



**PEOPLES
PLACES**
AND THE HISTORY OF
WORDS
IN BRATTLEBORO, VT

Research Leader Guidelines for
Audio Production

(UPDATED NOVEMBER 2020)



The Brattleboro Words Project is pleased to include you as a community Research Leader (RL) or other project participant. The research you do, audio and imagery you collect and talents you (or your students) contribute, will help inform the first iteration of the **Brattleboro Words Trail**: self-guided audio walking, biking and driving tours

pegged to sites and personalities you will relate to our theme of “words” (history, books, authors, publishing, journalism, speeches, scripts, printing, letters, memoir etc). The audio tours will be accessible through our website and mobile devices, including a gps-triggered app. The Trail, including a beautifully rendered artistic map of the various sites, will be completed and presented to the public on October 23, 2020 at the opening of a three-month exhibition at the Brattleboro Museum and Art Center. In addition to the Trail, a book about our area’s fascinating history as a center of printing and publishing will also be released on that day. The Trail is expected to be a living enterprise that will grow over time providing a deep-mapping of people, places and words of our community’s past and present day.

Your mission is to gather audio that relates to your specific site (or sites) and the authors, personalities or themes you associate with same. We aim to give Trail users a high-quality, immersive experience, to bring the place and its story alive through creative audio segments we help you produce. This handbook offers some guidelines to consider as you go about your work.

Project recording equipment can be checked out at Brooks Memorial Library. RLs can also record alone in the quiet library first floor ‘Story Booth’ to secure a professional sound, or arrange studio space through us at the VPR Studio at the Latchis Theater or studios at BCTV. Training, one-on-one technical assistance and general support is always available by contacting Project staff at brattleborowords@gmail.com

APPROACH AND GUIDANCE

Research Leaders vary greatly in experience, from those with no audio or research experience to seasoned public radio commentators. One of the main points of the Project is to introduce diverse community members to audio storytelling about places in our midst. Research Leaders represent different ages and walks of life, including writers, college students, artists, musicians, veterans,

historians, families and teachers—the latter in turn inspiring their students around place-based education and the use of audio.

We hope you will be inspired to tell a story you think is important and relevant today. It is your passion for the topic that will inform your research and the resulting audio. What new things will you find or connections will you make?

Loosely speaking, we encourage Research Leaders to approach the site and the person or persons associated with it through various humanities angles: history, literature, linguistics, philosophy, ethics, jurisprudence; comparative religion and history, theory, and criticism of the arts. **The humanistic social sciences can also be taken into account:** political science, government, geography, anthropology, and sociology.

Research Leaders / Teachers Should Expect To:

- Investigate books written about your topic;
- Find anything actually written by your subject and collect good quotes so **we can hear their words**;
- Start your script and/or audio with a place, the site that your GPS-triggered audio is pinned to on the final web mapping and artistic physical maps we produce.
- Submit scripts to Lissa Weinmann (LRWeinmann@gmail.com) for review by a Production Team responsible for vetting and guiding the process
- Review and note any existing historical markers associated with your site;
- Visit the local or regional historical society to see if they have files, artifacts, maps or other information relating to your site (you can snap some photos with your phone and send them to us with a caption and credit line like: Credit: Bob Smith, Putney Historical Society);
- Send us a photo of yourself and any other imagery, quotes or other snippets you find that we can add to the website page we will build dedicated to your site as learning unfolds;
- Research whether your site was used as a setting for a story or novel (Scott Farm was setting for filming John Irving’s ‘Cider House Rules’;
- Review old newspapers and/or radio accounts, video, film, photos; See for example “Chronicling America” <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>
- Provide context for your subject, a sense of the time, the local, national and/or global backdrop, and how your story fits in. Good audio depends on specifics, imagery. Paint a brief picture for the listener;
- Contact, interview and record (we can help!) scholars, experts, family members or other voices you may wish to include to speak the words of the character you are studying;

Your research will give you a handle on your story, and allow you to start getting creative. Is there an illustrative skit that can be performed? What about using examples of the music of the time? What other sounds might you include? What kinds of elements could you use to immerse a listener in your story? Free sources of music and sound can be found at: <https://freesound.org/> and <https://freemusicarchive.org/>. Will you write a script and narrate? Or interview others and piece the audio together?

Project partners, scholars and [Project Leaders](#) are there to provide you with direction, insights, technical guidance, training, and other resources as needed. Area scholars from a variety of the humanities disciplines can speak with you, visit your classroom or otherwise help inform your understanding and work.

