Abstract

This paper reviews critical developments in the international history of oral history and outlines four paradigmatic revolutions in theory and practice:
the postwar renaissance of memory as a source for 'people's history'; the
development, from the late 1970s, of 'postpositivist' approaches to
memory and subjectivity; a transformation in perceptions about the role of
the oral historian as interviewer and analyst from the late 1980s; and the
digital revolution of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Threaded through
discussion of these paradigm shifts are reflections upon four factors that
have impacted oral history and, in turn, been significantly influenced by oral
historians: the growing significance of political and legal practices in which
personal testimony is a central resource; the increasing interdisciplinarity of
approaches to interviewing and the interpretation of memory; the
proliferation from the 1980s of studies concerned with the relationship
between history and memory; and the evolving internationalism of oral
history.

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