for oral history collection contains multiple steps, and entails the assumption that transcripts will be the main mode of access for users.

At the AAA, the collecting or curatorial staff typically contacts artists for interviews, which are then conducted by contracted interviewers. Determinations about which interviews to collect in a given year are typically made in accordance available funding, often with guidance from advisors attached to specific grant-funded projects. At

the time of the interview, the interviewer collects a signed Consent & Gift form for the interview, along with descriptive information about interview participants for the interview's catalogue record. Interview questions typically begin with the artist's background, methods, interests, and influences (Kirwin, 2013, p. 86). After the interview, the interviewer sends the digital audio files and associated documents to the AAA. Once contracted vendors transcribe the interview verbatim, the AAA conducts a transcript review. During this review, an AAA staff member or volunteer audits the transcript by checking it against the full audio of the interview in order to correct errors and ensure stylistic consistency. The AAA sends the audited interview with tracked corrections to both the interviewer and narrator, soliciting clarifications and emendations while discouraging wholesale revisions that would cause the transcript to differ markedly from the audio. The AAA implements corrections received from interview participants, then sends a final version of the transcript to the narrator, completes the corresponding catalogue record, and publishes the transcript on the AAA website. The AAA archives physical and digital copies of the transcript with handwritten narrator/interviewer edits and the final transcript, along with associated correspondence.

This case study focuses on specific details within the above process as it was implemented in relation to a set of interviews with the Guerrilla Girls. The Guerrilla Girls formed in 1985 as an anonymous group of women artists in order to promote equality in the art world through protest art highlighting the lack of gender parity in art institutions. Their early actions of postering major New York art districts with designs citing statistics on the representation of women artists in galleries and museums gained significant attention in the art press. Membership in the group has been fluid over the decades, with

some members remaining constant while others stay for only a short time. Since the group's formation, anonymity has been a crucial aspect of the group's public presentation. Each Guerrilla Girl adopted the name of an influential woman artist as a pseudonym—this left them free to pursue their individual careers under their own names. In public, as a play on the word “guerrilla,” the Girls wear gorilla masks to conceal their identities.

In 1999, the group, led by two members, “Frida Kahlo” and “Käthe Kollwitz,” incorporated as Guerrilla Girls, Inc. In the 2000s, internal disagreements led some members of the group to splinter and form two other groups, Guerrilla Girls On Tour, which addresses discrimination in the theatre, and Guerrilla Girls Broadband, which focuses on new media art. In 2003, “Frida Kahlo” and “Käthe Kollwitz” filed a lawsuit against the two splinter groups for copyright and trademark infringement. Each side saw the other's position as an attempt to claim individual ownership of collectively produced material. In filing the suit, the plaintiffs made their real names public record. However, despite technically outing themselves, these members along with some of the other Guerrilla Girls choose to maintain their anonymity via pseudonyms where possible.¹ In 2007 and 2008, the AAA recorded seven interviews with fourteen current and former members of Guerrilla Girls, including one with “Kahlo” and “Kollwitz.”

Because the collective's membership prefers to remain anonymous, the interviews were recorded and catalogued using their pseudonyms. During its transcript review process, the AAA sent the audited interview transcripts to the addresses provided by the narrators, the only contact information the AAA had at the time. After years passed with no reply from “Kahlo” and “Kollwitz,” the AAA finalized the catalogue records for these

interviews and made them publicly accessible online. An art historian, Anna C. Chave, first requested and then used the newly available online transcripts as sources in an article in the *Art Journal*. After the article's publication, "Kollwitz" and "Kahlo" asked the AAA's permission to make clarifications and corrections to the online transcript of their interview. The AAA allowed those clarifications, taking the old, audited version of the transcript off the website and putting the new, reviewed one up, a decision Chave later criticized as "anti-archival" in a letter to the editor of the *Art Journal*. Via letters to the editor, "Kollwitz" and "Kahlo" voiced their objections to material about them and about the origins of the group shared by other Guerrilla Girls in the AAA interviews. In response to notification that the previous, unreviewed transcript had been cited in a publication, the AAA altered both their policies and their communication with artists about the transcript review process, interview transcript finalization, and public access.

Even though these interviews were conducted just a few years ago, analysis of this case using staff interviews and review of policy and procedure documentation provides an important look into a still-evolving field. Recent and current best practices used by cultural institutions for web access to archival objects provide context for the decisions the AAA made and for the evolution of their procedures. The quandaries that AAA staff worked through in managing this set of interviews proves illustrative as archivists continue to define the parameters of online access to materials, and as new methods of accessing oral histories develop.

Research questions

1. What complications and questions emerged as the AAA collected and made accessible this set of interviews?

2. How did these complications inform and change their oral history collection workflows and access policies?
3. How do these policies reflect and/or shape current best practices in the field?
4. How might other institutions learn from the complex set of issues inherent in this case as oral history repositories adapt to changing web access technologies?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Best Practices and State of the Field

In order to demonstrate the evolution of oral history access policies in the wake of online collections, it is necessary to situate this case study in the context of the recent history of oral history collections and access. The Oral History Association (OHA) and the Oral History in the Digital Age (OHDA) project provide online collections of current resources, suggestions, and guidelines for collecting oral histories. The OHA's current guidelines, "Principles and Best Practices," was revised in 2009 from an earlier document adopted in 2000, the "Oral History Evaluation Guidelines," itself adapted from the OHA's 1989 "Oral History Evaluation Guidelines."

Discussions in advance of the adoption of the 1989 version centered on ethical issues. These guidelines "sanctioned the use of anonymous interviews, although only in 'extremely sensitive' circumstances." Changes in technology spurred the most radical changes between the 1989 and 2000 documents. These revisions "aimed to encourage practitioners to pay more attention to technical standards and to new technology and media, particularly the Internet" while also raising "some of the ethical issues that the new technology posed." Guidelines within the "2000 Oral History Evaluation Guidelines" that have particular relevance to this case study include the instructions for "good faith efforts" to be made "to honor the spirit of the interviewee's agreement," for interviewers to "respect the rights of interviewees to refuse to discuss certain subjects, to

restrict access to the interview, or, under extreme circumstances, even to choose anonymity,” and to “clearly explain these options to all interviewees.” Under their guidelines for repositories, the OHA advises that interviewees should be informed of the potential uses of their interviews, especially “given the rapid development of new technologies.” Furthermore, repositories should ensure in good faith that “the uses of recordings and transcripts comply with both the letter and spirit of the interviewee’s agreement.” Regarding interview transcript information, the OHA recommends that institutions consider whether the transcript is an accurate record of the audio file and whether careful record is kept of each step of processing the transcript, “including who transcribed, audited, edited, retyped, and proofread the transcripts in final copy,” as well as whether the “nature and extent of changes in the transcript from the original tape” are made known to users (“2000 Oral History Evaluation Guidelines”).

The OHA’s 2009 revised version of these guidelines, “Principles and Best Practices for Oral History,” provides a more structured set of practices for interviewers and institutions, organized by the headings “In Advance/Pre-Interview,” “Interview,” and “Post-Interview.” The best practices contain new recommendations regarding interview restrictions and release forms. Updated guidelines on digital media formats are included: The OHA encourages that recordings “be stored, processed, refreshed and accessed according to established archival standards designated for the media format used,” and that “the obsolescence of all media formats should be assumed and planned for.” Additionally, the new guidelines place a stronger emphasis on access, asking repositories to “make transcriptions, indexes, time tags, detailed descriptions or other written guides to the contents” of interviews. The previously used language on “letter and spirit” of

interviewee agreements is refined and clarified to some extent, though many decisions still remain up to the individual repository's interpretation:

“The repository should comply to the extent to which it is aware with the letter and spirit of the interviewee's agreement with the interviewer and sponsoring institution. If written documentation such as consent and release forms does not exist then the institution should make a good faith effort to contact interviewees regarding their intent. When media become available that did not exist at the time of the interview, those working with oral history should carefully assess the applicability of the release to the new formats and proceed—or not—accordingly.”(Principles and Best Practices for Oral History, 2009).

Rather than compiling a generalized set of best practices, the OHDA—a product of an Institute of Museum and Library Services National Leadership Grant and collaboration between several major oral history repositories, developed under the direction of Douglas Boyd, Director of the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky—contains quick guides, background information, and instructions on collecting, conducting, and disseminating oral histories, as well as a wiki for collecting other institutions' customized best practices.

