

**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. It collects, archives, analyzes, and shares audiovisual oral history records within and beyond academia. One of the key ways it does so is through its members' projects and initiatives, which have historically shaped the Centre's identity, values, and ethics. Since 2018, COHDS includes the Acts of Listening Lab (ALLab), a state of the art performance and recording space located within the Centre. The ALLab prioritizes research and creation in relation to oral history, oral history performance, and listening.

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. The principle of shared authority is at the core of our research ethics, our administrative structure, the training that we offer, and our public programming. In the spirit of sharing authority, COHDS positions itself as a threshold between the University and the community.

**2. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE** COHDS is an established, major research unit within Concordia University, which provides the Centre with its annual operating budget. As such, COHDS follows Concordia's Policy on Research Units. The Centre's governance structure consists of: two Co-Directors, who are full-time faculty members at Concordia and core affiliates of COHDS; a Coordinator and Community Facilitator (CCF), who is a paid staff member, and; an Administrative Board (AB), made up of elected representatives of staff, student, and community affiliate. The Co-Directors, CCF, and AB report annually to the COHDS community via our Annual General Assembly.

**a) Co-Directors: Appointment and Responsibilities** The Co-Directors are the appointed heads of COHDS. 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 Centre's 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, and the Dean or Associate Dean, Research, in Fine Arts. 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 oversee the preparation of the annual report and review material for renewal of the recognition status. The Co-Directors seek external and internal funding for the unit's operations, as well as its research activities, on a continuous basis. Co-Directors are usually appointed for a three-year term, 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 on Research Units.

**b) Administrative Board (AB)** This seven-member body oversees the strategic direction and administration of COHDS. The AB helps to determine the Centre's policies and procedures, as well as guide the Co-Directors, when needed, in questions such as research collaborations, affiliation, and to vote on core membership. In addition to the two Co-Directors, the AB consists of three core members / full-time faculty member affiliates (who can be internal or external to Concordia), one community representative, and one student representative. Faculty members serve two-year terms while students and community representatives serve one-year terms. At their term's end, each Board member is responsible for consulting with their constituency to seek expressions of interest for replacement members. These candidates present themselves at the Annual General Assembly, where the appropriate constituency votes by secret ballot. When there is only one candidate, that individual becomes a member of the Board by acclamation. Where there is a tie between two candidates, they may share the post by identifying a first and second representative. The Coordinator and Community Facilitator (CCF) is an ex-officio member of the AB, acting as recording secretary for the meetings. The AB meets at least three times yearly. In any given year, should the Director of the Acts of Listening Lab not also be serving as one of the two Co-Directors, they should be invited to participate on the Board.

**c) Annual General Assembly** COHDS organizes an annual meeting to which all affiliated members are invited. The purpose of this Assembly is fourfold. First, the aim of the meeting is to inform the community about recent and upcoming events and opportunities, as well as members' accomplishments, and institutional or operational challenges. The Assembly is, second, the Centre's forum for collective discussion about strategic directions and long-term vision. The Assembly, third, provides a platform for exchange between affiliates, and to this end usually incorporates a keynote or other signature event that encourages discussion and debate about oral history and/or oral history research-creation. Fourth, the Assembly is the setting for the Centre's annual elections to the Administrative Board, and where we recognize new core affiliates.

**3. MEMBERSHIP, PARTICIPATION, AND REPORTING** Anyone wishing to become an affiliated member of COHDS must first fill out an application form, found on our website. Applications are vetted by the Centre's Coordinator and Community Facilitator and its Co-Directors and may also be referred to the Administrative Board (AB) if needed. The Centre welcomes applications from any individual, organization, or group with an interest in and desire to explore oral history and/or oral history research-creation. Core affiliation is a special distinction reserved for affiliates who have made a sustained contribution to the COHDS community over time. Nominations of core membership may be made by anyone (including the affiliate in question). Nominations may be directed to the Co-Directors and/or the CCF, who will share it with the Administrative Board, who makes the decision. All affiliates are expected to be active in the intellectual and creative life of COHDS, attending seminars and/or workshops whenever possible, and contributing to the mentorship of newer members.

Every summer, as per Concordia's Policy on research units, COHDS submits an Annual Report to Concordia's Research Office with copies to the Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Science and the Faculty of Fine Arts. This report provides an overview of the Centre's 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, all affiliates must submit a short annual report of their activities each spring so that these can be integrated into the institutional Annual Report. Members who do not submit their report two years running will cease to be affiliates, but are always welcome to re-apply. Affiliates are expected to acknowledge COHDS's support in their work when appropriate.

