

STATE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF IOWA

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The Annals of Iowa

Volume 62 | Number 2 (Spring 2003)

pps. 274-274

The Oral History Manual

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

Porter, Kimberly K. "The Oral History Manual." *The Annals of Iowa* 62 (2003), 274-274.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.10704>

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The Oral History Manual, by Barbara W. Sommer and Mary Kay Quinlan. AASLH Book Series. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002. vii, 129 pp. Illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index. \$70.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

Reviewer Kimberly K. Porter is associate professor of history at the University of North Dakota. She has recently returned to her research and writing on the Iowa Farm Bureau after overseeing a major oral history project on the Grand Forks flood of 1996-97.

In *The Oral History Manual* Barbara W. Sommer and Mary Kay Quinlan answer nearly any question the budding, or experienced, oral historian could possibly conjure. Their comprehensive but concise volume addresses such issues as project planning and legal and ethical considerations, as well as the preparation of a budget and finding financial support. The authors provide the necessary instruction to tackle the mechanics, technological and otherwise, of conducting interviews. They also address the labors that must follow after the interview has been conducted: processing and preservation. The suggestions will function for the audio preservationist as well as the individual set on video recording.

The Oral History Manual should prove of interest and value to all readers of the *Annals of Iowa*. Many manuals of style and technique exist, but this is perhaps the most straightforward, easy-to-use, and readily available one on the market. The authors provide useful forms and credible guidelines for a variety of projects. Their timely suggestions for publicizing and funding projects should find a ready audience, particularly in times of bare-bones state and federal budgets. Moreover, given the increasing awareness in primary and secondary schools of the importance of oral history in their curricula, as well as the swelling number of historical societies, private institutions, and individuals interested in the craft of oral preservation, this book should find a place on many a bookshelf.

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