Many of these resources offer a glimpse of the state of the field of oral history web access circa 2000-2016. A 2000 study conducted by Karen Brewster of the Elmer E. Rasmuson Library at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) investigated the then-nascent uses of oral history on the internet in order to determine how the library might

most ethically use the internet as an access point for its oral histories. Brewster notes that UAF had previously provided access to their program's oral histories via CD-ROM, but that the library wanted to learn how other repository websites handled ethical and legal issues surrounding copyright and use of oral histories. In the end, the UAF program found that their research led to the decision to "notify people of our intentions to use their recordings on the Internet," to ask their permission, and to include a protective statement explaining copyright, permission, and cultural sensitivity issues at the website's entry point (Brewster, 2000). This study highlights the growing concern over how oral history agreements are understood by repositories and interview participants in relationship to the potential for much wider access.

Transcription: Issues and Practice

In both physical and online oral history repositories, the transcript has traditionally been considered the standard for making oral history audio more easily accessible to researchers. In her 2011 exploration of context as experienced in "internet archives" versus context created by finding aids on repository websites, Emily Monks-Leeson argues that internet archives seem to lack the "provenancial bonds that archivists take as crucial to a record's meaning and evidential value" (p. 40).² Though writing this in reference to informal "online archives" not necessarily rooted in a traditional archives context rather than repositories' representations online, Monks-Leeson's exploration of online archives' creations of new contexts for textual, image, and media records spurs consideration of the issues inherent in considering the edited transcript as the primary access point for oral histories. If the act of transcribing an interview is ultimately an act

of translation, how responsible should the repository be for clarifying which document—the audio file or the transcript—is primary?

The concern over the transcript as a mediating document in oral history access is not a new one. In his 1984 article, “Transcription: Shadow or Reality,” David Dunaway dialogues with the dichotomy Willa Baum sets up in her 1977 text, *Transcribing and Editing Oral History*. Baum identifies two schools of thought within oral history processing, one that identified the tape, or the audio file, as the primary document, and the other that identified the transcript as the beginning framework most crucial to researchers; Baum ultimately concludes that both are necessary (p. 38). Dunaway notes that Baum ignores a question she raises in this discussion, that of whether the archivist is processing “an interview or a series of facts” (1984, p. 115). This question becomes important when contradictions in the record are discovered, and the archivist must decide how and whether to resolve those contradictions. Dunaway notes that there are theoretical dimensions to the question, “What do we do when we transcribe?” He concludes, “Perhaps the transcription process itself decontextualizes oral information to the point of inutility; for the transcript is hybrid, neither oral nor written, a shallow reflection of a living, dynamic event” (p. 117).

Linda Shopes’ essay on the OHDA website, “Transcribing Oral History in the Digital Age,” provides a general description of oral history transcription for facilitating oral history use, as well a list of its drawbacks. Among other issues, transcribing is expensive, time-consuming, can create a backlog of interviews to be transcribed, and can strip oral history of its oral quality by making a text document the primary access format. Shopes posits that newer access technologies are spurring a paradigm shift for oral

history, pushing it “away from its traditional archival mode to a more engaged presentational mode” (Shopes, 2012).

Access: Research Issues, Projects, and Workflows

Many of the recent and emerging models and suggestions for oral history access center around human or automated interview segmentation, tagging and metadata assignment, indexing, and implementations of automatic speech recognition/speech-to-text programs. Rather than provide an exhaustive list of these projects, this section will touch on a few important proposed research issues, projects, and workflows in order to provide context for the case at the center of this study.

In 2002, Gustman et al. examined the oral history archive at the Shoah Foundation to identify issues of access to large collections of video data and to outline a set of research subjects designed to address those issues. The authors looked to a number of emerging methods and techniques including automatic speech recognition (ASR) automatic classification, and segmentation to help alleviate staggering resource requirements for human cataloging of large collections (Gustman et al., 2002). Similarly, in 2005 Goldman et al. reviewed the current state of speech-to-text technology in relation to the preservation and access of spoken-word audio collections.

In 2008, De Jong et al. discussed the then-current standards and scalability of oral history access technologies. These included metadata models for tagging, indexing using a controlled vocabulary, segmentation, projects for implementing speech-to-text technology, and automated metadata generation. For the future, De Jong et al. recommended innovative workflow designs to “support the integration of automated, semi-automated, and manual annotation,” while noting that “systems will then be needed

that can support continued enrichment of metadata acquired in this way throughout the content life cycle" (2008, section 3:17). Though hopeful about the potential for automated techniques to help increase the diversity of oral history users and uses, the authors remained wary that deploying automated systems could raise issues related to rights management, personal privacy, and the need to edit audio files to match their edited transcripts (De Jong et al., 2008, section 3:21). That same year, a 2008 project launched by the University of Louisville's Oral History Center to facilitate online access to analog interviews via digitization, interview segmentation, and metadata creation demonstrated one attempt to provide easily navigable audio access using off-the-shelf applications while also maintaining control over the download and alteration of audio files (Daniels, 2009).

A number of projects related to interview segmentation, transcript indexing, and/or speech alignment emerged in response to the rising popularity of oral history collection and increasing use of digital modes of access. These include Klemmer et al.'s Books with Voices, a 2003 project using bar-code augmented paper transcripts to enable access to digital video interviews viewed on PDAs and Christel et al.'s 2006 design of the Informedia interface, implemented using interviews in *The Historymakers*, a large African American history archive of video interviews. Later projects, such as the Oral History Metadata Synthesizer (OHMS) at the University of Kentucky (begun in 2008) and Popup Archive (begun in 2011) have focused on how to efficiently and realistically integrate automated techniques into institutional workflows. OHMS was designed as an open-source set of tools to help ease repositories' backlogs of untranscribed oral histories through indexing. Popup Archive, a fee-based service, offers ease of use and the ability to

improve transcription efficiency with speech-to-text technology (Boyd, 2013; “Popup Archive”; “Knight News Challenge”).

In keeping with this emphasis on adapting customizable tools to repositories’ individual workflows, Lambert and Frisch outline an alternate framework for processing oral history data; rather than processing oral history content linearly—moving from oral to textual, audio file to transcript—Lambert and Frisch propose mapping oral history content through multidimensional controlled vocabularies. In their HUB model, the oral history data remains at the center, surrounded by an inventory of both authoritative and user-centered metadata. This model allows repositories to custom-build controlled vocabularies, in accordance with the specificities of a given collection. Lambert and Frisch note that some amount of flexibility in implementation is required in adopting this sort of processing model, admitting that “waiting for the ‘perfect software’ or a single methodology to resolve the complex challenges of oral history practice in the digital age is inadvisable, likely impossible, and arguably irresponsible.” Instead, they encourage “thinking less about standards, particular computer platforms, and even ‘best practices,’ and more about improvisations that can be flexibly tailored to immediate needs” (Lambert and Frisch, 2013).

Ethical and Legal Issues: Anonymous Subjects and Maintaining Relationships

The above research agendas and tools do not provide any easy answers about transcript/audio review or institutions’ ethical obligations to donors during the review process. Indeed, speeding an interview through processing to immediate and full user access with easily navigable audio may in fact complicate some of those issues. As noted in the earlier outline of relevant best practices, recording oral history interviews with

anonymous or pseudonymous subjects requires deliberation and care. The repository must balance the need for accuracy in catalogue records with the interviewees' desires for self-representation and safety. At issue in many of the best practices for establishing and maintaining relationships with oral history narrators are archives' legal and ethical obligations to donors. John A. Neuenschwander, in "The Legal Ramifications of Oral History," outlines appropriate legal considerations that repositories and interviewers should consider in conducting and collecting oral history interviews (Neuenschwander 2011).

Boston College's Belfast Project presents a recent example of the danger of collecting interviews containing potentially sensitive material when the interviewees are protected not by anonymity, but instead by temporary restrictions to the interviews themselves. The Belfast Project is comprised of interviews (2001-2006) between Boston College researchers and 46 former nationalist IRA, Catholic, and loyalist Protestant combatants. Interview agreements stated that the interviews would not be made public until the deaths of the interviewees. However, after a former IRA volunteer gave an interview to the press, another reporter publicly indicated that the volunteer had made a taped confession of crimes in the Boston College interviews. In response, the British Government subpoenaed the tapes in 2011, initiating a years-long legal battle that put issues of confidentiality and protection of sources at the forefront (Cullen, 2014; McMurtrie, 2014). In an interview about the case, Mary Marshall Clark, the Director of Columbia University's Center for Oral History Research, noted, "The issues that this case represents are issues we deal with constantly...we're ethically bound as historians that the people we interview know what will happen to their material and what could happen"

(McMurtrie, 2014). After the Belfast Project, Boston College began requiring Internal Review Board (IRB) review of oral history collections intended to be made public. Other oral history projects allow anonymity/pseudonymity when revealing the identity of interview subjects could put those individuals at risk, such as with undocumented immigrants. The Southern Oral History Program's New Roots/Nuevas Raíces project, for example, contains interviews with pseudonymous participants, identified on their website with the last name "X".

