Appendix 1: Adaptable Email Templates

The following emails are included for the benefit of anybody running a similar project. They are provided as templates, so that you don’t need to start all of your emails from scratch. You’ll note that they are full of specific details that were specific to this project. However, though the details will not fit your project, the issues they address will — so they are to be treated as a resource for troubleshooting.

I have included these emails, because they were the most useful to Teaching the Talk.

1. Recruitment email – history department
   • This was by far the most successful recruitment email I ever wrote. It was sent to all undergraduates in the department of History.

Dear Students,

Here is an opportunity to put your skills as a historian to the test. The Theatre Archive Project (TAP) ([http://www.bl.uk/theatrearchive](http://www.bl.uk/theatrearchive)) is recruiting students to conduct oral history interviews with theatre professionals and theatregoers with memories of British theatre between 1945 and 1968.

TAP is an ongoing collaboration between the University of Sheffield and the British Library, with an online database of over 200 oral history transcripts ([http://www.bl.uk/projects/theatrearchive/interviews.html](http://www.bl.uk/projects/theatrearchive/interviews.html)). After an introduction meeting explanation the project in more detail and direction as to how to conduct the interview, participants will then be given contact information for their prospective interviewee.

This semester’s first introductory session will take place on Wednesday, 11 February, from 15:00-16:00. There will be other introductory sessions so if you are interested please send an email to Alec Patton ([a.patton@shef.ac.uk](mailto:a.patton@shef.ac.uk)).

There is a limit on the number of interviews that are conducted each semester - however, if you aren't able to conduct an interview this semester we will keep your name as a possible interviewer in the future.

This not only looks great as an academic extra curriculum activity for you CV or toward the Sheffield Graduate Award, but it really is a chance to be involved in recording the history of these individuals’ lives. Also the transcript of the interview is published into the archives of the British Library, making you a published interviewer.

For any more information or to express an interest please email Alec Patton([a.patton@shef.ac.uk](mailto:a.patton@shef.ac.uk)).
2. Email to students who wish to attend the introduction
   - This email went out to students who responded to the initial recruitment email.
   - I attached the Interview Guidelines and Transcription Style Guide to this email. If you don't want to send out emails with really memory-heavy attachments, you can provide students with the web address from which the guidelines can be downloaded.

Hello

We've got a date, time, and place for Oral History introductory session. It'll take place on Wednesday, 11 February from 3:00-4:00 in CILASS Collaboratory 2 (that's on the first floor of the Information Commons).

The session will be an introduction to the Oral History methods used by the project. I'll also teach everyone how to use the Edirol R-09 digital recorders that we use for all our interviews. After this event, I'll provide you with contact information for a potential interviewee, and you can get in contact with them and sent an interview date. As I've mentioned before, the project will be able to book a train for you, so don't worry about travel expenses to the interview.

I've attached interview guidelines and transcription guidelines to this email. Please have a look at them before the event.

Send me a short email to let me know if you'll be able to attend this session, and if you know anybody else who's interested in getting involved with the project, you can bring them along too. Pass my email address along to them so they can tell me they're coming.

Best
Alec

3. Interviewer Selection Email-call for proposals
   - In the second iteration of the project, I had twice as many possible interviewers as I had spaces, so I had to institute a selection procedure. This is how I did it.

Hi Everyone

Because so many people are interested in conducting interviews for the Theatre Archive Project, we will be selecting interviewers based on a short covering letter.

If you would like to conduct an interview for the Theatre Archive Project, please send me an email of no more than 100 words saying why you are interested in doing an interview for the project.

The deadline for emails is Wednesday, 25 February, at 9:00 AM.

Best
Alec
4. Email of acceptance to successful candidates

Hello

I'm pleased to tell you that your application to be a Theatre Archive Project interview has been successful.

We will contact you again in a few days to give you contact information for somebody who is interested in being interviewed for the project.

Congratulations, and I look forward to working with you in the coming months!

Best
Alec Patton

5. Email providing the interviewee's contact information:

- This is a very important email – it’s also very long (maybe too long, that’s for you to decide in your project!)

Hello

This email will give you the name of your interviewee and their contact details.

It's a long email but please read it all carefully, because it's all important. You may want to print it out and hold on to it as well.