Your main point of contact will be Project Director Lissa Weinmann (LRWeinmann@gmail.com) and Assistant Project Director Desmond Peoples (BrattleboroWords@gmail.com), who can connect you with the help you may need from our Technical Director Reg Martell Reggie@BrattleboroWords.com or Creative Director Jen Austin (JenAustinVT@gmail.com) who will design and build your site's page on the BrattleboroWords.org website.

MONTHLY ROUNDTABLES FOR SHARING INFORMATION

Research Leaders are invited to share findings with other Project participants and the community at large at our ***Roundtable Discussions held the third (sometimes varies) Thursday of each month at 6pm.*** Research Leaders give a 15 to 30 minute presentation about their theme/site, we publicize and share it with other Research Leaders and the public. The events are free. The Roundtables convene at the specific site, at 118 Elliot in downtown Brattleboro or Brooks Library. Research Leaders may invite scholars/authors or others to augment a Roundtable Discussion, and an honorarium for them is possible. To see a list of the 20+ Roundtables the Project has mounted visit our website: <http://brattleborowords.org/roundtable-discussions/>

STARTING NOVEMBER 23, 2019 -- SATURDAY WORKSHOPS

After a series of great workshops in Fall 2019 with the Vermont Folklife Center, Project personnel will be hosting semi-regular Saturday workshops at 118 Elliot from 1 to 4 pm where researchers and field producers can gather to troubleshoot, learn and share their processes. One of our editors will be on hand to help with technical issues. Search for Saturday Workshops on our website or Facebook page to see the schedule (no Sat after Thanksgiving or Christmas).

MAKING SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

We hope Research Leaders will, to the extent they are able, interface with other community members who would like to contribute to illuminating their site, including artists, musicians, authors, students, scholars and sources willing to be interviewed to bring audio to life. Several composers are working on sites to develop music specifically for them.

The Research Leader, if desired, could interface with local students from 3rd to 12th grade and college students who may also share an interest in your site/topic. Research Leaders may also volunteer to review such student work. In addition to audio, classrooms may contribute artwork, photography and other digitized archival images, video, and handmade books, all of which will be vetted for potential use in the final audio tour and website.

RECORDING AUDIO

If you have a good digital audio recorder, especially one donated to your school from the Project, use it. Many schools participating in the Project have been gifted an audio set as part of the work; Technical assistance and training is always available, and if you want us to come help you record someone, just let us know. If you have questions about how to use the recorder, refer to the Equipment User's Guide on the site: <http://brattleborowords.org/equipment-guide/>. Or you can call or email the Project personnel indicated above. Practice several times before you actually record.

When you have a recording, follow our instructions to label it and load it up to the site under the 'Production Resources' tab on the top right of the home screen. Be sure to print one of the 'Release Forms' for anyone being interviewed that gives us permission to use their 'tape'. You can allow them to listen to the tape before it goes out, free of charge, to the public at large. We are also happy to put links to others' institutions / websites on your site page.

Project recording equipment can be checked out at Brooks Memorial Library. RLs can also record in the library first floor 'Story Booth' at Brooks to secure a professional sound (only room for one person at a time).

How many audio segments you submit is up to you. We expect the average site on the map to have 1 to 3 short segments, each 3 to 5 minutes long, but anything you contribute is needed and welcome. In general, depending on pacing, five minutes of talking translates to about 625-750 words. You can 'narrate' your script and/or recruit others to read or be the voice of your subject in the script; We have several actors who can help.

The first segment should, as in a lead paragraph in a news story, summarize the story, so if someone stops with the first one, they get the jist of the story. This may be a script you write for yourself or someone else to read. Remember, audio is best when it paints a picture.

Remember too that our goal is to set a scene for those who will likely be at the site, standing there, using the audio to illuminate the place and its connections to the past and the person you are studying and work to bring it alive for people today, so there is a lot of creative freedom for you. Listen to the finished Harris Hill examples on the site for a sense of what we are looking for. Imagine a visitor biking past Harris Hill wondering ‘What’s that?’ and stopping to listen to the audio on their cell phone through the Brattleboro Words Trail mobile app for a full, in-situ experience.

Subsequent segments can further elucidate aspects of the story, and be organized any way the RL sees fit. There could be a segment devoted to someone simply reading your favorite quotes or a single poem or newspaper excerpt from / about your subject.

Participants are not required to submit complete, polished segments unless they wish to.

Interviews, music, sections read from works, etc. can be submitted raw, but please try to edit long pieces down to what you think is important. All audio will be edited and ‘polished’ to reflect the tone of the Project, including unified intro and extro text/music for all sites with our Brattleboro Words Trail theme created by Ty Gibbons and Reg Martell.

