Planning your Object Stories slideshow

How to record a captivating story

Your object has a great story behind it, but how do you make that interesting for other people? The challenge of Object Stories is to capture the story in a few minutes. Before you get started, here are a few things to consider:

- **The object is half the story**
  Remember, your recording will be matched with photographs of your object, so it’s important to keep your recording focused on the item. Start by telling us what the object is and how it would have been used. Describe what it looks and feels like, and what you know about where and when it’s from.

- **Focus on the detail**
  Point out any unusual markings or details that help tell the story behind the object. Share what you know about who originally owned the object and when it was used, worn or shown. These details will help bring your object to life.

- **Explain its cultural significance**
  We’re interested in objects that have more than sentimental value. Think about the historical, cultural or social significance of your object and what it tells us about the time that it’s from.

- **Include yourself in the story**
  You might have a personal connection to the object or it might be an object that you’ve had strong feelings about ever since you came across it. Tell us why you chose to share a story about this object.

- **Record the audio first, then take your photos**
  The story that emerges from your audio recording will guide you in what to focus on when you photograph the object. In a good slideshow, the words and images work together to tell the story.

Sample questions

Here are some questions to get you started. You might not need to answer all of them, just choose the ones that will get to the heart of your object’s story.

The most important questions to answer are:

- What are we looking at? Describe your object and what it was used for.
- What is it like to hold or wear the object? Tell us about its size, weight and what it’s made from. Are there any unusual features or markings you’d like to point out?
- What does this object tell us about the time and place that it’s from?
- Do you own this object? And if so, how did you come to possess it?
- What does the object mean to you, why did you choose to talk about it?

You might like to include some of these questions:

- Was this item common or one of a kind?
- How has it held up over time?
- Can you empathise with the person who owned or used the object? Tell us how you think of them when you’re holding the object.
Planning your Object Stories slideshow

Photographing the object

Your slideshow will need a series of 6-12 different photos to tell your story, but you should aim to take about 20 photos so you have more to work with when you’re editing.

Before you start taking photos, think about the key points of the audio interview, so that the images will help illustrate what the storyteller has revealed about the object.

Here are a few tips to get you started:

- **Choose an interesting background**
  If the object is easily moved, photograph it in a place with plenty of natural light and a background that will add atmosphere, but not be too distracting. If you’re at a museum you might be able to set up some similar objects in the background or you could use a simple backdrop to add colour to your photos.

- **Shoot in landscape**
  You’ll want your photos to fill the frame, so shoot all of your images in landscape. If you’re photographing a large object think about ways to capture it horizontally, which might involve lying the object down or photographing it from up high, before you focus on the details.

- **Build a sequence**
  Telling a visual story with your images will draw viewers into your slideshow. Think about a start, middle and end to your sequence of photographs. You could introduce your object with images of taking it out of a box, or putting it onto a mannequin. At the start of your story, show the whole object before moving in closer.

Here’s an example of the start of a slideshow featuring a convict punishment shoe, you can watch the slideshow here: [https://vimeo.com/73426413](https://vimeo.com/73426413)

- **Include the storyteller**
  Take a variety of photographs that include the person who is telling the object’s story and include them in the shots wherever possible. If you’re working on your own object story, you might like to ask a friend to help you with this part. Take a few photos of the storyteller’s face as they look down or examine the object. Encourage them to interact with the object.
Planning your Object Stories slideshow

• Photograph the details
  Get in close and focus on any unusual details or markings, especially if these are discussed in the interview.

• Plan a closing shot
  Try to get a photo with the storyteller holding the object in a single shot. They may need to sit at a table or lean in to get close to the object, or hold it close to their face. This will make a good closing image as they reflect on what the object means to them, and will also be a great thumbnail image when your story displays on the Open website.

• Use archival images
  You may have an archival photo that gives context to the object and the story you’re trying to tell. Before you use it, make sure you have permission from the copyright owner to include it in your story. If it’s a physical photo try and photograph the storyteller holding the image.

Here’s an example from a slideshow about a crocheted dress, you can watch the slideshow here: https://vimeo.com/73427717