The Library does more than collect and preserve documents and other records documenting South Carolina history. We also have an energetic oral history program. Interviews conducted with donors and others often prove fascinating, and our program is designed specifically to build on our collections and further develop the record collected at the Library.

The Library’s first systematic oral history effort came into being with the creation of the Library’s division for Modern Political Collections in 1991. Special recording and transcription equipment was purchased and the division began a regular program interviewing donors and key associates to fill gaps in collections and add to the information those collections contain. Interviews with typical “narrators” require only a single session lasting one to three hours, although some interviews may require multiple sessions lasting ten or more hours. The Library’s University Archives division has recently begun a project interviewing senior alumni about their experiences while attending USC, and we are delighted to preserve the recollections of these early USC students.

Staff members transcribe the actual interviews and the transcripts are edited by the staff and the narrator to assure that the transcript is as accurate and detailed as possible. Once open for study, these interviews have proven to be popular resources for the scholars visiting the Library. The staff working on the oral histories particularly enjoy the opportunity to get to know our narrators on a first hand basis.

“I believed – and it proved so in the end – that if we held out and remained strong militarily, eventually the communists in Russia would see the light and see the difference and change their own form of government.”

~ Congressman Bryan Dorn
Oral History Interview, 1993