In "Steering Clear of the Rocks: A Look at the Current State of Oral History Ethics in the Digital Age," Mary Larson draws distinctions between IRB ethics in human subjects research and ethics in oral history collection, noting that the purposes of oral history research have traditionally differed from that of research overseen by IRBs, though standards within oral history have changed over time. For example, the standard of requiring signatories for deeds of gift and copyright assignment has shifted; where once the signatory could be the "owner" of a particular interview, in the 1980s, "the required signature shifted from that of the donor to that of the chronicler" (Larson, 2013, p. 40). Later, the norm shifted to requiring both signatures. Regarding copyright and changes in access technologies, Larson asks, "Even if a program has clear copyright to an interview, does it have an ethical right to do anything it likes with that oral history, even if the chronicler could not have foreseen a particular possible use?" In answer to this question, Larson outlines the four different approaches repositories have taken to negotiate legal and ethical questions: (1) Assuming equivalency between ethical and legal rights, (2) Maintaining physical control over an interview by only putting finding aids online and not the interview or transcript, (3) Putting older interviews online only as

excerpts, and (4) Attempting to contact interview participants before putting their interviews online (Larson, 2013).

In January 2017, the U.S. government issued a final rule removing oral history and journalism from the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, thereby excluding oral history collection from IRB oversight. The rationale for the rule acknowledges that oral historical studies typically depend on the identification of individuals in history, and that discipline-specific guidelines for ethical conduct already exist. This rule was in response to three decades of lack of clarity in U.S. research institutions regarding IRB review of oral history interviewing protocols ("Oral History Research...", 2017).

Regardless of IRB oversight, in negotiating legal and ethical questions pertaining to interview subjects, it is preferable that collecting institutions, interview participants, and researchers alike engage in dialogue about the possible uses and limitations of oral history as a documentary form. While potentially providing greater insight into an individual or movement than a born-textual source might, an oral history also exists as an individual's in-the-moment narration of her own past—such narrations may change over time but, in the instance of a recorded history, are artificially maintained as constant. In "Speaking of Craft: The Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America," Archives of American Art Deputy Director Liza Kirwin writes, as advice to both the archivist and researcher:

The fact is that people reinvent the past in response to their current circumstances and the particularities of the interviewer, and they often defend and distance themselves from their experiences...But what is perhaps more meaningful is the way in which the interviewees made sense of their lives. How they create coherent stories—the language they use, the structure of their narrative, the revisions to their retold life stories,

reveal not only their interpretation of past events but also who they are in the present relative to the interview session. (p. 92).

The Guerrilla Girls

In addition to the Guerrilla Girls oral history transcripts accessible through the AAA website, Suzanne Lustig's 2002 dissertation, "How and Why Did the Guerrilla Girls Alter the Art World Establishment in New York City, 1995-1985?", provides an overview of the founding of the Guerrilla Girls, their use of gorilla masks and pseudonyms to "keep the focus on the issues rather than [their] personalities," and how their impact changed over time (Lustig, 2002, "Introduction"). Though always lively and at times contentious, the group began to fracture in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Two members of the group revealed their real names by filing a lawsuit against members of two splinter groups. This lawsuit and subsequent outing was covered in the national press, including in a 2005 *New Yorker* article by Jeffrey Toobin.

A 2011 issue of *Art Journal* focused on the history and legacy of the Guerrilla Girls. One of these articles drew upon the interviews at the heart of this case study. In "The Guerrilla Girls' Reckoning," Anna C. Chave explores the political orientation of the group and its members, their demographic makeup, the impact of their artwork, and the contentious internal dynamics of the group (2011). Another article in the issue, "Guerrilla Girls and Guerrilla Girls Broadband: The Inside Story," was written by "Gertrude Stein," one of members of the group who split from the original Guerrilla Girls. "Stein" describes the history of the Guerrilla Girls from her perspective, and outlines some of the conceptual, artistic, and political differences between later members of the group (2011). The "Letters" section of the *Art Journal*'s subsequent issue contained responses from "Frida Kahlo" and "Käthe Kollwitz" objecting to their portrayals in the earlier essays, as

well as from “Stein” et al. in response. The same “Letters” section also included Chave's objection to the AAA's removal of the original “Kahlo” and “Kollwitz” transcript from their website (2011).

The areas of complication that the AAA worked through in its collection and processing of the 2007-2008 set of Guerrilla Girls interviews highlight problems inherent in transcribing and reviewing interviews, accessing interviews online, and ethical issues surrounding anonymous/pseudonymous interviewees and maintaining positive donor relationships. The problems the AAA encountered with these interviews underscore the knowledge and interpretive gaps in the then-current best practices. In the wake of improved access methods and technologies for oral histories, it is arguable that some of these gaps still exist, or may be exacerbated if lines of communications between all stakeholders in the oral history collection process are not kept clear. In light of ever-increasing oral history collection and usage, examination of this case will help demonstrate what was previously lacking in common oral history workflows and offer suggestions as to how new best practices and ethical considerations can or should be adapted.

METHODOLOGY

Approach

This study consists of an intensive description and analysis of the above case, using inductive, comparative analysis to process collected data: interviews with and questionnaires completed by current and former AAA staff and Anna C. Chave, as well as relevant workflow artifacts. The criteria for selecting this case are twofold: (1) I first learned of this case as a Summer 2016 Intern within the OHP at the AAA—it is unlikely that I would gain a similar level of access to undertake an analogous study at another institution as an outsider, and (2) With its long history, significant collection, heavy research use, and current practice as an active collector of born digital oral histories, the AAA's OHP is an exemplar in the field; it is likely that issues that the AAA faces in its oral history archiving process are also faced by other institutions, both small and large.

Data Collection and Ensuring Trustworthiness

I conducted interviews with the two current AAA staff members with the most direct knowledge of this case: Oral History Archivist Jennifer Snyder (who held the position of Archives Technician during the period in question) and Deputy Director Liza Kirwin. I received completed questionnaires from former curatorial staff member Emily Terrell and the art historian who cited the changed transcript at the heart of this case, Anna C. Chave. I also requested participation via questionnaire from Justin Brancato, staff member at the AAA's New York research center from 2003-2010, whom Anna C. Chave identified as

facilitating her access to the Guerrilla Girls interviews. Liza Kirwin and Emily Terrell dealt directly with this specific set of interviews from the initial interview collection through transcript publication online. Kirwin, a longtime AAA staff member, has thorough knowledge of the institution's history, as well as current policies. Snyder is the AAA's first Oral History Archivist and has helped to institute new workflows and policies within the oral history program. The semi-structured interviews were recorded over the phone in February, 2017. Questionnaires to Terrell and Chave were sent out in February and March, 2017 (Appendices C and D). I contacted and received a response from Justin Brancato in April, 2017.

As mentioned above, I learned of this case while an intern at the AAA, working under Oral History Archivist Jennifer Snyder. In order to address my biases regarding this research as a result of my former connection to the AAA, I solicited written answers to a structured set of interview questions from (1) The Guerrilla Girls, Inc., and (2) Anna C. Chave. Requests for participation sent to the Guerrilla Girls were not returned. This study is limited in the lack of representation of those perspectives. In an additional effort to address bias and identify any inaccuracies or misrepresentations, I have member checked this study with participants.

Given the amount of time between the events described in this case and the study, some parties to this case have different memories regarding the exact sequence of events, or were otherwise unable to recall specific details. Since this case is focused primarily on policy change and development and web access in response to a complex set of

interviews, my aim is not to determine “who is right,” nor to rehash disagreements, but to record the sequence of events and corresponding thoughts and impressions according to the each interview participant’s perspective.

Analysis of documents pertaining to AAA OHP policies and procedures includes:

- “Oral History Collections Processing Form” – The AAA’s method of collecting narrators’ information for interview catalogue records (Appendix A).
- “Procedures for Oral History Interviewers: A Summary” – The AAA’s current oral history guide and contract for interviewers (Appendix B).
- “Oral History Interview Procedures” – An older version of the AAA’s procedures for interviewers.³
- The AAA’s current and past Consent & Gift form language and corresponding restrictions information.⁴

Analytic Techniques and Extrapolation

To analyze my dataset—the above-listed documents and interviews—I employed an inductive and comparative analysis. Interviews were transcribed and open-coded iteratively. I grouped codes in accordance with the different topics with which this study is concerned: Transcription, Access, Ethical and Legal Issues, and basic information on the Guerrilla Girls. I created activity models for the interview collection workflow at the completion of interviews (Figures 1 and 2). To triangulate my data, I reached out to Anna Chave, the Guerrilla Girls, and former Archives of American Art staff member Emily Terrell.

This study posits that both the issues the AAA dealt with and their solutions are, to some degree, transferable. Findings bear a useful relationship to policy review,

donor/patron relations, and access that can be extrapolated to other institutions and situations.

