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Capturing the Social Memory of Librarianship

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Capturing the Social Memory of Librarianship

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Capturing the Social Memory of Librarianship

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This research has identified elements of the social memory of librarianship from the last half of the twentieth century by collecting and examining thirty-four oral history interviews of librarians at the end of their careers. These professional life stories trace an important arc through the history of library and information science. Many of these librarians began their careers prior to the use of any form of computer technology in libraries. This cohort ushered in a wave of technological innovations that has revolutionized the access to information. These oral history interviews are part of the *Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retiring/Retired Librarians* sponsored by the American Library Association and the School of Information at the University of Texas. The social memory includes regret and nostalgia for the librarianship practiced at the beginning of their careers, excitement and wonder about how technology has fundamentally changed the profession, and perspectives on the popular stereotype associated with their careers.

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Chapter One. Introduction

This dissertation examines oral histories from end-of-career librarians through the lens of memory studies. Chapter one discusses the oral history program that forms the basis of the research, and introduces the theory and methodology that are the subjects of chapters two and three. An original example of the application of memory studies theory to a well-regarded oral history initiative and an example of some preliminary research on the oral histories collected for this project conclude this chapter.

CAPTURING OUR STORIES

Oral history is a labor-intensive method of conducting research. As such, this researcher takes great pride in the data itself and its public presentation on the *Capturing Our Stories* website (A. A. Smith & Roy, 2008). In many respects, the resulting corpus of interviews will be the most lasting and important contribution of this research. It will provide a repository of practical library history at the end of the twentieth century for current and future librarians—and library historians—to access and use in their own professional development.

Capturing Our Stories: A National Oral History Program of Retired and Retiring Librarians began as one of Dr. Loriene Roy's initiatives during her year of service as the 2007-2008 President of the American Library Association (ALA). It is a partnership with the School of Information at the University of Texas. Dr. Roy's initiative was a response to the large-scale aging and retirement of the librarian workforce in the first part of the twenty-first century. *Capturing Our Stories* documents institutional and professional

memory from a generation of librarians that ushered great technological change into the science of librarianship.

While the interviews are the property of ALA, this researcher has permission to use and reproduce the recordings for his dissertation. *Capturing Our Stories* gathers professional histories of experienced librarians as they exit their careers and makes those histories accessible to colleagues, students, and less-experienced librarians using state-of-the-art digital archiving tools via the Internet.

Currently the project features thirty-three completed interviews using the GLIFOS rich-media platform. (This research involves thirty-four oral history interviews; however one does not appear in the online corpus.) GLIFOS is web-based technology that enables a viewer to listen to the actual, unedited interviews while the transcript scrolls automatically (Kirkland, Smith, & Roy, 2010). Most of the interviews also include streaming video, so the viewer can listen to the voices of the narrators, see their expressions, and read the transcripts which are synched with the recording. The transcript may be key-word searched and many include a table of contents. The use of this state-of-the-art technology is but one aspect of this original research project. The website for the *Capturing Our Stories* project is hosted by the School of Information at the University of Texas. It may be visited at <http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~stories/>.

The interviewees in the corpus represent librarians from a variety of professional backgrounds; they retired from school libraries, academic libraries, public libraries, medical libraries, and a prison library. The interviews have been conducted by many different volunteer interviewers, themselves librarians or library school students—some of whom have been formally trained in oral history methodology, but many were not. The website includes a “Training documents” section that provides volunteers with instructions on the process; notably, to come prepared with a few basic questions, but to

allow the subject to guide the content and “tell their own story” (A. A. Smith & Roy, 2008). These training documents have been reproduced in Appendix B. Though some oral history methodologists might blanch at this lack of rigor, the chief motivation has been to “capture” the stories within a reasonable timeframe coordinating volunteer resources. In many respects, the very parameters of the project allow a degree of freedom in the collection of the interviews that would not be appropriate in another setting. Although it takes training and practice to collect a successful life history using the methodology (DeBlasio, 2009), an oral history interview limited to the professional life of a librarian—and conducted by a fellow librarian—can be successfully executed by a volunteer. This is due to several factors: librarians are well-educated, have an appreciation for history and preservation, and, for the most part, are fond of talking about their profession.

ORAL HISTORY AS METHOD

Oral history is the methodology of choice for this project because a “bottom-up” account of the profession was desired: real, practicing librarians discussing their careers as opposed to a historian’s account of librarianship. Paul Thompson writes, “The challenge of oral history lies partly in relation to [the] essential social purpose of history. This is a major reason why it has so excited some historians, and so frightened others” (P. R. Thompson, 2000, p. 3). Another seminal oral historian notes, “Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did” (Portelli, 1991, p. 50). Many oral history proponents point out that it is the singular subjectivity of this practice that sets it apart from traditional history. It is a narrator’s account of her own experience, told in her own

voice. It is recorded using an objective (technological) medium. It is unedited. The technology of portable recording devices has made oral history possible, which explains why this methodology is fairly recent (Sommer & Quinlan, 2009).

Due to its subject matter, *Capturing Our Stories* straddles the line of traditional history and many of the values and conceits of oral history. Oral history is celebrated in progressive circles because of its ability to bring out and preserve the silences of traditional history. The methodology of oral history comes from a desire to document the vernacular events and social lives of everyday people—people who would never be the subject of a traditional biography (Brown, 1988). It is often used to preserve a record of the activities of “subaltern” groups—people whose work or existence undermines the hegemony of the dominant culture, whose thoughts and ideals are silenced by the majority (Young, 2003). The subjects of these oral histories are professional librarians. By their occupational definition, they are well-educated: the entry-level professional degree is a master’s degree, usually from a program accredited by the American Library Association. Though they may be aware of, sympathize with, and even identify with subaltern groups and ideas, most librarians would be considered members of the dominant culture due to their socio-economic status; however, their membership in the dominant culture is often in a supporting role—possibly even an underappreciated role. Thus, librarians, in their role as intermediaries between subaltern groups and information, would also be appropriate oral history interviewees especially when such effort aims to document and preserve their memories.

MEMORY STUDIES AS THEORY

The concept of social memory is an important aspect of understanding and appreciating this collection of oral histories. Maurice Halbwachs (1980, 1992) and Paul Connerton view society as the most powerful force in shaping memory and history. Connerton considers three types of memory: the personal, cognitive, and habit-memory. Most of the memories under consideration in *Capturing Our Stories* are personal memories. “These refer to those acts of remembering that take as their object one’s life history. We speak of them as personal memories because they are located in and refer to a personal past . . . ” (Connerton, 1989, p. 22); whereas a cognitive memory holds objective information or refers to events that the subject did not personally experience, and habit-memory is knowledge that is embedded within a gesture or physical movement. When considered with Halbwachs’ notions of collective memory, and when Jan Vansina’s (1985) ideas about cliché and stereotype are incorporated, a unique study of librarianship is possible. It is cleaved from the traditional history of the profession by its emphasis on individual subjectivity—the hallmark of oral history work—and uses the lens of memory studies to identify the social bedrock that the profession shares.

Maurice Halbwachs posits that all individual memories are “kept” via the medium of our social groups. Personal history is organized and remembered through our interactions with others, also remembering. In his work entitled “The Social Frameworks of Memory,” published in *On Collective Memory*, he describes three main “collectives” that almost all people share in their unique positions as social creatures: family, religious life, and social class (Halbwachs, 1992). Librarians share an initial social framework with a graduate school cohort, through their common experience. They then share a professional life that may include networking within associations and annual conferences. Outside of their professional lives, many will share a common experience as members of

the “middle” socio-economic class (Julian, 1979; Van House, 1988; White & Macklin, 1970). From these networks, each individual will develop ideas of what it is to be a “librarian.” These notions may include ideas about scholarly disposition and personality—and even highly specific notions about what kind of personality fits the individual roles that librarians may possess (e.g., children’s librarian, cataloger, director, reference librarian).

Vansina’s work on stereotype and cliché is instrumental in interpreting the collective memory of the *Capturing Our Stories* narrators. He discusses the importance of listening for the cliché in his “The Message Expresses Culture” (1985). He describes cliché as “deliberate and purposeful simplifications” that “must be interpreted symbolically because they cannot be accepted as they stand” (p. 139).

An Example from Memory Studies Applied to Oral History

An original example of “listening” for cliché within an oral history may be found in Theodore Rosengarten’s *All God’s Dangers: the Life of Nate Shaw* (Shaw & Rosengarten, 2000). In the 1970s Rosengarten spent several years recording the life history of Ned Cobb, who is identified in the book as Nate Shaw. Cobb was an illiterate African-American sharecropper born in 1885. His story is a rich testimony of life in rural Alabama during the “Jim Crow” days after Reconstruction and before the Civil Rights movement.

Cobb generally refers to himself and other African-Americans as “colored,” as this was the socially accepted term of that time; however, the narrator would sometimes use other language to describe himself. Here is a passage that demonstrates how his language changes:

My son told me a man is just a man there in Philadelphia. They don't nigger you around and you don't have to "Mister" anybody on account of his color; don't have to make out like you worship nobody to get along. Colored man could get a job there like anybody else; he could drive as nice a car as anybody else; he could live in as nice a house as his ability allow him (Shaw & Rosengarten, 2000, pp. 498-499).

After reading several passages where Cobb would switch from calling himself "colored," this researcher (A. Arro Smith, not Dr. Rosengarten) realized that Mr. Cobb's choice of words was quite deliberate. He was employing cliché by using the word *nigger* only when he was referring to men of his race being taken advantage of by whites. In another passage where Cobb uses the epithet generously, he is describing discriminatory banking practices enacted during the Hoover administration:

The white folks in this country was goin in that direction anyways—nigger couldn't have any of their money to make a start with, no way to make something for hisself unless he started with his own money. . . . Afraid a nigger might do something if he got the money in his own hands, do as he please; might hold on to it if he wanted to hold it, might spend it accordin to his pleasure. The white people was afraid—I'll say this: they was afraid the money would make the nigger act too much like his own man. Nigger has a mind to do what's best for hisself, same as a white man (Shaw & Rosengarten, 2000, p. 264).

Cobb's selective use of the epithet is a signal to his audience that he is not simply referring to black men; but that he is specifically referring to the subjugation of black men. His use of specific language is consistent with that of those who are employing a stereotype. Once the listener learns how Cobb is employing the cliché, she is able to find additional nuances in the narrator's story when this language is used.

An Example from Memory Studies Applied to Librarians

Librarians in the United States live with a powerful stereotype. The cliché that librarians are meek, frumpy, unmarried women with their hair in buns, half-eye glasses perched on their nose, and wearing sensible shoes while patrolling the library stacks and *shushing* patrons is so pervasive in twentieth-century culture that it really needs no documentation.

This researcher's two favorite motion pictures involve librarians. In the first example a librarian has only a fleeting role; but both demonstrate the power of the cliché. In *Philadelphia Story* the character played by Jimmy Stewart plays a newspaper reporter who visits the local library to research the family of an heiress (played by Katharine Hepburn) whom he has been sent to investigate. The librarian asks him, "What is thee wish?" Stewart does a double-take at the anachronistic idiom and asks her to repeat it—just to make sure he has heard her correctly. In deference to the librarian's grammar, and without guile, he asks, "Dost thou have a wash room?" and then, "Thank thee" (Cukor et al., 2000, released 1940). In addition to speaking straight from the King James Bible, the librarian is efficient, yet brittle, and can only be described as "mousey." Her final words in the scene are, "Shush, shush" (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Librarian from *Philadelphia Story*.



Figure 2. Librarians in *Desk Set*.

In *Desk Set*, librarian Katharine Hepburn and her crew of research assistants work both sides of the stereotype as they fact-check for a broadcasting company, and fight against being replaced by the new “electronic brain”—a computer named ENIAC (Lang, Tracy, Hepburn, & Marchant, 2004, released 1957). The librarian and research assistants are smart; but they are also demurely sexy and funny. In addition to being able to quote challenging and obscure passages from Longfellow, they are also concerned with the latest fashions from Gimbels. Hepburn’s character is able to rattle off the following lines from *The Song of Hiawatha* from memory: “By the shores of Gitche Gumme, / By the shining Big-Sea-Water, / Stood the wigwam of Nokomis, / Daughter of the Moon, Nokomis. / Dark behind it rose the forest, / Rose the black and gloomy pine-trees, / Rose the firs with cones upon them; / Bright before it beat the water, / Beat the clear and sunny water, / Beat the shining Big-Sea-Water.” It is a tour-de-force performance—what every librarian aspires to be.

The picture is a romantic comedy, and Hepburn ultimately chooses the affections of Spencer Tracy over Gig Young. But the comedy of the picture is contingent on the viewer’s notions of the librarian stereotype, and the fact that the cliché normally does not allow for librarians to be seen in a romantic role. In both films, the anonymous librarian in *Philadelphia Story* and Hepburn in *Desk Set* wear their hair in a “bun” (Figures 1 and 2).

Librarians have long fought this stereotype (Agada, 1984; Dewey, 1985; Heim, 1983; Kneale, 2009; Lancaster, 2003; Low, 2007; Wilson, 1982). However, in a cursory examination of the initial *Capturing Our Stories* interviews, many of the subjects refer to the stereotype, or use librarian clichés to discuss their careers, their self-perceptions, or to place themselves within the larger community of librarianship. By acknowledging the

stereotype, librarians may use the cliché as synecdoche for their personalities and the history of the profession. They also may use it to define how they are different from society’s perception of the profession.

The cliché is the public face of a larger collective memory within the profession. Librarians share a set of social and character traits—notably the desire and willingness to assist those without research training to satisfy their information needs—that fall outside of the public’s general purview. This broader social memory truly defines the vocation of librarianship. This dissertation examines the corpus of oral histories that have been collected for the *Capturing Our Stories* project and “listens” for the elements that represent the collective memory of librarianship. This is done using the lens of memory studies scholarship. The data are a selection of memories—individual oral histories—that form a sample of the profession. Tropes and motifs, including those of persistent stereotypes that are part of the social memory—the very society—of librarianship are identified.

SIGNIFICANCE

This research produces two contributions to the field of library and information science. The first product is the raw data: the corpus of interviews collected for the *Capturing Our Stories* project. The *Stories* project stands on its own as a repository of individual millennial librarians’ memories. Secondly, this dissertation provides not only a summary of the *Capturing Our Stories* project, but an analysis of the individual memories to construct a social memory of the profession. *Prima facie*, two questions may be asked:

1) How is this research different from past oral history projects?

Oral history is not a new methodology to “capture” the stories of individual librarians. In fact, there is an American Library Association directory of oral history projects involving librarians that was published in 1986 (Dale & Association). It is a finding-aid to over 200 librarian oral histories. *How is Capturing Our Stories different?*

2) How will this research contribute to the professional literature?

There are many research studies examining librarians’ personalities, motivations, and even contentment (“American Library Association Spectrum scholarship program,” 2009; Bernstein, Leach, Chicago Consulting Center., & American Library Association. Office for Library Personnel Resources., 1984; Hines & Baker, 2008; Julian, 1979; Leysen & Boydston, 2009; L. Roy, 1987). *How will this dissertation contribute new research to the discipline?*

The *Capturing Our Stories* project is different in two important respects from previous oral history projects involving librarians. First, the parameters for inclusion focus on end-of-career professional histories. All the subjects have a long perspective to discuss the profession of librarianship. Being removed (or anticipating their retirement) from the day-to-day machinations of providing service, they have a more thoughtful point of view than mid-career librarians. This is not to imply that previous oral history projects have left out retired librarians—this researcher actually has no idea because those previous projects are difficult to access due to the technological constraints of the twentieth century.

Capturing Our Stories uses twenty-first century technology to publish and preserve the interviews. Whereas previous oral histories have been painstakingly collected, most have been archived in (probably dusty) boxes full of cassette tapes and yellowing transcripts. Unlike earlier projects, *Stories* is available online—both the source recordings and the transcripts—and the transcripts may be searched using

keywords. This makes the project not only available to anyone and at any time, but the searching capabilities unlock the intellectual content, as well.

To answer the second “so what?” question, it is important to note that the research cited concerning librarian motivation and personality is based mainly on quantitative surveys. Oral history is a qualitative method and *Capturing Our Stories* provides more than a single moment snapshot of opinion, it collects a corpus of data that has almost infinite possibilities to be manipulated and interpreted by this researcher and future scholars. A strength of this research is that it will apply theories from memory studies and open ground for mining the transcripts for linguistic psychological clues employing future evolving technologies (Pennebaker, 2010).

Ultimately, the presentation of the source material (the *Capturing Our Stories* website) will probably be far more “important” as far as a “so what?” *Capturing Our Stories* documents the lives of librarians that participated in what Donald Davis called the “Dynamic Expansion” of the profession (D. G. Davis, 1976). These are the librarians who brought modern service to practically the entire nation—not just to the elite. These are the librarians who ushered high technology into the lives of the common man, who saw their profession make huge changes in how information was accessed with the digital revolution. These *are* interesting stories. They do have an audience and their experiences reflect changes that have influenced all humankind in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

This dissertation based on the *Stories* archive contributes to the history of our discipline by examining the interviews through the lens of memory studies. Oral history methodology and memory studies theory provide powerful tools to examine the legacies of our culture. Librarians at the end of their careers are a rich resource to mine with these tools. Combining oral history methodology with memory studies theory to examine the

robust archive of interviews in the *Stories* project results in an innovative work of research that documents not only the prosaic professional lives of librarians in the last half of the twentieth century and the dawn of the new century, but also their motivations, hopes, regrets, astonishments, and collective wisdom.

Chapter Two. Literature Review

Chapter two examines the scholarly record for three integral facets of this research. These are the human subjects of the research, the method employed to capture the data, and the theory used to glean knowledge from the data: the librarian workforce, oral history, and memory studies, respectively.

The librarian workforce of the latter half of the twentieth century is the subject of this dissertation. A brief history of the profession is outlined and then research considering the cohort of librarians similar to the sample involved in this project is presented in this first section of the literature review. This research has been published within the discipline of library and information science. The genesis of *Capturing Our Stories* was due in part to a long-standing notion of a sea-change in the workforce due to aging and retirement in the early part of the twenty-first century. Many quantitative studies of this phenomenon are examined in this section of the literature review. Librarians have shown a keen interest in their social nature, as well; therefore, there is also a rich vein of material speculating on the psychology of librarians.

Many of the documents presented in the oral history section of the literature review do *not* come from the discipline of history scholarship. This bibliometric fact provides insight into the nature and controversy of this methodology. Oral history represents a different paradigm of collecting data that is particularly useful in this study of end-of-career librarians.

The selections of research on oral history discuss the background of the methodology and some definitions of the technique. Criticism of the methodology, both from within the discipline and without, is detailed. This section concludes with a review

of published research that supports the use of oral history methodology as a technique to examine the subject of this dissertation.

The memory studies section of the literature review consists of research that is also from a hybrid of disciplines. Much of these writings germinate from traditional history publications, but with a soupçon of material from psychology, anthropology, and linguistics. Detailed are articles establishing the provenance of the theory; the use of oral history in the theory; criticism, and the place of individual memories within the “collective” or “social” memory; and specific applications of the theory to a proposed study of retiring librarians.

WORKFORCE

Librarianship has evolved from a hereditary sinecure to an occupation for spinsters—perceived or otherwise—to a vibrant profession for men and women of diverse backgrounds and career goals. James Thompson notes the discovery at Thebes of two librarians who had served Ramses: a father and son named Miamum (1977, p. 102). Miamum’s legacy is the mid-twentieth century Marian Paroo, better known as “Marian the librarian” from Meredith Willson’s musical, *The Music Man* (Willson, Lacey, & Bogin, 1958). She is an unmarried music instructor and librarian, “characterized as picky, hardworking, standoffish, bookish, and by most accounts, pitiable. . . Over forty years later, the image continues to permeate public opinion and remains the stereotype of the professional librarian” (Grimes, 1994, p. 3). Twenty-first century librarians are technological wizards that “serve as interpreters and guides to the vast array of information that exists,” according to American Library Association past-president Sarah Long (Kneale, 2009, p. 118).

The spinster stereotype is pervasive. Liladhar and Kerslake have analyzed the employment patterns of women library workers and found evidence of a “marriage bar” that either prevented promotion to women after marriage, or made it very difficult for a married woman to keep her position. Their work focuses on 1950s “career novels.” They found the only women to rise to upper management positions in mid-century novels about library work were those who remained unmarried (Kerslake & Liladhar, 2001; Liladhar & Kerslake, 1999). Though their work focuses specifically on depictions of librarians in novels, these images, much like Marian from the *Music Man*, influenced society’s view of the field, and, in turn, the candidates for librarianship (Wilson, 1982, p. 134).

This first section discusses the evolution of the occupation into a profession including the history of library education, governmental and philanthropic initiatives that shaped modern librarianship, and the expansion of the profession in the last half of the twentieth century. Although this dissertation is about librarians, a discussion of libraries and library education is important in order to frame the social context of the librarians being studied. The social memory of librarians is inextricably tied to the history of the profession and education that they share as a cohort.

A review of articles describing social traits of librarians follows. Much of this research was garnered in order to learn how to attract the most successful candidates for library careers. Also included are studies of career satisfaction. Much of this research was based on responses to questionnaires and includes quantitative data. Some of these are dissertations from the library and information science (LIS) field, but others are reports commissioned by the government and universities doing research of general education trends in the United States. Still others were commissioned by the American Library Association.

The final part of this section is devoted to a quantitative review of the retirement trends of contemporary librarians followed by some qualitative comments about the state of libraries as these senior fellows leave the profession.

Library History

In an essay entitled “The Professionalization of Librarianship,” Michael Winter notes that librarians prior to the late nineteenth century were simply scholars conversant in philology, the natural sciences, and philosophy. The turn of the last century brought about a need for a new type of scholar. This modern librarian would not be tied to any particular branch of the liberal arts or natural sciences, but specializing in a “meta” discipline: the discipline of organizing knowledge itself (Winter, 1983).

Early librarian education was provincial, at best. In a history of library education, Donald Davis quotes an 1876 précis by Justin Winsor. The following is entitled, “A Word to the Starters of Libraries:”

1. Procure what is in print.
2. Send to any library which is a fit exemplar, and ask for its rules and reports.
3. Take time to study all these documents and when you have got a clear idea of what a library is, and how it should be maintained, consider closely the fitness of this or that library to this or that community, or to those conditions under which you are to work.
4. If you have no time, resign your trust to some one who has, and who has a correct appreciation of the old adage that those who help themselves are soonest helped by others.
5. After studying and problems are still unsolved, write to an old librarian but do not be surprised at the diversity of opinion among experts.

6. Choose that which you naturally take to; run to it, and do not decide that the other is not perfectly satisfactory to him who chose that.
7. Whichever you have chosen, study to improve it. (D. G. Davis, 1976, p. 114)

Melville Dewey sought to formalize library education by introducing it into college curricula at the end of the nineteenth century, though not everyone agreed that the nature of librarianship required a standardized education. One of Winsor's contemporaries in the field, the famous William F. Poole, stated the following in opposition to Dewey's advocating of university training for librarians: "Practical work in a library, based on a good previous education in the schools, is the only proper way to train good librarians. The information cannot be imparted by lectures; and who that is competent has the time to do the lecturing? . . . There is no training school for educating librarians like a well-managed library" (Bramley, 1969, p. 77).

Dewey prevailed by establishing a library school at Columbia and then the New York State Library in Albany. "The launching of the School of Library Economy's first class of twenty students on January 5, 1887, was the beginning of an experiment to see whether and how librarians could be taught within a formal framework" (D. G. Davis, 1976, p. 116). The curriculum addressed accession methods, classification, and cataloging; but also included how to use a typewriter and "library handwriting" (Bramley, 1969, p. 79).

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, the ALA helped to formalize library education by working with the Carnegie Corporation. This collaboration led to Charles Williamson's *Training for Library Service* report in 1923, and the founding of the Board of Education for Librarianship (BEL) in 1924 in response to the Williamson Reports' criticism of the quality of library education in the United States (Estabrook &

Montague, 2003). At that time, there were fourteen “approved” schools in the United States. “The establishment of the BEL signaled a new direction in education for librarianship. Although Dewey organized the first library school in 1887, Williamson, nearly forty years later, pressed the idea that the ALA had a responsibility to create an agency to accredit the profession’s schools” (D. G. Davis, 1976, pp. 120-121).

In addition to the Williamson reports of 1921 and 1923, the Carnegie Corporation was instrumental in establishing the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago in 1926 (Estabrook & Montague, 2003). The school at Chicago took a path different from Dewey’s practical education by rooting itself within the academic world of the social sciences with a concentration on research and publication (Downs, 1968). It was the first library education program to offer a doctorate.

Library education in Texas is a history of false starts. The library director of the University of Texas initiated a library training program in 1900 as a summer course for perspective librarians, though the class could not be used toward a degree. In his 1966 master’s thesis for the University of Texas Graduate School of Library Science, James Kenneth Roach states that this course failed to receive the approval of the Board of Regents and was abandoned (Roach, 1966). The following year the Committee on Libraries of the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs addressed the Regents with a similar request, and assent was given. Loriene Roy in a historical reader’s theater production notes that the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs pressured the University administration to institute a library training program in order to staff newly established public libraries in Texas (L. Roy, 1996). This small effort, not connected with any specific degree, continued until 1909. Roy notes that the initial program was discontinued in 1909 so that the new University Librarian, Nathaniel Goodrich, could devote his time to the construction of the new library building. According to Roach, in

1919 LIS training was begun again as a department in the College of Arts, with the following courses offered: “Classification, Cataloging, Bibliography, and Book Selection and Reference. The four courses, each running for nine months, could only be counted as electives toward the A.B. degree since neither a major nor a minor was allowed in library science” (p. 5). Until the founding of the Graduate School of Library Science in 1948, this department suffered in an uncertain state due to the tenures of the University Librarian, fiscal appropriations, and the rejection of the program by the Association of American Library Schools.

The Graduate School of Library Science at the University of Texas opened in the fall of 1948 with Dr. Robert R. Douglass serving as the director—that title was changed to dean in 1967. Douglass served as dean until 1968. The 1992 article on the Graduate School in the *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science* notes that the first degree offered was a fifth-year master’s degree. For many years, the University of Texas was the only school offering library science education in the Southwest. In 1969, a PhD option was added to the curriculum (Douglass & Sparks, 1992).

Agnes Reagan’s 1957 dissertation for the University of Illinois notes that the first shortage of librarians occurred during WWI as the profession’s newly-honed organizational skills became important assets for the federal government and the war effort (Reagan, 1957). Those recently accredited library schools did fulfill the nation’s need for librarians and, by 1931, there was concern that too many librarians were being produced. She cites a 1932 article in *Library Journal* by Carleton B. Joeckel that states “In the brief period between 1923 and 1931, then, we have run rapidly up the scale from a serious shortage in the number of trained librarians all the way to what seems to be certain over-production” (Joeckel, 1932, p. 104). His recommendations were that library school enrollments be limited by increasing admission standards. However, the Second

World War reversed the trend yet again. The demand for librarians exceeded the supply “to such an extent that the difference between the two has reached alarming proportions” (Reagan, 1957, p. 2). Reagan points to this post-war period of great expansion in the profession as the genesis of the “fifth-year master’s programs” in many library schools.

Aside from the sheer growth of librarianship and library education in the twentieth century, social issues that affected American culture as a whole also influenced librarians. These include topics of gender equality and race, as well as evolving notions of the library’s mission.

Racial politics played a huge role in public intercourse, especially in the South. Since the early twentieth-century, there had been African American librarians who were educated at “Negro colleges,” and worked in “Colored” schools and branches of public libraries. Before the Civil Rights Act, African American librarianship had been cultivated mainly through private funding initiatives, with Carnegie leading the way. Between 1911 and 1941, the Carnegie Corporation made a total of \$2,048,265 in donations to “Negro” colleges (Lester, 1942, p. 64). In 1925 Carnegie helped to fund the first library school in an African American college, The Hampton Institute in Virginia, and then endowed the library school at Atlanta University in 1941 (Battles, 2009). Hooper writes in *Untold Stories: Civil Rights, Libraries, and Black Librarianship*, “Although Jim Crow begot many monstrosities, it is pleasing to note that the libraries of our traditionally black colleges and universities became monuments to human hope. The dedicated work and sacrifice of individual blacks and whites overcame inadequate resources, prejudice, hatred, and the fear of one’s enemies, as well as ignorance, authoritarianism, and the condescension of one’s friends” (Hooper, 1998, p. 58). In 1963 the Carnegie Corporation appropriated an additional \$1.5 million to the United Negro College Fund (Anderson, 1968).

The librarian workforce under consideration here—those at the end of their careers in the first decade of the twenty-first century in the United States—are the fruit of several post-war initiatives that served to create the modern notion of library values. Kathleen de la Peña McCook delivers an overview of these in her chapter, “Public Library Growth and Values: 1918-2004,” in an *Introduction to Public Librarianship* (2004). One of the first documents to shape modern librarianship was the American Library Association’s 1948 “National Plan for Public Library Service.” It sought to address economic inequalities in public library expenditures, and served as the blueprint for the ALA’s lobbying efforts in Washington. This led to the introduction of federal legislation:

The passage of the Library Services Act (LSA) in 1956 was the result of 35 years of concerted effort on the part of the American Library Association. Designed to assist in the establishment of library service in areas unserved, especially in rural parts of the country, the LSA required that each state submit a plan for library development before it was eligible to receive federal aid. . . . [The] work of the state library agencies, usually in collaboration with the ALA state chapters, has been central to overall national public library development (McCook, 2004, p. 66).

Ten years later, Lyndon Johnson formed the National Advisory Commission on Libraries to further examine the country’s need for libraries and to promote policy to affect those goals. The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) was a direct result of the Johnson-era Commission. In 1975 the NCLIS released its “Toward a National Program for Library and Information Services: Goals for Action” with the following objectives:

1. Ensure that basic minimums of library and information services adequate to meet the needs of all local communities are satisfied;
2. Provide adequate special services to special constituencies, including the underserved;
3. Strengthen existing statewide services and systems;
4. Ensure basic and continuing education of personnel essential to the implementation of a National Program;
5. Coordinate existing federal programs of library and information service;
6. Encourage the private sector (comprising organizations which are not directly tax-supported) to become an active partner in the development of the National Program;
7. Establish a locus of federal responsibility charged with implementing the national network and coordinating the National Program under the policy guidance of the National Commission;
8. Plan, develop, and implement a nationwide network of library and information service. (McCook, 2004, pp. 67-68)

These policy initiatives, originally driven by the ALA and translated into government mandates, shaped how libraries understood their role in our communities. McCook identifies three roles of the modern library: providing lifelong learning and literacy education, serving as the cornerstone of democracy, and defending intellectual freedom.

These three roles are addressed in a report to the American Library Association by Edward G. Holley, entitled *ALA at 100* (1976a). The ALA helped support adult education by producing and promoting various reading lists, which have always been controversial and prompted calls for censorship. As a natural forum for various ideas and points of view, the newly-emerging modern library was forced to take a defensive position against its attackers and censors. Through its work defending its very mission,

the twentieth century library became one of the most vocal advocates of democracy, the Constitution, and particularly the First Amendment. The ALA adopted the first iteration of the “Library Bill of Rights” in 1939:

The 1939 document was strengthened in 1941, a broader version approved in 1948, and subsequent amendments were adopted in 1961 and 1967. The 1961 revision specifically ruled out racial discrimination in libraries. The purpose of all the versions was to protect the right of every citizen to read whatever he or she wished to read and to assure the presentation of “all points of view concerning the problems and issues of our times.” (Holley, 1976a, p. 22)

The profession and the state of library education truly came in to their own in the 1960s, ushering in a generation of librarians unprecedented in their numbers. From Dr. Davis’ section entitled “Dynamic Expansion:”

There is no doubt that the decade of the 1960s witnessed the most dramatic growth that the profession has yet seen. The restructuring of, and the increase in demands upon, education for librarianship which took place in the previous decade set the stage for what was to come. Throughout the twenty-five years following the close of World War II, the expansion of library services grew steadily. As the standards of the profession rose, more trained librarians were needed to fill vacated or new positions in all types of libraries. In the mid-1950s a trickle of federal legislation, beginning with the Library Services Act of 1956, initiated financial support to libraries which had grown to a steady stream a decade later. These funds caused an increased need for more personnel in first public, and then school, academic, and special libraries. The programs undertaken by these appropriations encouraged outreach into neglected segments of society: the rural and urban poor, the racial and ethnic minorities, and people deprived of cultural and educational opportunities (D. G. Davis, 1976, p. 126).

Quantitative data documenting the expansion of librarianship may be found in Edward G. Holley’s article, “Librarians, 1876-1976.” He shows a 70% increase in ALA membership between 1951 and 1975: from 19,701 members in 1951 to 33,516 in 1975. Conference attendance increased 222% during that same period (Holley, 1976b, p. 181).

This rapid growth of the profession set the stage for what many forecasted as a staffing crisis in the twenty-first century.

Though the term *librarian* was originally applied to any clerical worker in a library, for the purposes of this research the term will be used exclusively to denote a professional library worker who holds a master's degree from an ALA-accredited program (ALA, 2008). Other library workers may be referred to as para-professionals, clerks, library assistants, or pages.

Social Traits

Research about who these librarians are and how they decided to become professional librarians is found in many studies on personality traits, career choice, and career satisfaction. Barbara Dewey notes that there was a plethora of research addressing these questions in the 1950s and '60s motivated by recruitment efforts to address a shortage of librarians during that period (Dewey, 1985). Libraries and library educators were attempting to discover what type of person made the most successful librarian candidates, and how to attract those candidates to the profession. Her own 1985 research affirmed the many previous studies: that contact with practicing librarians was the most influential factor motivating new library school students.

A dissertation by Agnes Reagan in 1957 was an early attempt to quantify who were the best candidates for library education, and how to market the profession to attract these individuals. She found that the best librarian candidates came from liberal arts colleges where preparation for a specific vocation and narrow specialization was discouraged as these colleges required “an extensive use of library materials and tend to encourage an appreciation for books and libraries” (p. 197). In polling library students,

she found the most influential factor guiding students to a career in librarianship was a positive experience with a practicing librarian. Her suggestion to increase recruitment efforts was to have personable librarians working in liberal arts colleges: “To be influential with these potential recruits, a librarian, generally speaking, must have two qualities—a genuine interest in students as individuals and a manifest belief in the worth of librarianship” (p. 194). She continues, “This librarian creates on the campus an awareness of librarianship as a profession—an awareness which, ideally, is engendered not only in students but in administrative, teaching, and counseling personnel as well” (p. 198).

A little over a decade later, Rose Mary Magrill pursued a similar hypothesis for her 1969 dissertation, also at the University of Illinois. She expanded her research to include both library school students and non-library graduate school students to examine attitudes about librarianship from both within and without the discipline. She found that library school students had been attracted to the vocation in order to “work with people,” “to use special abilities,” and “to be original and creative.” In essence, “it would seem that the people currently entering these graduate programs are not looking for a sinecure but for a challenging position which offers opportunity for humanitarian service” (Magrill, 1969, pp. 161-162).

She confirmed the earlier findings about the influence of a practicing librarian on potential recruits, but shows that this is also a double-edged sword with her research involving non-library school graduate students. Of the non-library school graduate students who had negative views of librarians, many of these pejorative attitudes could be traced to experiences with poor-performing or unhelpful library workers, or a complete absence of any interaction with a professional librarian. Magrill measured several attitudinal vectors, including “social prestige,” “intelligence,” and “personal qualities.”

Those graduate students (both library school students and non-library school students) who had positive experiences with practicing librarians held the profession in high esteem; but those that either had not used the services of a librarian or bad experiences with a library held divergent and negative views of the profession. She concluded that “favorable experiences with public and academic librarians are related to a favorable stereotype of the librarian” (Magrill, 1969, p. 169).

In 1970, sociologists White and Macklin were contracted by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to conduct a “program of research into the identification of manpower requirements, the educational preparation and the utilization of manpower in the library and information profession.” Their report is entitled “Education, Careers and Professionalization in Librarianship and Information Science.” They found that library school admissions were not highly selective and that many of the students came to the field after having pursued a previous career. Only 35% of students responded that they had chosen library work as a “career,” with 26% stating that their reasons for pursuing a library degree was a desire for “something besides housework and family raising,” and 24% “to earn supplementary income” (White & Macklin, 1970, p. 57). Twenty percent of students were returning to graduate school after raising a family (p. 32). The authors noted that a third of the respondents reported working in a library before the age of 21 (p. 16). When students were asked what aspects of library work they expected to enjoy most, the duties that involved working with people were ranked highest (e.g., working with “congenial fellow employees,” “helping people with projects”), and cataloging ranked last (pp. 24-25).

A 1979 study of graduate library school students at the George Peabody College for Teachers confirmed many of the previously reported statistics. Sixty-four percent of students had bachelor’s degrees in either English, literature, or drama; 20% had a degree

in education; and 16% held a degree in history (Julian, 1979, p. 16). Most of the students made a decision to pursue librarianship as a career in college (34%), with 30% deciding after college graduation; though 20% reported deciding to be librarians in high school (p. 19). Thirty-four percent reported that personal contact with a librarian was the primary influence for their decision (p. 26). When asked how many of the students had previously worked in a library, 87.5% responded affirmatively (p. 22). When asked why they wanted to be librarians, the most popular answers were “like books and reading” and “desire to help people” (p. 27). A 1988 study of library school students at Berkeley found very similar results (Van House, 1988). “The factors most often rated ‘very important’ were interest of work, stability of earnings and employment, and variety of places to work. Earnings were least likely to be rated ‘very important’. . . . It would appear that Berkeley MLS students have consciously traded future earnings for interest, variety, stability, and low entry costs” (pp. 162-165).

ALA Spectrum scholars were surveyed in 2004 on a number of motivational factors. The Spectrum scholarship program is the ALA’s “national diversity and recruitment effort designed to address the specific issue of under-representation of critically needed ethnic librarians within the profession . . .” and provides funding and leadership training to LIS students from under-represented groups (“American Library Association Spectrum scholarship program,” 2009). Ninety-seven percent of scholarship recipients from 1998 to 2003 reported that they were attracted to the “flexibility of the career options, agreeing that librarianship would be able to let them use their talents. . . . 95 percent agreed that they thought the career would give them the opportunity to help others” and 93% reported enjoying using libraries in the past (Loriene Roy, Johnson-Cooper, Tysick, & Waters, 2006, p. 8). Seventy-nine percent “knew a librarian who

enjoyed his or her work,” and only 64% identified potential salary as a motivation (pp. 8-9).

Several studies have researched the motivations and attitudes of practicing librarians. A survey in 1984 for the ALA found that the chief motivation for librarians was the challenging and varied nature of the work (Bernstein, et al., 1984). Eighty-two percent of respondents listed this factor as the chief advantage of their work; 45% reported “opportunity for growth/advancement;” 38% cited “independence/autonomy;” and only 20% ranked salary as a primary motivating factor in their work (Bernstein, et al., 1984, p. 12).

Librarianship offers many facets of work within the field. The following research focuses on specific types of professional librarians. In 1987 Loriene Roy conducted research on children’s librarians in Illinois. When the respondents were asked why they stayed in children’s services work, 27% reported that they “like the work,” and 19% said they enjoyed working with children. Only 4% responded that the salary was the chief motivator (L. Roy, 1987, p. 199). When asked about the disadvantages of children’s services work, 19% reported lack of prestige and low status as their primary complaint. Fourteen percent identified low salary as their chief objection (p. 202).

A 2007 survey of American Research Library (ARL) cataloger librarians showed 88% were “very or somewhat satisfied with their current jobs” (Leysen & Boydston, 2009, p. 290). The demographics of this group showed 35% of them to be between 50 and 59 years of age, and 18% to be at least 60 years of age. Even with the high percentages of librarians approaching retirement age, their library degrees were almost perfectly divided between the four decades: 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, corroborating the data from earlier studies that librarianship often is a second career choice (p. 277).

A 2008 study focusing on business librarians queried practitioners about their prior work history and satisfaction as librarians (Hines & Baker). Only 38% of the respondents listed librarianship as their first career. When asked about their reasons for choosing librarianship, the three top answers were: “job functions,” “love of field,” and “love of books” in that order (p. 399). Thirty percent said they were between 30 and 39 years of age when they began their library career and 8.7% reported being between 40 and 49 (p. 400). Seventy-eight percent reported being “very satisfied” with their career (p. 402).

Aging and Retirement

Alarm concerning the eventual retirement of the many librarians from the profession’s “dynamic expansion” generation has been sounding since the 1990s. A touchstone of this worry is Stanley J. Wilder’s 1995 report, *The Age Demographics of Academic Librarians: a Profession Apart*. Using statistics culled from the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), he noted the following:

- The percentage of the population of ARL librarians aged 34 and under is 1/3 that of individuals of the same age employed in comparable professions.
- The percentage of the population of ARL librarians aged 45 and over is almost 75 percent higher than the percentage of those of the same age employed in comparable professions.
- The age profile of ARL librarians changed noticeably between 1990 and 1994. The percentage of the population aged 45 and over increased from 48 to 58 percent.

The unusual shape and movement of the ARL librarian age profile appears to be related to the large group of librarians aged 40 and over who were either hired to service the 1960s period of baby boom growth in higher education or are baby boomers themselves. . . .

Projections suggest that 16 percent of the 1995 ARL population will retire by 2000. Another 16 percent will retire between 2000 and 2005, 24 percent between 2005 and 2010, and 27 percent between 2010 and 2020. (p. viii)

Wilder concedes there are several mitigating factors to his report, namely that ARL librarians tend to be older—and more experienced—than librarians as a whole, and that they tend to retire later in life; however, he believes the ARL profile numbers are very similar to the librarian population as a whole. Additional data reported by ALISE show that the age of LIS students also aged significantly: from 1981 to 1993, library students over the age of 35 rose from 26% to 50%; therefore, those filling the ranks of the retiring baby boom generation will also be retiring relatively soon (Wilder & Association of Research Libraries., 1995, p. 57). Many of the following articles cite Wilder's report extensively (e.g., Arthur, 1998; D. M. Davis, 2005; Lenzini & Lipscomb, 2002; Matarazzo & Mika, 2006).

More recent studies have confirmed Wilder's contention that librarians will retire later in life than the population as a whole; but this only postpones his original dates for the mass exodus of experienced professionals. The director of the ALA Office for Research and Statistics, Denise Davis, reported in 2005 that “the greatest estimated retirement wave will occur between 2010 and 2020, creating a potential deficit of library and information science graduates between 2015 and 2019” (D. M. Davis, 2005, p. 16). She also confirms Wilder's earlier assessment of new LIS students: that library schools attract a large number of older students pursuing a second career. In 2005 she estimated that the average age of an MLS candidate was between 30 and 35.

John Berry III, in a 1986 *Library Journal* editorial, called this phenomenon the “graying” of the profession (Berry, 1986). Since then this term has been applied liberally when writing about the state of the library workforce (e.g., Darby, 2004; Level & Blair,

2006; Mosley, 2005; Zabel & Van Fleet, 2008). In a 2002 article, Rebecca Lenzini wrote in the *Searcher: the Magazine for Database Professionals*:

The news about our aging profile has certainly hit what appears to be a “fever pitch” in our own trade publications. And, surprisingly, we don’t seem to be the only ones worrying. Our coming shortages and demographics have also hit the mainstream press. Witness *The Washington Times’* Sunday article from July 2000 entitled “A Lack of Librarians Is One for the Books.” The subtitle of the article puts its finger on the problems: “Retirements, pay, image thin ranks.” And, Laura Bush certainly brought the situation into major headlines with her support for the \$10 million special IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services) fund earmarked specifically toward improving the recruitment and education of librarians (p. 88).

So, where does this leave the profession? In Gwen Arthur’s 1998 article, similarly titled, “The ‘Graying’ of Librarianship,” she describes challenges to the aging librarians and their supervisors, as well as the benefits of working hard to retain older librarians. Chief among the challenges facing the baby boomer librarians in 1998 were technological issues as libraries fully embraced digital resources within their institutions: “In the past 10 years, libraries and academia have undergone a technological revolution in which unprecedented automation of information systems, both mediated and end-user, has been the driving force in library planning and service implementation” (p. 324). She calls the confrontation with new modern information tools “technostress” (p. 326). However, the point of Arthur’s article is to find ways to accommodate an aging workforce:

Veteran librarians have the vast experience of the individual and organization upon which to draw, and it is from this experience that much of the mature career development can spring. Their historical perspective is often valuable to administrators both in planning and governance issues. They can be excellent providers of on-the-job training and mentoring for new staff, and from such experiences they not only share in the growth and socialization of new staff to the organizational culture, but also can find opportunities for their own professional development. Having developed expertise in one area of librarianship, they may also have the confidence to master new areas of responsibility, and to be willing

to participate in cross-training programs to broaden their skills and increase their organizational versatility. (p. 325)

Part of the alarm being sounded is the belief that there will simply not be enough new librarians to replace the retiring baby boomers. Matarazzo (2006) cites a U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report that places librarianship at number three on a list of occupations that will experience shortages of workers between 2000 to 2012 due to the aging of the workforce. He goes on to discuss why new recruits are not projected to keep pace with the demand:

The primary factor that has led to the aging MLS workforce is a decline in young people choosing library and information science as a career during the past two decades. The reasons why more individuals don't choose LIS as a career are manifold: The field offers less-than-competitive salaries; it has a negative professional image; it lacks a good bachelor's-degree feeder program; it is not a first career choice for the majority of those entering the profession; and some of the LIS schools are now attracting "information science" students who are encouraged to pursue careers outside of libraries. (p. 39)

He also corroborates what others have mentioned: That LIS graduates are older than those in most other fields, so they do not work as many years before retiring.

The current edition of the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (United States. Bureau of Labor Statistics., 2008) corroborates the data regarding the aging of practicing librarians, noting that "2 out of 3 librarians are aged 45 or older, which will result in many job openings over the next decade as many librarians retire"(p. 269). But the *Handbook* also cautions against exuberance in the market for job seekers: "Recent increases in enrollments in MLS programs will prepare a sufficient number of new librarians to fill these positions"(p. 269).

There are contrary opinions about the place of aging librarians. The editor-at-large of *Library Journal* expressed his dismay at one of ALA President Leslie Burger's

initiatives. Library Corps was to be a program to place retired librarians in volunteer settings within libraries needing additional human resources. Berry's editorial was entitled, "Start a Corps, Not a Corpse: Don't Saddle Poor Libraries with Obsolete Boomers" (2006). He writes,

I mean no disparagement of old fogies, although I believe there would be fewer libraries that "need assistance" if the boomer librarians had been better at what they do. Look, I am older than most of them. I retired a few months ago and have enjoyed watching young, energetic librarians and journalists more than fill the vacancy. I often have said, "We tried that years ago; it didn't work" to their ideas. Surprise! They work, with new blood, a new society, and new technology to drive them. (p. 10)

In his usual provocative style, Will Manley has also commented on the "graying" of the profession in his *American Libraries* opinion column (2002), but with nostalgia. He writes:

You know that the library profession is in big trouble when the issue of the day is not censorship. What could be bigger than censorship? How about survival? That's what is on everybody's mind. Where are the young librarians? Where are the young library science students? Numbers don't lie. Our profession is rapidly aging, and where is the next generation of librarians? The fact is they don't exist. Bright young people who are interested in the challenge of the storage and retrieval of information are going into high-tech careers. Do you blame them? (Manley, 2002, p. 108)

It should be noted that Will Manley is a "pundit" who is attempting to stir controversy. His views may only contain a kernel of truth, but they do serve as a barometer of general opinion in the library world. Manley's article is entitled, "And Then There Were Nuns," and he compares the traditional library workforce with another dying breed:

In many respects I feel like [an] elderly nun. My generation may be the last librarian generation, but I have no regrets and I make no apologies. Those of us who got into this profession did so to serve others. We believed deeply in the public library as the "university of the people." By my reckoning, we'll be at it for another couple of decades before the word "librarian" disappears from everyday

speech. . . . There are worse things in the world than being the last nun in the convent. For one thing, not having a library in which to find her (p. 108).

On the other hand, this same pundit suggested in 2009 that it could be time for more people to retire due to the tough economic times as the most protected workers were generally the ones with the most tenure. In “Retiring the Golden Years: Even the Dinosaurs Had to Step Aside Eventually,” he writes, “If Bertha would retire, a younger colleague might be spared a layoff” (Manley, 2009, p. 64). He then lists 21 signs that it might be time to retire. Here is an abbreviated list:

1. Remember reading *Wilson Library Bulletin* every month
2. Remember using a typewriter to produce catalog cards
3. Remember wielding a date due stamp
4. Remember saying “libraries will never be able to afford computers”
5. Looking up a line of poetry in *Granger’s*
6. Asking a job applicant if she was married with children
7. Keeping sex-ed books behind the circulation desk. (Manley, 2009, p. 64)

Workforce Conclusion

The selection of the literature presented here represents a body of published work establishing and defining the subject of this dissertation: the librarian workforce of the latter twentieth century. Materials examining the history of librarianship show its professional evolution; texts discussing the social traits of librarians quantitatively document the personality of the profession; and the reports and articles about the fate of librarianship in the first part of the twenty-first century demonstrate and corroborate the belief that the workforce is changing in a material manner as vast numbers of librarians

retire. The literature establishes the background for many of the objects of this dissertation. These include the following:

- Librarians share a social memory that includes elements of a shared education, shared social class, and shared values.
- Librarians confront the question of their “professional” status.
- Librarians retiring in the first part of the twenty-first century have witnessed and participated in a vast technological change in the nature of their work.

ORAL HISTORY METHOD

Oral history as a popular practice was borne out of the 1960s and 1970s as a means to preserve vernacular history, that is, history from the community without the intercession of interpretation that professional historians with political goals might impose.

This researcher was introduced to the methodology through his work within the discipline of anthropology. The placement of oral history outside the field of traditional history—or even journalism—is telling. This section of the literature review will demonstrate not just the efficacy of the method but also how it challenges traditional history by incorporating elements of feminist theory to mitigate hegemony and historical colonization.

History of the Method

Rebecca Sharpless notes in her historiography of oral history that the practice is far from new:

Practitioners of the modern oral history movement enjoy contemplating its ancient origins, sometimes pointing out with glee that all history was oral before the advent of writing. From the Greek side come the historians Herodotus, who employed first-person interviews in gathering information for his account of the Persian wars in the fifth century BCE, as well as Thucydides, who interrogated his witnesses to the Peloponnesian War “by the most severe and detailed tests possible.” In the Zhou dynasty of China (1122-256 BCE), the emperor appointed scribes to record the sayings of the people for the benefit of court historians. Africanists point to the *griot* tradition in recording history, in which oral traditions have been handed down from generation to generation. (2008, p. 19)

Sharpless continues:

Oral history research reflected the social changes of the 1960s and 1970s. The growing acknowledgment of the importance of various ethnic groups in American society fueled an interest in their histories. One of the earliest such oral history endeavors was the Doris Duke project on Native American history. Between 1966 and 1972, tobacco heiress Duke gave a total of \$5 million to the universities of Arizona, Florida, Illinois, South Dakota, New Mexico, Utah, and Oklahoma. The funding established multiple oral history centers to document the diversity among Native Americans. (Sharpless, 2008, p. 27)

Though the methodology may have been popularized in the sixties and seventies, one of its first large-scale projects was during the Great Depression. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) documented a corpus of slave narratives from a population of Americans quickly disappearing (Campos, 2006; Govenar, 2000). Over 2,300 first-hand accounts were collected from 1936 through 1938.

Oral history interviews have been the basis for many notable works addressing the African American civil rights movement, including the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Alex Haley (1965), the *Freedom Riders, 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (Arsenault, 2006), *Voices of Freedom, An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement*

from the 1950s through the 1980s (Hampton, Fayer, & Flynn, 1990), and *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* (Shaw & Rosengarten, 2000). Appalachian lives and folkways were profiled in the enormously popular Foxfire series in the 1970s beginning with *The Foxfire Book: Hog Dressing; Log Cabin Building; Mountain Crafts and Foods; Planting by the Signs; Snake Lore, Hunting Tales, Faith Healing; Moonshining; and Other Affairs of Plain Living* (Wigginton, 1972). This book sold more than 100,000 copies in its first month of publication (Sitton, Mehaffy, & Davis, 1983). Studs Terkel's best-selling books are another example of this methodology's acceptance in popular culture, including *Working: People Talk about What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (1974) and *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (1970). In this century, oral history is beginning to assert itself on the Internet. Notably, the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project (Project, 2009), the Oral History of the U.S. House of Representatives ("Oral History of the U.S. House of Representatives,"), StoryCorps (StoryCorps, 2012), and the ACTUP Oral History Project (ACT-UP, 2009). Many of the WPA Slave Narratives are included in the Library of Congress' site, Born in Slavery (Works Progress Administration & Federal Writers' Project, 2001).

Modern oral history was contingent on the development of recording equipment: first, wire audio recording, and then tape recording in 1948 (Sharpless, 2008). Michael Frisch (2006) laments the fact that many well-conceived oral histories are lost or ignored simply because the tapes, and even possibly the transcripts, end up stored in an archive and forgotten. An example of this is an entry from the Austin Public Library in the 1986 American Library Association publication, *A Directory of Oral History Tapes of Librarians in the United States and Canada* (Dale & Association). The *Directory* shows an oral history of Annie Campbell Hill, 1876-1979, conducted in 1977. She was the

Head Reference Librarian for many years at the University of Texas. The recording is 20 minutes long and there is a transcript. However, there is no entry in the Austin Public Library or Austin History Center online catalogs for this interview. It is either uncataloged or lost.

Frisch (2006) reports that a new era of oral history is being developed with digital technologies. This twenty-first century technology makes the creation of oral history sharp and clear with high-definition video. Streaming technology on the Internet makes the dissemination of oral history much more accessible, and digitized oral history transcripts makes research more facile and precise with robust full-text searching. He states:

These considerations help define the threshold on which we stand: digital technologies are opening new ways to work directly and easily with audio and video documents. Oral history audio and video can now be placed in an environment in which rich annotation, cross-referencing codes, and other descriptive or analytic “meta-data” can be linked to specific passages of audio-video content. By searching or sorting by means of these reference tools, the audio-video materials themselves—not the transcribed text version—can be searched, browsed, accessed, studied, and selected for use at a high level of specificity. Indeed, with many of the emerging tools for providing such access, users and researchers themselves can mark, assess, analyze, select, and export meaningful audio and video passages for a range of customized research, presentational, and pedagogic uses. (pp. 103-104)

Frisch posits that the new technological media for oral history ushers the promise of the method even closer to fruition; *viz.*, that the histories are freed even further from editorial intervention.

Definitions

Paul Thompson in 1978 notes, “The challenge of oral history lies partly in relation to [the] essential social purpose of history. This is a major reason why it has so excited some historians, and so frightened others” (2000, p. 3). Another seminal oral historian writes, “Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did” (Portelli, 1991, p. 50). Many oral history proponents point out the singular subjectivity of this practice that sets it apart from traditional history.

However, modern oral history is different from oral tradition: It is a narrator’s account of her own experience, told in her own voice. It is recorded using an objective (technological) medium. It is unedited. The technology of portable recording devices has made oral history possible which explains why this methodology is fairly recent (Sommer & Quinlan, 2009).

Oral history is also different from journalism. Though oral history is facilitated by an interviewer, the interviewer allows the narrator to tell her own story. A good oral history interviewer only prompts the subject to continue or expand on the narrator’s own tangents (DeBlasio, 2009). Whereas journalism is a process of culling sources, editing, and corroboration, oral history is an intimate exposition of a personal memory with only minimal intervention by the interviewer.

These issues are addressed in Alessandro Portelli’s chapter, “What Makes Oral History Different,” in his seminal work, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (1991). He begins this chapter by stating the obvious, that “oral sources are *oral* sources” (p. 46). This is to stress the preeminence of the recording of the narrator’s voice, without the intervention of a transcriber or reporter—or even written words.

Though most modern people in the developed world are literate, few people have the facility or gift to write well enough that their words evoke a satisfying story or narrative. Paul Thompson notes that “the overwhelming majority of published autobiographies are from a restricted group of political, social, and intellectual leaders” (P. R. Thompson, 2000, p. 28). Good writers, whether they are historians, creative writers, or memoirists, are rare; however, many people—whether literate or not—are able to *tell* a good tale. Portelli begins his discussion by stating the obvious to clearly set the parameters of his work. He has asked people to *tell* their stories. He knows that when the recordings get transcribed, then edited, and—in the case of his English-speaking readers—translated, much is lost:

This is one reason why I believe it is unnecessary to give excessive attention to the quest for new and closer methods of transcription. Expecting the transcript to replace the tape for scientific purposes is equivalent to doing art criticism on reproductions, or literary criticism on translations. The most literal translation is hardly ever the best, and a truly faithful translation always implies a certain amount of invention. The same is true for transcription of oral sources. . . . The tone and volume range and the rhythm of popular speech carry implicit meaning and social connotations which are not reproducible in writing. (Portelli, 1991, p. 47)

The English Popular Memory Group meditated on this insight noting that “a knowledge of the past and present is also produced in the course of everyday life;” however, this “common sense” of history is rarely recorded, since it lives “in everyday talk and in personal comparisons and narratives” (Group, 2006, p. 45). In this way oral history is able to capture what may be easily overlooked and lost.

Alessandro Portelli’s own work examines the Italian labor relations among steelworkers in Terni and a misremembered murder during a strike (1991), and the events surrounding the mass execution at Fosse Ardeatine in Rome during the Nazi occupation

(2003). In his *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome*, Portelli (2003) writes:

One of the differences between oral and written sources is that the latter are documents while the former are always acts. Oral sources are not to be thought of in terms of nouns and objects but in terms of verbs and processes; not the memory and the tale but the remembering and the telling. Oral sources are never anonymous or impersonal, as written documents may often be. (p. 14)

Paul Thompson notes in *Voices of the Past*:

In all these fields of history, by introducing new evidence from the underside, by shifting the focus and opening new areas of inquiry, by challenging some of the assumptions and accepted judgments of historians, by bringing recognition to substantial groups of people who had been ignored, a cumulative process of transformation is set in motion. The scope of historical writing itself is enlarged and enriched; and at the same time its social message changes. History becomes, to put it simply, more democratic. (2000, pp. 8-9)

Criticism of Oral History

Oral history is celebrated in progressive circles because of its ability to bring out and preserve the silences of traditional history. The methodology of oral history comes from a desire to document the vernacular events and social lives of everyday people—people who would never be the subject of a traditional biography (Brown, 1988). It is often used to preserve a record of the activities of “subaltern” groups—people whose work or existence undermines the hegemony of the dominant culture, whose thoughts and ideals are silenced by the majority (Young, 2003).

But what of the criticism that these tales and stories are just that: tales and stories? Many traditional historians bristle when oral history is contemplated as a method because they doubt its credibility. Here Portelli defends the method by pointing to a different credibility:

Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did. . . . The importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge. Therefore, there are no “false” oral sources. (1991, pp. 50-51)

This has been noted as a paradigm shift in history circles, embracing post-modernist and feminist theory, and moving away from positivist notions about history and objectivity (Perks & Thomson, 2006). Portelli continues:

Traditional writers of history present themselves usually in the role of what literary theory would describe as an “omniscient narrator.” They give a third-person account of events of which they were not a part, and which they dominate entirely and from above (above the consciousness of the participants themselves). They appear to be impartial and detached, never entering the narrative except to give comments aside, after the manner of some nineteenth-century novelists. Oral history changes the writing of history much as the modern novel transformed the writing of literary fiction: the most important change is that the narrator is now pulled into the narrative and becomes a part of the story.

This is not just a grammatical shift from the third to the first person, but a whole new narrative attitude. The narrator is now one of the characters, and the *telling* of the story is part of the story being told. (1991, pp. 56-57)

Connerton discusses the difference between traditional history and oral history in his chapter on “Social Memory” (1989). In order to justify the apparent lapses of historical fact found in oral histories, he notes that the subjects are not members of the elite—and so they should not be bound by a chronology or historical authority imposed by the dominant culture. He continues, “The historian will only exacerbate the difficulty if the interviewee is encouraged to embark on a form of chronological narrative. For this imports into the material a type of narrative shape, and with that pattern of remembering, that is alien to that material. In suggesting this, the interviewer is unconsciously adjusting the life history of the interviewee to a preconceived and alien model. That model has its origin in the culture of the ruling group. . . .”(p. 19). Though his caveat about oral

history—that it will “produce another type of history: one in which not only will most of the details be different, but in which the very construction of meaningful shapes will obey a different principle” (p. 22)—is an interesting observation about oral history in general. It may not always be applicable, as when the narrators are well-educated and are familiar with the historical canons of the cultural elite.

As well-educated professionals, librarians are also keenly aware of how history is created. Other than historians, librarians may be the population most familiar with issues of historiography. A majority of the content of most libraries involves history. Librarians spend a great deal of time deciding which histories to include in their collections—and they must be prepared to defend their decisions. Librarians are aware of what constitutes good history. The majority of librarians are students of history. They know how a history is constructed; therefore, the oral history interviews that they participated in as subjects are often well-crafted, even relative to a traditional history. The parameters of the project also lend itself to accuracy: the *Stories* subjects are discussing their professional lives, so their memories are organized by periods of education and work for specific institutions. So Connerton’s caveat about oral history is largely inapplicable to this study of librarian oral histories.

In his book, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*, Michael Frisch relates an illuminating story about the power of this research technique. The New York *Times* had commissioned the author to research and write an article about unemployment in Buffalo, New York, in the mid-1970s using oral history methodology. Frisch was excited to use this progressive methodology in a way that would demonstrate its value to a non-academic audience: the readers of the *Times*. He was aware of the issues of class, hegemony, and interpretation that occur in what he

calls “History—capital H” (Frisch, 1990, pp. 59-60) and how they can be mitigated by using oral history—lower case h.

Frisch discusses the triangulation that takes place between the interviewer (recording History), the narrator, and her memories (oral history with a little h). Being conscious of this triangulation—and guarding against the biases of the interviewer’s interpretation (History)—is the key to a successful oral history (Portelli, 1991).

Frisch’s interviews collected for the *Times* article were successful and honest; however, the project began failing when the work had to be edited for mass-consumption by his team of researchers. One of the things that makes oral history different from journalism is the fact that it is the *narrator’s* story, told in her own way, including (and excluding) what *she* deems important (DeBlasio, 2009; Tisdale, 2000). Conscientious editing may be possible in order to present a cogent and concise project; but it must be done very carefully. Frisch reports that he and his team became leery at the outset of the process when confronted with the *Times’* parameters for the story; however, they worked hard to present a true account of the subjects’ interviews, *sans* overt interpretation.

But the *Times* editors added an additional layer of interpretation. They were in the business of selling newspapers. They desired an article—a story—that their readers would *enjoy*, along with Sunday morning bagels and coffee. They wanted poignancy! This is where the very careful attention to triangulation—the relationships between the interviewer, the oral history, and the narrator—became so muddled that it was no longer “true.” Here is an example of Paul Thompson’s comment become manifest: “The challenge of oral history lies partly in relation to [the] essential social purpose of history. This is a major reason why it has so excited some historians, and so frightened others” (P. R. Thompson, 2000, p. 3). The *Times’* editors were not happy with Frisch’s research—it terrified them.

This perversion of the “story” by the *New York Times* is an example of what Linda Tuhiwai Smith would refer to as colonizing research except, instead of Buffalo’s underclass, her thesis involves Western “positivists” imposing their own cultural assumptions and mores on indigenous peoples (L. T. Smith, 1999).

Her controversial work, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (L. T. Smith, 1999) lays bare the epistemological heart of the issue within Western science: There are non-Western ways of knowing, communicating, and comprehending—even remembering. Her thesis details many ways that positivist science has impoverished indigenous cultures through overt colonization and subtle misunderstandings of the very nature of their wisdom and lifeways. Smith describes how the West has failed to understand many basic tenets of indigenous culture not only due to language barriers, but also a failure to understand that different notions of time, space, and gender role create wholly incompatible world views, even when the words are successfully translated. She maintains that centuries of misguided studies conducted by arrogant and insensitive interlopers has poisoned the entire notion of research for many non-Westerners. Smith’s work is a manifesto calling on indigenous peoples to cease cooperating with first-world scientists and to begin a program of research that is sympathetic to their own goals, values, and modes of knowing.

Oral history methodology is a Western tool that can help to amend the “colonizing” histories of the past by letting indigenous peoples tell their own stories in their own voices. Smith would argue that all oral histories need to be created by—and for—indigenous peoples; however, even if conducted by outsiders, the methodology holds promise to ameliorate many of the inequities of past Western research when it is conducted in a fashion respecting the mores and customs of the culture. Smith describes several issues that the Western researcher often misunderstands. These include personal

agency, the role of the community, privacy mores, hierarchies, and the aforementioned notions of time, space, and gender. What Smith has to teach all researchers, no matter their setting or agenda, is that a successful program must include reflection and the knowledge that not all research subjects “think” or express themselves the way scientists schooled in the Western canon of thought might expect.

Oral History Conclusion

This section of the literature review has established the legitimacy and relevance of oral history methodology. Most important are the distinctions that make oral history valuable as a tool to collect data for this research, as opposed to other forms of data collection techniques: *viz.*, that oral history is different from “capital-H” history, biography, journalism, or surveys, and it captures sublime and meaningful information in a manner that more traditional research methods may miss.

The narrator’s product of an oral history interview is different from the story that narrator would tell among friends and family; and it is different from the autobiography that she might write. The narrative shared among friends and family (her social networks) contains implicit references that are known—and not made explicit (Halbwachs, 1992). The autobiography—if it were ever to be written—would be a careful and guarded self-edited creation: possibly a work of literature. The successful oral history interview is blessed with two advantages: the interviewer is a sympathetic “outsider,” and it is a spontaneous dialogue. Anna Green in her work on collective memory describes it in this way:

There are differences between the fixed, literary written form of life narrative, and the fluid, interactive and often more ambivalent dialogue that is generated in the oral history interview. . . . Reminiscing with one’s contemporaries . . . writing an

autobiography, and responding to an oral historian are all very different mnemonic contexts. (Green, 2004, pp. 40-41)

The spontaneous dialogue produces a far more “true” story than if a narrator were taking the time to consider, write, and edit. In other words, this “triangulation” that Frisch speaks of is beneficial: It is part of the magic of this methodology.

MEMORY STUDIES THEORY

The field of memory studies is a relatively new discipline that combines theory and method from a variety of scholarship. In many ways, it is simply a way to examine historical and sociological experience through a lens focusing on human memory, particularly collective memory (Olick & Robbins, 1998). Though memory studies scholarship is not primarily devoted to oral history, it supplies sublime but powerful theory to understand the content and context of oral history.

This section of the literature review examines the theoretical base of memory studies: the existence and identification of social memory, or collective memory. Criticism and the place of the individual memory within the context of a social memory and some applications of this theory to the work at hand follow.

Collective Memory

Maurice Halbwachs posits that all individual memories are “kept” via the medium of our social groups. Personal history is organized and remembered through our interactions with others, also remembering. He describes three main “collectives” in his work entitled “The Social Frameworks of Memory,” published in *On Collective Memory*,

that almost all people share in their unique positions as social creatures: the family, religious life, and social class (1992).

Librarians share an initial social framework through their experience in a graduate school cohort. They then share a professional life that may include networking within associations and annual conferences. But they also share a collective memory of their citizenship, their “place” within a social class, and even their gender.

Pierre Nora has detected a change in how people remember in the modern era. He believes this is due in part to the contemporary turn to memorialize and “make” what we call *history*. Before the professionalization of history—and the printing press—all history was social or collective memory. Nora, who is French, summarizes many of his ideas about modern historiography in an English-language article in *Representations* entitled “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire” (1989). He believes the advent of professional historians has led to certain events of the past to be fixed by their memorialization as artifacts in books and monuments, which is counter to the past ways of remembering:

Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. (p. 8)

Nora worries that the accumulation of monuments—what is known throughout the field of memory studies by the French term *les lieux de mémoire*, or “sites of memory” in homage to his exhaustive work—is profoundly changing the way we remember, perhaps cluttering our memories with static “sites” that take the place of the more natural and organic memories of our past.

Halbwachs and Nora set the stage for a discussion of the place of memory, whether it can be termed an individual memory, or a collective memory as perpetuated

through our social networks; or as a “site of memory,” an artifact of history-making in the modern sense.

Individual Memory and Criticism

While the field of memory studies has matured and Halbwachs’ notions of collective memory have served as her taproot, some scholars have noted a theoretical problem that especially manifests itself when employing oral history methodology: though it is useful to regard all memories as existing in realms of the collective memory, the fact is that each memory belongs to—resides within and issues from—an individual. Anna Green discusses this in her *Oral History* article, “Individual Remembering and ‘Collective Memory’” (2004). She warns researchers to not minimize individual memory and the capacity for subjects to be reflective and critical:

Oral historians need to re-assert the value of individual remembering, and the capacity of the conscious self to contest and critique cultural scripts or discourses. Rather than seeking to fit oral narratives to pre-existing cultural representations or psychoanalytic templates, would it not be more fruitful for oral historians to explore those points of conflict and rupture in people’s lives that create confrontations with discourses of power? (pp. 42-43)

Susan Crane has also tackled this issue in her “Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory” (1997). Like Nora, she also discusses modern memory in terms of a “culture of preservation we have inherited” (p. 1375). Her solution is to create a “middle term” to represent the balance between historical memory (Nora’s *lieux de mémoire*) and collective memory: “historical consciousness.” This term is taken from another scholar, Amos Funkenstein. In this way, she relocates the “collective back in the individual who articulates it—the individual who disappeared in the occlusion of personal historical consciousness by the culture of preservation” (p. 1375). Crane posits that the creation of

historical artifacts does freeze the collective memory in a point in time, but that the agency of the act is through an individual accessing the collective. And that each time an individual recalls and articulates a memory from the collective, she does so as an individual negotiating her own unique path through that collective. “I am suggesting that historical research is a lived experience that the self-reflexive historian consciously integrates into collective memory” (p. 1382). This is the “historical consciousness” that balances historical memory and collective memory.

Paul Connerton’s work in memory studies explores society as the most powerful force shaping memory and history. Connerton divides memory into three types: the personal, cognitive, and habit-memory. Personal memories “refer to those acts of remembering that take as their object one’s life history. We speak of them as personal memories because they are located in and refer to a personal past . . . ,” whereas a cognitive memory holds objective information or refers to events that the subject did not personally experience (1989, p. 22). A “habit memory” is the “capacity to reproduce a certain performance. Thus remembering how to read or how to write or how to ride a bicycle is in each case a matter of our being able to do these things, more or less effectively, when the need to do so arises” (pp. 22-23). This taxonomy of memory is also found in Maurice Halbwachs’ notions of collective memory; however, Connerton’s theory expands on Halbwachs by including bodily gestures, manners, and clothing to find the nexus of memory in the corporeal world of society.

Applications of Memory Studies

One facet of using memory studies theory is triangulating the “remembered history” with other forms of history in order to see what is included—and excluded—from the social memory. Below is a discussion of some of the critical issues that may comprise the social memory of the subject of this dissertation.

Much like teaching and nursing, librarianship has been a “pink collar” profession in the United States. These vocations require advanced education—and are generally highly valued in society—yet the financial compensation is routinely inequitable in relation to vocations requiring comparable education that are historically men’s careers (Census, 1998). Even within librarianship, there have been disparities between men’s and women’s salaries (Martin, 1983; Robinson, 1983). Issues of financial and social inequality because of their gender must produce a powerful collective memory of anger for women. Men, too, may experience this anger if they feel their earning power has been stifled due to their choice of a “pink collar” profession.

However, librarians retiring now may have “worked” through a dramatic shift in society’s views of women. They were in the earliest stages of their careers or education in 1972 when the Equal Rights Amendment was passed by Congress. They were also working when the ten-year window of time ended without ratification by the necessary number of State legislatures and the Amendment failed to become a part of the Constitution in 1982 (Koeol, 2009).¹ And salaries are becoming more equitable—the longitudinal data in the census report referenced above demonstrates this. So the collective memory of women librarians may include the fight for women’s rights; and the collective memory of male librarians may include information about the stereotype of the

¹ An interesting oral history of Alice Paul, who was instrumental in the passage of the E.R.A, can be found at http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=kt6f59n89c&brand=calisphere&doc.view=entire_text

profession as “women’s work.” Both men and women at the end of their careers will probably be able to reflect on changes and social progress.

The Johnson-era Great Society programs were a significant influence on the culture of librarianship, through increased funding for library education; but the Great Society’s most valuable legislation was inarguably the Civil Rights Act ("Civil Rights Act ", 1964). With regard to race, the culture of librarianship began to “officially” change in 1961 when the American Library Association’s revision of the “Library Bill of Rights” specifically ruled out racial discrimination in libraries. The purpose of this document was to protect the right of every citizen to read whatever he or she wished to read and to assure the presentation of “all points of view concerning the problems and issues of our times” (Holley, 1976a, p. 22).

Though the Supreme Court’s Brown decision ("Brown v. Board of Education," 1954) struck down the idea of “separate but equal” public accommodations and led to the desegregation of schools and libraries, it was truly the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that formally began the process of integrating society. Throughout the United States, but especially in the South, the subtext of race and equality must have permeated the generation of librarians that are retiring in the twenty-first century. Will these “memories” be present in the collected oral histories? They may be discussed by African American librarians; but they may also be suppressed in interviews with white librarians.

Specifically within the field of librarianship, the generation of librarians retiring in the twenty-first century was the recipient of a wave of policy initiatives. One of the first documents to shape modern librarianship was the American Library Association’s 1948 “National Plan for Public Library Service.” It sought to address economic inequalities in public library expenditures and served as the blueprint for the ALA’s lobbying efforts in Washington. The first fruit of this effort was the passage of the

Library Services Act (LSA) in 1956, funding the establishment of library services in rural America (McCook, 2004).

Comprehensive timelines of social and policy issues related to librarians in the last half of the twentieth century are found in the millennial issues of *American Libraries* and *Library Journal*, and an issue of *Texas Library Journal* from 2009 ("Events of the century," 1999; "Libraries: the long view," 1999; Meraz, 2009). These timelines may serve as a "checklist" of memories to compare and contrast with the oral history data in the *Stories* project. This triangulation may expose areas where journalism and social memory overlap as well as lacunae in the collective memory.

Regret and Nostalgia

Narrative and oral history is strongly tied to emotive responses as the subjects voice feelings such as regret in the midst of nostalgia. Renato Rosaldo (1989) has written about nostalgia in a way that may have relevance to a study involving oral history methodology. Here is his etymological introduction to the term:

To "us," feelings of nostalgia seem almost as "natural" as motor reflexes. How can one help but feel nostalgic about childhood memories? Don't all people in all times and in all places feel nostalgia? Yet even the history of the concept in Western Europe reveals the historical and cultural specificity of our notion of nostalgia. Far from being eternal, the term *nostalgia* (from the Greek *nostos*, "to return home," and *algia*, "a painful condition") dates from the late seventeenth century when it was coined to describe a medical condition. The term described, for example, a pathological homesickness. (p. 108)

While Rosaldo goes on to describe nostalgia as "idealized fantasies designed to gloss over violence and brutality" (p. 109) by imperialist colonizers, the kernel of his

argument is that women and men reflect on their pasts in ways that promote the vision of their lives in which they wish to believe.

In a multidisciplinary work on the concept of regret, Janet Landman examines many aspects of remorse (1993). She begins her study by identifying regret as the only alternative to nostalgia that exists within memory:

The only *past* we much like is the sentimental past of nostalgia, a cozy place furnished with golden oldies, retro watches, and vintage vehicles. Otherwise, we keep our distance. For to reflect on the real, unsentimentalized past is to open oneself up to regret, feeling sorry about past mistakes, misfortunes, and missed opportunities. In shunning the past, we shun regret. (Landman, 1993, p. 6)

Later in the book she writes, “Though memory does not always evoke regret, regret is frequently associated with memory” (p. 204).

She uses an expansive variety of methods and disciplines to discuss regret including philosophy, ethics, psychology, and mathematical models of economic decision theory; but her chief inspiration comes from a typology of literary analysis, dividing novels, plays, and poetry into four categories: comedy, tragedy, romantic, and ironic (p. 247). Using this literary taxonomy, she is able to identify different types of regret and their responses. These gradations of regret may expose useful subtlety when studying oral histories.

A similar notion is found in Alon Confino’s article, “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method” (1997). He invites us to view memory “as an outcome of the relationship between a distinct representation of the past and the full spectrum of symbolic representations available in a given culture” (p. 1391). Similarly, Coser writes that Maurice Halbwachs (1992) explores social memory with a “presentist approach . . . He argues that the beliefs, interests, and aspirations of the present shape the various views of the past” (Coser, 1992, p. 25).

Cliché and Stereotype

Connerton's social memory and Rosaldo's notions of nostalgia are influenced by stereotype and cliché. Jan Vansina discusses the importance of "listening" for the cliché in his chapter entitled "The Message Expresses Culture" (1985). He describes cliché as "deliberate and purposeful simplifications" that "must be interpreted symbolically because they cannot be accepted as they stand" (p. 139). He details a method of interpretation so that they may be used objectively as historical data. His guidelines include the following:

- Compare the message with other accounts, tales, or traditions to see whether one is dealing with stereotypes or not.
- Pursue the ways in which the core images of the narrative have been expanded . . . and determine what the core plot of the narrative is.
- The imagery should at least be obvious to most people in the community.
- The elucidation of implicit meaning must tell us how the original tradition was probably altered to arrive at the message studied.
- Not all stereotypes have implicit meaning that differs from their explicit meaning.
- One should never *a priori* assume that a stereotype always has the same meaning.
- Images are multivocal and ambiguous. (pp. 144-146)

The word *stereotype* has been used in the social sciences since the 1920s. Pauline Wilson writes about the origin of the term in her *Stereotype and Status: Librarians in the United States* (1982): "*Stereotype* is a term taken from printing. When a body of type is set, a mold is made of it. The mold is then used to cast a metal plate. The plate is the stereotype" (p. 3). She notes that in a 1922 publication Walter Lippmann used the word

to describe the process by which people not fully informed reach conclusions based on generalizations. “Stereotypes prevail because they are useful, even necessary. They are a way of organizing learning, a way of organizing experiences with certain groups of people. . . . Once learned, they become a social reality or social fact. They are real although they are not palpable. They become ‘pictures in our heads’ ” (p. 4).

Well-known and well-documented are the stereotypes and cliché that are part of the popular culture notions of librarians and librarianship (E.g., Agada, 1984; Dewey, 1985; Heim, 1983; Kneale, 2009; Lancaster, 2003; Low, 2007; Wilson, 1982). Vansina’s theory and guidelines for identifying cliché within narratives may provide a powerful tool to examine oral histories of the profession to expose subtle meanings about the nature of librarianship.

