



Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling  
Centre d'histoire orale et de récits numérisés  
Concordia University • Université Concordia

## **GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

**New Version**  
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## **1. MISSION STATEMENT**

The Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling / Centre d'histoire orale et de récits numérisés (COHDS/CHORN) explores the connections between oral history, digital media, and the arts, and opens up access to and analysis of the audiovisual oral history record. As a centre of production by way of a wide array of media, it shares its findings with diverse audiences, both within and beyond the academy. COHDS serves as a point of convergence for collaborative research, teaching and publishing among faculty and students at Concordia, as well as community-based projects operating at the local, national and international levels. Community based researchers and artists are an integral part of our community of practice. Sharing authority is at the core of our research ethic.

## **2. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

The administrative structure of COHDS is governed by Concordia University's policy on Research Units. It consists of two co-directors, the Administrative Board, and the Annual Assembly.

### **a) CO-DIRECTORS: APPOINTMENT AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Co-Directors are the appointed heads of COHDS, a University recognized research unit. The Co-Directors are responsible for the scientific direction and administration of the research unit. In addition, the Co-Directors oversee the coordination of the activities including student training, outreach and special events, as well as managing communications both within the unit and externally to partner institutions, external members, funding agencies, and the community.

The Co-Directors report to the VPRGS in consultation with the Dean or Associate Dean, Research in Arts and Science. Key areas for such reporting include: budget, space, human resources, and internal relations with other Concordia units such as departments and faculties, and inter-institutional affiliations. The Co-Directors have the day-to-day responsibility for staff operations of the unit, as well as ensuring that the unit conforms to the relevant Collective Agreements and policies in effect within Concordia University. The Co-Directors are responsible for the budget of the unit and for preparing the annual report and review material for renewal of the recognition status. A plan for securing external and internal funding for the unit's operations, as well as research activities, should be developed and revised on a continuous basis.

The Co-Directors are appointed for three years which can be automatically approved for a second three-year term, for a total of six years. An outgoing Co-Director can be re-nominated for a third term following this procedure. The procedure for choosing a Co-Director must conform to Concordia University's policy governing Research Units.

## **b) ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD (AB)**

This seven member body oversees the strategic direction and administration of COHDS and its research projects. The AB is responsible for determining the Centre's policies and procedures as well as core membership and affiliation. In addition to the two Co-Directors, the AB consists of three other core members, as well as a community representative and a student representative. The core members are elected to serve two year terms by a meeting of core members. The community and student representatives are elected to serve for one year by a meeting of community or student affiliates. The Associate Director is an ex-officio member, acting as recording secretary for the meetings. There are at least three meetings, yearly.

## **c) ANNUAL ASSEMBLY**

COHDS organizes an annual meeting of all affiliated members. The purpose of this Annual Assembly is to advise the Administrative Board and to act as a forum for information exchange between affiliates. Elections are also organized as part of this meeting to renew the AB by electing a community and a student representative every year, as well as core members when needed.

## **3. MEMBERSHIP, PARTICIPATION, AND REPORTING**

All affiliates are expected to be active in the intellectual life of COHDS, attending seminars and/or workshops whenever possible.

Anyone wishing to become an affiliated member of COHDS must fill out an application form and attach a curriculum vitae as well as a 150-200 word project statement. New applications will be vetted by the Centre's Associate Director and its Co-Directors and might be going to the Administrative Board (AB) if needed. The AB might invite the input of all existing core members in cases where a person is applying to become a Core Member of COHDS. All core and affiliated members must submit a short annual report of their activities by March 1<sup>st</sup> each year so that these might be integrated into our Annual Report. Members who have not been active in the previous year will cease to be an affiliate of COHDS but are welcome to re-apply. Affiliates are expected to acknowledge the contribution of COHDS in their work when appropriate.

COHDS is required to submit an annual report to Concordia's Research Office with a copy to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts by May 31st. The report should provide an overview of the activities during the past year and its financial status (a budget for the past year and a budget forecast for the coming year). To facilitate this, all affiliated members must submit by March 1<sup>st</sup> a short summary of their COHDS-related activities over the previous year as well as planned activities for the coming year.

