

**Handbook for Families Creating an
Interactive Biography
Version 1**



*Welcome and thank you for participating in this project. This handbook is designed to introduce you to the **Interactive Biography** project and help you prepare for it. We will be working together in creating an interactive biography for your relative. One of your jobs will be to choose and assemble the content for the biography. We hope to answer some of the questions you may have, while providing you with some ideas on how to get you started.*

1. The Interactive Biography Project

The biography we will be creating in this project will hopefully offer a meaningful and engaging glimpse into some of the important events in your loved one's life. The memories you share will cover numerous topics, time periods and events.

This project will touch upon histories that:

- **Discuss memories** – *Your relative may or may not recall the stories being told. The experience may be like listening to a new story or one that has been told over many times.*
- **Offer insight and perspective** – Your relative will watch these stories and may understand them as a representation of their life. Some of the perspectives offered in the biography may be unfamiliar to them. The overall perspective(s) can be important and valuable to them.
- **Are subjective** – The stories will be told from your own point of view, but feel free to include interesting events for which you weren't present.
- **Are coherent and continuous** – The biography can include a range of time periods, themes, and content. They will differ and come together in many different ways.
- **Are thematic** – The biography will be connected not just by a timeline but by themes.
- **Are recognition- and communication-oriented** – Some of the content may offer additional thought, support, or value than the everyday conversations.
- **Involve possibility and change** – The biography may touch upon times of great changes or opportunities.
- **Are endless** – Some content may not have definitive conclusions or may still be continuing today.
- **Involve difficulties** – Some memories may include difficult memories. We can discuss the value of this as it may have some benefits or drawbacks. Ultimately it will be the family's decision what to include.

2. The Goals

This project can offer a wide variety of goals. This part of the handbook focuses on the general objectives that you may wish to focus on. Hopefully, reviewing these goals will help you generate some ideas regarding possible biographical content.

The goals are:

- **Stimulation** – The memories you will share will hopefully evoke some reaction.
- **Emphasize strengths and abilities** – You may wish to focus on your loved one's assets.
- **Leave a legacy** – This project offers a medium that will provide information on your relative for years to come.
- **Gain perspective** – Sharing memories may help you gain a new perspective into the life of your loved one.
- **Generational bond; Family membership enforced** – This goal may be achieved through contributions from a range of family members.
- **Emotional reaction** – This can be either positive or negative. Some stories that appear negative may offer extreme value in terms of perseverance, strength, and triumph.
- **Enhanced quality of life** – Being reminded of the past may help improve general well-being.
- **Enhanced care, respite, bonding** – This biography may become a tool that enhances the relationships in your relative's daily life.
- **Moral development** – Many stories may have overarching morals that are valuable to both your relative and the family.
- **Optimism** – Stories can help promote optimistic feelings.
- **Shared experience** – Having the opportunity to share memories of your loved one will also serve to remind your family of the numerous memories you have in common.
- **Communication, distance-based** – Family members who are far away can be involved in this project by helping to contribute material. They

may offer some forgotten stories, new knowledge, photographs, memorabilia, and more.

- **Multi-modal** – This project seeks to be multi-modal and stimulate many of the senses. Namely, we hope to include music as well as imagery in the biography. We can include video interviews, music clips, photographs and more.
- **Personal** – This biography is made specifically for your relative and may include some personal material.
- **Dynamic** – The interactive nature of our project allows the biography to be dynamic. The person viewing the biography can chose the content that they would like to view next. We hope that this interaction helps promote a positive and stimulating experience.
- **Remembering** – Your relative may or may not recall all of the stories. This will be a factor when presenting the content.

In the space provided below, list some of the goals that may be most important to you, your relative, and your family:

3. What to Include: Content Types

Many different types of content can be used in this project. It is important to include anything that may be of significance to your loved one. You may want to look through old journals, photographs, memorabilia, collections, remnants, mail, or think about memories your loved one often shared with others. Photographs or videos of places and objects can be made.

The finished biography may contain:

- **Audio and Video** – Stories, anecdotes, and jokes
- **Music** – Your relative may enjoy the option of listening to their favorite music from different times in their life
- **Still Picture** – Photographs of people, places, or items

In the space provided below, list some of the content that your relative will find most enjoyable (please indicate if any may be less enjoyable).

4. What to include: Choosing Themes

A vital aspect of this project involves choosing appropriate 'life themes'. You may want to consider sharing memories that involve various aspects of your relative's life. Below, we have included a list of possible themes, as well as some questions that you can ask yourself. You may want to discuss your relative's life prior to their illness, however you may want to include aspects from their current day-to-day life.

Time Periods and Experiences

- **Childhood** – What were some important moments or aspects from your relative's childhood? Where does your relative's name come from? What did he or she want to be when s/he grew up? Did s/he have any special pets or toys?

- **Youth** – What were some important moments or aspects from your relative's youth? What did your relative look like in his or her high school yearbook? Do your relative have any special friends or influences?