BEFORE YOU READ ON mark this down: there will be a British Library interview day on Thursday 19 March. That means that on this day the British Library has reserved two rooms for Theatre Archive Project interviews. Obviously, only a limited number of interviews can take place on this day, and I'll just reserve it for the first people that I hear from. So if you and your interviewee want to conduct the interview on this day, let me know as soon as possible.

We will arrange at least one other British Library interview day for later in the year, so don't worry if this one is coming up too soon!

Whatever your interview day, you need to tell me what it is at least eight days in advance, or we won't be able to book you a train ticket (and may not be able to lend you a digital recorder).

Now, here is your interviewee:

A. N. Other
email: ______
tel. : ______
address: ______

[Any background information about the interviewee, or useful websites (wikipedia sometimes has useful entries, though it should be taken with a grain of salt!) should go here]

For advice on making contact with your interviewee and arranging a time and place for the interview, refer to your interview guidelines.

LAST, BUT NOT LEAST: I said this before, but it bears repeating: you need to give me your interview day at least eight days in advance. If you get in touch any later than that, we will not be able to buy you a train ticket, and may not be able to provide you with a recorder.

Best
Alec

6. Email to students who seem to have dropped off the face of the earth
   - In my experience, a few students just break off contact completely after they are given the names of their interviewees. Some students are trying to contact their interviewees, and don’t want to get in touch until they can say they’ve done it successfully. Others just disappear, and are never heard from again. This email is a polite way of seeing who is still involved in the project.
   - If a student doesn’t reply to this one (which can be sent as a mass-email), I’d write one more personal email to them (see below for an example), and if I don’t hear anything after that, I would reassign their interviewee (sending them a final email informing them that I’ve done so).

Dear TAP Interviewer

I'm writing to see how you're doing with organising your interview (so disregard this if you've been in touch with me recently, or have already done your interview).

If I haven't heard from you yet, please get in touch to let me know how you're getting on!

Best
Alec

7. Email telling students to return recorders PROMPTLY
   - We had a problem in the first cohort because so many students were conducting interviews in the same two-week stretch, so there were barely enough recorders to go 'round. I sent this email in order to minimise the problem.

Hi Everyone

This is a message for everyone who hasn't yet done an interview: when you do your interview, I need to have your recorder back THE NEXT DAY at the latest - or, if you're recording on the
weekend, the following Monday. We have a lot of people doing interviews, and only four recorders—so if you return a recorder a day late, you may be forcing one of your classmates to cancel their interview. I cannot stress enough how important this is.

If you're doing your interview over the Christmas holiday, return it the day you get back to Sheffield (and tell me in advance what day that will be, so that I don't need to send you emails about it as soon as the holidays are over).

Thanks
Alec

8. The final email to send to people who seem to have dropped off the face of the earth

Subject: How are your interview preparations going? Haven't heard from you in a while

Dear ______

Please let me know as soon as possible how your efforts to contact _____ to interview _____ for the Theatre Archive Project are going.

If I don’t hear from you within a week, your interviewee will be reassigned to another interviewer.

Thanks so much
Alec

9. Email telling students their recorder is ready to be picked up

- This email generally goes out about a week before the interview takes place.
- This email should also include information about the trains that have been booked for the student, if that information has not already been sent.
- I attach a pdf of the Edirol R-09 owner's manual to this email. You also might want to attach the Interview Guidelines and Transcription Style Guide, in case the student has misplaced or deleted the copies that you sent before. Alternatively, you can just provide a link to the website from which they can be downloaded.

Dear _____

Another long email. As always, please read it very carefully.

The Edirol R-09 recorder is ready for you to pick up at the English literature main office. It's a blue box, and it's being stored in one of the pigeonholes.

The box is labelled with your name, and contains your train tickets, the British Library 'Clearance Note and Deposit Instructions' form (which the interviewee will need to sign), and an Equipment Loan Sheet, which you need to fill out when you take the recorder.

It's important that you understand the 'Clearance Note and Deposit Instructions' form, so that you can explain it to the interviewee and they can give informed consent. What it says is that the interview will be preserved as a permanent, publicly-available reference in the British Library.
Sound Archive, and that it will be available for use in research, publication, education, lectures, broadcasting, and the internet. If you're confused about this, please let me know IN ADVANCE OF THE INTERVIEW so we can make sure you understand it.

Be sure to test the recorder out before the interview (I recommend sitting down with a friend a few days before to do a brief 'interview'. This will give you a chance to get comfortable with working the recorder, as well as with the craft of conducting an interview.