Memory Studies Conclusion

Very recently there has been an effort to bridge the gap between memory studies and oral history. Paul Hamilton asked two scholars to compile a collection of essays with this in mind. The result is the publication of *Oral History and Public Memories* in 2008 (Hamilton & Shope, 2008b). They attempt to forge a new relationship between oral history and memory studies:

[W]e observed that recent scholarship on historical memory in the fields of history, anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies has rarely engaged with oral history as a central practice in many societies where memory and history are inextricably entangled. Quite simply, very little published work examines how oral history, as an established form for actively making memories, both reflects and shapes collective or public memory. (Hamilton & Shope, 2008a, pp. vii-viii)

Their collection of essays examines the intersections of oral history and memory studies in a variety of settings, including the Aboriginal culture of Australia (Nugent, 2008),

post-apartheid South Africa (Field, 2008), gays and lesbians in San Francisco (Roque Ramirez, 2008), and how to effectively use oral histories in museum settings (Thomas, 2008).

Capturing Our Stories straddles the line of traditional history and many of the values and conceits of oral history due to its subject matter. Oral history is celebrated for exposing and preserving the silences of traditional history and the methodology is used to document the vernacular events and social lives of everyday people who would never be the subject of a traditional biography (Brown, 1988). It is often used to preserve a record of the activities of people whose work or existence undermines the hegemony of the dominant culture, whose thoughts and ideals are silenced by the majority (Young, 2003). The subjects of the *Stories* histories are professional librarians. By their occupational definition they are well-educated. Though they may be aware of, sympathize with, and even identify with subaltern groups and ideas, most librarians would be considered members of the dominant culture. However, their membership in the dominant culture is often in a supporting role—possibly even an underappreciated role. This is why the method of oral history is appropriate to document and preserve their memories.

Memory studies theory will enable this researcher to apply a lens to examine the individual memories in the corpus of oral history interviews—and divine a collective memory for the librarians at the end of the twentieth century. Taken as a whole, the individual stories containing regret, nostalgia, cliché, and stereotype, may inform us of aspects of this subject that lie beneath the surface of the individual interviews. And when triangulated—compared and contrasted—with traditional historical resources, they may expose lacunae of memory.

LITERATURE REVIEW CONCLUSIONS

The master’s degree in Library Science, acquired at an American Library Association-accredited graduate school, may be the only collective memory that *all* librarians truly share. Library work can be very diverse. There are public libraries, school, academic, law, medical, and corporate libraries—just to name a few. Within each type of library there are a multitude of professional positions—for example: reference, cataloging, programming, children’s services, collection development, acquisitions, and administration. Some graduates never step into a traditional library, using their bibliographic skills to collect, index, and administer databases. Each type of library has its own professional association and conferences—and within each association are individual “round tables” and focus groups. There is a society (and a very specific social framework and collective memory) for everyone involved with librarianship.

However, each professional librarian has attended an ALA-accredited graduate school. This accreditation imposes a core set of knowledge deemed essential to be a modern “librarian” (Dalrymple, 1998). Some of the professional standards that are indoctrinated into future librarians through this process include bibliographic control, reference best practices, collection development, and “philosophy, principles, and ethics of the field” (ALA, 2008). The initial *Stories* interviews demonstrated that library school memories may be a recurring trope. The experience of earning a master’s degree in library science may be the most compelling shared memory in the collective consciousness of the profession. Though this memory’s recurrence across the corpus of interviews may be biased—as it is a frequent lead question by interviewers attempting to establish an easy rapport with the narrator—it may be the most pervasive aspect of our professional collective memory because the act of attending library school was the genesis of our careers as librarians.

One historical issue that has affected modern librarianship is the very nature of information—there is just more of it. The print publication industry alone has experienced phenomenal growth in the last half-decade. In the years 2002–2008 new book titles grew an amazing 126% (Bowker, 2008). To stretch a concept from Pierre Nora, each of those books could be considered a “site of memory,” or in his coinage, *les lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1989). Nora actually posits that collective memory is dying due to the culture of preservation: “Archives, museums, memorials, anniversaries, and histories needed to be created by modernity because spontaneous collective memory has ceased to function” (Crane, 1997, p. 1379). Whatever the case may be, it is the modern librarian who must preserve, index, and make accessible each individual “site” in this explosion of memory.

Fortunately, there are new technologies to assist in bibliographic control. These memories may be the most important to document in this project. The librarians retiring in the twenty-first century learned the tools of their trade when computers at the library were found only in the pages of the science fiction books in the stacks. Librarians trained in the ‘60s and ‘70s learned to expertly manage 3x5 cards fed into a typewriter. Each book would be represented by at least three surrogate cards in the catalog drawers: author, title, and subject. Each additional subject, added author, or series statement required another surrogate card to be created and filed. Halbwachs’ *On Collective Memory* would have required the creation and filing of six cards. Most librarians did not do the actual typing and filing, but they had to have expert knowledge of these tasks in order to train and supervise their clerical staff. The circulation of said materials was another equally daunting task: keeping track of who borrowed what and when it was due.

Technology liberated librarians (and their staff) from the most time-consuming clerical tasks; however, it did not change the “science” of bibliographic control.

Technology simply made it far more efficient and precise. These are powerful memories that many of the narrators share. “Let me tell you about the first computer we got . . .” is a recurring line in the oral histories of the *Stories* project.

However liberating the computer was in daily tasks of librarianship, that labor-and time-savings was quickly consumed by an entirely new medium of information: databases, Gopher, Fetch, electronic List-servs, and ultimately the Internet. These same technologies also made self-publishing far more viable, resulting in even more “traditional” (bound paper) items necessary to organize and preserve. The social memory of late twentieth century librarianship may be dominated by the changing nature of our work due to the challenges and opportunities of technology.

Historians of technology, journalists, and information science researchers have done a fine job documenting each step in the march of computer automation and processing. What the narrators of the *Capturing Our Stories* project do differently is describe their individual—personal—experiences with the new tools of the library trade. These oral histories will provide a “bottom up” story of what it was like to discover the power of computer processing, and how library work changed and adapted. This is a social memory that only this generation of librarians can share. The individual memories will be different; but a powerful collective memory will emerge from the corpus.

Chapter Three. Methodology

This research uses as its primary data a corpus of oral history interviews of librarians at the end of their careers in the first decade of the twenty-first century. These interviews are from the *Capturing Our Stories* project (A. A. Smith & Roy, 2008). The library includes thirty-four interviews. A table summarizing the oral history subjects appears as Appendix A.

The *Stories* oral history program was a response to the large-scale aging and retirement of the librarian workforce in the first part of the twenty-first century. It documents institutional and professional memory from a generation of librarians that ushered great technological change into the science of librarianship.

This dissertation examines oral histories that have been collected for the *Stories* project and “listens” for elements that represent the social memory of librarianship in the last half of the twentieth century. This is done using the lens of memory studies scholarship. The data are a selection of memories—individual oral histories—that form a sample of the professional memory. Tropes and motifs, including those of persistent stereotypes, regret, and nostalgia that are part of the social memory—the very society—of librarianship are identified.

RESEARCH QUESTION

As this research is qualitative, there is not a specific hypothesis to test. John W. Creswell suggests the following when designing a qualitative research question:

In a qualitative study, inquirers state research questions, not objectives (i.e., specific goals for the research) or hypotheses (i.e., predictions that involve variables and statistical tests). These research questions assume two forms: a

central question and associated subquestions The subquestions narrow the focus of the study but leave open the questioning. (2003, pp. 105-106)

Following oral history precepts, the narrators “speak for themselves.” This researcher has “listened” and presents his findings as *their* truth. The individual stories in the corpus are collated and a collective—or social—memory emerges from it.

The research question is the following:

What do librarians retiring in the first decades of the twenty-first century remember at the end of their careers?

Subquestions:

- 1) *How are cliché and stereotype used in the interviews?*
 - (a) *What does this tell us about librarians’ image of themselves and how they are perceived?*
 - (b) *Are these messages coded to mean something less obvious?*
 - (c) *Are there stereotypes within the profession regarding individual roles (e.g., children’s librarian, cataloguer, reference librarian)?*
- 2) *Do the subjects have nostalgia for the librarianship practiced at the beginning of their careers?*
 - (d) *What specific aspects are they nostalgic about?*
 - (e) *How did technology affect their professional lives?*
- 3) *Do end-of-career librarians speak about professional regrets?*
 - (f) *What would they have done differently?*
- 4) *Do the oral histories discuss key events in the history of librarianship and culture?*
 - (g) *Do the oral histories reflect memories different from a more traditional questionnaire?*

METHOD

The chief method in this research is oral history, specifically the interviews conducted through the *Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program*.

Capturing Our Stories: A National Oral History Program of Retired and Retiring Librarians began as one of Dr. Loriene Roy's initiatives during her year of service as the 2007-2008 President of the American Library Association. It is a partnership with the School of Information at the University of Texas. The interviews are the property of ALA; however, this researcher has permission to use and reproduce the recordings for his dissertation.

As stated, *Stories* began as one of Dr. Roy's ALA Presidential Initiatives; but this researcher was not initially involved with the project. Dr. Roy put together an exploratory committee for *Stories* during her term as ALA President-Elect which morphed into a National Advisory Committee. This researcher's involvement began shortly before the 2008 ALA Annual Conference when he was recruited by Dr. Roy to become the national director of the program—largely because leadership from the original committees had not materialized. The initiative was resuscitated and a training pre-conference workshop was held to officially kick off the project at the beginning of Dr. Roy's term as president at the 2008 ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim, California,

This researcher worked with Dr. Roy to envision a sustainable oral history project building on the very enthusiastic reception of the original Initiative proposal. He has an academic background in oral history techniques through his work with Dr. Martha Norkunas in the Anthropology Department at the University of Texas, and had conducted a previous memory studies project documenting the burial practices of African

Americans in the Jim Crow era of East Austin. This included multiple oral history interviews with a mortician.²

Based on the enthusiasm of the initial cadre of volunteers and Advisory Committee members, it was believed that workshop-trained interviewers would be able to identify and interview retiring or retired librarians attending the ALA Annual Conference. The pre-conference training workshop included over thirty participants. The workshop discussed the basic tenets of oral history methodology and showed some successful examples of interviews, instruction on how to use mini-DV videotape cameras, and a break-out session for hands-on practice with the technology. Ten sets of cameras and tripods were brought to the conference in the hope that pre-conference participants would “check them out” on a daily basis to conduct interviews while at the conference; however, recruitment of onsite interviewers and interviewees was a bitter disappointment. Of the pre-conference attendees, only three chose to conduct an interview during the conference—and two of those just interviewed each other.

The experience at the 2008 Annual Conference made this researcher realize the depth of commitment that a professional-life history interview would require. Each interview is approximately one hour in length; *ergo*, a commitment of at least ninety minutes is required—by two people, who each have many committee and presentation appointments during a harried conference. This researcher quickly learned that depending on volunteers during the ALA conference was not going to produce a library of interviews. But in the months after the conference it also became apparent that volunteers—even those that had spent an entire day at a pre-conference workshop—were

² These oral history interviews were recorded in the funeral parlor’s chapel—next to an occupied coffin—because it was the quietest location in the building.

not going to provide the lion's share of interviewing. Only one pre-conference participant sent in an interview in the year after the 2008 ALA Annual Conference.

The bulk of interviews collected for this project are the result of this researcher's active participation in the process and incentivization among LIS students at the University of Texas School of Information. Dr. Roy included an oral history module in her graduate Public Libraries class in 2009 that required groups of students to conduct an interview. In addition, two cohorts of Capstone students have contributed interviews. They have also been instrumental in transcribing and coding the corpus of interviews.³

Two appendices reproduce pages from the "Training Documents" section of the Capturing Our Stories website. Appendix B is the "Instructions for Interviewers." In this section the most important elements of conducting a successful oral history interview have been distilled into a brief synopsis. Specific instructions include:

- Have an outline of chosen questions ready. There are suggestions under Question Bank.
- Listen to your narrator. Be prepared to follow her lead and abandon your pre-selected questions.
- Listen to your narrator. Give her time to reminisce and follow up on her own stories.
- Remember to use prompts, such as "Can you tell me more?" Remember the five W's and the one H when you ask follow-up questions: who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- It is often useful to follow a funneling approach in asking questions: move from the general to the specific.
- Channel Terri Gross on Fresh Air.
- Have fun! (A. A. Smith & Roy, 2008)

³ Graduating students at the University of Texas School of Information complete a Capstone independent study project as a final requirement for the master's degree.

Appendix C reproduces the “Question Bank” of suggested interview topics.

Triangulation

To divine a collected memory from the oral history interviews, a social context must be supplied. Research documenting the social, educational, and motivational aspects of the “average” librarian has been presented in the literature review on the library workforce. This research will not attempt to corroborate or recreate these quantitative studies, but will use them as a baseline to develop a broader picture of the collective memory of retiring librarians.

One of the tools to provide a context to the individual memories is to compare and contrast the contents of the interviews with a checklist of historical issues and events. This historicization provides a means to document the overlap between what Frisch describes as History—capital H—and the “little h” history of social memory (Frisch, 1990).

Historicization

Two sets of historical data were created to compare and contrast the events noted in the oral history interviews. The first is a basic timeline of events and social issues from 1955 to 2007. These dates should represent the formative years of our subjects’ youth through the end of their careers. The items are a selective list of historical events and social issues such as gender equality, civil rights, and technological epochs taken from the historical chronology of a well-regarded reference source, *The World Almanac*. This list has been significantly edited to provide a snapshot checklist as a context for the

project. It begins with the 1955 introduction of the polio vaccine and contains items such as Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech and assassination, the Vietnam War, the Kennedys' assassinations, AIDS, and 9/11. The entire list may be found in Appendix D.

A second timeline of library-specific issues was also created. The library chronology combines timelines found in the millennial issues of *American Libraries* ("Libraries: the long view," 1999) and *Library Journal* ("Events of the century," 1999), plus a 2009 *Texas Library Journal* article (Meraz) and an internal ALA report (Ghikas, 2003). It is a chronology of library and information science milestones to be used as a checklist while analyzing the interviews. It crafted from the following:

- Selected pre-1970 events found in the *Library Journal* article that a cursory study of the initial recordings in the project suggested as influential.
- Selected events found in Mary Ghikas' report to the ALA Executive Committee entitled "ALA Milestones."
- All of the post-1970 events found in both the *Library Journal* and *American Libraries* articles.
- Twenty-first century issues noted in the *Texas Library Journal* article.

This list includes epochs of library history that would have influenced or occurred during the careers of the *Stories* interviewees. Examples include the Ranganathan's Laws from his 1931 work on cataloging, the adoption of the Library Bill of Rights by the ALA, the introduction of OCLC, MARC, AARC, and AACR2. This list may be found as Appendix E.

Survey

In order to provide additional context to the corpus of interviews, a follow-up survey of selected narrators was conducted. Whereas the *Stories* corpus relied on oral

history methodology of prompting subjects to discuss their professional lives, this survey asks a controlled set of questions in a journalistic style of interviewing.

This survey is composed of six questions. Two of the questions are designed to contrast the narrative found in the *Stories* oral history submissions. The two questions repeat elements that are discussed in virtually all of the oral history interviews:

Tell me when you knew you wanted to be a librarian?

What do/did you miss most about librarianship at the end of your career because of the changes in the profession?

These are the first and sixth questions in the follow-up survey.

The middle four questions were addressed by some of the *Stories* participants, but not to the satisfaction of this researcher. More information was desired in order to pursue the stated research subquestions listed earlier in this chapter. These four middle follow-up questions are the following:

What made librarianship the right career choice for you?

What traits are most important for librarians to possess?

Thinking about your conception of the stereotypical librarian, how do you conform—or not conform—to the stereotype?

Could you tell me any regrets you have about your choice of librarianship as a profession?

The answers to these questions are compared to the oral history interviews for each subject. This exercise demonstrates how closely the results of the oral history method compare to a more traditional survey method within our sample. What information overlapped the two methods? What was left out of the “story in their own telling?”

Ten randomly chosen original *Stories* participants were solicited to participate in the survey. The survey instrument was vetted by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Texas. Some of the participants chose to respond by writing out their answers, but most of the follow-up interviews were conducted over the telephone, digitally recorded, and transcribed. Chapter Five analyzes the results of this survey instrument and notes how the individual participants responded (in writing or by telephone) in the first section of the chapter.

ANALYSIS

This investigation is what Robert Weiss terms an “issue-focused analysis” in his *Learning from Strangers: the Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (1994). Here he describes what an issue-focused study accomplishes:

An analysis whose aim is issue-focused would concern itself with what could be learned about specific issues—or events or processes—from any and all respondents. Some respondents might contribute more to the analysis, others less. . . [It is] likely to move from discussion of issues within one area to discussion of issues within another, with each area logically connected to the others. (pp. 153-154)

He describes four phases of analysis for a corpus of interviews. The first phase is called “coding.” “Sorting,” “local integration,” and “inclusive integration” follow.

Coding involves identifying concepts of interest in the interviews. Weiss notes that some coding categories are brought to the process before knowing what the interviews will produce: “We plan to use them because they are related to the problem we hope to study, as an aspect of the problem or an explanation for it or a consequence of it” (p. 155). Other categories and concepts may emerge that bear fruit, as well. Categories will evolve as more interviews are analyzed and previous interviews may need

re-coding. Weiss describes this process as coding categories being developed and defined through interaction with the data (p. 156).

Sorting involves separating the coded concepts and examining the contents of each category. Sub-categories may be identified and once-promising concepts may prove irrelevant. At this stage of the process, the contents of the successful categories are mined for quoted excerpts.

The step Weiss refers to as “integration” involves summarizing the sorted categories and interpreting the data. First, the predominate notion of each category is found and noted; but then secondary opinions and—perhaps more importantly—divergent opinions are identified. From this a hypothesis regarding each of the studied concepts is tested and the researcher has her material to discuss. “Local integration brings coherence and meaning to excerpt file materials and their codings” (p. 160). The “inclusive integration” phase “knits into a single coherent story the otherwise isolated areas of analysis that result from local integration” (p. 160). Weiss notes that he often does not know what the research will reveal until well into the local integration analysis.

Each oral history interview and subsequent survey interviews were coded in the process of carefully proofing and editing the transcripts for final publication on the *Capturing Our Stories* website. Once coded and sorted, patterns emerged in the “local” and “inclusive integration” stages of the analysis.

This plan of analysis closely resembled a method detailed for a study of nurses titled “Analysing oral history: A new approach when linking method to methodology” (Miller-Rosser, Robinson-Malt, Chapman, & Francis, 2009). These researchers employed a four-step process. The first level of analysis is collecting the interview. Next, they build brief biographies of the subjects—in the words of the participants. This

gives a cultural context to each of the interviews that might not be captured in the extracts from the next level of analysis.

The third level of analysis is the collection of “telling abstracts” (p. 479). Individual sections of the interviews that match the researcher’s criteria for study are culled and sorted into categories. The abstracts are in the participants’ own language:

In this level, the researcher searches for and then extrapolates the common themes from each of the biographies. Similar to thematic analysis, the researcher is searching or listening for the ‘commonalities’, which in turn are the ‘telling abstracts’. The telling abstracts become the framework, the building blocks, for the final historiography, the collective meaning of the participants’ oral testimonies. (Magrill, 1969, p. 479)

The fourth level is the assemblage of the telling abstracts into a collective meaning. This is the researcher’s construction of the meaning—the interpretation.

Theories applied to the method of oral history come from the emerging discipline of memory studies. This is appropriate as all oral history comes from individual memories. The oral histories were examined to divine a collected memory of librarianship at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Within the collected memory there may be specific recurring tropes of nostalgia and regret, but especially cliché and stereotype.

Collective Memory

The notions of a collective memory come essentially from Maurice Halbwachs. Recurring—and very similar—memories of social class and education (which are discussed by Halbwachs), as well as reminiscences of library agency and mission are found across the corpus of interviews to create a social memory of the profession.

One rich source of material is the individual narrators' descriptions of "what they did." Identifying the *one* "what I did" statement in each interview—and comparing them across the corpus—provides a key to the essence of the librarian collective memory.

Regret and Nostalgia

Work on nostalgia comes from Renato Rosaldo (1989, p. 479). Due to the very nature of the interviews in the corpus—end-of-career librarians reflecting on their professional lives—elements of nostalgia are present. These memories comparing and contrasting the state of librarianship at the beginning and end of their careers prove valuable.

Identifying in each interview the epochs in the introduction of technology—and what was gained, and lost, with the technology—provides a social history of the introduction of the computer into librarianship and the creation of information science.

Work on regret comes from Janet Landman (1993). Extracting a list of regrets from the corpus of interviews proves interesting, especially when examined using theory from Landman. Each of these regrets is coded with the typology from literary criticism: comedic, tragic, romantic, or ironic.

The social memory of regret and nostalgia among retiring librarians is original research that provides a unique glimpse of the profession.

Cliché and Stereotype

Work on cliché and stereotype in memory studies comes from Jan Vansina (1985); however, there is much to be found in the library literature on this topic—as

librarians are a modern archetype of stereotype (Agada, 1984; Dewey, 1985; Heim, 1983; Kneale, 2009; Lancaster, 2003; Low, 2007; Wilson, 1982).

Identifying the use of cliché and stereotype within each interview in the corpus creates a rich metric of librarians' self-perception and their views of the outside world's perception of themselves.

Listing the ways librarians self-identify in opposition to the stereotype, as well as their conformation—and if or how that changed over the last half of the twentieth century—is particularly interesting.

EXECUTION

At the beginning of the analysis phase, a spreadsheet was developed to note instances of social memory found within the individual interviews that had been identified as being of potential interest. These “issues” were noted in the first column, or *y*-axis, of the spreadsheet. Each interviewee’s name was populated at the top of the spreadsheet for the *x*-axis. As an interesting bit of interviewee *x*’s story was found by carefully reviewing each recording, a brief abstract of that segment was noted in their column next to the *y*-axis description of the social memory. Along with the abstract memo, a URL pointing to exactly that section of the interview was noted as generated from the GLIFOS application.

As the careful analysis of the interviews progressed, the categories of social memory features were refined and expanded. New, unanticipated patterns of social memory emerged. Because of the innate protean nature of a spreadsheet, some categories were able to develop sub-headings, and entirely new categories were also inserted into the spreadsheet.

Before beginning this phase of the research, this researcher was already very familiar with the contents of each of the interviews—even the ones he had not conducted himself—because of the way each interview had been processed within the GLIFOS application, notably the “synching” of each transcript paragraph to the digital recording. Yet even with this familiarity with the interviews, new elements of social memory emerged when examined within the structure of the spreadsheet. One example is the preponderance of “accidental” librarian stories: Many of the interviewees reported that librarianship had not been their first career choice—yet all were enthusiastic about their ultimate decision.

As the spreadsheet became populated with the individual elements of memory, patterns of social memory elegantly emerged. Here is a list of the initial categories of social memory that were to be harvested from the individual interviews:

- Regret, with subcategories.
 - Comedy
 - Tragedy
 - Romantic
 - Ironic
- Nostalgia, with subcategories.
 - Technology
 - Changes in the profession
 - MLIS school memory
- Cliché, when the subject employed a cliché.
- Stereotype, when the subject discussed professional stereotypes, with sub-categories.

- Identifying in opposition
 - Conforming
- Historicization, with occurrences noted from the two timelines.
 - Social context list
 - Professional context list
- Sexism.

As the interviews were analyzed, other social memories emerged that were added to the spreadsheet. The already processed interviews were then re-analyzed for these additional elements, sometimes by identifying a keyword that could be searched within the transcripts, but mainly by drawing on the researcher's own memory of the corpus of interviews. Some examples of additional social memory topics that were inserted into the original spreadsheet include the following:

- Within the Nostalgia sub-categories, an additional entry was made for anxiety about the future.
- Within the Stereotype sub-categories, it became manifest that there were stereotypes within the profession, as well as from without; and there was also a great deal of discussion about the personality traits most closely associated with successful librarians.
- One totally new category that was added to the spreadsheet identified the one “what I did” statement that dominated each interview. By analyzing and comparing these statements, the overriding social memory was identified—as almost all included the very same elements.
- Another category of social memory that emerged involved accounts of their first library experience as a child. A surprising number of interviews included this information.

Once the spreadsheet was completed with the analysis of all the interviews in the corpus, this researcher could then “see” patterns of social memory that included all, some, or not very many of the interviews at all. The next step of analysis was to take each line of the spreadsheet and revisit what each of the interviewees had shared on that topic. The abstracts that had been written in each cell of the spreadsheet were copied to a word-processing document along with the GLIFOS-generated URL for that section of the interview. Once pasted, the URL was re-opened to produce the transcript of that identified section. The section of the transcript itself was then copied to the word-processed document. The time-stamp of each section was also noted in the new document to aid in the citation process. The abstracts, the transcripts, the URL from GLIFOS, and the time-stamps of each of the identified social memory memes were strung together in one document with each description from the *x*-axis of the spreadsheet heading up a section of text. This researcher now had approximately 175 single-spaced pages of quotes arranged by topic with bibliographic citation data for each entry ready to be synthesized in order to divine the social memory of librarianship.

The following chapter shares the results of this work with the *Stories* oral history interviews. It begins with a brief discussion of the theory used to justify this researcher’s contention that the social memory of librarianship can be gleaned by this process. But the majority of the chapter is crafted with very little critical discussion, in keeping with precept of oral history methodology to allow the subjects the opportunity to tell their own stories, in their own words, in their own ways.

Chapter Four. Stories Captured

This section is based entirely on the corpus of oral history interviews from the *Capturing Our Stories* project. Critical and editorial intervention is limited—by design. In keeping with oral history methodology, the information in this chapter attempts to allow the subjects of the research to tell their own stories in their own voices. This researcher assumes that elements found in multiple oral history interviews constitute “the social memory” of librarianship. A discussion of the implications of the oral history interviews, including the incorporation of theory from memory studies, regret, and stereotype, will follow in the sixth chapter. The entire corpus of transcripts under consideration for this research project is included in Appendix G.

But what is *social memory*? The basis of this idea, as discussed in the Chapter Two Literature Review, comes from Maurice Halbwachs, although his notion of this idea is translated from the French as “collective memory.” He posits that all memories are “kept” and perpetuated by social groups, namely individuals who share a familial, religious, or class affiliation (Halbwachs, 1992). He suggests that as social class distinctions become less relevant, professional social relations may replace that part of his theory in the modern age (pp. 138-142). Here is where librarianship becomes a vector for Halbwachs’ notion of collective memory.

Paul Connerton takes up Halbwachs’ ideas of collective memory and introduces the term that we will use, *social memory*. Connerton expands Halbwachs’ notions to include “acts” that facilitate the participation and continuation of a social memory. He uses the terms “commemorative ceremonies” and “bodily practices” to describe actions that a society uses to facilitate their social memory (Connerton, 1989). Much of what librarians describe in their oral history interviews are “actions.” These are actions that

introduce the love of books and reading to young children; actions that create order out of the chaos of information; and actions that, above all else, help people find the resources they need.

What follows are selections of memory from the corpus of thirty-four oral history interviews. But what justifies the theoretical leap from Halbwachs' and Connerton's ideas to this researcher's contention that a social memory can be practically defined? The oral history work of Portelli and the oral tradition work of Vansina provide this bridge. Jan Vansina finds that oral history is but one component of the oral tradition. Oral tradition is the history of societies, especially pre-literate societies. Oral tradition is by necessity shared through a lineage of social relations over time. Oral history is the first step in oral tradition, that which is contemporary to its shared speakers: events that happened to them personally or during their actual lifetimes (Vansina, 1985).

Halbwachs provides us with an apt metaphor in *The Collective Memory* (1980) using the example of music and musicians. A piece of music may be recognized by a non-musician who is familiar with it. One may even be able to hum a tune from it. But one cannot actually "play" the music without becoming a musician. Only musicians who are familiar with the specific piece of music can perform it. If the music is an orchestral score, a musician may be only to play "her part," though she would understand the total work. The orchestra conductor would have a broad knowledge of all the parts. An orchestral work can be thought of as a social memory. Participants in the social memory may be as versed in the topic as the conductor, or may know how to perform just "their part;" or they may simply know of the music, enjoy a performance of the social memory, and take away a tune to hum later. The social memory of librarianship is much the same. All educated people are aware of librarians—and some know more about the profession than others; however, only practitioners of librarianship are truly versed in the social

memory. One's facility within the memory may be limited to just a particular sphere of practice (e.g., a children's librarian or an academic reference librarian), or it may be broad if there has been a concerted effort to learn more of the facets of the social memory (such as being a library school professor, or ALA president or councilor). This research on librarianship is like interviewing members of an orchestra who have just performed a complicated symphony.

Alessandro Portelli divines social memory from multiple oral history interviews describing the same events. By comparing and contrasting oral history interviews of a cohort who lived through a single event in his *The Death of Luigi Trastulli* (1991), he is able to document not just “what happened,” but what a society believes happened. In the case of the murder of a young man in Italy, society’s memory is clearly different from the printed journalism of the day and the version of events depicted in traditional histories. But it is the memory that is shared by the inhabitants of Terni, Italy. It is this social memory that actually influences their current decisions. Portelli has collected multiple oral history interviews and found repeating elements. These repetitions are the social memory.

This research has also collected multiple oral histories and presents repeating elements that we will call the *social memory* of librarianship from the last half of the twentieth century. Portelli’s example for bridging Halbwachs’ and Connerton’s theory with a practical method to document a social memory guides this research. End-of-career librarians have been offered the opportunity to tell their stories in their own words, at their own pace, and without responding to a specific set of questions. What follows is a collection of story details that share common elements. This is the social memory.

A note on style: This oral history project takes advantage of state-of-the-art streaming technology on the World Wide Web. As such, each quotation in this chapter is

footnoted with an individual URL that may be followed using one's web browser to access that particular section of the oral history interview at the *Capturing Our Stories* website. As works on oral history methodology cited in the literature review attest (Frisch, 2006; Portelli, 1991), a transcription of a conversation often fails to convey important details from the interview. For this reason, the individual URLs are footnoted on each page. These footnotes take advantage of the verity that the technology is able to supply. Readers using a printed copy of this dissertation may access a companion citation finding aid webpage with the clickable links at:

<http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~stories/links.htm>

This research is innovative because of its content and because the source material is made so readily available to scholars. When, or if, the reader questions an interviewee's meaning—or timbre, or irony, or humor—that specific section of the interview is but a mouse click away.

This chapter begins with striking comments shared by many of the librarians interviewed about their regrets as they advanced into management and library administration. Discussions involving the funding of libraries, personal compensation, and sexism follow. Many of the interviewees state that they had not intended to become librarians, but as they matured it became apparent that this career was the perfect choice for them. Several of the interviewees also share memories of their childhood library experiences—fond memories that shaped their later decisions to pursue the career. This cohort of librarians witnessed an incredible change in their professional lives due to the advance of technology. These memories are a profound testament within the history of the discipline. Many of the interviewees shared their horror of cataloging class in library

school and this leads to a discussion of cliché and stereotype. These repeating elements are the social history of librarianship in the last half of the twentieth century.

PROMOTION REGRETS

Regret associated with moving up the administrative ladder is a pervasive theme within the corpus of interviews. It is a bittersweet regret because the promotion to higher levels of administration comes with increased pay and prestige, but almost all of the respondents expressed regret about leaving behind the simplicity—and fun—of their former entry-level library duties.

In an academic library this might manifest itself as the added strain of faculty or tenure status and its attendant pressures. Kathryn Kaya refers to this as “jumping through hoops” when she would have been perfectly happy just working with students and helping the teaching faculty: “doing library things” (Kaya, 2010, 10:25).⁴ She made a conscious decision to not advance higher into administration, because “it would have taken me too far from the work that I enjoyed doing—which was with the patrons” (Kaya, 2010, 24:41).⁵

Other librarians, like Bill Mears, loved his work as an administrator. His master’s degree was in librarianship, but his doctorate was in public administration. Though he was the director of a large academic library, his interviewer—a former employee—asked him about his habit of continuing to take reference shifts, even as the director.

Dr. Mears responds to her question with the following, in a charming and self-effacing style:

⁴ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Kathryn_Kaya&p=video1&b=625&e=679

⁵ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Kathryn_Kaya&p=video1&b=1386&e=1481

I could say a lot of noble reasons—but it was because I liked working with the public. That's the bottom line of it. I truly found that much more enjoyable than pushing paper all day long. And so it was almost a relief to get out and work with the public. But I really liked working with the public. I like to do reference, because it's kind of like solving a puzzle—you know—finding the right answer. And because people usually appreciate that, and appreciate you—is another rewarding part of it. (Mears, 2008, 11:53)⁶

This sentiment is echoed by Andrew Hansen, who began his career as public librarian and then worked for many years as an administrator for the American Library Association. After he retired, he hoped to find a volunteer or part time job as a traditional reference librarian, “...doing what I really love doing. I did not want any part of administration” (Hansen, 2009, 10:43).⁷

One public librarian, Sheila Henderson, also expressed resentment about the time that administration took away from what she saw as the library’s mission, especially concerning personnel issues. While she was adamant about the importance of coaching and mentoring early-career librarians, she also believed in letting people move on when their career prerogatives did not align with her goals. She discusses the inordinate amount of documentation that was required to be in compliance with the municipal government’s policies and procedures when terminating an employee. She states, “It is hard to get in a full day’s work as it relates to library work, and that to me is a real challenge and I resent that” (Henderson, 2010, 42:13).

Mary Bushing talks about the politics of administrating a library. She has worked in both public and academic libraries and identifies the same two types of politics in both institutions: Capital “P” politics involve the administrative bureaucracies and established

⁶ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Dr._Bill_Mears&p=video1&b=713&e=772

⁷ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Andrew_Hansen&p=video1&b=643&e=663

chains of command. But also small “p” politics, which entail responsibility to multiple constituents and the unstated powers within an organization:

What are the forces acting upon the library at any given time? So there are always frustrations because it isn’t possible just to do the things that you see to be the best thing, but rather you have to work through the system.

You have to learn how to be a diplomat. You have to learn how to compromise, even when you had rather just to do what you know to be the right way.
(Bushing, 2010, 09:33)⁸

Kent Middleton, a public librarian, also expresses frustration with being a low-level manager and the in-fighting among top management. Over the course of his career as a public librarian he perceived the budget struggles as a constant battle between the library directors who would attempt to gain the goodwill of the City Council with little regard to the impact reduced services would have on the most needy patrons. He cynically states that perhaps the library directors believed if they cut costs in the short-term that the Council would support them with increased funding later on (Middleton, 2008, 20:16).⁹

Later in the interview he relates how he would describe his job:

Well, I told friends and relatives that I was really more of a city bureaucrat during the time. . . I was a branch manager than I was a librarian. Because my time was almost completely taken up with staffing problems, purchasing problems, and customer complaints and I got very tired of that. So I don't miss any of that at all. When I was able to help customers directly that was, that was always satisfying.
(Middleton, 2008, 55:44)¹⁰

Karen Breen talks of losing what she loved by being promoted:

⁸ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Mary_Bushing&p=video1&b=573&e=764

⁹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Kent_Middleton&p=video1&b=1216&e=1350

¹⁰ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Kent_Middleton&p=video1&b=3344&e=3391

When I got to be head of children's services, I enjoyed it for quite a while, but then it became meetings and more meetings and more meetings. And all the things I loved the most, I lost -- working with the kids, building a collection -- I lost that. (Breen, 2008, 14:31)¹¹

Then she went to a conference where Margaret McElderry (a noted children's book publisher) was speaking. "And I listened to her and I turned to [the person seated next to me] and I said, 'I have just come to realize that I am never going to be Margaret McElderry. I need to pick what I want to do with my life and to really have a good time'" (Breen, 2008, 14:31). She left librarianship proper to become a successful consultant, staging workshops and conferences—working to inspire children's librarians who might also be bogged down with the minutiae of their jobs.

The art of collection development is a task that librarians report regretting the loss of in the process of being promoted to management. Kenneth Yamashita, a public librarian in California, specifically mentions how much he loved doing materials selection in his early career. He reminisces about the joys of collection development during his early days when he is discussing the end of his career—which was during a fiscal crisis and involved making difficult decisions about which branches to close, limiting hours of operation, and laying off staff. He enjoyed materials selection in his early days because of the impact it had on cultural communities who had not been well-served. He reflects that the act of collection development was an important responsibility that directly served the public. Though by most measures being the director of a large library system may involve much more responsibility, he *remembers* the act of collection development as being far more important (Yamashita, 2010).¹²

Jaye McLaughlin was a children's librarian who became a branch manager and then departmental manager for the Fort Worth Public Library in Texas. During her

¹¹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=TexLegacyProj%3Abreen_karen&p=video1&b=871&e=899

¹² http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Kenneth_Yamashita&p=video1&b=1513&e=1691

tenure collection development was first out-sourced, then returned to a centralized staff for the entire system. She talks about this move away from the control of individual branch librarians with regret because it took the decisions and knowledge of new materials out of their hands. She discusses the attention that collection development was given during library school and how she truly enjoyed this facet of librarianship. Ms. McLaughlin relished the early part of her career when she really knew her branch's collection—because she had selected it. Collection development was satisfying because of the “immediacy of knowing what books were coming out,” but that work was time-consuming and “then something gave” and her attentions were consumed with “dealing with all the problems with adult patrons as well as children’s, and as well as planning your programs, as well as, you know, taking care of the pages and supervising” (McLaughlin, 2011, 47:41).¹³ Looking back, she could not definitively say that outsourcing and then centralizing collection development adversely affected her library; however, she did miss that part of her early career. “But looking back...What difference did it really make? I don’t know” (McLaughlin, 2011, 47:41).

Though there were aspects of moving into library administration that are bittersweet memories for Ms. McLaughlin, the overall experience of promotion into management was very rewarding. When asked if she ultimately enjoyed the increased responsibilities, she says, “Yes, much more . . . because I had more pull” (McLaughlin, 2011, 36:16). She discusses how her sense of the library mission was expanded when she became the advocate of children’s services within the system administration of the large north Texas library. As an entry-level children’s librarian, and then a branch librarian, she had little experience with other departments. She enjoyed working with other departmental managers because they taught her about other aspects of librarianship from

¹³ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jay_McLaughlin&p=video1&b=2861&e=2960

a systems standpoint: “I enjoyed managers’ meetings and getting to know the other managers, because they all taught me a lot of things. Parts of the library that I wasn’t aware of, you know, because we didn’t have government documents in the children’s department...” (McLaughlin, 2011, 36:16). At one point she was cross-trained to work in the business library. This experience as part of a management team demonstrated to her that each of the library divisions were interdependent. She came to appreciate each of the divisions: “[This] helped me respect a lot of the different librarians, and realize, you know, that we all have our specialties, so I could very much respect what they were doing. Therefore, I assumed I had that same respect” (McLaughlin, 2011, 36:16).¹⁴

Elsewhere in the interview she discusses how her new administrative status allowed her to develop a very gratifying skill and passion. As an early-career children’s librarian, she was responsible for developing and executing storytimes on a weekly basis. The process of selecting a theme, finding the appropriate books, and doing a quick run-through of the stories consumed a great deal of time each week. But as a children’s services division manager she would only occasionally have to substitute for a vacationing or ill librarian’s storytime. This gave her an opportunity to develop a repertoire of stories that she memorized. She began to *tell* stories instead of simply reading them. And this was far more rewarding, allowing her to really interact with her young audiences in a way which she never had time to do when it was a weekly chore.

When you are telling a story, you are telling them and looking into their eyes, and that story becomes much more immediate to them. Many storytellers will say it is not just the storyteller, but it is the audience and you are bringing it in and you are making something magical. If the audience isn’t interested, it won’t happen. If the storyteller isn’t any good, it won’t happen. When you are reading a book, the kids are focused on the pictures. When you are telling a story, they might create that picture in their mind.

¹⁴ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jay_McLaughlin&p=video1&b=2116&e=2252

So it becomes a little bit more of an imagination and trying to understand, and—and it's not somebody else's idea of what it looked like. . . .

The reason I didn't feel like I could learn the stories [before] was because I didn't feel like I had the time. (McLaughlin, 2011, 18:36)¹⁵

Nevertheless, Ms. McLaughlin's transition into management was not without trials. She relates, "I think there was an ongoing problem because I still really saw myself as being a children's librarian, so I didn't make that transition into management as well as perhaps my supervisors wanted me to do" (McLaughlin, 2011, 05:27).¹⁶

Sarah Long is another children's librarian who discusses the transition into management:

It made me very nervous at first, because I was used to working with children. And while I've always been able to talk easily, I got so nervous that I would write out these little cards for opening ceremonies. "Hello, my name is Sarah Long. I am the director of the library."

I was very nervous about coming across as adult and in charge and not being a children's person. All of my friends had warned me that I would have to give up my feather boas and my cowboy boots and other crazy costumes that I had adopted as a children's librarian. (Long, 2008, 11:00)¹⁷

But ultimately Ms. Long believes children's librarianship is the perfect prerequisite for administrative work:

I think actually working with youth is pretty good preparation for being an administrator. If you can organize a program for kids, you can certainly organize a board meeting. Now I'm not meaning to put down board members, but it's a similar kind of thing. If you can organize volunteers to work with the children's program, you can recruit people to help you in any kind of management exercise you'd like to mention. So I think that if you can work with young people, you can just about work with anybody.

And children's librarians are legendary for being able to find the resources and convince people to help them for harebrained projects. And a lot of what you do

¹⁵ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jay_McLaughlin&p=video1&b=1116&e=1477

¹⁶ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jay_McLaughlin&p=video1&b=327&e=345

¹⁷ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Sara_Long&p=video1&b=630&e=672

as an administrator, at some level, can be considered a harebrained project. So I think that in many ways, I was well suited to move up into library administration. (Long, 2008, 13:28)¹⁸

Though she does not specifically reference her work with the American Library Association in connection with her “harebrained projects,” she did serve as the 1999-2000 President of ALA.

Micky Freeny also missed storytime when she began to move up the administrative ladder. She says that she was always the storytime substitute for vacationing children’s librarians because of her love of working with actual children, rather than simply managing librarians. Even as a library director, she enjoyed working the odd Sunday shift—much like Dr. Mears, above—in order to stay in touch with her institution’s patrons because she loved public service (Freeny, 2009, 12:03).¹⁹ However, she also notes that as a manager she had the freedom to theorize and implement new ideas about children’s services. As a manager she was able to take risks developing programming that would have been impossible as an entry-level children’s librarian. She reports this was exceptionally satisfying.

Another librarian, Diana Collins, relates the joys of being a children’s librarian and watching generations of kids grow up:

They’re little sponges, they are open to learning, they want to learn, they want to be there, they want to be in the library!

They love to come and sit on the story rug and hear the stories I love to share. And I love giving the child the perfect book and seeing them turn and say “I want another one just like it.” There’s no greater words to a librarian. (Collins, 2008, 06:01)²⁰

¹⁸ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Sara_Long&p=video1&b=780&e=838

¹⁹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Nicky_Freeny&p=video1&b=723&e=830

²⁰ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Diana_Collins&p=video1&b=310&e=359

But she laments the loss of that day-to-day contact with the kids when she became a library director. And then when the library outgrew its physical resources, all of her time was consumed with a building project and fund-raising.

It became more of a fund-raising position, I was always raising money. I was the representative of the library in the community so I wasn't reading kids books and placing books in hands or promoting large print or whatever to patrons, which was what I really liked. The people stuff is what I really liked, not the pleading for money from multiple organizations. (Collins, 2008, 06:01)

Children are not the only population whom librarians reported missing as they climbed the administrative ladder. Both Ms. Collins and another public librarian, Karlan Sick, specifically mention their older patrons. Ms. Collins states, "I loved my seniors. The ninety year old gentlemen in the little touring hat and the little convertible that roared up in front of the library to read the *Wall Street Journal* everyday" (Collins, 2008, 06:01). Ms. Sick compares the two constituents when asked what she missed about moving into management: "Seeing individual readers more often. [My library has] a large population of senior citizens and I found I really enjoyed working with them too. That was not dissimilar from working with children and teenagers because if they need help, you get up and help them. You don't just sit there" (Sick, 2008, 25:23).²¹

These nostalgic recollections filled with regret concerning advancement from their entry-level positions—something most people would regard with enthusiasm—are particularly poignant because they are so unexpected. The next section addresses two issues involved with fiscal matters. Librarians will discuss the struggle to support their institutions, and also their personal frustrations with salaries.

²¹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Karlan_Sick&p=video1&b=1514&e=1556

FUNDING AND COMPENSATION

The constant struggle for funding is another important element in the social memory of librarians. Fiscal challenges for their institutions, as well as regrets about their personal financial compensation, are found in many of the interviews. These are often the only elements of regret to be found in an interview about a librarian's professional life. Many of the regrets fall into Landman's (1993) category of tragic, but librarians are also quick to make light of fiscal issues with irony or comedy.

When asked about her biggest frustrations as a public librarian, Jeannette Larson (2008) first responds that she doesn't like to dwell on obstacles, but would rather focus on solutions. However, she then volunteers that throughout the years of her career there had been a constant struggle with the governing authorities over funding, and she wished they had consistently valued her mission as a library director. Because her funding was constantly in flux, programs and hours of operation were being adjusted—or eliminated—each year. She felt like her patrons held only her responsible when they complained bitterly as their expectations for library service were not met, whereas the blame for reduced services truly belonged with the City and County who were inconsistent in their financial support.

However frustrating her experiences obtaining funding were, she uses humor: "Until the City Manager has a child, they don't discover youth services—and then all of the sudden they are like 'Oh my gosh, storytime! This is the greatest thing in the world'"(J. Larson, 2008, 19:06).²² She wishes there were other ways to get city administrators excited about the library and to ensure more consistent funding.

Another public librarian, Diana Collins, reiterated the importance of storytime as a funding tool: "That's kind of my philosophy, if I can hook them in story hour then I've

²² http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jeannette_Larson&p=video1&b=1147&e=1204

got them for life" (2008, 53:23).²³ She believes that a child who grew in her storytime becomes her best advocate and educated taxpayer, understanding the value of knowledge and libraries.

She describes her funding battles as a contest with the other government departments that were deemed (rightly so) to be essential, such as providing police and jails:

But I always felt like, well, what about the people that are doing their jobs right and want a library? . . . Instead of being a team that worked together to provide it, [the budgeting meetings] were adversarial and I hated that. I hated it. I hated it. (Collins, 2008, 47:48)²⁴

Ultimately Ms. Collins employs humor to describe a surprise financial gift. Earlier in the interview (and quoted above) she had talked about relishing the time spent with her very youngest patrons *and* the retired seniors:

We had that little man that wore that little hat that drove up in his convertible at the age of whatever? When he died he left us half of his estate—it was over \$100,000. So, who knew? I didn't know he had any money but when he died he thought enough of us to leave us money. So that's the sort of thing that gets us through. (Collins, 2008, 27:56)²⁵

Connie Corson jokes about the administration's solution to a staffing shortage at her private girls' school library in New York City. The headmaster suggested she work with volunteers after her part-time clerk was let go during a budget shortfall. The library was considered a plum volunteer position, so there was no shortage of willing parents. At one point she had as many as thirty active volunteers. But managing all those volunteers

²³ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Diana_Collins&p=video1&b=3203&e=3224

²⁴ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Diana_Collins&p=video1&b=2868&e=2953

²⁵ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Diana_Collins&p=video1&b=1676&e=1703

consumed much more of her time than when she simply had a paid clerk—time that she should have spent with the students, the *raison d'être* of a school librarian.

My circulation system was totally messed up because they were doing the circulation and, kindergartners had checked out, I mean, a totally inappropriate video or something for the . . . the upper schoolers. (C. Corson, 2009, 32:00)²⁶

And she had to be careful not to hurt anyone's feelings, which made managing them even more difficult because these were powerful, important people. Only after several years of struggling was the clerk position restored.

Only one of the interview subjects had anything good to say about fundraising. Irene Hoadley is the retired director of the Texas A&M library, an Association of Research Libraries (ARL) member. She believes that working hard to secure donations and grants brought prestige to the library and endeared it to the other departments. It leveled the administrative playing field within the university when the deans and president could see that she and her staff were not only contributing to the institution by providing ARL-level scholarship, but that they were also helping to “pay their way.”

It provided the opportunity for us to do some things that we would not have been able to do otherwise: The student computing area. We would not have had that, except for one individual who gave the money to do that. And being able to attract some of those kinds of things—some of those kinds of funds—was good. The other thing it did was, it gave the library a lot of visibility that it had not had before.

Most people, if they thought of A&M—whether they were students there, or whatever their connection to the institution was—they have no real concept of a library. But once we got the mothers' clubs involved, and some of the other alumni groups, former students groups, then that gave more visibility to the library as an institution, and as a result, it's—some of that funding, and some of that recognition has continued to evolve and to develop. And that's only good for the institution. (Hoadley, 2009, 20:34-22:12)²⁷

²⁶ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Connie_Corson&p=video1&b=1944&e=2070

²⁷ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Irene_Hoadley&p=video1&b=1234&e=1332

The struggle to fund libraries is a perennial issue that directors and administrators negotiate with their governing bodies. Many expressed dismay at the process, wondering why they had to constantly remind funding authorities that the library's mission was important. But the inequity of personal compensation is a struggle that almost all of the librarians interviewed referred to as simply "part of the job." Making money was not the reason people entered the profession. Almost all of the comments about salaries fall into Landman's typology of regrets as comedy (Landman, 1993). Andrew Hansen, after describing a 30-year career in librarianship, says, "And I have often said I have never regretted becoming a librarian except every payday" (Hansen, 2009, 16:24).²⁸ Diana Collins states, "You get to do something you love and you get paid for it . . . minimally paid for it" (Collins, 2008, 35:53).²⁹

Jenifer John Patterson relates some discussions she has had with young people considering a career in librarianship:

You know, and I spend a lot of time saying you know it's true, I never made a lot of money, but I always owned my own house, I've always had a nice car, I've always managed to take trips when I wanted to, you know, you figure it out, you make it work, you know. It's just like teaching, it is, it is a calling. It's a calling and we've got to figure out a way that it calls and continues to call to young people. (Patterson, 2008, 54:05)³⁰

Mary Bushing comments, "This is a fabulous way to earn a living. The salaries aren't great. You will never get rich, but it's a fabulous way to earn a living." Employing comedy, she continues to say that there are other compensations besides the remunerative that make librarianship a personally valuable profession—like having access to a great store of interesting anecdotes to share at cocktail parties. Then she uses

²⁸ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Andrew_Hansen&p=video1&b=983&e=993

²⁹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Diana_Collins&p=video1&b=2153&e=2282

³⁰ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jenifer_John_Patterson&p=video1&b=3132&e=3305

irony, “. . . if you ever attend any.” Dr. Bushing ends this passage by stating the chief social memory of librarians: “you have to have a passion” (Bushing, 2010, 27:51).³¹

Being passionate about librarianship is the compensation that is missing from the paycheck. Micky Freeny jokes about a conversation with a bus driver just after getting her first job as a professional librarian:

And I can remember how excited I was. I took a Metro bus back to my apartment in the district, and I can remember talking to the bus driver about—I had gotten this job, I was the only person on the bus, and he said, “Well, how much are you going to make?” And I said, nine thousand dollars. Nine thousand dollars? He said, “I make more than that! You have a master’s degree and you’re going to work for nine thousand dollars?” (Freeny, 2009, 05:11)³²

But not only are librarian salaries inequitable compared to similar professions requiring a master’s degree, there are inequalities within the profession. Several children’s librarians reported perceived slights from their fellow librarians in other departments, as well as in their financial compensation. Rita Auerbach notes that children’s librarian salaries often lagged behind those of their peers in public libraries, so that if you wanted to work with kids, it was more financially lucrative to work as a school librarian because those salaries were tied to the teachers’ contract in her state (Auerbach, 2008).³³ Karen Breen reiterates this:

Never give up your children's librarian job. It's still the best thing. It's what you got into the business to do. For me, the frustration was children's librarians never get paid what everybody else gets paid. So they have to leave what they're doing to become better paid. (Breen, 2008, 29:52)³⁴

³¹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Mary_Bushing&p=video1&b=2790&e=2872

³² http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Nicky_Freeny&p=video1&b=311&e=339

³³ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Rita_Auerbach&p=video1&b=693&e=716

³⁴ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=TexLegacyProj%3Abrean_karen&p=video1&b=1792&e=1829

Many of the interviewees discuss their disenchantment with their salaries, especially when compared to other professional careers requiring a master's degree. But all of the subjects reported personal rewards as career librarians that more than compensated them for their diminished earnings. The next section examines one possible reason that librarianship has never been a lucrative choice.

SEXISM

The salary disparity could be attributed to sexism. Librarianship was considered a "pink-collar" vocation (Grimes, 1994; Wilson, 1982), and children's librarianship was especially considered a woman's career choice. Connie Corson worked in the education department at the Museum of Modern Art and she describes the mentality concerning human resources:

Our salaries were not as good as they were for men. I always felt that we were hired as if we were volunteers. . . . And there was an attitude in the museum that the women who worked there, most of them were usually volunteers. They were the wives of board members for example, Board of Trustees members, and they did some very valuable work. They ran a Junior Council. They ran all kinds of educational programs and so on, but the assumption was that every woman must have a man who can afford for her to take a volunteer job. . . . Well, that was certainly not the case for me. I needed a job because I needed to earn money. My entire education, library school education, was all at my cost. (C. Corson, 2009, 17:11)³⁵

Library work as only fit for volunteers is a recurring theme in Ms. Corson's interview. When discussing a later job as a school librarian, above, she related the headmaster's insistence that she replace her clerk with parent volunteers.

A military college librarian reports a similar disparity: Filomena Magavero began working for the Maritime College at Fort Schuyler in New York just after the conclusion

³⁵ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Connie_Corson&p=video1&b=1031&e=1231

of WWII. She was the only professional woman at the College for more than a decade, though they had many female clerks on the staff. Because she was a woman, though, she was hired at the same pay-rate as the clerks—even though she had her master's degree from Columbia and the majority of the rest of the faculty had only received the equivalent of a two-year “school ship” degree. She loved many aspects of her job as a librarian, but the entrenched sexism of the all-male military college left her with many bitter memories:

And here I am, with much more education, and I was hired as a clerk. Now I questioned that of the librarian at the time, you know. I thought, “Why should I be in the clerical line?” He said, “Well, there's nothing I could do, you know this is the way it is,” and you know I accepted. . . .

But I didn't realize that these people [laughs] would start treating me like a clerk, and always did, and were mean-spirited about it, you know they really were. I had no restroom facilities. I had to walk two blocks outside of my office. In the winter I had to put on a coat, a hat, and boots to go and wash my hands [laughs]. And these men had—what they used to call them “heads”—in the Navy, a bathroom is a “head.” They had “heads” one on top of the other on two separate levels in the Fort, and I had to walk two blocks outside, you know, and it was a little ridiculous. . . . One of—I call—I shouldn't even call them professors, they really weren't, [laughs] but they would come over and throw a piece of paper at me and say, “Type this,” you know and I would say, “But, I don't type”—you know [laughs], that kind of thing. . . . (Magavero, 2005, 07:40)³⁶

Ms. Magavero relates this story with a tragic tenor, but is quick to say that she loved the work. She also enjoyed a special place in the hearts of many of the sailor students who went through the Fort. As the only faculty woman, in addition to teaching scores of students how to conduct research in the library, she also was the Fort Mother to hundreds of young men away from their homes and families for the first time in their

³⁶ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Filomena_Magavero_2&p=video1&b=460&e=759

lives. She stayed within the clerical pay scale for thirteen years before the salary inequity was addressed. “I’m not going to let these guys run me out of here, just because they want to treat me as clerk” (Magavero, 2005, 07:40).

But she also is quick to use comedy to also discuss her regrets, especially when relating the story of how she ultimately got a women’s washroom in the same building with the library:

It was only because one day we had—we received a gift—and if anybody knows anything about gifts that you get from somebody's attic or basement, it was moldy, and dusty. And I think I had to put on my hat and my coat to go to the restroom, really just to wash my hands, maybe four or five times that day, because the material I was working with was so dirty. So that by late afternoon, when I made maybe the fourth trip, I just walked into the admiral's office—because in those days the president of the Maritime College was not called “president,” he was called, “admiral” all the time. So I walked into the admiral's office, with my black hands, [laughs] and I held them in his face, and I said, “You know I’ve made this trip here, maybe four times today, just to wash my hands,” and he saw I was practically in tears, so he said, “Sit down, Fil.”

And so I explained what happened. I said, “You know we don’t have a washroom in the Fort for the women.” And I said, “that’s awful.” So he said, “Okay, I’ll do something about it.” So the next day . . . he came over, he took me into the men’s head, and he said, “What if we covered the urinals?” [laughs] So I said, “I don’t care what you do. You could leave them just the way they are, just put a latch on the door, and when I’m in there, I’ll lock myself in.” So he said, “No, we’ll fix it up, and this will be your Ladies Room.” And he did. So I finally got a ladies’ room, after two years. After two years, I finally got a ladies’ room [laughs] which was good [laughs]. (Magavero, 2005, 19:11)³⁷

And it is with comedy that many of the other social memories involving sexism are remembered. Valerie Feinman remembers a double-standard that benefitted women employees of one of her earliest libraries. She was paid an extra stipend when she began working on the bookmobile, because the act of climbing into the cab of the truck was

³⁷ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Filomena_Magavero_2&p=video1&b=1151&e=1276

deemed unlady-like if performed wearing a skirt. Since these women were asked to wear pants, the extra \$3 stipend was paid so that their pants could be dry-cleaned (Feinman, 2008, 12:13).³⁸

Bill Mears recounts his experience as male librarian in a female-dominated institution with a funny story about required knowledge that was not included in his library school curriculum:

At the University, one of the little things that I knew how to take care of was when the men's urinals ran over because the handle got stuck. I knew how to go in and unstuck that. And they would always call me and say, you know, "Dr. Mears, can you go to the restroom (laughter) and fix it—" And . . . I would always think, walking there to do that job, "This is what I went and got a PhD for? [laughter] So I could ____." But anyway—I like every part of being a librarian. I like that part. I like every part of being a librarian. (Mears, 2008, 16:48)³⁹

Echoing Ms. Magavero's experience as the only professional woman at an all-male institution, Ms. Feinman reports that she was only one of two women in an academic science department. "There was one lady, in the Dean's office, and there was me" (Feinman, 2008, 16:43). She laughs as she shares a perquisite of the arrangement: She married one of the physics doctoral students.⁴⁰

Her journey as a science librarian was not easy, though. In this next passage, she recounts her motivations for choosing this career:

Oh, yes. As an undergraduate, I had studied chemistry, geology, physics, mathematics, etc. I was majoring in general sciences—this is a side story—because, again, there were no jobs for Canadian women in sciences. Once, while I was at college, my Dean called me in and said, "You are not doing very well in your chemistry courses. I think that you should not want to be a chemist." And I looked him up and down, and said, "Have you been in the science library lately?" He said, "No." He was a geologist—he didn't need the library very much. I said,

³⁸ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Valerie_Feinman&p=video1&b=729&e=775

³⁹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Dr._Bill_Mears&p=video1&b=1008&e=1057

⁴⁰ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Valerie_Feinman&p=video1&b=1003&e=1050

“Well, the books are all out of order. There's nothing published in the last three years that is a book. The journals are impossible to find. You don't have the latest journals. And there is not a science librarian. I want to become that science librarian.” He said, “My blessings—continue in your courses. We'd love to have you as a science librarian.” (Feinman, 2008, 15:29)⁴¹

Earlier in her interview, Ms. Feinman discusses the limited vocational opportunities for women in the middle of the twentieth century:

This was 1950, approximately, and the day I turned fourteen, which was in 1951, I began working in the Hamilton Public Library. My godmother, Isabelle Skelly, said, “If you want to have a career in Hamilton, in Canada—anywhere—you might as well become a librarian.”

Something that most of you watching this don't understand—or won't—is that women in Canada had very few options open to them in the '50s. If they became a teacher, they had to retire when they were pregnant. They could become a nurse, if they didn't get married. (Feinman, 2008, 06:20)⁴²

Ms. Feinman's early decision to be a librarian is the exception. The social memory of librarianship is dominated by those who decided to become librarians after pursuing other careers, notably teaching; and in the case of women, by the necessity of a flexible schedule to accommodate their family planning.

CAREER MOTIVATIONS

Stories of “accidental librarians” who did not initially intend to pursue the career of librarianship are an element of the social memory occurring many times over within the corpus of interviews. Jenifer Patterson, Rita Auerbach, Peggy Richwine, and Nancy Fogarty were all motivated to choose librarianship after initially preparing to be teachers. Ms. Richwine, a science librarian like Ms. Feinman, choose librarianship after teaching

⁴¹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Valerie_Feinman&p=video1&b=929&e=995

⁴² http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Valerie_Feinman&p=video1&b=380&e=473

for a few years. She very much enjoyed teaching and describes it as a rewarding experience, but for reasons she chose not to share in the interview, she found teaching did not give her the flexibility she desired. Academic librarianship in a science department allowed her flexibility and the ability to pursue her love of the sciences (Richwine, 2008).

Nancy Fogarty also chose librarianship after teaching because of the flexibility, but she did not enjoy her previous teaching experience. She disliked all the grading and the rigidity of the schedule. In addition to the scheduling flexibility, librarianship appealed to her because of its many permutations: academic, school, public (Fogarty, 2008).

Rita Auerbach began her career as a high school English and history teacher. She loved the kids and loved the intellectual challenges of teaching, but she also reports disliking the rigidity of the schedule and the constant pressure to maintain a current lesson plan. She relates a story about the librarian at her school who seemed to combine the best of both worlds. This librarian had an interest in archeology, so she arranged to teach a class just for one semester—she traded shifts with one of the teachers. For that semester she took over a high school archeology class and the social studies teacher staffed the library for that period.

Ms. Auerbach states that librarianship “was my last choice of a job. I was sure that librarians sat around and waited for people to ask where the bathroom was, and that didn't seem like an intellectually stimulating way of life” (Auerbach, 2008, 02:58). But when Ms. Auerbach was burned out with teaching, she remembered this school librarian and her example of successfully combining passions with the flexibility that librarianship afforded. “It was the best decision, short of marrying my husband, that I ever made”(Auerbach, 2008).⁴³

⁴³ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Rita_Auerbach&p=video1&b=178&e=252

Jenifer Patterson had a very short career as a teacher. She ultimately found the flexibility of librarianship to be the career choice most complementary with her family planning goals:

Okay, I started out thinking I was going to teach and I spent one day in a seventh grade classroom and the kids were throwing spit wads and the coach had to come in twice and I had no experience with classroom management and I really didn't understand what would be required to teach middle school English. I was just an English major and it sounded like a good idea. So I walked out of there thinking, well, I better think of something else. . . .

[After having a child], I decided, okay what do I do now? I always liked libraries, maybe I'll see if there's a position open at Houston Public Library where I lived. And there was an evening and Saturdays job in the literature and biography department which was perfect for me.

So I worked that for about a year, a little bit more than a year and by that time I had realized that it was a non-coercive way to teach, that being a reference librarian was a perfect way for me to continue to learn and to share what I knew with other people and help other people find what they were looking for without having to be a disciplinarian. (Patterson, 2008, 04:51-07:03)⁴⁴

Jaye McLaughlin and Diana Collins also report that their library careers were motivated by the flexibility their schedules as new mothers demanded (Collins, 2008; McLaughlin, 2011).

Librarianship as a career was perfectly compatible with Ms. McLaughlin's family goals. She began volunteering at her children's elementary school in the library and found the work very satisfying. The librarian suggested that she return to graduate school for an MLS. Even upon entering the master's program, she still didn't really know much about the field:

I went and interviewed at the library school and they said "Well, what kind of librarian do you want to be?" I said "What kinds are there?" [Laughter] So it is

⁴⁴ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jenifer_John_Patterson&p=video1&b=291&e=423

sort of a happenstance and sort of a hop skip and a jump to get there, and uh the gentleman that I interviewed with, he directed me into children's programming. (McLaughlin, 2011, 02:35)⁴⁵

Jeannette Larson had also volunteered at a school library. She was at loose ends after completing an undergraduate degree in Native American Studies, and knew she would need an additional degree to find work, but did not want to pursue a master's or doctorate in anthropology. Her mother was working in a school library and she accompanied her as a volunteer.

It was sort of one of those *V8* moments where you kind of bonk yourself on the head and I said, "I love reading and I love being in libraries and I love doing research, why haven't I thought about working in a library?" (J. Larson, 2008, 08:24)⁴⁶

Connie Corson describes her library career epiphany as a "eureka" moment after studying art in college:

And when it was time for me to graduate, I wondered, what am I going to do now, you know? Am I going to be able to sell paintings? Am I going to be able to make pottery? And so on. And I had a wonderful librarian there who was my mentor all those years. . . And I went to him and I said "Dr. Lewis, I don't know what to do. I am graduating." . . He taught art librarianship there and he said to me, "Why don't you become a librarian, become an art librarian?" And it was like a eureka moment, you know. (C. Corson, 2009, 06:10)⁴⁷

After working as a librarian at the Museum of Modern Art and then as an art bibliographer at a university, she was asked by a friend at a New York City girls' school to help with the selection committee for a new school librarian. She had never even considered school librarianship before, but after touring the school and sitting with the selection committee drawing up the job description, she decided *she* wanted the job. So

⁴⁵ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jay_McLaughlin&p=video1&b=30&e=163

⁴⁶ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jeannette_Larson&p=video1&b=504&e=586

⁴⁷ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Connie_Corson&p=video1&b=306&e=443

her career began by following an unexpected path that led her to an even more unexpected conclusion.

Her husband Richard Corson also reports a meandering career path. He was in his final year of college working as a research assistant for a professor:

I didn't have a clue of what I wanted to do. . . . I asked him what should I do, he said "Well, why don't you go to library school?" And I said "What's that?" [Laughter] (R. Corson, 2009, 01:37)⁴⁸

Other librarians report similar happenstance stories of their introduction to the vocation. Janet Swan Hill became a librarian because her husband was drafted during the Vietnam War and she went to live with her parents. Two of her college roommates had gone on to library school—and she was at loose ends. Library school was simply convenient. But the career was very rewarding. She was able to use her natural sciences background to become a noted geography and cartography cataloger at the Library of Congress and serve on many ALA committees and ALA Council (Hill, 2010).

John Mitchell is another accidental librarian. He was working for an engineering company with his knowledge of Slavic languages when they lost their contract with the Navy. He had a friend at the Library of Congress who knew they were desperate for a bibliographer with that language skill set. LC hired him and then he went to library school for his MLS (Mitchell, 2010).

Ken Yamashita initially studied art history and Chinese language, but could not find a job in a museum. He went to the local public library looking for a temporary job as a clerk. The director happened to be looking for ways to expand library services to their Asian-American population and encouraged Dr. Yamashita to work at the library

⁴⁸ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Richard_Corson&p=video1&b=97&e=131

while getting his MLS. Librarianship proved to be a life-long commission. He eventually also received a doctorate in business administration in order to more effectively lead a large public library system (Yamashita, 2010).

Kathy Kaya also started her career as a clerk. She says, “I entered the profession sort of through the back door” (Kaya, 2010, 01:15). She worked as a paraprofessional while her husband was a professor at the University of Wisconsin. When her husband took a sabbatical, it was simply a perfect opportunity to study for her MLS at the University of Hawaii.

Sheila Henderson worked in the medical library at M.D. Anderson Hospital in Houston, Texas, the summer before she planned to enter nursing school. “It was quite by accident” (Henderson, 2010, 01:13). She found the library so fascinating that she never made to nursing school. She stayed at the medical library for eight years before going to library school for her MLS.

Robert Gaines worked as a student assistant at the library while in college studying to be a history teacher. He describes library science as a “fallback:”

But when it looked as though the employment opportunities were going to be few and far between, library science for me was a natural fallback—and a very congenial fallback because I've enjoyed working at libraries and you still get to teach, quite a bit. (Gaines, 2008, 05:20)⁴⁹

Bill Mears also reports having no real clear path before becoming a librarian:

I have seven undergraduate majors. I kept going back and getting another undergraduate major. I met my future wife, and she said “You’re not very smart, are you?” I said, “Why?” She said, “You could have had a doctorate degree by now. Why don’t you go on and get your master’s?” Having just completed a major in library science, I said “Yeah, okay. That sounds smart.” So I went and got my master’s in library science. And finished my master’s, and my wife said, “Now that you’ve got that, why don’t you just go on and get your doctorate degree?” And I had just taken a vow that I would never go back to school again. I had had

⁴⁹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Robert_Gaines&p=video1&b=258&e=336

enough; but then I went back to school, and got my doctorate. (Mears, 2008, 04:57)⁵⁰

Not all librarians are “accidental” librarians, though. Many of the interviewees knew from their earliest years that they desired this profession. Gail Huetting reports she knew in the eighth grade that she wanted to work in a library. She did not think this was possible because of her profound hearing disability—and she was under the impression that all librarians were reference librarians, working with patrons. In high school, though, the school librarian introduced her to cataloging and the technical services side of librarianship, which proved to be a very fulfilling career for Ms. Huetting (2011).

Arlene Luster knew she wanted to be a librarian at an even earlier age. She has a strong memory from when she was four years old and her mother took her to the library:

And I couldn't even see over the top of the counter. It was really high. And I saw this lady, and she probably wasn't a librarian, maybe she was a circulation clerk—I'm not sure. She had this pencil and a stamp pad. And she took the pencil, and it was attached to the pencil, ok, the little stamp pad. And she stamped it, she turned the pencil around.

And as soon as I saw that, I was convinced. I wanted to be a librarian.

And when I went to high school, the school had a field trip down to the public library. And we went to the teen section, and this young adult librarian read the book "Momma's Bank Account." I was doubly convinced that I wanted to be a librarian. And that's why. That's why really. That's why. (Luster, 2009, 11:37)⁵¹

Later in the interview, when Dr. Luster is talking about technological change in the profession, she laughs and reports that she never got to use that little rubber stamp. She never got to use it even though it was the inspiration for her whole career (Luster, 2009, 25:50).⁵²

⁵⁰ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Dr._Bill_Mears&p=video1&b=246&e=342

⁵¹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Arlene_Luster&p=video1&b=697&e=751

⁵² http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Arlene_Luster&p=video1&b=1517&e=1553

Childhood Memories of Libraries

Two future librarians report setting out to read every book in their childhood libraries. Peggy Richwine attended a very small school with only four classrooms. The “library” consisted of shelves along the walls of the four rooms. She set a goal of reading all the books. “So I read every one of them. And I’d take one home every night and read it, and return it the next day, and take another one home the next day” (Richwine, 2008, 11:00).⁵³ Karen Breen reports starting from *A* and working through the collection at her high school library (Breen, 2008).

Ms. Breen remembers her early childhood library sharing a building owned by her grandfather. His plumbing shop was in the other half. She spent many afternoons in the library as her grandfather worked next door. Ms. Breen’s later childhood involved a great deal of moving while her father was in the military. She remembers that the library—in whatever temporary city they were stationed—could always be counted on to provide emotional stability: “The library was the only place that I knew to get the things that made me the happiest. And that was books” (Breen, 2008, 00:44).⁵⁴

Bill Mears tells two stories from his childhood. The first is his recollection of learning about the public library. He was already an avid reader prior to discovering the library and he spent his money buying Hardy Boys books from the stationery shop in his neighborhood. They were ninety-nine cents. He collected Coke bottles with a two-cent redemption value in order to fund his reading habit. He clearly remembers the astonishment he felt when finding out that the public library would lend him Hardy Boys

⁵³ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Peggy_Richwine&p=video1&b=603&e=667

⁵⁴ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=TexLegacyProj%3Abreen_karen&p=video1&b=44&e=87

books for free—and that he could spend his Coke bottle money on the cinema, which only cost nine cents at that time (Mears, 2008).

Dr. Mears' second childhood library memory continued to influence his library values throughout his long career:

And I think that I will always, always remember this—I can still see this scene in my mind: Being a young boy, and being interested in things, I one time—I kept looking in the library for books on a certain subject—I'll tell you it was sex. And I could never find this book, so—I didn't want to go up and ask at the desk—but after enough weeks of looking, I finally went up to the desk, and I asked this librarian that was at the desk, "Do you have such-and-such book?"—I can't remember the title. And with that, she started, "Why does a young man your age want to look at that type of book—?"

And about that time, a nice woman from behind the scene came onto the scene and said, "Mary"—or whatever her name was—"I'll take care of this." And she came up to me, and she said, "We keep that book behind the desk. Do you think you are old enough to read this?" And I didn't know what to say, so I said, "yes." And so she gave me that book, and I got to look at all the pictures in that book, and was contented and turned it back in.

And I always to this day remember the kindness of that woman, because I was so embarrassed. And love that woman for that, and I still think of that woman kindly, and always insist that my staff treat people with respect—especially kids. (Mears, 2008, 06:08-09:26)⁵⁵

Richard Corson tells of an early childhood crush on the librarian. He was already an avid reader, but the attractions of Miss Charlotte Moughton also helped spur his interest at the library. When the interviewer suggests they try to find her, Mr. Corson explains that she has been dead for many years, and there is a Moughton Room at the Winter Park, Florida, library in her honor (R. Corson, 2009).

⁵⁵ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Dr._Bill_Mears&p=video1&b=368&e=566

TECHNOLOGY MEMORIES

How technological innovation affected the professional lives of our subjects is truly astonishing. This cohort of librarians ushered in much of the digital age that twenty-first century librarians and library users take for granted. Their stories of the introduction of computers and automation are particularly fascinating. This section on Technology Memories has many subsections to account for the scope of these recollections. We will begin with pre-computer technology and then discuss early computer technology, the introduction of online public access catalogs (OPACs), inter-library loan (ILL), and online database searching. This section closes with librarians sharing regrets about how technology was implemented, as well as some “lessons learned” about automation.

Pre-computer Technology

Several librarians shared memories of pre-computer technologies. *Library hand* was mentioned by both Sarah Long and Valerie Feinman. This was a convention of cursive penmanship that was thought to be particularly legible, used to create catalog card and index entries in the absence of a typewriter.

Ms. Feinman remembers hand copying citations that the reference librarians had collected to create a local history card index for the Hamilton, Ontario, public library in the 1940s and ‘50s. And thirty years later when she visited the library, that index with hundreds of cards in library hand—*her* library hand—was still being used because the *Canadian News Index* only began publication in 1975 and had never attempted any retrospective indexing (Feinman, 2008).⁵⁶

Sarah Long, past-president of ALA, also recounts a library hand memory. Her library career—and her professional training—began after typewriters had become more

⁵⁶ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Valerie_Feinman&p=video1&b=570&e=642

commonplace and she had never heard of library hand. But she was asked for a handwriting sample when interviewing for a position in England while her husband was studying abroad there:

I applied for the job, and I went to the interview. And there was an older woman who interviewed me. And she asked me for a sample of my handwriting, and I thought, this—remember this is in the late '60s—I thought, “cool she's into handwriting analysis.” Oh no no, she was interested in library hand. You know, where you write on the card catalog, the catalog cards and so on. (Long, 2008, 05:15)⁵⁷

Creating a catalog and indices were not the only processes that were manually performed—the entire library was an orchestrated, fully human endeavor. In addition to the card catalog in which each item was represented with a surrogate main entry card and then “traced” with additional entry cards for title(s), additional authors, and subject(s), a master file of shelflist cards was kept in the technical services department of the library. These were used to aid the cataloger in selecting the appropriate classification for new materials and to conduct an inventory of the collection.

Diana Collins remembers shelflist cards as “little 3x5 things of agony” when describing how an inventory was executed prior to catalog automation. The librarian would physically take a drawer of shelflist cards and go through the shelves, item by item matching up materials with their surrogates. Missing books would then be checked within the circulation cards to see if it was charged to a patron. Ms. Collins worked at the Marble Falls, Texas, library—but the technical processing was done at the Burnet, Texas, library—so the shelflist resided thirteen miles away. Not only was her inventory a time-consuming task, it was also a coordination challenge (Collins, 2008).

⁵⁷ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Sara_Long&p=video1&b=315&e=340

Early Computer Technology

The book catalog is another technology that many librarians remember prior to integrated library systems (ILS). The *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences* describes this as a technology that had been in existence in a primitive form for many years, but it became a practical tool after punch card computer technology made its compilation and revision less cumbersome beginning around 1965 with the Baltimore County Public Library Book Catalog (Jay & Eugene, 2009). The book catalog allowed for one library's complete catalog to be shared with multiple branches, partners, and researchers.

Pat Tuohy worked at the Austin, Texas, public library and shares her memories of the book catalog with an astonished—and much younger—librarian interviewer:

Austin Public was considered kind of cutting edge technologically because they had a card catalog based on computer records. Now they developed like a freestanding punch card system with the author, title, subject, and they created a book catalog, have you ever seen one?

JK: No I haven't, I'm interested to see this.

PT: This is a book catalog.

JK: Lift it up, there we go.

PT: And this is 1976 and I don't know when they started publishing this, but they went from the card catalog to the book catalog and I'm not sure when they started doing this, maybe late '60s, early '70s, and there would be a punchcard for each one of these titles and it was like this. And this is the subject, so you'd look up the subject, you'd look up the books, and you'd get a call number and as I recall, there were no locations, no locations, and there were at that time 15 branches. . . . So you didn't know if you owned it, but you did know that it was owned by the system. (Tuohy, 2009, 24:18)⁵⁸

⁵⁸ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Patricia_Tuohy&p=video1&b=1458&e=1563

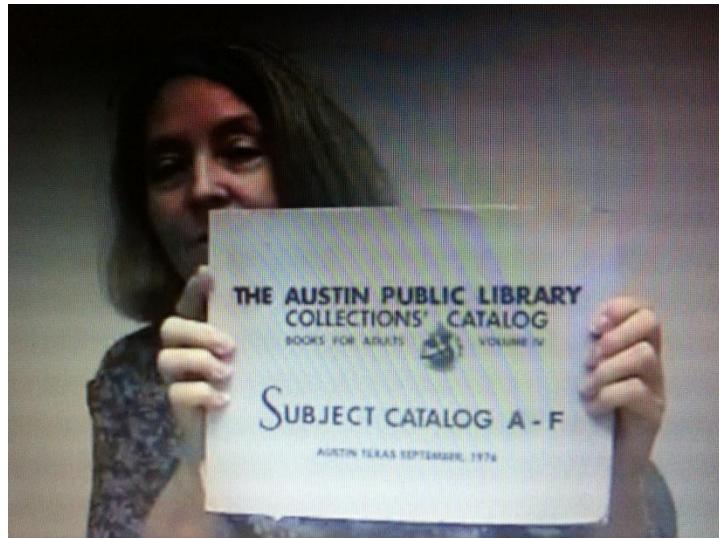


Figure 3. Pat Tuohy with Book Catalog

Kent Middleton, also at the Austin Public Library, reports nearly identical memories of the technological advance that the book catalog brought to a system of several branches. He also has to explain what a book catalog is to his interviewer. He remembers the final edition of the book catalog was printed in twelve very thick volumes (Middleton, 2008).