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

COHDS uses the following categories to describe different kinds 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 have an important role to play in supporting the Administrative Board's work to develop the Centre's strategic directions. Typically it is the members of the Administrative Board who put forward nominations for Core Members. These nominations are discussed at the first Board meeting of the new academic year (usually in September), in advance of the Annual General Assembly. The Board then votes on new Core Members, and these approved nominations/new Core Members are then announced at the Annual General Assembly.

b) **Affiliates** – are faculty members, students, community-based researchers and artists or affiliated organizations whose oral history and oral history research-creation activities enrich our community of practice. Affiliated members are expected to advance the mission and outreach of COHDS, through regular attendance at seminars or special events and collaboration.

c) **Visiting Researchers / Visiting Artists** – are unpaid visitors to COHDS and/or the Acts of Listening Lab, who have applied to be affiliated during their stay in Montreal. The duration of these residencies vary but typically last from one month to one year.

d) **Post-Doctoral Fellows** – are paid affiliated researchers who have been awarded a post-doctoral fellowship under the supervision of a core member.

**5. ACCESS TO RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE** All core members and affiliated members of COHDS have access to the Centre's recording equipment and shared computer workstations during designated lab hours. COHDS provides limited lab support on an advertised schedule during our main months of operation (September-April). Affiliates may book our in-house interview room and the main meeting room (the "Sun Room") on a first-come, first serve basis. However, should there be competing demands for these spaces, priority will be given to core members' requests. Core members may request a key so they can access COHDS after hours. Should an affiliate 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. Our Rights and Responsibilities of Affiliates document on our website provides more information on affiliate access, and our website may be consulted for a partial list of our technical equipment and software.

**6. ARCHIVES** The COHDS Archives is composed primarily of audio and audiovisual interviews in collections donated by research projects and individuals. Its mission is to collect and preserve oral histories and supporting documentation created by or in collaboration with our community. The Archives are maintained by an Archivist employed by the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling. Researchers wishing to use the archives must first agree in writing to respect the regulations for access and use on all archival material, as well as any specific restrictions placed upon the material in question. COHDS reserves the right to refer any research/access/use requests to the Co-Directors. Our Access Agreement form and our policies regarding donations and access to the COHDS Archives are regularly updated and can be found on our website.

**7. STUDENTS** COHDS aim to promote the professional development of undergraduates and graduate students, whether they are based at Concordia or at other universities. We welcome students from all disciplines to visit our Centre and to apply to become affiliates. Student affiliates have a public profile on our website and are regularly invited to participate in COHDS seminars and workshops as well as at conferences, including our own, annual “Emerging Scholars” symposium.

**8. RESEARCH ETHICS** The core of research ethics for COHDS is the requirement for informed consent and the mitigation of harm. The interviewee’s right of withdrawal during the interview and beyond is also a central value that researchers must respect. We offer detailed ethical guidelines, as well as model consent forms, on our website. All COHDS affiliates and core members are expected to follow established ethical guidelines regarding research with human subjects in accordance with their community’s values and/or the formal processes outlined by their institution. For example, Concordia faculty and students must also familiarize themselves with Concordia’s official ethics protocols process if interviews are going to be part of their thesis research and/or published work. All professors and registered students must familiarize themselves with their institution’s ethics protocols and seek the approval of their university’s ethics board before conducting any interviews.

**9. STAFF** The COHDS team includes several part-time employees: the Coordinator and Community Facilitator (CCF), the Lab Coordinator, and the Archivist. The CCF is the main staff position at COHDS. The CCF is hired by a committee consisting of the Co-Directors (or delegate) and one other member of the Administrative Board. The CCF is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Centre under the overall direction of the two Co-Directors. The Lab Coordinator is responsible for the Centre’s main computer lab, our technical equipment, and provides training and support when appropriate. The Archivist is responsible for the COHDS Archives. Staff vacations are taken during the summer term. Any major absences from campus should be discussed with the Co-Directors at least two months in advance. It is the responsibility of all staff members to keep a record of their activities and their hours worked (over-time, sick

days, etc). All staff members employed directly by COHDS must report any issues of concern to the CCF/Co-Directors promptly, to facilitate timely action and/or discussion with the Board. Staffing and hiring questions are the purview of the Co-Directors and the Administrative Board, who may meet privately (without staff) when needed. When core faculty affiliates hire staff to work on research projects based fully or in part at the Centre, every effort will be made to provide shared workspace for these individuals. When affiliates' space requests and/or technical requirements are in conflict with COHDS's day to day operations, however, the latter will take priority.

**10. INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS** COHDS welcomes interns and volunteers. Volunteers may offer their time either for specific events/projects or on an ongoing basis. Internships are unpaid but can be credited if the student's academic program allows it. Please note that there is no staff supervision during COHDS's annual, six-week summer closure (end of June through to mid-August).