ANALYSIS

During interviews and in questionnaires with current and former AAA staff, I asked questions regarding the AAA's oral history collection and transcription review procedures, as well as about significant changes to those procedures over the past several years. Study participants spoke about the process of collecting the Guerrilla Girls interviews, and the challenges that this process posed. Interviewees discussed lessons learned from those challenges, as well as ways in which archival policy improved as a result of the episode. In this section, I will describe current processes of collection, transcription, and access as they take place at the AAA generally in comparison with how these processes were implemented at the AAA with the Guerrilla Girls interviews. Comparing the AAA's typical procedures, events specific to the Guerrilla Girls interviews, and general best practice guidelines in the field highlights breakdowns in AAA's workflows and policies while underscoring areas for growth or further consideration.

Collection Process

General Procedure

The process of collecting oral histories at the AAA has evolved with changing technologies and best practices in the field since the beginning of the Oral History Program in 1958 (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017). Figure 1

AAA Oral History Program: Typical Interview Collection and Transcript Review Activity Model

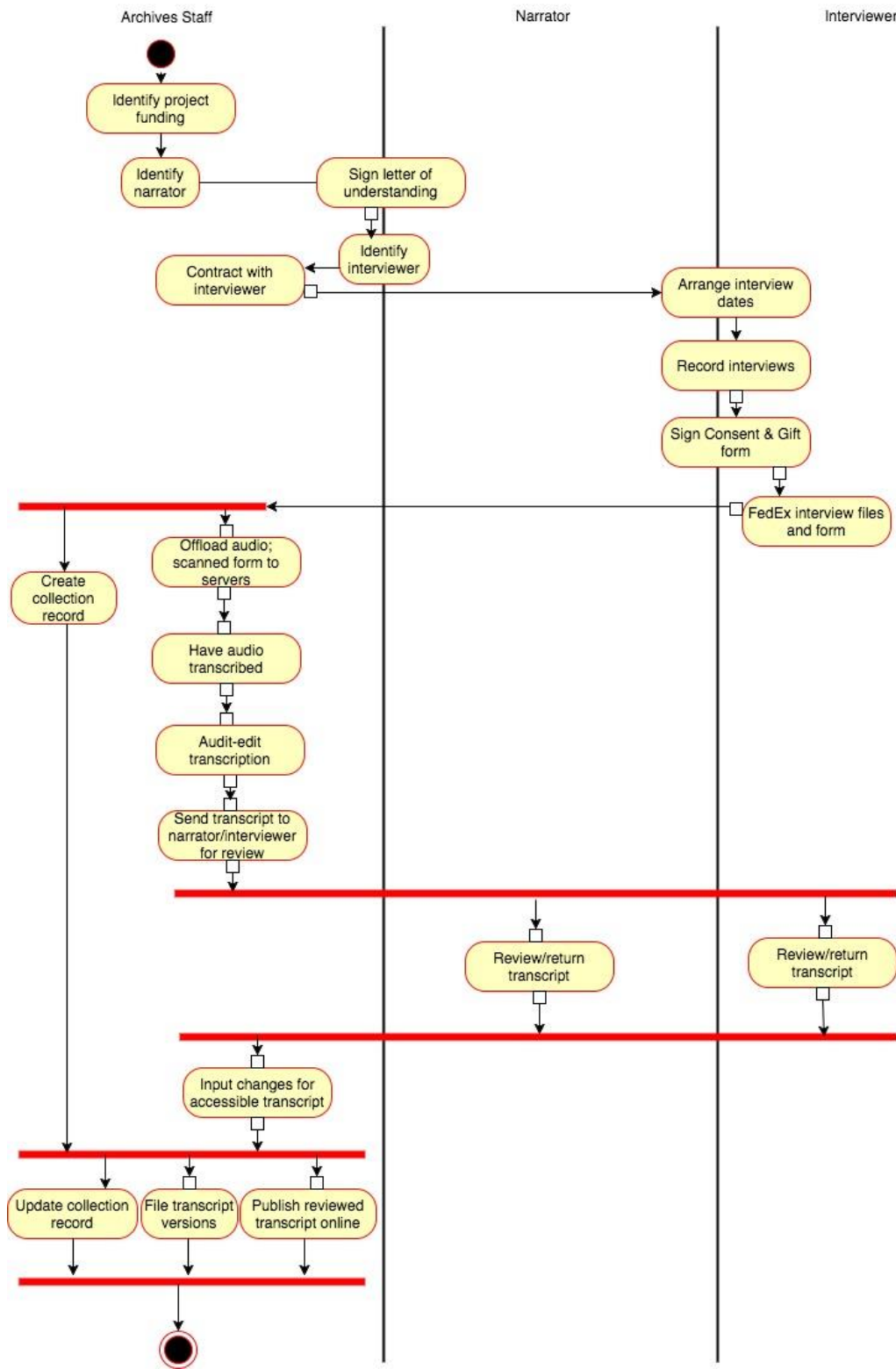


Figure 1

represents the high-level typical order of activities involved in the process. The AAA maintains far more detailed procedural directions with technical information and instructions for accessioning, data entry, audio transfer, transcription ordering, auditing, finalization, and inter-office communication regarding workflow (“Oral History Interview Procedures,” 2011). Currently, collection of an interview or set of interviews typically begins when the AAA identifies a gap within their oral history collection and is able to locate a funding source or receive a grant to address that gap through a given project or focused set of interviews. Developing the project and identifying potential narrators and interviewers might involve consultation with an external advisory group comprised of individuals familiar with the project area. When contacting potential narrators, the AAA provides information on the Archives’ Oral History Program, the rationale for conducting the interview, the expected audience or user group, the accessibility of the transcript online, the transcript review process, and restriction options (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017). Narrators who agree to be interviewed sign a letter of agreement prior to the interview (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017; “Oral History Interview Procedures,” 2011).

Interviewers may be individuals who have contracted with the AAA to conduct prior interviews; the advisory group may recommend qualified individuals; or narrators may request interviewers with whom they have a prior relationship. In any case, they are typically art critics, art historians, or have some professional familiarity with a given project area (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017; Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017). After the interviewer signs a contract detailing their role and listing the expected number of interviews, the interviewer and narrator schedule

a date or dates for the interview(s) (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017). The contract includes an attachment detailing the AAA's requirements of the interviewer as well as suggestions for the interview. An abbreviated version of the current form of this document appears on the AAA's website (Appendix B). This document provides the mission and purpose of interview collection and gives a general overview of pre- and post-interview procedure. The document directs the interviewer to "prepare an outline in advance of the interview session(s)," "take time to review with the interviewee the purpose, procedures, and anticipated uses of the interview," "not make promises to the interviewee that the Archives may not be able to fulfill, such as guarantees of publication and control over future uses of the interview after it has been made available to researchers," and "respect the right of the interviewee to refuse to discuss certain subjects or to request a restriction on access to the interview," among other items.

The total recording time for the interview(s) must be at least three hours. The AAA encourages multi-session interviews to give both parties a chance to reflect before the final interview session(s) is/are completed (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017). AAA staff typically sends recording equipment to the interviewer, unless the interviewer owns equipment suiting the AAA's standards (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017; "Oral History Interview Procedures," 2011). Interviewers collect catalogue data from narrators via the Oral History Collections Processing Form (Appendix A). Upon completion of the interview, the interviewer and narrator each sign the Consent & Gift form, which states that both the audio and transcript of the interview will be in the public domain and that interview participants will have the chance to review the transcript (Snyder, personal communication, February

14, 2017). The current Consent & Gift form notes that the interview “may be made available via the Internet on the Archives’ website” (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017). In previous years, the AAA automatically provided to narrators a restriction page with the Consent & Gift form. The 2008 version of this sheet offered four types of restriction requiring either researchers or the AAA to seek permission from narrators before access: (1) Restriction of use of the transcript in a publication; (2) Restriction of access to the transcript; (3) Restriction of the use of interview audio; and (4) Restriction of access to interview audio. The current version of this sheet offers two options: (1) Restriction of access to the transcript; and (2) Restriction of access to verbatim sound and/or video recording. In both of these instances, researchers are required to get written permission from narrators before accessing their desired formats. The sheet also provides a space for narrators to choose a date to terminate the restriction, noting that all restrictions will terminate at the narrator’s death unless an authorized representative is designated. In the past, offering this restrictions page at the time of interview led some narrators to preemptively restrict their interviews before viewing the transcript. These restriction options are now provided to narrators upon request (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017).

Once the interview participants sign their Consent & Gift forms, the interviewer sends—via FedEx—the physical forms and SD cards with the interview audio files to the Oral History Archivist, who accessions the interview, offloads the audio via the AAA's Digital Asset Management System, and sends copies of the audio to an external transcription service (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017; “Oral History Interview Procedures,” 2011). At this point, the transcription review process begins.