I've attached an instruction manual for the R-09 to this email. Take a look at it if you're confused when you're doing your test-run. The most important thing to remember is this: if the 'rec' button is glowing red, the interview is recording. If it's flashing, it isn't recording. So make sure it's glowing.

There may be batteries in your recorder, but PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE plug it into the wall when you do your interview. Never rely on battery power for an interview. If you lift the rubber flap on the left side of the recorder you'll see where to plug the power cord in.

When you've finished the interview, just put the British Library 'Clearance Note and Deposit Instructions' form into the box with the recorder. I'll file it when the recorder comes back.

After you do your interview, you can put the interview straight onto your computer using the USB cable that's in the box. This means you're interview is backed up (good for peace of mind). Also, you can start transcribing (make sure you re-read the transcription guidelines before you begin)

I need to have your recorder back as soon as you get back to Sheffield after Easter. We have a lot of people doing interviews, and only four recorders- so if you return a recorder a day late, you may be forcing somebody else to cancel their interview. I cannot stress enough how important this is.

Good luck with your interview!

Best
Alec

10. Email response upon receiving draft interview transcript from student

- The first edited draft should be attached to this email

Dear

Thanks for sending your interview transcript. Here's how the proofing process will work:

First, we read through the transcript and correct any (to us) glaringly obvious misspelled proper names. Then, we send a hard copy of the transcript to the interviewee, who corrects other proper names. Then we incorporate their changes, and proofread the full document for spelling and punctuation errors. Then, we'll email the proofed transcript, with track-changes enabled. This way, you'll be able to look over the document to make sure that you're happy with the changes we've made.

We've done the initial proof, and I've attached the document to this email (with track-changes enabled). Please have a look at it to make sure that our changes look all right to you. You were there doing the interview, so will be sensitive to details that we aren't aware of. As you'll see, I've
changed a few obvious typos while I was going through, as well as the proper names - but the more thorough proofing will come later.

Thanks
Alec

11. Email to students who are late submitting their transcripts
   ▪ This is bound to be an issue. Here's a polite but firm way of handling it.

Dear _____

I don't seem to have the transcript of your interview yet. I've you've sent it already, please re-send it, because it hasn't reached me.

If you haven't sent it yet, please send it to me by the end of this week. If you need more time, let me know so that we can set a deadline that will work for you.

Best
Alec

12. Invitation to write an article about conducting the interview for an online student journal
   ▪ This is a nice way for students to extend their involvement with the project.

Dear _____

Congratulations! You're now almost completely through the interview process (there's nothing for you to do but have a look at the final proof when I email it to you). From your first contact with your interviewee, through planning the interview, traveling to meet the interviewee, conducting your interview, and transcribing it. You've done quite a bit, and you should feel pleased with yourself.

Now I'm going to ask you to consider doing one more thing: write a short article about the interview. We would consider any article for publication on the Student Ambassador Network online journal (http://cilass-student-journal.group.shef.ac.uk/) - though if you don't want it to be public, just let me know.

There are two ways you could go about writing the piece. First, you could write it up like a magazine profile - this is a very different sort of record from a transcript, and gives you an opportunity to make your voice heard. I'm sure you know what sort of piece I mean, but as an example, take a look at this profile of Barack Obama in the New Yorker from 2004: http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/05/31/040531fa_fact1.

Notice the physical description on the first page: what people are wearing, what sort of building they're in - all this stuff is lost in the interview transcript.

Second, you could write a more reflective piece about the nature of the interview itself - considering it as a personal experience, a social event, or a piece of evidence.

I have a personal interest in your response, because I don't have any idea what it's like, as a second-year, to contact an elderly stranger and interview them - and since we hope to run projects like this again in the future, it'll be very helpful to get your views.
If you found it extraordinary, I want to know why - if you feel uncomfortable about it, I want to know why.

Would you do it again? Would you do it differently? How would you want your interview used by researchers? How would you *not* want it used?

If, like me, you find word-limits helpful, I suggest you aim for 1500 words. If you don't like word limits, send me anything. I won't mind if what you send me is 300 words long or 3000.

There's no strict deadline for this, but I advise writing it and sending it to me by the 6th of February. After that the new term will start, and odds are very good that you'll have too much new stuff to think about.

Thanks for all your hard work
Alec