

DIY Guide: Create a Life History Album



Waswo X. Waswo is an American artist who kept returning and eventually moved to Rajasthan, India in 2001. During his early trips to the country, he took a lot of photographs of the people he saw around in order to remember them and record his travels.

Taking photographs to chronicle (which means recording facts in a detailed way) events, people or places is known as **documentary photography**.

Documentary photography is used to record both historically important events as well as everyday life. Of course, these photographs can be viewed by others long after the real events, moments or people they captured have passed – continuing to tell their stories.

Life history is a term used to describe the story of a person's life. People around us can have many interesting stories and experiences that we may not know of and that would be great to record. So, how about getting inspired by Waswo and trying your hand at photo-documentation to create your own life history album?

You will need some basic supplies and equipment:

- A camera (any camera will do: phone/digital/polaroid)
- A voice recorder or a notebook
- A printer and A4 sheets
- Scissors, glue, pens and markers
- Paper puncher and twine/ribbon
- Other art supplies such as paints, crayons, etc (optional)

Step 1 : Choose your subjects

First, go around your house, building or locality and make a list of people you want to interview. It can be anybody from your grandmother to the watchman of your building or the fruit-seller who comes to your society every evening.

Step 2 : Interview your subjects

Make a schedule and meet them one by one for an interview. You can ask them simple questions like where they are really from, who they live with, what they like about living in your city, what do they do on their off days, etc. You can ask them questions about their childhood, their jobs, their families and other questions you can think of. Record your interviews or take notes.

Step 3 : Photograph your subjects

They can pose for your photograph in a way they like, or you can also suggest a pose (or even props) that you think might fit in with their life story. You can also take a candid photograph (where they are not posing and just going about their day naturally), if they're okay with you doing that. Try to compose your photograph carefully to try and reflect something about them, if possible.

Step 4 : The documentation project

Once you have done your interviews and recording, print the photographs out and stick them one by one on your sheets. Listen to your recordings or read the interview notes that you had taken and write down the relevant bits below that image. You might want to include different details for different people, depending on what you learnt about them.

Basic details could include, names, dates of birth, where they live, what they do, etc. If you discovered more interesting stories like an interesting adventure they had while travelling or a childhood memory, you could choose to focus on that instead.

Step 5 : Making the album

You can decorate the sheets as you like with your art supplies. You can choose unique designs to reflect your subjects and their stories and a single design for all the pages of your album. Once you have all your sheets, punch two holes on the vertical side of each sheet. Put them all together and bind them using twine or ribbon or even some thick thread – whatever you have handy.

Pro Tip: You can create a cover for your book using cardboard, or simply add an additional sheet of paper at the front and back. Decorate the cover as you wish and add a title too!



Don't forget to take photographs of your creations and DM it to us on Instagram @mapbangalore. You can also email them to us at education@map-india.org