Guerrilla Girls Procedure

Though the above describes the general contours of the collection process, oral history collection and transcript review can vary depending on the project and the narrator. A few actions in those procedures have been refined in the years since the Guerrilla Girls interviews were first recorded. Figure 2 shows the high-level actions taken in the collection and transcript review process for this set of interviews.

Staff members Liza Kirwin and Emily Terrell managed the Oral History Program's workflows from 2007-2011, the period between the Guerrilla Girls interviews collection and online publication. The decision to request a set of interviews with the Guerrilla Girls came after some members of the Guerrilla Girls donated their papers to the Getty Research Institute. Prior to this donation, Kirwin had spoken to the Girls' representatives about the possibility of the AAA serving as the repository for their papers. Since that was no longer an option after the donation to the Getty, AAA staff decided that interviews collected as part of the Oral History Program would provide a valuable alternative resource for researchers hoping to access Guerrilla Girls materials at the AAA (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017). Additionally, one of the AAA's regular interviewers at that time, Judith Olch Richards, had a trusting relationship with many of the Girls and was able to serve as a conduit for arranging the interviews (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017). Funding for conducting the interviews was provided as part of a larger collecting project. Since Richards already knew the Guerrilla Girls' identities, she did not need to plan for the logistics of arranging an interview that would conceal the identity of the narrators from her. Counter to standard AAA practice, the Guerrilla Girls were recorded in pairs, rather than singly (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017).⁵ Kirwin speculated that the participants may have

AAA Oral History Program: Guerrilla Girls Interview Collection and Transcript Review Activity Model

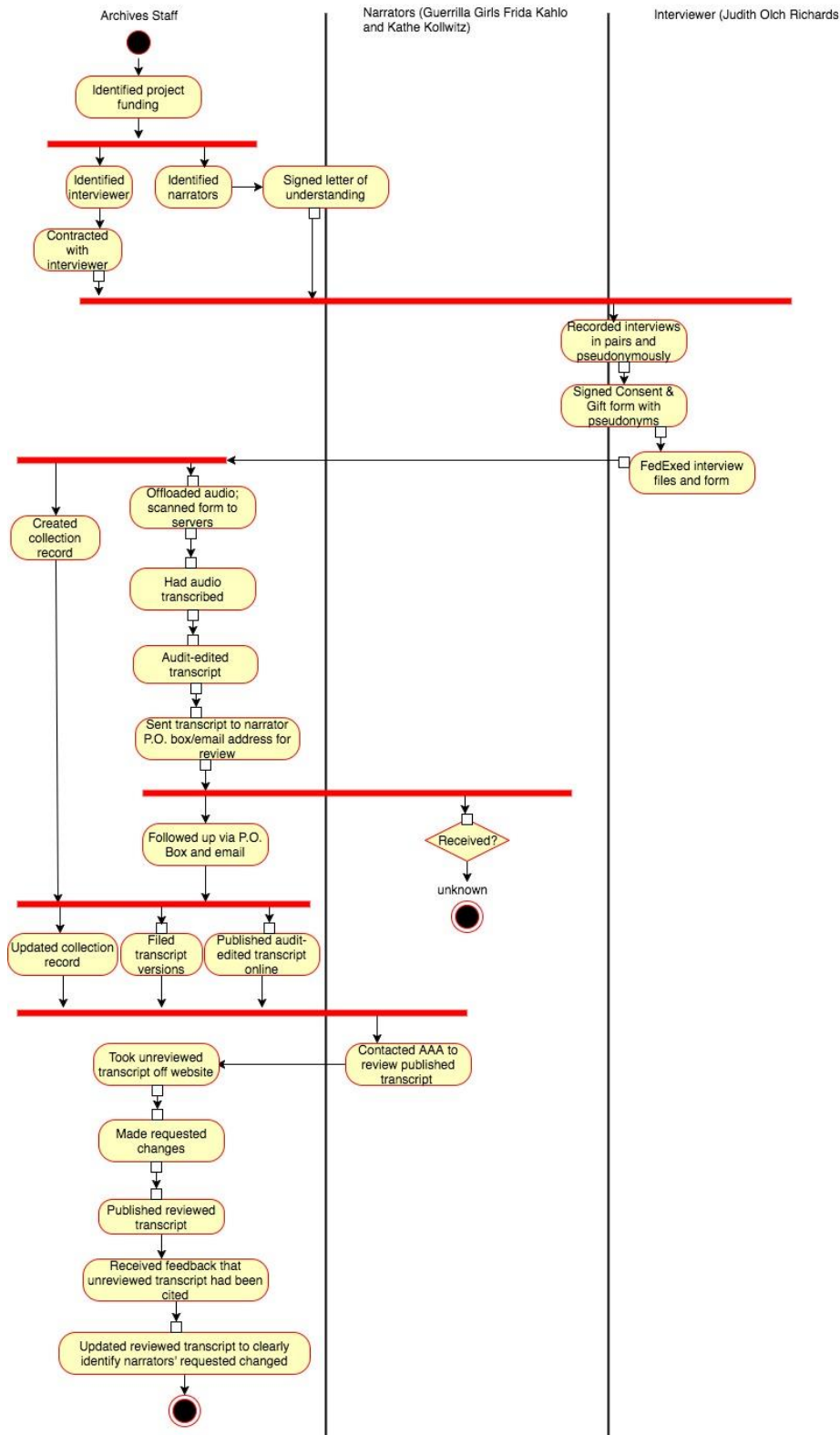


Figure 2

preferred this arrangement because it reflected the Guerrilla Girls' ethos and art practice of prioritizing the collective and collaborative over the individual (personal communication, February 10, 2017).

Each of the Guerrilla Girls signed Consent & Gift forms for their respective interviews using their Guerrilla Girls pseudonyms rather than their legal names (Terrell, personal communication, March 19, 2017). The language from the Consent & Gift form the AAA was using in 2008 is as follows:

_____, the undersigned, does hereby agree to the verbatim recording of an interview conducted by _____, representing the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and does further **dedicate to the public all copyright interest** in the interview.

It is understood that the **audio recording and any transcription** will be owned and maintained in the collection of the Archives, and will be made available to scholars and qualified researchers in accordance with Archives' policy, subject to any restrictions stated herein. All unrestricted transcripts will be made available via the Internet on the Archives' website (<http://www.aaa.si.edu>) [emphasis mine]. (Snyder, personal communication, February 9, 2017).

As with the AAA's current Consent & Gift language, this agreement makes both the audio and any transcription—not just transcripts approved by narrators—accessible to researchers. The current Consent & Gift form, however, explicitly places both the audio and the transcript(s) into the public domain. None of the Guerrilla Girls placed any restrictions on either the audio or the transcript of their interviews (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017). They each shared their official Guerrilla Girls P.O. boxes and pseudonymized email addresses as their contact information (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017; Terrell, personal communication, March 19, 2017). The AAA allowed the use of pseudonyms and Guerrilla Girls-associated addresses in the interests of maintaining participants' anonymity. At that time, the recording of

anonymous interviews was unprecedented at the AAA. The interviews progressed to the transcription review stage as normal.

Transcription Review

General Procedure

The AAA primarily makes changes to oral history transcripts for readability (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017). Because the AAA does not currently have the staff available to edit audio files as well as transcripts, no content changes are made to the archival or access versions of interview audio (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017). The audit process for the transcripts used to be a more intensive and time-consuming process, with auditors or editors removing transcribed vocal tics and adding clarifying information in brackets (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017). Decades prior, transcribers—typically subject specialists like art historians or graduate students—were also the audit-editors of the transcripts. As the AAA began to record more interviews per year, they streamlined their process by contracting with transcription companies to transcribe interview audio. However, the loss of specialized attention accorded to each interview during transcription necessitated an additional level of post-transcription review (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017).

According to the current workflow, upon return of the transcript from the transcription service, AAA staff, interns, or volunteers audit the interview, checking the transcript against the audio to correct errors and ensure the interview is verbatim. Staff then sends printed copies of the corrected transcript, with changes tracked and visible in Microsoft Word, to the narrator and interviewer for review. The AAA typically refrains from sending electronic copies to narrators/interviewers for review. In experiments with

electronic transcription review, staff noticed that reviewers tended to make more sweeping changes to electronic copies. In an effort to keep transcript derivatives as similar to their corresponding audio as possible, the AAA reverted to sending physical copies for review, barring outstanding exceptions or special requests from narrators. When the narrator/interviewer returns their physically marked-up transcript, staff inputs their edits, again tracking changes in Microsoft Word. That edited transcript is then saved as an additional version before a final version of the transcript is created with all changes accepted. Staff then publishes the final version on the AAA's Drupal website (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017).