#### **4. CATEGORIES OF AFFILIATION**

Major external funding bodies such as the FQRSC have specific expectations regarding categories of affiliation, particularly as it relates to university faculty. COHDS has the following six broad categories of affiliation:

**a) CORE MEMBERS** – are active and productive university researchers or practitioner researchers/creators who are deeply invested in the research activities and intellectual life at COHDS. As individuals whose connection to COHDS is substantial and long-standing, core members advise the Administrative Board in setting the centre's strategic direction.

**b) AFFILIATES** – are faculty members, students, community-based researchers and artists or affiliated organizations whose oral and digital history activities enrich our community of practice. Affiliated members are still expected to significantly advance the mission and outreach of COHDS, through regular collaboration and attendance at seminars or special events, but will not be expected to take on an unpaid administrative load.

**c) VISITING RESEARCHERS/ORAL HISTORIANS** – are visiting researchers who have applied to be affiliated with COHDS during their stay in Montreal. The duration of these residencies are from one month to one year.

**d) POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWS** – are those affiliated researchers who have been awarded a post-doctoral fellowship under the supervision of a core member.

**e) STAFF** - are members directly employed by COHDS or by core faculty members on specific research projects based wholly or in part at the Centre. The Associate Director will be hired by a committee consisting of the Co-Directors (or designates) and one other member of the Administrative Board. Normally, staff vacations are taken when universities are not in session and all vacation plans should be discussed at least two months in advance with the Co-Directors. It is the responsibility of the staff member to keep a record of their activities and their hours worked (over-time, days off). All full and part-time staff members, employed directly by COHDS, will submit a report for each meeting of the AB (so it can be circulated 5 work days prior to the meeting).

**f) INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS** – are students or non students recruited by COHDS or by affiliated members for a specific period of time (usually 120 hours) and for a specific task. Internships are unpaid but can be credited if the student's academic program allows it.

## **5. ACCESS TO RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE**

All core members and affiliated members of COHDS will have access to the Centre's recording equipment and computer workstations during designated lab hours. During these times, COHDS will provide limited lab support. Any affiliate may book the video-conference room, training lab or interview room on a first-come, first serve basis. However, should the demands on these spaces grow significantly – preference may have to be accorded to core members. Core members may request a key so they can access the COHDS complex at their convenience.

Depending on the budget, core members may be eligible for partial payment for conference travel for COHDS related research, as are affiliated members. Free printing, translation subsidies, and grant writing support may also be provided. Should COHDS be able to offer student bursaries, those who have a supervisor who is a core member will have preference – though other student affiliates would still be encouraged to apply. The Associate Director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Centre under the overall direction of the two Co-Directors. Should an affiliate member fail to bring back equipment on schedule or return damaged equipment (without compensation as per the lending agreement), their affiliation with the Centre may be forfeit.

## **6. ARCHIVES**

The COHDS archive is composed of audio and video interviews as well as paper documents produced by research projects or individuals, which have been donated to the Centre. The archive is maintained by COHDS in order to offer academic and community-based researchers access to the unique information contained in the donated material. Hundreds of interviews are accessible to researchers, who may access our collection through our catalogue. The material may be accessed by researchers who agree to respect the regulations for use of all archival material, as well as any specific restrictions placed upon the material in question. The *COHDS Norms, Procedures, and Protocols* document (as amended IN 2014) sets out our guidelines for the donation of and access to oral history interviews.

## **7. STUDENTS**

COHDS wishes to promote the professional development of undergraduate and graduate students from many disciplines and various universities. Student affiliates will be profiled on the website and be invited, whenever possible, to participate in COHDS seminars and workshops as well as at conferences. In line with FQRSC and SSHRC rules, when the budget permits, financial support for conference travel is available to students. Space on the COHDS server may also be allocated for their professional websites.

## **8. RESEARCH ETHICS**

All COHDS affiliates and core members are expected to follow established ethical guidelines regarding research with human subjects. These ethical guidelines, as well as our model consent form, can be found on our website. At the core, is the requirement for informed consent and the mitigation of harm. The interviewee's right of withdrawal during the interview must also be respected. Faculty and students must get the approval of their university ethics board before conducting an interview.