

HOW TO LIVE FOREVER

Writing & Sharing Your Sisterhood / Region Story

RESOURCES & EXAMPLES

Articles & Publications

Keep chronicling the history of your nonprofit, Alyce Lee Stansbury (2019)
<https://eu.tallahassee.com/story/money/2019/08/03/keep-chronicling-history-your-nonprofit/1904799001/>

How to write the history of your business or organization
<https://www.chatterboxpr.co.nz/blog-2/how-to-write-the-history-of-your-business-or-organisation/>

15 Reasons You Should Write a Company History Book,
Debbie Y. Tayo-Odeshilo (2022)
<https://www.thewritersforhire.com/15-reasons-you-should-write-a-company-history-book/>

How to Do Oral History, The Smithsonian, 2017
<https://siarchives.si.edu/history/how-do-oral-history>
VERY helpful article

Oral History Interviews, The American Folklife Center
<https://www.loc.gov/folklife/familyfolklife/oralhistory.html>

Samples and Tips on How to Write Your Local Church History, Tai McGuire
<https://justdisciple.com/samples-local-church-history/>

How to Write a Church History by Eli H. Sheldon, 2010
<https://cdn.bgco.org/2017/07/01102650/HOW-TO-WRITE-A-CHURCH-HISTORY.pdf>

Bonus! For your personal stories: **StoryWorth.com**

By signing up for one year of storytelling, you or a loved one (if you give a gift subscription) will receive a weekly question meant to stir up long-buried memories or unearth perspectives previously unknown. At the end of the year, the stories are collected into one hardcover book, complete with photos and captions (that can be included with the stories).

Women's League has become a partner with Story Worth so when you use their referral link, you get a \$10 discount and WL makes a small commission as well. Just use this

referral link to find out more and get the discount:

<https://buy.storyworth.com?oid=37&affid=116&promo=5KxpaZtx>

The Committee

- Chair(s): one or two people who are dedicated to the compilation of the history and have the enthusiasm to drive the project
- Assign committee members to head the tasks:
 - Writing
 - Interviewing
 - Identifying archival information
 - Sorting & choosing pictures
 - Printing and layout
 - PR & distribution
 - Fundraising

10 Tips to Writing a Successful History (adapted)

Mike Wicks (2017) mike@mpwicks.com

Full article: <https://www.mpwicks.com/10-tips-writing-successful-corporate-history/>

1. **Plan your history before you do anything else.** Use a mind-mapping technique to lay your history out and come up with a table of contents. Histories are often chronological, but they don't have to be – consider what the best approach is for your story. Be creative!
2. **Write in a readable, accessible, conversational style.** Write in short paragraphs. History does not have to be boring – imagine you are telling your story to someone at a cocktail party or over coffee. Less is often more, you don't have to write 100,000 words – it's not an academic treatise!
3. **Discover what makes your sisterhood or region tick.** What is its vision today? What was its founder's vision? What makes the company vibrant – what gives it life? Focus on your culture.
4. **Don't get bogged down in detail.** It's too easy to start telling the reader absolutely everything that has happened in your history and boring them to death. Focus on the big stuff, not the minutiae. What have been your greatest achievements? Not just in terms of big events, programs and fundraisers, but in your relationship to your members, your synagogue, or in the case of regions – to your sisterhoods, and the wider Jewish and secular community, as well as to Women's League.
5. **Interview people who have made a difference.** Not just the founders, or past presidents, but other key players and characters through the years – and make them human. Make the history as much about people as it is about events and achievements. An interview with the chair of the Judaica Shop or rummage sale or Torah Fund who has volunteered for 30-years can provide a powerful insight into the

human aspect of who you are. Anecdotes and memorable quotes can bring a book to life – they also bring the company you to life.