Prior to the web publication of the Guerrilla Girls transcripts, the AAA would publish unreviewed transcripts only after multiple requests to artists for review. This process could go on for years, with some transcripts remaining unpublished if artists did not respond. Some artists responded with transcript reviews post-web publication only after receiving Google alerts they had set up for their names (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017; Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017). When artists subsequently reviewed their transcripts, the AAA would amend the online transcripts to reflect the narrators' wishes (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017).

Guerrilla Girls Procedure

This manner of ad hoc web publication is precisely what took place with the Guerrilla Girls interviews. After the interviews were transcribed and audited per the AAA's usual procedures, AAA staff sent them to the Guerrilla Girls' P.O. boxes and email addresses provided. The AAA generally uses FedEx, but was unable to do so in

this case because FedEx does not ship to P.O. boxes. All of the Guerrilla Girls except “Käthe Kollwitz” and “Frida Kahlo” eventually returned their reviewed transcripts with minor changes (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017). Kirwin recalls, “My recollection is we followed up about three times with “Frida Khalo” and [“Käthe Kollwitz”]. And we didn't have a phone number. We didn't know who they were...It was a long stretch of time” (personal communication, February 10, 2017). After about four years with no response from either participant, the AAA published the audited interviews online in October, 2010 (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017).

Access

General Issues

In discussing the AAA’s expectations for user access, both Snyder and Kirwin asserted that most users prefer to access the AAA’s oral histories via transcripts because they are word searchable. Some patrons may request audio through the AAA's online reference request system. Upon being made aware that transcripts are available, they will often choose the transcript over the audio. If transcripts have clearly been heavily edited, reference staff will alert researchers to possible discrepancies between the audio and the transcript. Patrons who wish to listen to unrestricted audio may do so in the AAA's Washington, DC or New York offices, or order an interlibrary loan copy through the AAA's reference request system. With public presentations, such as a museum exhibition, the AAA maintains a policy that excerpted audio must match the publicly available transcript. The AAA charges a fee for usage in a public presentation, such as a film or exhibition (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017).

Oral history transcripts were the first collections of the AAA available online, starting in 2001. The digitization of other collection items did not begin until 2005

(Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017). The texts were originally hand-coded in HTML. The AAA currently has a reference staff checklist for audio access; before audio is provided to a patron upon request, the reference staff must determine if the audio exists, if it is of sufficient quality, and if it is restricted.⁶ For many older interviews, specific restrictions are not listed in the AAA's collection catalogue; reference staff must consult physical collection files. The AAA also maintains a self-imposed policy that, if the narrators of a requested interview are living, researchers must request permission to hear full interview audio from them. The AAA now offers narrators the option of restricting the full audio of their interviews, while leaving transcripts fully accessible (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017).

Guerrilla Girls Interviews

In the summer of 2011, Anna C. Chave, now Professor Emerita of Art History at CUNY Graduate Center, cited the Guerrilla Girls interviews in "The Guerrilla Girls' Reckoning," an article on the Guerrilla Girls' lineage within the late twentieth-century history of feminist artists' agitation for proportionate representation within art-world institutions. In her questionnaire responses for this case study, Chave noted that Guerrilla Girls oral histories were not yet available when she first inquired at the AAA about accessing transcripts. In conversation with Justin Brancato, then an archivist at the AAA, Chave explained that she was working "under deadline on a commissioned piece on the [Guerrilla Girls] for *Art Journal*."⁷ Chave recalls that Brancato "offered to facilitate release of the interviews."⁸ After the interviews were published on the AAA's website, Chave worked from the printed transcripts accessed online (Chave, personal communication, March 24, 2017).

Upon the publication of Chave's article, Guerrilla Girls "Frida Kahlo" and "Käthe Kollwitz" returned their reviewed transcript with edits to the AAA (Terrell, personal communication, March 19, 2017). Unaware that the interview had been cited in the *Art Journal*, Kirwin and Terrell decided to make the requested edits and replace the transcript on the website (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017; Terrell, personal communication, March 19, 2017). Though the AAA was not required by law to do so according to the Consent & Gift agreement, their choice reflected a goal to maintain positive relationships with the narrators, as well as the intention to behave ethically with regards to the wishes of donors to the Archives (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017; Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017; Terrell, personal communication, March 19, 2017).

After the transcript was replaced in October 2011, Chave and Katy Siegel, then Editor of the *Art Journal*, received an emailed letter from "Kahlo" and "Kollwitz" stating that they had updated their AAA interview "to correct the misinformation in those other members' interviews" and providing a URL to the replaced transcript on the AAA's website (Chave, personal communication, March 24, 2017). In the Fall 2011 issue of *Art Journal*, "Kahlo" and "Kollwitz" expressed concern that the *Art Journal* did not contact them to fact check statements made about them by other Guerrilla Girls. In their Letter to the Editor, they assert, "Everyone is entitled to her own version of history" and ask "But what if that version is an attempt to rewrite history for the sake of one's own legacy?" ("Letters," 2011, p. 113). "Kahlo" and "Kollwitz" take exception to the collection process for the oral history interviews, asserting that another member of the group, "Gertrude Stein," selected most of the interviewees for that collecting project.⁹ They also objected

to the quoted content from the interviews, arguing that some comments from narrators represented “hearsay, largely from Gertrude, who unquestionably had an axe to grind” (“Letters,” 2011, p. 113). Identifying one of the complexities inherent in using oral histories (documents that can illuminate but also obscure the subjective, contingent, and constructed nature of historical narrative) as historical documents, “Kahlo” and “Kollwitz” argue, “Chave presents hearsay as fact” (“Letters,” 2011, p. 113). In this particular instance, attributions of “hearsay” and “fact” are under dispute; the Guerrilla Girls interview transcripts serve as evidence for parties on both sides, as well as sites of disputation made visible (or invisible) by textual revisions.

Ten members of the Guerrilla Girls and Guerrilla Girls BroadBand responded to this letter in order to “corroborate the contents of ‘Guerrilla Girls and Guerrilla Girls BroadBand: Inside Story,’ and affirm that it is true and accurate according to our best recollection of events” (“Letters,” 2011, p. 114). Chave’s published letter protested the AAA’s decision to replace “Kahlo” and “Kollwitz’s” transcript, tying “Kahlo” and “Kollwitz’s” calls for fact checking to the practice of artists making “fact checking a requirement for their clearance of copyright, using their leverage in that regard to try to reshape critical accounts of their work” (“Letters,” 2011, p. 114). In indirect response to “Kahlo” and “Kollwitz’s” statement regarding entitlement to versions of history, she acknowledges that collective constructions of history may be diffuse and contradictory, writing, “Inasmuch as artists’ histories may be said to belong to them, the history of the unincorporated Guerrilla Girls collective—which was the focus of my essay—belongs to all the women who contributed ideas and resources to that collective’s endeavors” (“Letters,” 2011, p. 114). Chave notes that the AAA’s failure to indicate “Kahlo” and

“Kollwitz’s” revisions leaves scholars “in the position of making unverifiable citations” (“Letters,” 2011, p. 114). An editor’s note explains that both “The Guerrilla Girls’ Reckoning” and “Guerrilla Girls and Guerrilla Girls BroadBand: Inside Story” underwent blind peer review and were fact checked by authors and editors (“Letters,” 2011, p. 114).

In this series of events and responses, Kirwin identified the AAA's primary mistake as taking the transcript offline, editing it as requested by the narrators, and putting the new version back on the website (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017). In describing how the AAA was alerted "fairly quickly by an author, I believe, that she had published a piece citing the verbatim, unedited transcript, which had by then disappeared and been replaced," Terrell likely refers to Chave's reply to "Kollwitz" and "Kahlo's" letter to the editor of the *Art Journal* in October, 2011.¹⁰ Terrell recalled being “horrified by our [the AAA's] misstep” (Terrell, personal communication, March 19, 2017). Kirwin speculated that some of the interview citations in the article caused strife within the already contentious Guerrilla Girls factions, leading “Kahlo” and “Kollwitz” to contact the AAA to make revisions (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017).¹¹ After learning of the published paper citing the previously unaltered transcript, Kirwin directed Terrell to "note the changed passages in brackets and to make a general note about that on the introduction of the transcript itself" (Terrell, personal communication, March 19, 2017). This newly updated transcript with an explanatory note was replaced on the website in March, 2012 (Figure 3).

The following oral history transcript is the result of a digitally recorded interview with Guerrilla Girls Frida Kahlo and Kathe Kollwitz on March 9, 2008. The interview took place at an undisclosed location in New York, New York, and was conducted by Judith Olch Richards for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. The text in curly brackets was added by the interviewees between 2008 and 2011.

