

IDEAS for WRITING MEMOIRS – For Wakatipu U3A, 9 May 2016

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PLAN THE BOOK

- Think about the format of the finished product.
- Size ?(A4 most economical).
- Visualise it
- Who is it about – One person – a family – a business - (Living people are easier to interview)
- Who are you writing it for? Children – grandchildren?
- Study other memoir books – What do you like – not like?
- Make a ‘mind map’ of the life and of sources.
- Make a Visual Timeline to identify possible chapters.

COLLECT, COLLECT, COLLECT AND COPY

- Death notices, Cemetery records, letters, diaries, cards, scrapbooks, school year books, maps, get full war records (order online 1 free set a year)
- Marriage, Birth, Death certificates
- Search www.paperspast.co.nz , local library historical section. (Hocken /Toitu in Otago)

OLD PHOTOS

Do not re-photograph – always scan at 300 + dpi in (Kodak contact 1200=A4) scan in colour - even if it is a Black & White photo. (scan slides 2400 dpi or higher) File in MANUAL Hierarchical folders - NOT by date. Use ‘Photoshop Elements’ to fix old photographs marks & stains.

ORGANISE ORGANISE ORGANISE

- Start with a clip folder, A – Z by chapter for notes & clippings. Use concertina folders – file boxes –
- Organise EVERY bit of paper so you can find it on the spot later. Instantly.
- Make a timeline of events – people - set up a pinup board (like detectives!)
- Find a quiet spot to work - throw every snippet you collect into your system

FAMILY TREES - Develop a small family tree for just a few generations- Great for keeping facts at hand. - www.ancestry.com.au is worth investing in as it provides links to other peoples trees, but be careful to check exact facts before linking. Family Tree Maker software synchronizes with Ancestry.com

INTERVIEWS

- Use digital recorders, the interview can be kept on your computer as a file
- The iPhone with an Audio App is better than any tape recorder
- No more than an hour at a time – take along photos to get them talking - Interview as many people as you can – start with the most ‘fragile people’ - ‘Express Scribe’ is software that helps slow or speed up when transcribing.

WRITING

- As you collect your clip file will grow – then take out a section of notes and plan/ write an essay / chapter - your writing will become like a friend in your head - Get another person to edit and proof. - ALWAYS type in WORD software – or WORD for MAC COMPUTERS
- Having trouble with computers? BUY A MAC! MUCH easier to use - intuitive - auto backup every hour - one operating system for years - attach devices automatically
- BACKUP as you work – keep an extra backup off-site – Use external hard drive as well as pen drives

PUBLISHING

- Type text in WORD BUT DO NOT do your book layout in ‘Word’ (Photos jump)
- Cut & Paste text (from Word) into publishing software. Use ‘Publisher’ software (for Windows PC) or ‘Pages’ (for Macs). Professionals use ‘Indesign’ software for books. PRINTING -
- Use local printers you can go to for advice - get quotes for different print runs
- Get good advice on binding - covers - cover design - paper quality
- Print plenty of copies - unit price goes down as print run goes up - Think about who needs a copy.