Some like to add transcripts with time code from their interviews to their scripts; You can use a service called [TRINT](#) that is a low cost, almost immediate transcription service. There is also a program called [AUDIO HIJACK](#), a paid service fee is requested annually, where you can interview someone on Skype and it creates a .wav recording that is quite good, among other nifty features. Check them out!

EDITING

The degree to which audio is ‘perfected’ is up to each RL. We appreciate you submitting the entire raw file of your interview and any edits in .wav file. We appreciate you listening and snipping out the briefer segments you think are most important to your story in a separate .wav file. The Project will teach RLs to edit if they don't know how to already (join us for some **Saturday Workshops** at 118 Elliot, see our Site and Facebook page for schedule), how to upload segments to our cloud archive for ultimate finishing by audio editors for the entire project. Some researchers may only finish scripts and leave the rest to us; That is fine.

Most of us are using **SoundTrap**, free, cloud-based editing software which you can access here: <https://www.soundtrap.com/> The great thing about Soundtrap is we can share and collaborate on sound files and edits. We can train you how to use Soundtrap at the Saturday Workshops. The library also has a full Adobe editing suite with tutorials available for you to use free of charge as well. We hold periodic audio making workshops, including most Saturday afternoons at 118 Elliot in Brattleboro. You can check our Facebook page for Sat info and times.

Final Audio Editing/ Production will be at the discretion of the Words Project staff and contractors' Audio Production Team.

UPLOADING AUDIO AND OTHER FILES

You will upload your segments for Project personnel's review directly to the 'Production Resources' link on the BrattleboroWords.org website, top right corner of home page. Artifacts or documents discovered along the way that may illuminate the audio can also be submitted in this way to be featured on the website/tour.

Getting files off the recorders and onto the web can be a process that varies greatly, depending on your hardware and software. Bearing this in mind, we've adopted a crazy M.O.: an actual human will work with you to assess each group's needs and develop a workflow for uploading content to the project database. So if you're ever stuck with a technical problem, please feel free to email our Tech Director, Reggie Martell, with any related questions:

(reggie@brattleborowords.org)

NAMING FILES

Before uploading audio, we apply a specific naming structure to all our files so they're easy to find later. It works like this:

Each file is given a numerical code, based on the date it was created. After that we list the "Place"; the topic and the content creator and other pertinent information. Example: The audio from our July 7th, 2018 Roundtable discussion at Scott Farm would be listed as:

20180712_Kipling_Roundtable_Martell_audience_microphone1.wav

Strict adherence to the date format is important, but the rest of the file name is more subjective and, more flexible.

CREDIT, COMPENSATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is up to Research Leaders to let us know who gets what credit, which will be listed on the website at the site page. You should also feed emails and other info about others involved to us so we can include them in our contact lists for Roundtable invitations and other events.

Research Leaders should also be aware of rights issues and use issues for images and other data you may use. Even as a non-profit, creating publicly available materials, we must ensure we have

the rights to use anything that appears in our audio: songs, voice clips, audio from radio or film, etc. It is important to be aware if there is music playing in the background, to turn it off. And, if there are pieces that you would like to include, working to get the proper permissions is important. Anyone being interviewed needs to sign a [Release Form](#) (available on our Production Resources page). Bring one with you to the interview for your subject to sign, then snap a photo of it and upload it or email it to us. (We will also need the original)

RLs will be awarded a \$200 honorarium for their work once files are submitted, and a modest Project budget, as needed (like to use transcription service, for example) may also be available. Research Leaders are required to file a W-9 form and send us an invoice in order to receive the honorarium. RLs' work will also be credited on the website and other publications that may occur.

TIMING AND DEADLINES

The Audio Production Team will give you a timeline for delivering your material. It is important to work closely with the Team, to discuss any challenges immediately, as there are many sites, hours of audio, hundreds of people involved, and our Production timeline is on a very tight schedule. We will introduce the first iteration of the Brattleboro Words Trail on **October 23, 2020**, and your work will be featured as part of an exhibition on the Project at the Brattleboro Museum and Art Center, but rolling deadlines will be created along the way depending on when Research Leaders start their work. Project Leaders will work with you to find ways to publicize and showcase your work once it is completed. We anticipate completing all community audio edits by **June 15, 2020** so that we have several months of post-production before our final deadline.

MORE QUESTIONS

Project Director Lissa Weinmann (LRWeinmann@gmail.com) and Assistant Project Director Desmond Peebles (BrattleboroWords@gmail.com) or Technical Director Reg Martell (Reggie@BrattleboroWords.com) or Executive/Creative Director Jen Austin (JenAustinVT@gmail.com) who, with the input you provide, will ensure your site's page is covered on the BrattleboroWords.org website.