Figure 3 [emphasis mine]

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After this incident, the AAA adjusted its procedures and policies to ensure improved clarity of communication with narrators by establishing deadlines for transcript review and maintaining transparency in showing changes made to the transcript. They have also experimented with adjusting the role of the interviewer in the audit/editing process.

The amount of days given to the narrator to review the transcript has changed over time with trial and error. In 2013, an external review committee with members including Mary Marshall Clark and Douglas Boyd reviewed the OHP. Upon the recommendation of the committee report, the OHP began giving firmer deadlines, starting with a 60-90-day period. Eventually they cut the standard deadline for return to within 45 days of receipt (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017). Firm deadlines clearly communicated to the narrator provide notice about what is expected and when. Narrators occasionally request deadline extensions, which are granted. The deadline policy also gives the AAA a firmer ethical footing to publish unreviewed transcripts after deadlines have passed rather than allowing them to languish unpublished for years.

Kirwin emphasized that the AAA learned it had to be transparent in showing changes between transcript versions in every part of the review process (personal communication, February 10, 2017). In an effort to reduce the number of mediating factors involved in the transcript review process, the AAA has experimented with having

interviewers both audit and review the transcribed interview, rather than simply review the already audited transcript (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017). At the time of Guerrilla Girls recordings, interviewers were compensated to conduct the interview only.

The AAA also learned that it had to make changes apparent online if there had been unavoidable edits made to published transcripts. In some instances, these changes take the form of postscripts written by narrators. Such addenda allow transcripts to maintain fidelity to their audio, while also permitting narrators to acknowledge how their thoughts may have changed in the time between interview collection and publication—“to comment in a way on their own construction of history” (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017).

The AAA continues to think about how oral histories are presented online. The review process and web presentation has come to include and show “who made what edits” (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017). In this way, the AAA strives to bridge the gap between oral source and textual derivative, making the transcript as verbatim as possible by discouraging narrators from inputting dramatic changes. Snyder points out that though it may be helpful to researchers to eventually make interview audio available online in addition to transcripts, archives will have to remain sensitive to narrators who wish to redact personal or sensitive information about themselves and others (personal communication, February 14, 2017). Practically, this would mean editing access versions of audio files, which could prove unfeasible for repositories without available staff.

In response to the Guerrilla Girls episode, the AAA now informs narrators that once interviews are published on the website, changes cannot be made. The AAA will, however, correct minor mistakes that may affect the interview's word- and web-searchability (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017; Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017). Describing lessons learned from the Guerrilla Girls interviews, Kirwin noted that these events marked a shift in how the AAA conceived of online access (personal communication, February 10, 2017). Rather than considering their website as a display portal for persistent physical documents, they started to consistently regard the web presentation of a document as published historical record. Though the AAA discourages all changes to published transcripts, any unavoidable changes made at the behest of the narrator after that publication require transparency. Terrell reflects, "In hindsight I should have taken the steps to note and clearly delineate [the Guerrilla Girls'] requested edits as post-interview commentary from the verbatim transcript" (personal communication, March 19, 2017).

Providing an example of how this policy currently functions in atypical situations, Snyder described a recent instance in which a different pair of Guerrilla Girls, "Élisabeth Vigée Lebrun" and "Liubov Popova", contacted the Archives regarding desired changes to their online interview transcript. One of narrators noticed that she had revealed personally identifiable information during the interview (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017). Not wishing to repeat its earlier mistake of changing a published historical document, the AAA communicated to the narrator the ethical difficulty of changing a record that had been publicly accessible since October 2010. After consulting the Smithsonian's Office of General Counsel, the AAA resolved the

issue by giving the Guerrilla Girl the option of restricting the interview via a new Consent & Gift form signed by both narrators with their legal names and addresses. This allowed the AAA to take the interview off their website and to easily contact the Guerrilla Girl regarding research requests in the future. Though the interview is no longer on the AAA's website, researchers can contact the AAA to request permission from the narrators to view the transcript.

Prior to this example, the AAA had been in consultation with the Office of General Counsel about the AAA's ability to make changes to previously static restriction forms. Every few years, the AAA examines Consent & Gift documents to assess whether the language is clear enough for narrators and functional for AAA staff. The AAA has recently made a staff hire to address assessing forms, interviewer training, and narrator communication (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017).

Given the fundamental differences between textual and oral documents and the emergence of new access technologies seeking to help bridge some of those differences, many issues remain for archives to work through. One concern involves uncertainty about making researchers aware of changes that have been made to transcripts during the review process. If a narrator wants to remove one sentence from a transcript, the AAA will do so before publication, but will not mark that change in the online transcript (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017). The reasons for this are ethical: the narrator often knows that the transcript rather than the audio is the primary access point, and so does not restrict their interview audio. However, if the redaction is clearly indicated on the publicly accessible transcript, the AAA may need to restrict the audio in order to discourage researchers from requesting interview audio in search of redacted and

potentially sensitive information. Granted, if the Consent & Gift form has been signed with no restrictions, the institution is not legally obligated to restrict any portion of the audio or the transcript. However, the AAA wishes to maintain positive relationships with all donors in order to maintain its ethical standing and to facilitate future collecting initiatives (Snyder, personal communication, February 14, 2017).

One potential option for easing the staff burden of matching publicly accessible versions interview audio to redacted transcripts would be to write software that would automate audio redaction based on the redacted transcript. Current open source software packages adaptable to this functionality include Gentle, a forced aligner that takes media files and associated transcripts in order to return precise timing information for words and phonemes within the media, and CMU Sphinx, a Carnegie Mellon University project that performs similar alignment in order to facilitate audio editing and automatic subtitle synchronization. Conversely, and perhaps problematically, researchers could employ this or similar programs in order to detect any discrepancies between transcripts and audio files (CMU Sphinx; Gentle; Ryan Shaw, personal communication, April 4, 2016).¹²

Conducting anonymous interviews also poses a continuing challenge to standardizing collection procedures for oral history programs. Attitudes towards anonymity have changed radically but unevenly within the Guerrilla Girls since the group's inception. While some Guerrilla Girls strenuously maintain their anonymity, others have revealed their identities. Interview audio potentially compromises their anonymity; their voices could be recognized. Snyder speculated, "If someone were to come to us and say, 'could we listen to the Guerrilla Girls audio?' I think that we would have a large internal discussion about that and we would probably say no...I think that we

would make them get permission from those Guerrilla Girls to listen that audio but we would want to make sure that [the Guerrilla Girls] were okay with [such access] and that they knew [there was a possibility of anonymity being compromised]" (personal communication, February 14, 2017).

Practices of institutional communication with narrators and users, theorization about the persistence of the web-accessible archival document, and strategies to make newer, more dynamic modes of oral history access more feasible for institutions to adopt provide areas of further exploration and potential improvement across the field. As exemplified above, archives can experiment with their review procedures, providing clear timeframes and delineating each step in the process to narrators in order to avoid possible surprises. Archives can also work towards general improvement of communication with both researchers and narrators about what exactly an oral history is and how it differs from other primary source documents in order to help explain why accessing a transcript might be different from accessing audio. As noted above, indicating changes to a transcript might direct researchers to the audio, which may defeat narrators' intentions to restrict some information via transcript redaction. This issue has the potential to be addressed via incorporation of forced alignment software programs into web publication workflows. How institutions choose to handle transcript changes during review may depend on the scope of their project, the wishes of their narrators, the demonstrated needs of their particular user groups, available staff to edit audio and transcripts, and/or the content of specific interviews.

Finally, Snyder noted that in the past several years, the AAA has improved in regularly assessing its Oral History Program. She asserted that the Archives' external

review process in 2013 "gave us permission to really examine our program from year to year...permission to evolve" (personal communication, February 14, 2017). This stated improvement underscores the value of institutional evaluation of oral history collection procedures. Incorporating such assessment, whether internal or external, helps to build a culture of willingness to make changes and experiment with different solutions that both conform to best practices and suit a particular institution's collecting projects, user groups, oral history narrators, and available resources.

CONCLUSION

This case study explored processes of transcription review and access in archival oral history programs as evidenced in a set of oral history interviews with the Guerrilla Girls collected by the Archives of American Art. In interviews with and questionnaires completed by current and former staff at the AAA and a researcher who used the Guerrilla Girls materials, a clearer picture of the fraught circumstances surrounding the interviews' web publication and use was established. Through focusing on the complications that emerged during the collection of this set of interviews and how these complications informed and changed the AAA's oral history collection workflows and access policies, this study gestures towards the ways that other institutions might learn from the complex set of issues inherent in this case as oral history repositories adapt to changing web access technologies.