An interim catalog technology existed between the book catalog and online automation. This was the microfilm or fiche catalog. It reduced the size of the mammoth book catalog to a few reels of microfilm or sheets of microfiche; however, it did require using a microform reader. None of the memories reported concerning the microform catalog were positive. Micky Freeny states, “That was horrible—that was really bad” (Freeny, 2009, 28:47). Kenneth Yamashita agrees:

We would have kids kind of spitting on the glass and then crunching the microfiche into the reader and oh...it was terrible and people not putting the fiche

back in order and you know, uh...not good, not good at all. (Yamashita, 2010, 35:48)⁵⁹

The computers that existed to produce these book catalogs and microform catalogs in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s were by no means “personal computers.” They were very large machines using punch cards to input data and the data was stored on large reels of magnetic tape. *Desk Set*, the motion picture comedy released in 1957, and starring Katharine Hepburn as a corporate librarian, depicts the introduction of just such a machine (Lang et al.).



Figure 4. The Electronic Brain from *Desk Set*

Many interviewees relate their early computer memories, and how they could envision this technology as being a powerful force in their careers; but none claim to have ever correctly predicted the modern prevalence of the personal computer and its paradigm changing impact on the profession (Auerbach, 2008; C. Corson, 2009; R.

⁵⁹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Kenneth_Yamashita&p=video1&b=2148&e=2307

Corson, 2009; Hansen, 2009; Henderson, 2010; Hill, 2010; Hoadley, 2009; Hueting, 2011; Kaya, 2010; Mears, 2008; Richwine, 2008; Ricklefs, 2011; Sick, 2008).

Connie Corson and her husband Richard, both librarians in New York City, volunteered to work at a pavilion during the 1964 World's Fair demonstrating an IBM punch card-based computer. As she is describing this memory, the interviewer specifically asks her about *Desk Set*:

Librarians were asked if they would be willing to demonstrate information access. Well this was the very beginning, you know, of the introduction of computers and both Richard, my husband, and I, we took a two-week training course with IBM and then we were in an IBM pavilion at the, you know, at the fair. . . . But right behind, you know, they had a whole bay of tables where we were sitting and people could come in and ask us information questions and, you know, we had to use punch cards to get at the information.

JF: Wow. That's something.

CC: So that was, I mean, an unusual experience.

JF: Absolutely.

CC: And, you know, something that kind of made me – gave me a sense of what might come. And this huge, I mean I would say the mainframe computer was probably as large as one of the walls here, you know, humming behind us.

JF: Did it make you feel like Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn in that movie (laughter) where he pits her against the machine but she wins—the librarian?

CC: Well, no, that didn't quite happen [Laughter]. (C. Corson, 2009, 53:50)⁶⁰

Kenneth Yamashita spent some of his professional career as an early library automation vendor representative. When discussing how he would attempt to convince librarians to adopt the automated LIS paradigm, he inadvertently harkens back to one of the plot elements of *Desk Set*. The women in the motion picture are initially convinced

⁶⁰ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Connie_Corson&p=video1&b=3231&e=3327

that the “electronic brain” is being deployed so their positions can be eliminated. The computer engineer insists the machine is being installed to “create more leisure” for the librarians (Lang, et al., 1957). The librarians interpret “more leisure” as a signal that they will soon be unemployed. Dr. Yamashita states:

The way we were trained to sell these systems was I think—I think at that time it was—it was so that it would—displace some of the more routine mundane tasks for the staff so that they could concentrate on public services or that you would not need to have as many staff. (Yamashita, 2010, 20:34)⁶¹

At the conclusion of *Desk Set*, the librarians are told by the computer engineer (played by Spencer Tracy) that their jobs were never in jeopardy. The machine was “never intended to take over. It was never intended to replace you. It's here to free your time for research. It's here to help you” (Lang, et al., 1957).

OPACs

Rita Auerbach remembers visiting Stanford University which had an online catalog which shared resources with Berkeley and one other university. She remembers thinking how that technology would eliminate the time-consuming filing of catalog cards (Auerbach, 2008). This same memory regarding the drudgery of filing catalog cards is also reported by Gail Huetting: “Nobody was gladder than me when OPACs came in and we didn't have to do filing anymore” (Huetting, 2011, 06:00). She remembers there never being a time in her career before the online catalog when there was not a backlog of cards to be filed.⁶²

⁶¹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Kenneth_Yamashita&p=video1&b=1234&e=1317

⁶² http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Gail_Huetting&p=video1&b=360&e=404

Dale Ricklefs remembers hating not the filing of the catalog cards, but the manual typing and proofing of multiple cards. Prior to a computer that could create cards, she would create a stencil and produce a master card using a mimeograph machine, then edit each card's heading. She admits that the "cards looked like '*bleep*,' but [laughter], but it didn't matter—it was there and I didn't have to proof them all" (Ricklefs, 2011, 53:35).⁶³ She acquired her first computer to print better looking cards using a program for the Apple IIe in 1983.

Online catalogs and library circulation automation were not universally embraced. Robert Gaines distinctly remembers there were faculty members bitterly opposed to replacing the card catalog. He was a librarian at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro and was sent on a fact-finding mission to the UNC campus at Charlotte, Virginia Tech, and the University of Kentucky among other institutions that had already automated.

And when we finally did get the system up—and I'm thinking this was 1984—we thought this was successful and well done. It's nothing like the web-based systems, you know, that we have today; but it gave you many, many more access points than an old card catalog. It still took us quite a while to convince the teaching faculty that this was going to be much better for them and their students—and it took many one-on-one demonstrations to drive that point home. But after a while, most of them came around, but if they didn't come around, they retired. (Gaines, 2008, 27:44)⁶⁴

Micky Freeny also remembers that the transition to an integrated library system was difficult for many librarians, technical services staff, and circulation clerks. She states that many older employees simply chose to retire instead of learning the new skills required (Freeny, 2009). But both Ms. Freeny and Richard Corson recall being excited

⁶³ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Dale_Ricklefs&p=video1&b=3215&e=3488

⁶⁴ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Robert_Gaines&p=video1&b=1664&e=1760

by the technological change, despite the pain of the transition. Mr. Corson says that at the beginning of his career in 1962, the most advanced technology they possessed was a manual typewriter. He describes the arc of his career as beginning with nineteenth century technology and jumping to the twenty-first century. This is one of the reasons he enjoyed his work so much (R. Corson, 2009).

Many librarians remember their first personal computer, or mini-computer—as opposed to the early mainframes described earlier. Ms. Ricklefs remembers her excitement when her library acquired their first IBM 8086, because it had a hard drive: “It had a hard drive. Woo hoo! A hard drive” (Ricklefs, 2011, 53:35). Dr. Bill Mears had access to a Radio Shack computer at his library at Southwest Texas State University. When one of his associates suggested they purchase a newer computer with a 4K memory, he remembers saying, “Four K, what are they going to do with all that [laughter]?” (Mears, 2008, 23:06).⁶⁵

But for many librarians, the real power of computing was in the ability to share and retrieve resources remotely. There are two strains of these memories: the advance in inter-library loan processing, and the periodical databases that became available.

OCLC

Andrew Hansen talks of pre-computerized inter-library loan (ILL) as a virtual black hole that research librarians flailed in without precision or great success. At the beginning of his career, ILL was a possibility, but the request had to be accompanied with a written justification for its necessity to the researcher. And each request was sent

⁶⁵ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Dr._Bill_Mears&p=video1&b=1386&e=1612

to the nearest large library, simply hoping they would own it and that they might be willing to loan it (Hansen, 2009).

Irene Hoadley worked at Ohio State University in the mid-1960s when her boss, Dr. Lewis Branscomb directed her and a team of others to formulate a proposal for university libraries to share a computerized union list of materials that would facilitate an automated inter-library loan system. This modest proposal was then presented to Fred Kilgour, and then it became what we know as OCLC (formerly the Ohio College Library Center, now known as the Online Computer Library Center). When the interviewer asks her if she could even imagine how her “Inter-university Council” proposal would ultimately shape the future of librarianship, she simply responds: “No” (Hoadley, 2009, 24:58-27:16).⁶⁶

Ironically, Dr. Hoadley insisted on never having a computer in her own office. When she retired as the director of the Texas A&M University library in 1992 personal computers were becoming more pervasive, but as a director she could still delegate computer-related duties to her assistants (Hoadley, 2009, 50:53).

OCLC also revolutionized cataloging. Gail Hueting, Richard Corson, and Billie Grace Herring all mention how OCLC made cataloging so much more efficient. Janet Swan Hill, a cataloger at Northwestern University, notes that computer-generated copy-cataloging was possible prior to OCLC; but it involved purchasing tapes from the Library of Congress, mounting them to their main-frame, and searching locally. OCLC made a union list of MARC records available for import individually that was updated daily. In addition to providing a platform for inter-library loan, it made cataloging materials an

⁶⁶ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Irene_Hoadley&p=video1&b=1498&e=1636

efficient, shared responsibility (R. Corson, 2009; Herring, 2011; Hill, 2010; Hueting, 2011).

Online Database Searching

The advent of online databases truly brought the world of research to any library with a telephone connection, a personal computer with a modem, and the financial resources to afford a pricey subscription invoiced by the second, plus applicable long-distance charges.

Because of the cost involved, early database searches were anything but spontaneous. A researcher would submit a request to a librarian who would formulate an efficient search string using Boolean operators. Once the local machine was connected to a database via telephone modem, this search string would have to be typed in very carefully using a DOS-based interface. One false keystroke could deliver line after line of incorrect results—while the clock continued to advance and the invoice continued to grow. Jenifer John Patterson recalls her first database search with horror: Her boss had requested some research on calcium so she typed in *calcium* with no additional Boolean operators. The machine printed out a stack of dot-matrix pages that were more or less useless—and very expensive (Patterson, 2008).⁶⁷

Medical libraries were generally the first to take advantage of database searching. Sheila Henderson remembers using a National Library of Medicine database as early as 1972 (Henderson, 2010). Valerie Feinman recalls using a predecessor of MEDLINE, called MEDLARS as early as the late 1960s. She remembers this as an exciting time in

⁶⁷ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jenifer_John_Patterson&p=video1&b=1138&e=1208

her career, attending a three-day training session with other medical librarians (Feinman, 2008). She has a particularly entertaining story from this time:

We were in Syracuse until '69. So I did a whole lot of different projects at the Medical Center that were absolutely fun and way ahead of anything else. So, I guess one of the funnest things there was after I showed a faculty—a professor—how to use MEDLARS, and was searching on an operation that he was going to do in a couple of days, we actually found him a brand new article. And the next morning at nine o'clock, I got a phone call. He was in the operating room—would I please bring the article to him because he had forgotten one section of it. And we got it back at the end of the day with a little bit of blood on it. [We] wiped it off and put it back on the shelf.

I mean, that--every medical librarian has a story like that--similar to this; but I lived this as a librarian in the '60s, who was very very young and raw, actually. [Laughs] So, it was fun. (Feinman, 2008, 19:49)⁶⁸

The cost of the database searching—and whether to pass that cost directly to the researcher—was an ethical dilemma the new technology introduced. Nancy Fogarty discusses this when remembering the early days of database searching. This issue plagued the administration of her library at the University of North Carolina because charging a price for research work was a paradigm change. The student or faculty member would sign a contract submitted with their database research request stipulating the maximum charge they would allow: \$25, \$30, sometimes up to \$50. “It was a very controversial thing, charging for information” (Fogarty, 2008, 30:36).⁶⁹

Librarians began letting researchers conduct their own database searches as the price of telecommunications dropped and more user-friendly search interfaces were developed. Peggy Richwine remembers the shift beginning to occur in 1987. Prior to that year she would spend a great deal of energy conducting database searches on behalf of researchers at her academic library. But then her duties shifted from being an

⁶⁸ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Valerie_Feinman&p=video1&b=1185&e=1247

⁶⁹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Nancy_Clark_Fogarty&p=video1&b=1836&e=2091

information intermediary to being a trainer. Technology allowed library patrons to become more independent, even for advanced research; reference librarians became technology tutors and counselors, facilitating the enterprise (Richwine, 2008).

Valerie Feinman relates another humorous story about teaching students how to shift from database to database within a single interface: “One of the instructions was to press F9, to transfer to a different database. The students had to have it explained that this meant not to touch F and then 9” (Feinman, 2008, 01:25).⁷⁰ However, another librarian, Connie Corson, a school librarian in New York City, ultimately found her best technical support for her early EBSCO database terminal was with her young students. When she found herself befuddled while attempting to sort out all the cords and connections, she remembers one of them patting her back and saying, “Don’t worry, Mrs. Corson, we’ll be there for you. We’ll help you” (C. Corson, 2009, 41:07).⁷¹

Some Lessons Learned Regarding New Technologies

Several librarians brought up some collection development dangers that database technology introduced. Dale Ricklefs, Valerie Feinman, and Kent Middleton all shared similar concerns about administrative short-sightedness in the zeal to embrace online databases.

Ms. Ricklefs was pained by the fact that many libraries were now wholly dependent on database subscriptions. Where they used to have stacks of periodical back issues—or cabinets of microfilm—they now possessed nothing tangible but contracts that might not be renewed during a budget shortfall. During previous budget crises the library

⁷⁰ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Valerie_Feinman&p=video1&b=85&e=107

⁷¹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Connie_Corson&p=video1&b=2467&e=2549

might have eliminated some current subscriptions, but the collection of past serials was still intact for researchers and patrons to access. Entire serials collections were now dependent on the whim of budgetary authorities and digital vendors (Ricklefs, 2011).

Kent Middleton expressed the same disenchantment. As the head of reference services at the central Austin Public Library he was initially very excited about the promise of this technology. But through the course of his career he saw the standing order print subscriptions budget drawn down to purchase the database subscriptions. And then the database budget was drawn down because of budget issues—but the print subscriptions budget was never adjusted up. He also laments the fact that his institution—and the profession as a whole—has not successfully educated the public about the database resources. Researchers know how to access the articles using library databases, but the average patrons who would come into the library in the past and enjoy the plethora of hard-copy magazines in the reading room are simply left out of the new digital calculus (Middleton, 2008).

Valerie Feinman remembers a premature leap into technology—although it was microform technology. Her library had decades of *Godey's Lady's Book* and *The Century*, and other serials that had been popular at the end of the nineteenth century which were taking up many linear feet of shelving. A decision was made to embrace the new technology and replace the backfiles with microfiche copies. But the great illustrations and advertisements did not make a successful transition to black and white microfilm:

When I saw the microfilm, I cried because it didn't have all the ads and all the pictures. And the ads are what students loved, because in a marketing and business course, they wanted to look at an ad from the 1880s and compare it to one from the 1930s compared to one from the 1980s. (Feinman, 2008, 28:00)⁷²

⁷² http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Valerie_Feinman&p=video1&b=1680&e=1774

She was very happy to see a retrospective digital version—in color—of *Godey's Lady's Book* at a vendor's booth during the 2008 ALA Annual Conference; she felt that technology could ultimately redeem that particular format transition mistake from her early career.

Technology Regrets

Ms. Feinman's regret concerning the deaccessioning of *Godey's Lady's Book*, is but one voice of disenchantment that the promise of digital technologies brought to the profession of librarianship. The fact is that the World Wide Web and broadband connectivity radically changed how libraries operated and how librarians did their jobs. Though no one wished that digital technologies had not penetrated their profession, many shared wistful memories of library work prior to the digital age.

Filomena Magavero, who began her career in 1946, remembers how she often felt like a detective when doing research. She worked at a maritime college library and their collection included materials on seamanship dating back to the 19th century. As she became more and more acquainted with the collection, her personal memory became more valuable than any finding aid or index. She developed personal relationships with the researchers in her field because of her expertise. She reports:

I used to love digging into those things, you know trying to find an elusive fact that they wanted to know about a particular vessel, and we could do it because we had the resources. And after awhile, you know, people knew that. And it was fun to get a phone call asking for me by name, you know because I had done something for somebody else, you know? But it was really great fun. I was sorry when the computers came in [laughs]. (Magavero, 2005, 25:09)⁷³

⁷³ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Filomena_Magavero_2&p=video1&b=1509&e=1597

Mary Bushing talks about technology taking the humanity out of the craft of librarianship. When she visits her community library in Bozeman, Montana, she rarely interacts with any of the staff. The catalog is user-friendly and allows her to put materials on hold if it shows them to be checked out, and the circulation desk is fully self-serve with an automated scanner for self-check. She is quick to point out that the building is beautiful—an award-winning LEED-certified building—and the atmosphere is pleasant, but she misses interacting with librarians and clerks. “As we create some of these efficiencies—which I am all for—we have to understand that relationships matter” (Bushong, 2010, 27:06).⁷⁴

Andrew Hansen, a public librarian, remembers his pre-Internet reference department attempting to answer a question about Danish Constitution Day. Three different librarians were trying to determine when the Danish Constitution had been signed. And they all came back with three different answers. It turned out that the Danish Constitution is never amended: when a revision is necessary, they write a whole new document. Three different dates had been found in three different reference books, depending on the age of the reference. The librarian’s job in this case was not just finding the answer or answers, but figuring out why there were different answers.

He has not recreated this reference query in the digital age, but he posits that Google would be just as accurate—perhaps delivering even more than three “correct” answers. He sees the role of the modern librarian as an information consultant: someone who can cipher the right answer out of the calculus of Google (Hansen, 2009).

Many librarians expressed regret about digital technology while quickly following up with celebrations of the online world. Karlan Sick laments that young people cannot

⁷⁴ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Mary_Bushing&p=video1&b=1626&e=1751

understand a lecture today unless it is accompanied by PowerPoint presentation; but then just as quickly rejoices that digital media seem to have sparked a renaissance in young people's reading and literature—and curiosity (Sick, 2008).

Bill Mears began witnessing the changing role of reference librarianship when he was the director of the Southwest Texas State University library in the 1990s. Even though he was the library director, he always scheduled in a couple of shifts at the reference desk each week—to keep his finger on the pulse of the library and also to relieve the tedium of administrative work. After he retired from the University, he took what was supposed to be a very short-term position as interim director at a small public library in central Texas. At that library he was the only professional staff member for much of his tenure—and he spent a great deal of time at the reference desk. He could quite clearly see how online technology had changed the role of the reference librarian, yet he was unsure of what that role actually was. He reports that whenever he would bring up this topic—of a changing role for libraries and librarians—at professional conferences and meetings, his colleagues would vehemently disagree with him. He remembers one meeting where he was pulled aside after the meeting by a colleague and told that he was totally wrong (Mears, 2008).

Rita Auerbach misses the days when there was no Internet and the quest for information began and ended at the library, when “they didn't labor under the misconception that the Internet was as good as a trained librarian” (Auerbach, 2008, 35:01).⁷⁵

In pre-digital days, the library (card) catalog and resources (books) were completely under the control of library staff. There were never surprises unless hooligan

⁷⁵ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Rita_Auerbach&p=video1&b=2101&e=2122

children rearranged the drawers of the card catalog. Nancy Clark Fogarty points out the unanticipated consequences of technology, especially from third-party vendors. Overnight and without any warning, a database interface could change radically, or the OPAC vendor could change how records were indexed—entire fields of information would vanish without notice. Technology may have freed up her time to devote to other tasks, but monitoring and trouble-shooting the technology proved to be very time-consuming. She, too, is quick to point out that the efficiency of the modern “connected” library is worth all the trouble. But learning to spot the trouble involved a significant learning curve (Fogarty, 2008).

Jenifer John Patterson misses her early days as a business librarian using “paper” resources. She fondly remembers how the reference department had a little competition to see who could answer a telephone reference question while the patron was still on the phone—instead of noting the question and calling them back later with the answer (Patterson, 2008).

Using the paper—or analog—reference sources, which were the only things available when she began her career, took expertise and personal memory that the average person did not possess. This is what separated librarians from lay researchers: a strong background in information resources, the tools to quickly extract the desired information, and an often encyclopedic memory.

Ms. Patterson often thought of herself as a “magic helper.”

Well, when I was in library school, I took a course with Glynn Harmon and it was an information science course. And at the end of my time in library school we had a written exam and an oral interview. That was as much as we did to complete our Masters degree. And on the written exam one of the essay questions was, “compare the term ‘magic helper’ with the term ‘information scientist.’” And I defended the concept of “magic helper.” And they wouldn’t graduate me unless I

rewrote that part of the essay and said, “No, I can see why it's important to be an information scientist.”

But really to me, that was the essence of librarianship—that was what drew me to it—was that ability to magically connect someone with what they needed the most to know. And it was like magic. It was like something that you could do for people that they could not easily do for themselves.

And as we moved into the current era, it is much much more obvious because of Google—because of search engines—how to find what you need to know, and so that role has indeed pretty much gone away. The only thing that is still left of it to me is like readers advisory. That is still very personal and very magical when you can find the books that someone really wants to read that they don't even know exists. So that is there, but it has indeed progressed to a much more self service approach to information seeking. And that was happening all during my career. (Patterson, 2008, 28:54)⁷⁶

The provision of web access in libraries quickly brought a very controversial challenge to librarians: whether to filter. And the early filters were not particularly effective. Some libraries elected to filter everything, some decided to implement a tiered policy, and others made the decision—backed by ALA policies on censorship—to not restrict Internet access (A. A. Smith, 2006).

Micky Freeny reports that several members of her staff left because of the challenge of providing Internet service. “I think there were lots of people who said, ‘I'm not going to learn to use a computer, and I don't need to be here for that’” (Freeny, 2009, 28:47). She remembers that many librarians found monitoring patrons' use of the computers to be beyond the scope of what they had envisioned for their professional lives. Reference librarians found themselves performing far fewer reference transactions. Instead of doing the work they loved, they were reduced to scheduling Internet time on a clip-board for patrons who were often uncooperative and policing Internet users for inappropriate content viewing.

⁷⁶ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jenifer_John_Patterson&p=video1&b=1729&e=1888

Technology did eventually catch up to the modern librarian's needs. Time- and print-management software was developed and successfully implemented in the new wired library. Ms. Freeny concludes this section of her interview with a story of how technology even redeemed itself for the traditional reference librarian:

One of the biggest changes was the use of telephone. Because our bigger branches, and especially the one where I was the manager for a long time, their telephone business was phenomenal. . . . That telephone reference just went by the wayside. And they saw that—and this was what was frustrating for the front-line staff, that was replaced in their work day with monitoring computers. So that was very frustrating.

I found a lot of good reference librarians revitalized when we went to live online chat reference. It gave them that old-fashioned reference experience that they all enjoyed. So I think that was in a way, a savior, for the staff that was nostalgic for the kind of reference work they used to do. (Freeny, 2009, 32:17)⁷⁷

Sarah Long was the 1999-2000 ALA President during the height of the Internet filtering controversy. ALA took a strong anti-filtering stand based on concepts from the Intellectual Freedom Manual (American Library Association. Office for Intellectual Freedom., 2010). Ms. Long was the public face of ALA defending libraries from the threat of government-mandated censorship, such as legislation that became known as CIPA (Child Internet Protection Act). The brave new world of the Internet meant that Ms. Long was barraged by the press and pundits accusing her of advocating for the availability of pornography in public libraries—clearly a misconstrued notion of the ALA policy on filtering. “Dr. Laura” Schlessinger led a months-long campaign against public libraries concerning this issue on a widely-distributed syndicated radio talk show (Wessells, 2000).

⁷⁷ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Nicky_Freeny&p=video1&b=1937&e=1962

But it was not just the media that did not understand the full dimensions of the issue: Ms. Long's own family confronted her with accusations. She recalls an uncomfortable conversation in her own kitchen with her step-son, holding his infant son, where he asked Ms. Long if she really wanted the baby to be exposed to smut at the library? "I certainly approved of ALA's position, but it is very hard to be the point person. And to be pummeled with those kinds of questions—" (Long, 2008, 28:56).⁷⁸

Technology Redemption

Dr. Mears is not the only retiring librarian expressing ideas about the changing role of the library. Several other interviewees tempered their technology memories with advice for the next generation of librarians regarding the future role of the library in an online age.

Kent Middleton echoes Rita Auerbach's sentiment about the mistaken notion that the Internet is as good as a trained librarian. He discusses the lost opportunity to educate people about the Internet. Mr. Middleton sees the library's new role as instructing patrons how to find authoritative information, although he worries that the time for that may be too late—everyone already thinks they are an Internet expert (Middleton, 2008). Kathy Kaya expresses the same sentiment. She sees students who have already learned inefficient—lazy—research habits:

The students are so savvy that they have created—before they get to us, they have created their own way of looking for information without the—with the background of being able to judge whether it is good information, whether it's appropriate for their purpose. And so I—and this was true when I was working,

⁷⁸ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Sara_Long&p=video1&b=1736&e=1752

but I suspect that it's maybe even greater—that it's having to undo bad habits rather than just teaching them anew. (Kaya, 2010, 18:54)⁷⁹

She does believe technology has made it easier for librarians to “concentrate on libranness and not having to worry about the details and the nitty-gritty of making things work” (Kaya, 2010), but that new “libranness” must be about teaching people how to evaluate the information they find for themselves.

Janet Swan Hill discussed how the cataloger’s craft is even more important in a digital age. Cataloging used to be about creating surrogate records (catalog cards) so humans could locate actual physical materials (books). Though library cataloging led the information age and the content of these surrogates is now called “metadata,” catalogers are still doing the same essential task: creating efficient tools for finding information. But with so much digital information available, the cataloger’s job is even more important. It is the metadata that helps an authoritative document rise to the top of an efficiently constructed search strategy (Hill, 2010). Peggy Richwine voices a similar concern about having a standard vocabulary of subject headings. If an article does not possess metadata from a standard thesaurus of subject headings, a researcher may very well miss many valuable sources. Ms. Richwine gives the example of an article about a newborn. Some writers will call this an infant; others will refer to it as a neonate. It is the judicious application of standardized metadata—what catalogers have always done—that makes research efficient (Richwine, 2008).

Ms. Hill laments many trends in the technical services departments of today’s libraries and the fact that cataloging education is waning in the country’s LIS programs. She is worried that library administrators are decreasing the funding for technical services because of the mistaken impression that online resources can be efficiently located

⁷⁹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Kathryn_Kaya&p=video1&b=1134&e=1214

through a key-word search. “We don’t have a profession if we don’t have information organization. There is no point in our existing as a separate discipline without it” (Hill, 2010, 43:38).⁸⁰ “The metadata is even more important than it used to be” (Hill, 2010, 19:51).⁸¹ Dorothy McGarry echoes Ms. Hill’s worries about LIS education: “I think libraries are getting short-changed by turning out people who can call themselves librarians who haven’t had a decent class in cataloging. Or any class in cataloging” (McGarry, 2010, 59:29).⁸²

Anne Gault describes the vicissitudes of technology as a “merry-go-round that you have to grab and get in there” (Gault, 2009, 12:14).⁸³ She still prefers to read a book, and does not see that changing. Sheila Ross Henderson is excited about the modern library. She believes that providing Internet stations for the public encouraged more men to visit her library than she had seen in her entire career before the advent of the computer. Ms. Henderson always had a contingent of retired men who would come to read the paper or check their portfolios using *Morningstar*, but working and professional men began to be patrons when she added computers, online databases, and Internet access:

Now I have business men there. There are accountants. I have one doctor that comes on a regular basis. I have the manager—well he is actually the owner—of the McDonald’s that comes and does his accounting, and you know, his books and all that in the library.

We have become a community hub for all walks of life and I think that is just magnificent. They love our wireless. I had a policeman tell me “I ran somebody off from your library the other night.” I said, “What happened?” “Well, he was out there using your wireless.” I said “Don’t do that.” [Laughter] I said, “You are supposed to put that down, I said, so I can count it on my statistics.” He

⁸⁰ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Janet_Hill&p=video1&b=2618&e=2778

⁸¹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Janet_Hill&p=video1&b=1191&e=1273

⁸² http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Dorothy_McGarry&p=video1&b=3569&e=3702

⁸³ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Anne_Gault&p=video1&b=734&e=787

looked at me, but that's—I mean we want people to use our services and if having wireless that is accessible outside the door is going to help somebody, I'm all for it. (Henderson, 2010, 1:00:01)

Jeannette Larson states that the days when the librarian was in direct control of the library collection are over. She recalls when the librarians of smaller libraries would be expected to know about every book in the collection—that was their job. She sees the biggest challenge for modern librarians is an adjustment to a new paradigm of the collection: a collection that is constantly evolving and in flux. Ms. Larson believes the librarian's new job is similar to “reader's advisory,” but for the information age: knowing how to direct patrons to the information and materials they need, on their level of understanding. It is about learning to manage information and facilitating its efficient dissemination within the library's constituents (J. Larson, 2008).

Sarah Long refers back to her previous comments about pre-computer technology to discuss—provoke—ways that libraries will need to evolve to meet the needs of future users:

Remember I talked about library hand? This is when cards were written for the card catalog with a certain, with a certain penmanship. I mean, that's laughable now. And young librarians graduating today don't even know what that means. And so, now I think, for example, we ought to think about a library not cataloging anything in the traditional way at all. You know, I think maybe Dewey might be on the way out. We have tagging now.

This is kinda—I'm speaking heresy here. And I'm speaking to be provocative, but I think librarianship has to think about those people born after, 19-- 9, what am I saying? After 1980, because those people are very different from you and me. They have grown up with games, gaming. They are into multitasking. They do things very differently, and there is some evidence they even think differently. And the library has to be a very different place for them. (Long, 2008, 21:30)⁸⁴

⁸⁴ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Sara_Long&p=video1&b=1290&e=1350

These recollections of library technology innovations, and their unintended consequences, come from the last decades of our cohort's careers. Let us now turn to memories involving the first steps toward becoming a professional librarian: library school.

LIBRARY SCHOOL MEMORIES

All librarians went to a graduate school and matriculated with a master's degree in library science, information science, or some combination. This social memory of library school is the first professional memory of their careers.

Rita Auerbach remembers going to library school at Columbia when computers were still a novelty. But she understood that they were going to be an important resource in the future, so she made sure to take the one computer class offered by her program—which happened to be scheduled at the same time as the only children's literature class. So she never got to take that children's literature class, which is very ironic since she has devoted her entire career to children's librarianship and even chaired the Caldecott Awards committee (Auerbach, 2008).

Ms. Auerbach was warned to not expect a great deal of intellectual rigor at library school. A friend of hers who was a library director told her that library school would be dull and full of tedious work, but she should persevere because actually being a librarian was very rewarding work.

So I carried that advice with me to library school. And sure enough it wasn't enormously intellectually challenging, but they piled on an enormous amount of work, I think to prove that it was an intellectual challenge. And every time something wonderful would happen and I would enjoy it, I'd start to get nervous because if there was an inverse relationship between your reaction to library school and your love of the profession, I was afraid maybe I wouldn't love being a librarian!

But it turns out I have. I've shared that advice with other people who've thought about dropping out of library school and inspired them to go on and they've thanked me afterwards. So I can't say this is true of all library schools, but I must say that I loved working as a librarian a whole lot more than I liked learning to be one. (Auerbach, 2008, 04:32)⁸⁵

Connie Corson studied at Columbia and graduated in 1962. She appreciated the library science theory taught in school, but felt many of the day-to-day skills required for running a library could only be picked up on the job. She has always recommended that potential librarians work at a library before or during master's degree work so they are equipped with both practical and theoretical skills when they graduate (C. Corson, 2009).

John Mitchell's time in library school was just at the cusp of MARC implementation. Because he was able to learn MARC and how to catalog in an electronic environment at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., he came to the Library of Congress as a new cataloger with a considerable advantage over most of the LC's more senior staff (Mitchell, 2010).

Pat Tuohy attended the University of Texas and graduated in 1970. She had planned to be an academic librarian, but shifted her focus to public libraries. When the interviewer asks what led her to make this decision in library school, she replies, without hesitation:

Cataloging—

Let's be perfectly clear, it was cataloging. It was AACR1, it wasn't even two, and the notoriously difficult cataloging teacher at the time, who I'm not even sure who that was, but it was a prerequisite for academic libraries and I knew I couldn't make the cut because I could barely make a B in Billy Grace Herring's beginning cataloging course. And Billy Grace Herring needs to be interviewed for this because she is a wonderful library school teacher—Dr. Herring, and you need to

⁸⁵ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Rita_Auerbach&p=video1&b=272&e=337

interview her very soon because she is a wonderful woman, guided the careers and positively influenced library school students for years and years.

And I owe her an incredible debt because I didn't earn a B in that class, but she saw in me a love of libraries and she really gave me a B which is exactly what you had to have. And I'm eternally grateful to her. She wouldn't remember this, but I, of course, do. (Tuohy, 2009, 03:08)⁸⁶

Ms. Tuohy says when she told Dr. Herring that she was switching her focus to public libraries, Dr. Herring enthusiastically told her she was going to make a great public librarian and it was the right choice. And it was the right choice for Ms. Tuohy. She went on to work for the Austin Public Library and then to inspire and counsel hundreds of her peers as the director of the Central Texas Library System.

Billie Grace Herring was working on her master's degree at the University of Texas in the early 1960s in preparation to be a school librarian. But as she was finishing her master's thesis the Dean recruited her to take advantage of a federal Title IIB grant at the library school and continue her research on school libraries for a doctorate. In addition to the fellowship, she says the Dean, Dr. Robert Douglass, made it very clear he wanted her to stay with the school after completing the PhD. And she did, until retiring in 1996. "You talk about a gift dropping in your lap!" (Herring, 2011, 14:17).⁸⁷

Hatred of cataloging class is mentioned in more than just Ms. Tuohy's interview. Robert Gaines, Peggy Richwine, Karen Breen, Karlan Sick, and Robert Corson (2009) all professed a deep antipathy toward learning cataloging at library school. Mr. Gaines says it was his "least favorite class. Not that there's anything wrong with cataloging . . ." (Gaines, 2008, 09:06).⁸⁸ Ms. Richwine says her cataloging class was simply "a matter of endurance," which is ironic because she spent a great deal of her later career organizing

⁸⁶ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Patricia_Tuohy&p=video1&b=188&e=269

⁸⁷ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Billie_Grace_Herring&p=video1&b=857&e=1249

⁸⁸ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Robert_Gaines&p=video1&b=546&e=647

materials (Richwine, 2008, 16:05).⁸⁹ When Ms. Sick was asked about her least favorite class, she replies, “Oh, I suppose cataloging—like everybody” (Sick, 2008, 04:45).⁹⁰ Ms. Breen was more emphatic about it: “Oh yeah, cataloging. No question. Oy!” (Breen, 2008, 06:06).⁹¹

In each case where the interviewees mentioned disliking their cataloging class in library school, it is clear by the timbre of their remarks that they assumed almost everyone would agree with them. In fact, all the interviewers can be heard murmuring in agreement—and sometimes laughing. The dislike of cataloging (at least among non-catalogers) is a library cliché. In these next two sections, elements of the social memory that employ cliché and then selections from the interviews that discuss stereotypes within and without the profession are examined.

USE OF CLICHÉ

Cataloging and catalogers are the subjects of several clichés in the social memory of librarianship.

John Mitchell, a retired cataloger for the Library of Congress, first uses cliché to distinguish himself from the stereotype of most catalogers by saying that contrary to the “normal Myers-Briggs cataloger,” he is actually gregarious and very outgoing (Mitchell, 2010, 12:37).⁹² But later in the interview he returns to the subject with another cliché, saying that a good cataloger has a very focused attention to detail, and “we lose sight of the forest for the individual tree sometimes in cataloging.” He goes on to say catalogers

⁸⁹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Peggy_Richwine&p=video1&b=965&e=979

⁹⁰ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Karlan_Sick&p=video1&b=285&e=291

⁹¹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=TexLegacyProj%3Abreen_karen&p=video1&b=366&e=376

⁹² http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_John_Mitchell&p=video1&b=757&e=800

pay a great deal of attention to rules. They want to follow rules and this “may be sometimes an enigma to our colleagues” (Mitchell, 2010, 17:31).

Janet Swan Hill, also a cataloger, employs the same cliché about technical services staff not seeing the forest for the trees, but she argues for the opposite of the stereotype. She believes it is the public services staff who see individual trees, because each scenario is unique. Ms. Hill argues that the catalogers are looking for patterns—so they can apply agreed upon rules based on patterns.

Catalogers look at a problem and say what are – what is the class of things to which this belongs? What precedents will I set by making this decision? What forest does it grow in? If I plant this tree here, how will that influence everything else? (Hill, 2010, 25:36)⁹³

She continues, catalogers are detail-oriented because they must find the details that matter and apply cataloging and classification rules so the library works in an efficient manner. And then the public services staff can address the individual trees on a day-to-day basis because the forest is well-organized by the technical services staff.

Bill Mears echoes this cliché about catalogers when he describes how he interviews and hires people. He tries to assess their people skills during an interview, regardless of their other qualifications. Dr. Mears says the only reason he has ever had to fire someone in his forty years of experience is because they could not work well with others—either their co-workers or the patrons. He could train or coach a poor-performing librarian to find an effective place within his organization, but he could never change an employee’s basic people skills no matter how hard he tried. He uses cliché at the end of this passage, when he states, “And that even applies to the librarians that are in tech services” (Mears, 2008, 29:12).⁹⁴

⁹³ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Janet_Hill&p=video1&b=1297&e=1564

⁹⁴ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Dr._Bill_Mears&p=video1&b=1752&e=1783

Janet Swan Hill invokes the cliché of the monkish cataloguer using the technical services department as a retreat from the real world. She states, “It’s not a matter of sitting there all by yourself transcribing things like a monk . . . because it is no retreat” (Hill, 2010, 51:15).⁹⁵

Jeanette Larson makes a similar off-hand comment about catalogers, also in reference to how everyone working at the library needs to possess interpersonal skills—even in technical services. She refers to catalogers as typically people who do not want to be in front of everybody or who do not want to deal with kids; but she also self-references the comment, calling it a stereotype that might not be wholly accurate (J. Larson, 2008).⁹⁶

Clichés are used not just about catalogers, but applied generally to the entire profession within the social memory. When Dr. Yamashita is discussing his brief career as a representative for a library integrated systems vendor, he mentions that he just was not a very good salesman. In this interview it is the interviewer who employs the cliché by saying “most librarians aren’t good salesmen” (Yamashita, 2010, 14:32).⁹⁷

Dale Ricklefs uses a similar cliché when talking about why she was hired by the City Manager of Round Rock, Texas:

Even though the library skills were needed, he had interviewed many librarians who were very much the librarian or librarian’s librarian. He was looking for someone who could manage to go with the flow when necessary—which is what happens in politics. (Ricklefs, 2011, 11:06)⁹⁸

The stereotype invoked by this cliché is that most librarians may not possess the interpersonal skills to work well within a contentious political atmosphere.

⁹⁵ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Janet_Hill&p=video1&b=3075&e=3167

⁹⁶ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jeannette_Larson&p=video1&b=171&e=203

⁹⁷ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Kenneth_Yamashita&p=video1&b=872&e=917

⁹⁸ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Dale_Ricklefs&p=video1&b=666&e=702

When Jenifer John Patterson is giving some advice to new professionals at the conclusion of her interview, she employs a subtle cliché also decrying the tendency of librarians to be introverted. She says:

Work on believing in yourself, work on your social skills, work on knowing how to be charming and interesting to other people. You know, all of the same things that anyone else needs to succeed in life, we need to succeed in life. It's not a place to hide, it's not a place to rest, it is challenging. (Patterson, 2008, 45:59)⁹⁹

Kathy Kaya echoes this cliché when she relates her own interpersonal metamorphosis. When she joined the faculty of Montana State University, she realized she needed to push beyond her comfort zone and speak out rather than waiting for her turn. She reports that this was a very difficult thing for her to learn (Kaya, 2010).¹⁰⁰

Jaye McLaughlin, a children's librarian for her entire career, tells a story about recently visiting an academic library. Her use of cliché is also subtle, but telling:

The librarian that was there helping with students. He looked very at ease with what he was doing and very approachable. And so you know I think those traits are something that we really need to emphasize because we really aren't the "shushing" librarians any more. (McLaughlin, 2011, 27:04)¹⁰¹

The implication is that librarians are usually not "at ease" when working with the public, something that must be compensated for.

The stereotype about shy librarians may be a legacy of gender in the history of librarianship. Pat Tuohy invokes this cliché when she explains to her interviewer how Women's Clubs were pivotal in the genesis of many small Texas public libraries:

In my experience, it's the women of the community, usually better educated, or just they love to read. They don't have to be better educated, but they have a love of reading and education and a real respect for it. And they were the impetus to start the library. And I have seen this in all of these libraries that have started, it's

⁹⁹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jenifer_John_Patterson&p=video1&b=2759&e=2796

¹⁰⁰ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Kathryn_Kaya&p=video1&b=319&e=324

¹⁰¹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jay_McLaughlin&p=video1&b=1624&e=1673

mainly women that are doing this. And there are men involved—don't get me wrong, there are energetic male volunteers—but it is heavily women and it's women in the community who have standing.

Whether they're newcomers to the community or they're the old grand-dames, or the daughters of the old grand-dames, they have standing and they're doing this for their community. They're doing this for Moody [Texas] or Mart [Texas] or whatever community they're in to make it better. . . .

And this is an established pattern for public library development. It goes back to the Women's Clubs. The Texas Federations of Women's Clubs. The old time libraries, like Llano [Texas], were established by the Literary Guild or the Ladies of Fortnightly Club. The Fortnightly Club in Brenham, Texas is over 100 years old and they established a public library. And that could have been a bookshelf in the county courthouse or in the basement, but they were the impetus to start a library. And this is like 18-something, '90 or 1901.

So, and many of these women's clubs, they were literary societies, they read books and talked about them. They cared about the education in the community and they wanted a library. And these had to be the better educated, more affluent members of that community. (Tuohy, 2009, 41:54-45:00)¹⁰²

Peggy Richwine was a science librarian at a university. At one point her interviewer asks how she feels about taking the word *library* out of the name of her alma mater's degree program—and many other library and information science schools. Ms. Richwine replies by discussing a tangential cliché: that any discipline that “has *science* in its name is not a real science.” She does not have a particularly strong opinion about the word *library*, but she has always felt uncomfortable with the word *science* because of the cliché among her peers within the hard sciences. Ms. Richwine would be more comfortable calling the profession “information management” because that is what she has done. She reminds the interviewer that her career began managing only print materials. Her career has been an arc of working with print to working almost exclusively with electronic materials. She believes using the term “information

¹⁰² http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Patricia_Tuohy&p=video1&b=2514&e=2780

management” is a more accurate description of the discipline because it lacks the print-based connotation of *library* and the derisive cliché of *science* (Richwine, 2008).¹⁰³

Jeannette Larson compares librarianship to the mafia:

And it's a little bit like the Mafia. They never let you out, you're never—they pull you back. Because I still get calls, you know I left the State Library thirteen years ago, and I still get calls saying, "institutional memory, how did we get started doing such and such, do you remember why we made this decision and we did this," you know?

And I also think that's one of the wonderful things about working in libraries and with other librarians—is that we do talk to each other and we do stay. You're never sort of not a librarian anymore. (J. Larson, 2008, 53:58)¹⁰⁴

Karlan Sick echoes Ms. Larson’s comment about never not being a librarian. She says she has to “bite her tongue” not to recommend books to people when she is shopping in a bookstore (Sick, 2008).

Karen Breen’s interview includes several uses of cliché. She refers to behaviors that she assumes all librarians share. From the tenor of her comments, it is clear that these are elements of her story she believes are part of the social memory of the profession. The first instance involves her post-retirement career as a children’s bookstore owner. She says: “I bought a children’s bookstore—every children’s librarian wants to do it for themselves, you understand” (Breen, 2008, 17:37). She reports that after three and half years she sold the store “and got that out of my system.”¹⁰⁵ In another off-hand comment, she talks about visiting other libraries when traveling. She rhetorically asks her interviewer, “Don’t we all go to every library that we can look at?” (Breen, 2008, 27:52).¹⁰⁶ Both of these clichéd references assume the interviewer’s familiarity with a shared vocabulary of memory.

¹⁰³ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Peggy_Richwine&p=video1&b=1131&e=1231

¹⁰⁴ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jeannette_Larson&p=video1&b=3238&e=3279

¹⁰⁵ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=TexLegacyProj%3Abreen_karen&p=video1&b=1057&e=1097

¹⁰⁶ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=TexLegacyProj%3Abreen_karen&p=video1&b=1672&e=1686

DISCUSSING THE STEREOTYPE

The difference between using a cliché and discussing a stereotype is subtle but important. Oral history interviews are self-reflective, by their very nature. In addition to using cliché to tell their stories, many of the interviews also address the stereotypes that have been part of their professional lives. These can be divided into two main groups: those within the profession, and those stereotypes from without.

Within the Profession

One such stereotype within the profession is a hierarchy of perceived prestige. Connie Corson was anxious about the perception that she was stepping down the perceived ladder of librarian prestige by taking a job as a school librarian after a career as a librarian at the Museum of Modern Art and then at a university. She had never even considered being a school librarian, but she was asked to be on the selection committee of at a private girls' school in New York City that needed to hire a new librarian. After touring the campus and talking with some of the teachers and the headmaster, she came home and announced to her husband—also an academic librarian—that she was embarrassed to be thinking that she might want the job. She was worried that after years of building a prestigious career as an academic librarian, people would feel that she was “stepping down” to be a children’s librarian, or a school librarian (C. Corson, 2009, 27:44). She did take the position—much to the surprise of the administrators who had only asked her to serve on the search committee—and never regretted the decision.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Connie_Corson&p=video1&b=1664&e=1762

As mentioned earlier in the section about the library funding challenges, Jeannette Larson alludes to a stereotype about city managers working with public libraries. She refers to the following as “a joke” within the profession: that the library is a footnote in the annual budget until the city manager has a child attending storytime (J. Larson, 2008, 19:15). She wishes there were more consistent ways to attract the attention of funding authorities than simply waiting for them to have toddlers.¹⁰⁸

Janet Swan Hill laments the position of technical services within the perceived library hierarchy, especially within LIS graduate education:

When you are a minority, it is easy to be overlooked and to have the rest of the faculty in the library school—in the LIS programs—not quite understand why it is important to what you are doing and emphasizing other [library sub-disciplines]. . . . Those people advise students and they say, “There’s no future in cataloging. Why would you want to do that?” —with that kind of attitude—or they sneer at it—anecdotally they sneer at it—or make jokes at the expense of information organization. Well, of course people aren’t going to come into the field.

Also, we don’t tend to attract into the field from many of the subject disciplines that would have a special affinity for cataloging—like music or philosophy or mathematics. If all you get is English and history majors, you are going to get English and history majors and they are not as likely to be interested in cataloging as somebody who took Latin. . . So you start with—you have self selected out most of the people who might be drawn to cataloguing, and then you subject them to a LIS program in which cataloging and other related activities are not stressed and may even be made a joke of. (Hill, 2010, 41:50-43:38)¹⁰⁹

Outside the Profession

A persistent stereotype from outside the profession is that everyone who works at the library is a librarian. Many of the interview subjects refer to fighting against this stereotype. Kent Middleton blames the error on the profession not properly educating the

¹⁰⁸ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jeannette_Larson&p=video1&b=1155&e=1208

¹⁰⁹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Janet_Hill&p=video1&b=2510&e=2618

public about itself. He believes that at least 90% of the public thinks that circulation clerks are librarians, even though only a high school degree is required of the position at his institution (Middleton, 2008). Peggy Richwine laments the fact that most people have no idea librarians hold master's degrees—and often a second master's degree in their discipline of bibliographic specialization if they are an academic librarian. And to be a really capable librarian “it requires a great deal of skill and intelligence and effort. I think people have no idea what is required of being a librarian. Training and experience all come together to make your role as a librarian much more valuable” (Richwine, 2008, 01:27:46).¹¹⁰

In the earlier section on Career Motivation, Rita Auerbach says librarianship was not her first career choice: “No, and it was my last choice of a job. I was sure that librarians sat around and waited for people to ask where the bathroom was, and that didn't seem like an intellectually stimulating way of life” (Auerbach, 2008, 02:58).¹¹¹ In this first instance, she is referring to her own perception of the stereotype prior to becoming a librarian. Later in the interview, she refers back to the stereotype when discussing others' perceptions of her career:

People would come up to me and say, “Oh, I'd love to have your job. I love to read, I could sit around all day and read.” And maybe there's a subset of people who don't realize that the people checking the books out are not trained librarians. (Auerbach, 2008, 32:20)¹¹²

Earlier in this chapter, Arlene Luster shared her inspiration for pursuing a librarian career: the little rubber stamp on the end of the pencil she witnessed a clerk using in her childhood library. She later discusses why she always insisted on a desk for

¹¹⁰ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Peggy_Richwine&p=video1&b=5266&e=5311

¹¹¹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Rita_Auerbach&p=video1&b=178&e=192

¹¹² http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Rita_Auerbach&p=video1&b=1940&e=1974

the reference librarian that was clearly separate from the circulation activities. This was to provide a visual cue to the patron that there is a difference between the positions. Dr. Luster chuckles when remembering her initial rubber stamp inspiration to become a librarian—because she now realizes that person was probably not even a librarian, simply a clerk (Luster, 2009).¹¹³

But by far the most common stereotype involves the “shushing librarian.” In Chapter One, an illustration was used from the motion picture *Philadelphia Story* of the librarian shushing Jimmy Stewart’s character (Cukor et al., 1940). Her hair is in a bun and she speaks using grammar from an earlier century: “What is thee wish?” Robert Gaines also refers to a Jimmy Stewart motion picture (Capra et al., 1946) in his interview:

There certainly have been social stereotypes over the years, in the early part of my career I guess, everyone remembers the *It's a Wonderful Life* stereotype of the poor lady being relegated to opening the library—the famous Jimmy Stewart film which we see many many times every Christmas. So there was the stereotype that most librarians were female, and rather dowdy and saying *shh* all the time rather than being terribly helpful.

I think that stereotype was always mistaken, and always was mistaken, it was always just a stereotype. Because I started using libraries, as I said, in 1949. I joined—I got a card—I got my card to access the Nashville Public Library—and I always found librarians to be professional and helpful and knowledgeable. . . I actually never heard a librarian go *shh* in my entire life. (Gaines, 2008, 06:35)¹¹⁴

Kenneth Yamashita also specifically refers to the stereotype of “middle aged Caucasian female with a bun who has her hand up here [shushing]” (Yamashita, 2010, 40:00). He echoes Mr. Gaines’ comments that a good librarian is the exact opposite of the common stereotype—that the effective librarian is not someone who wants to sit in

¹¹³ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Arlene_Luster&p=video1&b=1517&e=1553

¹¹⁴ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Robert_Gaines&p=video1&b=395&e=472

the background and read a book, but someone who is “passionate about public service and has good communication skills . . . more service-oriented than book-oriented.”¹¹⁵

Many of the interviewees refer to this stereotype when discussing the type of person that makes a good librarian. Contrary to the stereotype, Irene Hoadly says of academic librarianship that “you didn’t want somebody that was going to come and wants to sit in a little corner. And that’s what people’s concepts of libraries were at that point in time. Maybe it is still for some people, I don’t know” (Hoadley, 2009, 31:35).¹¹⁶ Karen Breen agrees, saying about children’s librarianship: “Let’s make sure they know all of what this job is. It’s not enough just to think that, ‘I like children’s books and I’m here holed up in this corner’” (Breen, 2008, 24:12).¹¹⁷

Some librarians even celebrate their non-conformity to the stereotype. Jenifer John Patterson recalls the horror that her first supervisor expressed when she attempted to execute her first database search. She had been tasked with finding current periodical articles on calcium, but she had not understood the necessity of limiting the search string. She returned with a fat stack of dot-matrix printouts that were basically useless and been invoiced per citation. She says, “it’s very hard for me to be as orderly and methodical as a librarian is normally expected to be” (Patterson, 2008, 18:58).¹¹⁸ She found her calling involved library programming, motivating her peers, and consulting—professional library work outside the scope of the stereotypical librarian.

Jeannette Larson also identifies in opposition to the stereotype. When discussing the modern library, she points out they are not necessarily quiet places anymore. And that

¹¹⁵ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Kenneth_Yamashita&p=video1&b=2400&e=2544

¹¹⁶ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Irene_Hoadley&p=video1&b=1895&e=1908

¹¹⁷ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=TexLegacyProj%3Abreen_karen&p=video1&b=1452&e=1466

¹¹⁸ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jenifer_John_Patterson&p=video1&b=1138&e=1208

the librarians are often the loudest people in the building. She celebrates the fact that contemporary libraries do not fit the stereotype:

They've become much more open and airy. And—you know—probably the greatest change—and again, this is kind of stereotypical—is that we're no longer the quiet places. In fact we're . . . bustling busy places—not quiet scholarly hideaways where everyone is sitting around reading. Now you've got conversations going, you've got machines clicking, you've got headphones that somebody's got up too loud, and they're busy, bustling places. (J. Larson, 2008, 46:26)¹¹⁹

Mary Bushing warns that it is not an unstressful career:

Well, one piece is this isn't a place where there is no stress. This isn't a place where you can retire from the world. . . There is this still this underlying myth that somehow library work is—is kind of lovely.

Library work is exciting, but I wouldn't describe it as lovely. So I guess, first of all, to understand that this is work that is challenging. Secondly that this is work about relationship; relationships with the people who use the library, relationships with the people who fund the library, relationships with your colleagues. If you don't like people, think about a different job. This isn't the job for you.

We have fewer and fewer backroom jobs where we can hide people who don't want to be interrupted in their work. This job is all about interruptions. No matter what you do. I mean whether you are an administrator, whether you are a systems person, a reference or information person, even technical services, whatever you are doing, this job is about interruptions because it is a service job and that means response. (Bushing, 2010, 44:09-46:30)¹²⁰

Karen Breen uses the word “defensive” about describing—or defending—what librarians actually do. She describes the stereotype as “the quiet nerd in the corner” (Breen, 2008, 32:54). Like Ms. Richwine, above, she has felt a lifelong enmity with the

¹¹⁹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jeannette_Larson&p=video1&b=2786&e=2841

¹²⁰ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Mary_Bushing&p=video1&b=2649&e=2790

stereotype and wishes the public could comprehend the amount of training and discipline required to be an effective librarian.¹²¹

If the stereotype of librarians invokes an image of a shy spinster more concerned with protecting the contents of her library than providing access to the materials, then the social memory of librarianship is precisely the opposite. The final section of this chapter recounts the most pervasive memory element found in the *Stories* corpus. It is the memory of “What I did” as a professional librarian.

HELPING PEOPLE

Taken as whole, the social memory of librarianship as expressed through these oral history interviews can be summed up as a desire to help people find the information they needed and making an impact on the lives of their patrons. The specifics of this impact depended on the nature and type of librarianship practiced. School and children’s librarians devoted their careers to instilling an essential love of reading. Catalogers across library types worked to build an efficient infrastructure of knowledge. Public services librarians worked to provide frontline access to information for their communities and to cultivate a love of life-long learning. Academic librarians served their faculties and students pursuing advanced research. No matter the individual discipline within librarianship, a single vision of what they did emerges from the interviews: They helped people. In the third Methodology chapter, one of the elements discussed as added to the original memes documented in the research spreadsheet was the “What I did” statement that often summed up the entire interview. The following extracts come from these “What I did” statements.

¹²¹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=TexLegacyProj%3Abreen_karen&p=video1&b=1974&e=2051

Many of the interviewees fondly relate how their patrons had thanked them years—sometimes decades—after having helped them with a research paper or introducing them to a favorite author. Jeannette Larson recalled having two different former child library volunteers thank her for their introduction to the library. They were both now getting their master’s degrees in library science. The mother of another child declared that she still talks about when Ms. Larson had taken her to a library conference to meet children’s book authors over eighteen years prior. She believes that perhaps teaching is the only other career “where you really have people come back and say. . . you really made a difference for me” (J. Larson, 2008, 06:45).¹²²

Kathryn Kaya relates a similar story. She was an academic librarian and describes her reference work as more than simply referral and providing answers—she developed relationships with her college students. Over the course of their education and matriculation, many would return to her reference desk because they had developed a rapport and they knew they could trust her with their research problems. She specifically recalls a local contractor: “Every time he sees me, he thanks me for helping him get his master’s degree—because he was my student” (Kaya, 2010, 18:14). And he graduated over thirty years ago.¹²³

Robert Gaines, also an academic librarian, expressed similar memories of helping students learn to become competent researchers. He describes this as the most fulfilling part of his career. Mr. Gaines seems amazed that he has been blessed with this gift of being able to help people. “You have changed their life in some way by providing them with the information they need. That is always very fulfilling. And it can happen tens of thousands of times in a library career” (Gaines, 2008, 25:31).¹²⁴

¹²² http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Jeannette_Larson&p=video1&b=405&e=471

¹²³ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Kathryn_Kaya&p=video1&b=1094&e=1130

¹²⁴ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Robert_Gaines&p=video1&b=1531&e=1613

Ninfa Trejo came to public librarianship rather late in life as a second career, but she found it very rewarding because of the interactions she had with people. She describes the library work as not about books, but about “lives” (Trejo, 2008).¹²⁵

Sheila Henderson discusses a strategy she used in Georgetown, Texas, to reach out to kids who were not library patrons:

But you see, you can, you can do things that will change people’s behavior. Behind the library in Georgetown was this old building. It was a shotgun house that they had actually talked about making into a museum for the African American community. That was where the kids that were catching the bus would gather in the mornings. Boys and girls, and all ages, and they would be so rowdy. Okay, I started arriving early and I would have a bag of candy. Now did they need candy? No. [Laughter]

But I had a bag of candy and I would go and I would sit on the porch, and they would have to talk to me and share their homework with me and any problems that they had or whatever, and I would hand out candy. And that got to be a regular event. So you know, whatever you can do to effect a positive outcome for not just your patrons that walk in the door but your potential ones as well.
(Henderson, 2010, 51:49-52:54)

Filomena Magavero was the only woman working at a naval school. She describes stories of her work with young men, many of whom had never been away from home before becoming cadets. In the middle part of the twentieth century there were no mental health professionals on campus for these boys:

You know I really--I think I helped a lot of them. . . I knew so many of them well, they worked in the library, or I knew them because I worked with them on research problems, or you know whatever. So they would come and they would tell me their sad tales, and I tried to help them as much as I could, and that was another thing, that was another one of my jobs [laughs]. (Magavero, 2005, 29:46)¹²⁶

¹²⁵ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Ninfa_Trejo&p=video1&b=428&e=468

¹²⁶ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Filomena_Magavero_2&p=video1&b=1786&e=1859

Ms. Magavero was their librarian, but also their motherly advisor. Arlene Luster shared similar memories as a military librarian stationed at several overseas military bases. She also had homesick boys in a strange country who appreciated her as a confidant, and her ability to find them books to read that reminded them of home (Luster, 2009).

Diana Collins remembers watching her storytime children grow up, helping them with their middle school homework, and then their high school research projects. She describes the preschool and elementary children as “little sponges,” saying they are just completely open to learning and they want to be in the library. She loved listening to their interests and finding picture books: “I love giving the child the perfect book and seeing them turn and say ‘I want another one just like it.’ There are no greater words to a librarian” (Collins, 2008, 04:54).¹²⁷ Eventually she would have the pleasure of working with the children of those children.

Ms. Collins reports that many in her community still fondly remind her of an occasion she helped organize to commemorate the opening of a new library building. She got people from the community to form a human chain from the old library to the new library and they passed about 500 children’s books hand-over-hand:

But, I mean there are still people who are talking about being in the book brigade. We had Brownies, we had Cubs, we had cheerleaders, we had football team people, we had every fraternity, sorority, every public service group in town. We had teachers and fireman and city officials and we had a few county officials. And it was organized by a couple of volunteers—and actually that volunteer is our county judge . . . and she says of all the things she's ever done that book brigade was the best.

You know, so it was a very triumphant moment to go symbolically as well as physically from the old to the new. It was great fun. (Collins, 2008, 51:05-52:16)¹²⁸

¹²⁷ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Diana_Collins&p=video1&b=294&e=347

¹²⁸ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Diana_Collins&p=video1&b=3065&e=3136

Her strategy has been to “hook them in story hour then I’ve got them for life. And be taxpayers—and educated taxpayers who understand the value of knowledge and how to find knowledge” (Collins, 2008, 53:23).¹²⁹

Peggy Richwine relates a story about her enthusiasm for the library. She was a science bibliographer at an academic library. One morning she had been assigned the task of giving a tour of the library to a group of folks. She went downstairs and found a group of people in the lobby and proceeded to give them a tour of the library—all four floors. At the conclusion of the tour, back down in the lobby, they thanked her. And then her associate pointed out another group of people waiting patiently. *They* were the people who had come for the tour. “And my colleagues, they were just cracking up. Because they couldn’t believe I was so enthusiastic, that I’d just grabbed the first person that came in the door, and gave ‘em a tour” (Richwine, 2008, 52:18-54:09)¹³⁰.

Andrew Hansen could trace the arc of his public library career with the novel, *Peyton Place*. When he began his career in 1956, the out-going librarian had told him she had not made a decision whether to add the novel to the library’s collection—as it was very controversial and she knew the next director would most likely have to fend off censorship attempts if a decision was made to acquire it. She left the entire controversy for Mr. Hansen to sort out. Mr. Hansen did purchase the book for the library and fought to keep it on the shelf. He was most proud of his efforts to resist censorship throughout his career.

Mr. Hansen then refers to Mark Twain’s habit of reminding people that his life began with the appearance of Haley’s Comet and the comet’s return signaled his death. At the end of Mr. Hansen’s career, he says an article appeared in a library journal about

¹²⁹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Diana_Collins&p=video1&b=3203&e=3224

¹³⁰ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Peggy_Richwine&p=video1&b=3166&e=3249

weeding with the subtitle, “Is it time to weed *Peyton Place*?” [“Weeding the Fiction Collection: Or Should I Dump Peyton Place?” (Chelton & Jacob, 2001)] And it was—the book was no longer terribly interesting and no one had checked it out in years. *Peyton Place* was Andrew Hansen’s Haley’s Comet (Hansen, 2009).¹³¹

Pat Tuohy discusses the balance that must be struck between administering the library efficiently and the ultimate goal for the library. She began her career as a public librarian and is now the director of CTLS (Connecting Texas Libraries Statewide, formerly known as the Central Texas Library System). In this latter role her perspective is broad, and she works to inspire individual librarians to remember their goals:

Oh, you know, it's so easy to be distracted by the crazy bureaucracy we find ourselves in and libraries can—librarians cannot avoid bureaucracy. We are part of it, we are integral to it. And to keep reminding ourselves: you're doing this for people, the people you care about—the public in a generic way, but also people in a small way, like the kids that live down the block, the senior citizens you may know. It's really hard to, with all the bureaucratic crap that comes down, the reason you're there is to serve people. And you're doing the Lord's work with helping them connect with information, reading, viewing, whatever it is that enriches their lives in a positive way. And that's what you have to keep reminding yourself, that there's a reason you're putting up with all of this madness. That the end result of your efforts are worthwhile and people are going to benefit and they may never know your name, but you may be planting a memory in a child about how they were helped finding something that expanded their life and their vision.

You hear this from successful people, you hear them say, I remember when I went into the Brooklyn Public Library—or the Honolulu Public Library—and got what I needed and it had an impact. It had an impact on their life, a positive one. They will not remember your name or your face, but they'll remember what you did for them. And keeping that in mind that that's the real reason you're there is the hardest thing to do but the most important, or you will go crazy having to put up with the craziness. (Tuohy, 2009, 55:01-57:22)¹³²

¹³¹ http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Andrew_Hansen&p=video1&b=2720&e=2752

¹³² http://solstice.ischool.utexas.edu/Capturing_Our_Stories/index.php?title=Interview_with_Patricia_Tuohy&p=video1&b=3301&e=3442

Many other interviewees also referred to the magic of helping people—remember Jenifer John Pattersonson’s “magic helper” from an earlier section (Patterson, 2008). Dr. Irene Hoadley described her role as an administrator as fostering relationships that help professionals learn to help library patrons (Hoadley, 2009). Karen Breen discussed her role on the Caldecott Award committee as ultimately helping children find the best picture book that year (Breen, 2008). Rita Auerbach and Karlan Sick both summed up their careers as helping children discover the joys of reading (Auerbach, 2008; Sick, 2008). Richard Corson talked about how his abilities to help people with research increased exponentially over his career—about how his knowledge was cumulative. Helping one college student research a topic would increase his skills so that he was an even better librarian for the next student (R. Corson, 2009). Helping people was what these librarians did.

Chapter Five. Follow-up Survey

At the conclusion of gathering the set of oral history interviews for the *Capturing Our Stories* project that have been analyzed for this research, a follow-up survey was conducted with a random sample of ten of the original interviewees. A survey instrument was developed with six questions. These questions were designed to more fully probe several elements found in the oral history interviews. The questions were the following:

1. *Tell me when you knew you wanted to be a librarian?*
2. *What made librarianship the right career choice for you?*
3. *What traits are most important for librarians to possess?*
4. *Thinking about your conception of the stereotypical librarian, how do you conform—or not conform—to the stereotype?*
5. *Could you tell me any regrets you have about your choice of librarianship as a profession?*
6. *What do/did you miss most about librarianship at the end of your career because of the changes in the profession?*

Almost all of the participants had shared their stories about the decision to become a librarian in their oral history interviews. And many had also shared memories comparing the beginning of their careers with the end of their careers as part of the narrative arc of telling their professional life story. So the first and last follow-up survey questions often replicated information already found in the oral history recordings. These questions invite an analysis of how the differing methodological techniques—the oral history interview of a life story compared to the simple answer in a survey—inspire different types of responses. The librarians selected to participate in the follow-up survey

share their memories of these two events from their careers in a voice that is different from the original oral interview. The voice is more objective—because it is answering a specific question, and not part of a life story narration. But it is often also more subjective—because the question is specifically asking about their personal experience.

The middle four questions address topics that many of the oral history interviews did not include, but were of interest to this researcher and address the Research Question subquestions listed in Methodology chapter. None of the responses are truly surprising and, in fact, elements of almost all of the survey responses can be found in the *Stories* transcripts. They are simply oblique or implicit within the oral history narrations. The survey has brought these elements to the fore. The survey results are summarized in Appendix F.

SURVEY QUESTION ONE. DECISION TO BECOME A LIBRARIAN

One of the most pronounced themes to surface from the oral history interviews involves the memory of when the subjects decide to pursue a library career. Fifteen out of thirty-four of the *Stories* subjects reported considering librarianship only after attempting an earlier career. To elicit further responses the first question in the follow-up survey was *Tell me when you knew you wanted to be a librarian?*

The sample of ten librarians who participated in the follow-up survey included five who decided to pursue librarianship as a second career choice, three who definitively always wanted to be a librarian, and two subjects who had more complicated answers. Four of the five who stated that librarianship was their second career choice had begun their professional lives as teachers.

In the survey Robert Gaines simply states that he taught for six years before deciding to become a librarian. Mr. Gaines chose to respond to the survey with written answers. He writes, “I had to make a change in career, and librarianship offered the best opportunity to stay within an academic community” (personal communication, August 31, 2012). His oral history interview includes a more in-depth explanation. In the *Stories* interview he volunteers that he was teaching history at the university level while pursuing a PhD in history. After six years as a doctoral student he decided that his prospects as a full-time history professor did not merit struggling to finish the PhD and he chose to switch to a master’s in library science. His goal had always been to have a career in academia, but he decided to become an academic librarian instead of a history professor (Gaines, 2008).

Micky Freeny actively avoided a career as a librarian. She participated in the follow-up survey with a recorded telephone interview. Her response to the first question is very similar to her introductory remarks in the *Stories* interview. In both the survey and the oral history interview she discusses working in libraries as a high school student and college student and how her supervisors encouraged her to get a library degree and follow their career path. But she did not want to be a librarian; she wanted to be a teacher. She taught French at two different schools before realized that she simply hated disciplining her charges.

In both the survey and the oral history interview she also states that her education as a teacher limited her to teaching only one subject. Librarianship offered her the ability to achieve her first love—working with children—and as a librarian she could pursue a broad array of subject interests and be liberated from the constant battle of classroom discipline.

In the follow-up survey she does volunteer that the reason she did not initially desire a career in librarianship was due to its “image.” Here is her response from the survey:

I actually had fought it because I had worked all through high school and college and the children’s librarian kept saying, “Oh, you should be a librarian.” No, I really don’t want to do that, I really don’t want to do that. . . . Quite honestly you know it was the image that kind of kept me from doing it. And then once I realized how much I, you know, the work was really great. (Freeny, personal communication, August 31, 2012)

Her discussion about stereotype, which continues later in the survey, is wholly absent from the oral history interview. This information is found in the survey because she is specifically asked about the origins of her career. In the oral history interview the leading question is less specific. The interviewer is seeking to elicit her story in her own words—and perhaps put her at ease. He states, “So tell me what interested you in libraries and library science and we’ll just have a nice conversation about it” (Freeny, 2009, 01:30). This leads to Ms. Freeny recollecting her failed career as a French teacher and the encouragement she received from her supervisors while clerking in the library at school, but she does not volunteer her initial aversion to the profession. Her comment incorporating the stereotype only appears in the survey responding to a specific direct question.

Karlan Sick also began her career as a French teacher. She discusses her first career in both her oral history interview and the follow-up survey via telephone recording. In her follow-up survey she states that she had taken a break from teaching while living abroad. When she returned to New York City so that her husband could pursue a PhD at Columbia, it was simply very convenient to get a master’s because Columbia had a renowned library school. She mentions her own young children simply

in passing here: “They were little then and I was quite interested in their books and so I went to library school at Columbia” (personal communication, September 3, 2012).

In her oral history interview Ms. Sick expands on this part of her life. She says “I realized that it would be very difficult to teach and have kids” (Sick, 2008, 02:06). She also discusses how disheartening it was to attempt to teach a classroom of forty-five students. After returning from living abroad, and with her own small family growing, Ms. Sick discusses in her oral history interview that she did some substitute teaching. It was during this period that she became acquainted with a school librarian, and realized that Columbia—where her husband was studying—offered a master’s degree in library science that would allow her to enjoy working with children, but with the flexibility that she desired.

Sarah Long also recounts a failed initial career as a school teacher in both her follow-up survey, which she completed with written responses, and her oral history interview for the *Stories* project. In her survey responses, she simply states that she “lost control of the class . . . I was shattered, as I had always wanted to teach elementary school” (personal communication, December 1, 2012). But her oral history interview contains a great deal more. She retells specific anecdotes about how she unable to control her classes, and though she recounts these episodes with humor, it is clear that her inability to follow her dream of teaching was devastating.

In the oral history interview she also shares how she became an excellent children’s librarian—and how she ultimately learned what mistakes she had made as a teacher. Ms. Long intimates that with the skills she learned as children’s librarian, she could probably now also be a successful classroom teacher (Long, 2008).

Ms. Long and Ms. Sick both relate similar stories of their failed teaching careers in both their oral history interviews and their follow-up surveys, but the oral history

interview gives them the opportunity to expand on the theme and tell a story, not simply recount a fact. This is true with Ms. Kaya's interview, as well. Her first career was also as a teacher and she recounts this in her oral history interview, along with a description of interacting with the librarians and realizing she "wanted to be like them" (Kaya, 2010). But in her follow-up survey telephone interview, she only volunteers that she was a student worker at her university library and never mentions being dissatisfied with teaching prior to pursuing a library career (personal communication, November 28, 2012).

Jeannette Larson also did not plan to become a librarian. In both her oral history interview and her follow-up survey, which was a recorded telephone conversation, she recounts casting about for a career after completing her BA in anthropology. She began volunteering at a school where her mother was employed. After spending some time in the school library, she describes her epiphany about librarianship as a "V8 moment" in the oral history (J. Larson, 2008, 07:58) and as a "light bulb" in her follow-up survey (personal communication, November 26, 2012).

Ms. Larson's responses to the follow-up survey are just as loquacious and rich as her oral history testament. Her descriptions of deciding to become a librarian are virtually identical in the two methodologies even though four years separate the two interviews.

Three librarians report librarianship as their first career choice, although in the case of Mary Bushing it was a career choice within the vocation and calling of being a nun.

Much like Ms. Larson, Mary Bushing also recounts her decision to become a librarian in both her oral history interview and follow-up telephone survey with virtually the same language. Dr. Bushing has an admittedly unusual career story—and she also

works as a library consultant in her retirement—so she may have recounted this memory many times. She entered a Benedictine convent after high school and the Holy Mothers assigned each novice an education plan, based on their aptitudes. She was told that she would be sent to get her BA and then MLS; ultimately she was to go to Notre Dame for a PhD in philosophy. In her survey, she says “it never occurred to me not to do the library part because it just seemed to be exactly right” (personal communication, November 23, 2012).

In her oral history interview she is only slightly more expansive in retelling this part of her life:

They would send me then to what was then Rosary College—and is now Dominican University—to get my master’s in library science because I was a generalist. I was one of those people who got good grades in math and science as well as in the humanities and other things. And they thought that was going to be a great librarian, because I would know a little bit about everything. And then they were going to send me to Notre Dame to get my PhD in philosophy. . . . It never occurred to me not to. It seemed like I was born to be a librarian anyway. (Bushing, 2010)

She left the convent before completing her BA, but returned to college after starting a family. She did attend library school and even chose to get her MLS at Rosary College just as the Holy Mothers had planned. And she ultimately completed a doctorate degree, though not in philosophy, an EdD; and not at Notre Dame, but at Montana State University. Though the career of librarianship was chosen for her, she did not question the decision because it was the right choice for her.

Dale Ricklefs always wanted to be a librarian. Comparing the two methodologies for Ms. Ricklefs’ decision to become a librarian results in the same essential story, but with slightly different anecdotes to illustrate her motivations. In the oral history format she recounts at length her childhood experiences at the Chicago Public Library—idyllic

sojourns to the cool young adult section after spending a hot afternoon frolicking on the lake shore. She remembers wondering how the library operated beyond the public areas and her fascination with a very early photocopier at the library (Ricklefs, 2011). In her follow-up survey, which she completed by submitting written answers, she remembers childhood games playing “library.”

I knew in elementary school that I wanted to be a librarian. I played librarian, or what I saw “librarians” do. For example, I cut sealed envelopes in half across the narrow part and pasted the envelopes in books and took index cards and created check out cards. I had kids in the neighborhood borrowing books. I volunteered in the elementary and high school library, and did work study in the academic library while I was an undergraduate. After college I worked in a corporate library as a library assistant, and then went on to get my MLS, paid by my corporate sponsor. (personal communication, July 31, 2012)

The only difference in the stories, other than remembering different anecdotes to illustrate, is the expansiveness of the accounts. In the oral history she includes more information about how she felt as a child in the library: she is more lyrical. In her written response to the survey, she is more concise, though she still paints a very nice picture of a childhood knowing she is destined to become a librarian.

Librarianship was also Pat Tuohy’s first career choice, but like Jeannette Larson she did not make a decision to pursue the career until her college days. In her oral history she recounts how the Latin American History collection at the University of Texas—which was her primary research interest as an undergraduate—was located in the same building with the library school:

At that time it was in the main building of the University on the 3rd floor. And we shared a corridor and a bathroom with the library school . . . and as I hung out in the hallway with the Cokes—because you couldn’t take those into the library—I talked with library students and asked them "what's library school all about?" (Tuohy, 2009, 01:10)

In her recorded telephone survey response she tells a slightly different version where a professor in her early college days told her that history students make wonderful librarians. This conversation put the idea in her head as she was discovering that she “really loved writing papers and reading and synthesizing and all of that” (personal communication, September 3, 2012).

Librarianship is Ninfa Trejo’s third career, although she had wanted to be a librarian since her childhood in Mexico. Both her oral history interview—one of the first, recorded in 2008—and her follow-up survey, conducted over the telephone in 2012 recount almost identical recollections of a childhood love of libraries, her career as a political appointee that ended when Jerry Brown lost the governorship of California in 1982, and her decision to pursue a library career as a belated childhood dream. This first quote is from her oral history interview:

So I was looking for a job, and I had some interviews, and I went to interview at the San Diego Public Library. When I got in there, I thought, I want to work here. No matter what they offer me, I’m going to work here. (Trejo, 2008)

Here she recounts the same memory, four years later, for the survey:

I thought as soon as I got into the library I said I don’t care what they offer me, I want to work in this place. I don’t care if they offer me the lowest, I want to work in this place. (Trejo, personal communication, August 16, 2012)

But only in the survey—in which she is specifically asked about the decision to become a librarian—are we treated to her earliest memories of libraries:

Well, I was very young. I was in elementary school and I was living in a small town in the north of Chihuahua. It is a border town and I used to do my homework in the library. There was only one library and it was on the back of the municipal building, you know, for the mayors and everything. And in this library no one was there and I was very little in elementary school and I just found it so fascinating to be in that library and being by myself. It was myself and the one person that was in charge. I don’t know if she was a librarian or not; but there was one person in charge, and she let me just be there and I was just fascinated to

be in that place. So I think it was very early in my life that I wanted to be a librarian. (personal communication, August 16, 2012)

This first question, *Tell me when you knew you wanted to be a librarian*, was addressed without fail in all of the oral histories found in the *Stories* project. It is part of every librarian's story. The number of respondents that chose librarianship after pursuing previous careers is similar with past research. The 1970 study by White and Macklin found that only 35% of LIS students reported that librarianship was their first career choice (White & Macklin, 1970). A 1979 study found that only 20% reported a desire to become a librarian prior to entering college (Julian, 1979).

This question's inclusion in the follow-up survey provides a demonstration of the two methodologies at work: a comparison of the two techniques. The second and subsequent questions entail more subjective and less explicit memories of a professional librarian's life. These questions are found in the follow-up survey because they address specific issues of interest to this researcher that were not found so easily within the corpus of oral history interviews. Elements of these questions are addressed within the corpus, but often these memories must be teased and assembled. Upon initially reviewing the first sets of oral history interviews, this researcher was disappointed that the interviews often did not include emotional content—how the subjects *felt* about what they were doing professionally. This emotional content is often the most beautiful aspect of a well-conceived oral history project, such as Thomas Rosengarten's biography of Ned Cobb, *All God's Dangers* (2000).

