bottles are expertly examined. In addition to the book's value as a
general reference to bottle collecting, its historical treatment of the
glass industry and its extensive listing of scent bottles and historical
flasks make this volume an important addition to the literature avail-
able concerning glass containers.

*Pittsburgh*

**Robert M. Stern**

*Interviewing the People of Pennsylvania: A Conceptual Guide to
Oral History.* By **Carl Oblinger**. (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania His-
duction, appendixes, notes, photographs. $2.50.)

Oral historians, especially those working with Pennsylvania residents, can glean much of worth from Oblinger's book. The author hammers home the message that oral history must go beyond record-
ing interesting individual reminiscences and develop new insights on
the workings of society. Moreover, he communicates an appreciation
of the unique potential of oral history work and conveys enthusiasm
for the task of reclaiming the history of Pennsylvania citizens. The
photographs and sample interviews included in the book document his
claim that local projects can uncover a wealth of exciting material. To
use the guide to develop new projects, however, readers must bring to
it additional information on the technique of conducting oral history
work and their own frameworks for interpreting the past.

A brief preface outlines the scope, design, and structure of the
book. Here Oblinger claims that the book "puts the stress on con-
ceptualizing an entire project rather than simply on the mechanical
and procedural techniques. Specifically, this little book samples vari-
ous approaches used in the past or scheduled for use in the future
among various ethnic, racial and class groups in Pennsylvania" (p. ii).
The design of the book calls for the introduction to serve the first
of these purposes, while the succeeding four chapters report on oral
history projects conducted with four groups of Pennsylvanians: black
migrants, eastern and southern European immigrants, working-class
native-born whites, and residents of small towns. If the introduction
provided a thorough grounding in conceptual and related methodologi-
cal concerns, the four case studies could stand as specific examples of
how these concerns are worked out in local studies. But the intro-
duction is not up to the task, being both too abstract and limited in its
treatment of how to structure projects around questions of historical significance and too sketchy in its discussion of methodological problems. The remaining four chapters, then, become somewhat isolated reviews of the findings of the oral history projects, along with suggestions for pursuing similar projects among other Pennsylvania residents.

The projects Oblinger reports on were conducted by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), the agency which published the guide. All are interesting and thought-provoking studies, probing the changing nature of social life for state residents. The chapter on the family life of native-born whites, for instance, shows how oral history can shed light on attitudes toward marriage, child-rearing, and domestic life. The chapter on black migration demonstrates that interviews with elderly blacks who came to Pennsylvania in the early twentieth century reveal much about the social organization of the black community.

The author presents good arguments about the importance of doing extensive background research, preinterviewing possible subjects, documenting the precision and veracity of information elicited from participants, and following up initial interviews with open-ended discussions. Furthermore, he offers some good concrete suggestions on how to prod the memories of subjects. He suggests, for example, that interviewers ask their respondents to take an imaginary tour of their neighborhood or town as it was in their youth, describing the houses, shops, and people they encounter. But Oblinger buries critical materials, such as the “Interview Data Form” and the “Instructions to Interviewers” in footnotes or appendixes. He offers few comments on these materials, leaving potential oral historians with little direction on how to use them. He emphasizes, for instance, that open-ended interviewing is preferable to more structured questioning. But instead of systematically pointing out the differences between the two formats, he merely appends examples of PHMC interview schedules, referring to them cursorily in the introduction and case studies. Likewise, he stresses that establishing rapport between interviewer and subject is a vital step in a successful project. Yet his text gives few clues as to how to build up this relationship. The “Instructions to Interviewers” similarly provides little help.

Hence most community residents, relying solely on this guidebook, would find it difficult to replicate the PHMC studies on their own, much less to examine different social groups or explore different social processes through oral history work. Oblinger’s summaries of
research, methodological tips, and examples of interviews and questionnaires do not add up to a comprehensive handbook to the art.

Despite its limitations, the book is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the diverse pasts of Pennsylvania's people. Oblinger's work should encourage others to take up similar "grass-roots" studies.

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Both of these Pennsylvania bibliographies will be welcomed by students, teachers, librarians, researchers, and historians alike. Dissertations are sometimes overlooked by researchers because of the unavailability of the indexes. The thirty-seven-volume comprehensive Dissertation Index, 1861-1972 (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1973) and the nine-volume Dissertation Abstracts International, 1861-1972 (Ann Arbor, 1970) are not available in many of the smaller libraries. Baumann now makes the research of Pennsylvania dissertations easily available to smaller libraries and institutions with small budgets.

The author has divided the subject matter into eleven categories. The dissertations are arranged alphabetically by author under each category. The subjects are: general, colonial America, Revolution, early national, Jacksonian and middle period, Civil War and Reconstruction, Gilded Age and Progressive period, twentieth-century America, ethnic, religion, and education. Some items appear in more than one category. There is an author index but not an index to the titles themselves. It would have been helpful had the department for which the dissertation was written been included.

It is hoped that the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Com-