NOTES

1. In “The Guerrilla Girls’ Reckoning,” Anna C. Chave notes that after the 2003 lawsuit, 40 women allowed their real names to remain visible in documents in the Guerrilla Girls archive at the Getty Research Institute. Only seven had their names redacted. I have chosen to follow both the AAA and Chave’s lead on using the Guerrilla Girls’ pseudonyms in the course of this study. Chave reasons, “Because several ostensibly anonymous Guerrilla Girl factions remain active...and because it would violate the longtime egalitarian spirit of the organization to divulge some members’ names while protecting others (that is, those still guarding their anonymity), I have elected here to maintain the Girls’ now partly nominal cover” (Chave, 2011, p. 110-11).
2. Monks-Leeson refers to digital, online, and website archives as “websites created by individuals, organizations, or institutions who presumably have little to no grounding in archival theory yet desire to make historical material accessible in digital form” (p. 38).
3. This document, with a last updated date of 2/7/2011, contains some internal contact and web access information. For these reasons, it has not been included as an appendix. This document was transmitted to me via personal communication with Jennifer Snyder.
4. I accessed current and 2008 versions of the AAA’s Consent & Gift forms with corresponding restrictions pages. These documents contain internal contact information, and therefore have not been included as appendices. These documents were transmitted to me via personal communication with Jennifer Snyder.
5. Kirwin notes that the only other occasions where the Archives records artists in pairs tend to be for husband and wife and/or other collaborative teams. In those instances, the Archives also records individual interviews with each participant.
6. For very early interviews, some audio may not have been kept; the transcript exists as the only record of the interview (Kirwin, personal communication, February 10, 2017).
7. Chave thanks Brancato in the footnotes to her article (Chave, 2011).
8. Brancato notes that while he was not on staff at the AAA when Chave’s paper was published in the 2011, it is possible that he was working the reference desk while Chave was conducting research. He states, “I don’t actually recall anything regarding her research. I wasn’t involved administratively in the collection process, nor was I involved with the decision-making regarding restrictions. If I was involved it’s likely because I provided access to what was available at the time” (personal communication, April 7, 2017).
9. “Kahlo and Kollwitz” also take exception to the portrait painted of them and the Guerrilla Girls in “Stein’s” article in the *Art Journal*, “Guerrilla Girls and Guerrilla Girls BroadBand: Inside Story” (“Letters,” 2011).
10. Chave notes that she did not contact the AAA directly regarding the changed transcript. After registering her protest of the AAA’s alterations of the transcript in her *Art Journal* letter, Chave received a letter of apology from the AAA (Chave, personal communication, April 6, 2017).

11. Though I was unable to confirm this with members of the Guerrilla Girls, it is likely that quotations from group members regarding members' primary roles, interpersonal dynamics, and the group's origin stories play into contested narratives within the group.
12. Thanks to Ryan Shaw for pointing out this potential solution/complication to the issue of matching transcripts to audio, and for directing me to example software packages.

APPENDIX A: Current AAA Oral History Processing Form

Archives of American Art

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS PROCESSING FORM

To the Interviewer/Interviewee: Please completely fill out this form in order to expedite and aid in the processing of your interview. You will probably want to complete this along with your interviewer/interviewee. Thank you in advance for your help.

1. Interviewer

- a. Full name as you would like it to appear in our records:

- b. Occupation as you would like it to appear in our records:

- c. Birth year: _____
- d. Current residence: _____

2. Artist / Art Dealer / Interviewee

- a. Full name as they would like it to appear in our records:

- b. Occupation as they would like it to appear in our records:

- c. Birth year: _____
- d. Current residence: _____

3. Location of interview

- a. List as you would like it to appear in our records (i.e. home, home and studio, name of studio, etc.): _____

4. Please attach a copy of your *curriculum vitae* (if available). Or, direct us to a website where this information is accessible.

_____ [website]

(This helps us fill in pertinent information as we are editing your oral history interview, such as dates and names of exhibitions, timeline for education, etc.)

5. Please sign and date the enclosed Consent & Gift form and return.

APPENDIX B: Current AAA Procedures for Oral History Interviewers: A Summary

PROCEDURES FOR ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWERS: A SUMMARY

Mission statement: The purpose of the Archives' oral history program is to create a unique, lengthy exchange between the interviewer and the interviewee, one that yields a richness of detail and a sense of character not available in other primary sources.

A. Preparation

The Archives of American Art will discuss with the interviewee the purpose, procedures, and anticipated uses of the interview.

The purpose of the interview

- To preserve the life story of prominent individuals
- To gather a depth of information on specific works of art, techniques and materials, periods, schools, movements, and relationships.
- To expand research in the field of American art
- To introduce interviewees to the mission of the Archives of American Art and alert them to the value of preserving both their oral reminiscences and their papers.

The procedure

- The interview will be recorded, at least 3 hours in length and in at least two sessions.
- The interviewer will be asked to sign a letter of agreement.
- The interviewer will ask the interviewee to sign the Archives' standard *Consent and Gift* form.
- While the intent is to provide open access, the interviewee may request an access restriction.
- The Archives of American Art will transcribe and audit-edit the transcript.
- The Archives will send the transcript to the interviewee and the interviewer for their review for accuracy.
- The interview will be preserved and cataloged by the Archives of American Art.
- Recordings and transcripts will be made available to researchers at Archives' offices. All unrestricted interview transcripts and select audio portions will be digitized and available through the [Archives' website](#).

B. The Interview

Before any work begins the Archives must receive a signed letter of agreement from the interviewer.

1. Make a date with the interviewee.
2. Prepare an outline in advance of the interview session(s).
3. Familiarize yourself with the interviewee's background. Research relevant documents and secondary sources related to subject.
4. Take time to review with the interviewee the purpose, procedures, and anticipated uses of the interview (stated above).
5. Do not make promises to the interviewee that the Archives may not be able to fulfill, such as guarantees of publication and control over future uses of the interview after it has been made available to researchers.
6. Test the digital audio recording equipment at least once after you set it up for the interview.
7. Record in a quiet place.
8. During the interview, keep a running list of proper names to aid in the transcribing and editing process. When you are not familiar with a name or place, ask the interviewee for clarification.
9. Ask challenging and perceptive questions. It may be helpful to provide the interviewee with a copy of your outline prior to the interview. While the Archives may provide a set of generic interview questions, these topics will serve as a baseline for amplifying significant aspects of the interviewee's life and as a catalyst for more specific avenues of inquiry.
10. Always listen to what the interviewee is saying and do not interrupt. Save your comments and questions until the interviewee has finished.
11. Strive to achieve a balance between the objectives of the project and the perspectives of the interviewee. Encourage interviewees to respond in his or her own style and language and to address issues that reflect his or her own concerns. Explore fully all appropriate areas relevant to the interviewee and do not be satisfied with superficial responses.
12. Respect the right of the interviewee to refuse to discuss certain subjects or to request a restriction on access to the interview.
13. Do not settle for a single session unless you are convinced that the interviewee has exhausted the subject.

**APPENDIX C: Liza Kirwin, Jennifer Snyder, and Emily Terrell
Interview/Questionnaire Questions**

1. What was/is the typical process for collecting and making accessible oral history interviews at the Archives of American Art?
2. Will you list some ways that process changed or evolved in recent years, or in your time at the AAA? Will you talk about some of the reasons for the changes you listed?
3. Will you talk about the process of cultivating the Guerrilla Girls as donors to the AAA? Were there any initial challenges?
4. Why was the specific interviewer (Judith Olch Richards) for that set of interviews chosen?
5. How were the pairings of each group of Guerrilla Girls for interviews chosen?
6. Were there any specific concerns about the interviews voiced by the Guerrilla Girls before going into the interviews?
7. How was the issue of anonymity broached and handled?
8. How soon were the interviews transcribed and sent to the Guerrilla Girls after the interview?
9. Who responded and what changes were made and when?
10. When and how were the interviews made publicly accessible?
11. If applicable, when and from whom did you begin to receive feedback or concerns over that access, or over the versions of transcripts that were online? Which transcripts were at issue?
12. If applicable, who handled those concerns and how?
13. At what point were the transcripts revised, removed, and replaced?
14. What were the rationales behind those choices?
15. Can you characterize the staff discussion or organizational communication around making these choices?
16. Did you receive any feedback regarding the replacement of the transcripts? How was that feedback addressed?

17. Did this result in any appreciable change in policy? In strategizing access policy for the Archives moving forward?

18. If applicable, how do you think user expectations regarding access to oral histories online informed the AAA's decision-making with regards to this case? Have you noticed ways in which user expectations have informed the evolution of web access policies at the AAA?

APPENDIX D: Anna C. Chave Questionnaire Questions

1. When and how did you first learn of the availability of the Archives of American Art's Guerrilla Girls oral histories?
2. Were there any barriers to accessibility?
3. Did you access the audio, the transcript, or both?
4. How did you learn that the transcript you cited had been altered?

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