The absence of emotional content could be due to a combination of several factors. First, the very nature of the project set parameters that many of the subjects may have interpreted as excluding all but their most professional memories. *Capturing Our*

Stories was conducted under the aegis of the American Library Association, which may have influenced how much emotional content some of the subjects felt comfortable sharing. Also, many of the interviews were conducted by fellow librarians not trained in the art of oral history interviewing. And all of the interviews were conducted in a single session, so a trust relationship between the subject and the interviewer could not be fully developed.

Nevertheless, the oral history interviews do tell personal stories that glimpse the narrators' emotional lives. This researcher worked hard to cull this information in the previous chapter. The emotional content was often not explicit, buried deep in the professional stories of the subjects. The following and subsequent survey questions specifically address the issues that this researcher found difficult to mine in the oral histories. The follow-up survey questions help bring many of these elements to the surface. They make the implicit content from the oral history interviews explicit.

SURVEY QUESTION TWO. RIGHT CHOICE

The second follow-up survey question asks, *What made librarianship the right career choice for you?* This information is often implicitly found throughout the narratives in the oral history interviews, but this specific question results in explicit answers that were often difficult to mine from the *Stories* corpus. These explicit answers also corroborate the survey scholarship found in the Literature Review.

Professional leadership, library administration, and personnel management are the predominant themes in Dale Ricklefs' interview in the *Stories* archive after her introductory childhood memories spent at the Chicago Public Library. She is careful to distinguish herself from the "librarian's librarian" (Ricklefs, 2011, 11:17) when

discussing why the city manager of a fast-growing suburb north of Austin offered her the directorship shortly after she graduated with her master's degree: she believes the city manager was looking for a fellow politician who could finesse a relationship with the City Council to bring the young city into maturity.

Another theme throughout her interview is a willingness to embrace cutting-edge library technologies throughout her career. One of her interviewers is Pat Tuohy, the director of the Central Texas Library System, and she also remembers Ms. Ricklefs being the early-adopter of circulation and cataloging technologies. Her survey response encapsulates both of these themes:

It offered variety, a blend of people and information. I loved the automated aspects in particular, a good blend of technology and people. I went on to be a public library director after 5 years of serving as a clerk and then corporate librarian. This required a broad skillset, which I possessed, as well as some fearlessness. I was a risk taker.

Her survey response is concise and uses the specific words "fearless" and "risk taker." These are words that describe the essence of her oral history testament. But these emotional words do not appear in the oral history. They only appear in the context of this question posed in the format of a survey.

Throughout Robert Gaines' oral history interview he discusses his love of teaching. In remembering his introduction to this career in both his oral history interview and the follow-up survey, he consistently refers to his initial desire to be a history professor. His answer to Question Two follows his response to the first question and his statements within the oral history interview: "The bibliographic instruction element of librarianship offered me the best opportunity to build upon my history teaching career" (personal communication, August 31, 2012). He says the following in his oral history interview:

But when it looked as though the employment opportunities were going to be few and far between library science for me was a natural fallback. And a very congenial fallback because I've enjoyed working at libraries. And you still get to teach, quite a bit. (Gaines, 2008, 05:15)

Academic librarianship was the right choice for him after deciding not to finish dissertation for his PhD in history. It offered stable, reliable employment while allowing him to indulge his initial desire to share knowledge and be a member of a community of scholars.

Ninfa Trejo's oral history interview and her follow-up survey share a common theme and both tell of her desire to be of service to the Mexican-American community through library outreach. Her oral history interview recounts her very personal story of wanting to become a librarian and then her love affair and marriage with the influential library activist and scholar Dr. Arnulfo Duenes Trejo. Dr. Trejo was a renowned library school professor, owner of a Spanish-language book distribution company, founder of REFORMA (National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-speaking), and he hosted a biennial conference promoting Latino library education. In her oral history interview she tells a deeply personal story about how she and her late husband shared a common goal. It worth noting that this interview was conducted by her friend, ALA past-president Sarah Long—so a rapport and trust existed between them prior to the interview. Ms. Long specifically asks her to share her memories about life with Arnulfo.

In the follow-up survey her remarks also touch on her involvement with outreach to the Latino community but leave out the deeply personal love story. In the survey she shares her efforts to bring equitable learning opportunities to Mexican-Americans by promoting cross-cultural education. Librarianship was a perfect career to exact her

ambition to enable Latinos to reach their educational potential and also to create multi-cultural respect.

Pat Tuohy tells a great story in her oral history interview about standing up to censorship in her earliest days as a new librarian. It involved going before the City Council to ask them to change a well-intentioned policy regarding vendors who were also doing business with the Apartheid South African government. An unintended consequence of this policy was that the Austin Public Library could not purchase the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* or Disney films. The Council's intention was to support Nelson Mandela by putting fiscal pressure on companies that were trading with the South African government, but this resulted in a practical prohibition to purchase basic library materials—censorship.

By telling this story, she lets us know that ethical principles were an important part of why librarianship was a rewarding career for her. But in her survey response she is more direct. She states that being in a position to fight for “intellectual freedom as a foundation of democracy” fulfilled her political sensibilities (personal communication, September 3, 2012).

Karlan Sick was another former teacher who became a librarian. In her answer to the second survey question she says that librarianship was the perfect choice for her and then gives three brief reasons: 1) when her kids were in school she was school librarian, so their schedules were matched; 2) she always loved reading; and 3) she loved helping people. She says, “I loved to help people find the right book, so it was wonderful” (personal communication, September 3, 2012).

Elements in her *Stories* interview echo these three stated reasons, but with eloquence. In the early part of the interview she discusses how important raising her new

family was to her and how librarianship offered scheduling flexibility to achieve that goal. Toward the end of the interview she recounts the following:

It surprised me how much in common people who went into guidance work or social work had with people who were attracted to librarianship. That there's that wanting to help people aspect. . . I read somewhere that the lucky person is one whose avocation is his vocation, and I feel –going in a bookstore I have to bite my tongue not to recommend books to people. (Sick, 2008, 28:02)

Kathy Kaya is even more brief in her survey response. She simply says, “It was just something that I enjoyed and it made me happy” (personal communication, November 28, 2012). But throughout her oral history interview she discusses how much she enjoyed cultivating the human relationships through her professional career as a librarian, both with her colleagues and her patrons.

Micki Freeny’s answer to the survey question is a bit of a surprise until the *Stories* interview is reviewed carefully. She states that librarianship was the perfect career for her because “it involved two of the things I loved most and that is reading and children” (personal communication, August 31, 2012). And that librarianship continued to be the right choice for her as she advanced into administration because she always was able to continue to work with children—whether as a substitute storytime librarian or through children’s services committee work at ALA. “And so I never lost that dedication to children and children’s books and reading even though I was doing management and then administration.”

She never states this implicitly in her oral history interview; she also is never directly asked this in her interview. But throughout the *Stories* interview she always references her work—even her library director work—to the children’s projects she is most proud of and how library service to children has evolved during her career.

Mary Bushing's oral history makes clear that she loved her career and felt the Holy Mothers at her convent were correct when they assigned this trajectory to her based on her aptitudes, but she never really addresses why it was the right career for her. In her follow-up survey she provides the details:

I have been told that I have two very strong skill sets. On the one hand, I have very good people skills, both in terms of managing people and doing the political stuff and all the parts that go along with librarianship. And secondly I am a very good detail process person. So I am sort of good at both ends of the spectrum. I am good at the management, the cataloging, the figuring out how to do things efficiently and good at the people part as well. (Bushing, personal communication, November 23, 2012)

These two elements—the people skills and the administrative detail skills—are clearly present throughout her oral history interview, but diffused within the story.

This pattern is repeated in comparing Sarah Long's interview with her survey responses. Her *Stories* interview is enchanting—she is an excellent raconteur—and she discusses her many roles within the profession: children's librarian, academic librarian, library director, system director, and ALA President. But she does not specifically tell us why librarianship was the right choice for her, except to say that it made economic sense after her failed attempt to be a teacher. Ms. Long's survey response is specific:

I think it was an excellent choice for me. Through the years the variety librarianship offers has been the saving grace for me. . . . I know now that I am easily bored and need constant change and challenge. Librarianship offers this for those who are willing to embrace it. I was already committed to working in public service. The move to librarianship was not radically different from teaching. (personal communication, December 1, 2012).

Ms. Long's oral history interview included the passage about how children's librarianship prepared her to be a library director, run Board meetings, and other "hare-brained" ideas, so her survey comments about needing constant change and challenge ring true (Long,

2008, 13:31). But, again, only the survey elicited the specific emotional information: that she was easily bored.

The protean nature of a library career is echoed in both Jeannette Larson's oral history interview, but especially in her survey response. Throughout her *Stories* interview, she enthusiastically describes her different roles within the profession. From her oral history:

One of the things that's nice about working in public libraries is that you can sort of move and shift. So it's kind of like about the time I was sick doing story times, I was able to move into a managing position where it was like okay, now I'm helping other people enjoy doing story times and I can fill in once in a while. (J. Larson, 2008, 45:49)

But in Ms. Larson's survey response she tells another story—including a nice literary reference—to address this specific question:

You know sometimes I tell people that when I was a kid, I read Nancy Drew and I wanted to be a detective and instead I became a librarian. And it is kind of the same—the same kind of work except I don't get beat up very often. And it is really hard for me to imagine myself doing anything else because it is such a broad-based field. There were no limitations to it. I never felt like I was stagnant or doing the same thing. I mean every day was new stuff that you were doing. And I guess I kind of consider it a jack-of-all-trades kind of career because I, you know, was involved in business which was one of the things I looked at when I finished my undergraduate degree. Do I go and get an MBA? But I get to do some business stuff. I teach. I am involved in child development. You know, librarians are on the cutting edge of so much stuff even if we don't really use it immediately. You know we are very involved with technology and computers, and public speaking and there is just so much to it that it has really been a great career choice. I feel like I have really had a lot of different careers in terms of the kinds of things that I have been able to do, and some great opportunities.
(personal communication, November 26, 2012)

These responses echo much of the research on career motivation detailed in the second chapter Literature Review. An ALA Spectrum Scholarship report from 2006 found that 97% of respondents were attracted to the “flexibility of the career options”

(Loriene Roy, et al.) and the White and Macklin study found 20% of LIS students returning to graduate school to become librarians after starting a family (White & Macklin, 1970). A 1984 report for ALA found 82% of the respondents listing librarianship's challenging and varied nature of work as the chief advantage of the career (Bernstein, et al., 1984).

SURVEY QUESTION THREE. SOCIAL TRAITS

The third question in the survey addresses another lacuna in the *Stories* interviews that this researcher was hoping his subjects would address with greater precision: How do librarians perceive their personalities? To elicit responses in the survey, the question was generalized: *What traits are most important for librarians to possess?*

In her oral history interview, Mary Bushing discusses several personality traits that she believes are essential for a librarian. Foremost is a broad base of knowledge—what used to be called a generalist—and an innate curiosity help people find the information they desire. She also makes a point to distinguish the stereotype of the quiet librarian who lacks “people skills” as myth. But these elements are diffused within her oral history interview.

When asked specifically in the follow-up survey, Dr. Bushing emphatically responds, “Communication, communication, communication, communication. I don’t care where you are working in the library. The communication is important” (personal communication, November 23, 2012). She goes on to list a number of other important traits: being ethical, being non-judgmental and fair, having common sense and a broad liberal arts education, having analytical and organizational skills. Upon examination of

the *Stories* recording, all of these issues or traits are also mentioned in her oral history interview, but the survey question makes them manifest.

Curiosity is a recurring answer to this question. Pat Touhy reiterates Dr. Bushing's comments about having a broad curiosity about the world:

I think definitely intellectual curiosity. And that is so essential, wanting to find out, not necessarily for a purpose . . . but being really excited by following trails that appear not to be germane but turn out to be wonderfully stimulating. So I think librarians have to be intellectually curious about the world at large, not just any particular field that they may have an expertise in. (personal communication, September 3, 2012)

Micki Freeny qualifies her survey response by pointing out she is a public librarian:

Love of helping people...now that is public librarianship. I don't know about academic or any of the others. For public librarianship, curiosity, love of customer service and love of working with people, and loving information and reading. (personal communication, August 31, 2012)

Kathy Kaya also qualifies her response in this manner, "Well you know there are all kinds of librarians?" She was an academic reference librarian, but her answer is identical to Ms. Freeny's: "Curiosity. Lots of people skills" (personal communication, November 28, 2012). As an amendment, she also mentions organizational skills.

Karlan Sick repeats, almost verbatim, a passage from her *Stories* interview in her survey response over four years later. This passage is from her oral history interview:

It surprised me how much in common people who went into guidance work or social work had with people who were attracted to librarianship. That there's that wanting to help people aspect. (Sick, 2008, 27:39)

Here is her response to the survey:

Well, I noticed over the years that I was involved with training librarians that the kind of person who seriously considered being a social worker often turned out to be a really good librarian. Because you really have to want to help people. (personal communication, September 3, 2012)

Robert Gaines also speaks from a reference librarian's point of view. His survey response identifies both diligence and patience as the perquisites for a good librarian. "Patience in working with patrons who are not really sure what they need" (personal communication, August 31, 2012).

Dale Ricklefs, who was always on the cutting edge of library technology throughout her career, identifies two main traits: a passion for helping people find the information they need; and the ability to keep learning—to stay current with the information—"especially in areas where you may be less comfortable" (personal communication, July 31, 2012). Both of these survey responses fit perfectly with her oral history story that included a great emphasis on professional development and mentoring leaders. Ms. Ricklefs has clearly never been satisfied with the *status quo*.

In Ninfa Trejo's oral history, she shares her opinion that the library is not about books, but about the community of lives that share the books. This is echoed in her survey response when she states that the most important trait for a librarian to possess is a desire to help people: "To care for people" (personal communication, August 16, 2012).

Sarah Long echoes Ms. Trejo's comment about the library not being about the books, but about working with people:

Librarianship has moved from being about books to being about working with people to satisfy community and information needs. This is true for all types of librarianship--academic, public, special, school, or whatever. The winning traits today are different from the traits of yesterday. Today's successful professional must be outgoing and really like people, anxious to listen and to do the mental work to convert needs into library service. There's a lot of creativity and planning involved in that, but there is also a need for a political sense and an understanding of funding. Being fluent with technology is a must. (personal communication, December 1, 2012)

Jeannette Larson begins her survey response with a reference to the stereotype of catalogers being “problem solvers and puzzle players” and more introverted than public services librarians. But then she says, “In general, you have to have an open mind and an insatiable curiosity” (personal communication, November 26, 2012). She gives several examples from her own recent experiences where people in her social circle—and her homeowners association board—wondered aloud about some fact (perhaps simply rhetorically), and she was compelled to go find the answer for them. At the end of her survey response, she says, “A librarian needs good people skills and a real desire to help people find what they need.”

These answers from 2012 echo the conclusions of Rose Mary Magrill’s 1969 dissertation on librarian personality. She states,

It would seem that the people currently entering these graduate programs are not looking for a sinecure but for a challenging position which offers opportunity for humanitarian service (Magrill, 1969, pp. 161-162).

Two main voices emerge from these responses about the personality traits that are essential. Librarians must be curious and have a strong desire to help people. Ms. Larson’s initial comments about the stereotype lead us to the next question in the survey, *Thinking about your conception of the stereotypical librarian, how do you conform—or not conform—to the stereotype?*

SURVEY QUESTION FOUR. STEREOTYPE

This question specifically asks whether they conform to their conception of the popular stereotype of the librarian. Several of the respondents began by stating what their

conception of the stereotype was, but others did not. Robert Gaines responded by invoking the sad character from a popular motion picture:

The stereotype is usually of a dowdy middle-aged woman (a la *It's A Wonderful Life*), who is more concerned with keeping things quiet and keeping books on the shelf, than in actively helping patrons. This has NEVER been accurate, and I suspect very few librarians fit that stereotype. I certainly don't. (Gaines, personal communication, August 31, 2012)

This is very similar to a passage in his *Stories* interview, quoted above in Chapter Four, where he also invokes the scene from *It's a Wonderful Life*, but in the interview he is talking generally about librarians—and how he has never encountered a *shushing* librarian in all his life. In the survey not only does he believe the stereotype to be inaccurate, but he definitively states that he does not conform to it.

The stereotype of the *shushing* librarian is so pervasive that one may assume that the respondents who do not define it are alluding to this as the basis of their comments (Agada, 1984; Dewey, 1985; Heim, 1983; Kneale, 2009; Lancaster, 2003; Low, 2007; Wilson, 1982).

Ninfa Trejo is concise with her response. With an adamant voice she says, “I do not conform to the stereotype. It is unfortunate that the stereotype exists, but I do not think I conform to it” (Trejo, personal communication, August 16, 2012).

Kathy Kaya identifies in opposition of the stereotype and she defines the stereotype obliquely in her survey response. She says, “I actually enjoyed getting out into our university community and not needing to be cloistered in the library doing stereotypical library things” (personal communication, November 28, 2012). Her reference alludes to quiet monks, and she makes it clear in both her follow-up survey and oral history interview that librarianship is about working with people, not solitude.

Two of the follow-up survey respondents refer to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) test when discussing whether they conform to the stereotype. Both Sarah Long and Dale Ricklefs believe the average librarian is an ISFJ—Introversion, Sensing, Feeling, Judging; but Ms. Long scores as an ENTJ—Extraversion, Intuition, Thinking, Judging—and Ms. Ricklefs as an ENTP—Extraversion, Intuition, Thinking, Perceiving (Myers-Briggs, 2012). Dale Ricklefs admits that non-conformity can be “problematic . . . threatening to the quieter staff,” but the extroversion is essential for leading an organization (personal communication, July 31, 2012). Ms. Long believes that most librarians in her professional cohort scored as ISFJ:

This is a person who is quiet, logical, is good with rules and is fair. This is not a person who likes change or who is very creative. . . . Personally I never conformed to the old stereotype. My MBTI results are ENTJ. I get my energy from being with others, and often I am neither logical nor good with rules.
(personal communication, December 1, 2012)

Ms. Long concludes her response to this question by stating her belief that twenty-first century librarians are more likely to be outgoing, like herself. She states that librarianship is changing and adapting to modern sensibilities and the reality of the stereotype is much less prevalent today than it was for her generation of professional.

Karlan Sick responds to this question with neither an affirmation nor a denial, but by describing the school libraries that she has cultivated in her career. They were “a three ring circus, so the library was not a place that was quiet” (personal communication, September 3, 2012). She invited teachers and volunteers to use the space for programs, demonstrations, and movies. In this way she makes clear that her libraries were vibrant places, and she is proud to have created library experiences that defied the stereotype.

When discussing her decision to become a librarian in the *Stories* interview, Micki Freeny alluded to the stereotype when describing her reaction to someone

encouraging her to become a librarian: “No, no, I really don’t want that fate” (Freeny, 2009, 01:55). She intended to have a glamorous career as an English teacher in a French school. She reluctantly pursued librarianship only after her failed career as a teacher.

In her follow-up survey she addresses the stereotype by saying, “I guess, I don’t know, but I do fight against that” and then tells a funny story about perceptions: Ms. Freeny and a colleague were travelling to a meeting with other library administrators, and while driving they were marveling at the way that they did not fit the stereotype, “they are not going to believe that we are librarians.” But that evening they were sitting on the verandah of the hotel and a young man asked them if they were with the “Elderhostel ladies”—a designation they considered even worse than the librarian perception they were so smug about avoiding (personal communication, August 31, 2012).

Ms. Freeny concludes this part of the survey by resigning herself to the stereotype because it may be a consequence of having a career that has been perfectly suited for her aptitudes and values:

We enjoy and have fun doing our work, so let them laugh at us, you know. We are not cool or whatever, but you know we have one of the most fun jobs in the world. I know in my youth there were—you know when I was a young person working I had friends one time tell me, “you know you are the only person I know that really likes what they do.” We have to laugh at ourselves. (personal communication, August 31, 2012)

Pat Tuohy addresses the aesthetic stereotype of the librarian in her survey response. She readily admits that she fits the part, and she rhapsodizes on possible reasons and motivations for conformity to the stereotype:

Oh, I think I conform pretty well. I am a little old lady with a bun, I certainly wore lots of buns when I was really young in the profession as a branch librarian. Of course, you know, everybody was wearing a ponytail with the hair pulled back then so it wrapped around very easily and made a bun.

You know, librarians as a whole are not very good dressers. We dress poorly. Of course, that sometimes is a direct relationship to how much money you are paid. But, you know, as a whole, librarians don't have a very stylish sense. There are exceptions. You probably know who they are, but for the most part we are not fashion mavens. Those things—I don't know if just because they don't tend to be important to us personally, but I think that is the case.

And here is something else that I never realized until a friend of mine pointed this out who was a really beautiful—physically beautiful—person. We were standing in line at some public library association event in California, or someplace like that, and she is looking at the line next to us and she said, "You know, librarians are not very attractive people." You know, for the most part, we don't have a lot of beauty queens in librarianship. Those people tend to go into marketing or something else. So you know, I think that is a fair assessment. And of course to librarians, it's that we are all about inner beauty. We are all beautiful inside, you know. (personal communication, September 3, 2012)

Jeannette Larson celebrates conforming to the best parts of the stereotype and her opposition to the unproductive aspects of it. She does, in fact, read all the time, but her personal book collection is piled in stacks throughout her house with no rhyme or order. She does wear glasses but her hair has never been worn in a bun. And she is quick to admit that she is always one of the loudest people in the library. One aspect of the stereotype that she particularly favors is trustworthiness:

I was thinking about it and kind of a positive stereotype for librarians I think is that we are considered to be pretty trustworthy. . . . And we are generally not judgmental about what people are using information for and open minded about it, which I think is a good stereotype for us. We are there to help you find the information that you need regardless. One of my early reference questions came from some guy who was obviously a Hell's Angel, and it was like, you know, do we really want to know why you are asking about this information?—whatever the topic was? Actually he was a great patron. The best of our stereotypes, I think, is that oftentimes we are very open to helping people find what they need. (personal communication, November 26, 2012)

This attitude is also present in Ms. Larson's *Stories* interview, where she is quick to embrace whatever works in any given situation, and to find innovative solutions to problems.

Mary Bushing first claims to not conform to the stereotype in her survey response, but then admits to wearing “sensible shoes” (personal communication, November 23, 2012). She says that she doesn’t conform to the stereotype because she is a rule breaker, and she has always been more concerned about providing access to the materials than protecting the materials.

Dr. Bushing became a library consultant after retiring, and she discusses using the stereotype as a pedagogical tool to cultivate a discussion about how libraries must change to stay relevant in the modern age. She uses the stereotype of the “detail-oriented rule follower” to motivate her clients to embrace flexibility and adapt to twenty-first century information needs.

SURVEY QUESTION FIVE. REGRETS

Could you tell me any regrets you have about your choice of librarianship as a profession? Responses to the fifth survey question were uniformly concise. Two of the respondents, Kathy Kaya and Ninfa Trejo, stated flatly “None” (Kaya, personal communication, November 28, 2012; Trejo, personal communication, August 16, 2012).

Only Dale Ricklefs really expressed a true regret, and that was her decision to stay in Round Rock, Texas, and not pursue a career in a larger institution or library system where she would have been able to do more “dynamic” work (personal communication, July 31, 2012). And even here she tempers her regret by stating that her career was truly fulfilling—and that she developed a library pretty much from the ground up into a vibrant organization that improved the entire community. “I was able to improve the city, encouraged staff development, and improved myself most of the time.”

Robert Gaines wonders that he never pursued a library directorship, but qualifies the statement:

I enjoyed my career and was reasonably successful. It would have been interesting to become a library director, but that is not a regret—the money would have been much better, of course! (personal communication, August 31, 2012)

The remaining seven respondents were all very happy with their careers, with no regrets—except for their financial compensation.

Mary Bushing: Oh it would have been nice to make money, but on the other hand I did one year in my career, they actually paid me what I was worth. That was nice. But do I have any regrets? Oh man, I don't think so. (personal communication, November 23, 2012)

Karlan Sick: Oh, no, I have no regrets at all. It was just wonderful. I guess one could be paid more. But after all, teachers weren't paid that much either. (personal communication, September 3, 2012)

Pat Tuohy: Well, not as a profession. . . . But I think the thing that I regret most is that we are so poorly paid and that really contributes to a lot of the stress of being on the lower end of middle class. That, I think that is the biggest regret I have is that we are so poorly paid. (personal communication, September 3, 2012)

Jeannette Larson: You know I don't really know that I have any regrets. You know, it is like, and it is like some of the things that people might think of is well, gee, you could have made more money in something. Well, you know, actually some of the other benefits outweigh that. I really don't think there is anything that I regret about having chosen that. (personal communication, November 26, 2012)

Sara Long: At the moment, I have no regrets at my career choice. I wish I had more money in my semi-retired condition, but I might have been just as poor if I had done something else. Librarianship has been very good to me and on balance, I have no regrets—only gratitude. (personal communication, December 1, 2012)

Micki Freeny: None whatsoever. I have friends that do because they think we are...you know they might have found a more lucrative career and that we are not appreciated or not paid, but that is the nature of public service. You know it is true if you are a public servant. An attorney, you are not going to make what a private attorney makes, so I have no regrets. None whatsoever. (personal communication, August 31, 2012)

All of these remarks closely match the social memory found in the *Stories* oral history interviews in the section from Chapter Four on Compensation. Micki Freeny's story about riding the bus home from getting her first professional job, is worth recalling here:

And I can remember how excited I was. I took a Metro bus back to my apartment in the district, and I can remember talking to the bus driver about—I had gotten this job, I was the only person on the bus, and he said, “Well, how much are you going to make?” And I said, nine thousand dollars. Nine thousand dollars? He said, “I make more than that! You have a master’s degree and you’re going to work for nine thousand dollars?” (Freeny, 2009, 05:11)

These comments reflect past surveys that have included questions about salary and compensation. A 1988 study of library school students at Berkeley reported that they had “consciously traded future earnings for interest, variety, [and] stability” (Van House, 1988, p. 164). In a 1987 study of Illinois children’s librarians, Loriene Roy found that only 4% reported that salary compensation had been their chief motivation for their work (L. Roy, 1987).

Regrets about individual choices made within the profession—or resentments and frustrations about how the profession was regarded by funding authorities—are found throughout the *Stories* corpus, but regret about choosing librarianship as a career are wholly absent. This could be due to our sample: They are self-selected end-of-career librarians. Librarians who left the profession prior to retirement are, by definition, not included in the sample.

SURVEY QUESTION SIX. CHANGES IN THE PROFESSION

The final question in the survey is designed to elicit elements of nostalgia from the respondents, *What do/did you miss most about librarianship at the end of your career because of changes in the profession?* This is a direct question that many of the respondents also addressed in their oral history interviews. As such, it invites a degree of comparison between the methodologies much like the first follow-up survey question.

Dale Ricklefs' testimony in the *Stories* project is full of many insights about the changing nature of librarianship in the last half of the twentieth century. She recounts with precision how technology transformed the profession—mainly for the better—but she worries about several aspects of contemporary digital librarianship. Ms. Ricklefs is concerned specifically with the lack of physically archived correspondence for future researchers to pore through, and serials subscriptions that may vanish into the ether because of their virtual format.

But in her follow-up survey, she is more reflective about her own role within the profession at the end of her career. She talks of missing “really being needed” by her patrons and her staff. She had worked hard to make her modern library user-friendly so that the average patron no longer required skilled intervention to negotiate its resources. And she had developed her staff into such an efficiency that they really no longer required her direct and day-to-day management. “That is the more miserable part of leading once a system is well established and in a bit of stasis” (Ricklefs, personal communication, July 31, 2012).

Ms. Ricklefs, in addition to being a champion of staff development and state-of-the-art library service, is deeply conscientious about the mission of the public library and her fiduciary responsibilities to the community she served. She describes how retiring was the correct moral decision, so that a younger person with fresh ideas could have the

opportunity to lead her library. In answering this follow-up question so, she indicates a nostalgia for the days when she was a less-efficient manager and she was full of ideas about how to improve library service.

Sara Long echoes some Ms. Ricklefs' comments, noting that "much of what I 'created' in my career no longer exists," but she has no regrets about the changes (personal communication, December 1, 2012). She is proud of the changes in the profession. In her *Stories* interview, she was adamant that the profession demands constant innovation—she uses a term of art from the technology field to describe it:

It's now constant *beta*. You know that term? Beta? Means that it's in a test phase. It's never gonna be any more than beta, just jump into it and do it. You don't quite understand it, but push some buttons and try it out, see if you can get it to work. And so I, I try to tell myself that, it's constant beta, get used to it. (Long, 2008, 23:03)

In her response to the follow-up question, she returns to this sentiment, but noting that she is very proud of her career even though her ways of doing things now seem quaint and outdated. "I don't miss anything about librarianship because of the changes in the profession. I am proud of what librarians did yesterday, and proud of what I did in my career" (personal communication, December 1, 2012).

In Jeannette Larson's response to the follow-up question, she brings up an aspect of the library's place within the contemporary world of information that may be influencing the resolve of new librarians to defend the library against censorship. Since retiring as a public librarian, Ms. Larson has been working as a consultant and as an adjunct professor at Texas Woman's University School of Library and Information Science. She relates a disturbing trend of nonchalance among her students and her consulting clients about fighting censorship. She remembers how the mantle of intellectual freedom fighter was the highest badge of honor when she was a new librarian,

and worries that contemporary librarians are not as concerned with censorship. She worries that contemporary librarians may not value personal objectivity in their collection development (personal communication, November 26, 2012).

She discussed the importance of personal objectivity in her oral history interview, as well. In a passage where she relates how effective librarians treat all their patrons without bias, she remembers working with a Hell's Angel motorcycle gang member and how appreciative he was because Ms. Larson was able to be polite and nonjudgmental. But her *Stories* interview continues with her concerns that the strange or non-conforming patron of her early career may be the psychotic and dangerous patron in the twenty-first century library (J. Larson, 2008).

In her follow-up survey response, she reiterates the social changes in librarianship and how librarianship is practiced differently from her early days. She speculates that censorship may not now be widely regarded as a librarian's chief concern because the library is simply one player in the information world. When she began her career, the library was *the* repository for humankind's information. Now it is a partner within a system of knowledge resources. Nevertheless, she believes librarians should be the defenders of intellectual freedom, and she worries that the profession is abdicating this important role.

Pat Tuohy is the librarian who introduced her *Stories* interviewer to the book catalog, circa 1976, that she had kept as a souvenir of technological innovation. Her entire interview—and career—focused on the importance of public librarianship bringing information to communities in order to foster better citizenship and human dignity. In her follow-up survey she laments some of the consequences of technological efficiency in contemporary libraries: “I am alarmed to see the depersonalization of librarianship. . . .

[The] Internet and all of that takes the personal touch with patrons out of the picture” (personal communication, September 3, 2012).

Karlan Sick shares this same concern. In her follow-up survey response, she states that toward the end of her career she witnessed many new librarians leaving the profession because “they spent all their time helping people with paper jams in the printers of their computers. . . . They were just troubleshooting the computers all the time” (personal communication, September 3, 2012).

Micki Freeny is less nostalgic in her survey response. Though she hedges her comment with the preface that she will be devastated if the if “the book goes the way of the dinosaur,” she is enthusiastic about how technology has shaped contemporary librarianship (personal communication, August 31, 2012).

Her *Stories* interview contains a more in-depth view of this subject. Early in her interview she recalls a paradigm shift at the reference desk when the library installed a bank of Internet-accessible computers for her patrons to use. She remembers that reference work changed dramatically during that period and that many of the reference librarians were very dissatisfied with the new realities of their work: They spent much less time working with patrons to find answers to reference questions, and virtually all of their time assisting patrons learning how to use the computers—including the very pedestrian tasks keeping the printers functioning and acting as “time-keepers” and referees for the public computer stations. She recalls that many good librarians left the field during this transition period of twenty-first century librarianship because they felt they were no longer really practicing librarianship.

But later in her interview she says that technology redeemed itself. Patron computer access time management software was implemented—and printers became more robust and reliable. She says that ultimately “chat reference” over the Internet gave

her staff the opportunity to practice their art and science in the brave new world of librarianship using their timeless professional skills in the modern era (Freeny, 2009).

Her follow-up survey response is much more succinct: “I think we have the best of all the worlds. We have the technology to help us but we still have the love of reading and promoting it” (personal communication, August 31, 2012).

This survey question elicited basically a single common response from the librarians who answered it: Technology has radically changed the profession. Some are nostalgic for lost opportunities to work with patrons, but all see tremendous value in the innovations.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The follow-up survey was a useful tool to illustrate the difference between the two research methods. Often the survey responses were succinct capitulations of topics from their earlier (sometime four years earlier) oral history interviews. Occasionally the questions were able to probe issues that had not been included in the original interviews. In each case though, the timbre and answers were parallel or in concert with the original.

Many times the corresponding passages from the oral history interviews were more detailed and contained specific examples of memories. The follow-up survey responses tended to include less description, but sometimes more emotional content. This might be attributed to the perceived purpose of the oral history interviews—having been created under the auspices of the ALA as a testament of the entire profession. The follow-up survey used specific language to ask personal questions. For example, “What made librarianship the right choice for *you*?,” “How do *you* conform to the stereotype?,” “Tell me about regrets *you* have . . . ?” These specific follow-up questions often elicited very personal responses.

The survey ultimately illustrates the importance of an element of oral history methodology that is completely missing from the *Stories* project: a careful plan of repeated interviews so that a rapport and trust can develop between the subject and the interviewer (M. A. Larson, 2006; Portelli, 1991; Schneider, 2011). All of the *Stories* interviews were conducted as single sessions. This strategy was adopted in order to quickly build a corpus of interviews to fulfill the mission of the ALA Presidential Initiative that included funding for only a total of twenty-four months. This researcher has invested much more time in the project after its initial funding expired in order to pursue his scholarly agenda. But in hindsight—and as demonstrated by several elements of the follow-up survey—more care dedicated to the original interview strategy may well have created a more profound trove of research. A careful follow-up oral history interview may have revealed far more of the subjective social history than was captured by this set of single-session interviews.

Chapter Six. Discussion

At the outset of this research project several theories were discussed. It was proposed that oral history theory and methodology would enable the collection of an accurate depiction of the lives of librarians from the last half of the twentieth century, and that memory studies theory would reveal nuances of the social memory of this cohort. This discussion chapter begins with a brief recapitulation of these theories and the theoretical “steps” that lead to the conclusions of the research project. Then the “research question” and “subquestions” are addressed individually to assess the project.

The first theoretical stepping stone must begin with French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs’ work in the first half of the twentieth century (Halbwachs, 1980, 1992). His work on collective memory provides the foundation for this research project. His idea that individual memories are “kept” through relationships within social groups is the basis for this researcher’s notion that a collective memory exists for the social group identified as retired librarians. This cohort share collective memories about their decision to pursue this career, their experiences in graduate school, and their professional lives as librarians.

Halbwachs found evidence of collective memory within three main societal groups: the family, religious affiliation, and social class. Paul Connerton expands Halbwachs’ notions of collective memory by including commemorative performances, clothing, and bodily gestures as part of the nexus of social memory that envelops all personal memories (Connerton, 1989). He uses the phrase *social memory* as opposed to Halbwachs’ more narrow definition of “collective memory.” And this, social memory, is the concept used in this research project, as it represents a broader sense of librarian society.

Halbwachs' and Connerton's work is purely theoretical. Neither offers a practical methodology to actually ascertain the collective or social memory. For this theoretical stepping stone, a jump is made to the practitioners of oral history. Paul Thompson and Alessandro Portelli (and many, many others—c.f. the section of Chapter Two discussing oral history) show how oral history captures subjective and implicit elements of life that may be ignored and undocumented by traditional forms of history (Portelli, 1991; P. R. Thompson, 2000). These oral historians provide a theory of why these stories are “true” and important to preserve, and provide a methodology to capture them.

The stepping stone that bridges memory studies theory to oral history theory and method is found mainly in Alessandro Portelli's work interviewing a cohort of Italians who witnessed a murder in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli* (1991) and his *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class* (2003); and also Jan Vansina's work, *Oral Tradition as History* (1985). Portelli's oral history work concentrates on gathering versions of the same story and finding the essence of the social memory by collating repeating elements and comparing them to more traditional historical documents to expose inconsistencies. He does not suggest that the social memory is wrong; it is simply the organic memory that is shared by the participants. Although the actual circumstances of Mr. Trastulli's death—even the year of his death—may completely differ from archived newspaper accounts, he does not suggest that the social memory is incorrect; the social memory is simply a different truth from the history constructed by the journalists of the time. Portelli argues that the social memory trumps the traditional history because it is the social memory that influences the current population of Terni, Italy.

Portelli is able to extract the social memory from a cohort by conducting individual oral history interviews and collating the shared memories. His methodology

inspired this research project, providing an approach to examine the professional lives of retired librarians.

Vansina's work discusses the much older discipline of oral tradition, which is, by nature, shared by communities. These are stories told over generations and belonging to whole societies. His work also examines what these shared memories mean to their societies. He finds that the modern practice of oral history is but one facet of humankind's original historical method, oral tradition. Particularly useful is his notion of the importance of stereotype that occurs within oral tradition (Vansina, 1985).

Few disciplines are subject to more discussions involving stereotype and cliché than librarianship (Agada, 1984; Dewey, 1985; Heim, 1983; Kneale, 2009; Lancaster, 2003; Low, 2007; Wilson, 1982). Vansina's work provides a theoretical framework to examine the use of stereotype and cliché within oral histories collected from members of the same society.

Two other theory stepping stones are borrowed from memory studies to examine the corpus of oral history interviews for evidence of a social memory. Instructions on how to identify nostalgia come from the work of Renato Rosaldo (1989). And Janet Landman's work on regret provides a typology from literary criticism theory to identify how the subjects refer to disappointments in their careers as librarians (1993).

This research project has collected and analyzed thirty-four individual oral history interviews to divine a social memory of librarianship. None of its findings are particularly surprising and they corroborate much of the earlier research presented in the second chapter literature review. What is interesting is that the findings can be linked to individual librarians. This history is predicated on professional life stories that are presented in full, not nameless sources participating in an anonymous survey, but real librarians *telling* their stories in their own words. The social memory emerges from

individual elements that are repeated throughout the corpus. It is the story of an entire cohort, told over and over again.

Returning to the work of Portelli, his theories about the inadequacy of transcription provides this research project with its twenty-first century significance. While oral history is a twentieth century invention made possible by recording technology, *Capturing Our Stories* uses state-of-the-art technology to present these oral histories with as little editorial intervention as possible. Access to both the original unedited sound recordings of each interview along with transcript that this researcher has used to describe the social memory is available at the *Stories* website hosted by the School of Information at the University of Texas. In addition, the majority of the interviews include streaming video. Oral history transcripts have long been lamented as editorial interventions. *Capturing Our Stories* and this dissertation breaks ground because the unedited source material is available to corroborate this researcher's work—and it is but a mouse click away. The use of this technology brings us closer to what Michael Frisch has described as a “post-documentary sensibility” in his work exploring the future of digital oral history archives (Frisch, 2006). If the veracity of the inferences made for this dissertation is doubted, please consult the original recording. Each direct quotation includes a timestamp: Listen to the subject's tone and timbre; see their facial expressions.

There are many things this study of retired librarians does not address. It does not seek to validate the oral history methodology by “fact-checking” the stories of the individual subjects. It does offer a glimpse of the difference between oral history methodology and traditional survey methodology by comparing elements of the social memory found in the oral history interviews with the responses to specific questions using a survey instrument. This research most especially cannot address the many

permutations of theory in the nascent discipline of memory studies, whose practitioners might variously call this work divining the social memory of librarianship “‘collective remembrance’ . . . ‘popular history making’ . . . ‘national memory,’ ‘public memory,’ ‘vernacular memory,’ [or] ‘countermemory’” (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 181). Nor does this research attempt to solve the riddle of how individual memories can be part of collected memory—it does not use Susan Crane’s hybrid term “historical consciousness” to bridge the theoretical chasm as described in the Literature Review (Crane, 1997, p. 1382).

PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION

What do librarians retiring in the first decades of the twenty-first century remember at the end of their careers?

Chapters Four and Five address the primary research question. Chapter Four presents the results of the thirty-four oral history interviews under consideration for this research project collected for the *Capturing Our Stories* program. Chapter Five contrasts some of results from the oral history interviews with responses from a follow-up survey conducted with a sample of ten of the original interviewees.

An analysis of the oral history interviews reveals patterns of memory: the social memory of librarianship. Many of these elements of social memory were predicted in the research proposal, including discussions of the changes technology wrought in the field, memories of graduate school, cultural stereotype, sexism, and low wages. The study also reveals some surprises that this researcher did not anticipate including many stories of “accidental librarians,” a strong aversion to cataloging, and regrets about being promoted into administrative work.

These oral history interviews document the facts of these librarians' professional lives. And many of the results presented in Chapter Four are worthy of study and reveal aspects of librarians' social memory—and are interesting to read. But these interviews—with rare exceptions—are not of the emotional caliber that this researcher was hoping for.

In Paul Thompson's book, *Voices of the Past*, he states, "To interview successfully requires skill" (P. R. Thompson, 2000, p. 222). He then instructs oral history hopefuls to practice, prepare, and find their own interviewing "voice" that suits their individual personalities. He maintains that practice is necessary to learn how to really listen to a subject, and to know when and how to probe for further emotional content.

These are some essential qualities which the successful interviewer must possess: an interest and respect for people as individuals, and flexibility in response to them, an ability to show understanding and sympathy for their point of view; and above all, willingness to sit quietly and listen. (P. R. Thompson, 2000, p. 222)

These interviews were chiefly conducted by volunteers without extensive training or practice in the art of oral history. Although the instructions for the project were adequate, a lay oral historian without prior exposure to the method often cannot execute a finely wrought interview that probes the most subjective and emotional content of a subject's life story without extensive practice. At the outset of the *Stories* project, it was thought some of these difficulties would be bridged by the fact that fellow librarians would be doing the interviews—so there would be a professional rapport and trust implicit in the relationship. The interviewees do tell their library stories—why, when, who, what, and how; but the emotional content is mostly absent. With rare exceptions, the subjects do not share how it *felt* to be a librarian. The one interview that brims with anger about sexism and inequality is that of Filomena Magavero conducted by Jane Fitzpatrick. Ironically, this interview was not conducted for the *Stories* project, but instead for *StoryCorps*, the popular oral history project for the Library of Congress. Ms. Fitzpatrick

learned of the *Stories* project later and secured Ms. Magavero's permission to also submit the recording to our project. Ms. Fitzpatrick is a capable interviewer and she proceeded to interview two additional librarians for the *Stories* project. Yet these additional interviews also seem stilted compared to the Magavero recording. This leads the researcher to believe that in addition to the lack of interviewer training the very nature of the *Stories* project may have influenced the responses.

The project is conducted under the auspices of the American Library Association. Each interview begins with a script that states:

This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired/Retiring Librarians. It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association presidential initiatives. This recording will be the property of the ALA, and may be published and used for scholarly research. (A. A. Smith & Roy, 2008)

Perhaps this opening statement sets a tone that no interviewer, however gifted, is able to overcome. ALA is the oldest, largest, and most powerful professional library membership organization. It is well-thought of even among non-librarians. Perhaps this aegis influences the depth of emotion that many of the participants are willing to engage? It is conceivable that participants might believe that ALA would only be interested in the "strictly business" stories of their careers. In *A Shared Authority* (1990), Michael Frisch writes about how the perception of the interviewer, the comfort of the interviewee, and the circumstances of the interview all factor into a calculus that determines the success of the oral history project. It is possible that the "authority" lent to the interviews by ALA stifled all but the most professional details of these life stories.

Besides the outstanding Magavero interview there are other exceptions in the *Stories* corpus to this criticism. Pat Tuohy's, Mary Bushing's, Jeannette Larson's, and Sarah Long's interviews are charming in their candor and brimming with personal

insight. Ms. Tuohy's work with many central Texas public libraries as the director of a regional consulting and advocacy organization gives her a first-hand perspective of how small libraries originate, grow, and flourish. Both Dr. Bushing and Ms. Larson work as consultants since their retirement as librarians, and both also share a broad view of the profession from their outlook as trainers. Ms. Long is an ALA past-President, so she is also able to share a catholic view of librarianship. All four of these women are public speakers in their professional capabilities. They were not shy about sharing their thoughts about librarianship in their oral history interviews. Valerie Feinman's recollections are deeply personal and often simply hilarious. She recounts the limited occupational opportunities for women in 1950s, especially those interested in the sciences. With wit and charm she has crafted a career that satisfied her desires for intellectual stimulation, and she shares her story in a most appealing way. The interview with Bill Mears includes great personal stories—including his childhood memory of desiring a sex instruction book that was kept behind the circulation desk. Micki Freeny's interview is poignant, especially when discussing the unintended consequences of technological innovation at her library. It should be noted that this researcher—who had excellent oral history training—conducted both the Freeny and the Mears interviews. And Dr. Mears had been a long time library mentor and friend. But there were many more interviews that this researcher personally conducted that are simply flat. Another very good interview is that of Sheila Henderson that subsequently is not part of the *Stories* website because she withdrew her permission to publish it. After viewing her interview on the website, she regretted her candor and asked that it be removed.

Chapters Four and Five demonstrate that end-of-career librarians remember their decision and motivations to join this profession. Many remember their first childhood library experiences. They have regrets and nostalgia for their earliest days as librarians,

before technology radically changed the profession and before they advanced into management positions. The subjects interviewed do not regret becoming librarians, but they do express regrets about their financial compensation, and many also struggled to secure stable funding for their institutions. Many also remember their personal relation to the stereotype of librarianship, and others use clichés to describe the profession. In the following sections elements of the social memory that were detailed in the proposed research question subquestions outlined in the Methodology chapter are examined.

Subquestion One. Stereotype and Cliché

How are cliché and stereotype used in the interviews?

(a) What does this tell us about librarians' image of themselves and how they are perceived?

(b) Are these messages coded to mean something less obvious?

(c) Are there stereotypes within the profession regarding individual roles (e.g., children's librarian, cataloguer, reference librarian)?

Stereotype and cliché are closely related and are often used as synonyms. But for the analysis required for this research the terms have been cleaved from each other in order to explore two separate but related facets of the social memory. The term *stereotype* is used when the interviewee discusses the subject of library stereotypes. The term *cliché* is used when a subject employs a library stereotype during the interview as shorthand for an aspect of the social memory without actually discussing the term's resonance as a stereotype.

Chapters Four and Five document specific stereotypes that are part of the social memory both within the profession, but especially from outside the profession. First, a

review the definition of stereotype found in the second chapter: Pauline Wilson discusses the origin of the term in her *Stereotype and Status: Librarians in the United States* (1982) as argot from the early days of the printing press. Printing with movable type involved casting a metal plate that was used to make duplicate inked images on paper. This metal plate was called a stereotype. The term's use in the social sciences dates from the 1920s to refer to a synecdoche of traits that is perceived to be repeated throughout a culture.

Several of the interviewees discuss the most popular image of librarianship: the meek female—perhaps spinster—who completely lacks social charm and is primarily concerned with protecting the library collection from human depredations (Agada, 1984; Dewey, 1985; Heim, 1983; Kneale, 2009; Lancaster, 2003; Low, 2007; Wilson, 1982). And when they discuss this stereotype they almost always identify in opposition of the stereotype, unless they are also employing self-deprecating humor.

Robert Gaines begins his oral history interview by invoking the image from *It's a Wonderful Life* (Capra, et al., 1946) of the spinster “relegated to opening the library So there was the stereotype that most librarians were female, and rather dowdy and saying *shh* all the time rather than being terribly helpful” (Gaines, 2008, 06:35). Eight other oral history interviews discussed in Chapter Four also mention this stereotype, and defend themselves against this portrayal. Another four interviewees lament the common misperception that all of the library’s employees are librarians.

Mixed notions about stereotype are found in the Chapter Five survey responses. Here the question was posed, *Thinking about your conception of the stereotypical librarian, how do you conform—or not conform to the stereotype?* Two of the survey respondents agreed that they do in fact conform to the “frumpy” aspects of the stereotype, and both used humor to acknowledge the fact (Freeny, personal communication, August 31, 2012; Tuohy, personal communication, September 3, 2012).

Jan Vansina discusses how stereotype and cliché is used in his work on oral tradition. In his chapter “The Message Expresses Culture,” he describes clichés as “deliberate and purposeful simplifications” (1985, p. 139). He outlines several instructions for researchers identifying cliché within an oral tradition. These include: a) compare the use across many accounts, b) determine the core plot of the narrative, c) the imagery should be obvious, and d) not all stereotypes have implicit meanings that are different from their explicit meanings (pp. 144-146).

When librarians use a cliché—as opposed to discussing the stereotype—they are often referring to the very same personality traits that popular culture has assigned to the profession while using the cliché to identify themselves in opposition or as a means of criticizing their peers. The most startling repeated use of cliché found in the *Stories* interviews involve non-catalogers speaking about the technical services staff members, or their hatred of cataloging classes in library school. This cliché is earned by catalogers because cataloging class is perceived as a difficult and tedious aspect of librarianship; this researcher can attest that for someone without a generous aptitude for organization, cataloging class may be the most difficult trial of library school (A. A. Smith, 2008). Catalogers and technical services staff members do, indeed, stay out of the public eye at many libraries so they may very well conform to the stereotype.

Catalogers themselves like to talk about their particular skills and personality traits in the *Stories* interviews. Two different catalogers use virtually the same cliché—though one claims they often “don’t see the forest for the trees” (Mitchell, 2010); and the other states that it is the catalogers who are able to see the forest because they are able to organize the entire body of knowledge and it is the public services staff that cannot see the forest because they must be concerned with each individual tree (Hill, 2010).

Though the range and depth of cliché directed toward cataloging and catalogers was intriguing, there was not an example to be found in the corpus of what Vansina would term an “implicit meaning.” In Chapter One an example of coded language was discussed using Theodore Rosengarten’s oral history of an African-American sharecropper, *All God’s Dangers: the Life of Nate Shaw* (2000). In several passages this researcher (Arro Smith, not Dr. Rosengarten) found the narrator switching terms to describe himself. He used one term, *colored*, to describe himself and his peers throughout most of the book; but he used another term, which is highly offensive to many, to describe himself whenever he was relating an episode in which he had been taken advantage of or abused. This decoding of cliché provides a valuable insight about the narrator. It functions as a key to understanding the narration.

This researcher could find no similar “key” to unlock the social memory of librarianship through an examination of the use of cliché in the *Stories* corpus. What the clichés do signal is a cleavage between the public services staff and the technical services staff—this is the explicit message. The implicit message is that the two librarians are different. There are different aptitudes required for each position.

The *Stories* interviews do demonstrate a perception among librarians that work with children is less important than work with adults. Many of the children’s librarians interviewed recalled memories of inferiority, lack of respect, and lack of financial compensation compared to their peers. Karen Breen implores her interviewer:

Never give up your children's librarian job. It's still the best thing. It's what you got into the business to do. For me, the frustration was children's librarians never get paid what everybody else gets paid. So they have to leave what they're doing to become better paid. (Breen, 2008, 29:52)

Rita Auerbach, Diana Collins, Jaye McLaughlin, Karlan Sick, and Micki Freeny all share memories of heartache when leaving behind their entry-level children’s librarian jobs to

pursue administrative careers within their library systems. And one librarian, Connie Corson, relates her story of indecision about taking a school library position—that she really wanted—because she was unsure how her former peers at an academic library and the Museum of Modern Art would perceive her move. These interviews do show that there is a perception within the social memory that children’s librarianship is less important and, therefore, less prestigious.

Subquestion Two. Nostalgia

Do the subjects have nostalgia for the librarianship practiced at the beginning of their careers?

- (d) *What specific aspects are they nostalgic about?*
- (e) *How did technology affect their professional lives?*

Nostalgia plays a role in the *Stories* corpus in two prominent strains of recollection. At the outset of the research project this researcher was confident that the interviews would detail how technology changed the nature of librarianship. This is the story of our profession that is the subject of library History—with a capital H. It is no surprise that individual librarians’ histories would also include a chronology of technological advances during their careers. Most of the interviews detail working with their first computers and discuss how it radically changed their jobs. Some of the librarians even brought realia to the interview to document the “old ways:” Pat Tuohy held up a book catalog for the camera, and Gail Huetting shared an old Cutter table.

A second, more surprising, bit of nostalgia involved several of the librarians discussing how much they missed doing storytime, working with children, and doing reference work. As they matured into their careers, they moved into administrative

positions which involved managing a staff of younger librarians, and ultimately entire libraries. These managers and directors no longer were able to enjoy many of the aspects of librarianship that had originally drawn them to the field.

Both of these aspects of nostalgia are interesting from a memory studies point of view because they follow a pattern found in the work of Renato Rosaldo. In a 1989 article following the release of several acclaimed films including *Passage to India* and *Out of Africa*, he became incensed with the dominant culture's apparent nostalgia for the very traditions their imperialism had destroyed. He theorized that nostalgia was most pronounced for customs that had been destroyed by one's own hand. Librarians—whether as the avatars of technology or as women and men simply climbing a ladder of professional responsibility—can in no way be considered imperialists set on conquering entire foreign cultures for avarice, but in both aspects recollected in the *Stories* interviews they have destroyed their former library practice by their own volition.

The stories of how technology crept into the library careers of our subjects are humorous much of the time. Both Bill Mears and Dale Ricklefs recall exclaiming to themselves how proud they were to acquire personal computers with a hard drive after experimenting with early models whose only memory consisted of large-formatted floppy discs. Jenifer John Patterson tells a tale of horror after submitting an online database request with only a single search term and receiving reams of dot-matrix printouts billed by the second and by the citation. Valerie Feinman recalls having to teach students that F9 did not mean pressing the *F* key and then the *9* key.

Although all of the librarians expressed amazement at how much their work had changed due to technology over the course of their careers, many also shared caveats. Kent Middleton wondered whether librarians had lost the opportunity to truly shape how people use the Internet. He wishes that the profession had realized the potential of the

World Wide Web earlier, and had actively created a public dialogue to discuss and train patrons how to take advantage of it properly. He believes that librarians abdicated their role of being the gatekeepers—or guardians—of information, and that an entire generation has grown accustomed to the Internet without truly understanding how to use it properly. Both Mr. Middleton and Dale Ricklefs worry about contemporary trends in serials licensing, and worry that libraries that cannot afford a large continuous subscription to digital materials will be left with much less than they had when institutions were collecting actual print journals and archiving them on microfilm. Mary Bushing is nostalgic for the days when a trip to the library involved chatting with librarians at the reference desk and clerks at the circulation desk. Her community library is so automated and efficient that it is possible to locate and charge materials without the intervention of any staff. She misses the human contact.

No one wants to go back to pre-Internet searching of bound copies of the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* and then tracking down the citations in dusty journals found in the library basement, or using a card catalog; but librarians at the end of their careers in the twenty-first century do fondly remember the art and science of their profession at the beginning of their careers in the previous century. Both Sarah Long and Valerie Feinman discuss “library hand,” the handwriting convention used before the typewriter was widely available. And Filomena Magavero recalls with pride the personal knowledge she had of early American maritime history, and how researchers would specifically contact her because of her encyclopedic acquaintance with the resources in her institution’s collection. This passage is quoted in Chapter Four, but bears repeating here:

I used to love digging into those things, you know trying to find an elusive fact that they wanted to know about a particular vessel, and we could do it because we

had the resources. And after awhile, you know, people knew that. And it was fun to get a phone call asking for me by name, you know because I had done something for somebody else, you know? But it was really great fun. I was sorry when the computers came in [laughs]. (Magavero, 2005, 25:09)

Librarians embraced the promise of technology because it made the mission of the library manifest. It made information easier to locate for our patrons. It made managing the information more efficient. When Rosaldo's theory about imperialist nostalgia is applied to the memories of librarians, the fact that the "old ways" of librarianship were replaced by the new information science, and with the full enthusiasm of librarians making their collections more efficient and user-friendly, these memories become nostalgic because the old traditions were destroyed by their own hand.

This nostalgia for pre-technology librarianship may also be intimately bound with the social memory of librarians because of the nature of those acts. Prior to computer automation, librarianship was practiced with a great deal of physical exertion. A librarian—or a clerk—manually inserted a card to be typed for each of a book's tracings and each of those cards was filed manually in the catalog. The catalog was searched by physically flipping through cards in a tray that was manually pulled out of the cabinet. Information and referral at the reference desk was conducted by searching through bound phone books and hand-written ready-reference files—perhaps spinning a rolodex to find an obscure fact for a patron. All of these actions could be considered by Paul Connerton as "bodily practices" in his work expanding on Halbwachs' notions of collective memory (Connerton, 1989). He finds that much of the social memory is remembered by the repetition of physical acts, commemoration, and bodily practices. The practice of mid-century librarianship involved many more bodily practices than our more cerebral and computer-assisted contemporary profession.

The second element of nostalgia also follows patterns of both Rosaldo's and Connerton's theories. Many of the interviewees expressed nostalgia for their entry-level library work, either on the reference desk or practicing children's librarianship. Bill Mears and Andrew Hansen both had fond memories of working at the reference desk. When Dr. Mears became the director of a large academic library he was able to schedule himself back to the reference desk for a few hours each week because he enjoyed it so much more than "pushing papers all day long" (Mears, 2008, 11:53). After years of administrative work, both he and Andrew Hansen chose to enjoy their retirement by returning to the much less prestigious work of staffing the reference desk at small public libraries.

But the most poignant memories of nostalgia involve leaving children's librarianship. This was discussed at length in Chapter Four and again in the previous section of this chapter on the perception of prestige within librarianship. Day-to-day work with children was the inspiration for many of the careers detailed in the *Stories* project, often after failed careers as school teachers. Yet real children's librarianship is reported to have been sacrificed by many of subjects interviewed as they advanced in their careers. And children's librarianship is very active work: doing a storytime requires a great deal of what Connerton would refer to as "bodily practice." It is far more physical than managing a staff of subordinate librarians and clerks. So these memories of nostalgia for entry-level library work may be especially powerful: it is the work that inspired them to enter the profession, it is far more of a "bodily practice" than administration, and the decision to end the day-to-day work with children was made voluntarily, often to pursue greater compensation and prestige. These three elements combine to make leaving children's work particularly painful. Rosaldo defines nostalgia etymologically "from the Greek *nostos*, 'to return home,' and *algia*, 'a painful condition'"—basically homesickness

(Rosaldo, 1989, p. 108). This is what many of the librarians describe: a longing to return home to their original entry-level careers.

Nostalgia and regret go hand-in-hand in these interviews. In the next section elements of regret are codified and patterns are found in the *Stories* corpus.

Subquestion Three. Regret

Do end-of-career librarians speak about professional regrets?

(f) What would they have done differently?

Janet Landman discusses regret as the only possible form of memory other than nostalgia, although she has a more liberal notion of nostalgia than Rosaldo. Her coin of memory has sentimental and cozy images—“golden oldies”—on one side, and unsentimental regret on the other (1993, p. 6). One of the many theoretical tools she uses to analyze forms of regret comes from literary criticism. She codes instances of regret as one of four types of literature: comedic, tragic, romantic, or ironic (p. 247).

When looking at the *Stories* interviews through the lens of Landman’s notions of regret, this researcher has only concentrated on personal regrets—not regrets or disappointments about the profession of librarianship itself, nor where the discipline might be headed. With this in mind it should be no surprise that almost all of the regrets found in the corpus of oral history interviews also relate to memories of being promoted, as discussed in the previous subquestion section of this chapter, and to comments about the meager financial compensation librarians have traditionally received. As Andrew Hansen explicitly stated in his interview: “I have often said I have never regretted becoming a librarian except every payday” (Hansen, 2009, 16:24).

Mr. Hansen's comment about payday is clearly in the comedy vein, as are all of the regrets about salary. Micki Freeny told the story about her excited exchange with the bus driver after getting her first job after earning her master's degree—and the bus driver exclaiming, "I make more money than that!" (Freeny, 2009, 05:11). Mary Bushing says "You will never get rich, but it's a fabulous way to earn a living" (Bushing, 2010, 27:51). Jenifer John Patterson echoes Dr. Bushing's comments, and Diana Collins states, "You get to do something you love and you get paid for it . . . minimally paid for it" (Collins, 2008, 35:53). All of these comments are said with an ear for comedic timing and with a smile.

When asked specifically about regrets in the follow-up survey, two of the respondents flatly say "no," they have no regrets about librarianship. One of the subjects does express a regret that she spent almost her entire professional career in one library—she wishes she had been able to test her potential in a more challenging environment. And another wonders that he never pursued a directorship. But both quickly report that they were perfectly satisfied with their decisions and had wonderful careers. These answers turn more toward the romantic rather than the comedy found in the oral history interviews.

The remaining survey responses are all about the financial compensation. And they also are tinged with romance. They do regret the lack of pay, but all note that the career's advantages outweigh this detail of mammon. Micki Freeny even states, "but that is the nature of public service" (personal communication, August 31, 2012), and many of the other responses echo this sentiment.

Regrets about being promoted, whether that meant moving away from reference desk work or leaving behind storytime and children's librarianship for prestige and a higher payscale, offer typologies almost evenly divided between romantic and tragic,

with bit of irony. The irony is from the acknowledgment that they made the decision to accept a position away from their first love of librarianship—something Rosaldo would find interesting as a self-reflective proof to his contention that we suffer nostalgia most for the things we have destroyed ourselves. But mostly librarians use a romantic or tragic voice when remembering their early careers.

Five librarians employ romance to talk about their decisions to move into administrative work. Mary Bushing speaks of learning to be diplomatic and to compromise in order to make the library as a whole succeed. Both Bill Mears and Micki Freeny found ways to incorporate their entry-level work back into their lives as library directors: Dr. Mears asked the reference desk scheduler to give him a shift or two each week just to get out of his office; and Ms. Freeny always insisted that she was the first substitute for storytime if and when the children's librarian was away. But all of the librarians that expressed a romantic regret also spoke of how they incorporated those early experiences on the front lines of the library into their administrative decisions.

Regrets shared with a tragic tone involved memories of loss that could never be reclaimed as they climbed the administrative ladder. Karen Breen states the following:

When I got to be head of children's services, I enjoyed it for quite a while, but then it became meetings and more meetings and more meetings. And all the things I loved the most, I lost—working with the kids, building a collection—I lost that. (Breen, 2008, 14:31)

Many of these regrets in the tragic mode involve the constant battle to secure institutional funding. Diana Collins was emphatic: “Instead of being a team that worked together to provide it, [the budgeting meetings] were adversarial and I hated that. I hated it. I hated it” (Collins, 2008, 47:48). The mandate to fight with funding authorities—sometimes year after year—removed the naiveté of several new managers, a chore they had not imagined in their entry-level positions. Jaye McLaughlin reports that she was never able

to feel as comfortable after she became a manager as when she was simply a children's librarian. Two librarians, Ms. McLaughlin and Kenneth Yamashita both discuss the disillusionment they experienced when collection development was centralized or outsourced as a money-saving necessity. They had both been taught that book selection should be done at a local level and they both truly enjoyed this aspect of librarianship. The loss of the power to select materials was profoundly unsettling—and the fact that they participated in the decision as administrators made it even more disturbing.

Though the subjects may express regret and memories of nostalgia, none of the librarians shared any definitive ideas about what they would have done differently with their careers. They all appear to have thoroughly enjoyed their lives as librarians.

Subquestion Four. Triangulation

Do the oral histories discuss key events in the history of librarianship and culture?

(g) *Do the oral histories reflect memories different from a more traditional questionnaire?*

In the research proposal two historical checklists were created to identify elements of historicization within the interviews. The first checklist is composed of cultural highlights taken from the *World Almanac (The World almanac and book of facts, 2010)*. The list of historical and social events was edited by this researcher to provide approximately sixty chronological items that would have been memorable during the lives of the *Stories* participants, from 1955 to 2007, such as the lunar landing, the Vietnam War, and 9/11.

The second checklist is composed of approximately fifty epochs in library history dating from 1904 to 2008. This list was culled from several professional sources to create a single chronology of events that influenced librarianship ("Events of the century," 1999; Ghikas, 2003; Libraries: the long view," 1999; Meraz, 2009). MARC, AACR, AACR2, OCLC and many other non-acronymed milestones in library and information science history are included in this list. These lists may be found in Appendices C and D.

As each oral history interview was carefully analyzed, notes were made when a subject referred to any item on either of these lists in an effort to document how interviewees positioned their stories within the broader framework of the profession and social history. The results were surprisingly meager.

Looking at the social history chronology, only seven of the thirty-four interviews refer specifically to any of the items. Both Kent Middleton and Janet Swan Hill mention the Vietnam War. Mr. Middleton was a conscientious objector and saw his career as a librarian as a form of public service to further his political goals. Ms. Hill's husband was drafted and she went back home to live with her parents. She simply needed something to do while her husband was deployed so she went to library school. Valerie Feinman refers to the assassination of John F. Kennedy when placing a memory within historical context about being a children's librarian at a branch library in Canada. Connie Corson and Pat Tuohy remember early censorship battles that were related to specific historical epochs. Ms. Corson discusses a controversial book display about gay rights—which was new topic at the time; and Ms. Tuohy was involved in fighting a City Council decision to prohibit using vendors that traded with the Apartheid South African government. This ban included the company which distributed Disney productions, severely hamstringing her ability to acquire children's films. Robert Corson remembered the when co-education

was introduced at his maritime college, and Karlan Sick discussed practicing librarianship in newly desegregated schools.

More of the *Stories* participants refer to items on the professional chronology. A total of eleven librarians mention specific library history milestones. But even this number is low considering the purpose of the oral history interviews was to discuss their professional lives. The librarians that mention the most items on the list were also those whose experiences were the broadest. Sarah Long is a past-President of ALA, so she is adept at contextualizing library issues within the history of the profession. Her tenure as ALA president included the introduction of CIPA, the Child Internet Protection Act, and she has many recollections of how difficult the Internet filtering issue became for practicing librarians. Andrew Hansen was employed by ALA from 1971-1994 and he discusses the introduction of inter-library loan through OCLC and the Library Bill of Rights. Billie Grace Herring was a library school professor whose doctorate was funded through Library Services Act appropriations. She also discusses the introduction of MARC, AACR, AACR2 and OCLC, as any good professor would be wont to do. Several other librarians mention MEDLINE as their first introduction to online database searching.

The lack of historicization may have two explanations: the first is related to the nature of oral history, and the second refers specifically to the *Stories* project at hand. As Alessandro Portelli reminds us in his chapter, “What Makes Oral History Different,” a good oral history interview is more concerned with meaning and less concerned with events (Portelli, 1991). This is echoed in Michael Frisch’s work discussing the difference between capital “H” History and the histories that are shared among ourselves (Frisch, 1990). Oral histories are spoken conversations, dialogues between two people that happen to be recorded for posterity. When the interviews are going well, the fact that it is

“for posterity” should almost disappear. Perhaps the historicization that is expected in a journal article—and by definition in a capital “H” History—is really not part of a natural language conversation.

The second explanation for the lack of historicization in the interviews comes from the very parameters of the project. *Capturing Our Stories* sets out to document the professional lives of end-of-career librarians, and the interviews were conducted by fellow librarians. The interviewees may have felt it unnecessary to contextualize their experiences with known epochs of social and library history because not only are they sharing their story with a fellow librarian, the interviews are for ALA and other librarians. Both the interviewee and the interviewer share a language of professional experience—a social memory that does not need explication using the thesauri of chronological terms this researcher assumed would be used. It is precisely because a social memory does exist among the participants that so few historical contexts are invoked.

There is no question that the responses found in the *Stories* interviews are different from the more traditional survey methodology. Chapter Five provides evidence of the difference in methodologies. The answers that come from specific questions are different from the more casual narratives that an oral history interview produces. As discussed in the fifth chapter, the survey responses are often more specific, but without the anecdotes and background stories that make the information come alive. Though some of the survey responses actually contain more emotional content, this may be because the instrument was a follow-up survey and an element of trust had been developed. As also discussed in the conclusion of Chapter Five, the *Stories* interviews would probably have captured more personal and emotional elements if the interviewers had been better trained and had included a follow up interview. If the *Stories*

interviewers had consistently used some of the personal language included in the survey instrument (e.g. “What regrets do *you* have?”, “What made this the career choice for *you*?”), perhaps the oral histories would have a less sterile and objective feeling.

Research Question Conclusion

There is a social memory of librarianship in the last half of the twentieth century. Most of the cohort of librarians retiring the first decade of the twenty-first century remember not particularly wanting to become librarians—perhaps due to the popular stereotype—but found this career gave them the flexibility they desired and an ability to serve their communities in a way that was truly rewarding. They often express regrets about leaving their entry-level positions for administrative work, especially when their early careers involved work with children. They have nostalgia for the “old ways” of practicing librarianship prior to the introduction of computers; but they also celebrate the innovations and efficiencies that automation has brought to the profession.

FURTHER RESEARCH

This research has two components. There is the *Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program*. It was designed to be an ongoing project in partnership with the American Library Association and the School of Information at the University of Texas. And then there is this dissertation using the *Stories* interviews and the follow-up survey instrument to divine a social memory of librarianship. This researcher is proud to have contributed both to the legacy of library and information science.

With the conclusion of this research project comes a responsibility to continue and refine this oral history program, and to ensure its archival legacy. The continuation of

Capturing Our Stories must involve finding a permanent home within the American Library Association. This researcher's initial overtures to the Library History Round Table (LHRT) of ALA were resoundingly rebuffed, possibly because this group of historians are invested in old notions of capital H-History and do not consider oral history to be a worthy enterprise. This researcher has made promising entreaties to the newly-formed Retired Members Round Table (RMRT), but they are still finding their mission within ALA. This researcher is a member of the RMRT, he presented their program at the 2012 Annual Conference, and he will continue to work with them to adopt the *Stories* project.

The relationship of the *Stories* project with the School of Information at the University of Texas should be considered tenuous. Currently the digital presence of the project on the World Wide Web is hosted by the University and the GLIFOS software license is courtesy of the School of Information. An interruption of either the hosting or the software license would erase the public digital presence of the *Stories* project and relegate it to the dusty and useless history of the other librarian oral histories mentioned in the Chapter Two Literature Review. Without intervention the transcripts would be only available in the last Appendix of this dissertation.

These transcripts and recordings must be carefully consigned to a true archive. This researcher has begun work with Dr. Patricia Galloway at the University of Texas to formulate a plan to transfer these records to the American Library Association's archive at the University of Illinois in a manner that will preserve their integrity and provide a finding aid and metadata to facilitate their use for future generations of researchers. The transcripts are also included in Appendix G of this dissertation in order provide an additional preservation redundancy.

The *Stories* transcripts are a rich vein of data for scholars of library history, professions, and social affinities to mine. The corpus available for study currently contains over thirty-five hours of recordings and over 470 pages of transcripts. It represents thirty-four individual oral histories that share a common career and age demographic.

This researcher is disappointed to have failed to find the kind of linguistic key to understanding the oral history interviews of librarians that was discussed in the Chapter One Introduction using Theodore Rosengarten's work, *All God's Dangers* (Shaw & Rosengarten, 2000). Further careful analysis may reveal a linguistic key to implicit meanings overlooked in this research.

A fellow researcher at the University of Texas Psychology Department, James W. Pennebaker, has created a analysis tool called Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC). This software program is designed to find patterns of implicit meaning:

LIWC calculates the degree to which people use different categories of words across a wide array of texts, including emails, speeches, poems, or transcribed daily speech. With a click of a button, you can determine the degree any text uses positive or negative emotions, self-references, causal words, and 70 other language dimensions. (Pennebaker, 2010)

Tools such as these automate the analysis that this researcher has conducted painstakingly "by hand." The use of such a tool may unearth additional implicit meanings within the social memory to complement the research for this dissertation.

At the outset of this project, this researcher thought perhaps more librarians would discuss the controversy involved with their graduate school alma maters changing their names and dropping the word *Library* from their degree titles. But only two of the interviews actually mention this trend and neither seemed to particularly care. He believes that the country-wide graduate school name change involves a refutation of the

popular library stereotype, and with that refutation is an abandonment of the traditional values of librarianship. He finds that many of the values touted in the *Stories* interviews are particularly feminine: caring for people, public service, teaching, and working with children, all with their attendant low wages. The stereotype of librarianship is predominately feminine and not prestigious. Taking the word *Library* out of the name of graduate schools and degree programs is perhaps an effort to make the discipline more academic, prestigious, and potentially lucrative; but it also strips away the most important aspects of the field.

But this sentiment was not found in the *Stories* corpus. A research project designed to find evidence of this theory might entail interviewing library directors about the quality of library school graduates they have hired over the last decade, or measuring the commitment to these “feminine” ideals among librarians who have graduated from the Information Science schools in contrast with the older librarians who matriculated from traditional Library schools.

One absence in the *Stories* interviews is a discussion of homosexuality. This researcher (who is a gay man) interviewed two men for the project who are “out” gay men. Neither chose to discuss any aspect of sexuality during their interviews.

In 2010 the United States House of Representatives issued a proclamation recognizing the ALA GLBTRT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Roundtable) as the oldest professional gay rights organization in the United States ("ALA GLBTRT 40th Anniversary Recognized in U.S. House Resolution," 2010). Several members of the GLBTRT have approached this researcher about documenting their long history within ALA through oral history methodology.

In addition, this researcher has participated in several ALA ALCTS committees (Association for Library Collections and Technical Services) and has perceived a larger

number of gay men involved with cataloging and information organization than would be found in a normal distribution of the population. Early in his association with this cohort, this researcher coined the phrase *gay cataloging mafia* and this is now the term of art used by this group of men when arranging social functions at ALA conferences. An oral history project tailored to gay men in library and information science and why they chose librarianship—specifically why they chose cataloging—might prove interesting research.

The research for this dissertation took its cues from memory studies theory to divine a social memory for the discipline. Further proposed research incorporates theory from gender studies. Both the work identifying feminine elements of librarianship—including the possible renunciation of those values through the explicit name changes of LIS graduate programs—and the proposed focused study of GLBT retiring members—specifically gay male catalogers—point to further research examining the role of gender and sexuality among librarians.

Chapter Seven. Conclusion

In the “Significance” section of the Introduction Chapter, two questions were posed. The first question asked how this project was different from past research. The second question asked how this research would contribute in a meaningful way to the literature of information studies. The first question addresses originality, and the second question asks, “So what?”

Oral history projects have been focused on librarians and librarianship prior to the *Capturing Our Stories* project. This is documented in the ALA publication from 1986, *A Directory of Oral History Tapes of Librarians in the United States and Canada* (Dale & Association). A Google search reveals many, many more librarian oral history projects—some currently underway. But this researcher has found none of these that are as extensive as the *Stories* project, nor as accessible. The *Stories* project breaks ground because it represents a diverse cross-section of librarians from many parts of the country. It is original because it uses the state-of-the-art technology available to the School of Information at the University of Texas to deliver its content to anyone with a broadband Internet connection. These oral histories are available to be viewed, studied, and enjoyed—unlike past projects that are limited by the technological constraints of the previous era.

This dissertation is original because it takes the methodology and theory of a very successful oral historian, Alessandro Portelli, and applies it to a cohort of librarians at the end of their careers. They tell their stories of ushering librarianship into the twenty-first century using tools they never dreamt possible when they began their careers. In addition to letting the narrators tell their own stories, this research has applied interpretive tools to

bring out implicit meanings through the analysis of stereotype and cliché, nostalgia, and regret.

So what? This research is important because it examines a generation of librarians that is quickly disappearing. It lets them speak for themselves to document what they consider important about their careers and professional lives. It lets them share their memories of how librarianship made radical changes due to technological innovations. These are important stories. They do deserve to be shared and archived. Alongside the capital-H Histories and encyclopedia articles about millennial librarianship, this research allows future scholars to literally see and hear individual librarians describe how they practiced the art and science of librarianship. And this dissertation distills their recollections into a social memory that represents the entire cohort.

Appendices

APPENDIX A. SUMMARY OF ORAL HISTORY SUBJECTS

			Gender (blank for Female)	Race/ Special demographic (blank for Anglo)	Primary type	Primary position	Library school		Year of graduation
Rita Auerbach (audio only)					Public/Sch	Children's	Columbia		
Karen Breen (audio only)					Public	Children's	LSU		1970
Mary Bushing					Varied/Co	Admin	Dominican		1975
Diana Collins					Public/Sch	Director			
Connie Corson (audio only)					School	Children's	Columbia		1962
Richard Corson (audio only)	Male				Academic	Catalogue	Columbia		1962
Valerie Feinman					Academic	Instructor	Syracuse		1965
Nancy Clark Fogarty					Academic	Reference	UNC		1969
Micki Freeny					Public	Children's	Catholic U		1972
Robert Gaines	Male				Academic	Reference	Tenn.		1974
Anne Gault					Public	Director	Texas		1959
Andrew Hansen	Male				Public/AL	Reference	Mid-West		1956
Shiela Henderson (removed)				African Ar	Medical/P	Director	Texas		1975
Billie Grace Herring					School/Pr	Instructor	Texas		1962
Janet Swan Hill					Academic	Catalogue	Denver		1970
Irene Hoadley					Academic	Director	Michigan		1960
Gail Huetng			Deaf		Academic	Catalogue	Illinois		1973
Kathryn Kaya					Academic	Reference	Hawaii		1979
Jeannette Larson					Public	Children's	So. Calif.		1978
Sarah Long					Public	Director	Emory		1969
Arlene Luster					Special	Admin	Western F		1955
Filomena Magavero (audio only)					Academic	Reference	Columbia		1946
Dorothy McGarry					Academic	Catalogue	UCLA		1971
Jaye McLaughlin					Public	Children's	Texas		1983
Bill Mears	Male				Academic	Director	So. Miss.		1970
Kent Middleton	Male				Public	Reference	Texas		1972
John Mitchell	Male				LC	Catalogue	Catholic U		1989
Jenifer John Patterson					Public	Admin	Texas		1974
Peggy Richwine					Medical	Reference	Indiana		
Dale Ricklefs					Public	Director	Texas		1977
Karlan Sick (audio only)					School/Pu	Children's	Columbia		
Ninfa Trejo			Latina		Public/Ac	PR	San Jose		1992
Patricia Tuohy					Public/Co	Admin	Texas		1970
Kenneth Yamashita	Male	Asian			Public	Director	Rutgers		1973

Summary: *n*=34

Women/Men: 27/7

Type of Library:

Public	15
Academic	11
School	4
Special	4

Primary Position:

Children's	7
Administration	15
Reference	7
Cataloguing	5

APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE *STORIES* WEBSITE

Instructions for Interviewers

Equipment Preferences

Most preferred format:

High-definition (HD) Camcorder using MiniDV tape cartridge.

Standard-definition (SD) Camcorder using MiniDV tape cartridge.