6. **Tell the story in images as well as in words.** A coffee table book approach is far more accessible than a dry academic work. A full color, approachable pamphlet or booklet is more likely to have an impact when it is easy to briefly look through.
7. **Dig deep for archival documents, photographs and other ephemera.** People are fascinated by old images and historical material and these have the power to draw people into your story. Think sepia shots of events and luncheons (with the hats and gloves!) 30- 40 or 50 years ago, or your first bulletin article or old program announcements.
8. **Break up your story with cameos of key individuals.** During the research and interview stages, listen carefully for quotable moments. Gather them like valuable, exotic truffles and use them to season your pages with evocative surprises.
9. **Be concerned with the look as well as the words!** How the final project will look, from illustrations and overall design to format, paper and binding is important. Good writing is only one aspect of making it readable and accessible.
10. **Be authentic** – people can see spin from a mile away. The more transparent, honest, open and forthright you are, the more fans you will have. That's not to say that you have to air your dirty laundry in public, but if there a few skeletons in your closet deal with them appropriately and use your story as a way to clear up any misconceptions.

PLUS Have fun!

Sharing your story:

Programs: In person & electronic

- Have a history launch
- Use the information for an Honoree Event
- Treasure Hunt - program highlighting the most interesting information discovered.
- Leaders Legacy (focus on past leaders and their impact on your sisterhood)
- Sukkot Ushpizot – Invite sisterhood leaders into your Sukkah (create small posters with picture and brief history)
- Share snippets of your oral history interviews
- “I remember when...” program and panel
- “Spotlights on Our History”

Through your website and electronic communication

- Adapt program ideas for periodic communication
- Website/web page: Include
- Lists (leadership, programs, projects)

- Videos of edited interviews
- Timeline
- Historic documents (whole or excerpted)
- Picture album
- The full story

Updating

- Identify an appropriate time period for updating your historical materials.
 - Following a major event
 - At the end of an administration
 - Annually
- Use milestones to publish an update of your history.
- Don't wait to do historical interviews with the elderly
- Make sure your website information is current and correct.

Examples

Women's League website

<https://www.wlcj.org/archives/>

They Dared to Dream (1918-1968)

<https://www.wlcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/They-Dared-to-Dream-1918-1968-1.pdf>

The Sixth Decade (1968-1978)

<https://www.wlcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/The-Sixth-Decade-1968-1978.pdf>

75 Years of Vision and Voluntarism (1918-1993)

<https://www.wlcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/75-Years-of-Vision-Voluntarism-1918-1993.pdf>

Garland of Grace (1917) Edited interviews with living past international presidents

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYQVOwA18KM> (video)

<https://www.wlcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/A-Garland-of-Grace-2017-A-Tribute-to-the-Presidents-of-Womens-League-for-Conservative-Judaism-transcript.pdf>

(transcript)

Timelines:

Women's League:

<https://www.wlcj.org/archives/100-years-of-womens-league/> (formatted)

<https://www.wlcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Womens-League-Timeline-1918-present.pdf> (spreadsheet – PDF)

Torah Fund: <https://www.wlcj.org/archives/torah-fund/torah-fund-timeline/> (narrative)

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Journal Lila Frost, Chair
Sisterhood of the Jewish Center of Kew Garden Hills, 1942-1967

CONTENTS:

Sisterhood Officers and Board 1967-1968
Through the years: Officers, Board, Past Pres.
Messages from: Synagogue & Sisterhood leadership
“The Ladies Auxiliary” list of members in 1942
Purpose of the Sisterhood
Articles on: Programs and special projects, Fundraising, Torah Fund, Braille,
Relationship to National Women’s League
Lists of women serving Sisterhood as Elected Directors, Officers, President
Paid listings/ads:
 Friends of Sisterhood In Memorium
 Our Children Full page ads
 Our Grandchildren

Website Histories

The Women of Temple B’rith Kodesh, Rochester, NY
<https://www.tbk.org/wri/tbk-history.html>

Women’s League International Northeast Region
<http://www.wlcjregion.org/northeast/region-history/>

Green Road Synagogue, Cleveland, Ohio
<https://www.greenroadssynagogue.org/history.html>

Temple Beth El, Rochester, NY
<https://www.tberochester.org/shalom/our-story/history/>

The Temple, Atlanta, Georgia
<https://www.the-temple.org/history>

Beth Meyer Synagogue, Raleigh, NC
<https://www.bethmeyer.org/about-us/our-history>

Beth Israel Synagogue, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
<http://thebethisrael.com/about/history/>

The Community Synagogue, Port Washington, NY
<http://thebethisrael.com/about/history/>