- **Education** – Did your relative enjoy school? Did s/he enjoy learning on his or her own? Was a lot of time spent in the library?

- **Profession/Career** – What career ambitions did your loved one have? What are the important achievements? How did his/her career evolve?

- **Middle age** – What were some important moments or aspects during your relative's middle age years? Did your relative develop new interests during this period?

- **Life today** – Are there any life changes that can be discussed? What kind of care and assistance does your loved one prefer? Are there specific activities that he or she prefers to do independently?

Personhood

- **Personality** – What makes your relative laugh? Smile? Sad? Upset? Are there any favorite jokes or classic stories? Does your relative have any pet peeves? What characteristics is s/he known for?

- **Values/Religion/Spirituality** – What are your loved one's beliefs? Does s/he have traditional values or customs?

- **Rituals** – Were there any daily rituals that were important such as bed time, the newspaper paper, meal time, etc. What quirks does your loved one have?

- **Health history** – Is your relative the type of person that was rarely ill? Did he or she prefer to treat themselves at home when the flu hit? Are there any aspects about their current illness that can be discussed?

- **Losses/tragedy** – What events have challenged your relative? How did s/he cope?

Interests and Accomplishments

- **Achievements and strengths** – What goals did your relative spend a lot of time working towards? Did s/he always have a knack for making others feel better when they were down? What do you admire most about him or her?

- **Culture and languages** – Is your relative interested in distant culture and languages? Does your family have a strong cultural history?

- **Hobbies** – Cooking, athletics, traveling, reading, card games, clubs, volunteering, music, art, collecting, traveling, tools, etc.

- **Leisure activities** – How did your relative spend their free time? Was free time alone spent differently than free time with family or friends?

Social Factors

- **Family** – What are some important moments or aspects from your relative’s family life? What made your relative’s family proud? What role does family play in your relative’s life?

- **Friends** – Does your relative have a large number of friends? A small number of close friends? Did s/he keep in touch with any childhood friends?

- **Social history** – Has social interaction played an important role in your relative’s life? What types of activities did s/he prefer? How did your relative act in social settings?

- **Celebrations** – What were some important celebrations from your relative’s life? Did your relative enjoy entertaining?

- **Community** – Where has your relative lived? What cities? What did the homes look like? Pictures?

Other Themes or Content

- **Other** – What was a typical day like?

5. Creating Introduction and Conclusion Segments

When the biography first begins playing, an introduction segment will be shown. The introduction segment has two purposes. First, it provides an opportunity for you to greet your relative and introduce yourself, and secondly, it allows you to briefly explain the system and what to do. At the end of the introduction segment, your loved one will be familiar with the speaker (you), and will have an idea of what's coming up.

The introduction segment might include a personal introduction, a greeting, an explanation of what's to come, an some brief instruction regarding the interactive component. In the space provided below, list any additional features or specific items that you would like to include in the introduction segment.

When the biography ends, a conclusion segment will be shown. The conclusion segment will let your relative know that the biography is over. It can also let them know that they are welcome to watch it over again as they choose. In the space provided below, list any additional features or specific items that you would like to include in the conclusion segment.

6. Tips

We have created a short list of tips that might help you along the way. Remember that you don't have to follow any of these suggestions; they are simply provided to help you tackle the project.

- Throughout the previous section, think of the different kinds of content that can be included regarding that theme. For example, perhaps you have a song in mind that is representative of your relative's personality. This song can be included. Perhaps there is a photograph of your relative where they are engaged in a hobby or sport.
- Consider the question, "What would your loved one put in a time capsule?" This question may help direct you to possessions that are significant in your relative's life.
- Consider the question, "How does my relative want to be remembered?"
- When tying together themes with content types consider any people, places, music, stories, poems, books, jokes, or sayings that may have influenced the event.
- Remember that your relative will have this biography for some time. So, introduce yourself and the system clearly, and be as detailed as possible in your descriptions.
- Even though we are interviewing you, the stories don't always need to involve you. For example, if your relative has a story (or stories!) that he or she has shared repeatedly in the past about a certain event, you can recount this story.

7. How Interactivity Will Play a Role

Since interactivity is an important element of this project, we will have to decide how this biography will be navigated. For example, there may be a list of themes to choose from, a list of time periods to choose from, or simple options of going with one segment or another. In order to present these options, the biography will contain 'Interactive Instructional Lead-In' segments that will explain the system functionality and introduce the choices at hand. These decisions have not been finalized because we hope to get your feelings on them. At that point we can discuss the layout of the segments in more detail.

In order to help us learn more about your relative, please answer the following two questions. What activities or hobbies s/he *currently* takes part in (e.g. listening to music, playing bingo, etc.)? What household items does s/he currently use independently (e.g. the television, kitchen utensils, toothbrushes)?

8. Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions or concerns feel free to ask the researchers.