Other acceptable video formats:

HD or SD Camcorder using DVD storage media

Digital 8 or 8mm

SVHS, VHS, or VHS-C

3/4" Umatic format

All of these can be converted in our lab to web-accessible video.

Preferred:

Audio recorder using .wav format. This is a high-quality audio format.

96 kHz/24 bit preferred

Acceptable:

Audio recorder using .mp3 format

Any digital format on a CD

Analog cassette tapes.

Realia

Encourage your narrators to bring any realia or artifacts of their library careers. Take pictures with your digital camera of your interviewee and their mementos.

Ask your interviewees to bring pictures of their libraries. Scan these as jpegs.

Pictures of your narrators and their realia will make the site visually arresting, and provide some context to each interview.

Before conducting the interview:

No matter what equipment you use, you must rehearse with it before your scheduled interview. There is nothing worse than getting home from an interview to find your recording is useless.

Find out how close the microphone should be placed to your narrator. Experiment with different practice narrators. For example, if you have a loud, booming voice, you will need to place the mic much closer to your narrator than to yourself.

Experiment with different surfaces to place the mic. Often narrators will tap the table to emphasize points creating loud booms on the recording. You may find it best to place the mic on a cushioning cloth such as a towel or a piece of packing foam.

Read the instructions for your recording equipment. For example, some recorders that use USB flash drives have very specific instructions on how to eject the drive.

Know the amount of recording that will fit on your media. For example, know how much audio your flash drive will hold.

Listen for any background noise. Are there appliances that are humming? Are there fans that can be switched off? Are there any household pets that need to be relocated?

Mute your cellphone.

Make the space comfortable.

Have some water within reach to drink. Save eating food until after the interview is completed.

Have the interviewee fill out the [Volunteer Interviewee Form](#). This provides the project with a standard set of biographical metadata to code each interview with. [Here is a printable copy of the form](#) to use if you do not have Internet access at the time of the interview.

Have the interviewee fill out the [Oral History Release Form](#).

During the interview:

Begin each interview with the [Opening Script](#).

Have an outline of chosen questions ready. There are suggestions under [Question Bank](#).

Listen to your narrator. Be prepared to follow their lead and abandon your pre-selected questions.

Listen to your narrator. Give them time to reminisce and follow up on their own stories. Remember to use prompts, such as "Can you tell me more?" Remember the five w's and the one h when you ask follow-up questions: who, what, when, where, why, and how.

It is often useful to follow a funneling approach in asking questions: move from the general to the specific.

Channel Terri Gross on Fresh Air.

Have fun!

Watch the clock and note when your recording medium will be full.

After the interview:

A) Interview recorded on camcorder:

Mail the following to the Project office:

MiniDV tape, or other storage media used (SVHS, VHS, VHS-C, DVD, etc)

Paper or digital copy of the Narrator Information Sheet

Paper or scanned digital copy (with signature) of the Oral History Release Form

Paper or digital copy of the [Context Notes Sheet](#).

B) Audio-only interview:

Mail the following to the Project office:

CD or DVD with audio recording (please keep a copy for yourself as a backup)

Paper or digital copy of the Narrator Information Sheet

Paper or scanned digital copy (with signature) of the Oral History Release Form

Paper or digital copy of the [Context Notes Sheet](#).

Indicate whether you are willing to transcribe the recording. (Transcribing your own interview is a huge help and it is much easier and accurate for the interviewer to transcribe than a non-interviewer.)

If you are willing to transcribe the recording, consider using the following free application: <http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/> It creates hotkeys on your keyboard to control

play-back and incremental rewinds. When you have finished the transcription, it may be emailed separately. Please make a backup of the original digital file prior to beginning the transcription.

Address to mail materials:

Arro Smith
School of Information
1 University Station D7000
Austin, TX 78712-0390

APPENDIX C. QUESTION BANK FROM THE *STORIES* WEBSITE

Introductory Questions:

Name.

Current or last library position.

Where?

Brief history of library career.

Library background

What was your relationship to books as a child?

What lead you to decide to work at a library?

Why did you decide to become a librarian? Was it a common career path at the time?

Was this career only one of a few options available to you?

Were there social stereotypes tied to the being a librarian?

LIS Formal Education

Where did you attend school?

What were your most and least favorite classes?

What is the most important thing you learned in library school?

What were your other experiences while pursuing your MLS?

What do you think about some programs taking the “library science” description out of their degree/accreditation?

Are there specific library skills that you feel are timeless (a knack for customer service, for example?) or others that current students needn’t bother with as much?

Are there skills that retiring librarians see new librarians lacking, such as practical skills?

What is the most important thing you learned on the job that you could not have learned in school?

What do you wished you would have known before you began your first job?

General Career Questions

What were your favorite aspects of your work as a librarian?

What are the best aspects about work as a librarian?

What were your greatest triumphs as a librarian?

What are some things about your work as a librarian that you will remember forever?

What made your work experiences unique?

Discuss some of the most enriching experiences during your career.

Discuss a couple of difficulties you have faced during your career. These difficulties can be either with patrons, with the library or elsewhere. How did you handle the situation?

Reflecting upon either those instances or on others, would you have handled the challenge in a different manner now? What advice would you offer to new professionals

on how to handle challenging situations as they arise? What would you advise against doing?

What have been the biggest frustrations or disappointments in your career? Were they avoidable?

What do you hope that the next generation of librarians will experience?

What different ‘hats’ did you have to wear as a librarian that you never imagined you would have to?

How or why did you chose to stay in your career?

How did you maintain your passion for the field?

Is there something you wish someone had told you before you began your career?

Professional Associations

Please tell me about your involvement with professional associations.

What did you learn or gain from your experiences with professional associations?

How did participation in professional organizations influence your career?

Ethics

How often did you consult the Library Bill of Rights or any other American Library Association policy documents?

How did you respond to the federal government’s attempt to limit civil liberties such as the requesting patron information through the Patriot Act and National Security Letters?

How did you respond to CIPA and find a balance between the America Library Association position on Internet filtering and the needs of your specific library?

Tell me about a time when your professional ideals clashed with the demands of your employing library and how you resolved this conflict.

What was the most controversial time during your career in the information world? Did you do anything to contribute/hinder the impact the time had?

Service

In what ways did the library you work in interact with the community?

How have you used your position in the community to help people?

What matter-of-fact words of advice would you give to new librarians in learning how to handle the homeless and other special users of the library?

Do you remember the first patron you handled on you very own and what question was asked? What’s the funniest, or most surprising query you ever received?

Who are the patrons you most remember and why?

Who was their most memorable patron and why?

Was there any resistance among the staff regarding serving patrons using the Internet and not necessarily using the library in a traditional manner?

How do libraries provide services that current users want without losing track of what a library fundamentally is?

What are the greatest changes you have seen to library services? Why were those changes valuable or not valuable?

What is the ideal role of the library in the larger community?

Technology

How do you feel about all of the technological changes that have taken place in the library over the course of your career?

What sort of unanticipated consequences were there [in incorporating new technologies in libraries]?

How have you dealt with the technological divide that has existed for the last 30/40 years?

How has digitization changed the way you access information for personal use or for patrons, and is there a difference in methodology depending on the audience served?

What are two primary differences in the way you approach information retrieval given the new parameters of searching in contrast to the approach you took when you first entered the library world?

How did technology change your job? What were the positives and negative aspects of the changes?

How has public access computing in your library impacted the demographics of library patrons?

How have you learned to develop, adapt to and take advantage of advances to information technology?

Changes/Future

How have libraries and the role of librarians changed over the years?

What changes did you particularly like or dislike?

As the library changed, what did you find hardest to change about the way you did your job? (i.e. What was the hardest to give up?) What issues did your peers have as well?

What is your prediction for the future of libraries?

Imagine you are not retiring now, but twenty years from now. What do you feel will be the biggest threat to libraries in the coming years?

What is the future of printed books?

How has the atmosphere of the library evolved since you became a librarian? In other words, how different do libraries look and feel?

How do you envision the future of public libraries and the role of librarians?

What do you believe is the most important function of a public library?

What changes would you like to see in public libraries in the next ten years?

Advice and Final Reflections

If you had one piece of advice to give to a librarian who was just starting their career, what would it be?

What is the *one* most important thing a librarian must keep in mind at all times?

What are the top three personality traits that a successful librarian must possess?

Would you mind comparing your first and last day as a librarian, in terms of your experiences, thoughts, and feelings?

What skill has been most useful to you in your career?

What do you feel is the most important idea or theme you'd like to pass onto future generations who will continue in the profession?

Tell me about the accomplishment of which you are most proud.

What will you miss the most about being a librarian?

What do you plan to do after retirement?

APPENDIX D. SOCIAL CONTEXT LIST

1955	Eisenhower threatens use of atomic weapons in case of war Polio vaccine
1956	Highway Act earmarked \$32 billion for national road system
1957	Troops sent to Little Rock to enforce court-ordered desegregation
1958	Soviets launch <i>Sputnik</i>
1959	Castro overthrows Batista in Cuba
1960	Soviets shoot down American U-2 spy plane African-American students stage sit-in at Woolworth's lunch counter
1961	Bay of Pigs Berlin Wall erected Freedom Riders challenge segregated seating
1962	Cuban Missile Crisis John Glenn orbits Earth
1963	MLK delivers "I have a dream" speech Kennedy assassinated
1964	LBJ announces "War on Poverty" Vietnam conflict escalates
1965	LBJ announces "Great Society" programs Malcolm X assassinated
1966	400,000 troops deployed in Vietnam
1967	Thurgood Marshall named first African American Supreme Court Justice
1968	Tet Offensive MLK assassinated RFK assassinated
1969	Armstrong and Aldrin land on the moon Woodstock
1970	Four students killed at Kent State
1971	Court approved busing for school integration Pentagon Papers published
1972	Nixon visits China Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) sent to States for ratification
1973	Roe v. Wade Watergate
1974	Nixon resigns
1976	Death penalty ruled constitutional
1978	Proposition 13 in California
1979	Three-mile Island

	Embassy hostages in Iran
1980	Reagan elected president
1981	Sandra Day O'Connor confirmed as the first woman Supreme Court Justice
1982	ERA fails to win the necessary votes AIDS
1983	Sally Ride becomes first woman astronaut
1985	"New" Coke; "Classic" Coke
1986	MLK holiday <i>Challenger</i> explodes
1987	Dow closes over 2000 Iran-Contra Affair Stock Market crashes
1988	Cigarettes declared addictive by Surgeon General
1989	Exxon Valdez Savings & Loan crisis
1990	Americans with Disabilities Act
1991	Persian Gulf War
1992	Rodney King Clinton elected NAFTA
1993	World Trade Center bombed Janet Reno is confirmed as first woman Attorney General Branch-Davidians in Waco Don't Ask-Don't Tell
1994	Whitewater
1995	Republican "Contract with America" Oklahoma City Federal Building bombing First female cadet at the Citadel OJ Simpson not guilty
1997	Madeleine Albright confirmed as first woman Secretary of State
1998	Monica Lewinsky
1999	Kervorkian convicted Matthew Shepard Columbine
2000	Y2K Human Genome Project Bush v. Gore
2001	9/11 USA PATRIOT Act Afghanistan invasion
2002	Axis of Evil Priest sex-abuse scandal

2003	Iran invasion Gay marriage in Massachusetts
2005	Katrina NSA eavesdropping exposed
2006	Stem cell research vetoed
2007	Pelosi becomes first woman Speaker of the House The final <i>Harry Potter</i> book sells 8.3 million copies in 24 hours.
	(<i>The World almanac and book of facts</i> , 2010)

APPENDIX E. PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT LIST

1904	Local tax funding for public libraries. λ
1911	First woman serves as ALA President. ρ
1925	BEL Report. ρ
1931	Ranganathan's laws: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Books are for use • Every reader his or her book • Every book its reader • Save the time of the reader • The library is a growing organism (Ranganathan, 1931) λ
1939	ALA adopted a Library Bill of Rights. λ ALA adopts a code of professional ethics. ρ
1940	ALA Committee on Intellectual Freedom established. ρ
1945	ALA Washington DC office established to influence policy. ρ
1951	BEL Standards for Accreditation revised. ρ
1953	ALA adopts Freedom to Read statement. ρ
1956	The passage of LSA [Library Services Act] in 1956 was a major milestone for libraries, as the first action by the federal government to invest in [public libraries] and to acknowledge the issue of equity of access to information. λ
1959	ALA adopts Goals for Action. ρ
1960s	The creation and implementation of MARC. λ
1961	Library Bill of Rights amended to include race, religion and politics. ρ
1964	Desegregation within the American Library Association. Passage of the Josey motion at the ALA annual conference. λ Library Services and Construction Act. ρ
1967	AACR published. ρ ALA establishes Office for Intellectual Freedom. ρ
1970	President Nixon signs legislation creating the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. α ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table established. ρ ALA Gay and Lesbian Task Force (later GLBT Round Table). ρ
1971	OCLC goes online with a computerized shared database for catalogers. α λ The National Library of Medicine establishes the MEDLINE national database for health science researchers. α ALA adopts Policy on Confidentiality of Library Records. ρ
1973	Mead Data Corporation makes the LEXIS legal research system commercially available. α
1976	Election of Clara Jones as ALA's first president of color. λ
1979	Some 900 delegates hear President Jimmy Carter address the first White

	House Conference on Library and Information Services. α AACR-2. ρ
1979	ACRL and the Association of Research Libraries adopt Standards for University Libraries. α
1980	ALA implements gender-neutral language in policies. ρ
1981	First celebrity READ poster (with Mickey Mouse). ρ
1982	The first Banned Books Week is observed. α
1983	Defining [public library] roles. Lowell Martin's article on public library roles in the January 1983 issue of <i>LJ</i> . λ
1985	ALA Pay Equity Commission. ρ
1987	ALA leads efforts to end FBI "Library Awareness Program. ρ
1989	ALA Committee on Information Literacy. ρ
1990	The Association of College and Research Libraries [ACRL] and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology adopt the first version of "Standards for Community, Junior, and Technical College Learning Resource Programs." α
1991	President George Bush addresses 2,000 delegates at the 2 nd White House Conference on Library and Information Service. α
1994	The first national study of public libraries and the Internet finds 20.9% connected. Three years later, researchers find 72% of public libraries have an Internet connection. α Inter-library Loan Code. ρ
1995	ALA promotes "Digital Divide" national discussion. ρ
1996	Congress creates an Institute of Museum and Library Services. α President Clinton signs the Library Services and Technology Act, an updated version of the Library Services and Construction Act recognizing a new era in library service. α The introduction of the E-rate. λ ALA files suit challenging the Communications Decency Act. ρ
1997	Microsoft founder Bill Gates and his wife Melinda establish the Gates Library Foundation with a gift of \$200 million (second to Andrew Carnegie in today's dollars) to assist public libraries in providing Internet connections to the public. α 72% of public libraries have an Internet connection. α λ Google. τ ALA Spectrum Initiative. ρ
1998	The American Association of School Librarians publishes updated Information Power guidelines for school libraries with a focus on information literacy. α
1999	ALA Office for Diversity established. ρ
ca. 2000	"On demand" culture. τ "Transforming Libraries" Movement. People were bypassing traditional

	libraries and relying solely on what they could find on the Internet. τ
2000	Children's Internet Protection Act, mandating filters to receive federal aid. τ
2001	USA PATRIOT Act challenges patron privacy and confidentiality. τ
2002	White House Conference on School Libraries. ρ
ca. 2005	Hurricanes Rita, Katrina, & Ike. Libraries were among the most universally praised institutions during these turbulent events and solidified their crucial role in emergency situations. τ
ca. 2007	Social media. τ
ca. 2008	Wireless, portable, and hand-held device prevalence. τ
2008-	Economic recession. τ
	α ("Libraries: the long view," 1999)
	λ ("Events of the century," 1999)
	ρ (Ghikas, 2003)
	τ (Meraz, 2009)

APPENDIX F. SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

n=10

Q1: Tell me when you knew you wanted to be a librarian?

Always wanted to be a librarian	3
Second career choice	5
(Second career choice after teaching)	4
Complicated answers	2

Q2: What made librarianship the right choice for you?

Public service, administration, technology	3
Working with people	5
Variety, flexibility	2

Q3: What traits are most important for librarians to possess?

Communication & interpersonal relations	6
Curiosity	4

Q4: Thinking about your conception of the stereotypical librarian, how do you conform—or not conform to the stereotype?

Conform	3
Do not conform	7

Q5: Could you tell me any regrets you have about your choice of librarianship as a profession?

Financial compensation	7
No regrets	1
Spending entire professional career at just one library	1
Did not pursue a directorship	1

Q6: What do/did you miss most about librarianship at the end of your career because of the changes in the profession?

Technology replacing human elements	7
Quaintness of pre-technology librarianship	2
Worries that librarians have lost their appetite to fight censorship	1

APPENDIX G. TRANSCRIPTS

Auerbach Transcript

KR: This is Kristy Raffensberger. I am here with Rita Auerbach at Rita's home in New York, New York. She has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired/Retiring Librarians.

It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association presidential initiates. This recording will be the property of the ALA, and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is June 11, 2008.

Hello, Rita.

RA: Hello, Kristy.

KR: Thank you for being a part of this.

RA: It's a pleasure and an honor.

KR: We're going to start right off in your childhood. Did you spend a lot of time in the library as a child?

RA: The truth is, I don't really remember. I'm almost sure that I never went to story hour. My first conscious memories of using the library was when I was old enough to walk the half-hour that it took me to get from where we lived to the main branch of the Brooklyn Public Library.

I just remember the joy of being on my own, and going into the children's room and borrowing books and carrying them home. But I have no idea how old I was at the time.

KR: Are there any books that you remember from your childhood?

RA: I don't remember reading a huge number of children's books and there was one series -- I wish I could remember -- it was about this man who lived in the wilderness and his relationship, I think, with the wild animals there.

I wasn't at all interested in animals but I just loved these books and I can remember going to find the next one and the next one. But the books that I do remember loving -- well, my favorite was Peter Pan because it was the first play that I saw when I was six.

I remember we went to the theater on Broadway and Jean Arthur and Boris Karloff were in the play. My mother got me the book and I loved that book; we read it over and over and over again. When I was younger, I loved The Little Engine That Could. I still do.

When I was working in a school and life was getting me down, or I had problems, or things seemed too pressured, I would always drag it out and read it to the kids. I don't know if it gave them courage to go on, but it always gave me a lift.

I loved The Borrowers, I loved Mary Poppins, but I really have read so many more children's books as an adult than I ever did as a child. It just has given me great joy to be able to bring those books to kids while they're still young.

KR: Was being a librarian your first job?

RA: No, and it was my last choice of a job. I was sure that librarians sat around and waited for people to ask where the bathroom was, and that didn't seem like an intellectually stimulating way of life. I started out as a school teacher.

I taught high school history, one semester of English. I loved the kids; I loved the challenge of teaching. I didn't love the pressures of teaching and having to know every Sunday night exactly what you had to do on Monday.

When I was working at Garden City High School, Jean Crabtree was the high school librarian. She was the most extraordinarily bright and inspiring woman. Her last year working, she started teaching a course in archeology because she loved archeology.

There was an arrangement made so the head of the social studies department would relieve her in the library so that she'd be free to teach.

That was the kind of woman she was -- to prepare all of this material for just one year. She was an inspiration and she loved being a librarian.

When I was trying to think of what else I might want to do with my life, it was her encouragement that got me to go to library school. It was the best decision, short of marrying my husband, that I ever made.

KR: Did she give you any advice, or did she just encourage you to apply?

RA: Yes, the advice she gave -- no, no, she didn't give me any advice. She just encouraged me to apply. And she introduced me to some people at the now-defunct Columbia Library School, which was a wonderful place at the time and that's how I happened to go there.

But I did get advice from a friend who was the director of one of the local public libraries on Long Island, also a very brilliant woman. She said that library school was without very much intellectual content so if I didn't enjoy it, not to be discouraged.

But that being a librarian was wonderful work. So I carried that advice with me to library school. And sure enough it wasn't enormously intellectually challenging, but they piled on an enormous amount of work, I think to prove that it was an intellectual challenge.

And every time something wonderful would happen and I would enjoy it, I'd start to get nervous because if there was an inverse relationship between your reaction to library school and your love of the profession, I was afraid maybe I wouldn't love being a librarian!

But it turns out I have. But I've shared that advice with other people who've thought about dropping out of library school and inspired them to go on and they've thanked me afterwards.

So I can't say this is true of all library schools but I must say that I loved working as a librarian a whole lot more than I liked learning to be one.

KR: Did you have a particular children's literature class that you liked?

RA: No. I didn't even take children's literature! And this has become my life; it's still my life after I'm retired. But at the time, I wasn't sure what kind of librarianship I was going to go in to.

I knew that I had to work on Long Island and I was prepared to take anything that I could get. When I was in library school, about thirty five years ago I guess, well some long time ago, there were almost no computers being used in libraries.

Auerbach transcript

The Internet didn't exist, I think it was just ARPANET, the military net. And there was no e-mail.

So library school had just one or two courses on using computers in libraries and I thought that was something that I really should know about and it was at the same time as the children's literature course.

So I never took a children's literature course -- everything I know I've learned since I started working.

KR: Did you feel prepared to enter the field after you graduated?

RA: Yes, I did. The students with whom I studied were very, very bright and I liked quite a few of the teachers whom I met. I felt prepared. But when I started as a librarian, I was in a brand new library that was still in trailers welded together -- a temporary building.

And the director of this brand new library who had built quite a few very fine libraries, turned out to be an alcoholic. About two months after I started, two months out of library school, she threw a pencil at the board in a board meeting and quit.

I wound up acting director of this brand new library. Turned out she had spent a good part of the year's budget. We had to let a number of people go, so I was now in charge of everything.

And the two things that I really needed to know about that library school had not prepared me for were accounting and plumbing. Because the pipes leading out of this temporary building were not insulated.

It was Christmas Eve, I was the only one working, I think there were three people in the library, and all of a sudden one of the three yelled, "There's water coming out of the bathroom door!"

Turns out the pipes had frozen and then it had gotten a little bit warmer and they had burst. Well, the other two people in the library were a little girl who was there with her father.

Her father was a plumber and within about two minutes he had the water turned off and he told me about insulating tape. But ever since, I've thought that library school should offer courses in plumbing and accounting!

Of course that was a tiny place, with virtually no staff. Yes, I felt prepared.

KR: So when you stopped being in charge of the whole library and became a children's librarian what were some of your duties?

RA: We had active story hours and I started doing a lot of storytelling, which has really enriched my life. It saddens me that so few children's librarians these days are carrying on this library tradition. We arranged programs, crafts programs, trips for the kids.

And we were the first library on Long Island to have RIF in the early days of Reading Is Fundamental, which sadly, now, is losing its federal budget under the Bush administration. It was the very early days of doing programs for parents and caregivers of children.

And doing toddler programs. I had nothing to do with that innovation, but there were people on Long Island who did, who got the idea from the New York Public Library, who then took it to Long Island and have since been instrumental in spreading the idea around the country.

Auerbach transcript

And so we were involved in doing some programs like that, but it was really just before I left the public library so they never developed the way they might have today.

KR: How many years did you work in the public library system?

RA: I was a public librarian for five years. Then, like so many friends of mine, I loved the work -- oh, and we brought authors to the library also.

But like so many friends of mine, I loved the work but I was not happy with the administration and I know many people in that situation.

It reached a point where I was not willing to work for the director of the library, so I had to look for another job. I had taught in Garden City and I saw that they were looking for a school librarian and I knew people in the district.

That's how I switched to working as a school librarian in Garden City. I was there for fifteen years. Then I switched to Port Washington and I was there for nine years and then I retired.

KR: What are some of the differences between public libraries and school libraries?

RA: Oh, there are huge differences. I'll start with the finances. The budgets of public libraries, in my experience, certainly on Long Island, for materials and programming are vastly superior to the budgets in school libraries.

The materials budget in school libraries on Long Island are, with some notable exceptions, appalling. But there is a big difference in salaries.

And because the school librarians are on a teacher's contract -- are teachers -- their salaries are much higher than most public library salaries. Again, that's not universally true, but it's true in many, many cases. Now that I'm retired, that doesn't seem trivial.

But that's not the most important thing. There's a large difference in the kind of work and in the tempo of the work. In a school library, you see the children repeatedly. They are there all the time.

So if you read something and you know the person who will love that book, there's no problem finding them. You can just bring it around to their classroom, or you can wait till their class comes in because they'll come in probably every week.

You have a wonderful relationship with the children and you see them constantly as they grow older.

In my case, very happily because I had parent volunteers, you get to know their families in ways that I didn't in a public library, even though in a public library the parents bring them in. There was just a closeness to the relationship, which was very special.

I know that exists with public librarians and the kids who come in, but I think with a smaller subset of the children who use the public library. So that's a very wonderful thing about it.

And because you see the kids repeatedly, there are things that you can do and themes that you can pursue that are harder to do in a public library.

As a storyteller, it was really wonderful because when you do a storytelling program in a public library very often the people who come are younger. Not always so, but very often.

Auerbach transcript

In the school library you're seeing -- I was in in elementary school -- so it was everybody up to grade six and then everybody up to grade five when middle school started. You can do story programs for older kids and they're there and they love it.

Nobody's told them that it's only for younger children. So that was as great gift. The things that are not as wonderful is that it is necessary to teach kids to use the library and to do research in the library. Sometimes that involves their doing things they might not choose to do.

So it's very important to establish a very warm relationship and a trusting relationship so that on the days when you're asking them to do the things that they might choose not to, you're drawing on the goodwill that you've built up with the perhaps more exciting and lively things that you've done.

That's not to say that research skills can't be exciting, but the honest truth is that any time you're teaching kids to do things, you're going to ask them to do things that they may think are not what would be their first choice.

They'll come back afterwards and thank you for what you've taught them but at the very moment that you're teaching it, it's not always what they most want to do. So there's that element.

Many school libraries have very rigid schedules. And they become elaborate baby-sitting services for teachers who have contractual breaks. That is a great shame. Luckily, in the two schools in which I worked, there was some flexibility.

I am not a great fan of totally open scheduling in school libraries, because there were things that I wanted to do with the students, even things that had nothing to do with what they were learning in their classrooms, that I thought were important for them to experience.

I relished the fact that I could count on their coming. But I've been in school libraries where I've seen this rigid schedule, one class right after another.

The librarian would start something, then the kids would start looking for books and whether they're finished or not, the period's over and they have to leave. The schedule can be very stultifying and that's very sad and of course that's not an issue in a public library.

School librarianship is a great deal of work. People see it as you work from nine to three and you have your summers off and that's it. Those people have never taught. It's a great deal of work and we all worked very late. I was often there till nine o'clock at night.

I was often the last person there besides the custodians. One issue is that as a school librarian you also wind up doing more clerical work. That goes back to some of the financial issues that I was mentioning earlier.

In a public library, you have a much larger support staff than you are likely to have in a school library.

KR: Do you have any memorable children, or programs that you did?

RA: In the school library, one of my favorite programs that we ever did was a parent/child reading group. I got the idea from a public library friend, Anita LaSpina, who works in the Rockville Center Public Library.

She has a very successful mother/daughter book group and I thought that in the school it would be better to have not just mother/daughter but parent/child. It was a joy. I did it for many years. The parents and the children loved it.

Auerbach transcript

The premise was that we'd get together and discuss books as peers, children and their parents. It was a way to expose parents to some of the wonderful things that have been written for children.

It was a way to have a more sustained discussion of books with children than was always possible when their whole class was visiting.

I remember this bright, bright, bright ADHD boy who, in class, would sort of whirl around on the tables in the back of the room, but who was one of the most perceptive members of my parent/child book group.

And I remember his mother telling me that they were walking down the hall toward the library one evening -- we did it in the evenings -- and just looking at her and saying, "I'm so glad that we're doing this together." That was a wonderful program, everybody should do one.

We had other marvelous programs. The parents ran a cultural arts week every year when they would decorate the library and decorate other rooms for different experiences for children from a particular culture.

We would have dance troupes coming and storytellers coming. The kids would go through a whole series of stations in the library, experiencing games and foods from the culture. I was involved in doing storytelling and sharing books and helping the PTA run the week.

That was a wonderful program. I guess those are my two favorites. And yeah, I remember kids who were in classes for children with learning disabilities who would come in begging for books. I remember kids who read more than I ever could and I could never keep up.

It seemed to me that I never had enough suggestions for them. Wonderful children.

I did a program as a storyteller in a school a couple of years ago -- this was a long time after I had left the Garden City elementary school where I worked -- and three of the kids who had been children in my classes who are now in college, the mother of one of them was the principal of that school.

So this boy knew about the program and he came with these two other kids, just to hear me tell stories so many years after they'd last seen one another. You can't work with children and not have children that you remember vividly.

KR: You've mentioned storytelling a lot. Why do you think storytelling is important?

RA: That's my hour-and-a-half workshop, but I'll try to tell you briefly! I think I once heard a reading teacher say that people don't read fluently because they can sound out words, they read fluently because they have a sense of story.

So, as they're reading, they can anticipate what might be coming next. And storytelling, I think, offers children the sense of story. I think it hones listening skills, which are incredibly important for kids.

I think it helps them evoke images from language, which is crucial to leading a productive, imaginative life. And because the stories are wonderful and they impart joy as well as wisdom. I think it's very important for children to hear stories.

Children are not used to listening. A lot of listening they do now is in front of the television screen and the television, as Rafe Martin once said, doesn't demand that you pay attention or listen. So kids get used to talking while they are watching or listening.

Auerbach transcript

You only have to go to the theater to see the impact of that on our cultural life. So when you are telling children stories and they are wholly involved, they are creating the story with you, I think it's very important for their development as fully rounded human beings.

KR: Do you have favorite stories that you like to tell?

RA: Oh yes. Many of my favorite stories that I told as a librarian came to me thanks to Diane Wolkstein and the stories that she's collected. I'm Tapinky, She's Tapinkey, We're Tapinkey Too.

My favorite stories were stories that involve the children, where they could chime in and chant along and be involved.

There's a wonderful story about a man who goes out hunting and finds this golden bird -- the story is called Freedom Bird, I wish I could remember the source right now -- but there's a chant in it and there's nothing more gratifying than walking out in the hallway of the school and hearing classes just walking down the halls spontaneously chanting this refrain because they take such joy in the story.

Yes, there are many favorites that I've told over the years. The nice thing about working in a school actually is that if you are a storyteller, you see many classes and if you learn a story you can tell it repeatedly.

Whereas I would think in a public library you can tell it every year but you have fewer opportunities to retell.

KR: Do you remember any memorable reactions from kids to certain stories?

RA: Oh yeah, as I said, when they -- parents would tell me about kids who came home and would tell them the stories that I had told or tell their siblings the stories I had told. That meant everything.

KR: Going back to the school library, did you ever have any challenges to any books by parents?

RA: No, I had one in the public library which I'll tell you about, but I did get a call once from the superintendent's office -- I don't know if you remember the flap about Where's Waldo, that was some years ago.

And I got a call to find out if we had Where's Waldo books in the library, I thought that was disturbing.

KR: What was the controversy around him?

RA: I don't remember now. I don't remember whether there was a character hidden in one of those pictures who was naked ... ? I honestly don't remember. I should remember, but I don't. But I did get a challenge in the public library.

Somebody came in and wanted to know if we had The Gnats of Knotty Pine, by Bill Peet. I only found out later that the reason for it was that one of the hunting magazines had complained that it was anti-hunter. So this guy wanted me to remove it from the library.

I didn't realize at the time that this was part of a national movement to try to suppress this book, so we had a nice long chat and I explained to him that there were books in the library that I didn't necessarily approve of either, but that's the way it was.

Auerbach transcript

Thomas Jefferson knew that this wouldn't be easy and we had to each learn to -- I didn't say it quite in this condescending way -- but I said that if he had some things that were pro-hunter I would be glad to consider adding them to the library collection.

He brought me a nice collection of pamphlets and I dutifully put them in the vertical file. But we actually became friends afterwards and he was fine with our keeping the book. He would come in every so often and say hello. We had a nice relationship as a result of this challenge.

I don't honestly remember any others. Maybe that says that I didn't have daring enough books. Maybe I should have had more. That's something to think about.

KR: How did you keep yourself motivated?

RA: Well, first of all I found the work self-motivating. I know people say that after a while that they can do the work with one hand tied behind their back. I have never understood this.

There was nothing that I ever read, nothing I ever learned, that sooner or later wasn't useful working in the library, even with very young people.

There was almost nothing my husband read that wasn't useful to me working in the library because the topic would come up and it would be something that I would know about.

I didn't require a huge amount of help with keeping motivated, but I think that a large part of that was being involved in professional activities like ALA and local professional activities.

Because you meet people who are excited about their work, who have ideas that you can apply, and who are constantly reminding you of why this work is important. I recommend that every young librarian get involved.

I was talking to actually the high school librarian from the district from which I retired yesterday -- we were at a publisher's event -- and she was saying that she'd like to come to ALA but she guessed she'd have to get support from the district and she wasn't sure if she could get it.

I said that I didn't always pay my own way, but almost always. It was worth it to me. It changed my life. I'm not opposed to people getting institutional support, I think they should.

And I was always grateful on the rare occasions when I did. But to me, it's been everything. There is no way that the money that I've spent going to ALA hasn't repaid itself in professional satisfaction many times over. And personal satisfaction.

KR: So I know you can't go into detail of what went on during the committees, but what committees have you been on?

RA: I've been on the most amazingly wonderful committees. The best, I chaired Notables for two years and was on that for two years prior to that, a few years prior to that. I've been on the Newbery committee twice, Caldecott once.

I'm going to be chairing the Caldecott committee for 2009 books; it's the 2010 Caldecott committee. I'm currently on the Penguin Putnam Award committee, which is a great joy because we give a small stipend to people to come to their first ALA annual conference.

I got started in ALA because I won the precursor of that, the Scribner Award. I've been on the Coretta Scott King Award committee many times, which has been one of the most satisfying things I've done at ALA.

I don't have my résumé ... I've been on so many wonderful committees. And I've also had some odd experiences which are worth mentioning. My first committee that I was appointed to was Toys, Games and Realia.

And I got there and the chair announced that she wasn't really sure what the committee was supposed to be doing and it really didn't have much of a charge. I was so excited, it was my first committee, and that was really a downer.

The next committee I got appointed to was, at the time, The Continuing Education Committee -- these are ALSC committees. I got there, and the chair announced she wasn't really sure what the committee was supposed to be doing.

And I thought, once maybe I could take, but twice was too much. So ALSC, at the time, didn't have an education committee, just continuing education. It was at a time when schools of library education were starting to drop their programs to train youth services librarians.

I think I have the chronology right. So I suggested that we change the committee to an education committee and we went to the ALSC board, I guess we went to the EB first, then the ALSC board, and they approved that.

And the committee wound up writing the first set of competencies that ALSC published for children's librarians. That was interesting and satisfying and worthwhile because I know people who have used those competencies in their staff training.

They are many iterations now down the line, but it started the ball rolling. So I think part of the secret of being involved in ALA is to find work that is worth doing and avoiding the work that's not.

Oh, and I've been on ALA council, I've been on the ALSC board; I've done things that have been so satisfying, that have involved me with such bright and caring people.

KR: Is there any particular program that you can remember from going to a conference that you brought back to the library, that you thought was very beneficial?

RA: I'll try to think of one, but I know of one that I saw just last year when I was already retired that I would have brought back. That was a program on doing story theater with children, which was fabulous.

And very easy to replicate. At ALA ... no, I don't remember any programs that I brought back. I know that I brought back a lot of wisdom about materials to use with young people. It was most important to me in that way.

And then, as I say, through local professional involvement, I got the idea of the parent/child book group. That was a professional thing, but it wasn't through ALA.

KR: What about being a librarian do you think would surprise those who are outside of the profession?

RA: That you don't sit around all day reading! People would come up to me and say, "Oh, I'd love to have your job. I love to read, I could sit around all day and read." I think that.

And maybe there's a subset of people who don't realize that the people checking the books out are not trained librarians. And of course, I was surprised that you didn't sit around all day waiting for people to ask where the bathroom was!

Auerbach transcript

KR: Although some days you do ... No. You've mentioned a few influential people. Is there a particular mentor that you can ... ?

RA: Yes, Jean Crabtree. She was a magnificent woman and a fine librarian. All of us who knew her and loved her miss her very, very much.

KR: What are the greatest changes that you have seen to library services?

RA: Oh my goodness. Well, computers and the Internet! I mean, it's a whole different field from when I entered it. When I started as a librarian, everyone used card catalogs and it was a very time-consuming process to maintain it.

I remember some years after I had become a librarian, my husband and I went to a conference in Stanford, and I went into the Stanford library and they had a computerized catalog, which at the time wasn't even to be taken for granted in university libraries.

They were linked to Berkeley and one other university.

I remember coming back and telling my students that if you had a computer at home, you could -- well, you had to use a modem because computers were not linked by the Internet -- but you could dial in to the university catalog and at midnight you could sit there with your cup of tea and your feet up and check the university's holdings and go in the next day and get the materials.

How extraordinary that was! Well, by the time I left the school, you could pretty much do that even if you went to Manor Haven School.

Although our computer, sadly, was not on the Internet because the head of technology in the district was afraid of people crashing it, breaking in, which I think was not the most foresighted attitude, but in any case that was the situation.

So, there were no resources available on the Internet, there was not the notion abroad that everything was available on the Internet so people were not resistant to coming into libraries to get information because they didn't labor under the misconception that the Internet was as good as a trained librarian.

But the operation of libraries was totally, totally different.

KR: You told me a little bit about your first day. Can you tell me about your last day?

RA: As a librarian? It was just very sentimental. It was very sad. We didn't do anything very special, but saying goodbye to the children and knowing that this was going to be a huge change in my life was both poignant and hopeful.

Because it's exciting in life to take on new challenges and have different textures in different parts of your life. Yes, it was mixed. But I don't remember the day vividly.

KR: What have you been working on since you've retired?

RA: I'm still involved in a lot of things to do with children's literature. That's been very exciting. As I said, I've just been elected chair of the Caldecott committee. I will have been the last elected chair because from now on the chairs will be appointed by the ALSC President.

And I chaired Notables after I retired, so that was a huge commitment. It was pretty much like working full time.

Auerbach transcript

But I've also just now become chair of the grants committee of the Long Island Fund for Women and Girls, which is a feminist philanthropy on Long Island that I was involved in organizing in its early stages. That's exciting.

And I've just become head of membership for the Port Washington Retired Educators, which is the branch of the union for retired people. And I'm studying French; I started studying French after I retired, without a huge amount of discernable success but I'm plugging away.

KR: I wish I knew French and I would ask you a question, but I don't.

RA: And if you did, I would have to reveal how little I've learned! But that's very exciting and a challenge. Those have been the main things. We now are able to travel, not only in peak times, which is a delight.

We can ski, when not every child in the United States has a vacation week as well. So those are the main things. We just go skiing and traveling and going to theater, concerts, opera, ballet, sometimes four nights a week.

KR: Do you visit libraries when you travel?

RA: Not often. Occasionally, especially when we're abroad, it's sometimes intriguing to see libraries, but no.

KR: Are there any other final words of advice you'd like to share?

RA: I suppose only librarians would ever read this, so I can't say become a librarian.

KR: You never know.

RA: It is joyful work. And good work, and important work. And if you're in library school when you read this, don't be disappointed if it's not more challenging. Know that the work is going to be worth doing!

KR: Thank you very much.

RA: Thank you.

Interview conducted by Kristy Raffensberger in June 2008 in New York, New York.

Transcript indexed and places marked by Vivi Hoang in Fall 2008 at The University of Texas at Austin School of Information.

Breen Transcript

KR: This is Kristy Raffensberger. I am here with Karen Breen at the Kirkus Reviews offices in New York, New York. She has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired/Retiring Librarians.

It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association presidential initiates. This recording will be the property of ALA, and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is June 4, 2008.

KR: Hello.

KB: Hi.

KR: Thank you very much for agreeing to be part of this.

KB: You're very welcome.

KR: We're going to start a little bit in your childhood, if you don't mind. Did you spend a lot of time in the library as a child?

KB: My grandfather owned a plumbing shop. He owned the building. Half the building was the library and the other half of the building was his plumbing shop. So from very young childhood I would spend lots of time there in the library.

And then I became -- my father was called back into the military and we started to travel and often, the library was the only place that I knew to get the things that made me the happiest. And that was books.

KR: What books did you like to read as a child?

KB: I'm trying to think of things that I ... I can remember reading all the time. I can remember pretending that I was completely engrossed in a book so that when my mother would call me, and I didn't answer, she'd say "Oh she's just reading."

I can remember the first book I was given because I told that to somebody a few weeks ago. A gift of *The Door in the Wall* by Marguerite de Angeli because my mother's best friend was a librarian. And it won the Newbery and that's what she gave me for Christmas one year.

But the book that I remember as a child more than anything else -- *The Secret Garden*. Which I've read again and again. I read it just a few years ago and I'm old now. It's still my favorite book.

I read a lot of Nancy Drew. My mother had a window seat full of Nancy Drew and other series books, but the ones I remember were Nancy Drew. But then I decided that they were the same story over and over again so I quit those.

I don't remember a lot of children's books. My parents were members of the Book-of-the-Month Club and once I was old enough, that's what I read, whatever they were getting.

KR: Do you have any memories of being in the library?

KB: I remember, as a youngster, I can remember a summer reading program where you had to pin the tail on the donkey, and every book you got, you know. I remember that. I don't remember a lot about the libraries that I went to as I was growing up because they were military.

Breen transcript

Often military-based libraries are very similar. But as a high school student, I finally realized that I just had to read every book that had ever been published and I began in the adult section with the A authors. And started reading that way.

I'm not sure how I got to *The Red Pony* but I remember reading that and thinking, Wait, this is way too far into the alphabet. Oh, and I read some romances as a high school student, but I don't really remember the books that I read as a child.

What I do remember are the children's books that I've read as an adult. And that's how I decided to become a children's librarian.

KR: Was that your first career?

KB: Yes, I had ... I didn't know what I was going to do when I was in high school. My mother did the typical "well you read all the time, why don't you become a librarian?" And it was like, you know, the clouds parted and the sun came out.

And then when I realized that being a librarian meant that I was always going to learn things, that people would ask me questions and I would research with them so that I would continue to learn, I decided that I wanted to be a librarian.

In library school I took a children's lit course and knew right then that's what I wanted to do.

KR: Where did you attend library school?

KB: I went to LSU. I went there because it was my state school. Even though as a military dependent I had been everywhere, I still retained Louisiana residency so it was free, basically.

KR: You mentioned the children's lit course. Did you like that because that's when you started reading children's books? Did you have an influential teacher?

KB: You know, I did. I had a really good children's lit teacher. I wish I could tell you her name, but I don't remember it now. I had someone who talked a lot about what it was like to be a librarian and all the things that you had to do that you didn't expect to have to do.

But I had this great reading list and we had to turn in cards every week. Five books, five cards for the five books that we had read. So we spent the whole semester reading children's books and I was converted.

KR: Did you have a least-favorite class?

KB: Oh yeah, cataloging. No question. Oy.

KR: Did you feel prepared when you graduated to enter the field?

KB: Not completely. Library school was helpful, but I was very lucky to go to work at the Queens Borough Library System, where the children's librarians were put through a fairly rigorous training series.

That's where I really learned how to work with children, how to conduct reference interviews, how to do a story time. Those were things I wasn't taught in library school. Later in my career, I became the person that ran those workshops.

KR: Do you remember your very first day?

Breen transcript

KB: I do. I had no idea where I was going to go. I arrived at the main library and I happened to say in the middle of my conversation with the woman who was waiting for someone to come pick me up, "I was thinking maybe children's work; I really like children's books."

Never dreaming, of course, that they were so desperate for children's librarians, all you had to do was say the word "children's." Then I arrived at the branch where I was told that I could sit at the reference desk and read. And I thought, What better job could there be?

And then of course I learned about things that you didn't know, people that were ridiculous.

How they would come by and steal the money out of the drawer -- you had to sell postcards for reserves and there was a little change box -- and people would take that and run out the back door, that kind of stuff. But I got to work with children.

And I got to learn how to put a really good picture-book session together and those kinds of things that were grounding.

I only was in that branch for four months because they had assigned me to a branch they thought made sense because my husband-to-be was an airline pilot and they figured I would want to be close to Kennedy. And I was living on the opposite side, closer to LaGuardia.

So they kept moving me. And with each move I got more and more in charge of the children's pieces of things.

KR: Did you like to move around?

KB: I did. It was really as much to get closer so that my drive home was not so long. But it also gave me the experience of working with different ethnic groups and income levels. So that first year I was in three branches, and I got to know a little bit about Queens, which was nice.

KR: Do you have any memorable children or programs?

KB: The ones you remember are the ones who come back later and they're in law school and they say, "Hi, remember me? I'm Tommy Hickey." And I'm thinking, "Tommy Hickey? Wait a minute. You were the trouble maker."

He needed attention and he always needed somebody to ... you know. And that's what I remembered about him.

I remembered one family who came to story time and I told the little girl, or maybe both of the children, that they were standing in for my daughter, who was still living with my parents in Louisiana and hadn't come to live with me yet.

And that I missed her and so I was glad they liked to come to the desk and chat with me. And about I'm going to say five years later, I moved to a house directly across the street from those two children. Which was kind of neat.

But I don't remember, oh, I remember a child ... we had such a kid in ... when I got the Queens Library main children's room, where I was head of the children's room with three other librarians under my supervision, we had a little boy whose name I don't remember.

He was just nothing but trouble. And what we did with him was to give him all the attention he was looking for by being bad, but we gave it to him when he was being good.

Breen transcript

And I learned that from another dinosaur, Steve Herb, who is probably still working, but he came -- he's a child psychologist, too -- he taught us that when you have really tough kids, half the time it's because they just really want your attention.

We gave this little boy all kinds of attention and turned him around. He became the kid who would say, "No, if you want to get in the bathroom, you have to ask at the desk."

He was another child by the time ... We doted on him and gave him what he was missing at home, I think. Those are the ones I remember.

KR: What were the different levels that you went through? You said you went through the ranks.

KB: I was a children's librarian when I first started, working with other people who were running the children's room.

Then when I got to the Queens Village branch, I went from there to Laurelton. Laurelton was a branch where there was somebody else who was the children's librarian as well.

Then from there, I went to Queens Village, where I was in charge of the room. That was all in the first year, so I was really lucky. I got my own, very nice collection in a very nice library in only eight months after I had started in the system.

I worked there for a couple of years and we had a fire. We all had to be transferred. When they reopened the library and transferred people back, they didn't bring me back so I was in another branch where I was in charge of the room again.

By then I was really, fiercely, upwardly mobile, shall we say. I applied for the head of the central children's room and got that. I got that in 1975. So I started in 1970 and five years later, I was head of the central children's room.

Then we went through a period of downsizing where the city went bankrupt, or came close to bankruptcy, so everybody was bumped down. They called it "bumping." And so I was the assistant head for a while, and then back up to being the head.

Then, when Jean St. Clair, my mentor, the head of children's services, retired, she recommended me as her replacement. And they gave me the job. I did that for five years. I left -- how many years did I do all that?

I was at Queens for twenty years, so I don't remember how that all worked. When I got to be head of children's services, I enjoyed it for quite a while, but then it became meetings and more meetings and more meetings.

And all the things I loved the most, I lost -- working with the kids, building a collection -- I lost that.

I went to an IBBY conference in Williamsburg where Margaret McElderry spoke and she had this amazing history.

And I listened to her and I turned to the publisher and I said, "I have just come to realize that I am never going to be Margaret McElderry. I need to pick what I want to do with my life and to really have a good time."

And I went back and told my assistant that I was going to start looking for something else to do. I got a phone call one day for somebody who needed a reference, for someone who was applying for a job with her organization.

Breen transcript

I told her what I needed to tell her about the woman and then said, "Would you guys come and talk in front of my children's librarians about your project?" and she said, "Sure." And she called me back later to set up the date and when I said, "Did this woman take the job?"

She said, "No, and we're still looking for somebody." And I said, "Tell me more about the job because I know a lot of people." It was a job rebuilding New York City public school libraries.

It was mostly school librarians who were doing it, but I said, "Do you have to have a teaching accreditation?" and she said, "No." And I said, "I think I might want that job." And I got the job!

So for ten years, I worked with this amazing group of women who listened to each other, and backed each other up, supported each other, and worked as a team, and had money to do this job with, and did those workshops like I had been doing before -- but with no turf-building going on.

It was wonderful. So I worked as a consultant, going into schools and working with school librarians.

KR: And what was that organization called?

KB: That was called Library Power. It was a nationally run program, but it started in New York City. It was funded by the Dewitt Wallace Reader's Digest Foundation. It was supposed to be for three years and it lasted for ten.

Because the work was just so necessary and what we were doing was so, so important. And was working. While I did that, I bought a children's bookstore -- every children's librarian wants to do it for themselves, you understand.

I bought an existing store, and got that out of my system. And then I retired. The store lasted three-and-a-half years, Library Power lasted another four or five years, and then I retired from that.

While I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do next, I did a little dabbling with Baker and Taylor, thinking I'd do collection development there, but that was not working out.

I drove home one day and walked in the house thinking to myself, "All right, my jobs have always fallen in my lap. Where is my next job?"

And I walked in my house and there was a message from the editor/publisher of Kirkus Reviews. She said, "I'm hoping I can convince you to become the children's book review editor here at Kirkus." And I said, "I would kill for that job!" So. That's how I got to Kirkus.

I've done everything but publish. I've been a bookseller, a consultant, a librarian, and a reviewer. The best thing about being a reviewer is that you don't have to convince anybody to borrow it, or buy it.

KR: You just say your opinion.

KB: Yeah, exactly. I recommend it!

KR: So, let's go back to you being children's coordinator, or head of children's services, in Queens. Did you learn how to be a leader or did that come naturally to you?

Breen transcript

KB: I think that I was true to my Aries astrological sign. I'm pushy. So all through my work life, I always thought I knew better than anybody else about how I was going to do things. So I was forever nudging.

When they would reject a book for the booklist, I would write a contradiction and tell them that they were making a mistake and they needed to rethink this.

And finally Jean put me on the book selection committee because she was tired of listening to all that and she said, "Ok, we're going to put you there." And so those kinds of things moved me forward.

I took every workshop I could take about managing children's services -- and never thinking that I'd be the coordinator. But thinking that it would just make what I was doing, I would do my job better. And so that, for me, was the value of ALSC and ALA.

And I was a member of NYLA for a long, long time. Always networking, and trying to learn to do whatever was coming along, and keeping up to date and so forth. I did a lot of standards writing as the head of the central children's room. I was part of that whole workshop.

We were writing standards for performance and that kind of stuff. And I went to the ALSC Institute that originally did the first group of children's performance standards. And I worked really hand-in-hand with Jean and so it just was a natural move forward.

She called on me to work on committees with her, she called on me to do things, and it didn't make sense for anybody else to take that job because I'd been the one big-mouthing it all along.

And they were going to advertise and then the director said she went home and her husband said, "Why are you even looking? You've got somebody right there." So that was just a natural evolution.

I learned on that job too, though, you know. You never stop learning. You just hope that you don't make such a terrible mistake that it's not fixable!

KR: Did Jean ever give you any advice that you remember? Or was it just a lot of helpful ... ?

KB: You know what? She's the one who said, "You really have to be a member of ALSC." It was called the Children's Services Division then, CSD. She said, "You're crazy not to be a part of this organization." That was the best advice she ever gave me.

I didn't know how to go. I didn't know about getting funded to go. So she said, "If you get on a committee, the library will pay you to go." And worked me that way. She taught me a lot about collection development.

And she taught me a lot about always looking for the right people to bring in to workshops. I guess that's really the advice that I would say she gave me. She was a real mentor. She's gone. We lost her last year. But she was real special. An important part of my life.

KR: When you were teaching other librarians, what did you try to impart on them?

KB: Well, that's interesting because I'm one of those kinds of people that never lets go of anything. So I would pick up things, collect things, clip things. And I think my successor, the first thing she did when she got into my desk was to clean my desk out!

Breen transcript

But it was one of those -- it was, "Let's make sure they know all of what this job is." It's not enough just to think that, "I like children's books and I'm here holed up in this corner."

I happen to be of the camp that doesn't believe that children's librarians should be arts and crafts people, too. But I do understand that there is another camp.

I always have believed that children's librarians should be children's librarians and you should have crafts people do the craft programs and the after-school things that are not book-related.

But what I would do is -- I hired Steve Herb to come and do this workshop about how to work with problem children, for instance. I hired people to come and do workshops about burnout.

Anything that I ever picked up at ALA, I would snag those people and bring them in, just to enrich those librarians in what they were doing.

I went to a workshop one time with a guy who literally said -- he was a psychologist, I think -- and he taught you things about how to approach the job so that it just didn't become the same job every day.

I hired him to come in and do that. I had to do a certain number of workshops and I just didn't want to do the same thing all the time.

And again, it's one of those things -- I went to a storytelling workshop and I thought, "She's really good." Carol Birch. "I think I need to have her come and teach the children's librarians that everyone is a storyteller. I just need to figure out how to get a hold of her."

And I got on the bus, and I sat down, and this woman sat down next to me. And it was Carol Birch! You know, it's the shuttle bus at ALA. So I have been lucky that way.

But what I was trying to teach them, always, is that the job is always changing and it doesn't have to be the same job all the time.

There is always something to learn. And I tell my husband, to this day -- once a librarian, you always have a job. Once a librarian, you're always a librarian. You're always that one who is overhearing the conversation, wanting to help get the answer.

KR: Do you find that more people come up to you and ask questions? Even when you're not in a library? Because I do.

KB: Really?

KR: And I don't know why.

KB: No, I haven't seen that. Well, you don't look like a librarian!

KR: Maybe it's happened all the time and I just realized it now. I don't know!

KR: So you talked a little bit about burnout. One of the questions that I had was how do you keep yourself motivated?

KB: Well, part of it was changing the focus of what the job was. I did those jobs in different units and different branches and that always changed things. That always reinvigorates you. And then the workshops that I would go to and come back, inspired to do something new.

As I said about arts and crafts, because I didn't really want to do arts and crafts all the time -- I went to Denver for an ALA conference ... I think it must have been ALA ... sure, it was.

Breen transcript

And I walked into the Denver Library -- don't we all go to every library that we can look at? -- and they did this after-school program that was something different every week. It wasn't all this and all that.

And I came back to the branch and said, "That's what I'm going to do." I wanted to tell stories but if I announced it was a storytelling afternoon, no one showed up. So I said, "We're going to have lagniappe." Which is a Louisiana word for "a little something extra."

"And you'll come and you won't know what you're going to do. One week it'll be a poetry workshop, and one week it'll be puppets, and one week it'll be origami, and one week it'll be storytelling." And those were the things that kept me going.

And working with the kids. I never got tired of that. I got tired of the same assignments every year. How many years can you do the exact same assignments -- and trying to work with teachers who really weren't working with you?

Which is why, when the people from Library Power called to ask for a reference, and they told me they were going to rebuild school libraries in the boroughs, I said, "You have to come and tell my children's librarians about this." This was always such a frustration for us.

But I -- again, I was lucky. I got to move. When I got to the central library, I became a supervisor. So there were new things to learn and do. But I will tell you this: Some years ago, I was asked to be a panelist at a workshop at a NYLA conference.

What they asked me to talk about was career paths for children's librarians. And I got up and said, "Never give up your children's librarian job. It's still the best thing. It's what you got into the business to do."

For me, the frustration was children's librarians never get paid what everybody else gets paid. So they have to leave what they're doing to become better paid.

For the last couple years that I was at Queens, I was working on a parallel promotion system for the children's librarians so they wouldn't have to leave children's work.

They could become a regional children's librarian, or something that would allow them to stay in their branch, do their children's work, and still get paid equitably. But that never happened. I'm sure you know that.

KR: Did you have a favorite program that you liked to do that you missed the most?

KB: I liked the book discussions. When I was at the central library, there were several of us and everyone had a different program. I always liked picture-book time. There were books that I can probably recite today that I did over and over again. I really loved those.

But having kids be enthusiastic about talking about a book was really a treat. Especially if they came and talked about a book instead of what was going on in school! That was always a trick.

KR: So what different hats did you have to wear as a librarian that you never imagined?

KB: Advisor. Comforter. Bathroom monitor.

And that's interesting because that woman that I was talking about, who was the library school person, who's approach was to tell us all the different things -- she said, "You're going to be in the library one day, and there's not going to be anybody there when the kid throws up. It's going to be your job to clean up the throw-up."

Breen transcript

You know, she just sort of laid it out. And she was right! I don't think I ever really expected to be that person behind the counter that has to diffuse an angry patron. Those are things you don't really understand until you're there.

KR: Is there anything about being a librarian that you think would surprise those outside of the profession?

KB: I've often had to be defensive about what librarians do. I think that the old image is gone -- I hope it is, anyway -- of the quiet nerd in the corner. But I think that people still don't quite understand the wealth of knowledge that is contained in any one single librarian's head.

Or the ability to get at it. I've been away from it enough now that I don't really know what's going on exactly, but I do have the sense that Internet search engines are challenging that whole concept.

It's only after people are awash in the bazillion answers that they realize they need to turn to someone. And I think that still would be a surprise to people. That librarians are still really critical.

KR: You've mentioned ALA and ALSC. Do you have a favorite conference memory?

KB: I have to say, two years ago when Chris Raschka won. And he singled me out as the reason he was there at the podium.

KR: What did he say?

KB: He remembered when we had met for the first time. I had been in the city; my husband and I were in the city to go to a jazz club and we stayed at a girlfriend's house who lived in the city.

When I got home that night, there was a note on my pillow that said, "That guy you like who wrote Charlie Parker Played Be Bop is reading at the Shakespeare and Co. around the corner. I got up the next morning, having no sleep at all, and went into this store.

What he remembers is that I was there, and there were two or three knee-high children ... and me. I talked to him briefly, he didn't know my name, but I became his champion.

And I was chairing Notables that year, and I read Charlie Parker Played Be Bop to them so they would get it and make it a Notable. And I cornered everybody I could and he remembered that. And he said, "If it weren't for Karen, I wouldn't be standing here tonight."

There's nothing that could top that. Other things, meeting people. Meeting authors. That's always fun. I'm a real author groupie, author/illustrator groupie. Good parties, good workshops, those are good memories too. But nothing like that one.

KR: So you would encourage younger librarians to join?

KB: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. It's such an enriching piece of a really good career. You have to be a part of it if you're going to be a good professional librarian. You can't not, I think. You have to take advantage of every opportunity that is offered to you in that organization.

And I'm not necessarily saying that you have to run for office. But being involved means that when you go back to your branch or your library, you're better at what you do. Absolutely.

KR: This past year you were chair of the Caldecott committee.

KB: Yes, I was. The thing I wanted to do most in my career.

KR: Why is that?

Breen transcript

KB: I don't know. I'd been on lots of committees, but I just thought, "Before I retire, I really want to chair the Caldecott committee." And so I was really, really excited to run -- and barely win. But I won. Then I was very, very lucky. We had a fabulous year last year.

There was just so much to look at, so much to choose from. Really good stuff was being published. And a great committee. I really had a good committee.

You go into these committees, you begin these committees, and you're warned -- I guess isn't the right word -- you're advised to listen to each other.

It's always suggested that you try not to repeat what others have said unless you really think it's important to emphasize something. Be prepared to speak critically about a book rather than emotionally about a book.

And that's what I got. I got fourteen other people who could do that. And that was great. I was really lucky.

KR: And you chose as the winner ...

KB: The Invention of Hugo Cabret. A groundbreaker.

KR: Why is that?

KB: It's an over 500-page picture book. Which its author/illustrator wasn't even sure what it was. It's a very different book, mostly told in pictures.

There is plainly supporting text but it's unlike anything that has ever won before and I can't imagine that we'll ever see anything like it again. He's a genius, that man. We picked four honor books that were also quite wonderful.

Unique, each of them, in their own ways. It was a very, very satisfying year.

KR: Have you had anybody argue the choice with you?

KB: Question maybe, but not argue. It's interesting, because of what it was, I sat with Diane Foote and wrote talking points for the people who would have to answer reporters and whatever.

I had the woman from the New York Times -- who was probably the only person who even questioned it at all -- and she didn't really question it, she simply said, "How does it feel to pick a novel for the Caldecott?"

But no one else ... I was -- at least, I don't know about others, but the talking points became not really necessary. I think part of it is that the public couldn't really question a Caldecott. They just know that it's got a gold sticker and that it's a beautiful book.

People have told me, "My Caldecott bookshelves look very strange because we had to make room for this big, fat book on it." But no one's argued it.

I've had incredible, incredible response from people who congratulate me and the committee -- it's not me, it was the committee -- for choosing it. People were very excited. And that's very gratifying too. I was all set to have to argue with people but I haven't had to.

KR: Can you describe the moment that it was announced that it won?

KB: I can. I was in tears. The audience rose to their feet and cheered. And I could barely breathe because, I will admit, I was fearful that there would be question ... or silence. That was the real fear.

Breen transcript

Someone said to me, "What are you going to do when there is no response at all from the audience -- when there's dead silence?" And that put the fear into me.

I was so sure that this was the Caldecott winner -- I was sure because the committee was sure -- that I hadn't questioned it at all. Until this person said the only thing you have to fear is that there's dead silence when it's announced. And then I thought, "Oh no."

So, when they announced it and Loriene -- was it Loriene? No, Jan Marino -- announced it and put it up on the podium. There were people jumping up and down and shrieking. And the saddest thing is that you can't see that anywhere.

KR: It wasn't videoed?

KB: It was videotaped straight onto the podium. But what was going on behind us, and in the audience, was pandemonium. And people rushing up and hugging us and carrying on. It was wonderful.

KR: Before we started the interview, you said something about retirement and the Caldecott committee.

KB: Did I? I guess -- I said that this was the best way to retire. At the peak of everything. This was my dream in my career, and to have this book be the winner just capped it for me. It was the absolute best way to retire.

KR: I asked you if you remembered your first day in the library. Do you remember your last day in the library?

KB: Well my last day in the library service, in the real library world, not the consulting world or the Kirkus world, I had to tell the children's librarians I was leaving. And as you may have already detected, my emotions are right at the surface.

So I started to tell them, I said, "I have something important to tell you," and then I started to cry. And they thought I was going to tell them I was dying.

KR: That is one way of going about it then, because then it's reassuring ...

KB: Right! And I remember that. But of course I wasn't, at that point, I wasn't a practicing floor librarian, I was an administrative person so from then it was people coming by to congratulate me, that sort of thing.

And then I got to see those people again because at Library Power we tried very hard to connect to the branches because we wanted to be sure there was coordination between the schools and branch libraries.

KR: Where would you like to see new librarians lead the future of libraries?

KB: Oh gosh. I guess I want them to stand strong for the principles of working with kids and books. I would like to see them be secure in what they are doing and be recognized for their value. And know how to get that recognition. Not to take being ignored lying down.

I want them to be smart, and to promote the library as a resource for people. I am so impressed by the young people that I see now. As Kirkus reviewers for instance, meeting some of those folks, they have all the energy I don't have anymore.

I guess I want them to fight for equitable access for kids -- kids who don't have what everybody else has: access to resources, the Internet, and to books and to learning the pleasure of reading, and that piece of it. I haven't really thought about that.

Breen transcript

Partly, I think, because the kids we're turning out today, or even the young librarians, are smarter and more on their toes than when I got into the business. They're out there making names for libraries and themselves. That's good.

I think there's a point in my life where I realized I don't get graphic fiction, for instance. It just doesn't connect in my brain. And it's ok because there are plenty of other people who do get it.

But keeping in touch with the trends and stuff, that's always important. And being relevant.

KR: In all of your many jobs, do you have a favorite?

KB: I think that for the freedom of being able to do what I want to do, Kirkus probably was that. When I started here, I wasn't -- I was sort of an afterthought. I was part-time.

I started getting more and more into the magazine for the children's section and it got bigger and bigger.

We started covering more and more. Then, they finally started to discover that the children's half was important. And my successor, Vicky Smith, is full-time. That is very satisfying too. I said you're not going to hire anybody unless you give this full-time status, with full benefits.

But I was always independent. Which is different than being under some board, or director, or branch manager, or whatever. Here, I did my thing, and they went on about their business. I liked that. No kids though, and I do miss them.

When I think about what I'm going to do next, there'll probably be some kids involved somewhere.

KR: That's the question. Any ideas?

KB: Well, when I first told people I was retiring, I said I was going back to Louisiana for a good part of the year working for Habitat, or something to help build New Orleans again because it's just such a disaster.

But I have a good friend there who is a former bookseller and who wrote reviews for Kirkus for a while for me. He's now very involved, culturally, in the city and he's got all kinds of ideas of things he wants for me to do. I may start talking to people there.

Part of the reason for my retirement though, is that I had deadlines here every two weeks.

And I don't ever want to be trapped in a deadline again. So to make a commitment, for instance, to do volunteer story times, or volunteer work with kids some place, will have to be a very flexible thing.

I know how hard it is to get volunteers who are dependable and come every week so I don't want to be one of those volunteers who doesn't show up. I'm still working on that, I don't know what I'm going to do for sure. We'll see. Got any ideas?

KR: Well, it seems like things just fall into your lap very often, so who knows?

KB: Right!

KR: Is there anything else that you'd like to share at the end of this?

Breen transcript

KB: I guess mostly I would just like to reiterate that being involved in this organization and knowing the people that I've known through the years has been the most valuable thing for me -- and I would say it would be for anybody. The network is amazing.

It's astounding how things work, how we trip over each other or pull each other up. I mean, I got the job at Kirkus because the woman at Kirkus called Julie Cummings at New York Public and said, "I'm looking for a new editor," and Julie gave her my name.

Julie and I knew each other, how, from ALSC. We were on a committee together and formed a friendship that has lasted till this day. That's the thing that people need to understand. That we all keep learning and we keep learning from each other. And we keep teaching.

KR: Thank you very much for taking the time.

KB: I'm glad to do it.

KR: And I feel the need to also announce to everyone that Karen is wearing fabulous, red lizard earrings. Which is the perfect ending to this interview. Thank you.

KB: You're welcome.

Interview conducted by Kristy Raffensberger in June 2008 in New York, New York.

Transcript indexed and places marked by Vivi Hoang in Fall 2008 at The University of Texas at Austin School of Information.

Bushing Transcript

This is Kathy Kaya. I am here with Mary Bushing at Mary's home in Bozeman, Montana. She has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired Librarians. It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of the ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is June 6th, 2010.

KK: Mary, would you please introduce yourself and tell us about your last library position, where it was and a brief history of your career.

MB: A brief history of my career. First of all, this is Mary Bushing as Kathy mentioned. My career has been in every type of library. I have worked in school libraries, been director of the reference, head of reference, head of technical services in public library. I worked as a special library at a special library for six months. It was a corporate library with lots of money. It is the only time in my life when the first question I had to ask was not how much will this cost, but what is the best way to get this information right now.

So that was kind of exciting because I have always worked in institutions where money tends to override everything. I worked in a state library as a state-wide consultant and then I worked for thirteen years at Montana State University in a variety of positions but all related to being head of collection development. I have been retired now eight years but I have done consulting and training all over the world and full time primarily in the U.S. of course.

KK: Mary, why did you decide to become a librarian? How did you become a librarian?

MB: Well, my story is a little odd. When I was eighteen, I went in the convent and I was a Benedictine nun for five years. And one of the things that happened in those days was that an educational plan was decided for each of the people who entered. Of course, you weren't involved in those decisions. It was based strictly on what they saw as your strengths and all of that. And I found out at the time that I left that the plan was they would get me my B.A. as quickly as possible. They would send me then to what was then Rosary College, and is now Dominican University to get my master's in library science, because I was a generalist. I was one of those people who got good grades in math and science as well as in the humanities and other things. And they thought that was going to be a great librarian, because I would know a little bit about everything. And then they were going to send me to Notre Dame to my PhD in philosophy. I never did get my PhD in philosophy. I did get one in Adult and Higher Education, but I married a philosopher ultimately, so I figure it is sort of the same thing. And I fulfilled their educational plans for me.

When my children were getting to be of an age when I really had to go to work, I wanted to finish my B.A. and get a library degree. It never occurred to me not to. It seemed like I was born to be a librarian anyway. And besides that was the plan, so I contacted the Illinois Library Association at that time and they had scholarships, and the scholarships weren't based on need. I mean we needed it. We had a house full of kids and a mortgage and all those things, but it was

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based on they did one on one interviews and decided who they were going to give them to, and I got a scholarship. So I did in fact go to Rosary College and get my M.L.S.

KK: Let me pause it for a minute. (Pause) Okay. Mary, looking at your formal library education, what do you consider are the parts that most supported your career, that added to your professional work?

MB: I would say one particular faculty member, in particular, was sort of a role model. And was someone who very definitely – but she was part-time faculty, so she was out working in the field. She was someone who was a leader in A.L.A., very active, and her concern was very much the user and that was my concern. I could do all the other academic stuff and all the reference courses and the cataloging and all of that, but it was that one faculty member that really turned me on in terms of how I could see my personality and my caring for people to fit into all that other stuff, like how to assign Dewey numbers, so it made good sense for me. And she was really my inspiration.

KK: What was her name?

MB: Last name was Crow. I can't for the life of me at the moment remember her first name, but up until even ten or twelve years ago, I would sometimes see her at A.L.A.

KK: You said she was out in the field. Where did she work?

MB: I am not sure where she was working at that point in time. She had a varied career, but it was the Chicago area and it was that, that spark from her that really feel, I guess, good or excited about what I was going to do.

KK: You have had a varied career yourself. What aspects were your favorites?

MB: I think always my favorite has been people. Now often that has been people that I have worked with, such as yourself; people who I worked for, even when some of them needed management from my end; people who have worked for me. In one of my early jobs, I was the director of a Chicag-- it was considered actually it was what is called a downstate county, although we were on the fringes of the Chicago metropolitan area. Now it has been gobbled up really completely, but at that time it was really a rural library and a pretty good size one, but a rural library nonetheless. And while I was there we became a district library instead of a public library under the township board. We automated for the first time in the old days, the way that worked, it was really for circulation, not for bibliographic control.

We built a new building and passed a bond referendum to do it, and when I was leaving there the newspaper in town wrote this wonderful editorial about, you know, how it's too bad more local government officials cannot be like myself. But they interviewed me and one of the things that they asked was of all the things I did – built a building, did all that – what was I proudest of? And I was proudest of the staff because I virtually had the same, I don't know, about maybe twelve people as staff as I had had when I came. And in the course of those five years, those people had become independent. They made decisions, and I knew the library even in the interim between directors would be just fine, and to me that was the most valuable thing.

KK: Did you have any major disappointments or frustrations?

MB: Oh, sure. There's always frustrations no matter where you work, whether it is a school library, a corporate library, governmental library, and a public library, and of course an

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academic library. The politics both with a capital "P" meaning whose governor and whose in the legislator or whose the county commission of the city council members. But also with a small "p." What are the real powers in the organization? What are the forces acting upon the library at any given time? So there are always frustrations because it isn't possible just to do the things that you see to be the best thing, but rather you have to work through the system.

You have to learn how to be a diplomat. You have to learn how to compromise, even when you had rather just to do what you know to be the right way. That, you know, in every job there are those kinds of frustrations. One of my own major frustrations was in an instance where I – I almost always got a job I applied for. There was only one time when I didn't and it was because it was a political decision that a man would be better working with the legislature, and it didn't all turn out well for that person but it gave me an opportunity to become an academic librarian, something I had never planned doing, so it worked out okay for me.

KK: Was there ever a point when you considered leaving the profession?

MB: I don't think so. Certainly there were times of frustration. There always are, but there's very few professions – in fact I don't really know of another one – where the people you meet no matter where they are, in rural Texas where I have done a bunch of work, and other places, and Alaska, other countries, it doesn't matter where I have done work, the people have a shared value system for the most part who are working in libraries. And so everywhere you go, you make friends and you have role models. No matter how old you get, there are still people you meet who you think I want to be more like that. But librarianship is the only profession I know of where there is just sort of an instant understanding. That's been extremely valuable for me.

KK: Could you please talk about your involvement in professional associations?

MB: Yes. Well, I've been a member of ALA for – continuously for twenty some years. There was a break in there when I simply couldn't afford to be an ALA member. So I had been an ALA member before that. So I was involved in ALA a great deal. I didn't run for council or any of those things, although I was asked a number of times to do that because I have name recognition and that is always a helpful thing. But ALA for me was a place where I met a lot of role models. A place where my passion about things was often matched by other people with similar passions.

One of the people that I met through ALA was Darlene Weingand who became a very close personal friend. We were both people who were very involved in continuing education stuff. And I did a lot of teaching for her at the University of Wisconsin, but I did it from here in Bozeman, so there were times when I would teach a two, two and a half hour collection development course by telephone. That's a real challenge because trying to convey without pictures as we have for this to a live audience sitting in various rural places in Wisconsin – not just the content, that's easy, they could read that, but the real importance of things and that sort of thing. But Darlene had, when she was involved in the profession, a real passions for quality continuing education, and so I became very involved with round table and held office and everything with the continuing, and we were responsible for adding to the professional ethics,

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number eight I believe it is, which is the statement about continual growth and learning and supporting others in that effort, and of course that is one of my passions.

And then I, of course, I have always been a member of my state association in Illinois and here in Montana. I am a past president of the Montana Library Association. Served, I think, in lots of other capacities – often frustrating. There is nothing like being responsible for a conference to teach you humility. And the Mountain Plains Library Association which is the largest and most robust of the regional organizations in the country, I have been very involved with that. I coordinated the leadership institute for five years down in at Ghost Ranch in New Mexico, so the associations, all of them at all those levels, have been the shot in the arm for me over and over again.

You know, you get sort of drug down sometimes by the day to day job or some of the people you might have to deal with or the frustrations of politics and money. And then you go to a conference and there is just this injection of energy, not just learning, but it's that what you learn from individuals over lunch, in the hallway and the things that you are able to bring back to your own position. But also sort of that, it is almost like a recommitment to what it is that we do and so the associations play a huge part in that.

When I did my own research for my doctoral dissertation and I did work with because I care so much about rural libraries, I did work – I did interview directors in rural libraries in seven states. Directors who were very, very successful in their little tiny town were often paid peanuts. One of my favorite quotes from one of them was that she wished that if I could do nothing else in trying to give them a voice that I could convince people that because they are from small town doesn't mean they have small minds. But the thing is that, that – one of the things I found out – I was hoping they were going to say that people who provide continuing education, people like myself were great role models for them. They didn't say that.

What they said was that other people like themselves were role models and that why this matters is that if we are unable to hook them into becoming part of the library community and you have to do that early on when they take on a job. Get them involved, take them to conference, take them to workshops, whatever it takes, because those people who were successful, one of the things they identified was someone went out of their way, someone often like themselves – not somebody official, but someone like themselves – to call them up and say "Hey, you know there is this workshop being given by the state library or the system or whatever. You want to go?" Or called them up and say "Hey, why don't I come over and we will have lunch and you can show me your library and we can talk."

That was the hook for them that got them involved as a member of a professional community which we usually define as, you know, an association at some level, that that mattered to them. So it not only matters to those of us who actually get to travel to things like ALA conferences and that sort of thing, but it matters to librarians everywhere – school, public, everywhere – to belong to a community of professional practice.

KK: Sort of building on that, in your vast career have you ever run into controversy or a difficult time having to do with the Library Bill of Rights and the ethics of our profession?

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MM: I haven't really run into difficulties there. Although as the collection development and Santa Claus is what you are at an academic library especially the way the construction was at Montana State University, and although we never had enough money, we always needed twice what we had as a budget, just the same being in a position to award a vendor a million dollar a year contract means that you are loved by many vendors and so there is this ethics issue that arises in acquisitions which of course is really what that is and learning, learning how to balance the ethics there. To understand the ethical issues and at the same time be able to develop friendships, professional friendships with many of the vendors and the people who work for them.

We are in business together in many ways. Their success can also be our successes but understanding where that line is between having professional relationships and at the same time sort of not being bought from the standpoint of a vendor. Now when I speak at state associations in particular, I usually try at least to run through the exhibits once and I tease some of those vendors about, you know, now they say, "Hi, Mary, how are you doing." You know before they would have bowed down and have said hello to me. But there is a, there is a real interesting ethical situation involved in, in that and some people have a hard time with it. I have shared with others actually in presentation situation, there is a set of ethics for the professional purchasing association, whatever the name of it is, in the business world and that set of ethics is far more specific about some of those things. And I find that to be a useful piece to help librarians talk about that.

KK: In your work with various communities, in what ways were you able to - this is the service component. In what ways did you interact with your communities in a service mode?

MB: Well you know, the academic library is one great example of that. One of the reasons I hesitated to move to the academic environment was because I wasn't going to have a public as it were. I wasn't going to be on a desk. I was going to be in an office and have a staff in, you know, the backrooms, and I was concerned about. And the dean that was at that hiring me said, "All of the faculty are your public, and you need to have a close personal relationship with every one of them." So that's what – that was really what was my goal. Of course, I married one of them so that has always been a running joke about, you know, close personal relationships with the faculty, but I worked very hard to find ways to be connected to individuals as well as departments, and used a variety of different ways.

One of the best ones was one I got an ALA conference with other academic collection development people, and that was the idea of setting aside some money for - we don't really set it aside; it's you know, done with smoke and mirrors but set aside money for every new tenure track faculty member. It wasn't much but, and then they would get a letter that I would write, the dean would sign, and they would get a letter saying, "Oh, we are so happy that you have come, you know. We want you to be successful and to help with that, we have set aside some money so that we can immediately purchase the things you might need either for your research or for the courses you are teaching right off. In order to get this money or to have this money spent, you have to meet with Mary Bushing personally." It wasn't quite worded that way but that was the idea, so that I had that opportunity right off, and to find out what their research areas

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were, and what they were going...and to make them feel loved and welcomed and all the rest of it, and how wonderful interaction would be our library, that we had no backlog and all the you know positive things we could say. That was a huge success. Not everybody took advantage of it certainly, and we knew that would be the case, but it made a lasting connection and even if I couldn't remember their name when they appeared in my office again, they felt as though they could come and so.

And graduate students, more and more they sent graduate students to me, especially PhD students who needed certain kinds of things and they weren't in the collection and they are sort of, you know, you can only do so much inter-library loan, and what else could we do. And so a lot graduate students that I did. Also there were quite a few faculty, especially administrators, who just came to me directly because they knew me. Not because I was better than the people on the reference desk, but because they knew me, and everything is about relationship. And so they would call me in my office and ask reference questions, and I would have to say, "Well, you know, that's really not ? ??? what I do anymore -- and you don't want me doing this for you, trust me, but I will talk to someone who will get back to you and they will be able to." But it is that personal connection, and whether it is across the circulation desk, it's interesting about that relationship thing.

As we have self check-in in libra... – checkout, check-in in libraries, one can go to the public library for example and never interact with a person. We have a new library here in Bozeman, very nice award winning green building, but you don't interact with staff anymore and all the people in that library – I have done consult, you know, free consulting for them and done other kinds of things and I know them; they have all been in workshops that I have done at conference and such, including all the circulation people and tech services – I don't see them anymore when I got to the library.

Now I am a self-sufficient library user for the most part, so it is not like I need assistance but I am very much struck by how we have are going to work out, not just here in Bozeman but in libraries as we create some of these efficiencies which I am all for, but we have to understand that relationship matters. Who we do business with whether it is buying an appliance, where we go for our groceries, whatever it is, is still connected to how we are treated so more and more Jim, my husband, picks up the books for me at the public library. I don't enjoy going as much as I used to and I realize that it is because I don't get to have a few words with staff when I am there, and I don't think that I am that odd, so I do think as a profession we have to figure out how to ...

KK: So that is one major difference you see based on technological developments.

MB: Yes.

KK: Do you see any others – pluses, minuses?

MB: I would say most of them are pluses. I am very excited about the potential for some changes in the bibliographic control world. I won't go into those but I think things are going to change much faster than most of the profession is ready for. That we really are going to be leaving behind some of the things we have considered part of our bible and moving to other

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ways of keeping track of – other ways in the sense of what matters about an individual item and how we track it. And those things are happening.

We can't afford any more what traditional cataloging cost us and we have to be more realistic and I can see more and more from the people who really know, the things that they are saying, that that's going to change and it is going to change... well, we have public libraries that are arranging their collections now the way book stores do and giving up things like Dewey.

I don't know if we know any academic libraries that would do that, and there is some good reasons for that but still that is one of the indicators. Also in the not too distant past, twenty years ago, twenty five years ago for some libraries up until very recently, technical services was the majority of the employment. We can't afford that, and many libraries changed. Montana State University changed. Twenty years ago we began to recognize we couldn't afford what we were doing and we had to be far more efficient about it, and change how we used our personnel.

That we needed more people working with students and faculty, and fewer people sitting in a backroom worrying about - oh, funny things about serial cataloging for example, you know. Making a bibliographic record every time the student newspaper changed its name instead of saying, "Now we are going to disobey the rules and we will make one bibliographic record that will cover the one hundred years or whatever it was of the school newspaper. Too bad it's against the rules but there really aren't any catalog police so we will be okay." But I see that as one of the major areas that is going to change.

KK: And who do you see having difficulty dealing with this transition?

MB: It isn't always the catalogers, and I use that sort of term generically, because in many ways they were the first people who used technology in libraries, and so they would, in my experience, technical services staffs as a whole, not everybody, but as a whole have been far more open to changes often. I also don't think it is an age thing. It is a personality type thing and I think that we have, we have younger people in the profession who are very technologically astute, but on the other hand they tend to be people who see things as black and white a great deal. Sort of a plus and zero, or one and a zero, you know, the computer model sort of thing, and I think some of the people working in the profession even in the public service areas may have a harder time with some of those changes. I am not sure.

I mean, it is a – it is so much more based on personality, but we still do as a profession, despite the service element, we attract people, you know, for any job whether it is a professional job or a support position of some kind, we attract people who want a world without stress, where the rules are clear and everything is black and white and, you know, hopefully we stop a lot of those at the door, but not always. And of course those people, the people who don't like change, whatever kind of change it is, are going to have a hard time with it.

KK: But basically the change will be invisible to the patrons.

MB: In many ways invisible, not invisible to patrons like my husband.

KK: Right, right

MB: Who is your ultimate library user as a researcher in philosophy.

KK: Right.

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MB: You know, and is the one who finds all the cataloging mistakes at the University and brings them to tech services. Good thing, they know him and love him, but you know to the ordinary user, I don't think much of it will be, will be evident.

KK: Okay, looking into the future, what kind of changes do you think might be coming down the road? Well, you mentioned one.

MB: The technological one. I am seeing in the rural sector, more and more school/public combinations, all over the country, even though there are states like ours and quite a few others where we don't have any legislation on the books, state law on the books, that is going to make all of them structured the same or legally set up the same, and so we have a variety of different models of how that works. Sometimes the models work very, very well, because of the personality of the individuals involved but then over time twenty years later those individuals change and sometimes the model doesn't work so well because so much is dependent on the people rather than what the legal model is.

But I think in the rural area we are going to see more and more of that. We just can't afford the bricks and mortar of separate buildings. I also think that in the – well, we have all loosened up a lot, well I hope all of us have, organizationally so that you can have your cup of coffee in the library. We, you know, we are not going to let you deliver pizza probably but you know we are much more open to some of the creature comforts.

We are more concerned even in academic libraries that we have a welcoming atmosphere, that people want to come and feel that we want them to come. That's a change that is currently taking place that makes a huge difference, so those are some of the things. I would hope that we would – well, another one is more and more paraprofessionals--I hate the term paraprofessionals, it you know doesn't really describe what these people do in the library--but I think more and more people who have traditionally been in support positions of whatever kind are being given the opportunity to work with patrons more, whatever kind of library it is.

And to get, when you work with people, you get that relationship factor even when you are on the other side of the desk and the job satisfaction that goes with that. Now you also get all the problems that go with it because not everybody is lovely that you deal with but you know in many ways the librarians who get that job satisfaction of interaction and giving people answers, helping them meet the right book or the right author, the things we do in programming, all of that. And a lot of our staff members who have been very dedicated caring people and often from a philosophical standpoint about serving people have been stuck in positions where they get no feedback on the job other than you got all those periods in that bib record in the right place. You know, a not very sustaining kind of feedback, so I think we are seeing more and more of that as well. And I would hope – are there any questions about library education.

KK: No, but...

MB: Oh, but I could comment, could I? I have hoped for years that we would, and I am still hoping in my lifetime that we would have the good sense that the sociologists had. At about the same time that the master's degree became the entry level degree for librarianship, it did for social workers as well. It was the pressure of the economic times. It was, you know, it was primarily women professionals so there were salary issues. There were a lot of reasons that

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came together for that to happen. It wasn't a wrong thing to do. It was the natural course of things.

However, we have seen that if the thing that primarily prepares us for this very complex professional position is just a master's degree – however many courses that was when I took it, I don't know ... twelve maybe – one course that was administration and I have spent my entire career involved in administration, organizational issues, systems thinking, those types of things in one semester? Can't do it. And every other area the same way. You are going to be a children's librarian. My God, the amount of stuff you have to digest and know and understand, including child psychology, teen psychology, the literature, all sorts of things. You can't get that in just a master's program, so I would really hope that we would as a profession do what social workers did.

They came to the recognition twenty years ago or more, I can't remember now when, that the master's degree needed to be a specialization degree and that an accredited program at the BA or BS level as the entry level made a great deal more sense. That's where you get a bit of everything. Have a better opportunity to say, "Okay, now when I get a graduate degree, what I want is a master's in library administration, a master's in children's services, but that opportunity then – and with a bachelor's degree I could have the title librarian as many, many thousands of people have, but would have had some grounding for it as opposed to none."

And be doing the job and having the legitimate title which we have denied people for a long, long time and from an educator's standpoint, I really think what we need as people who are getting a more in depth in the area where they are taking a responsibility. And at the same time we need to legitimize the number of people who keep libraries running who as people said to me when I interviewed them for my dissertation work, "But, Mary, you have to understand that I am not really a librarian. Well, yeah, I supervise all these people. I work with the county commission. I manage the budget. I do the hiring and firing. I am the cataloger. I do the fund raising. I do the PR. We built a new building, but I am not a librarian."

Well, then I mean what is a librarian? So I sincerely hope that in my lifetime we go back to having more accredited programs at the undergraduate level that prepare people for library careers and then have master's programs in a few select kinds of areas so that I could, that I could choose to be an even better children's services librarian, or an even better administrator. We know that many public library administrators go get master's in public in administration because that is where the knowledge is that they need, but really they could have gotten a lot of their library education at their undergraduate. And as we look at the cost of education, maybe we have got to be more realistic about this. So that is one area where I am still crossing my fingers.

KK: Do you have a final piece of advice for the people who will be coming librarians?

MB: For the people considering a librarian perhaps and? Well, one piece is this isn't a place where there is no stress. This isn't a place where you can retire from the world. I have a running joke that you know in the old days, the king had three daughters. And the first daughter married the prince after whatever adventures were necessary. The second daughter entered the

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convent and the third daughter became a librarian. And although I have never seen evidence of that, there is this still this underlying myth that somehow library work is...is kind of lovely.

Library work is exciting but I wouldn't describe it as lovely, so I guess first of all to understand that this is work that is challenging. Secondly that this is work about relationship; relationships with the people who use the library, relationships with the people who fund the library, relationships with your colleagues. If you don't like people, think about a different job. This isn't the job for you.

We have fewer and fewer backroom jobs where we can hide people who don't want to be interrupted in their work. This job is all about interruptions. No matter what you do. I mean whether you are an administrator, whether you are a systems person, a reference or information person, even technical services, whatever you are doing, this job is about interruptions because it is a service job and that means response. So I guess that would be my advice.

This is a fabulous way to earn a living. The salaries aren't great. You will never get rich, but it's a fabulous way to earn a living. There are so many paybacks, and you have a mind full of useless information that you can pull out at cocktail parties, if you ever attend any, that actually doesn't wow people by the way, but interesting information you accumulate as a librarian, but you have to have a passion for what you are doing. You have to like people and you have to be someone who is comfortable with ambiguity.

There are no right or wrong answers. If not finding the right answer paralyzes you, this isn't the job for you. You have got to be comfortable with ambiguity and you have to be willing to constantly change and adjust. And if change is hard for you, then you need to either get help to make it easier or find some other kind of work. Those would be my ... but it is a wonderful job in any...whatever hat you wear.

KK: Thank you, Mary.

MB: You are welcome, Kathy.

Interviewed by Kathryn Kaya ; transcribed by Margaret Ann Smith.

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Jessica Kirkland: This is Jessica Kirkland. I'm here with Diana Collins. Diana, thank you. And we're at Diana's house in Marble Falls, Texas and she has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is a part of the Capturing Our Stories oral history program for retired/retiring librarians. It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of the ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is November 16, 2008.

JK: So, Diana thank you so much, I really, really appreciate you being here.

JK: So tell us a little about, just what has your career as a librarian been?

Diana Collins: Well, I started in 1979 in a little rural town, Marble Falls, at that time. And it was me forty hours a week and a sixteen hour a week helper.

JK: And that was it?

DC: That was it.

JK: Wow.

DC: In the summer time I would have a fourteen or fifteen year old girl that would be, it was like a seeder program, a government assist. And the rest of the time it was just the two of us and we were open forty hours a week. In Marble Falls, and it grew to where when I left twenty-two years later I had eight full time employees.

JK: Wow, that's amazing, why did it grow so much?

DC: Well, the area, I think, is very progressive, and people moving to Marble Falls wanted the library services they had had in Houston and Dallas, in Brooklyn, and wherever they came from. The Horseshoe Bay area was coming on strong.

DC: Horseshoe Bay was started in 1974 as a resort, a luxury resort, so people who could afford to live there and buy land there and build homes there were very sophisticated, educated people and they wanted the same kind of library service they were used to. So we just had to fall in line and make that happen.

JK: That's great, so you were at Marble Falls public library, but it served a little bit of a greater area than just Marble Falls?

DC: The Marble Falls public library is a part of the Burnet county library system and Marble Falls is the only library in the southern part of the county. There are three in the northern half of the county but the greatest population is in the southern half of the county. So we were serving the cities of Granite Shoals, Cottonwood, Meadowlakes, Horseshoe Bay as well as Spicewood and Smithwick. Smithwick is not incorporated, it's just a little suburb but it has a long history.

DC: Smithwick goes back forever and ever and all those folks who needed library services came to us. Horseshoe Bay, even though it's in Llano county were using us because its only six miles away and going to Llano would be a twenty something mile commute.

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DC: So they put their volunteer energies and money into Marble Falls library which was closer to them. Also, we have a Walmart.

JK: There you go.

DC: Llano doesn't have a Walmart.

JK: That's a big reason to come to town I guess. So you were there for how many years exactly?

DC: Twenty-two years.

JK: And then what are you doing currently?

DC: I thought I was going to retire and I intended to retire and six days after my retirement began I decided to go work for the school district. They had asked me multiple times in the past to come work for them in the past but it was never right, and they had two openings for elementary librarians and I thought, "what fun to get to read kids books all day and actually get to read the children's books I was buying at the public library," so I went ahead and did that and that was eight years ago.

JK: Great, so you are the elementary school librarian for Marble Falls?

DC: Highland Lakes elementary. It's in the Marble Falls school district but it's actually located in Granite Shoals and it's a Title One school which is a low socio-economic school. So it gets lots of federal monies to support the barriers to poverty, or barriers to learning and a successful life like education and jobs.

JK: Yeah, that's so cool that you've worked in two different sides of it. Tell me what's a little bit different about being a school librarian versus being a public librarian?

DC: The population at the school, at this one, is pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. They're little sponges, they are open to learning, they want to learn, they want to be there, they want to be in the library!

DC: They love to come and sit on the story rug and hear the stories I love to share. And I love giving the child the perfect book and seeing them turn and say "I want another one just like it." There's no greater words to a librarian.

DC: At the public library I had the diversity of watching these babies go through story hour and then elementary school and high school and onto being parents of their own. In twenty-two years I saw that. And then watching the parents of those children come in as grandparents. And I loved my seniors. The ninety year old gentlemen in the little touring hat and the little convertible that roared up in front of the library to read the Wall Street Journal everyday.

JK: Oh I love it!

DC: I just, I did miss that seriously when I went over to the school. So I traded populations that I served. At the public library as it grew, I was the director, and so I was pushed more and more into an administrative role. We also built a library so a lot of my time went into the building project which wasn't in my comfort zone, so I had to call Ann Ramos at the state library and say "send me books" so I can learn how to do that. And take lots of workshops and met with lots of people so that I knew how to do that.

DC: It became more of a fund-raising position, I was always raising money. I was the representative of the library in the community so I wasn't reading kids books and placing books

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in hands or promoting large print or whatever to patrons, which was what I really liked, the people stuff is what I really liked, not the pleading for money from multiple organizations. Like, the Marble Falls public library, the building is actually owned by the city of Marble Falls, the administration is county supported because it is the Burnet County library system, and the County Commissioners fund staff and other things.

DC: And then just various community groups came forward and did things for us so that we could stay afloat because none of those organizations, those government organizations, provide very much money. It's enough money to open the doors but not for the library service that our patrons needed and deserved.

JK: So what were the things that you did to get all of those people on board and in with your vision and get them to give you the money to keep the doors open?

DC: You know, you just have to provide a product that they want and something that they need and get used to having. So if you provide excellent library services. I remember when we didn't have videos and going to the workshops to learn how to acquire a video collection. Actually we didn't start with video, we started with audio and then we went to video and then we went to CDs and the rest is history.

JK: And who knows.

DC: Where we're going now. Computers, we were the only place in Marble Falls where the public could go to learn how to use a computer. We provided Apple2E's, two of them for the public to come in and use it and provided people to come in to teach them how to use it, including tutors to sit beside them to show them how to put a floppy in. I know that's old, old, old, you probably don't know that. But you used to have to stick a floppy in there to back up your data.

DC: That was in 1984, I think or 1985, and we started Literacy Council for those who couldn't read or didn't have their GED. That makes you important in people's lives and if its important to them they will get behind your process of getting your space, the collections you need, they provide money, and they also provide political clout to help you with the funding authorities. You have to be important. You have to make the library important, and if you believe it, it's pretty easy.

JK: It runs off, yeah. So how did you learn to do all of those things?

DC: Well, I didn't go to library school, but I did have a degree. And when I was interviewed there were four people for the position who had degrees of some sort, but I was.

JK: What's your degree in?

DC: It's in biology. Guess what biology does? Sorts and classifies.

JK: There you go.

DC: And puts things in neat little categories so it was really good training. Also, I'm a lifelong library user. My mother, and well I had a grandmother who taught Latin and English, the other grandmother was librarian of her church, my mother always used the library. Everywhere I lived I was always in libraries and so I was comfortable there.

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DC: Also, they told me the reason I got the job over the other three applicants, was that my children were in story hour and they knew my children and they knew that I was a regular library user and thought that I would be dedicated to seeing that the library succeeded.

DC: So, then that was in 1979, well CTLS, Central Texas Library System, at that time they provided, and I'm sure they still do, unbelievably detailed and intense workshops on whatever it was you needed to know. And we did, it seemed like we did about five a year, and they would be all day, maybe six or seven hours, and you spent it with Margaret Nickols Irb, you know, or Betty Carter, with people who are outstanding in their field and you just got in there and learned how to do it like that and took it home and did it that day.

JK: While it was fresh on your mind.

DC: And you know, they taught us acquisitions and collection weeding and all of the stuff that you need to know to have a good library, a successful library, was provided in the professional development portion of Central Texas Library Systems. The professional development portion, because they had the librarians on staff who could teach us and could bring into us what we needed. And we told them, "this is what we need," we could check mark on the evaluations. And since I've been at the school I find that the workshops are very lacking in intensity and depth compared to what the librarians go through, because our workshops were "get it the first time because we're not gonna say it twice." "Don't go to the bathroom, because you will miss something," you know. They were very intense because we had limited time to learn it in and we wanted to get the most that we could. So I give high praise to Central Texas Library System and staff.

DC: Beruta Carl was the coordinator when I started, I don't know if she's still at the Austin History Center, she was the director of the Austin History Center last I heard, and then it was Cathy Cain, and now it's Pat Tuohy. And they're the ones that provide that. I've worked with fabulous librarians, well Peggy Jamleka Rudd was the children's coordinator when I was first there, and she's now the director of the state libraries.

JK: Wow.

DC: So, that's the quality of continuing education that we were getting. So that' show you do it, you go learn it and then you bring it back and they're a phone call away to help you do whatever you need to do.

JK: That's great, so you got the support from them to learn how to do all the things that school might not teach you.

DC: Well, if I'd have been able to go to school, that would have probably been optimal. I kind of got the cart after the horse but because of continuing ed opportunities I was able to play catch up. And actually, I may not have all the theory behind things but I certainly know the practical part of it and how to do it all.

DC: We even had workshops on copyright law and legal issues. People from all over the United States would come in and give those workshops if we needed to know it. And we would make those plans with CTLS (Central Texas Library System) a year or so in advance and then they knew what we wanted and they'd go out and find the experts and bring them in and we'd spend a day with them. And at that time there was no email, but you know they were just a phone

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call away if you needed to talk to any of these people. So that's how you do it good, you can do it poorly by trying to learn it all on your own, but you can do it good with support of the professionals.

JK: So, what, we've been talking about all of these professional support systems, what were some of the organizations that you were a member of? It sounds like you got support from CTLS (Central Texas Library System), what were some of the others?

DC: I was in the Texas Library Association, obviously, in fact, I was chair of D3 (District three) at one point, before I bowed out. It was during my transition from public to private, or public to public school, which was tricky, very tricky, because I had a lot to do, a lot to learn at the school too.

JK: What did you do when you were the chair?

DC: TLA (Texas Library Association) is divided into, how many districts is it, ten? I think ten. And district three is the one that's central Texas. I think it goes over to Bryan, College Station, as far west to Llano, north to Waco, Hillsboro, and south to, San Marcos is in it, but Seguin isn't, San Marcos, Blanco.

JK: So, not quite to San Antonio.

DC: No, San Antonio is its own. And that's one of the components of the Texas Library Association and it's kind of like the grassroots; it's like Burnet county does certain things and contributes their ideas and opinions to the state of Texas, well there's 254 counties in the state of Texas, and there's only ten districts. But as the chair I was responsible for making sure we had a fall meeting and that the officers did what they were supposed to do and communicated with TLA (Texas Library Association) on how we wanted it to go, the direction that our people wanted to see things happen in TLA (Texas Library Association), and you are part of what happens at the conference, the annual conference.

DC: So, it's, I think it's 30 counties, I believe in Central Texas, so you find a meeting spot.

JK: That's a lot.

DC: You line up the presenters, you make sure you have goodie bags, you make sure you have a caterer, all of those things, the facilities are handicapped accessible, and you have vegetarian meals. You've got to have all of those things. That's what you do when you're chair.

JK: That's very interesting.

DC: Or you find people who will do it for you.

JK: There you go, you delegate a lot. What were the presenters, can you think of a specific presentation that you helped to arrange?

DC: Oh, I only had to do one one year, you're the chair-elect one year and then chair the second year, and you're involved both years. It seems like we had a workshop type forum and I know Christine McNew came and she was doing a presentation using the computer and the lights went out and she had to fall back on the old days.

JK: Before Powerpoint.

DC: Before Powerpoint, we all laughed about that because she was trying to teach us how to do things using the computer, internet resources.

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JK: And we didn't have a computer to work on.

DC: And we didn't have one and the lights went out and we were using candles, but I don't remember who the program was. Oh, we had someone and her program was how to do something with your library degree other than working in a library. And she was a consultant out of somewhere, Maryland I believe, Maryland or Virginia, and so she came and did a program on that. And I can't remember what the third, it seemed like we had three programs and you rotated through them and then we had lunch and then we had a business meeting and then door prizes and all.

JK: The best part, door prizes. That's great. That brings up, the candles and the Powerpoint, what are some of the technologies that you have seen? What was there when you started and what has grown and what is there now that is so different? That could be an hour right?

DC: Well, in 1979 my intro, my training at the main library in Burnet for three days, consisted of shelf lists and a little bit of inventory where you take a shelf list drawer to the stacks and you find the book that matches the shelf card. In case you've never seen one, they're little three by five things of agony, and you actually physically matched the accession number to the book and verified you had the correct item and then you put a little check by them, even though someone in some library school is saying you can't mark on them but we did, and your mark what year it was that you inventoried it.

DC: Well, at the Burnet library they had the master shelf list and it included all the holdings for all four libraries, so you're coordinating the inventory that was happening at Marble Falls, and then you went to Burnet, to make sure it was all there. So that was my introduction: standing on a step stool so I could reach the top shelves and verifying that the books.

JK: Matched the cards.

DC: And there were volunteers there helping us do it because we didn't ever have enough staff, never had enough staff, there was always volunteers there helping us do it. Anm then we got the books on tape with a donation, someone gave us money and said give it a try, and I was able to convince the county librarian that they should let Marble Falls do that, and so we did. Started off with six. And it's huge now, you know with audio, it's just enormous, and the Marble Falls library led the way on that for this area. And we went right on into CD's when the cars went from tapes to CD's and this library is well stocked hear and they still do it.

DC: And we bought video, how are we going to do that? And that was when we were trying to decide if it was going to be VHS or Beta and which way were we going to jump?

JK: How did you decide that?

DC: Well, there was a workshop on it, Central Texas Library System, and Bob Gaines, he was the guy, the guru, he was growing into being the guru at that point, which now of course he is the absolute authority on it. And we discussed it and what the industry standards were going to be and let's buy a few and see what would happen. And I think we used a little of our collection development money, we got a little bit of money from CTLS (Central Texas Library system) to buy things for the collection, and I think I used some of my money for that, may have had a little

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grant. Started off small and as that sorted out, we went the right way, we went VHS and it worked out ok for us and then we went with CD's.

DC: And in there somewhere we started with the Apple's to see how it would work in our community and we taught our public that wanted to come to classes, and they came in and used it. But we didn't have automation in the library because we had a unique situation in Burnet county, we needed a union catalog, and at that time it just didn't exist for four different locations. We didn't have the internet yet, and there was no way to hook us together real time, it was by phone lines. It was just not workable, we were too big to run on any small system, but we were too cheap to run on any big system with no money.

JK: So you were stuck in the middle.

DC: And we automated about the time we moved from the old library on Fourth street to the brand new library so we did both of those things at the same time.

JK: So you built a new library and automated at the same time?

DC: Which included sending the records off for retroconversion, trying to make sure your records are accurate so that meant a thorough inventory. You don't want to pay so much per record and then discover you haven't had that book for ten years.

DC: So we had to do that in the midst of building the library. I didn't get any extra help for building the library I had to do that and everything else at the same time.

JK: And was building the library really all on you? I mean, was that your project, other than laying the bricks, was that you?

DC: Yes, yes. We got "go right ahead and do it" from the county. The city said "we really want you to do this, what can we do short of tax money?" And they provided us with a loan, they gave us a certificate of obligation and they gave us the money to do it, or the Friends of the library the money to. The Friends of the library took on the note and on the project.

DC: I was blessed with volunteers every step of the way; people who wanted to see it happen. And in the early stages I had a gentleman who now lives in Burnet, Morgan Pace, and who knew about finding utilities underground and how to get permissions and variances from zoning commissions. So he took care of all of that stuff so I didn't really have to learn that. He was the one that made sure we'd paid the proper fees and that the footprint wasn't hanging too far over some gas line and that the tree could be taken down.

DC: He helped us acquire the land, it was cobbled together. We couldn't find one spot of land owned by one individual so we ended up buying from three different people to get it all in one spot.

JK: So thank goodness for having good contacts to help you get it together.

DC: And knowledgeable people that are willing to give their time. And about the time he (Morgan Pace) was ready to move, and he'd also been our computer handholder through a lot of the computer conversion process, he and his wife retired from teaching here, and another gentleman stepped right into the breach, John Rice. And his wife was already here and using our library and she said "John'll be here soon." And he built the Baytown refinery for Exxon Mobil, so in walks the knowledge and expertise that I needed for that.

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DC: So he was our project manager as well as a major fundraiser. And just different community members, we increased our Friends board from 15 to 21 so that we would have more people on deck and tried to select people to be on the Board that had the skills and abilities that we needed. We tried to represent all segments of our population and get all of our stakeholders to jump in and do what needed to be done. And it took nine years from the time that we decided we needed a bigger spot until we moved into the new building.

DC: So my two children took nine months but this baby took nine years. And it's an amazing process to go through because it does take so many people.

JK: What an accomplishment. That's amazing.

DC: It's a huge accomplishment for the city because there were no tax dollars involved. It was all raised or grants or from individuals. We had that little man that wore that little hat that drove up in his convertible at the age of whatever, when he died he left us half of his estate. It was over \$100,000. So, who knew? I didn't know he had any money but when he died he thought enough of us to leave us money. So that's the sort of thing that gets us through.

JK: That's incredible. What a great community. It sounds like you have a really special situation.

DC: Well it's built on volunteerism and I think that's what's unique about this area. And when we started the Literacy Council it was a member of the sorority who had a strong relationship with a dyslexic man that wanted to get him help and me because I had access to state literacy grant opportunities. Then I wrote that grant and we were funded so within a year we had a program going.

DC: And at that time there was not any help out there, you had to find. It was hard, it was really, really hard, to find. It was a lot of talking and a lot of looking. And people in Williamson County and Travis County had literacy councils going and they were fabulous, but they had resources that we didn't have including places to do it. So at the end of a year or two they decided, the Literacy Council of Texas or some organization, decided we were a model because we had done it from nothing.

DC: So I went all way down to Houston and stayed in a fancy hotel and learn how to do this from all of the experts. And they said "oh, by the way, will you be on a panel and tell us how to do it?" And when I was preparing for this I realized the way you do this is with volunteers.

DC: Nothing happened in Marble Falls without volunteers: we had a volunteer EMS (Emergency Medical Service), we had a volunteer Crisis Center for victims of abuse, we had the library. Everything in Marble Falls that gave the quality of life was for volunteerism. It's because of those folks that moved in here and saw how it could be and had the time and the inclination to do it. And that's what makes Marble Falls great and that's why Marble Falls library is so successful because we had the volunteers in place. The talent, the know how, the time came from people who had a stake in it, it was important to them.

JK: Yeah, well, I'm sold on Marble Falls.

DC: And so are several thousand others who are now living here.

JK: Gee, if you gave that speech it makes you want to move here. That's so awesome. We have just a few more minutes, so Diana, tell me, all right, we're back. (The interviewer thought

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time was up but was incorrect, the camera was stopped for a moment.) So, Marble Falls sounds wonderful. Take me back a little bit. You said that you always were always in libraries and that your grandmother was always there and your mother, what's kind of that first memory do you have of books and libraries?

DC: My first, my first memory of books is my grandmother reading to us. All of us would pile into her big old bed, all the cousins, and she'd read, whatever. I don't remember the books now, I just remember the warm, cuddly feeling of being with my grandmother and my cousins, and there were probably cats and dogs on there too, and her reading. So it became very important very early.

DC: Also, this was in a giant farmhouse in Missouri with four floors and there were trunks of books, steamer trunks full of books and if I couldn't find anything else to do I was back there in those trunks and dragging out books and reading them. And I was just always a reader and that comes from having reading as part of your life. My parents both read all of the time, no matter what else was going on, there was always a book in everybody's hand.

JK: There was always something.

DC: And we're continuing that tradition with our grandchildren. The eight year old, it's nothing to see her sitting here at the dinner table reading a book, but of libraries themselves, I don't remember.

DC: I remember as a fifth grader, going to the Carlsbad Public Library. We had moved to New Mexico briefly, I had a brother with poor health and it was suggested that he might do better in the dry air, so we moved there for less than a year and the Carlsbad Public Library was like my safe place.

DC: And it had a children's room, of course I read that up pretty quickly and then had to go out of there. But we moved as soon as school was out, because that's what you used to do, you moved when school was out so you wouldn't interrupt your children's school. And I didn't know anybody and so I went to the public library because it was within walking distance. So I was down there, no telling, they probably just thought, oh here she comes again, although I wouldn't have been a rowdy child, but I definitely would have made more shelving for them to do.

DC: So I do remember that library very fondly and for my own children I do remember the Temple library. It was an old Carnegie library and they had elevators, and my children loved the elevators. They had a million little rooms and I always felt bad for the librarians because they had to know if it went in the mystery room, or if it was a western it went in the western room, or it went downstair into the childrens collection. So I was kind of, I knew my way around the library.

DC: I remember libraries: Idaho Falls, we lived there briefly and that's where I found a record collection, they had a record collection in Idaho Falls. You just find stuff.

JK: That's great, so what was it that made you want to become a librarian, you go to school for biology, how did you make that transition?

DC: Well, I actually worked in a lab as a researcher in biology, and while he was at, while my husband was at, A&M (Texas A&M), I worked in the labs and paid our way.

JK: Wow, put him through school.

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DC: Yeah, at A&M, but you know I wasn't really looking for a job, I was volunteering.

JK: There you go.

DC: I was volunteering in the church office and one of the Friends of the Library was also a church member and he came into the church office and announced that the librarian had decided not to come back, that she'd had a baby and decided to stay home. And my baby was 5 years old and was going into school in September, and this was late May. And so the timing was good for me. And he really thought, because he knew I was a reader, and I had also worked with the church library, oh I forgot about that, lots of church libraries, the other grandmother.

DC: So I went ahead and applied for it and the timing was good and he, my husband, was able to take care of the kids after school and we didn't have a day care issue at that time. And it was appealing I mean, you get to do something you love and you get paid for it, minimally paid for it.

JK: Uh-oh.

DC: The county librarians do not get paid a great deal.

JK: Really?

DC: Yes, that's universally true.

JK: It sounds like they should get a lot more.

DC: Well, you're expected to do everything, but in my. Let's see I left in 2001 and I had been there for 22 years and I was making \$22,000 and I went to the school six days later and was making \$30,000.

JK: Wow.

DC: And they started me at zero because I had no school experience, so had I been able to take my experience with me.

JK: It would have been a lot more.

DC: Uh, huh. So, and I think most people would say the school districts don't have a real high salary. But this is not just county librarians, this is county employees.

JK: Everyone.

DC: It's not, it's well, your salary is paid by tax payers and the way the libraries kind of grew up with all of this help from the Friends of the Library and community groups. Like in Burnet there was a group calld Pen Chat and they met once or twice a month and they wanted a library really badly and they started hustling and getting money together, you know.

DC: So, the county depended on these groups to make it happen and gave the minimal that they could offer but they didn't value the librarians as professionals. And that was what CTLS (Central Texas Llibrary System) was trying to do, "you are a professional, you are performing a service that not everyone can do without special training." And that's the training they gave us and the attitude to go with it "hey I'm doing something unique and important and I should be paid for it."

JK: That's great. What are some of the things, that thinking about being a retired, well not really, but retired for six days and then came back librarian, that newer librarians are coming in, what are the things that you don't see them having? The things that you feel like you learned along the way but that these new people are coming in and don't have as much of.

DC: Well, I haven't worked with any fresh out of school students.

JK: Really?

DC: Or professionals. I see the teachers that are fresh out of school and I know that they don't know how to find anything in the library and when I tell them how to do it, they don't listen so then they get to come back and have the lesson again in two days.

DC: So, I think that some of the things that I bring to the table with my experience can help you guys and some of the things you can bring to me like your expertise in technology, I need. Although I've stayed up with it out of necessity, but it's like our school prohibits blogging, so I can't get Flickr, so I can't get Library of Congress pictures.

JK: Oh no.

DC: You know, their filtering system prevents us from learning about the new technology that you guys are getting all of the time. So I feel like I'm always clawing. And I talked to, we have, there's only one other person in our district that's managing a library that's not a certified librarian, and when I talk to the others that have come from other districts they have the ability to do those things. But they're all getting behind just like I am, they've been here two years now and they're going, what does that mean? I don't know how to do that, what do you mean download a podcast? I can't even download iTunes, you know.

DC: So, we're if we don't learn it at home we're not learning it at our job because it's not available to us. Our school filters those things so I think that it's a nice happy balance when younger librarians come on board and work with an experienced librarian. You both can learn and you know part of being a librarian is an intense curiosity about absolutely everything, so nothing escapes your notice without wanting to know about it.

JK: That's great, I was about to ask you, you know, how do you stay passionate for so long, and passionate enough that were you able to grow the library so much and get all of these people involved, and, but that intense curiosity, maybe that's it. Is there something else?

DC: Yes, I think that's part of my nature is intense curiosity. I love, obviously, I love to read and I'm eclectic, I read absolutely everything, I mean nothing is, if it's there, I'll read it. I love people and I love to be helpful to people so we're in the public library and you have every question from.

JK: Everything.

DC: Everything from very intimate personal questions, not of me, but they want to know about things that are very intimate and personal and it's a huge gamut of what people want to know. And if you want to help them, and if you're curious too, then it's not hard to stay passionate about it.

DC: I do think that after I had built that library, about 5 years after I had built it, I started looking around and thinking, well now what can I do?

DC: And I had good help, good experienced helps so I wasn't having to do it all myself and I had about 40, I think it was about 40 volunteers that were trained and in gear and doing what they needed to do. And I wasn't out fundraising all of the time and I wasn't meeting with architects and deciding what color the library was going to be, things like that, "where are you going to put the sign on that library?"

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DC: That sort of thing. Then I started getting a little, um, I didn't lose my passion for librarianship, I was just looking around and trying to see what the next mountain was that I should climb. And believe me the learning curve at a public school is straight up, so that was real exciting to go learn that if you don't have your, if you're not a certified teacher.

JK: What are some of the things that you had to learn really quickly not being a certified teacher?

DC: Classroom management would be first on your list, "how do you get five year olds to sit on a rug and listen?" The books were no issue for me because I'd been buying books and reading books to kids for many, many years. But classroom management, and you learn from the best because they're out there and you just watch those teacher's handle those kids who won't sit still or who are drifting off and you're losing them and you just learn some tricks. And I still learn every day. I learn something new, how to connect with kids. Also, not having any education courses, what do I teach them?

DC: And at that time there were library TEKS, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, that were required that the librarian teach, so I had to find a way to do that. That's not the case anymore, those are embedded in the language arts and the classroom teacher's TEKS, but I still do them. You know, I have my old list, you know, this is the spine of the book and this is the title page and these are things you'll find on the title page of a book, and this is the way you shelve a book, and it goes this way and not this way, how to use shelf markers. We sing, we dance, we do all kinds of fun stuff and you just learn.

DC: You just do it the hard way and it's kind of like learning to be a public librarian. I don't think I could go back and learn to be a public librarian today, and I think there's too much and it's too fast and too intense to learn it the hard way. But you know when I had, when this little town had 2,000 people and I took in two dollars a week in fines instead of \$200 a week in fines, you're allowed time to learn and master something. It's, and maybe there are little communities where you can do it now, but not in Marble Falls, I don't think you can learn by the seat of your pants in Marble Falls now.

DC: But going to the school, I had a gracious and giving principal who wanted me to be there and who was giving me the time I needed to learn about lesson plans. And finding the books was never a problem but what do you read, what you read to a four year old is different from what you read to a fifth grader, and I have seven grade levels and I have bilingual in each of those and what you can do for a bilingual class that's four or five years old is very different.

DC: They're understanding of English is very limited, you're doing a lot of visuals, you've got to have a lot of learning and excitement, things that they're learning right now: colors, numbers, seasons. So I was doing seven preps plus at least two or three for my bilinguals on a weekly basis to make sure that I had covered and gotten to each of those kids.

DC: Of course, my main goal is always that a kid is so excited about the book that they want to read it.

DC: That's awesome, five minutes, thank you (to the camera person). So, now that we're almost to the end, I'd like to know, what advice, do you have, in reflection, having had this great career, and having grown it from the ground up, we'll just go with it (to the camera person), what

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one piece of advice would you give to a librarian just starting out, whether they've been to school or not?

DC: One piece of advice? You know, I think that passion, maybe, that we talked about is essential because you can learn the rest of it if you've got the passion for it, and I think that you really have to deeply care about the people. That the job isn't eight to five or nine to six or whatever. It's until the job is done and being able to connect to people with that passion for books.

DC: If they find what they need, that their needs are satisfied and that they want to be part of the library world with you.

JK: Yeah, I think that's great advice, I like that one, I like that one. Tell me about, looking back on your career, what is the thing that you're most proud of, and then on the down side, what's the thing that you felt the most frustrated, or the thing that didn't work out, what was your highs and lows?

DC: Ok, my lows were probably working with some of the governing authorities that were so negative when you walked in to present your budget they immediately started from the bottom. Instead of chopping you from the top, they started at the bottom chopping, and I never got too comfortable with that. I always felt like they should see the worth in what we're doing, instead of "oh, here's a way we can cut, we don't have to provide libraries."

DC: And that was negative, that was very disturbing to me, that I never could reach. And I do understand that they had a limited amount of money and they had to provide jails and they had to provide a sheriff, they had to provide the clerk's office, and those things at the county level. But I always felt like, well, what about the people that are doing their jobs right and want a library?

JK: Yeah, that are helping all of the other people.

DC: But that almost universally for 22 years I felt that I went into the budget process, that instead of being a team that worked together to provide it, we were adversarial and I hated that, I hated it, I hated it, and that was a low.

DC: The thing that I did best. There's some things that I really liked.

JK: Well, that's ok.

DC: And one of the things that I really liked was starting a book club.

JK: Tell me about that.

DC: That was a lot of fun. Well, I just couldn't figure out how to do it. And I talked to my buddy over in Kingsland, Pam Downing over in Kingsland library and said "well, you've got one going how did you do that?" And so we just did an organizational meeting and got started and I just met the coolest, neatest people and found that cool, neat authors wanted to come talk to cool, neat club members.

JK: That's wonderful.

DC: And then that grew into the writer's club which wanted to do a writer's symposium. So we did for three years. I was a part of a reading, writing, and such two-day event where we got authors and readers and writers and experts together to talk about what we all loved.

Collins transcript

DC: That was really a lot of fun, it was also getting a caterer, and finding a facility, and making gift bags, you still had that going on, but hey I knew how to do it by then.

JK: You'd had the practice.

DC: And then I think the Literacy Council was personally gratifying and it's still going. And that is a very hard thing because about eight out of ten of your students don't make it very far, so you feel like you're always chugging uphill with a full backpack, but those two that make it, oh my god, you're so proud.

DC: So, those are highs. And then, of course, building a library. It's a 15,200 square foot library.

JK: Wow, and it went from being?

DC: 4,500.

JK: Wow, so you tripled the size?

DC: Oh, and we had this cool book brigade. We lined people up.

JK: What's that?

DC: Well, we saved 500 books out of the children's section and we formed a human chain down two blocks to the new library and we passed those last 500 books by hand down. And we had everybody in town and we had a cake and the rain held off until after it was over.

JK: Yay!

DC: But, I mean there are still people who are talking about being in the book brigade. We had Brownies, we had Cubs, we had cheerleaders, we had football team people, we had every fraternity, sorority, every public service group in town. We had teachers and fireman and city officials and we had a few county officials. And it was organized by a couple of volunteers, and actually that volunteer is our county judge Donna Klagert, and she says of all the things she's ever done that book brigade was the best.

DC: You know, so it was a very triumphant moment to go symbolically as well as physically from the old to the new. It was great fun.

JK: Yeah, that's great. To see everyone.

DC: I also like to have fun, have you noticed that?

JK: That's important.

DC: Helps you keep young.

JK: Well, which is more fun, the school or the public library?

DC: More fun is the school, but they're equally rewarding, they're equally important. But working, reading, they pay me to read books to children, does it get any better?

JK: It's not a bad thing, no.

DC: I get to buy fabulous books and I'm also teaching them a few things along the way: taking care of books, and valuing books, and what's inside of books. And we're getting there, we're going to be getting e-books before we know it, but in the elementary level where we'll still teaching them to read they're using a book they can hold in their hand.

JK: Yes, they can flip the page. But that's so great, it sounds like you're able to get those kids early so that later they can be a volunteer for your public library.

DC: You got it, that's exactly.

Collins transcript

JK: You get your claws into them and are ready to go.

DC: That's kind of my philosophy, if I can hook them in story hour then I've got them for life.

JK: Then they can be a Friend of the Library and help you purchase the land.

DC: And be taxpayers, and educated taxpayers who understand the value of knowledge and how to find knowledge.

JK: And how important the library is in that role. Well, that's great, is there anything we didn't get to talk about that you just really want to share? You've got five minutes to say anything you want about libraries.

DC: Well, I just think the world would be a much poorer place if we didn't have libraries and access to libraries. And I don't think it can all be done on the computer, although I do use a lot of audio books that I download from TexShare. I think there's a place for all of it but there's nothing quite the same as sitting down in a chair with a good book. I don't think Kindle is going to do it for me, I really don't.

JK: No, it's not quite as good.

DC: And I, yes, librarianship is more than books, it's information and it's equally rewarding to find the answer to a person's question, or help them learn how to do that on their own. Which is kind of where I've gone now instead of walk into the public library and "oh yes, you need this, well it's right here" and giving it to them. The little people are learning to find it on their own and I think they'll be really good library users forever and information seekers in whatever format it shows up in, so it's a whole new world.

JK: Yeah.

DC: We want to be ready for them.

JK: And you're on the edge of that, that's great.

DC: I'm on the edge of my story chair, reading to them all.

DC: I don't know that I'd like to be at middle school or high school, I think I like my little people the best.

JK: Yeah, they're more fun.

DC: Well, I don't know the middle school librarian loves her kids and the high school librarian has been there for 33 years and she wouldn't do it if she didn't love it. But I think if I wasn't at elementary, I'd be at public even with the bad pay, poor pay, poor pay.

JK: Well that was awesome, is there anything else you can think of that you want to get off your chest? Or brag about yourself if you want to. All right. Well thank you so much.

DC: Just a librarian.

JK: No, thank you so much Diana. I really appreciate your time. This was wonderful.

DC: Good, I hope there's something there you can use.

JK: Oh, I think there's a lot. That was really awesome. Thank you.

Amber Powell: The other day we learned to use the card catalog, do they still have those for little people or do they use the computer now, is it on the computer?

DC: Yeah, it's OPAC day, and it's coming up soon. I use all the tools, the InFocus projector and it goes up there and they see it on the wall and they go practice it. But I used to do

Collins transcript

it that way, I'd go over there and I'd take my fourth and fifth graders and we would do a lesson and then they would come back into the library and use the computers to find what they wanted and go to the stacks and actually find the book. Now I teach it to them in second and third grade and they go on scavenger hunts, and they find treasure buried, it's Mardi Gras beads.

JK: (Aside: Pretend like I didn't already say this.) Well, Diana, thank you so much for speaking with us. I know that we learned a lot from it and we're really looking forward to reviewing the tape and getting all the little gems from you. Thank you for your time. I really appreciate it.

DC: It was my pleasure.

JK: You've had a great career as a librarian and I wish you luck in your career as a school librarian now.

JK: Thank you, thanks again.

DC: Thank you.

This interview was completed by Jessica Kirkland on August 6, 2009 at the University of Texas School of Information.

C. Corson Transcript

JF: This is Jane Brodski Fitzpatrick. I am here with Cornelia Corson, called Connie Corson, at the City University of New York, CUNY Graduate Center Mina Rees Library. She has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired Librarians. It is one of Lorene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of the ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is August 3rd, 2009. Okay, and what is your name and if you can tell me what your last library position was?

CC: My name is Cornelia Corson, but everybody calls me Connie, and my last paid library position was at the Spence School in Manhattan. It is an independent girls school, and I am now a volunteer librarian at the Church in the Gardens in Forest Hills where they have a very capable library and archives.

JF: I am just going to skip ahead a minute since you mentioned what you are doing now. This is a volunteer position since you retired.

CC: Well, it is a volunteer position that I actually started before I retired, but I am more engaged in it now that I am retired because I have a little more time.

JF: Right. Is this cataloging or organizing or just kind of a little bit of everything?

CC: It's – it's everything. I'm, you know, I'm still in the process of trying to...we have a software system for cataloging and circulation but it is taking an awfully long time to get all the data into the catalog. First of all, because it was never cataloged before and, uh...and it's a lack of time on my part, you know. If I could be there more often, then I would get more done but a good part of it – it's the collection is about two thousand twenty five hundred publications and, um, you know, so I mean it's a doable thing but it just takes time.

JF: Okay. Well, maybe we will get back to that a little later. Now we are going to go back to the beginning and I am going to ask what was your relationship to books as a child and if it had anything to do with your decision to become a librarian?

CC: Well, books were always a very important part in our family and I grew up in Berlin, Germany, during the war years. In fact the war and I started at the same time, 1939, and when our family left after the war, we came to the United States, you know, to New York. My grandparents had to flee and uh, and they left everything behind and so did our family because we, we came over actually at the time of the airlift, the Berlin airlift, and so we brought just very basic things. And many years later, I would say fifty, over fifty years later, my husband and I, um, opened up the crates that had been standing in my cousin's basement all those years. And out of twenty five, twenty five or twenty six huge crates, sixteen of them were filled with books, so that tells me something about the importance books had in the life of our family.

And I separated all the books, you know, and sold some of them and, um, and I found children's books and the three eldest ones – we have six children in the family – and the three eldest, um, we had – we had our own book plates in our books so I was actually able to separate, you know, whose book belonged to whom, so and I have some of these. I have the books at home and the ones – I sent every one of my siblings some, some of the books so that was a very

Corson, C. transcript

important part, you know, of our life. And whether it influenced me at that time, I mean when I was younger I really didn't think about how this might have influenced me. But my mother was always very interested in books and she actually worked for a very famous book dealer Court Valentin. He also had a gallery, and so I sometimes feel that her interest, her genetic background in, you know, and love of books perhaps influenced me to go into the field of books. And she often said, you're doing what I always to do.

JF: Oh. So when, when - when did you decide to become a librarian?

CC: It was kind of a decision by default. I was an art student of in studio art and art history at Queens College before it was part of the City University, and the college had a wonderful art library...actually a separate art library...and I right away decided that I wanted to work in that library as a student assistant, you know. I needed money, I mean we didn't – the college didn't charge any tuition at that time but there were other expenses. Books and transportation and so on, so I needed a job and found one in the art library where I worked for four years.

And when it was time for me to graduate, I decided what am I going to do now, you know? Am I going to be able to sell paintings? Am I going to be able to make pottery? And so on. And I had a wonderful librarian there who was my mentor all those years. Stanley, Dr. Stanley Lewis was his name. And I went to him and I said "Dr. Lewis, I don't know what to do. I am graduating." And he was a professor at the Columbia Law School and he taught art librarianship there and he said to me, "why don't you become a librarian, become an art librarian?" And it was like a Eureka moment, you know.

What a great idea, that I could still continue to be in the field of art but as a, you know, with a library background. So I enrolled in Columbia and I, you know, I had to work so the next thing I asked Dr. Lewis was where do I find a job? You know, I don't have any library experience really, and he said, "The Museum of Modern Art is looking for a page. Why don't you get in touch with them?" So that was my first job. I worked at the Museum of Modern Art for eight years and later went back for another year and, uh, and I went from being a page to doing cataloging and head of reference, so –

JF: Wow, that's quite a –

CC: Well, I was going to library school at the same time and so, yeah, it was really, you know, this might be a question that I am anticipating from you but I always felt it was a great advantage for me to be learning the theoretical side, you know, in the library school and the practical by having hands on experience in the things that they never teach you.

JF: Right. Which is one of the questions that we might as well get to now which is, um, did you – do you think that the schooling prepared you for the career? Do you feel that –

CC: I think it was a combination of the two. You know, learning such things as about binding, circulation – um, they don't really teach you that when you, you know, when you are in library school. Just interacting with staff, you know, I mean those are all things that you learn on the job. You know, they are very practical kinds of experiences and I certainly would recommend to anybody who wants to go to library school, try to get a job in the library before or

while you are in school, so that you can have both those aspects of learning the, you know, the practical as well as the theoretical.

JF: It, it is hard when you come out of the school if you have never been in a library to understand how it works.

CC: Yeah. Well, I had a great advantage also of having worked for four years in the art library and so I had a certain amount of experience that somebody who had never worked in the library might, you know, might not have, and I had this incredible mentor who was really, you know, teaching me all those years that I was in school on how things are done in the library. You know, how I could be more effective as a student assistant.

JF: Oh, so he was your teacher at the um, when you were at Queens in art school?

CC: Yes, it was when I was at Queens College, you know, and I, I adored him. You know, I was totally taken and I said if this, you know, if this is what I could become what this man has, you know, has been, maybe that is a career that I want to go into.

JF: So was he also your teacher at the Library School or he did not...

CC: Yes, I think I took the, you know, the art librarians course with him.

JF: Um hmm.

CC: But I was already out of college at that point and was working at the museum, yeah.

JF: Did you have a most or least favorite class in librarianship?

CC: I thought about that for quite some time and since I was going to night school, um, and I took classes in the summer, um, I had different, you know, opportunities than the day time students, because my summer courses very often brought in librarians from outside of the area to teach classes and one of them was the reference course, and the head of reference from the University of North Carolina taught that course and he was just superb.

He was just...I have such fond memories of that class because of what I learned and how he explained reference service, and so I would say that was probably my favorite class. And did I have any classes that I – I don't recall really having any classes that I didn't like. You know, some of them, you know, were routine kinds of, kinds of things.

JF: Is there any class that you wish you had taken that maybe you did not? I don't know what was offered there.

CC: Yeah. Well, it was, you know, I – I started library school in 1961 so this was way before the age of computers and I would say if I had had the opportunity then and if they had offered courses I would have liked to have had courses in archives management, but I think that came much later to the library school.

JF: Um hmm. What do you think about some programs taking the word "library" or "library science" out of the name of the school or the degree or the accreditation?

CC: Well, I – I think the whole idea of changing it to library science when I went to library school it was the school of library studies, you know, and that seemed to me a rather encompassing term and I thought it was large – largely a marketing ploy. You know, I mean what if – my, my title changed over the years. I ended up being the director of a library media center, you know, so terminology changes as, you know, as different applications are

incorporated into libraries. So I don't, you know, I don't really care one way or another, but I was perfectly satisfied with library service.

JF: Well, but they are taking the word "library" out so they are changing to the school of information studies instead of –

CC: Oh, I see...well, it is as I said I think these are all marketing things, you know.

JF: So I think we have sort of covered some of the others when you graduated – when you graduated you certainly had entry level qualifications from the jobs that you had done. What was your first job out of library school?

CC: The job at the Museum of Modern Art where I was hired as a page and my, my years at the museum - it was like a dream job. I mean how often do you have the opportunity to kind of use the skills that you learned in your college life and it was just a great environment. I interacted with the staff from curators to directors. Scholars came there, graduate students, so it was just a very stimulating intellectual environment and to be around all these art works. Yeah, I mean at lunch time, you know, I could walk around and sit in front of – I don't know – Matisse paintings or whatever it was.

It was also very interesting that the guards there were mostly artists and many of them ended up becoming very famous. Sol LeWitt, Dan Flavin, Robert Ryman, just to name a few. And many years after I was there, I would, after I left, I still met some of them. You know, they weren't – I mean they weren't necessarily still guards and so on, but I would go to exhibitions or something and I would say, "Hey, Bob, remember me?" (Laughter) You know, so that was, that was also, you know, a very nice experience.

I also had an incredible boss there. His name was – we all called him B.K. – I can't even think of his first name now. Bernard, Bernard Karpel, and he was kind of the dean of art librarians. You know, he was looked up to in the profession as somebody who was, you know, had great experience and knowledge and he was very --an idea man. He would come up with all kinds of ideas, you know, whether it had to do with images or other things in libraries, and then he expected us to kind of carry out his ideas. So you know, this was also a great learning experience, you know. This was something that we could do. Let's see how we can do it and he would have the whole team, you know, working on it together, so that was another great benefit that I had and in a sense, he was also a kind of mentor for me.

At the point when I was ready to make a change and I had written a letter of resignation, now I had been there about seven or eight years and the museum had gone through a big construction. They took over the old Whitney Museum and were merging it and there were all kinds of problems and, you know, the library was often without telephones and problems. And, you know, and so being young and idealistic, I could see all the changes that should be made and I wrote this long letter, you know, based on my ideas of what the museum should be doing for the library, and when I handed that letter to B.K., he read it and he said to me, "Well, you got it off your chest. Now," he said, "now tear it up and write me a letter that will be acceptable to the administration. You don't want to burn any bridges."

JF: Wow.

Corson, C. transcript

CC: And I thought that was great advice, because I went home, wrote a totally different letter. We were just in the process of adopting a child and so I was really going to leave so that I could mother that child, you know, and I took a year off and, you know, to stay at home with my new son.

There were some things at the museum that for a woman especially were not that easy. Our salaries were not as good as they were for men. I always felt that we were hired as if we were volunteers. My first salary, my annual salary, was two thousand, I think, three hundred dollars or something. And there was an attitude in the museum that the women who worked there, most of them were usually volunteers. They were the wives of board members for example, board of trustees members, and they did some very valuable work. They ran a junior council. They ran all kinds of educational programs and so on, but the assumption was that every woman must have a man who can afford for her to take a volunteer job. Okay? That we had somebody who was supporting us. Well, that was certainly not the case for me. I needed a job because I needed to earn money. My entire education, library school education, was all at my cost. There was no support from the institution at that time and I was not able to get a scholarship because I was going part-time and that was at that time, you know, Columbia didn't give any scholarships. My husband whom I happen to have met at MOMA and....

JF: Not at library school.

CC: Well, but it turned out that he was in the library school at Columbia but he was a day time student and I was a night student so we never would have met if it hadn't been for the fact that he came to the library at the museum, and one of my colleagues there said, "Oh, there's this good looking guy in the reading room." So anyway that's kind of, you know, the story of how I met him and my vacations were always spent going to summer school, you know. So for three years, it took me three years to get my degree, so three summers I would spend with my four weeks of vacation and then two weeks to make the six, you know, weeks of the semester. Two weeks I was without pay. Okay, I had to pay for that in other words so that was, you know, something that was very difficult, you know, when you were living on a limited salary.

JF: Were men getting paid more or did they just have higher positions? Or both?

CC: It was probably both, you know. I think this is true maybe still to this day that men move up the professional ladder much faster than women and therefore get, you know, better pay. And my husband is an example of that. He became the director of the SUNY Maritime College Library when he was thirty-one, you know. So he was – I mean the state university wasn't paying that much but he was in a much better position in a way then, you know, than I was.

JF: I will just interject that we have – I have also done an interview with Richard Corson for this ALA project and now we can cross reference that.

CC: Yeah. So but I – it was just wonderful being at the museum. We went to all the openings. We uh, you know, it was just a very exciting place to be. You know, you felt you were at the center of some vital kind of activity. You know, new paintings would come in and you would see them, and the library had – it was a very fine library. Very well run and people from all over the world came, you know, to use that library.

JF: Was it a library of images as well as books? Did you have slides and records of the paintings?

CC: I mean this was what something that, you know, Karpel tried to do but it was a little bit before, you know, all the technology that made it that easily, but he always emphasized, you know the importance of images as well as the words, you know. So we had a huge collection of magazines, of pamphlets, of -- I mean all kinds of unusual desiderata and lots of scrapbooks, you know, the material we had on Picasso alone would have filled an entire, you know, an entire library. So and sometimes many of the things that were in the library were used for exhibitions too, because they were manifestos or seminal documents in the arts and so the, you know, the library was also a source in that respect for exhibitions.

JF: So you were doing reference work there?

CC: Yes, I was cataloging but mainly doing reference also. And I also had opportunities to prepare bibliographies for exhibition catalogs. And there were other things that I was able to do there, umm, where I made little extra money. I was given the opportunity to create an index for -- for the bulletins of the museum from the 1930s to 1963 or something. Sixty five, and I did that as a separate project, you know, on my own and this was for reproduction of the bulletin by Arno Press, and they included a seventh volume which was the index and so I made myself -- and I spent a summer doing that kind of work.

And then there were opportunities to organize the private libraries of some of the board of trustees, and so I got to go into the most incredible apartments with Miros and, I mean, you name it with all these art works hanging on the wall, leaning against, you know, the walls, carpets, and it as just incredible. And I had to catalog them and come up with location systems, so what would go into the bedroom, what would go into the living room, you know. What would go into the, you know, the piano room or something like that, so I, you know, I actually developed a location system for the materials as well as just created a record of what was in that, you know, in that home. I think I did that a couple of times and I also had the privilege on, you know, on one occasion, one of the - there was like a housekeeper who was there and she was Swedish and she always made a fabulous little treat for me. Baked, you know, something baked and coffee and so on, and my husband always said "Can't I come along?"

JF: (Laughter) It sounds delightful. And so you know how the other half lives too.

CC: Yeah, that's right. That's right. I mean it was really, you know, from one extreme to the other, so uh, you know, I had -- I had a really great time there.

JF: So when you left -- umm, and you took a year off you said.

CC: Yes.

JF: And then what was your next position?

CC: Yeah. Well, after that I -- I started working in college and university libraries for a while, and I think my next job and partially because I wanted to be closer to home was at York College, CUNY York College, and I was a cataloger there for about five years. And I did that as an adjunct, so I worked three days a week, you know, and I had time to be home as much as I could and when my children were old enough, you know, to go to school I could be a class mother and do things because my schedule was always a three day one. And I did that for quite

some time, and in between I also worked at the Fashion Institute of Technology, and I was hired there to help them convert from Dewey to Library of Congress cataloging call numbers.

JF: That's in Manhattan.

CC: Yes, that's in Manhattan, yeah. And then I also did a stint at the SUNY College, Maritime College, you know which is in the Bronx of doing similar work, you know, because they were changing to be more uniform with what was being used in academic libraries – that they should all, you know, be cataloged according to Library of Congress rules.

And then I decided if I really wanted to stay in this profession, I had to get a full time job. You know, this was not going to work for me in the long run and my children were also getting older. And uh, I got a job at SUNY College at Purchase which is in Westchester, north of New York, and I was head of cataloging there.

And, but again I had, you know, all these kind of connections with art. Purchase is well known for its performing and visual arts and so I became the arts bibliographer there also, so I selected all the art books for the collection. And I developed a very nice relationship with the art department and the faculty there, and, you know, it was also a very unique place to work.

They had the Neuberger Museum, so again I was surrounded by art and, you know, could buy books on art, so this was all a great satisfaction. And also at the Fashion Institute of Technology, I mean, that was also to some extent – is to some extent, you know, very much art related. You know, the creative arts, and I decided at a certain point that I needed to be closer to home. My children were in their teens and I wanted to be – I didn't want to have the long commute from Queens to Westchester and so I began looking for a job.

I applied at Queens College and various other places, and I got a telephone call from a friend who was the dean at umm, at a girls, private girls school, and she said their librarian was retiring after many, many years and they didn't have the first idea on how to go about finding a replacement. So they ask me to come in and I, you know, spoke with the dean and with faculty and I looked around the school, and there was art work all over the school. Math was taught with, you know, art – I mean hanging, you know, in the room. Science and so on, and they actually taught art history and had a very, very good art program. You know, everything from photography to, you know, you name it, ceramics and so on.

And when I came home I said to my husband, "What an interesting school." I said, "You know what, I think I am going to apply for that job. What do you think about it?" And he said, "It's up to you," and he suggested that I make myself a list of the pros and cons because I thought after spending so many years in academic libraries, I might be stepping down, you know, which was not the case at all. So I made my lists and I saw, you know, it's just an aspect of the profession and I am going to be able to prepare the students who will go into the academic libraries because of – with the experience that I had in colleges, you know.

And I was always in touch with students even though I was -- let's say the head cataloger at Purchase -- we were all required to do a certain number of hours a week at the reference desk, and I became, you know the head of the international students group. So I was always in contact with students and I think that is one the things that maybe appealed me to the profession – made the profession appealing to me that I was interacting with people, you know. I was not

somebody who wanted to be stuck in the back all the time. I wanted to have opportunities to – for interaction.

JF: So...

CC: So then I got the job at the Spence School and I thought this would be, you know, a few – a few years and then I would move on as my husband said “the gypsy librarian.” And I ended up being there for twenty years and it was again a very satisfying experience because I was working with highly motivated students, umm very scholarly and well educated faculty and I had good administrative support there. You know, that doesn’t mean there weren’t problems. There always are, and – but I had a lot of freedom so there were pros and cons.

I was the only – well, no there actually was – we – it was a K through 12 school so we did have a separate lower school library for some time. And I was the head then – I mean of both libraries. One was for the middle and upper school, and eventually the school decided they were going to merge the libraries, so – umm, and uh, that was at a time when the library was being renovated but completely. It was totally gutted and an entire floor was given over to the library and this was also the big introduction of computers. And we had computers, you know, before but more – they were more like individual databases on a computer.

JF: And about what year was this?

CC: Umm...1995. And so it was a beau — it ended up being a beautiful library. We had twenty five computers and, uh, you know, separate area for the lower school but it was all in one large room. And my library was of course the envy of a certain Mr. Corson, who was at the Maritime College and said “You have more computers and access to more databases than we have in our college library.” So, I mean, I am mentioning this as an indication of the kind of support financial and administrative that I had at the school.

There were difficulties at times. Umm, such as getting additional staff, you know, clerical staff was – I had a part-time clerical person for a number of years and then the administration decided to cut that position and they said, “you can do with volunteers,” you know. “We will get you some volunteers,” and the library was a very popular place, you know, and it was considered kind of a little prestigious to be a volunteer there. So yes, I had volunteers, at one point as many as thirty, and it really was an impossible situation. You know, placating all the volunteers, managing what they were supposed to do, checking what they were going to do.

My circulation system was totally messed up because they were doing the circulation and, you know, kindergartners had checked out, I mean, a totally inappropriate video or something for the, you know, for the upper schoolers. So it was a very complicated situation and um I had to tread carefully because many of these parents were also on committees and so on in the school so two of them by the way were librarians and one ended up going to library school as a result of working in the school library.

So it took me several years of justifying a budget for a clerical position, and part of it, I told administration a disproportionate amount of time on volunteers when I should be spending the time with students, you know. So eventually I did get, you know a clerical position and I did also have a media specialist who took care of, you know, everything to do with media and equipment and so on. And uh, but it wasn’t, you know – it was a long struggle.

Corson, C. transcript

There were also some incidents because I think you ask in your questionnaire, you know, did you have any problems or so on. Umm, I was very much someone for promoting books and I always had displays and observed certain events, you know, that were going on either historical or other things. And I made a display of books on, umm, gays and lesbians -- on homosexuality -- and that became a big controversy because I said something like in support of or in honor of, and there were parents who objected to this, who felt that I was trying to convert their daughters, you know, into becoming homosexuals.

And it was a problem that ended up going to the board of trustees. You know, I had, fortunately I had a policy, you know, about book challenging. I used all the ALA policies that I could and, you know, and I used that as a way of explaining to the administration and the uh, you know, the board of trustees, this was really more providing information for students so that they were – became more informed, you know.

And, I mean, eventually the board of trustees agreed with what I was doing. They just said “don’t call it ‘in celebration of,’ you know. “Use another term.” Yeah, so I mean it, it – you know, it ended well and there was one, I think I had one other instance of some questioning about a book that a lower school child was reading and she thought that the book was anti-Semitic and she told her parents about it. And, you know, once again reading out of context, you know, of one little or two little lines in a book and, you know, that was also resolved. And so in a sense, I mean, I feel I got support from the administration.

JF: So you, you were hired as a library director at Spence.

CC: Yes. Yeah, from the very beginning and they were very interested in me because of my academic background, because academics were so important, you know, in that school.

JF: Well now, besides the media specialist, were there other librarians on staff?

CC: I had a lower school librarian but she was for, you know, a number of years she was on another floor, but we, you know, we worked together, you know, and I held regular library committee meetings, and when I worked on the library budget, it was always all the staff who worked on it together.

JF: Did you have budgetary problems? I know that the, you know, the income level of the students was quite high there, right? Were there still budget problems?

CC: Yes. Well, you know the main budget problems were for staff. I mean, I – I think I got adequate funding for, you know, I could justify the – for example, the databases for which I was subscribing and, uh, you know, and the books were – I usually, I had a lot of freedom in what I could buy and I used the faculty to a great extent in weeding the collection and in making decisions on what to buy because I was a generalist, and I felt they were the specialists. So if I wanted to build up the collection, and every year I focused on a particular area of the collection that would be weeded and then developed. And, uh, you know, and I would have – it was very hard to get faculty to come in but, you know, food always helped.

JF: Food always helps.

CC: Yes, and so, you know, they would take books off the shelves that they felt were no longer relevant and then I said “okay, if you are withdrawing, you know, fifty books or something, give me lists of books that you feel are relevant for your curriculum.” And, and the

Corson, C. transcript

collection was very much curriculum-driven, although we did also have I mean a lot of just, you know, informational and relax – I mean reading for enjoyment -- pleasure books. And we had a book club and uh, you know, that I had for middle school and it was – you know, I had lots of opportunities.

I was also very active in interloan. I borrowed a lot of books. I always said to the students, you know, if you need something, just because we don't have it in the library doesn't mean you can't get it. And I required every student to have a card for the New York Public Library or whatever libraries system was closest to where they lived. Some of them, you know, they had country houses and so I said, okay, you know, use your country library then. But I, you know, there was no excuse for not having a library card and I actually had an arrangement with the New York Public Library that one of their librarians came once a year to the school and handed out applications.

And this was not just for the students. It was from the custodians, you know, up to the, I don't know, the head of admissions or so, and their husbands or so. Anybody who in this school who did not have a library card could get one very easily and this librarian would come back some weeks later and the kids used to ask me all the time – they would say "when am I getting my library card?" because I made a point of saying it's a very grown up thing for you to have a library card. You know, that you don't have to continue using your mother's library card. You know, once they were in fifth grade or sixth grade or something, so that was a very popular program.

And I also used another program, umm, that the New York Public supplied of, you know, interacting with schools and so I sometimes had librarians come in and do storytelling and things like that. So I was always reaching out to what resources there were in the community, and I would go with faculty sometimes and their classes for example when the new SIBL [Science, Industry and Business Library] was opened in, you know, by the New York Public Library. I went with the teacher, you know, too. And they had a class there, the science students had a class at the library on what resources they could use.

JF: Um, how do you feel about all the technological changes that have taken place in – over the course of your career.

CC: Well, it was a struggle at times. You know, when I got my first -- I think it was EBSCO -- had a database, you know, but you got it on a – it was like the whole machine that you got, you know, that had a computer in it. And, um, when that first came, you know, and there were no color coding, you know, on the cords, on how the wires - on how to connect them with something, and so I asked some of the upper school students. I said, "would you come and help me during your, you know, your free periods or something?" And it was like they patted me on the back and said "Don't worry, Mrs. Corson, we'll be there for you. We'll help you." Because they were obviously much more adept at this and there were problems with that first, you know, computer that we got, and I knew after a while that it was some kind of a hardware problem, you know, and not Mrs. Corson's problem. And so when I told them, we have to send – you know, I called the company and I said I think there's some problems and they sent us new equipment,

you know, and a replacement. And, you know, and they said, "You were right, Mrs. Corson."

(Laughter) You know, so.

JF: Okay, I just want to – um, did you, were you a mentor to other librarians at all?

CC: Yes. I was a great believer in joining professional organizations and I was very active in the Independent School Librarians Association which was called the Hudson Valley Library Association because it included metropolitan New York. And I was president of the organization for several years and, uh, you know, so I – and I relied very heavily on the librarians when I first went to the Spence School. You know, I would go – I visited schools. I must have visited at least eight or nine schools and I found out that school librarians were among the most giving open caring people, so – I mean there was this network out there and I used them and by the same token they, you know, they used me.

And I was happy, you know, to be mentoring and, uh, you know to share what experience I had because they always used to say, "Connie, how come you know about this?" And I said, "Because I went to, you know, this conference or something else, you know, and we were the first independent school to join the New York City School Library System which was a state funded system. They are called BOCES in other parts of the state and, um, and so that was, you know, something that I was trying to promote because that was one of my main sources for interlibrary loan. And just, they had conferences and book fairs and all kinds of things like that, so I used to, you know, always say, "How do I know about it?" I said, "Join the New York City School Library system or join, you know, NYLA – the New York Library Association, School Library Media Section. And I was on their board and so I was, you know, I was professionally active and I felt it was to my benefit and it was also a great way of networking.

JF: So besides being a member, you said you were on the board of NYLA. Were you involved in other organizations as anything more than a member? Or was it mostly with NYLA?

CC: Well, it was – it was mostly with NYLA. I – I think something also with – um – the association that – it's a branch, you know, of one of the groups that part of ALA, the American Association of School Librarians, and they also have a subgroup for independent schools, so I think I was active in that group, you know, I helped to organize tours of New York and other things when, you know, there were conferences in the New York area.

And I am now, I – I still belong to all of these organizations. I get all their, you know, newsletters online and journals and so on. And I am also a member of the Church and Synagogue Association because I am the chairperson of the library and archives committee at our – at the church to which I belong in Forest Hills and I have gone to three of their conferences. I couldn't go this year and it is also a wonderful group and I always come back full of ideas and I am on their membership committee, so I mean I, you know, I do engage in professional organizations.

JF: Even in retirement.

CC: Even in retirement.

JF: You are working for the profession.

CC: Right.

Corson, C. transcript

JF: Do you - well, actually it seems like your position in management, you still had a lot of interaction with the patrons.

CC: Yes.

JF: Do you feel like it made any difference to be a director or is there any special you would advise librarians to become directors, or is this just another aspect of the profession?

CC: Hmm, well it – it certainly changed my point of view because I was more involved with budgeting. I, you know, I had to super – well, I supervised the staff, you know, even before. No, I became the director of it (laughter). I was – I was supervising a staff and so there were often staff issues to deal with and uh I am trying to think what else. Well, and I had more interaction with the – with the administration. You know, I had to present goals to them. I was evaluated by them so it was, you know, it was more of a responsibility. I wore many hats while I was at Spence. You know, I was administrator, reference librarian, interlibrary loan librarian – uh, I mean you name it. Somewhere I have a whole list of all the things that, you know, that I had to do. I mean I was responsible for binding, for acquisitions.

JF: Now since you have left, is there still one person that does all of this or have they hired more people and, and divvied up the work more? Or do you know?

CC: Well there are still, you know, there are – I mean the per – the person who succeeded me has, you know, she is retired now just this year and I am not as aware of the staffing situation, you know, if they have better staffing or some of the same things. But her interests were different from mine. You know, I was a – I held banned books week, you know, celebrations every year and so on and got into amazing conversations with the students, you know, because most of the books that were banned were books that were required reading for them, so it was, you know, very interesting things.

I always had big displays and brought in – I remember once when every year the school did a Shakespeare costume so I decided we are going to have a Shakespeare display in the library. You know, not just books, and I called up the costume institute at the Metropolitan Museum and ask them if they could lend us some dummies and costumes. And our custodian and I drove down there and we picked up a couple of dummies and they stood, you know, in the corners of the library in Shakespearean costumes. Yeah, so, you know, I liked that kind of, you know, bringing visual ways of learning and may be that has something to do also with my art background, you know.

JF: Well that gets to the service part of the interview which is clearly your library interacted with places outside the library. In what ways did you interact with the community and what do you think the ideal role of the library is in a larger community.

CC: Well, I think I already mentioned to you some of that. I used the New York Public Library very heavily, the New York Society Library was another source that to which I sent students and my requiring them all to have library cards, you know, so I felt that the community was used well and it's a great advantage to be a librarian in a city like New York where there is so much available and, you know, you keep yourself informed.

And what would I say to the rest of it – how is it affecting libraries? Well, the world especially as it relates to books and information has changed radically. The impact of

technology on the way people use libraries and access information has been profound. Libraries around the world are rethinking their operations – so I mean I think technology has been one of the biggest changes in the way we use libraries.

In some cases, you know, like I just – I have a contact with a 92nd street Y with a librarian there and they are making tremendous changes with their libraries, scattering it all over the building so, I mean, things are, you know, happen for and some of this could be for financial reasons also and may have something to do with staffing.

So, but I think libraries are very different from what it was when I first started. When I came to the Spence School it was a 19th-century library. Wooden paneling, you know, a very different kind of a place so one of the first things that I had to do was, you know, I did a tremendous amount of weeding and, you know, and getting newer material in but it was, you know, I mean they had absolutely no technology to speak of. You know things like projectors and, you know, audio equipment, so slowly, you know, that built up.

JF: So you really had to learn about what – projectors and showing movies aside from the computers you...

CC: Technology. I had to learn how to put the reel on it. Yeah. We also belonged a media center. You know, an independent school IMS, I think – IMC or something they were called, and they had collections of films and videos and for an annual fee we could avail ourselves of that, so that was in a way another way of reaching out, you know, to the community, you know, and we used them quite heavily and so I had to learn how to put them on, you know, the projector.

JF: I have skipped around because what you have said leads into other things, so is there anything that you think that I have left out that you want to talk about or if not, perhaps we could get the final advice and final reflections which we have also kind of already covered. I get the feeling that you enjoyed your career as a librarian.

CC: I loved being a librarian. Actually, I have a neighbor who is a school librarian now and I am mentoring her.

JF: Oh wonderful.

CC: Yeah, she has interviewed me and I have filled out surveys for her and so I, you know, and so I mean there are lots of things going on. Something that I also, you know, the thing that I said I remembered this morning? In 1964-65 the world's fair was in Flushing Meadow Park in Queens, and librarians were asked if they would be willing to demonstrate information access. Well this was the very beginning, you know, of the introduction of computers and both Richard, my husband, and I, we took a two-week training course with IBM and then we were in an IBM pavilion at the, you know, at the fair, and we ended up being more backup people and so on but we were working with punch cards, so that was a totally different experience. But right behind, you know, they had a whole bay of tables where we were sitting and people could come in and ask us information questions and, you know, we had to use punch cards to get at the information.

JF: Wow. That's something.

CC: So that was, I mean, an unusual experience.

JF: Absolutely.

CC: And, you know, something that kind of made me – gave me a sense of what might come. And this huge, I mean I would say the mainframe computer was probably as one of the walls here, you know, humming behind us.

JF: Did it make you feel like Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn in that movie (laughter) where he pits her against the machine but she wins, the librarian.

CC: Well, no, that didn't quite happen. (Laughter) Maybe because we were the backup. Yeah.

JF: I mean I think we have covered your jobs. I don't know if there are any things you – you want to add about whether there are any frustrations or disappointments or any advice that you might have for future librarians.

CC: Well, I think I have told you about some of my, you know, not really disappointments but frustrations, and I just felt that I was, you know, that I was blessed to be in this profession and I always somehow ended up with something that had to do with art. Yeah, I mean, obviously part of me was always looking for that, but I had very unique opportunities of where I worked, you know.

And I was – I am extremely grateful for that and they were all learning experiences and what else can I – what would I say to a new librarian or somebody who is thinking of becoming a librarian? I think I wrote something down here, yeah.

Well, I wrote be flexible. I don't know, I have written so much I can't really find but, you know, be flexible, be – have a sense of humor. I think that played a big role, you know, in my life too because I used to hang a sign above my desk at Spence "Disturb Me."

JF: Oh. (Laughter) Great.

CC: And let me see, what else, I can say. Yeah, well I found the questionnaire that you gave me an opportunity for me to reflect on my profession which I probably never would have done if it hadn't been for this opportunity to be – to be interviewed and, you know, I – I am amazed at all the things that I did and opportunities that I had and would I do it again? Absolutely.

JF: Well, I think you have had a wonderful career. It sounds like lots of fun and you accomplished a lot.

CC: And I would certainly recommend it to, you know, to anyone who wants – I mean the career has changed dramatically in the forty years from when I started and, you know, retired in 2001, but you can tell that I can't stay away from libraries. I have my little library in the church there and –

JF: And you are still going to conferences.

CC: Yeah, and still going to conferences, and we are going to digitize the archives and we are in the midst...

JF: At the church library?

CC: At the church. And we are in the midst of trying to get funding. You know, fund raising for that so, you know, always there are challenges and...

JF: Well that is good.

Corson, C. transcript

CC: And I think that is what makes it such an interesting profession too. That, you know, it is never the same.

JF: Change is good.

CC: Yes, yeah.

JF: Well, thank you very much.

CC: And thank you for this opportunity.

JF: My pleasure.

CC: Improvise, adapt and be flexible – that's what I wrote down.

Interviewed by Jane Brodsky Fitzpatrick; transcribed by Margaret Ann Smith

R. Corson Transcript

JF: This is Jane Fitzpatrick. I am here with Richard Corson at the City University of New York Graduate Center Library Reading Room in New York City, New York. He has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired and Retiring Librarians. It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of the ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is July 17th 2009.

JF: Okay, so the first question, of course, your name and your last library position.

RC: My name is Richard Corson and my last library position was as head librarian at the State University of New York Maritime College Stephen B. Luce Library. That's a mouthful.

JF: That's enough.

RC: (Laughter) ...which is located in the Bronx, New York at the confluence of the East River and the Long Island Sound.

JF: In a lovely pentagonal fort.

RC: Right.

JF: The first question I have for you is why or when did you decide to become a librarian?

RC: I decided to go to library school when I was in my final year at college and I didn't have a clue of what I wanted to do. I had been doing some research for one of the government department faculty there, doing a lot of documents research and other things in connection with a book he was writing, and when I told him...when I asked him what should I do, he said "Well, why don't you go to library school?" And I said "What's that?" (Laughter)

JF: Right. This was at Wesleyan College in Connecticut?

RC: In Middletown, Connecticut. Yes, yes, right.

JF: Middletown, Connecticut. So, where did you then attend library school and what years?

RC: I went to Columbia University School of Library Services, SLS, which was - went out of business a few years ago, and I attended for basically one full year.

JF: So you went full time? You didn't work.

RC: I went full time.

JF: And was that an MLS at the time?

RC: Yes, it was an MLS at that time.

JF: Do you have any memory of your most or least favorite classes?

RC: Well I think my most favorite class was one taught by Bertha Fricke and it was a history of books and printing, and she was a very elderly lady at that time but she had the full run of the special collections at Butler Library at Columbia. And she knew her stuff. And very, uh you know, she loved it and she communicated that love for books and printing so I got the most I think out of that. My most difficult course was theory of classification. (Laughter)

Corson, R. transcript

JF: Somehow I knew you were going to say that. (Laughter) So going back a little bit, were you an avid reader? Do you think your love of books had anything to do with your deciding to become a librarian?

RC: Well, I was probably - I read a lot. Yes, I was a good reader and I enjoyed reading and I was often at the public library as a kid and I had a crush on the librarian, the public librarian of Winter Park, Florida, when I was a freshman in high school I think. Miss Charlotte Moughton. (Laughter)

JF: Oh, well we will see if we can get her for a....

RC: There's a Moughton room in the library there. (Laughter)

JF: We will have to see if we can get her for an interview. Is she still around?

RC: Not around.

JF: Not with us anymore.

RC: No, no. (Laughter)

JF: Were the classes at library school relevant to your career?

RC: I guess they were. I didn't think much of the education I got there at the library school. I thought it was very cut and dried, maybe because I was spoiled by Wesleyan and everything where it was very, you know. I loved it and I got into things deeply but I had a good time in New York. (Laughter) I met my wife so...

JF: Was she at Columbia at the same time?

RC: She - it turned out that she was a part-time student at Columbia and so we met..

JF: In the library program.

RC: In the library program. We met about five months after I started there. She took evening courses; I took daytime so we didn't, you know, we didn't cross paths.

JF: And how long after that did you get married?

RC: Approximately five months. (Laughter)

JF: I don't think we actually got the years that your were at Colum...the year that you were at Columbia?

RC: I think I was at Columbia in 1961 to '62, that, you know, that academic year of '61-'62.

JF: And what do you think about the recent trend of taking the word "library" or "library science" out of the description of library schools? Information schools?

RC: I am torn, because I - I, you know, I think the library is the most important thing and the other things are supportive and ancillary to it. And I - I don't think libraries are old fashioned or anything. I like the word library in it.

JF: I think part of the thinking goes that maybe it will attract more people if you..

RC: Probably true.

JF: If you have - take the word "library" out which I guess is kind of sad.

RC: You know I thought Columbia made a bad mistake by eliminating its program. It was really short sighted. They thought that computers were going to replace librarians. They were wrong.

JF: You know that librarians were going to have to become

RC: More important, actually. (Laughter)

JF: Exactly, exactly. What is the most important thing you learned on the job that you could not have learned in library school?

RC: I guess the importance of face-to-face contact with your clients and, you know, having that experience which you didn't get in library school. Just the ebb and flow of everyday communications when you are a librarian, especially at the reference desk, where you find out that things that you were searching for somebody else a few days or a few years later apply to somebody else and you kind of accumulate your knowledge, and you really become a generalist. I think you know a lot of things which is...can help other people.

JF: What do you wish you would have known before you began your first job?

RC: It's probably - oh no, I think I knew I wasn't going to earn much during my career and that wasn't a problem so I, you know, I – I probably would have liked to have known how much I would of – how much I was to enjoy the work I did. When you are first starting a career, you don't know if it's, you know, what if you are going to like it or if it was the right thing but I really in retrospect, you know, I wish I knew how much I would have liked my work. (Laughter)

JF: Can you tell...were there, uh, a mix of men and women at Columbia or?

RC: Yes, at the library school and on the faculty too, yes.

JF: Did you, uh, have any paid or unpaid library experience prior to attending library school or during?

RC: Just the research I did for this professor at Wesleyan. Uh, you know, I got a small stipend or something. I can't remember now actually, but I don't think it was just a fixing-up-my grades matter. (Laughter)

JF: (Laughter) And what was your first library job out of library school?

RC: My first job was at the State University of New York Maritime College Library.

JF: And you were hired as?

RC: I was hired as an assistant librarian, and the pay was \$5,910 a year. (Laughter)

JF: Wow, plus benefits.

RC: And that was about 30% or 40% more than Harvard was offering me.

JF: No kidding.

RC: Yes, and for the same work, because I was accepted there and I decided I need the money if I am getting married, so... (Laughter)

JF: Well, I think Harvard is notoriously underpaid.

RC: Yes.

JF: I think they like to..

RC: It is a privilege to work there. You want to get paid too? (Laughter)

JF: Exactly.

RC: Well, I needed to get paid so...

JF: And who interviewed you for that first position?

RC: I think my interview for my first successful position was the director of the library at that time, the head librarian at that time, Nat Whitten. Nathaniel. Joseph Nathaniel Whitten.

And by Filomena Magavero. She was the reference librarian, basically the associate librarian at that time.

JF: And were there other librarians on staff at the time?

RC: At that time there were, um, I would say four librarians there: Two reference librarians, the head librarian and the cataloguer, plus clerks. So the staff was at seven, a small school...a small library. (Laughter)

JF: And did you have...outside of the questions at the interview, was there any kind of test you had to take to show them you knew how to catalogue?

RC: Not for that job. No, not for that but I had been interviewed at other places before that interview.

JF: And where else besides? Well, you went to Harvard.

RC: The Harvard one which was...I had no test there. It was just, uh you know, looking at my, you know, academics, you know, and meetings, seeing how I responded. But I did apply for a cataloguing job (laughter) at Pratt Institute and I was given a...I had to catalogue a French book. Duh. (Laughter) So anyway I figured I didn't want to be a cataloguer anyway and that solidified that idea.

JF: Did they look at it right away and say you did this wrong or you just?

RC: They didn't need to. (Laughter)

JF: (Laughter) I don't know how fair that was, asking you to catalogue a French book.

RC: Yeah.

JF: Anyway. Um...

RC: My language abilities have remained to this day minuscule.

JF: Challenged.

RC: (Laughter) Yes.

JF: So what, so the year you started at Maritime College that was?

RC: September 1962. September 6th to be exact.

JF: And do you remember your first – well, what was your experience in the beginning of the job? Were you mostly at the reference desk?

RC: I was hired as assistant reference librarian so that was – and uh, so I was Mrs. Magavero, "Fil." Magavero was really my mentor in that job and just as a librarian, so I modeled a lot of my way I worked on her, you know, approach. And she was very detail-oriented and she had a much better memory than I did. (Laughter) So I was kind of eased into it but, you know, I – it was a small school and it was kind of unique school and so I started, you know, manning – staffing the reference desk right away. Right away, just basically after the first week I was there, evenings and things.

JF: Just to add something in here. Filomena Magavero's interview that I did a couple of years ago will also be part of the ALA Capturing Our Stories. So the Maritime College is a rather unique place and anything that you learned in library school probably didn't really apply to the kinds of reference questions you got there.

RC: Yes, that's true, except the how to find information of course was the, you know, an important part of the reference courses. And it was just the resources I used at the Maritime

College were quite different from most of the resources we became familiar with at Columbia like the uh ... anyway. (Laughter)

JF: Like the charts and the uh, when they - when they get ready for the cruise every year.

RC: There's a lot more engineering, you know, type of things. A lot more business kinds of things and Columbia was more, I think more on history and bibliography. It was just a different, different approach. This was more of a technical school and especially when I first got there, it was a very much, you know, technical school. The faculty was primarily nonacademic type of faculty. They have come up, you know, as mariners or something, and so the course work was much different. It was not challenging as a reference – you know, to be a reference librarian there at the beginning.

JF: And was the library heavily used either when you started or at any other point?

RC: No it was fairly lightly used throughout my career. There was like an ebb and flow since it was a maritime school, but um the – so partly as a result of that, I and members of the staff would develop ways of enticing more students to the library with various programs that we would, you know, do somehow tied into intellectual pursuits like arts programs. (Laughter)

JF: Well, I am going to ask you about one of those arts programs a little bit later.

RC: Arts and umm – you know, exhibitions. Yeah.

JF: How did your position change or how did you get promoted at the college and give me a time line perhaps?

RC: Well, when I first got to the Maritime College I was aware that they were planning a new library. They were planning to build a library in the same building but in a new space, a much larger space though. I think within two years or so, or three years after I started there we moved into this new library, so it was a much larger, more spacious comfortable place.

And, umm, as part of that expansion, we developed an audiovisual program for the first time. This was the big thing in the '60s, audiovisual. They were just coming in with big 2" Ampex, yeah, video recorders and things like this. But, anyway, I did some postgraduate work at NYU in media and I became the audiovisual librarian. I set up the program there basically, and I - I helped design the facilities that we installed in this new library. And I became that associate librarian in 1965. Pretty fast.

JF: And then what was the hierarchy in the library at that time?

RC: At that time it was the head librarian, two associate librarians. You know, basically like I say, very small. (Laughter)

JF: And so when did you move up into the chief librarian? How long did Nat Whitten...?

RC: I became chief librarian in 1970, so I was there eight years, I guess.

JF: So in those eight years, you did mostly reference work or?

RC: Well, in '62 until '65 I did reference. In '65 I became the audiovisual librarian and I only had one night of reference after that because I was doing completely...completely different things.

JF: How and when did you become the head librarian?

RC: Well, they had a search apparently and I applied for the job and I was recommended for it and I became the head librarian in 1970.

JF: Did Nat Whitten retire?

RC: He retired.

JF: He retired. Okay. When you became head librarian, how did your daily work change?

RC: Well, I was...yeah, I was still involved in audio, you know, in reference and in audiovisual in some way because of my past experience with it, so I kept a hand in there. But it really became much more administratively based and saw less of the students than I normally, than I had in the past in either of my two positions.

JF: And did you miss that part of it?

RC: Yes I did. One, one nice thing about the college is that they have a ship's library and I was able to go as ship's librarian on a number of summers and be the, basically the librarian on board the ship, the reference librarian and it was a good experience.

JF: So that is something I would like to talk about because that is certainly a unique aspect of the Maritime College is the ship's library and if you could describe a little bit and tell me about some of your cruises.

RC: It was what is called these days an unfunded mandate. We never had a budget for the ship's library to speak of. Maybe we had a couple of thousand dollars once in a while, but we never ever had a budget despite all kinds of maneuvers to get a budget put into, you know, into our annual budget request. It – so we were always scraping and scrimping and doing things but, you know, we – we assembled a library from various sources and we got money from grants, I guess, usually to get shelving and things like that for the ship's library.

JF: What was the first year that they had a library on the ship?

RC: They had had one already when I had gotten there, so that wasn't – but during the years that I was there we changed ships of course and we ended up in a much larger and more comfortable space than we had in past years so we were able to do more.

JF: So you had a special collection in the Luce library that went on the ship every summer.

RC: Yes, we had some books from a special maritime, you know, collection called the Robert Gove Collection, Memorial Collection that was things relating to life at sea and to seamanship and things, so we would bring that from the fort library. Otherwise, we had a core library on board and a lot of paperbacks and things, and we ran a film program on the ship. When I first came there we would get our films in 16mm reels, and we would get them from places like the Seaman's Church Institute or other places and we would show them on the deck of the ship at night in a rolling ship (humming sound) so anyway it was a nice experience.

JF: When was the first cruise you went on?

RC: Umm, it was probably in 1963 or so. I don't have it – I don't know exactly but I have gone on about six or seven cruises over the years.

JF: Did you always keep, uh, diaries? I know when I was working with you we had very detailed...

Corson, R. transcript

RC: Yes, I kept diaries. I should have looked at them, but anyway, yes, I used to. There is a lot of time on a ship and this was how I was able to spend some of my time detailing.

(Laughter)

JF: And was the library regularly or heavily used? Or is it mostly for recreational reasons?

RC: It was primarily used for recreation reading, yeah. Yeah, we had some courses and some classes come down but they were usually – most of the experience on board the ship for our students was hands-on. There were some courses but they were pretty much by the book courses and not requiring research or anything. It was just rote memorization, learning parts and things.

JF: And I know in later years, some of the librarians were responsible for giving lectures or preparing introductions to the different ports. Did you do that?

RC: Yes, I think I started, you know, this was one of my know-your-port things or port lectures where we'd try to give the students before the ship left actually some information about the various ports of call that were going to be made. The ship usually went to four or five ports in Europe usually so we would try preparing them in some ways of things, and we would also collect travel guides, you know, for that year and other things too. And we would have – when we could, we'd have people from beyond-- the consulates of various countries--come in and make a presentation which was nice.

JF: At, at the ports or at the college?

RC: At the college beforehand.

JF: So the school itself and, of course, the ship is sort of a quasi-military organization. Did you uh – what – how did that impact your role as a librarian?

RC: Not really. I wore a uniform on board but I had no real rank. It was just a – I had a khaki uniform like, well, all the other people. (Laughter)

JF: And in the library on land at the Luce Library were you uh – were the librarians ever part of the regiment or I think at one point they did wear uniforms.

RC: In early years, maybe in the '50s, the librarians might have worn uniforms, but by the time I got there we were all in civilian clothes. I might mention when I first got there the college was all male – you know, the student body was all male. And there was quite a lot of hubbub when they brought women students into the regiment so it took – there was a lot of alumnae comment and other things and dah-dah-dah, but it worked out fine, of course.

JF: That was in late '70s, the mid to late '70s?

RC: I am not sure. It was probably in the '70s. Yeah, yeah.

JF: And so how did your – how did you fit in with what – well did the alumnae...

RC: Well I promoted coeducation since I had never been at a coeducation school until then. Basically, I – Wesleyan was all male. The high school I went to for a year or two in Lake Placid was all male, so (Laughter)

JF: And the faculty at the Maritime College was also all male until...

RC: All male except for Mrs. Magavero who, you know, was library faculty, and there is a difference between library faculty and instructional faculty, especially back then.

JF: The difference being?

RC: I think – um – it's part of it was the way the state classified personnel and the teaching faculty were classified differently from the library faculty who were – would come up, you know, beforehand they had been in the civil service and then they had changed to something called the professional service which is, you know, they had more vacation and other things like that, more privileges, but they did not have the faculty academic year and other things like that.

JF: And the pay was at – on par with faculty levels?

RC: Not if you counted the fact that you were working twelve months instead of, you know, eight months or something.

JF: Right.

RC: And of course the state university's faculty salary rate was about two thirds of that of SUNY, so which is still true. (Laughter)

JF: Going back to the Luce Library then, how did you prepare or how did you evolve into being a director and what kind of measures did you use for outcomes and statistics? What did you have to do for statistics? Did you report to the administration of the college or?

RC: I always prepared statistics and I had the feeling that they were never looked at by the administration. I used it – you know, we had switched to a basically zero-based budget, you know, request program during my years there where we had justify everything and I would justify things based on – but I did use them. I think one of my weaknesses as a library director was not being able to embroider the truth too much.

JF: Did you have much support from the administration? Were they...

RC: The administration, I felt most times didn't have a clue about ... They were not academically oriented. Most of them were, you know, admirals from the Navy or Coast Guard and they were not focused on academics. They were focused more on the college as a quasi-military institution and various, you know, regimental concerns.

JF: So they didn't really care about the library pretty much one way or the other.

RC: The thing that really helped the library was they finally – the school started a graduate program and that gave us the impetus to, you know, really expand the collection. Broaden it and make it deeper in many areas.

JF: So you got funding when they started the graduate program.

RC: Yes, we got more funding and we got special funding too, various grants and things to build up the collection.

JF: Was the faculty on campus supportive, involved?

RC: They were supportive but they weren't that involved.

JF: So they never really lobbied for more library support.

RC: They supported it but it was a very top down kind of school and the faculty really didn't have a great deal of influence unfortunately. They were – it was a school unlike many other colleges where the faculty has much say in how things are run.

JF: Because there is always a little sort of tension between the regiment and the academic side of things. How did the library get funded and what did you learn about those complicated finances over the years?

RC: Well, as I say, we - there was a formula that was used by the State University of New York based on the number of students and other things like that and programs which fed into this budget thing and then you had to justify everything as I said. I can't go much beyond that I guess.

JF: Okay. What responsibilities as a director did you find most rewarding or most daunting, beyond the budget (laughter) which was always daunting?

RC: Most rewarding was just, you know, when people on the staff developed their qualifications and became – you know, they were promoted and then they took over more responsibilities. Yeah, I, yeah, I think working with the staff was my most enjoyable part. It was a very collegial staff, I think, and we worked together on things and ...

JF: You mentioned Mrs. Magavero as a mentor and a coworker. How - who else did you have working for you? Were you able to increase the staff?

RC: Well, some people were mentors in the fact that I would do everything the opposite of what they would do. (Laughter) So I don't know. They all kind of, you know, guide I think. You know, certain people were mentors to me in that way.

JF: Do you want to..

RC: I don't know if I should name names but...(Laughter)

JF: Well...

RC: Nat Whitten would be one. I mean he was – he loved me. I mean there was something he – he felt very strongly about me which was kind of embarrassing sometimes, but he was always very supportive. But on the other hand, his - his way of, you know, doing things, picking favorites – and yeah, of which I was a prime example. I didn't feel that that was professional and I really did not do that, I don't think, when I was a librarian. I based it, you know, on performance and, you know, abilities. (Laughter)

JF: So you ended up – did you expand the staff, increase the number of people at any time?

RC: Yes, during the height of the, you know, the school's – a lot of the library's funding and everything is based on the college's enrollment. If the college isn't doing well, we are cutting back in staff jobs throughout the campus, and for a while the college wasn't doing well enrollment wise. And, but at the height, I think the library had thirteen staff members total.

JF: How many librarians would that be?

RC: One, two, three, four, five...six. Six librarians, one technician and the rest were clerks.

JF: It's not like that now.

RC: No. Seven librarians actually. Yeah, so like I say it changes. Well, technology changes and the needs for personnel change and how you do things, so I can understand that. I just might – I don't know if you want just a ... At this time I should say I enjoyed my work a great deal. I felt, you know, I had a great time as librarian and one of the things I always tell people is that it changed so much while I was there because when I came in 1962, manual typewriters were, you know, the most advanced things we had in the library at that time.

And over time so many other things changed, and, you know, so we really went from the nineteenth century techniques to the twenty-first century during my time there and that was, you know, even though it took us a long time to get technology in the library because the administration didn't believe in PCs. They were mainframe people and we went through years of not being able to get what we wanted, but on the other hand we skipped a generation of clunkers (laughter) so it might have been foresight on the vice president for academic affair's part. (Laughter)

JF: I will skip ahead then to the technology section to ask how and when you incorporated technology. What did you do? Clearly you didn't do it with a great deal of help from the administration.

RC: Right. I guess that the first technology, I mean that we were, you know, was the audiovisual things that we started bringing in in the mid '60s and there was nothing like that on campus, so in a way we were the only place doing interesting things like that on campus. And then the school had many computers and, you know, which we never – you know, we used some times but it was just impossible with card readers and all this other stuff and so (laughter).

And I guess the first technology the library had then would be some of the - the CD with film computer turnkey things for, you know, like reference sources and things like that. And those are the first things - types of machines that we had except for microfilm and microfiche. You know, we were really – the library was usually getting things before most anybody else on the campus because the campus was so (laughter) backwards as far as technology so we pushed and pushed and pushed and pushed to get things.

JF: And when did you – what - was the SUNY Office of Library Services helpful in that?

RC: Yes, that was – when they developed the, you know, the Office of Library Services and set up the shared databases and, you know, where you would – you know, they would buy access to the databases you know, as the state university so there was purchasing power there. And that made a great deal of difference in the – that brought in online catalogues. Of course, the OCLC and so that was, you know, that was a huge change for the college which never would have happened without the Office of Library Services in the state university. They were always very supportive of us because we were small and they understood that so we were able to probably get more than we, you know, paid for.

JF: Right. So you brought PCs into the library about when? I know they were there when I started in 1994.

RC: I was going to say in the '80s some time but I really, I don't know that but, you know, we did as we got more technology, we did bring in – we, we got a technical person in our technical services scene because we were using computers for cataloguing and, you know, we were using more and more for other things too so...

JF: You also had a campus mainframe that everything went through, right?

RC: Not for that – not for the catalog.

JF: Not for the catalog. Umm, how about communications like e-mail and when did that start? I know that I think some of it was through the ILS [?] as well or ...

RC: No, I think that was pretty much through the campus office of, you know, but I used my AOL account for years before they had anything at the college so once again that was

JF: So you feel the library really led the campus in technology.

RC: Yeah, and sometimes we just did it on our own. (Laughter)

JF: It came out of the library's budget then for the most part or that was just sometimes yes and sometimes no?

RC: My only, yeah, I mean, you know, it would come out of the library's budget – computers and things like that. Yeah. Unless once again there was some major initiatives on a SUNY-wide basis and sometimes we would get things from that. They were doled out.

JF: Hmm. Did you consult with any publications that were important or over the years? This was before the Internet, before blogs, before list serves, and were you a member of any of the library associations?

RC: Well, I was a member you know of ACRL and ALA for a while. I was not a big person in organizations like that. I was – if anything it was more the local, the state branches of them that I was involved in, and with SUNY too. One of the things I found and maybe it was a good excuse, but the state – the Maritime College campus is isolated. Oh, you are in New York City. Yeah, but you are still isolated. You can't do anything. You can't go out to a meeting in the city and get back to work. It is like an all day thing, so that kind of – you know, we were very much isolated as – as members, as librarians actually. We didn't have a lot of communications so...

JF: There was no funding to go to conferences or even in the city or in other parts of the state?

RC: Yeah, yeah, that was always a struggle, yes. (Laughter)

JF: I want to go back to the general career questions because we talked a little bit about how unique the Maritime College is, but I wanted to ask you a couple of difficulties that you faced during your career. Is there – were there any times when you had any issues where you had to consult the Library Bill of Rights or another ALA or faculty policy?

RC: There were a couple of incidents or situations. Umm, one I had to make use of the ALA. I believe it was the ALA and the Library Bill of Rights perhaps, umm when parents started, you know, campaigning to get the book out of the collection written by a communist and the author's name was Victor Perlo. And it was something – I can't remember now.

JF: But we can look that up

RC: Yeah, but we had such a – you know, I mean, - you know, we, we kept the book and everything but it was such a weird thing to happen at a college and it kind of – at that time, many of the students and the parents at Maritime College were very unsophisticated in the way they were. And the college, you know, was seen as a trade school and what's this communist stuff doing there? So that was one thing. And then umm...

JF: And ??????? Was that an event that was known around campus? Did people support your position?

RC: Yes it was known on campus. We were supported, yes, by that. And also I think the AAUP was involved. The American Association of University Professors, excuse me, which

we had a chapter on campus and at one point I was president of that chapter, and during that time I was president of the chapter, the college - the library ran a - what we called the library lecture program and we had various talks and we had performances too actually, and music and other things. And one of our performances was the “Art of the Far Eastern” or near eastern dance. Belly dancing.

This took place during the time the World’s Fair was in New York so you could date that by then, yeah. And the dancer who came to perform and to discuss the history of belly dancing and its art was named Farida. And the admiral, the president of our college at that time, when he heard that we were going to have Farida there for a lecture demonstration went the equivalent of ‘60s ballistic. And he said “Oh, I know I saw her in a smoker the other day,” you know, so he was really putting his foot into his mouth of course, but this became a cause celebre and the AAUP chapter met on campus, met and you know made a resolution that this program be, you know, go on and that there not be this kind of censorship. And the program did go on – two performances actually – in the library and was very successful and, of course, Farida turned out to be, which I didn’t know at the time, a girl from my home town in Florida in Winter Park. Her name was Margaret Echols.

JF: Wow, small world.

RC: And she later – she wrote a book later on the subject. You know, she was working at the Moroccan Pavilion doing belly dancing during the World’s Fair, and she went on to become a very well known quilter who uses – used mathematical – a lot of mathematical formulas or, you know, in designing her quilts and so she is better known as a quilter I think than as a belly dancer. Anyway that was one time where the ALA and AAUP and all the, you know, the ideas of freedom of expression and other things were – came into play at our little tiny campus.

JF: Was your job threatened at all during this time or?

RC: Yes, yeah, it was threatened to a certain amount but, you know...(Laughter)

JF: Were you of tenured faculty at the time? May be not that.

RC: I don’t know...I don’t think so yet. No. Anyway I might have just gotten tenure but it didn’t – you know, that wasn’t the main thing. (Laughter) Maybe because I wasn’t paid enough to bother one way or the other.

JF: Umm, what do you uh – I know that the, the library at the Maritime College is not really as central a place as it is on other campuses, but do you think that it had – has a role to play in the larger community? Was there any outreach to the Throgs Neckcommunity which is around there or it was pretty much isolated on campus?

RC: Umm, it was pretty much isolated on camp – we, we tried various things but the, you know, the, the campus is located at the end of a peninsula. There is a guard gate at the entrance and it is pretty, you know, we open our doors to library users certainly. We had a certain amount but it is just very difficult to – you know, and back when I was there, it was difficult to advertise things too in the community, so we didn’t do much with the community. Our community was more – we viewed it more as the maritime business community. You know, we would advertise things to them, various things.

Corson, R. transcript

JF: Was there any interaction with any of the other maritime colleges or King's Point across the water, or the other maritime academies?

RC: Sporadically we would get together and say "we have to get together more often."
(Laughter)

JF: That little bit of water was hard to cross.

RC: Yeah, you know...and, and I would get – just at some point I would like to mention some of the things that our library did to really expand its foot print on campus, because you know, I mentioned a couple of them but you know, another thing that we did even though there wasn't a, you know, academic or program justification for it at that time was to evolve the archives collection because we felt that, you know, that the history of the college is very unique in a way. It's the oldest maritime college in the United States, continuously operating maritime college in the United States founded in 1874 I think.

And so archives – and we looked at archives and we not only collected archives from our school but we also began getting archives from other maritime organizations in New York City in order to save them from destruction, many of them. So as a result, we got the Sailor's Snug Harbor archives and materials before they left Staten Island and moved to South Carolina, and we got the archives from the Marine Society of the City of New York.

JF: Which goes back..

RC: Which goes back before the Revolution actually, so these were things that we got and we were able to get various grants – national, you know, federal grants and other things to develop, to organize the archives and hire people to do it. So it is a small collection but it is kind of unique and it is something that, that we felt was important to do.

And of course, I mentioned the lecture programs. We also had an art program because our students really didn't have a lot of background in the arts or anything, and so we brought – we had exhibitions and we brought artists to talk about why they painted and did things, and so we had some interesting programs which people still remember actually from the '60s.

And then the library also put out a monthly publication called Maritimaand this was something just to inform the faculty of what we were getting and to have information, you know, about the collection and we did this for years.

And then of course the library was - materials from the library formed the core of the, of a maritime industry museum that was established at the college. Many of our – many of the things from our collection went into that museum to start it.

JF: So you collected artifacts as well as...

RC: We collected them and they were donated to us so we accepted them. (Laughter)
But we, you know, we – the college – when the college building, the main building is called Fort Schuylerand that was restored as a WPA project in the 1930s and one of the parts of that was having paintings, WPA painters painted a number of paintings and those were in our collection. And what do we do with them because we had no place to exhibit things. You know, libraries, most of the walls are covered with book shelves so, you know, that ...

JF: Or granite that you can't ...

Corson, R. transcript

RC: Yeah, yeah. So that, you know, we were really involved in that museum which is a very large important museum now in a small field.

JF: And you also have the maritime history collection. Did you start that? Was that your idea?

RC: Yes, that was another thing that just to, you know, as a - our maritime, the State University of Maritime College is probably the preeminent school, the library especially, of all the libraries in the other maritime schools or other state schools but ours is probably the most well developed, and as part of that was making the special collections, I think, in maritime history. Once again it was we collected texts and other things and we tried getting every edition of things just to be a repository for those.

JF: Is there anything else that we haven't covered that I forgot to ask you? I – I would like to talk a little bit about how you think libraries have changed and what you particularly like or dislike about the changes and - unless there is anything we have left out career wise?

RC: Well, I love a lot of the changes. I mean, you know, by being - just being able to search, you know, on line for things and not have to plow through all the books like we used to do.

JF: Indexes. Right.

RC: Yeah, and the indexes and everything is just...it's, it's, it's fantastic. I – I think it is great and I think we get much better results too. And I think, you know, that's – I'm all in favor of change like that. And, I, you know, do love books. (Laughter)

JF: But I think you really led the development of technology in the library. You knew it had to be there and...

RC: And pushing for it and once again it was very frustrating sometimes to see our – my wife happened to be at a girl's school, a private school, as a library director and she would tell me "oh, we just put in a network, ten network computers" and this and that, and here is a high school, you know, which has twice the computer, you know, capabilities of a college. You know that was typical. (Laughter)

JF: Well you were kind of forward thinking in a conservative environment.

RC: Yes, that was.

JF: If you had one piece of advice to give a librarian just starting – I know - well, actually we should go back to your retirement years first. You retired in what year?

RC: 2001. In June, 2001.

JF: Just shy of forty years?

RC: Thirty nine years, yeah, yeah.

JF: And what have you done in your retirement?

RC: Umm, gained ninety pounds. I've...

JF: Professionally speaking. (Laughter)

RC: Well, professionally, not much professionally. I have become a volunteer for Habitat for Humanity. I do all their for the New York affiliates, so I work there. I do a lot of work at home for them and do the inputting of all the gifts into the database and generating thank you letters for those gifts, so I have been doing that for a number of years now.

JF: And are you involved in any library work or libraries at all?

RC: Not really. No, no, I – I'm involved in the college in that I put out a newsletter that I send to alumnae and other people who are interested. I put out an almost weekly newsletter out.

JF: And how did you get in touch with the people to set up that newsletter?

RC: Umm, it just started. Well, to get people to whom – to whom to send it, you mean?

JF: Right. I mean who is interested now that you are not on campus anymore, how do you reach those people?

RC: More word of mouth by people. So it's been e-mail the whole time. It was originally e-mail and now it is in its ninth volume I think. I skipped a couple of years. And, umm, you know, I'm a library user of course, very much so. Public libraries. I – I don't buy books too often and I think it is – you know, Queens Library is a wonderful library and I can order things and have them ready for me so I do maintain that.

JF: If you had a piece of advice to give a librarian just starting their career, do you have any words of wisdom?

RC: (Laughter) I'm sorry, I don't take myself that seriously.

JF: That's okay.

RC: Just enjoy what you do, I guess. Yeah, I mean, yeah, there's a lot of things to learn and working with other people is one joys of working in a library is that – that you are working together with people and, you know, it's an academic and learning experience and so on.

JF: If you had to do it over again, would you change – would you pick the same career?

RC: Yes, I would still do it.

JF: And you would still do it at the Maritime College?

RC: I might like to try some other place but I enjoyed my time. I really, I wouldn't have stayed thirty nine years if I hadn't liked it. Frustrations or not.

JF: That's a career life.

RC: Yeah, so I mean I'm not a good example of a librarian in that I never went anywhere else. (Laughter)

JF: But it was so different there and this is a really unique experience that, you know, especially going on the ship and ...

RC: Yes, it was. For New York City, yes, it was really something.

JF: Is there anything that you really miss? I am sure you don't miss crossing the bridge every day. (Laughter)

RC: The commute there. No, no, I, I'm really – I'm very happy in where I am now and I, you know, as long as I am healthy and can travel and, you know, we are doing things so I don't miss anything. (Laughter)

JF: Is there anything we missed in this interview that you would like to add at this point? Anything we didn't talk about? Words to the wise?

RC: I guess when I first started as a librarian I didn't know how it would work out for me because I, I think my, I knew my abilities were more in reference but I wanted to do technical services work because I didn't want to be in the public that much because I had a severe stutter at

Corson, R. transcript

that time and I was very self conscious about it. And of course, probably the best thing that happened to me is that I got a reference job, so I had no, you know, I had to be out and talk to people so I am not known as an introvert any more I don't think. (Laughter)

JF: Did you think you were when you started?

RC: I probably was although....you know.

JF: Well you were young when you started too, so that...

RC: Very young, yeah.

JF: As we get older, uhh you know, I think we have all become more extroverted.

RC: I enjoyed it.

JF: Okay, if you have any other thoughts or feelings...

RC: No, but thank you for interviewing me.

JF: Well thank you for...

RC: I hope someone finds this amusing at least. (Laughter)

JF: Hopefully, we'll – we'll use your old AV experience and add some multimedia to this.

RC: Okay.

JF: Thank you very much.

RC: Thank you, Jean.

Interviewed by Jane Fitzpatrick; transcribed by Margaret Ann Smith.

Feinman Transcript

This is Sarah Albert. I am here with Valerie Feinman at the Hilton--oh, Valerie Feinman: Marriott. Sarah Albert: At the Marriott--should I start over? Valerie Feinman: Nah, its fine, just leave it. Sarah Albert: --In Anaheim, California. She has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired/Retiring Librarians. It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is June thirty Valerie Feinman: Twenty-ninth Sarah Albert: Twenty-ninth, 2008.

So, Valerie, why don't we start with your most recent job and then a little about that and then we can talk about your history in the library profession. Valerie Feinman: Okay. My most recent formal job was that of instruction librarian at Adelphi University in Garden City, Long Island. I began that about 1983. When the incumbent left, we could not find anyone else and my dean decided I was a big ham and, therefore, could be an instruction librarian. I had a lot of fun during those years. A lot of fun.

The students didn't have their own computers, we had to teach them how to use the university computers. We didnt have that many databases, and no one was familiar with doing anything, so that if one of the instructions was to press F9, to transfer to a different database, the students had to have it explained that this meant not to touch F and then 9. Instruction was a lot of fun. I got involved in ALA, ACRL instruction section, and LIRT, the Library Instruction Round Table section. I wrote articles for them, I attended LOEX [the Library Orientation Exchange , founded 1971, at Eastern Michigan University]. I got involved in committees, and know a lot of people because my dean introduced me to a lot of people. By the way, my dean was Rochelle Sager, and one of her best friends was Mary Reichel, so right from the beginning I had a mentor in Mary Reichel. So, instruction was fun.

Sarah Albert: Okay, what were some other committees you served on in ALA? Valerie Feinman: Oh, well Sarah Albert: Or Valerie Feinman: How about Emerging Technologies committee of LITA in the 70s? Okay? Again, Emerging Technologies in IS; but it wasnt called that it was called something else--whatever. But mostly, I have been on LIRT. In several different positions. Most recently, as Elder Statesman to say "been there, done that, choose something different" every time the planning committee gets off track. And I am on the planning committee for the next retreat or pre-conference of LIRT which will be held in Boston-- that's fun. Sarah Albert: Thanks.

Valerie Feinman: Before that, I was at Adelphi; but in a rather different position. I came to Adelphi on May Day, in 1970, which I remember well because one of the faculty members planted a tree; and the librarians all went out because we were faculty to watch the tree being planted. I was brought in as a serials librarian, which they had never had before, because I supposedly had a good serials background. And the serials department was partly in reference, and then it was in technical processes, and then it was a separate department called academic technologies--which I became the head of--and that included non-print serials and microfilms

and microforms. So, I did that for several years: from 1970 to 1982-1983, when they wanted me to move into the instruction section.

Before 1970, I had applied for that job at Adelphi; but the person that they had hired was a male. This would have been the second male librarian in the library or maybe the third--and, unfortunately, no one had told him that he shouldn't leave his bottles in the reference desk. So, he was fired after a couple of months when they realized that he was very drunk in the evenings--and giving very bad advice to the students. And they phoned me up and offered me the job.

Before that, I was at Columbia. Columbia is a very interesting library. They hired me to work on a project called "PIC:" Parkinson's Information Center. Back in those days, the MEDLINE database--which was called MEDLARS--had "Parkinson's" as a word; but it did not have "dopamine" as a search concept. And I was part of a research group that was desperately looking through medical articles that might mention the word Parkinsons to find any kind of reference to the drug which then became dopamine. And this was, of course, going to go online with the National Library of Medicine. It was a fun and scary kind of job to have.

However, after I had been there six weeks, the grant gave out. I was furious: they had known that when they hired me. So, I walked into the Columbia offices and said, "You can't fire me just because the grant" you know--blah-blah-blah-blah. And they gave me a position as cataloger of business periodicals--which was terrible. I didn't know a thing about business. And I'd only been there a few months when Adelphi called and asked me to come work for them. I was very happy to be rid of the long commute into Columbia. So, that's my business life in New York. Before that, I was in Syracuse.

Sarah Albert: Okay. Do you want to talk about how you got started in libraries

Valerie Feinman: Oh, sure

Sarah Albert: As a teenager--or

Valerie Feinman: Yes. Absolutely. That's really the best place.

Sarah Albert: Okay.

Valerie Feinman: Okay, when I was eleven or twelve and doing debates in junior high, my godmother and my father got together. She was the reference head in the Hamilton Public Library--head of the reference department at the public library in Hamilton--decreed that I should think about a career as a librarian. This was 1950, approximately, and the day I turned fourteen, which was in 1951, I began working in the Hamilton Public Library. My godmother, Isabelle Skelly, said, "If you want to have a career in Hamilton, in Canada--anywhere--you might as well become a librarian."

Something that most of you watching this don't understand--or won't--is that women in Canada had very few options open to them in the '50s. If they became a teacher, they had to retire when they were pregnant. They could become a nurse, if they didn't get married. They could try to go on to graduate school; but they were not allowed into architecture schools, medical schools, law schools, etc. I had a good friend who wanted to become a lawyer. Her father was a chief justice and he got her into law school. No one would hire her and she worked in her father's office. And that was the truth of life in 1950, '55, '59--when I graduated from college.

So, I started at the public library. What does a page do? Well, I started in the summertime, so they gave me all the dirty work: unloading boxes of gift books that came in from all sorts of funny places, and arranging them alphabetically by author--when possible; however, many, many books were in sets of 20, 30, 40 volumes on flimsy paper that were meant to grace the shelves of someone's library but they were not meant for a public library. And one of the things I was allowed to do, besides arranging books, was to look at these sets of books, and if there was anything I like there where there were two or more copies, I could have it. I have a big collection of flimsy-paper classic books dating back from that. I still have them.

Okay, during the winters of the year, I would work in one of the departments--always the Fine Arts Department, or Arts and Sciences. This had the 500s, 600s, 700s of Library of Congress [DDC]. I would shelve books, and I would sit at the information desk when the librarian was off-duty or on a break or that sort of thing. After I was 15 or 16 they just left me at that desk all the time--and went off and did their work, because I was just used to doing it, and people were used to me. I worked three nights a week when I was in high school. I worked one or two nights a week and all day Saturday when I was in college. So, I was there a lot. I worked in every department except the children's department.

And one of the things I remember best, was copying the citations that the reference librarians would make for local content. There was no Canadian Index in the '50s, and the kinds of indexes they were getting in the States were very poor for Canadian content. So we would keep files on people that were important in Canada, people that were important in Hamilton, the government in Ontario and in Toronto, and the local celebrities, and what was going on. So we had all sorts of card files telling which folder to go to get this information. There was like a biography section, and there was a current events section, the Hamilton history section.

And I used "library hand" and wrote all these cards--hundreds of them--over the years. And when I went back to the new library 30 years later, the history section still had all those cards. Why would they replace them? Because the Canadian Index did not go that far back. Even when they made an index, it wasn't retroactive to the '40s and '50s--which was sort of fun.

Okay, after I left college I went to Toronto, and worked in North York which is the northern half of the city of Toronto. Now-- And I worked in the library system there, which was a very interesting system: It was about six miles from north to south, and about 25 miles from east to west. The population had grown from 80,000 to 800,000 in less than ten years. So the library had built a main library, three branches, and had four bookmobiles as they tried to figure out where the population was moving next. And to service the new schools that were just mushrooming at that time.

Okay, the first thing I did was work for the cataloging department. They knew that I was experienced enough to spend all day Monday filing all the new cards or to check filing done by others. Mostly I was the checker. I also looked up subject headings--looked up using Library of Congress or whatever--and did a whole lot of alias files for people with pseudonyms, which was an awful lot of fun. We had a whole printing department in the library that printed the cards for the branches on different colored cards, so that was taken care of. I didn't have to type anything--

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I was just doing all kinds of good things. Except it became very boring; so, I decided that I'd like to work with the bookmobiles.

Bookmobiles was fun. You usually worked four days a week, from 9 to 6 on one day--two days--and 9 to 9 or 10 on the other days, because you had to go out on the buses. We had two buses, and two cabs, plus a trailer. I was mostly on that one. We were paid \$3 extra every month so that we could have pants and be decorous climbing into the cab--and to pay for the dry-cleaning of said pants. [Laughing] Strange.

So that was a lot of fun, although you had to do a lot of juggling in your head to make sure you got the right books for this school, and for that community, and you always carried books by the box-load in and out of the bookmobiles. The most exciting thing, was the night we were coming back across this long, 8-lane highway in a snow-storm. And the trailer decided that it wanted to go down in the ditch. And it did. And it disconnected. And the cab only went partway down. And we got out of the cab and called the police and the tow-trucks, etc., and they came and pulled the cab back onto the highway so that we were able to go back to the library; but the van took two or three days to dig out because it was covered with snow and deeply down. So that was sort of a different kind of thing to happen to a very young person.

After that I also worked in a branch library for--I guess--seven or eight months, replacing someone who had the degree--as I did--but was going to attend library school. I was the children's librarian in the branch for that. And this was the year Kennedy died and I remember what was going on in Canada at that time.

Okay, at the end of the year, the children's librarian came back--what was Valerie going to do? Well, it seems that even though there were more than a thousand people applying for every library student position at the University of Toronto, where they had only 100 openings--they would--see the New York Public Library couldn't wait for that--so it would send people down to Syracuse, to the summer school, and after three summers you would have your library degree. So, I went down to Syracuse. They facilitated the whole thing. [I] started taking a reference course and a cataloguing course at Syracuse.

Well, the reference librarian called me in about three weeks into the six-week program, and said, "What are you doing in this course? You know all of this, except for the difference between Canadian and American sources." And when she found out a bit about my background, she said, "Great. We will give you free tuition, and make you the Physics librarian, as a para-professional"

Sarah Albert: And that was related to what you had studied--?

Valerie Feinman: Oh, yes. As an undergraduate, I had studied chemistry, geology, physics, mathematics, etc. I was majoring in general sciences--this is a side story--because, again, there were no jobs for Canadian women in sciences. Once, while I was at college, my Dean called me in and said, "You are not doing very well in your chemistry courses. I think that you should not want to be a chemist." And I looked him up and down, and said, "Have you been in the science library lately?" He said, "No." He was a geologist--he didn't need the library very much. I said, "Well, the books are all out of order. There's nothing published in the last three years that is a book. The journals are impossible to find. You don't have the latest journals. And

there is not a science librarian. I want to become that science librarian." He said, "My blessings--continue in your courses. We'd love to have you as a science librarian."

So, when I got to Syracuse, I actually became a Physics librarian. And that library had something like 22 faculty members, 125 graduate students, and a lot of undergraduate students. It was a huge department. There was one lady, in the Dean's office, and there was me. No student females, no faculty females. So, all 125 students trouped into the library the first week of school to see what was there [laughs] and it was a very strange kind of life. On the other hand, I'd always been in honors classes where mostly the people were male. In college most of the people were male. There were very few science females. So I was used to being out-numbered by a lot of men. Eventually, one of those physics students and I were married.

At the end of my first year, as physics librarian, I was suckered in by the head of the Upstate Medical Library, also in Syracuse, to do some extra work for him. He wanted some quasi-medical books looked up in the catalogs. He said, eventually, "Why don't you come and work for me. I'll give you lots of money--three times what Syracuse was giving me--and that way you could afford to pay your tuition, and you'll do a project that I want you to do." So, come September, one year after Physics, I went to work as a faculty member--because I was a paraprofessional--in the medical library. Well, that was fun. The project was to produce the first New York State Union List of Serials. These were big things in the '60s. I think we were the sixth in the country to do a state union list. And I went to visit all the state universities--to state president librarians conferences to be introduced. I did the first index. Got my name in the Library of Congress while I was still in library school. That doesn't very often happen.

Okay, after that project was finished, I went on and did a couple of other union lists; and then they decided to send me down to the National Library of Medicine to train on MEDLARS, which is now MEDLINE. After my three-day training, I came back and started teaching the medical faculty how to use MEDLARS to do their searches. This computer use predates all the other periodical indexes you've ever heard of. It was special, it was fun. The medical libraries had lots of money from the State, from the medical societies, from NLM, there were grants all over the place, computers everywhere: Let's get this business going. It was exciting and fun to be doing this in the '60s.

[I] finished my degree in '67. Got married in '69. No--'66 and '67. And we were in Syracuse until '69. So I did a whole lot of different projects at the Medical Center that were absolutely fun and way ahead of anything else. So, I guess one of the funnest things there was after I showed faculty--professor--how to use MEDLARS, and was searching on an operation that we was going to do in a couple of days, we actually found him a brand new article, and the next morning at nine o'clock, I got a phone call. He was in the operating room--would I please bring the article to him because he had forgotten one section of it. And we got it back at the end of the day with a little bit of blood on it. [We] wiped it off and put it back on the shelf. I mean, that--every medical librarian has a story like that--similar to this; but I lived this as a librarian in the '60s, who was very very young and raw, actually. [Laughs] So, it was fun. Do you want to take a break? [Recording restarts]

Feinman transcript

So, when I was working at the medical library, my husband then finished his PhD and we moved down to New York City. And that's when I began at Columbia at PIC [Parkinson's Information Center], and went on eventually to Adelphi and to a whole different set of career parts.

When I retired from Adelphi, four or five years ago, I was appointed a Nassau scholar, which means you are a retired faculty member that they are going to give another job to. And the job they wanted me to do was to become the volunteer librarian for the Nassau County Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is very important in Long Island where there are 5.5 million people and practically no empty land--and you have to get all kinds of permits to tear something down, or put something up, or play around with it. And the files were dreadful, because the Republican government that had just lost power, had disbanded the library about 15 years earlier. So people had collected what they thought was important in boxes and closets, under the desks, etc., etc. And when I arrived, they had just moved all of this crap down to this bomb shelter in the basement of the planning building. And they bought me shelves, and they bought me tables. We started organizing it. It was awful. First of all, I had to learn something about what the library was going to be, because they couldn't explain it to me very well. Each division--whether it was the railroads, or the money, this--had their own bit; but they didn't talk to each other very much.

So I went around and talked to everybody. I went to a local conference on county planning, and at that conference a couple of people patted me on the head and said, "Well, it's nice that you are here; but we don't expect you to understand much." I looked at the group of five I was standing in and said, "I did my MBA in '88, when did you do yours?" Well, of the five men, only two had an MBA. And from then on, no one ever belittled me. I knew what I had to learn and I learned it.

Why did I do an MBA? Because I was doing reference desk work [and] the students were talking languages I had no idea about. They, of course didn't know physics or calculus, and I didn't know business; so I did an MBA to learn what was going on. And also, it became extremely valuable because I was the only person in the library that ever had a marketing course, or a management course. All of which I think is very important for librarians.

So, the Planning Commission got organized because I was really lucky: I had library school students take an internship with me. There were two library schools nearby: one at Queens College, one at C.W. Post. And students would come over and work for a semester--do an independent project--I would spend a lot of time talking to them about different libraries and where as we do this in this library, you do it that way in the public library, and that way in the university library. I certainly had the experience to teach them a lot. I quizzed them. I made them read things. And they loved it--so I got a new student every semester. That was good.

And then, after I got it all organized, and everything was in place--sort of--and people could find what they wanted, I was there one day a week, they came down five days a week, open the door, signed in, and found what they wanted. The County decided to move the building. So they played dominoes around five or six different buildings. And this year--for the past year--three-quarters of the library has been in a trailer, and the rest of it has been in a big trailer where

there is a meeting room for the Commission to meet--and the most important volumes are sitting here. What a mess. So, I don't spend much time over there right now. Were moving into a new building this fall. But that's that kind of story--and that's kind of fun. And what's fun about that is that everything is on the computer. They have the GPS, they have the GPO files, they have this--and they have their own documents on file. I'm busy entering all the books in the library in the same file--or my students are.

But that takes me way, way back. What did we do in the '70s and the '60s and the '50s when we didn't have computers to the work for us? Interesting. When I was working in the public library and working at the public service desk at night, I did something that was called "library hand:" a very round, cursive, readable script. We couldn't use typewriters out in the public areas, because they were damn noisy in the '50s. So we wrote all those cards in library hand. So, that was fun.

In the '70s--'60s--in the medical school? We had MEDLARS. And we also were developing, for medical libraries, including National Library of Medicine, UCLA, Syracuse, and Washington at St. Louis--the four libraries were working together, cataloging medical books. We phoned each other every day. We used a thing like DARPA, and parceled out the new books we received, and we did the original cataloging for them. And it all went into NLM. So, that was sort of fun. I was only peripheral to that; but that is what we were doing.

In the '70s, I was working with the PIC database, which was an online database, again, from the National Library of Medicine. But when I came to work at Syracuse--excuse me, at Adelphi in Long Island--there was nothing on computers. We used Ulrich's for our serials, not a computer thing like MEDLINE. Okay. It was a struggle sometimes to do all kinds of paperwork we need to do for serials. The books were a little better off, because the books had the Library of Congress publications coming out every year or so. What serials had was Uhlrich's, which came out once a year, I think? It's now available online; but we had Uhlrich's and we had some prints, and the serials librarian had to keep track of a lot of journals, in terms of what the department needed, what was new in their field, and what was no longer being used but they wanted to keep it and what was available on microfilm and microfiche. And we did a major glutting of the collection at one point, and turned between 15 and 30 years of backfiles into microfiche. Now, for the New York Times that's just fine, because that's a very good copy and there is lots of them around; for Godey's Lady's Book, it wasn't available--although I noticed at this conference [ALA Annual 2008] that someone now has Godey's Lady's Book with all the illustrations online. I managed to eventually dump a whole lot of copies of the Century and some other journals, that had been popular in the 1880s and 1890s, because they were in pretty bad condition, and--theoretically--there was microfilm available--theoretically. When I saw the microfilm I cried because it didn't have all the ads and all the pictures. And the ads are what students loved, because in a marketing and business course, they wanted to look at an ad from the 1880s and compare it to one from the 1930s compared to one from the 1980s--so that was an interesting kind of thing. And all the business being done right now, in terms of bringing these sources back in digital form, is just fantastic--except you wonder, since the microfilm sort of all fell apart, is:

Feinman transcript

Will that happened to the digital form? Again, those papers were filmed, discarded, and what's going to happen? I don't know.

So, there have been a lot of changes. By 1982 or 83, I dont remember, I was in ALA in Philadelphia, and saw the young man from Innovative Systems--the triple I--and they had a serials system, which I knew was fantastic because I had had quite a few years of serial experience by now. And I questioned him, and they had done this, they had done that, they had just taken care of--every kind of extra issues. [I] went back to my Dean, and said we have to have this system. It is--it is--you know the pearl, the platinum, it's whatever you want--[and] we got it. We were one of the ten beta testers, or something. It was just--in a crazy way, we got it. And from then on, we just went forward, because we had the best serials system in the world, and they did a circulation system to go with it, of course, immediately. So, we transferred from the clunky system we had been using for circ, to this one; and had some fun with it. So, again, by '85 or so, we were up and running with the systems.

And we got EBSCO Host, which had--whatever it was--23 journals in those days. [Laughs] I went to an EBSCO Host lunch yesterday, and they have thousands I think now. And they have interfaces now that are unbelievable. And if you compare a Google search and an EBSCO search, it's like night and day. So the instruction librarians have to spend an awful lot of time persuading students not to use Google; but to use those very expensive databases that the libraries are now buying.

Ah, well--let's see how it changes in the next few years. Google is now coming to conferences--I don't know what they [laughs] they think they are offering something. They are not yet. They may get there; but they are not there yet.

Sarah Albert: Speaking of Instruction Librarians, what other advice would you offer instruction librarians? Like you said they need to be sure to really teach the EBSCO databases--what other kinds of--.

Valerie Feinman: Okay, the first thing the Instruction Librarian should do is find out what the ACRL IS section is doing. They've got online materials that you can use for free. ALA has lots of online materials that you could use. And the IS section also has a daily citation database thing, where people ask questions. Now, when it was the BI list, back in the '80s, it was run out of Binghamton University, it was just instruction people asking each other "How do you do this?", or "Do you have a roommate for ALA?", or "Are you going to be in town so you can show me how to do this thing?" Now, it is very sophisticated, and there's 15 to 20 questions every day, with lots of answers, lots of bibliographies, lots of articles. Whatever you want to know about, the ILI list is just terrific--so you've got to get into that information literacy list. Again, you do not have to pay for it. You just get into it.

Then, try to attend conferences, when they are near by. Try to attend ACRL chapter meetings, if they are near by--they do have them in many major cities, not every city; but--we have one in New York City that meets every November. I have been a member of it since '78, when it was created. I was a charter member. And I go to those meetings, and we get people from Connecticut, New Jersey, upstate New York, and Pennsylvania, all coming in for those meetings. And so, get to those things.

Feinman transcript

Then, the other thing you need to do as an Instruction person, is learn about LIRT--the Library Instruction Round Table. This is a thing you pay \$5 or \$10 extra for as part of your ALA membership--and if you ask about it, sometimes you get to pay the \$5 or \$10 and not your ALA membership (you can't go to conferences on that; but they will let you in for the discussions). What's good about LIRT is that it covers public libraries, Indian libraries, jail libraries--every kind of library that does any sort of library instruction. Yes, most of the people are university librarians because they are the ones who can afford to go to conferences; but there are a nice number of others. And we are making more and more virtual members because we know it is difficult to get money for conferences. And a virtual member has to go to one out of four years--or something like that, it's not too bad.

The other thing is, you can get a committee posting almost right away. We are not as hard-and-fast as the IS is, or the ACRL. Another other thing is, they have a newsletter. And they make bibliographies of articles, and you can write an article for them and get it published in the newsletter--long, long before you can do a research article for the ACRL journal. So if you want to get your feet wet with a little bit of publishing, again, LIRT is a place to be.

So, and then, talk to other Instruction Librarians. On Long Island, we have many colleges, and I've tried to get us all together to talk to one another and the methods are so different at the different colleges, because the deans are different and the provosts are different--and therefore, the libraries are different. So, you should at least talk to your neighbors, they might be doing something you wish you could do; they might be so far behind you that they want to talk to you; and at least you should talk to other people. In the '70s there was usually one instruction person at every university library. Now, almost all the reference librarians call themselves instruction people. So the numbers have grown; but there is usually one who is the boss, is the leader, is the one who has to keep the others informed. So find out who that person is. If you are in a very large library, it shouldn't be difficult. If you are in a small library, it should be easy as pie. And if you are an out-going and extroverted person, you can always put yourself right at the front. Be a ham like me and get yourself involved.

Sarah Albert: It sounds like a lot of that advice could applied to library school students also.

Valerie Feinman: Everywhere.

Sarah Albert: Do you have additional advice for students?

Valerie Feinman: When I was in library school, our faculty didn't talk to us about conferences. We didn't even know about state conferences. No one came back and reported to us about ALA. It was a desert. And I was actually very shocked by this, because I was still in library school when I was going to the medical library conferences, as a medical librarian because my boss dragged me everywhere for the grants. Okay? So I knew about conferences. I knew about papers. I knew what was going on. And I was appalled that the library school students didn't. Now, in today's age with so many blogs and so many websites--and everyone knowing everything--you just have to get on the web and find out what it is for your kind of library, or anything you are interested in. Use all the databases that you can find that are useful. And collect contact people in the field--whether it is a public library field, whether it is an

archives field--groups like ACRL have 25 different committees dealing with women's studies to arts, to archives.

And then there's another group in ALA called RUSA--Reference Users Services--this has BRASS, which is a business reference thing. It has several other sections, and it's very well centered for the reference librarian that has to do certain kinds of work. It has a history and genealogy and archive section, it has BRASS, it has CODES--which is cataloging. Find out, from ALA, what the groups are; pinpoint two or three that you are interested in; and start finding out more about them, because its easy now. The web is there: use it. And talk to other people in the school.

And talk to even faculty--because now that we have something called ALISE--which is the--who knows what its called [Association for Library and Information Science Education]it's the library school group that coordinates a pre-conference at ALA every year. It keeps the library school managements talking to one another. So, the library schools--now--have a better way of keeping in touch; and keeping each other informed. Make sure you know about it. A-L-I-S-E is that group.

What else can I say? Talk to people. Talk to people. Please. Don't be shy. There's--I spent today--this has nothing to do really with what we were talking about. I sat down at a table today for lunch with a cataloger. I had never met her before--there was an empty place at a table--and I sat down. A little while later, another lady came along, and she sat over there, and we said, "Come on, come on, join us!" It turned out that she was a cataloger too--for the Library of Congress--and the two catalogers got into a discussion about personalities. And they decided they were both introverted and--I'm definitely not introverted--we started talking "Librarians: what are they? What aren't they?" We went the gamut from how non-conservative are most librarians--how liberal, how far to the left, how standing by the library rules and rights--all the way back to jokes that catalogers tell on one another. It was just hilarious, it just went on and on. And none of us wanted to stop. And this is typical activity. Never sit in a corner: just join a group and start talking. I think that is the best way to learn about where you want to be? Is that--?

Sarah Albert: Yeah, that was good.

Valerie Feinman: Stop. I want a drink. [Recording restarts]

Sarah Albert: Valerie, what else would you like to share with us?

Valerie Feinman: Okay, at this particular conference--having spent Friday at the seminar with Arro Smith and learning all about Loriene Roy's project--my brain just went into click-click fast mode, and I started thinking. So that as I went around the exhibits, I plucked off certain people to talk to. For example, I ran into the--a person from the Canadian Library Archives, where they are half librarians and half archivists; but it is the Canadian National Library. And we started talking about "library hand" and hand-written cards, and old records and old indexes. And when I left, I got a promise from him to write something up and join the group get everyone else he could think of interested in it; and to get in touch with a man who had been at the Friday seminar, his name is Alvin Thompson, or something, who is the out-going Canadian Library Association president. So I connected those two people, gave the website to the second one, and said, "We want you in on this." I said, "One of the things I think Arro's going to be interested in,

would be slightly different handling of documents in Canada and the U.S." Just as there is different handling in the States versus the Federal.

Okay, then this morning I went to ALISE and spoke to them and said, "I want library schools involved in this." Library schools--and I talked to several separate library schools plus the ALISE group--I said, "Library schools have students. Students are up-to-date and know what they want to find out about. They can use camcorders. They need projects. They want to be interns. They want money. We can help them." I said, "Every library school in this country should a focus point for librarians in their area, to do the recordings of the elderly, the retiring, no matter what kind of librarian. They should go after their own graduates, and get comments from them. They should go after their own faculty and get comments from them. They should go after their aunts and uncles and god-mothers and whatever that were librarians, and get comments from them." This is important. And the ALISE people said, "Wow! I agree. That's the way we have to get started." And so I came back to [Arro], and said, "We have to do this." And he said, "Well, I was going to go there next." [Laughs] I said, "Okay, well I started it."

I also went to the BCALA, the black caucus of --yes. I said--I explained the whole project. I said, "I want to know who you recommend that I talk to. If I walk in, someones going to think that Im using you or abusing you--or whatever." I said, "This is an ALA project. You are part of ALA, and I'm sorry to say it, but black people can approach black people more easily than I can." And--I want those stories. Well, that got a big welcome, too. And yes, that one is going to go forward.

Sarah Albert: Wonderful. Valerie Feinman: I met a student doing a posterboard session. Posterboard session was on "people's reactions to libraries and librarians just following the flood." I said to her, "I want a copy of paper. I'm going to put [Arro] on to you, because this is a reaction to librarians." I said, "There maybe some library stories we can pick out of it, too." And we need to know that. This is a digital history that you are doing right now. Join the project. And so, everyone I've been bumping into, I've been talking to. And that's because I'm this kind of older person that--yep. And the other thing, and [Arro's] going to do this, I'm sure--we recommend a taping booth at every conference, with lots of publicity, so that people can sign up ahead of time and come in and tell their story. And it should be manned by library school students who get internship, get their way paid, whatever--we pay your way to the conference, you work for us as--. It can be worked out, let's just do it. Your library school may pay for it because its an independent project. I don't know? It can work out. And we can get more library school students to the conferences to do these things--especially someone local.

So, my--I think I said my brain went into high-gear. And it did. So I've just been going around in circles. I also want to do this a state library conferences. One of the ALISE people was from the Buffalo Library School, and she said, "Are you going to go to NYLA?"--the New York Library Association conference which is this fall. I said, "I was thinking about it." She said, "Well, you better. Come and talk about this." Every state has an association that has meetings. They can be satellite stations, too, if they put their minds to it. Again, using library school students as the facilitators. It just really can get going if we work on it.

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Last, but not least: I had to talk to John Chrastka about something. You know who he is, I think? [ALA Director of Membership Development] Okay. And I told him about the project, and I said, "You need to do more publicity on this. George Eberhart needs to do more publicity on this in that--ALA whatever it's called--that newsletter that comes out every Wednesday--

Sarah Albert: ALA Direct?

Valerie Feinman: ALA Direct. I've known George for 20 years. It's good. Okay, there will be more there. And anything Loriene wants to give him, he will publish--anytime. That's a message direct to you. Okay, so I talked to John Chrastka about this, and he said--oh, I told him also, that I had had a retirement"--what are you going to do after you retire?" --roundtable luncheon at a prior ACRL conference, and that I wanted to set one up for Seattle--which he thought was a good idea. But he said, "That's interesting, because I've been trying to get a users group--excuse me, an interest group--in ALA--to keep people about to retire interested in the profession, and able to help however they can help, as mentors or whatever." He said, "You and I need to talk about this." I said, "I just want to run a roundtable." He said, "Well, it takes a lot of work now days, you can't just say you want to run it the way you used to; and you need a hundred petitions." I said, "Echt!" He said, "I can do the petitions!" [Laughs] He said, "You and I, were going to do it." And we are going to do it.

So, if we can get ALA to have this interest group that will interface with Arro Smith's group, which will interface all over ALA, we're--this is going to become a real legacy, as Loriene imagined it. And I think it is just about time. One of the little catalogers at lunch time said today, "Too many of us are retiring, too many of us are getting Alzheimer's. We've got to get those stories now." And I agree. End of story.

Sarah Albert: Well, Valerie, thank you so much for sharing your professional history, and your advice, and your enthusiasm about the Capturing Our Stories project.

Valerie Feinman: It is perfect for someone like me.

Interviewed by Sara Albert; transcribed by Arro Smith.

Fogarty Transcript

Anne Marie Taber: This is Anne Marie Taber and I am here with Nancy Clark Fogarty here at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro and she has agreed to be interviewed as part of the Capturing Our Stories oral history program of retired and retiring librarians. This is one of Dr. Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of the ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is Wednesday, August 20, 2008.

AMT: How are you doing today?

Nancy Clark Fogarty: I'm fine Anne Marie, I hope you are.

AMT: I'm very well, we'll pause here.

AMT: First of all, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today. And would you mind telling me once more your name and then the current or most recent library position you've held?

NCF: I am Nancy Clark Fogarty and currently I am reference librarian and library instruction coordinator.

AMT: And where are you employed?

NCF: In Jackson Library at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro.

AMT: And you are currently in a phased retirement program, is that correct?

NCF: That's correct, I am working half time rather than full time. This is the end of my second year of three in that program.

AMT: Are you enjoying the phased retirement?

NCF: I am. It is a nice way to gently go into retirement without suddenly waking up one morning and saying, "oh, I don't need to go to work today."

AMT: It's great that that's an option these days.

NCF: Yes. It's a program that's extended to all faculty members within the University of North Carolina system, all 16 constituents.

AMT: Could you give me a real brief capsulized history of your library career? Just to sum it up before we go into a little more detail?

NCF: Yes. I have been a reference librarian also working in library instruction and collection management my entire career which began in 1969 when I graduated from library school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I worked first as a reference librarian in the humanities division there at Chapel Hill and moved to UNC Greensboro in 1970. So I've been here for 38 years as a reference librarian in charge of interlibrary loan, as head reference librarian for 18 years, and now as library instruction coordinator for 13 years.

AMT: So you've held several positions during your tenure here?

NCF: Yes

AMT: Great. Let's go back to the beginning, could you talk about your relationship as a child with books?

NCF: Well, I did enjoy reading and my mother returned to work when I was four years old and I began nursery school. And soon after I began my dad picked me up one afternoon and I

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told him I'd been "commoded" to kindergarten because I could read. Of course, I couldn't really read, I had simply memorized the books but I really could not read at that point.

AMT: Well, you maybe thought you could.

NCF: I certainly, everyone else thought I could, that was what was important.

AMT: Well, what led you to decide to work in a library eventually?

NCF: Well, actually my degree, undergraduate degree, is in English, and I taught high school English for two years. There were lots of papers to grade if you taught English correctly and taught writing. And I wanted to explore other options for careers where there was more flexibility and where you worked year round or had the option. And in librarianship I could see working in public libraries, school libraries, university, special libraries, there just seemed to be more options.

AMT: Okay, was librarianship a common career path at the time, or did you feel it was just one of a few options available?

NCF: Well, I felt there were lots of options available to me and I didn't have any friends that went into librarianship, so there were lots of options.

AMT: Okay, good. Did you notice at the time any kind of stereotypes associated with being a librarian?

NCF: Well, I assume that through the years there has always been some kind of stereotype associated with librarianship, but I didn't pay much attention to it.

AMT: Good for you. So you attended library school at Chapel Hill?

NCF: That's correct.

AMT: Did you have classes that were your most favorite or your least favorite while you were there?

NCF: Well, I wouldn't say I had a least favorite class or even a most favorite class. I enjoyed those that gave background on the role of librarianship and the role of librarians in society.

AMT: Okay, if you were to narrow down the most important thing you learned in library school, what would that be?

NCF: Probably the process of finding information and teaching people how to use it and find it.

AMT: Good. Tell me about the other experiences that you had while pursuing your M.L.S., what other things were you doing at the time, if anything?

NCF: Well, on a parallel track I was actually working as a reference intern, we would call it now, in the Humanities reference division at Chapel Hill. And as is often the case, you learn a great deal on the job. I worked lots of hours, we had a special training program there by two wonderful people, the head of reference and the assistant head of reference, Louise Hall and Patty McIntyre, were great mentors and they taught a great deal to the students and it's probably because of their direction that I really chose to go into reference librarianship.

AMT: They were good role models.

NCF: They were excellent role models.

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AMT: How similar or how different was that intern program to the one we have here today at UNCG (University of North Carolina at Greensboro)?

NCF: It was through the library science program as opposed to directly through the library here where we hire our reference interns. This was granted through the School of Library Science, worked actually a few more hours too. But other than that it was very similar to what we have.

AMT: And you were paid?

NCF: Yes, we were paid as graduate assistants.

AMT: Good. Some library programs today are taking the library science words out of the name of their degree, what do you think of that trend?

NCF: I'm not bothered by it as long as we understand that we are talking about people who are going to work in libraries. My degree was called library science, there is a science to librarianship, there is also an art to librarianship. So I'm not wed to the term library science, it doesn't bother me a great deal if it's library or if it's information studies, but as long as we understand we're talking about working in libraries.

AMT: Right, very good. Are there specific library skills that you think are always going to be needed, they're timeless, or are there some other skills that current library students don't need to spend as much time on as you did?

NCF: Well, I think a lot of skills are rather timeless, that is learning how to work with people and learning how to determine information needs whether you are doing that in person over the telephone via email in a chat session, instant messaging, whatever the medium, that's not really important but understanding what people need, including content areas.

AMT: So that's a skill that's always going to be needed?

NCF: I think so.

AMT: Are there any skills that you or other retiring librarians feel that the newer graduates are not as well prepared in, such as practical skills or others?

NCF: Actually I find that students today are quite prepared in practical skills, how to design webpages, things I really define as skills. I am more concerned about entry level librarians being concerned about content rather than skill in a subject area in which they will be working or subject areas in which they are working. So I am much more concerned about content than I am practical skills that could be learned on the job.

AMT: Okay, so for someone in this type of position, a reference librarian in an academic setting, they're a little short on subject knowledge?

NCF: Sometimes, not always. 20, 25 years ago it was rather assumed that you would either have a second Masters degree in another subject area or would get one soon after being hired. And that concept or idea has rather been dropped in recent years.

AMT: You think so?

NCF: I think so. There are some who come to us with a second degree, and very few have doctoral degrees.

AMT: Could you isolate one thing that you learned on the job as the most important thing that you couldn't have learned in library school?

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NCF: Well, that probably is dealing with people whether it's in management positions, you can't learn a whole lot about management without at least observing it, but as you participate in it you discover whole new worlds. So certainly managing people and working with the public too, managing people as patrons.

AMT: So both the supervision of other people and working with the public. And would that or something else be what you wish you'd learned before you began your first librarian job?

NCF: Well, you can talk about it, you can role play it, but until you actually deal with it in person, it's just hard to be completely prepared.

AMT: So you could wish all you want, but it's not going to happen without the experience?

NCF: Right. Another area that I would like to mention for that is library instruction or the teaching aspect. Teaching is expected of so many people. In our particular program a fair number of people have teaching certification and I think that's a good background to have going into librarianship, but nearly all librarians today are expected to teach in some way. And for the few that do not have certification, I think it's important they get experience teaching.

AMT: Yeah, that's another area that there would be no substitute for experience.

NCF: Right, library instruction or information literacy courses are increasing, I taught such a course in our Department of Library and Information Studies two years ago and I actually surveyed the ALA accredited schools and there were actually a fair number at that time, I have heard people say to the contrary, but I actually could look at the syllabi of those courses, so there are a fair number. I think it's important that students take that course.

AMT: Yeah, I would agree. One of the different things about being a librarian in a university is most of us have what's called these days as faculty status. Could you describe for us briefly what your contributions as a faculty member include and mean here at UNCG (University of North Carolina at Greensboro)?

NCF: Faculty, librarians became faculty members here at UNCG in 1976. I had come in 1970 so I did not have faculty status until 1976 and that was true of all the librarians. At that time, the faculty at large voted to include librarians and that meant that we particularly were invited to serve in many areas. That has a very positive contribution I think in helping teaching faculty in the academic disciplines regard librarians as true colleagues and get to know them. So I served on many types of committees from curriculum committees to faculty governance committees, faculty assembly, budget committees, but all of those areas help you meet faculty and learn about their needs, their desires, their backgrounds. And to some extent it helps for them to understand librarians better.

AMT: So, could you talk a little bit about some of those committees, maybe the ones that were the most interesting or rewarding to you?

NCF: Well, some of the more important ones were the curriculum committee, budget committee, where you are advising senior administrators on what priorities should be. Obviously the administrators make the final decision, but it's good for the faculty governance committees to advise the administrators. And this campus has been known for several years to have administrators who are open to shared faculty governance and that's been important.

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NCF: I feel working on the faculty assembly of the entire UNC (University of North Carolina) system has been important, I chaired the Benefits and Welfare committee of that and the budget committee of that. And you see at that level the problems that vary from campus to campus within a large system of 16 universities.

AMT: Did you feel that your education and/or your previous work life had prepared you for these roles interacting with the faculty in the university and others?

NCF: I'm not sure that education can fully prepare you for something like this. I'm a great believer that individuals have to develop themselves. Oftentimes you hear about faculty development well, yes, the institution has obligations to provide opportunities and encourage you to develop, but you have to do it yourself. There are just many things you have to learn on your own and work out yourself. No education, no number of degrees can fully prepare you, it's just an ongoing learning experience. And that's what we all have in life, we say we want to make our students lifelong learners, but we have to be lifelong learners as librarians.

AMT: Good point. So, on these various committees and assignments, you prepared yourself as you went along in each role?

NCF: Yes, you learn on each one something new and then you incorporate that into your additional experiences, it just broadens your experience and makes you wiser in your next encounter with faculty.

AMT: A little bit more generally, what were your favorite or best aspects of your jobs over the years?

NCF: Well as a reference librarian and library instruction coordinator you get lots of positive feedback from students, and that's wonderful, you know how well you're doing and you know when you're not doing quite so well. The feedback from faculty and students is really very rewarding, you have a sense of how you're doing along the way.

NCF: Even in restaurants, a waiter or waitress will say, "you taught my class, I learned so much" or "I needed that, I've not used the library very much" or whatever their response when they recognize you and respond to you.

AMT: That's great, that's got to feel good. Is there any experience or moment in your career that you would single out as your greatest triumph?

NCF: I'm not sure.

AMT: Something you're especially proud of?

NCF: Well, I would say just generally my relationships with students and faculty through the years. But you have to understand I'm not a person who has a lot of highs and lows, I'm a middle of the road plodder and so I feel that way about much of my career. I'm not high on a mountain one day and then down in the valley the next, and that's just a personality trait.

AMT: Right, so the whole thing, the relationships that have formed over time?

NCF: Yes, with both students and coworkers, faculty.

AMT: Okay. What made your job or any of your roles unique from others?

NCF: Well, there's some uniqueness when you are a supervisor both in the people that you are supervising and in what they are doing, what their responsibilities are. In departments such as reference librarians where most of your colleagues are librarians and you're trying to help

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them develop, you might have different responsibilities from supervisors in other departments in the library. I guess that's the main uniqueness of what I've done.

AMT: Okay, thanks. Now I wonder if you would discuss with me a couple of difficulties that you've faced in your career, challenges either with patrons or the library or the greater community that you deal with and talk a little bit about how you handled it then and if there's anything you might do differently now?

NCF: Well, I suppose anybody who supervises has some not so pleasant days with supervision. An employee will do something that you know they shouldn't have done and they know they shouldn't have done and yet you have to deal with it. So I would say that probably would be the most challenging area is knowing how to work around those weaknesses and lead the librarians to overcome any problems or weaknesses.

AMT: I can't say I really had many problem situations with patrons at the university library, all libraries tend to attract some individuals who have some psychological problems and University libraries are no different. And so there have been some times when we've had to walk very gingerly when dealing with some person and recognize that there is a psychological issue when you encounter that person.

AMT: Can you remember any specific instance that might stand our in your mind?

NCF: Yes, we had a student who scribbled and who threw erasers in the building but fortunately in a university setting you can call the mental health professionals and the student can be referred to them and so there is a way to resolve the problem. It can mean removing the student from the campus. And that happened with one of our students and I don't know why he chose the library, but he did choose it as his place to act out and it was actually dangerous.

AMT: Was that the one that was throwing erasers?

NCF: Yes.

AMT: At people?

NCF: At people. Not that he had designated them to throw erasers at, they were just in his way and he threw, he was frustrated when he did that, and in more than one area of the library.

AMT: You said he was scribbling, was that on his papers or just loudly?

NCF: Yes, it was on yellow legal pads, much like a child who, before he or she learns to write cursive, just scribbling.

AMT: That is unique. Let's take a short break.

AMT: All right. Nancy, what were the biggest frustrations or disappointments in your career and do you think they could have been avoided?

NCF: Well, I'm not sure that I could say that there were lots of disappointments. I've enjoyed what I've done, I mean there are always administrative decisions whether its in the library or at the university level or the UNC (University of North Carolina)system level that set you back as an institution or a department, but I don't really feel that anything has held me back in any way during my career here.

AMT: Well, that's good. Are there any different hats, as it were, that you had to wear as a librarian that you would never have imagined you would be doing?

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NCF: Oh, as a librarian you wear all sorts of hats. We had a budget freeze one year and the position that was taken away was that of the person who delivered the mail to the departments and so we all had to go to the mailroom, get our mail and return with the mail. And so several of the librarians decided to protest and we wore a little uniform type thing and protested near the circulation desk because we felt that the position should be filled.

NCF: And we had, we took pictures, and it was a sort of a fun time, but we wanted to make our point that even the person delivering the mail was important and it as a position that needed to be filled. So we did that. You shelve books, you deliver mail, you do your own typing, word-processing, whatever. At times so you just do a little of everything.

AMT: So when you were protesting did you carry a sign?

NCF: Yes, we actually had signs, I have a picture.

AMT: Oh wow, did you bring it?

NCF: I did not but I can get it for you.

AMT: Okay, was this by any chance during the 1970s?

NCF: You know, late 1970s, late 1979 maybe 1980. When there were budget problems, problems with the economy.

AMT: And protesting was the thing to do. All right, let's switch gears and talk a little about professional associations, tell me something about your involvement with these.

NCF: I've been very active in the North Carolina Library Association and fairly active in the Southeastern Library Association. In the North Carolina Library Association, I found that I worked with colleagues, people I knew and the meetings were about the right size.

NCF: I served as chair of the reference and adult services section, as the director of that section. I was a member of the college and university section. I served as treasurer at a time when there was no executive secretary, so in essence I was the de facto executive secretary of NCLA from 1986-1989. Chaired budget committees, served on ad hoc committees. I was very active throughout my career with North Carolina Library Association and for two periods I served on the Southeastern Library Association's Board. I attended many of their spring meetings in May in Atlanta and then various SELA meetings throughout the southeast.

NCF: It was very rewarding to me, colleagues from other types of libraries, public and private colleges, public libraries, special libraries.

AMT: Tell me something about what you learned or what you gained from these experiences with professional associations?

NCF: We shared ideas about some new initiatives, you shared ideas about solving problems and you got to know each other on a personal level so you could call on them when you needed them.

AMT: Good old fashioned networking.

NCF: Absolutely networking.

AMT: Did your participation in these organizations influence your career in some way?

NCF: I'm not sure that it influenced my career because I stayed at the same institution, Greensboro is my home, I spent all of my life here except for two years. So I'm not so sure that it really influenced my professional choices in my career.

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AMT: It was to serve more of a supporting role?

NCF: And a place where you feel that you really make contributions and you can help with professional development.

AMT: That's important. All right, switching gears once again, professional ethics. Can you think of a time when your professional ideals or ethics came into conflict with the demands of your employing library and if so how did you resolve that?

NCF: There actually have been very few, if any, instances of that in an university library because of academic freedom and a true commitment to that. There really have been very few incidents about that. And I've never been involved in a circulation department or information access area where there were issues with records of who's checked out books or that kind of thing. So I've really had very few professional conflicts or ethical conflicts with the, my employing agency whether its the university library or the university as a whole or the UNC (University of North Carolina) system, so I really don't have any professional ethical problems.

AMT: Any ethical dilemmas that didn't arise from a conflict with another agency but left you with a decision to make?

NCF: Well, personnel issues will probably challenge ethical beliefs, and I did face a couple of those. But if you have a streak in you that says this is the right thing to do and you know you have to do that regardless of what happens.

AMT: Or how difficult it might be to do that right thing.

NCF: That's correct.

AMT: But that doesn't really have to do with the librarian's ethics as it were. How about controversy, during your career, what would be the most controversial time in the broader world of information in libraries and what did you have to do with it or it with you?

NCF: I suppose one of the controversies was whether or not libraries should continue to make information available free of charge. When computing became, when computing entered libraries, it was more through the means of the library did computer searches that were actually conducted in other parts of the country. And there was a steep charge for that. And so should the library absorb that cost? Or should the charge be passed on to the consumer, or the student, or the faculty member on our campus?

NCF: And there was a lot of controversy about that as time passed of course, the information was more easily accessible not only by the librarians but also by the students and faculty themselves, so it became less of an issue. But at first it was a very controversial thing, charging for information.

AMT: Oh yeah, would that have been back when you were connecting via phone lines to computers at other institutions?

NCF: That's correct. Our library began doing computer searching in the fall of 1976. I think students today are amazed when they find out that librarians have been working via computers since that period. But that was very typical, that was when regional areas such as Solanet developed in the mid 1970s and it was just a few versions, but most of my life I've been working using computers.

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AMT: Right. Can you give me an example or two of the kinds of entities you would access using the computer?

NCF: Right. We did a lot of computer searching for doctoral students in the ERIC databases, dissertation abstracts, chem(istry) abstracts, biological abstracts, psych(ology) abstracts, which is now known as PsychInfo. This is usually when students and faculty were doing research, masters, doctoral level, faculty members, and they had to sign a contract saying they would pay up to X number of dollars, 25 dollars, 35, 60, whatever seemed to be appropriate and we had to produce the information, staying within the limits they provided.

NCF: So there were contracts that were signed each time we accepted the requests to do these. And we did them, these searches, out of sight of the public for the most part, occasionally we'd take the faculty member with us, but usually we didn't want to be distracted by them, we really only had them with us if we really felt we needed some clarification during the search process.

AMT: So you were really doing a part of their research for them that they would do now themselves buy accessing a database?

NCF: That is correct.

AMT: That is a little piece of history I really wasn't even aware of. Well that is, that was interesting.

NCF: That was for over a decade.

AMT: Yeah, so did they charge by the hour or the minute for the time that you were connected to the database?

NCF: There were two separate charges, one was for the online connection charge and the other was for the number of citations printed and those were generally done wherever you were connecting to and you'd have them mailed to you rather than you printing them yourself. Because it was less expensive to have them mailed to you than pay the continuing online charge for the printing. Or you might print a few and then have the remaining ones mailed to you.

AMT: Cool. All right. What about service? One of the situations that most librarians have to deal with is handling the public and in particular homeless people, and other quote special users of the library. Do you have any advice for new librarians in this kind of special situation?

NCF: Well, libraries are made, our purpose is to help people find information so if people are seeking information we would help them, we are a public library, because we are a public institution. Our first responsibility is to the faculty and to the students, the students are paying tuition, the general assembly is funding faculty to teach and do research and we need to support them, for anyone who is seeking information.

NCF: I think the problems that develop are when you have people who are in the library who are not seeking information, they are seeking shelter, air conditioning, entertainment, and that's a tough issue to deal with. We have not had a lot of problems here, we have had some sexual assaults in the past, none of the assailants were students here as far as I know, but libraries seem to attract outsiders that want to do something unusual and security cameras have basically solved that problem in the libraries.

Fogarty transcript

AMT: Thank goodness for those. Do you remember the very first patron that you ever handled on your own?

NCF: I do not have any recollection of the first person I ever helped either at Chapel Hill or at UNC (University of North Carolina) Greensboro.

AMT: How about a most memorable or perhaps the most memorable reference question?

NCF: Actually I'm not one who can sort of jump on a particular question or a particular patron. There have been some people who I was glad when we finished our transaction, but I really don't have a most memorable one. I don't think I've ever run from anything.

AMT: That's good. No patrons ever passed out in front of you?

NCF: No.

AMT: That's good. Yeah, I've always had trouble coming up with particular instances when people want that, so I understand. Do you remember whether the staff here at the UNCG (University of North Carolina at Greensboro) library had any resistance about serving patrons who wanted to use the internet instead of using the library in the traditional way of using the library, does that make sense?

NCF: I think if we mean again, accessing databases, I would say no. Various people who work in the library would have responses to different databases or whether you use CD-ROM or use the modem to dial in or eventually purchasing databases yourself and running them on your own mainframe in the University computing facility, or now the standard which is accessing these via the internet.

NCF: I would say we've always wanted to pursue the best in those areas but controversies come when something is not so good and people have different ideas about "let's not waste our money on this product or this method or we have limited resources, how are we going to determine which are the best databases and what is the best method of accessing the information?" So, yes, there are points of view that differ but never the discouragement of using online resources instead of using something in print. It's just whichever works best and fastest to the information they needed.

AMT: So its a pragmatic approach. What about the patrons that come in and they're not doing research, they're just sitting at the computer and doing any other of the number of things that people do at a computers, such as MySpace and YouTube and sports and so on? Have you seen any resentment or resistance among the staff to those people?

NCF: Yes, because there are always limited facilities and we do have posted a policy that the equipment is foremost for doing research here at the university and that can vary. Do we care if one of our students is checking his or her email? No. But there are times when you do have to ask people to let another student who does need to do research do that instead of using the internet for other purposes that you've described.

AMT: So you have a policy in place and you have done that when necessary?

NCF: Yes, in fact I did that yesterday.

AMT: Really?

NCF: I did.

Fogarty transcript

AMT: There's a limited numbers of computers that the public can use in the first place. What are the greatest changes in library services that you have seen and were they valuable or not and why?

NCF: Well certainly the greatest change has been in empowering faculty and students to find information themselves and teaching them how and then letting them do it. So that they do it from afar and then we design support services as well as means for them to do the research themselves. And I think empowering faculty and students is the most important thing we do.

NCF: I have had a couple of colleagues who wanted to keep the power themselves, but I've always felt that we should teach the student and faculty so they can find things on their own and not have to ask. And so we design online services for students who are on campus and for students who are taking distance education courses or classes that are offered online, even if they're not considered distance education courses. So we provide support through developing webpages that link them to the best resources, deciding and identifying the best sources for classes and subject areas.

NCF: And then also supporting online services through answering the telephone, answering email, providing instant messaging all hours that the library is open, or at least all hours that the reference desk is staffed.

AMT: So your role has shifted largely from being information finders to being the supporters and teachers of the information finders in a way?

NCF: I have said since I entered the profession that I have two goals and they really have not changed throughout my entire career. My goal is to find information for people when they need it and to teach them how to find information on their own. That hasn't changed even though I entered the profession before we had computer searching, through today in 2008. The means by which I do those two things have changed greatly through the years and from time to time, but those are the two basic goals that have not changed.

AMT: Very good. Speaking of technology, have there been any unanticipated consequences to the incorporation of new technologies in the library?

NCF: Oh, there are always unintended consequences, that is programs don't always perform as they're expected to, setting up an online catalog you thought you had indexed the correct fields only to find that what you intended to display doesn't work at all, there is too much information or there is not enough information or its the wrong information. So, yes, there are always unintended consequences when you enter a new technological era. But you work with it and you overcome the problems and then you continue on.

AMT: So we've already touched on the fact that digitization has changed the way that you access information both for yourself and for your patron, but is there a difference in how you do that maybe depending on your audience or the matter being researched or whether its for you or a patron?

NCF: Well, I consider digitization just another method to access information and if it's more convenient to do it that way then certainly you want to use that information. And we have wonderful projects of digitizing back journals and digitizing books and if one of my English majors needs a chapter from a book, then why not let them access that book that's been digitized

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for the chapter she or he needs, or the article that he or she needs? I don't think that the digitization of monographs is quite as helpful and by that I mean a book read from cover to cover because I think for the most part some people still need to hold a book in hand to read from cover to cover. If you're reading a book of philosophy you can't just scan through it, and just breeze though it. It requires putting it down and picking it up a number of times and that's actually easier to do, I think, still, with a print book as opposed to a digitized book.

NCF: But if you're just accessing parts of even one of those books or you just need a quote or one particular story within a larger novel or whatever, digitization is perfect.

AMT: Are there academic disciplines that use technology or digitization more or less than others?

NCF: Well, the sciences use digitization more, simply because science has more money than the arts and humanities and their materials were digitized before the materials in the arts and humanities. And that's particularly, in some areas of the humanities they still like the visual thing the tactile sense of touching the book, seeing certain aspects.

NCF: But again, I think that's probably because of money the sciences were better funded, research in the sciences is better funded and therefore their materials were digitized first.

AMT: right, okay. Even though this is an academic library as we've discussed we have a certain number of public patrons that don't have necessarily an affiliation with the university and we provide computer access to those people. Would you say public access computing of this type has impacted the demographics of our patrons in any way?

NCF: Maybe at first, but not as much now, and the reason I would say that is we probably were among the first to have computers and so more people outside the community came in. But as projects such as NCLive developed and all colleges and universities and all public libraries in North Carolina had the same access to a huge number of databases, common to us all, the impact on our library dropped dramatically with the launch of NCLive which has been a boon to all colleges, universities, and public libraries.

AMT: That's interesting, that's an aspect I wouldn't have considered. We've talked a lot about the past and reviewing how it's been, let's look into the future now for a minute, beginning with one more review question: how have libraries and the role of librarians changed over the years in a couple of more outstanding ways?

NCF: Well, as we've alluded to in our conversation, faculty and students are not here as often, they're in their homes and their offices and finding information themselves because it is digitized and we taught them how to do it and they learned on their own and so they need not be here. And so we provide support services for those, but they are the primary searchers rather than us and that will of course continue.

NCF: Our role of course is to monitor the resources carefully and make sure we are providing the best resources we can for the dollars made available to us for this purpose. It's important that we're always reviewing and evaluating carefully the resources that we make available.

AMT: And so that role is pretty much a constant, it's just the materials you work with has changed?

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NCF: That's correct.

AMT: As the library has changed, what did you find hardest to change as you did your job, was there some aspect or task that was particularly hard to give up for example?

NCF: I can't think of tasks that were hard to give up. What doesn't need to be done any longer you give up, I can't think of any that I gave up reluctantly, you adapt and if something is easier, you do it the easier way.

AMT: So you haven't been one to fight change?

NCF: No, I hope not. I was among the four people who volunteered to pilot first doing chat reference.

AMT: Good for you. Talk about that for a minute, would you?

NCF: Well, we decided in the reference department that we wanted to try it. We were the first in North Carolina in academic libraries to provide a chat service.

AMT: When was that?

NCF: Oh gosh, I don't remember. Several years ago.

AMT: Three or four maybe?

NCF: More than that. Because we wanted to provide that service to our patrons, it was more limited then. Because there were just three or four of us doing it, maybe four or five, so we didn't provide it all hours the library was open, or all hours the reference desk is staffed as we do now. But that was fun, that was interesting, and of course chat questions come from all over not just from your own population. We never restricted it to our faculty, staff, and students so we'd get questions from Italy or other places.

AMT: Don't you wonder how in the world they landed upon your library site sometimes?

NCF: Yes, surfing, doing a Google search, and our webpage would come up. I'm sure that's how.

AMT: So do you enjoy doing chat reference as much or more or less than face to face?

NCF: Well, I wouldn't say I enjoy it more than face to face, but it's fun. One of the advantages I've had throughout my life is I took typing in high school. And being able to respond quickly using a keyboard is wonderful and I would encourage anyone to get those basic skills, for any kind of work because anyone who's going to be working on a computer. So I can respond to chat very quickly and don't have to look for keys and move along very quickly, so I haven't minded chat at all.

AMT: Do you have any predictions for us for the future of libraries, academic libraries, or those in general?

NCF: Well, obviously the role of libraries is evolving. I think, I hope, in my lifetime to see the demise of print academic journals, I would love for academic journals to be offered only in the electronic format.

AMT: Really, can you say why?

NCF: Because the dichotomy we have now of trying to support both is going to cause us financial problems with the economy of the country as it is now. We still have a fair number of journals which we subscribe to both print and electronic. The publishers themselves have not

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created a very good pricing model to encourage libraries to subscribe to electronic only and I feel that's a problem we need to work with publishers on.

NCF: I think librarians have been reluctant to take leadership in electronic publishing. I don't know how to forecast popular magazines, I think they'll have a much longer role as a print product because if you're sitting in the doctor's office or at the hairdresser's you don't pick up a computer terminal or keyboard, you might pick up your iPod or whatever, but it's kind of fun to pick up a print magazine filled with pictures and I see those being around a long time but I don't see academic journals as having a long future in the published world.

AMT: Do you predict a lot or a little resistance from the faculty members who use those journals to the print disappearing?

NCF: I think most faculty are happier to use online sources as long as they know they can always access the same page, quote the same paragraph, and that there's a permanence to that. And we basically have that now with multiple locations of say JStor journals so if there is a terrorist explosion of some type that there are multiple locations so we have access to that information in perpetuity.

AMT: And of course most of those journals are now in PDF format so it looks just exactly like the printed page and it stays the same every time you go back and look at it.

NCF: Permanence is what faculty want to see, but I think most faculty do enjoy accessing it from their homes, offices, wherever in the world they are.

AMT: So they appreciate the convenience just as much as everybody else. So you don't see a lot, a huge amount of resistance to the disappearance of print journals?

NCF: Certainly not as much as we did five years ago.

AMT: Okay, so what there was is kind of evaporating?

NCF: Yes

AMT: What about printed books or monographs, what's the future for those?

NCF: I don't feel that I can predict the future of those as well as I can journals but again I see the type of print book as influencing the production. Edited books with chapters by different people are more like journals and are often indexed by databases in the same way. And a faculty or student may need only one chapter or two chapters within a book and those are ideal for digitization but the other monographs, they're more durable, they'll be around in print for a long time.

AMT: And of course the more popular and less academic books people like to be able to carry those around in their purse like the magazines.

NCF: That's right, out on the beach reading

AMT: Nora Ephron.

NCF: ...a romantic novel or whatever.

AMT: Or a spy thriller. Right. Well, wrapping up, if you had one piece of advice to give to a new librarian what would that be? Someone like me.

NCF: Be sure that you master the content as well as the format.

AMT: Thank you, very succinctly put. And this is maybe a little bit of review, what skill has been most useful for you throughout your career?

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NCF: Oh, I think I just mentioned typing.

AMT: You did.

NCF: The ability to find information quickly, so as a skill but other than that certainly working with people, having people skills. So that you're working well with faculty, staff, and students.

AMT: And that would require versatility too, to be able to relate to all different types of people from different backgrounds.

NCF: Recognizing that very initially within a conversation whether that conversation is online or in person.

AMT: That's true you need to know who you're talking to to know how to talk to them.

NCF: That's correct.

AMT: Okay, is there one or two accomplishments that you can look back on and single out as something that you're especially proud of? Something that you helped the library to do or become or implement perhaps?

NCF: Well, there are lots of those on campus, there really are lots but I would say overall just the impact that I've had on faculty and students lives to improve their situation while they were on campus.

AMT: Yeah, good. And what do you think you might miss the most about being a librarian when you finally complete your phased retirement?

NCF: Just interacting with faculty and students and helping them to find information and working with them in whatever way and just the personal interaction with them and knowing that I'm the helping.

AMT: Yeah that's really basic to it. Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you'd like to touch on before we conclude, either about your career or librarianship in general?

NCF: Well I think librarianship is a very rewarding career if you enjoy people if you enjoy knowledge and uniting the two it can be an extremely rewarding career. And I would encourage people who enjoy people and discovering new information to consider librarianship as a profession.

AMT: That's excellent advice, thank you very much Nancy for joining me today,

NCF: Thank you Anne Marie.

AMT: for this project and I appreciate your patience and forbearance and that's all folks.

Interviewed by Anne Marie Taber; transcribed by Jessica Kirkland.

Freeny Transcript

AS: This is Arro Smith and I am here with Micki Freeny and we're at the hotel - Chicago Hilton Hotel during the American Library Association Annual Conference in 2009. Today is July 10th, 2009. Nicky Freeny has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is a part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired and Retiring Librarians. It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of ALA and may be published and used in scholarly research.

So Micki, you went to school - attended the Catholic University of America and graduated in 1972 with a master's in Library Science.

MF: That's correct.

AS: And then you and I share something because we have worked our entire careers in the same public library - not the very same public library. But we've both spent our entire careers working in one public library. You've worked for over 25 years at the Prince George's County Memorial Library System and that is in College Park, Maryland. So tell me what interested you in libraries and library science and we'll just have a nice conversation about it.

MF: I actually was a page in high school. I spent three years also in Maryland, in Frederick County Maryland. It's a small town, much larger now. But one of those things where I was going to either work at the A&W Root Beer place or the library and I got the job at the library. And they were nice enough to give me a job every summer all through college, I was able to come back and work at Christmas.

And the whole time I was in high school I worked with them in the children's department, and the children's librarian kept saying, "Oh you need to go to library school." I'm saying, "No, no, I really don't want that fate." I was a French major in college. And so the year after I graduated I took a job in France teaching English in a French school - two French schools actually. And while I was there, I learned enough that I didn't want to be a teacher. I had decided

AS: But you still liked children.

MF: Oh, I love children. I was teaching in - private, Catholic girls. One of them was a boarding school. And I still found that probably - and this is in the seventies, I found that almost all I did was discipline. And I thought, I don't want to go back and teach French. My experience in high school was that most people didn't like French. So here's something that I loved, so did I want to go back to an American high school and try to teach something that I loved to people who hated it and know that eighty or ninety percent of what I did would just be pure discipline and not teaching.

And so I thought, I've got to do something else. I only had one language to really be successful in foreign language you need two, so I mean you can't really be a translator or - there

are really not many opportunities outside of teaching with a language degree - back then, anyway. And I had worked in the library and I thought, well I really like the public library, I knew of two library schools. Back then, we didn't have the internet, I didn't know how to - It wasn't easy to research. I knew of Catholic University, University of Maryland. The University of Maryland application came, you had to do it in triplicate. And it was like, well I really don't want to go that bad. So I threw it away. Catholic University's came, and it had nice, soft - you know, "What was the last book you read you liked?" You know - it was fun to fill out. So I completed it, sent it in, and lo and behold I got accepted without having done things like sending in my GREs, or - and my mother said she would loan me the money to go, so it was sort of like -

AS: And where was this university?

MF: Catholic University is in Washington, D.C. So I went, and finished in two summers and a year - finished in one year plus a summer. And then I had done my - we had to do a research paper at Catholic University and I had done "Public Library Service to the Urban Disadvantaged." I thought I would really like to work in Washington, D.C., but I didn't even get an interview there.

So Prince George's County gave me an interview, I got the job - actually started as an hourly librarian the summer before I finished my MLS, so I started, and finished in August, and then started - that was actually in '71. I actually got my degree in December, that was '72, but I started in 1971 at Prince George's in the children's department. And I can remember how excited I was - I took a Metro bus back to my apartment in the district, and I can remember talking to the bus driver about - I had gotten this job, I was the only person on the bus, and he said "Well, how much are you going to make?" And I said, nine thousand dollars. Nine thousand dollars? He said, "I make more than that! You have a master's degree and you're going to work for nine thousand dollars?"

That kind of burst my balloon, but I loved it from the very beginning, I loved children's librarianship. I loved Prince George's County - so I moved to Prince George's County - or actually I shared an apartment with someone in Montgomery County. And stayed as a children's librarian there for a couple years and then I got married, moved to Baltimore. And so I transferred to a library that was a little better commute to Baltimore. I spent six months there, a horrible, horrible commute. It was a place that had a race course. And if I worked the night shift, I got all of the race course traffic going to work. If I worked the day shift, I got all of the race course traffic going home. And so - it was a horrible road - it was six months, the absolute worst six months of my career.

And so I applied for a branch manager's job, got it. So that was after about three years, so I was still in my twenties. It was a branch manager for a very small branch that was due to get a new branch, but it operated out of trailers. And Prince George's County had a tax referendum initiative in the seventies that rivaled Prop. 13 in California. It froze taxes at that level, and so this new library that was supposed to be in these trailers for a couple years - that went on for nine years.

AS: You were in trailers for nine years.

Freeny transcript

MF: So I was in trailers for nine years. And we started in a library that had no - they only had bookmobile service. And it was a - just what people think of as an ideal library - public library community. We had a wonderful, we became the busiest library of that size branch within a year or two, and then overtook some of the next size branches. It was just a wonderful, wonderful community.

I was the only librarian, there were a couple clerks and pages. So we were there for nine years. Nine wonderful years. People thought it was just horrible. Because the trailers had been in another, they had been at a very well known project that the University of Maryland had called Highjohn??? from the sixties. It was in a model city community, so those trailers had already been - they had outlived their usefulness, really. But then they came to us and we used them for another nine years.

And then the library opened, finally, in a renovated school, because during that downturn, the county closed lots and lots of schools, so rather than build a library, they renovated a school. And I was there for one year, and in Prince George's there were small, medium, and large branches. And the trailer was considered a small, this next size was medium, and I was there for one year, and then I applied for a regional manager's job and got that. And in that case I was head of one of the largest libraries. And then I also supervised a couple small-medium sized branches. Should I, just keep going?

AS: Well, what - the transition from kind of being a hands-on manager to an administrator - what was that like and were you able to - tell me about that.

MF: Okay, I believe that managers of small branches have probably the hardest jobs of anybody. Because in that trailer - where I was for nine years, there was no one to delegate anything to.

AS: You were it.

MF: It was me and a clerk - and the clerks were wonderful, but they couldn't do story time, they couldn't do budget, they couldn't do collection development. And I had two maternity leaves while I was there, and I did all that from home - I did my collection development from home, and it was - I think - I still believe it's one of the hardest jobs that there is in libraries.

The medium sized branch was a little easier, because I had at least one person to whom I could delegate. And there were library associates and librarians. But then going to the regional library - in that case, I was still a hands-on manager because I was manager of the large branch and administrator to the others - I was on a systems-wide director's advisory council. That job was easier than either of the other two simply because you had people to delegate - specialists.

But one of the things that I think is the difference between a good manager and good administrator is that the good administrator has to come with a system-wide perspective. And I believe I had that and along the way - if I were to identify somebody that I think should go into administration - having a system-wide perspective when you're in a system is one of the most important things because if you don't have it, you don't have it. And people who were too parochial and you can do that without giving up the advocacy for your place.

So that I think is the biggest difference - you become an advocate for the entire library system and you have to look at the whole library system. When you're manager you're really just

Freeny transcript

looking at your little bailiwick. But if you're - people who become good administrators still look at what's best for the system. And they're willing to give coverage, they're willing to sacrifice things. I've known people when I was a library director, or an associate director - who would give up positions because they knew it was for the betterment of the system. People who can't see that, I don't think make good administrators.

AS: When you moved into the more administrative role, did you ever miss story time?

MF: I always did - and I always still did it. I was always the substitute. And from that job and because I was the manager, there was some opportunity. For instance, one time, we really early on, before anyone was doing toddler programs we did them. In - would have been the '80s. And I had a library associate who was going to try it, developed a plan, and then transferred out. And I had to take it over because there was no one who was willing to risk that. So as the manager I was able to do that sort of thing.

When I went into real administration, when I became an associate director, I really missed the day-to-day with the public. And one of the ways I compensated for that was by always being willing to do story time when somebody needed it. And I always worked on Sundays. Now in Prince George's County, then and now, Sunday has always been a sixth day, and you worked for overtime or overtime compensatory time. And it was volunteer. And so I always, even as a library director, signed up for Sundays, because, not so much that I wanted to - we needed the volunteers - because we often could get people. And I would always give up my time if somebody else really wanted the work, but I did it because I loved the public service. And so -

AS: Working on Sundays, were there other ways that you actually, as an administrator, just really kept in touch with the zeitgeist, the pulse of your community, as far as -

MF: Oh - one of the things that I did - I visited branches a lot, I still knew people in some of the branches where I had worked. To this day, I know people's names, I recognize them and they recognize me. But I also - I handled all comments that came in on comment forms. I believe that people should be responded to the way they communicate with the library. So the email and website comments that come we answer via the email or just responding to the comments.

And we had somebody that triaged those - not a lot of those got to me. But if she thought there was something I really needed to know, she would send those to me. But the written comments, I got all of them. And I responded to all of them. And I thought that gives you a really good sense of - really early in my career I was in - the branch where I worked. Someone was complaining about a book and so I explained the process, and said, "You'll get a letter." And the lady said - "Oh yeah I've gotten one of those la-de-da letters." So my secretary and I always called them "la-de-da's." So my secretary was really good at doing just the basics of a "la-de-da," and then I'd do the middle paragraph, and we'd do that for compliments, complaints, suggestions. So that's one way I think I kept up - because I'd see what they said.

AS: Speaking of those "la-de-da" letters that have to go out, and censorship complaints, and library ethics in general, have there been challenges in your career? Specific book challenges that you won, lost, that you gave up, or? How did you address those generally?

Freeny transcript

MF: Prince George's County was very lucky in so far as they really didn't get that many complaints about materials. I suspect that staff did a really good job of handling verbal complaints so that they didn't escalate. But I teach at University of Maryland, and I've taught Public Libraries Seminar there for several years, and of course censorship is one of the issues, and I would always go and look and try to get examples. And I think generally we got more complaints about the occult and anything about ghosts and witches.

And often not - sometimes, but sometimes just complaining about a book because people didn't like it. But often we've had too many. You know, we know you're going to - the balance isn't right. Not that many about gay issues or sex - occasionally. But almost never did they even go beyond the letter. In my entire years - I was at Prince George's County for 37 years, and if I look back at - because we kept the records for just decades, I think only a couple of books got to the level of the Board of Trustees.

One of them was - you're too young to know, but there's this book by Joyce Haber - I don't remember the name of it [The Users (Delacorte, 1976)]. But it was horrible - I mean it was as if the author put every character and then decided how to figure out how every single one would have sex with the other. It was not the literature, but it was the real best-seller back in its day. And that did get to our Board of Trustees, and they upheld that we had it. The truth is it was dying a natural death, and we were never going to order it again. It just going to go away anyway.

AS: It was going to wear out and you could deaccession it quietly.

MF: Exactly. Another was a movie which is pretty graphic and it's called "Kids." It's a documentary and it's pretty horrible and it's about a lot of sexual content with very young adolescents. Obviously the actors are not because they couldn't do that. But - and our Board upheld that. Our Board never withdrew anything. Prior to my being there, I think way back, there were some issues that I didn't have to deal with - with "Our Bodies, Ourselves" that was a you know, a - organized -

AS: It was a lightning rod.

MF: It was an organized- But I also think we did really good collection development. And the community's very liberal. I really do have to comment on Prince George's County because it's really unusual jurisdiction. It's the eastern suburb of Washington D.C. It went from predominately white to predominately African American and I believe it's the only - or at least was the first jurisdiction to have done that and had both the economic level and the educational level go up. And so it really is a unique place.

It's now about 68 or 70 percent African American. And as it's very, very liberal, there was a time before it became African American, that there were Republicans, but not at all anymore. Everyone is a Democrat, socially very liberal. Liberal in almost every way and yet extremely religious. The most predominate charity - I think a couple years ago Prince George's had the fifth or sixth highest per capita charitable giving in the country and it was all to African American churches. And so there's a real strong presence of religion. And some of it fundamental, some of it - lots of mega churches - 10,000 seat churches. So it's a very religious community, but very liberal socially. And so censorship is not a real problem.

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AS: Are there special, with such a high per capita concentration of African Americans, how has that affected your collection development - did you rely on different review sources? I mean, the mainstream review sources that I'm familiar with tend to leave out that segment of our culture - and how do you compensate?

MF: The collection development is something where I'm really interested and sometimes I have absolutely no hands-on experience with except with what one does for the branch. But I have a great deal of respect for all of the staff members who have been doing collection development at Prince George's for a number of years. And they seek out - early on as the community became more African American, it's easy to find literature, fiction, history, civil rights.

What was difficult - and they did a wonderful job of doing that - is to find make up, hair, parenting, you know a lot of the - health, mainstream books that really address African American families. And I was very proud and I'm sure they're still very, very proud of the collection. They - the staff, went out of their way - years ago, one of our staff members who died very young, was even involved with - and I believe it's Recorded Books that has a Griot line, and our staff member at Prince George's was responsible for naming - for giving them idea of the name of the griot line.

AS: That's spelled - ?

MF: G-R-I-O-T. Which is African American storytelling. And I think she was instrumental in bringing to vendors' attention the need for things like books on tape with African American authors and themes. And so I think the staff just - they took it very seriously. It's very difficult to find enough librarians of color - Prince George's has done a pretty good job.

I can remember one time asking at the local library schools - University of Maryland and Catholic University about graduates who would be African American or Latino, and everyone they named was already working for us. Because they were library associates. And that's one of the things we found was that we really had to, so to speak, grow our own. And by giving people who were normally not in the market for library jobs, jobs right out of college - or ??? not necessarily young but with college degrees and encouraging them to go get their master's degree.

AS: Your funding authority - do you all offer tuition help for employees?

MF: Prince George's County is - has had pretty austere budgets. I don't know if you've interviewed many people from Maryland, but Maryland is one of those library heavens. It's not Ohio with a lot of state money, although there's good state aid. It's some of the best libraries in the country are in Maryland. And some of the best funded libraries are in Maryland. Prince George's was not among those. Less funded. And I'm working with some out of date numbers, but let's say just a few years ago, per capita, expenditure in Prince George's was 26 dollars.

In Montgomery County it might have been 42. And they're side by side. And some of the other jurisdictions - much higher per capita. So Prince George's doesn't have a lot of money to spend, but I think we were always looking for creative ways - we did give really good administrative leave. So we weren't able to give much in the way of monetary renumeration for it - for tuition, but we gave generous administrative leave so that people could get their degrees.

Freeny transcript

AS: At the end of your career at Prince George's compared to the beginning of your career, tell me about - one of the reasons for this project is the people that are retiring now have seen a sea change in the technology part of the library. Tell me your thoughts of how your library system rode out those waves of technology change and your thoughts on good, bad, indifferent?

MF: I worked with Bill Gordon who was the executive director of ALA, previously, I mean not that long ago. And he instilled in us that it's "books, bytes, and buildings." And that you really have to have a good balance of staff, collection, and facilities, and technology. And I think we always tried to - we were never ahead of the curve. But we tried to be somewhat behind.

And we found that in Prince George's County there was somewhat of a digital divide. People weren't clamoring for what was ahead of the curve. They were looking for what they needed right then and I think we did a pretty good job of giving that. The head of technology at Prince George's was a librarian who came up through the ranks. Self-taught, started out as a searcher - back when we were doing database searches.

AS: Database searches - when you have to make an appointment.

MF: I can actually remember him saying "Everything's going to the web." We're saying, "Really, Carl, are you sure?" And we had a LAN, and he was saying, "No we don't want to invest that much in those because it's all going to be on the web." And so I think having a librarian who directed that was very helpful. And we always had maybe just enough left money to do - and I said, we weren't head of the line, we weren't in front of the curve.

We kept up and now they're - we actually also stayed with an ILS much longer than anyone else did. Mainly because we didn't see that the right product was available yet. And so we waited, and waited, and waited. And just this past year they migrated to a new one, right after I left. We had budgeted for it about two years ago. And I don't think that was - I mean we were soundly criticized by some people. We also know some of our neighboring libraries went through two, three different ILSs. So we waited, it was a little antiquated, but it served the purposes of our customers.

AS: Moving from that first card catalog to your first ILS - what was that like, what did it feel like? Was it scary, was it exciting?

MF: Well, we went from just a regular catalog to a microfilm catalog. That was horrible.

AS: Yeah I bet - I remember that briefly.

MF: That was really bad. Then we went to microfiche. And then to the online catalog. There was - I think there was this period where lots of older people left. That was mostly in circulation, though. I think there were lots of people who said, "I'm not going to learn to use a computer, and I don't need to be here for that." Among librarians, there were some kicking and screaming, I think at the administrative level, if you weren't able to think forward like that, you didn't belong there, and I don't think there was much reluctance among administrators. Some were front-line. I can remember, you know, being so frustrated with people who - and the hardest transition I think for librarians was the monitoring of the computers. You know before we put on the time management systems and you had a clipboard or whatever it was, and we all heard "I didn't go to library school to sign people up for computers."

AS: To be a monitor.

MF: Exactly. That was the hardest. It was - and then it was the whole period where we didn't know what to do about filters. You know, how to handle that, and we were one of the last to go with the filters. But once it became obvious that you know, with CIPA and - and the filters got so much better. I mean, early on they were just so restrictive. So there again, I have no regrets about how the timing - like I said, I'm sure there were critics, and people that always wanted to be ahead of the curve were frustrated, you know that we were a little earlier. But in retrospect, I think it was the right timing. I don't have any regrets.

AS: As far as librarian work, say reference desk work though. Can you tell me a little bit about the differences you see between reference desk work where 75 percent of your answers came out of the World Book Almanac, compared to reference desk work where you can Google.

MF: One of the biggest changes was the use of telephone. Because our bigger branches, and especially the one where I was the manager for a long time, their telephone business was phenomenal. And once people started looking up the wrong things, that telephone reference just went by the wayside.

AS: Plummeted, right.

MF: And they saw that - and this was what was frustrating for the front-line staff, that was replaced in their work day with monitoring computers. So that was very frustrating. I found a lot of good reference librarians revitalized when we went to live online chat reference. It gave them that old-fashioned reference experience that they all enjoyed. So I think that was in a way, a savior, for the staff that was nostalgic for the kind of reference work they used to do.

AS: When they - and my library's behind the curve on this, we don't have live chat reference yet, do those librarians, are they using, are they simply providing links to other sites on the internet, or are they actually breaking out the books and putting ???

MF: Probably everything. I've never done it, and I need to go back and give a shout-out for Maryland. Because Maryland, one of - when I say it's library heaven, one of the reasons is that it's a small state where collaboration is paramount. And when I came into the library system in 1971, there was reciprocal borrowing among all the libraries in the state of Maryland.

AS: One card?

MF: Not one card, but you could get a card anywhere, and you could return things everywhere. And over the years that just built - it became better and better and better so that there's a statewide reserve system called Marina where you can - without intervention of a librarian you can reserve a book in Ocean City, or whoever owns it and get it in no time whatsoever - there's daily delivery. I mean, it's just a wonderful statewide system. And the chat reference is also statewide initiative.

So librarians throughout the state, and not just in public libraries, in academic libraries, some special libraries, libraries take a certain amount of time. So you sign up for certain - the Pratt library does some of the early morning and late evening - they serve as our state library. And then we're in a consortium where it then goes to California, goes to Australia, comes back to Maryland and then starts all over. So our librarians get a block of time they're responsible for. And I know a lot of them, a lot of questions are just questions about the library system. You

know - what's the borrowing period in Hartford County? What's the fines at Montgomery County? Which made us do a really good job of getting that kind of information on our websites because people kept saying - this is what people were asking.

But there are some real reference questions too. Often they can just answer it from pushing out websites or pushing out information from our databases. We have really good, really good subscriptions for databases. Occasionally they just give an answer - I use it myself. I can remember - I was in New York City and I wanted to walk across the Brooklyn Bridge, but I couldn't find where - there's the bridge, where do you get - how do you get on it?

AS: Several blocks into the city.

MF: So I went back to my hotel, asked how do I get - and you know they just pushed the information. So there are - they get all kinds of questions. But it's enough variety that they get at least when I left, that was -

AS: So you retired from Prince George and now you are doing some volunteer work, or a temporary position?

MF: No, I am. I'm working for the District of Columbia Public Library as the youth coordinator. I'm working as a - what's called a WAE - Wages As Earned. It's a temporary, hourly position. But not in what I do, or the way I'm treated, it's you know - Ann Mitchell is the coordinator and I've always - my dream was to go back and be a children's librarian again. And this is just one step better for now. Because I said, after - there's something, when I reach thirty years, there's something very freeing - when you know that you can retire any day.

And I also knew that when I took the director's job, that I needed to stay in at least five years - that would not have been fair. And I told the Board when I took it I would probably be in it five to ten years. And with the interim year that I had it was eight. And I thought, you know, I started looking for opportunities that would allow me to - I've always worked. My husband was a house husband, and so he stayed home with my children, so I didn't take much time off. I have two children and I just wouldn't be happy not working. ??? and still work.

AS: So you get to do the fun part of children's librarianship now - again, right?

MF: Exactly, again. I still do story time, not regularly, but I substitute, I do a lot of training. And yet, and I feel one of the most important roles of a children's coordinator - a lot of libraries don't have the luxury of having them anymore - is advocacy. And I'm very grateful that I'm part of the top management to be there, to speak up for the kids and teens. And I think that's probably the most important role - that and training of a youth coordinator.

AS: And when you say advocacy, within your library system, or in the community?

MF: Well both, but I think the most important is within the library system itself. To say, oh well, maybe that policy would work for adults, but what about kids? Or, and I can't think of a good example of that, but that sort of thing. Just to make sure that -

AS: Make sure the kids get their part of the budget.

MF: Right. And in the case in the District of Columbia, the library director Jenny Cooper understands and knows the importance of children's. So it's not like I have to fight a battle, but she's not always there in some of the things that I might be talking about. And so just keeping children and teens in the forethought when, like I say, it may be that we're doing a policy

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discussion about a new time management system, or - we're saying, "Well, what about the kids? How does this work with the kids?" And I think that's an important role.

AS: And so, with a thirty year difference between the beginning of your career with children's services and your current role, tell us about the difference that you've seen working with kids. Or the resources you have. Tell us, children's literature - what do you think about the current state?

MF: I love children's literature. I love what - I love everything about the way the art is changing, the way, the different formats, the kids are basically the same. I mean, of course when I came into the field, there were no board books, we didn't - librarians didn't know that we should be reading aloud to babies. I think we got on that bandwagon way before anybody else. In my case, it was because I had young children, I could see - my husband began reading to our son when he was - well, from the time he came home from the hospital. And we could see absolutely before he was you know, a few months old that he was paying attention. And I did a lot of research back in the eighties on babies and books.

There wasn't much, but there were a couple - Dorothy Butler from Australia - or New Zealand. The Teachers of English had done some research on reading for babies. So I developed a program back in the eighties on why you should read aloud to babies. And I'm very proud of our profession, that we saw that way before - it took mainstream American, mainstream education policy makers - it took brain research, and scans of the brain for people to understand that, whereas we could see. So that's the biggest difference - back in the seventies, we didn't let two year olds in the programs. In Prince George's we did very early on, we allowed in two year olds. And then we very early on let in 18 month olds. And then most recently, took it all the way down to infants.

AS: Do you have separate story times? Toddler story times, preschool story times separate?

MF: It depends on the size of the library and the District of Columbia, also in Prince George's. If you don't have very many children's librarians, you don't have as many people coming in, you might put some ages together. In D.C. right now, one of our libraries has a baby, one year old, two year old - so it depends on your public. And we're launching an initiative to try educate our public about the importance. And the problem of course is that those who come into the library already understand.

AS: Preaching to the choir there.

NF: We're trying to go in - like lots of libraries, we're trying to reach people in the community, through churches, and so that - bringing in younger children, is one of the biggest differences over the years. The advent of the computer has made us a more interesting place for teens, and I think that is really good, although - I happened to be somewhere last night where we were talking about a library system that has a library director who's a very, very strong teen advocate. And this librarian said, "Oh yeah, ever since she - she brought all these teens and now we have gangs, and we have to have guards," in a very negative way.

Where in fact, the fact that they're coming to the library, those of us who love kids and teens think, "Well that's really good." And yes, they bring their challenges. Many more libraries

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have to have guards, but it's not that before kids weren't the same - it's that they weren't there. We didn't attract them. In the library that I worked in for six months, way back in the seventies, it was located next to a - it still is - located next to a high school. And back in 1974 when I was there, we had serious problems with discipline. And it's the same today, and some people want to say that's a racial thing, because the kids were white in the seventies - and it has nothing to do - anytime you have a library next to a high school, you have kids come in that - just because there are too many of them. It's not that they're bad, it's not that they're - they're just kids, when there are lots of them, are a challenge.

So I don't think any of that is different. Kids are kids, and what's really great is now they come in because they want to. Except being located next to a school is problematic. But when they come in to use the computers, that's a great thing. And we just have to find ways - and we do use gaming to attract kids. So some of the things they do is different, but they're no different, they still bring their same challenges, and opportunities.

AS: Well, we are getting towards the end of our tape. Do you have anything you'd like to share with a future generation of librarians? My vision for this project is that this will be digital archive that future generations of library students, or potential library students, will be able to access and learn from.

MF: Well, because you're probably not just interviewing public librarians, I just have to do a shout-out for public librarianship. For those who are suited, and that is if you really like people, and you like materials, public library is one of the most vital places you can work. I'd like to just comment too - I've been teaching at University of Maryland since 1996, and I don't know whether it's atypical - but I've seen only recently that very many, many very young people are coming into the profession. It used to be that most of my students were returning students, and now they're in their twenties. And that's pretty exciting.

I think we've done something right, that young people are seeing this as an exciting place to work. Whereas up until maybe even a few years ago, it took people into their thirties to recognize that the public library is a really great place to work. And now - to me it's remarkable how many young people now are coming into the field. People that want to work with children - many are attracted to school librarianship and I don't want to downgrade that, because it has some great opportunities with regard to scheduling - if you have young children, you're off during the summer. But in terms of being - allowing your creativity to go in so many different ways, public librarianship is just wonderful. There are some opportunities for that in schools, but you have to have the right principal, the right -

AS: All the stars have to align.

MF: All the stars have to align. Whereas in public libraries, for the most part, there you have just wonderful opportunities to use your creativity, your love of children. And then I think teen services is - young adult services has kind of waned a bit. I think more and more libraries are seeing that it takes some extra expertise to work with teens, and maybe there should be some dedicated staff to working with teens. In these budget times, that's going to be hard, a lot of places aren't going to have the money. We didn't in Prince George's. Right at the end of my career there we had to merge children's and young adults, which was unfortunate. Still, if you

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have the will, and you have people who are - you know, like kids, you can carry forward. But I would just like to encourage anybody that loves public and loves the materials to look at public libraries.

AS: Well good deal. Thank you very much for making time for this project during your busy conference in Chicago, and we appreciate you coming and sharing your experience with us.

MF: Thank you.

AS: Thank you very much.

Interview conducted by Arro Smith

Gaines Transcript

Anne Marie Taber: This is Anne Marie Taber, I'm here with Robert Gaines at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro, North Carolina at the University libraries. Bob Gaines has agreed to be interviewed today as a part of the Capturing Our Stories oral history program of retired and retiring librarians. This is one of Dr. Loriene Roy's ALA (American Library Association) Presidential Initiatives. This recording is the property of the ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is Friday, August 15, 2008.

AMT: Would you tell me your name please?

Robert Gaines: My name is Robert Gaines, full name Robert Fulton Gaines.

AMT: Thank you. What was your most recent library position, Bob?

RG: My most recent position was the position of Documents Microforms Librarian at UNC (University of North Caroline) Greensboro, here at UNC Greensboro 1974 through 2007.

AMT: So how many years were you here?

RG: 33 years.

AMT: 33 years at UNCG (University of North Carolina at Greensboro). Could you give me a brief capsule style history of your entire library career?

RG: Okay, in the form I filled out online I did neglect to put one experience in: when I was working on the MAT degree in history at Vanderbilt, I spent one year working in the library, the main library at Vanderbilt, as a student assistant. That was the year 1965-1966. And again, that was one I think I failed to put down. That was sort of whetting the appetite I think for library work.

RG: Now I went into teaching after that, got a position at Tusculum Presbyterian College teaching history and began work on a Ph.D. in History at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, came back to library science in 1973. I'm what's called an A.B.D. in history, I never finished the Ph.D. and never did the dissertation. I switched fields primarily because of the job market and, very poor job market in history. And switched fields in 1973 and did a one year M.S.L.S. at the University of Tennessee School of Library and Information Studies. Graduated in August of 1974 and was immediately hired here at UNC Greensboro as head of the documents, microform division.

AMT: Wow, great. All right, recording again, so Bob what was your relationship to books as a child?

RG: Okay. Like most little boys, who grew up in the 1940s listening to swing music, which is still my favorite and stories from World War II. Practically every little boy that I knew would belong to the public library. And I grew up in Nashville, Tennessee and started going to the public library in about 1949 at the age of seven and checking out things like 30 Seconds Over Tokyo and The Samuel Elliot Morrison History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II. And again typical of little boys in the period and have been really closely related to libraries ever since.

RG: And of course all of the graduate work and all of the history coursework that I took over several years at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee and a Danforth Foundation Fellowship

at Yale University, I spent a lot of time in libraries, you have to. And I came to appreciate libraries very much.

AMT: So, was it that, or were there other factors as well that led you to decide to work in a library?

RG: I liked working in the library when I did as a student assistant, at Vanderbilt, that's what's called a JUL, Joint University Libraries, in the mid 1960s. This was 1965, well actually it was late 1964, 1965, and part of 1966. That was a wonderful experience and I thought about the change then, even then. Because one of the institutions that belongs to JUL is Peabody, at the time was Peabody College, and they had an M.L.S. program at that time. They've since been absorbed by Vanderbilt. And thought about it then but decided to see what the history field would be like in terms of teaching and did have a successful and I think a productive career in that area.

RG: But when it looked as though the employment opportunities were going to be few and far between library science for me was a natural fallback, and a very congenial fallback because I've enjoyed working at libraries and you still get to teach, quite a bit.

AMT: Yeah, that's right. So when you decided to become a librarian, was that a common career path at that time?

RG: Gosh, I don't know that you'd call it a common career path but academically the University of Tennessee had just become accredited, they had had a program in library and information studies for some years but had gone for ALA accreditation in the early 1970's after Gary Purcell arrived as director of the program. So I don't know that one would call it common, but it was related an integral part of academic work and academic careers. So if you work in academia certainly its a very familiar and common potential path and that's where I was.

AMT: Okay, right, right, did you feel at the time that there were any social stereotypes tied to being a librarian?

RG: There certainly have been social stereotypes over the years, in the early part of my career I guess, everyone remembers the "Its a Wonderful Life" stereotype of the poor lady being relegated to opening the library. The famous Jimmy Stewart film which we see many many times every Christmas. So there was the stereotype that most librarians were female, and rather dowdy and saying "shh" all the time rather than being terribly helpful.

RG: I think that stereotype was always mistaken, and always was mistaken, it was always just a stereotype. Because I started using libraries as I said in 1949, I joined, I got a card, I got my card to access the Nashville Public Library and I always found librarians to be professional and helpful and knowledgeable.

AMT: And they didn't shush you?

RG: No. I actually never heard a librarian go "shh" in my entire life.

AMT: But we still can't get away from that. All right, I'd like to know a little bit more about your library science formal education, remind me again where you attended library school?

RG: The School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, that's the main campus, of course, for the state. And the M.S.L.S. degree at that time allowed for a certain amount of let us call it specialization or focus. My focus was academic

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librarianship, obviously you could focus on school librarianship. I could have gone either way because I had a teaching certificate with the M.A.T. degree actually involves a teaching certificate so I could go in any direction, but I decided to go in the direction of academic libraries and with a government and government information and reference orientation, really, I think one would say my specialty.

RG: And I did take government documents and I did take legal librarianship in the program which I found to be immensely helpful over my entire career.

AMT: So in that program were those some of your favorite classes? And what were your most and least favorite classes?

RG: Oh, let's see. Cataloging I think one could say was my least favorite class. Not that there's anything wrong with cataloging, I think this was case in which the L.I.S. program at UT (University of Tennessee) did not have a good instructor and it was something, one of those circumstances, where they had to draft someone who didn't want to do it. That was the problem with that particular course. But the reference courses in particular that dealt with sources in the social sciences and sources in the natural sciences. And, of course, the legal information course, the legal librarianship course, and the government information course, with my history background I just felt those were really very good courses. I enjoyed them immensely.

AMT: Good. What do you think would be the most important thing you learned in library school?

RG: The most important thing I learned in library school? That's a difficult one to put a finger on. You learn both a great deal of useful information and you learn technique and you learn the science of information. I think both are important. It's important to know how to find something but it's also important to build up a considerable body of reference information in your own right.

RG: As a history teacher obviously I've come to believe that the more you know about a subject, the better off you are. But I'll have to admit that I wasn't up completely, even having worked in a library for a couple of years as a student assistant, I wasn't really knowledgeable of the real techniques of the profession. And the use and the nature of all the indexing services and all of the reference tools, that's one of the reasons I found the reference courses to be very valuable, because I was able to learn about reference tools that I could put to immediate use when I was out in the profession hear at UNCG (University of North Carolina at Greensboro).

AMT: Okay, so that was a particularly important thing.

RG: I would say that was the most important thing, certainly.

AMT: Okay, good. Can you talk a little bit about other experiences you had while you were pursuing your M.S.L.S.? What else was going on in your life?

RG: Okay, while I was pursuing the M.S.L.S. I received a position. They contacted me, the head of the library science program, Dr. Purcell, told me that since I had teaching experience already and already had another graduate degree that they thought I would be appropriate for one of the, there were only two or three, library internships that were granted each year in the UT (University of Tennessee) main library that's called Hoskins library, it was the graduate library at

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the time. It's a 20 hour per week position in the reference department, they referred to it as a reference intern, but in actuality.

RG: You've been a reference intern I know and there's a great deal of training that goes on in that here, I'm afraid at UT (University of Tennessee) I would have to say they didn't do a great deal of training, they threw you in the deep end. You were immediately put on the reference desk and expected to help people--faculty, students, graduate students, whoever--answer the phone, help people who came in deal with the collection. Actually, one of the first jobs that I was assigned was to instruct the rest of the reference department staff on the brand new CIS, Government Information Services Indexes to Congressional Material. So I had to work up a presentation. And having been a teacher for six years at that point and at an institute of higher education, that was not that big a deal, but the interesting thing to me was that there was so little training that went into the reference internship, they threw you in the deep end. I think here we do a much better job of that, you're again familiar with that.

AMT: Yes.

RG: There's many many training sessions that I believe are very helpful. I've actually done some of them and I know that it's a very beneficial thing, but at UT (University of Tennessee) they threw you in the deep end. It was a paid position, it was not just a position in which you were maybe getting credit for a course, this was actually a paid position. You were a 20 hour a week employee of the reference department and expected to be at the reference desk.

AMT: And so, did you feel like you weren't perhaps adequately prepared to perform your duties?

RG: I was, actually I was because I was familiar with libraries and familiar with reference departments and when you do graduate work in other areas you have to use the resources of libraries. By that time I had done extensive work at Vanderbilt University Library, Yale University Library during the Danforth Fellowship and then at the University of Tennessee Library during the Ph.D. program in History. So I felt that I was adequately prepared but I know that some of the other folks who had positions who didn't have the kind of experience I had were probably not.

AMT: Right, okay. Now, slightly different angle, what do you think of some library studies programs that are taking the library science description, those words, out of their degree of accreditation?

RG: I'm not completely sure what the purpose is here, perhaps it is to attract more people with the label of information technology and perhaps getting into the border area of computer science and computer technology and programming and information science rather than library work. This perhaps broadens the scope of what one might be able to do with an M.L.S. degree, if they still call it an M.L.S. degree, but I'm a little skeptical about removing the library from library and information science, I don't think it makes much sense. It might just be a higher educational gimmick to make the degree more encompassing and more technologically friendly, perhaps, than it would normally be perceived. But I think it's always been technologically friendly and you've always had the opportunity to broaden the programs into, certainly, into information science and information studies and computer technology. Libraries are among the

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first institutions in higher education to utilize information science technology in a very big way, so I don't really see the need for it. I think it's a bit of a gimmick, but if it sells the program, I suppose it's something that might be looked at.

AMT: But you would really prefer to keep the word library?

RG: I think this is where we are and this is where we come from and the word, the terminology of library and the connection to library, I think is still a good thing.

AMT: Sure, what about library skills, are there specific library skills that are timeless you think, such as a knack for customer service? Or are there others that current students don't need to bother with as much?

RG: Certainly, if you are in public service the ability to deal with the public and the ability to deal with the public, who are not always going to be difficult to deal with, recalcitrant patrons, for instance, or particularly challenged patrons, from the standpoint of even literacy. This is always, I think a good thing. One of my instructors at the M.A.T. program back at Vanderbilt said that if you don't have a good knowledge of your subject and a good sense of humor you won't do well. I think that perhaps still applies.

RG: There is a great deal to the reference interview, much more than meets the eye and experience, I think, helps a great deal there. It depends on what you do in a library, clearly if you're a cataloger it's not going to be as important to answer public service type questions or reference type questions. Although certainly here you do see a lot of crossover, many librarians, such as yourself, work the reference desk as well as other departments. So again the skill of working with public and knowing the questions to ask and understanding how to draw a person out in terms of what they really need and not what they say they need. But to be able to draw them out from a standpoint of what they really need is an acquired skill.

AMT: And it's one for which the need is not going away. Are there?

RG: It's one for which the need, I think, is timeless.

AMT: Are there any, say, traditional library skills that you might see are less needed these days?

RG: Well, certainly, many of the tools seem to be going the way of the dodo bird. Many of the paper tools and the old standard reference tools which we loved in the old days. In the old days we used to ask the question many times in library school, I had to look at the question, "what are the dozen or so most important tools and sources you would include in your ready reference collection," stuff that's right at your fingertips. Maybe the Lincoln Library and the Statistical Abstract of the United States, well most of that has fallen by the wayside now and information technology has taken over and the computer, the omnipresent computer, has taken over.

RG: And the web certainly has changed things a great deal. So the tools which we use certainly have undergone tremendous, revolutionary changes within the last ten to fifteen years, the web certainly being the most important change. And that's a different kind of approach to information and finding answers and it does take a somewhat different educational skill.

AMT: Well that makes a lot of sense. Are there any skills that you as a retiring librarians see new librarians lacking, such as any practical skills?

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RG: New librarians lacking? Most of the new librarians I have experienced dealing with and helping to train here at Jackson Library have in my opinion been pretty well trained.

AMT: Good.

RG: I know that it is now highly accepted at most schools of library and information studies to give many reference librarians much more training than was the case when I was there. And taking a course in reference for the social sciences is very different from working the reference desk ten or fifteen hours a week as a reference intern would do and then getting training along the way from experienced librarians. So I would think actually the new graduates that I'm seeing, you're, I think, an excellent example of this, are better prepared in many ways than I was.

AMT: Well, that's hopeful sign. What is the most important thing that you learned on the job that you could not have learned in library school?

RG: Again, I go back to the techniques of librarianship, how to find things and also how to draw people out in terms of what they really need. There are skills that can not be fully understood or appreciated in coursework, they must be experienced in a practical setting. Those are the skills, I think, that would benefit someone who has been through a M.I.S. program at a particular institution but also internship training, on the job training in an active academic library setting.

AMT: So, definitely the interviewing, drawing someone out about what they need is one of those skills

RG: That's an acquired skill, I think you must do that you must actually work with that and have someone who is older and wiser looking over your shoulder and suggesting changes to you and helping you develop, helping you develop.

AMT: Yeah, any other examples that you can think of?

RG: Well certainly I've said over the years with a number of the reference librarians here at UNC Greensboro and I'll mention a name, Nancy Fogarty in particular, that she's forgotten more about reference work than I will ever know. There are circumstances in which a question would be asked and she's worked with the materials so long that she can come up with a very esoteric source that's on a shelf 50 feet away that I just wasn't familiar with. And that really comes from long service. It can't be done from coursework, I think that really comes from long service and really applying yourself to learning your collection. And learning your collection is part of really becoming an effective librarian, know what you have. And if you don't have the best sources, buy the best sources, find out what's out there, the new materials that are out there that can help you do your job better.

AMT: That's a good point. Is there anything that you wished you had known before you began your first library job?

RG: Anything I wished I had known before my first full-time library job? That one is a difficult question. I don't recall feeling that I should have learned something else or wished I had known something else before I got the job. And I think that is primarily because I had worked in libraries in several different settings. And when you have been in the teaching profession for some years and worked in the library in a couple of different settings, it does prepare you.

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There's nothing like experience, degrees are good, but there really is nothing like experience. So I would say, no, there's nothing that I really felt terribly challenged about.

AMT: Well, that's good. Can you tell me some of your favorite aspects of your job as a librarian?

RG: Teaching and bibliographic instruction has always been close to my heart and it takes me back to the actual classroom teaching which I began my career doing, teaching history in higher education. But at the same time, I honestly believe that the one on one communication with an individual patron in which you successfully solve a problem for that patron and provide that patron with good information and they leave happy and well-prepared to answer their question or write their paper, that's fulfilling, in and of itself. That's very fulfilling to know that you've one on one with a single individual, a student, faculty member, whoever it might be, member of the public, whoever it might be, if you have helped them, if you have changed their life in some way by providing them with the information they need, that's always very fulfilling and it can happen tens of thousands of times in a library career.

AMT: Okay, can you think of something that you would describe as your greatest triumph as a librarian?

RG: Greatest triumph? When you work withing an institution of higher education you must occasionally make changes and you must get the institution to change and you must change in terms of technology and you must make change in terms of how you do things and you must change in terms of the literal system or organization in which you work and when you are successfully part of such change and when you initiate such change, I think that is very fulfilling.

RG: Just as one little example, and this was an example which many, many faculty members opposed at the time, the first online catalog.

AMT: Oh, yes.

RG: Here at UNC (University of North Carolina) Greensboro, which clearly was going to have major benefits over and above the card catalog, was bitterly opposed by many faculty members who just really wanted to hang on to the old card catalog. And I was a part of the team which examined it at other institutions and we went to Virginia Tech and we went to UNC (University of North Carolina) Charlotte and we went to the University of Kentucky and we went to a number of other institutions, both within and without North Carolina, in order to examine the systems which were out there and how best to implement it. And when we finally did get the system up, and I'm thinking this was 1984, we thought this was successful and well done. It's nothing like the web based systems, you know, that we have today but it gave you many, many more access points than an old card catalog. It still though took us quite a while to convince the teaching faculty that this was going to be much better for them and their students and it took many one on one demonstrations to drive that point home. But after a while, most of them came around, but if they didn't come around, they retired.

AMT: One or the other. What are some other things about your work as a librarian that you think you might remember forever?

RG: My work as a librarian that I would remember forever? When you work in an academic library of course you work with a great many other people and even in a relatively

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small department, you must hire and train and work with lots and lots and lots of people, both full time staff members, part time staff members and student assistants. And that certainly had been a major part of my career and I certainly remember working with all of those individuals quite well and quite fondly in almost all circumstances. Many of them, by the way, went on to graduate degrees in library and information studies and are now actively employed in academic and other libraries. So I think I had also something of a positive impact on a great many students who were looking for a career and as a part of working for me in my department chose librarianship as their career path and have been quite successful at it. And that's been fulfilling, that has been very fulfilling, and that has been very positive and I'm still in contact with dozens of them, as far away as Indonesia for example.

AMT: Oh my goodness.

RG: I've had students go to Europe, I have a German student who went back and became an information specialist in Germany. And she came here as a student assistant. So again, it's been fascinating and very fulfilling to influence other lives in that way.

AMT: So would you say those were some of the most enriching experiences in your career?

RG: Oh absolutely, along of course with the teaching, the relationships which you develop with full time teaching faculty over the years, instructing their classes over and over again. Many individual faculty members I've dealt with, some of them I've dealt with for over 20 years. And every single year and in some cases every single semester they would bring their classes in for library instruction and eventually some of that instruction developed into major websites, actually presentations rather like this which were interactive and actually still can be accessed on the UNCG (University of North Carolina at Greensboro) website. That has been very fulfilling as well and I have created some relationships which I cherish, cherish over my life time. I'm still in contact, still socialize with, many of the faculty members that I've known for as much as 30 years.

AMT: Wow, so it's often about the relationships?

RG: It is often about the relationships and those are important and they're very important in the academic community. You must build and develop good working relationships and to some extent even social relationships with the broad academic community, that includes administrators, who I've known many of over the years and still remember fondly. And of course it also includes for us librarians many, many full-time faculty, the teaching faculty. Because they come to us to help their students learn research, they come to us for help in their own research, in many different ways.

AMT: Sure, let's change directions a little bit and talk about some difficulties you have faced in your career. They could be with patrons, or the library, or elsewhere, and how did you handle the situation and would you do it in a different way now, that kind of thing?

RG: Gosh, I think I've been fortunate I don't recall having ever had a severe difficulty at any time in my career. That has a lot to do with this library and the leadership of this library, Dr. James Thompson, and Doris Holbert, and the most recent director, you're going to have to help me with, Rosann?

AMT: Yes, Rosann Bazirjian.

RG: They were good-hearted people and wanted to be of service to the institution and to the library and wanted to make the library a center of academic activity, so the environment in which I worked was always pretty good. I haven't had to deal with a lot of recalcitrant patrons, I would say not one out of 100 has ever really got ugly or so deeply disappointed about something. I guess you hear the term these days of someone "going postal" and shooting everyone in sight because they didn't get what they wanted, this has never really happened at this library that I recall, anyone getting quite that violent of angry over a book fine or whatever that might be.

RG: I think I've been fortunate.

AMT: Good.

RG: There's certainly been difficult faculty members from time to time, the best way to deal with them is a combination of firmness and kindness. To try to help them understand better what it is that they need and to approach their needs in a more effective manner.

AMT: Any memorable examples?

RG: Well, again, I think, going back to something I've already said, I had to work very hard with a number of faculty members, many who were in my own discipline, history. I taught history and still teach history part-time, Western Civilization and U.S. History and what not, I've never quit teaching history. Many of the history faculty who were close friends just had the hives over dealing with an online catalog and technology in general, and bringing these people along was difficult, it was certainly quite difficult.

RG: You will always run into individuals within your patron group and this includes individuals who come in as part of the community, and government information librarians must deal with the community as well, that's part of our mandate as a depository library. And some of them can be quite difficult, usually not intentionally. The most difficult people to deal with were the genealogy types who wanted to tell you the story of their lives and then expected you to have records about their family. And when you had to tell them that no, you didn't have the manuscript census with names and you had the statistical census instead, this was always disappointing and sometimes disconcerting to those who were really into genealogy.

RG: The other difficult group to deal with from the general public who could be trying were inventors.

AMT: Oh dear.

RG: Who came in for the patent index, the trademark and patent index, before it all went online and they wanted to show you their inventions and they could take up a great deal of time and just go on and on and on about their inventions, just like the genealogy people with their family. And you just had to gently but firmly push them out the door sometimes because that wasn't a part of our mandate and we didn't have a massive collection related to patent and trademark. We had the basic indexes, but we didn't have patents, we didn't have full copies of patents, of course, now you can get them online.

AMT: So what was your strategy for dealing with people like that that needed to be helped to go away?

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RG: Well, you always have a strategy of helping them find where they could get such materials. And of course very quickly wanted to find out in the state who had the better genealogy collection and who had the manuscript census on film. And much of that, a large collection of that, was at Chapel Hill and most of the southern states, they had manuscript census for almost all of the southern states, and we found out very quickly that the Greensboro Public Library had a manuscript census for North Carolina only. And we never collected that because that was a kind of work that we frankly did not want to encourage and so we were able often to push people in another direction.

AMT: Very good.

RG: NC (North Carolina) State is a patent depository and had full patents for many, many years and so we were able to push the patent types down towards Raleigh and NC State. So a part of helping people who really want something that's impossible is at least knowing where to send them.

AMT: Right, that's a good point. Let's pause here again. Okay, I think we have.

AMT: Okay, moving on, let's talk about professional associations for a while. Tell me about your involvement with associations.

RG: Well, of course when teaching history it was useful to be a member of the Southern Historical Association and the American Historical Association. I went to a number of those conferences. After changing careers, I initially joined the North Carolina Library Association and have gone to many, many meetings of the North Carolina Library Association, in particular the documents division, the government documents division of the NCLA. Served as chairman I think, if I'm not correct, a couple of times edited their news letter and both chaired a couple of sessions for that group over the years. And I guess I was a member if the documents division of the NCLA from 1974 to almost the time I retired, that would be 2007, and participated in much of their activity and much of their work over that time period.

RG: The ALA (American Library Association) is a little bit different. I did belong to ALA for a limited period of time and went to their meetings and served on the Reference and Adult Services, actually, a committee to what was the best reference works of the year. And I think a couple of years I was on that committee and had to submit reviews of course of reference books and they were published, those reviews were actually published in one of the ALA tools.

RG: Dropped out of ALA though as I recall in the mid 1980's. If I'm not mistaken, it had gotten a little expensive to go to the meetings and getting stranded in Chicago in the big snowstorm of, was it 1978 or 1979, was disconcerting.

AMT: Oh dear, I can imagine.

RG: And taking an extra week to get home. And after that I decided that maybe I didn't need to go to Midwinters in Chicago anymore. I'm glad they have decided to do Midwinters in places other than Chicago on occasion.

AMT: Yeah, me too. What kinds of things did you learn or gain from those experiences with those associations?

RG: Quite a lot from the NCLA (North Carolina Library Association) because I was rubbing shoulders with and developed close relationships with and good working relationships

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with virtually all of the other documents librarians in the state. The people at Chapel Hill, at NC (North Carolina) State, at Duke, and other institutions. And the symbiotic relationship which we developed and which we carried into the documents group in NCLA was very beneficial for us. And when we had meetings, of course, the presentations that were given generally by those of who were in the group on different topics was very useful. I've given presentations a number of times to the NCLA documents group and as I've said, served as an officer a couple of times. That was very beneficial because it was work related but it also helped develop the relationships within the profession because you could fall back on that relationship from time to time when you needed something.

RG: And it was very useful in many circumstances when Duke had something that we didn't have or we had something, believe it or not, that even Carolina or NC (North Carolina) State didn't have. And they would send patrons to us or borrow materials from us or in a number of circumstances even borrow equipment from us and trade it with them. We had circumstances in which NC State, or excuse me Chapel Hill (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) needed a piece of equipment, microform equipment which would handle film in a better way than any equipment they had at the time and they traded us two microform readers for our one old fashioned reader which had this much larger screen. We decided we could part with it because we didn't have the same need they did. They had to have a larger screen for plots and maps and what not.

RG: So there were many circumstances in which we helped each other quite a bit and helped to train each other quite a bit. So there was a very good relationship among the documents librarians in the state and the broader reference group, I think, as well within North Carolina and the NCLA (North Carolina Library Association).

RG: NCLA was frankly, and I know this is an ALA (American Library Association) institution that we're working with here, but NCLA was more helpful to me over my career I think than ALA was.

AMT: Okay.

RG: But that's natural, I think, it is natural that your state group would be.

AMT: Sure, and it would depend a lot I think on what kind of work you do.

RG: True.

AMT: And would you say that your involvement on these associations had an influence on your career and if so, in what way?

RG: Oh the, especially the involvement in NCLA (North Caroline Library Association) and the programs which NCLA put on and every other year of course you're dealing with a major conference. And in the off years the documents section itself would put on, we always put on, a program in the off year and I was often involved in preparing those programs and getting speakers or in speaking myself. And the beginning of automation in technology and the use of computers and the beginnings of the web. Using those meetings to bring in experts and to look at the issues and to see how we might approach the technology better and perhaps serve the public better. We were pretty practically oriented, I think, and I think one could say we wanted to do things and put on programs, workshops in particular for our members which would help them:

help them develop their collections, help them with their jobs, help them with the developing technology.

RG: Back in the late 1970s the developing technology was here comes all the government microfiche and what do you do with it? Nobody had reader printers and very few document departments had just the basic technology to handle all that microfiche. And then ten years later here come computers and DVDs and CDs and what not with information on them and little database packages on them, like the NTDB the National Trade Database, that was I think the first one we received on a CD. And that meant you had to obtain PCs, the beginning of the PC trend in the 1980s.

RG: And then ultimately tie in to the beginnings of the web. But when we were faced with problems or issues especially with technology, we tried to deal with that within our organization and it was helpful to do so. It was always beneficial to us, always beneficial to us. Cataloging government documents was a big issue and we held a complete meeting on that, an extensive meeting, an all day meeting in which we brought in speakers from a number of institutions who had been doing it and had dealt with some of the vendors who were involved in this. And that was very helpful to us.

AMT: Okay, good. Let's switch gears again and talk about ethics for a moment. How often, or did you ever consult the Library Bill of Rights or any other of ALA's(American Library Association) policy documents over your career?

RG: Well, one definitely comes in contact with such information during ones formal education, after that if you are fortunate to work in a reasonable academic environment which doesn't attempt to restrict access, then you seldom have to come in contact with it.

RG: I think in the extent of my career dealing with such issues as will we provide patron information to the FBI? In terms of what books people have been checking out, what books certain people have been checking out, we've only run into a few circumstances where the ethics of the profession and the rights of patrons and the ethical activities of libraries have come into play.

AMT: Can you tell me about any of those occasions?

RG: Personally, I have not been directly involved, I have never been asked as a librarian to provide information to a law enforcement group about anything. Possibly a circulation librarian here and there has, I don't know. I'm not aware that this institution has, frankly. We of course always had a process for that.

AMT: Good.

RG: When you're a part of an institution of higher education there are, as with all institutions, teams of lawyers who prepare a process. We were able to refer such things on an immediate basis to the legal department, you know, within the university. But, frankly, I'm not aware that we've ever run across this. Now from time to time the U.S. government would get in contact with us and would say we've provided you with a publication that we shouldn't have sent, it was a classified publication.

AMT: Oh dear.

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RG: That's happened six or eight times and their instructions were immediately destroy it. Undersea submarine warfare areas, in the defense department material that we took, we received a number of publications that plotted the surface features of the Caribbean Ocean and Atlantic Ocean and what not, which we were not supposed to have received. I don't recall exactly what they were but we were contacted and we provided information verifying that yes the material had been destroyed or sent it back, whichever they requested. That was not really an ethical issue, that was a part of our depository obligation

RG: So, we really haven't, or I certainly have not run into ethical issues very often in librarianship and I think institutions of higher education are more fortunate in that respect than public libraries are. Public libraries dealing with the homeless and street people who want to come and sleep in the library and things of that nature. This is always an issue and part of the problems that one faces in public librarianship. But I can't remember an ethical issue that really was serious here. Although probably its perhaps where I worked and the Director, but particular circulation librarians might well be asked about, you know, what particular patrons have been checking out and that's a serious ethical issue to provide that.

AMT: Yeah, but you've been a little more fortunate in that regard?

RG: Yes, absolutely.

AMT: Okay, good. What about the future and the ways that libraries are changing? Have there been any changes in libraries and their roles? Has there been anything about that that you particularly liked or disliked?

RG: Well, the coming of the web and the coming of virtual access to almost everything is changing the role of libraries and some would speculate may eventually do away with the need for libraries. If you can access all of the information you need and all of the material you need full-text from your home then the question might arise, why do you need libraries? Frankly, I think it will be a long, long time before one can do without libraries because you will always need information professionals who know how to find things that you don't.

RG: I think this, you really can't Google everything and you don't want to depend on much of the questionable data that is out there on the web unless you know to evaluate it. And you know how to use the various databases that might perhaps be available to you and know how to use statistical sources. There are lots and lots of things that librarians will understand and be able to help the public with that will be timeless.

RG: And we're certainly having to change our profession and change our skill sets, we are certainly much more technologically bound than ever before, but I don't see the disappearance of libraries, I don't think that's going to happen. I don't see the disappearance of librarians, think information specialists will always be necessary. And from the standpoint of the students I'm seeing now who are coming in who are very technologically savvy, they've grown up with computers, they still don't know how to do library research.

AMT: Right, so with that in mind, what do you see as the future for libraries, librarians and/or books in print?

RG: Well, certainly books are going to be available online and full-text materials will be available more and more online so the physical book, I think that we can become too wedded to

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the physical format. Formats are going over to machinery, this is only natural, people want access and they're thinking, boy they want access from home. They want access, hopefully not while they're driving, but it certainly seems that way some days.

RG: We must ride the wave of technology. I don't think you can let the wave of technology and the wave of machine readable information roll over you and leave you behind. I think librarians must ride that wave and that means we must be familiar with what's happening and get out in front of it and provide the best of these services to our patrons. And if that means not being completely wedded to the book that you hold in your hand then so be it. There will always be books in libraries, I don't think there's any doubt of that. But certainly a much larger percentage of our budget already is going to databases and to information technology and to information access online than is going to the physical format material.

RG: There may come a time in the not too distant future when no one looks at a physical format journal but instead accesses everything full-text from one of the aggregator databases. I think it's much slower to see that with monographs, but it may come, that time may come. Don't be too wedded to the old ways, the old ways will still be there. I don't think we'll ever do away with the compact convenience of the book.

AMT: I certainly hope not.

RG: That's always going to be there, but we have to ride the wave of technology to provide people with what they need and that instantaneous, gratification now is instantaneous, people have no patience for looking for things

AMT: Absolutely.

RG: And we have to ride that wave or it will roll over us, and I think we have done pretty well at that, up to this point.

AMT: Good, if you had one piece of advice that you had to give to a librarian who is just starting out in their career, what would that be?

RG: Be flexible, understand that information is going to come at you from a great variety, of or in a great variety of ways, and from a great variety of sources. Be very flexible and do not wed yourself to just one aspect of information science or librarianship. Understand that you're going to have to grow as the profession grows and you're going to have to develop your skill sets in different ways, you will have to see technology changing very fast, very, very rapidly and that means repeatedly educating yourself with regard to the new aspects of information technology. So be flexible, understand that you just can't learn one set of skills and depend on those forever, you have to continue your education process along with your experience along the life of your career. It's going to be a learning process that might last 30 or 40 years, you can't just, you can't be complacent any longer.

RG: You must again, its the wave of technology and the wave of information science that is moving at such a rapid pace and you have to keep up with it.

AMT: That's very good advice, I think that's something that I realized as soon as I stepped foot into library school. What do you think you are going to miss most about being a librarian?

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RG: I think with all jobs and in particular academia related jobs, you miss the relationships with people with the patrons who, especially the patrons who are regulars, and with teaching faculty whom you've helped over many, many years. And seeing a new group of students come in every year, next week the new freshmen come in. This will be the 34th freshmen class that I will have witnessed enter this institution and you miss that I think. Anyone misses that, to see the new students, fresh faces come in and want to learn but perhaps in different ways. And they'll have very different social skills and.

RG: Okay, this is the Chancellor's Report for the year 1985 and the Chancellor's Report for that year focused on the library and the service of the library to the university community. I think it was a recognition of the importance of the library to the UNCG (University of North Carolina at Greensboro) community. This is a picture of a much younger me, Documents and Microform Librarian in 1985 in my department. And the narrative of course explains in particular some of the new capabilities and this is the leading edge of the technology revolution of course. We had an online catalog by this time which I participated directly in and we were beginning to look at, actually had already obtained, our first example of a computer. A stand alone computer for both public use and staff use for various skills. So this is simply a recognition of the university community that we were doing a good job.

AMT: Thank you. Okay, good.

Interview by Anne Marie Taber; transcribed by Jessica Kirkland.

Gault Transcript

Jessica Kirkland: Hello, this is Jessica Kirkland and I am here with Anne Gault at the Oak Hill library in Austin, TX. She has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History program of retired/retiring librarians. It is one of Dr. Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of the ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is June 17, 2009.

JK: Well, Anne, after all the formality, thank you so much for being here.

Anne Gault: You're welcome Jessica.

JK: I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me. So, tell me a little about who you are, where you came from and how you got into libraries.

AG: Well, my name is Anne Gault, I came to the University of Texas way back in the 1950's. Completed an undergraduate degree in Latin American Studies, transferred from Colorado. Began library after I came back to Texas after graduation, worked in the Law Library, in the old Law Library - under, oh I can't remember right now, Katherine? - anyway she was the librarian before Roy Mersky.

AG: And, then I was married, went away, had four children, came back to Austin and ended up by getting a divorce and going back to library school.

AG: So, a beginning and an ending.

JK: So, what was it that prompted you to go to library school?

AG: I suppose it was well, love of reading, love of books, connecting people with information.

JK: So, what was your first library job? You mentioned the law library.

AG: Well, actually I guess that was the first one as a page. And, I forget why, I knew somebody who knew somebody and I got in the Law Library. My brother was becoming a lawyer and I thought about going into law but then family came in between that. I worked putting cards in the card catalog, they don't do that anymore, at the University.

AG: And, I worked on a project, a literacy project, at the education library. Mainly these were part-time jobs.

AG: My first real library job was in San Antonio at a branch as a young adult librarian.

JK: Oh, great, and what did you do as a young adult librarian? What were your responsibilities in that job?

AG: Well, mainly, the programs back in those days weren't as fancy, they weren't as technical as they are today. Mainly it was reference and helping people. It was a very busy branch a lot like this Oak Hill library, and keeping the young adult things in order, and trying to set up programs. But, San Antonio at that time wasn't pushing forward. It was still in the dark ages.

JK: Can you tell me about a program that you remember that you worked on or created while you were involved in the children's program?

Gault transcript

AG: Well, actually not there, as I said at that time, they weren't doing programs as they have done in these last 20 years. Um, I had more experience when I became a community librarian in Kyle.

AG: At that time, the population was only 7,000, and right across from the elementary school so we had kids every afternoon. And that was where we put our thrust on summer reading programs and also literacy for adults, and that was more of a thrust of trying to get the kids because it was a bi-lingual community even at that time.

JK: So, what position did you hold at the Kyle Public Library?

AG: I was the director.

JK: The director, and when you started as the director, how many people worked there with you?

AG: I had a janitor and an assistant.

JK: And that was it? Wow, were you open five or six days a week?

AG: No, it was part-time, it was 20 hours a week. We extended some of the hours so we had some evening hours and we weren't open at that time on Saturday. So it was a part-time job, but in part-time library, you're expected to do what you do in a full-time library.

JK: So, what happened while you were there in Kyle? Did you see the library grow, what changes did you experience, and how long were you there?

AG: I was there 2 and a half years, I would say I had a good group of new people moving to Kyle even before everybody started moving around the country. So I had a good Friends group that we organized.

AG: And we had a fundraiser, it was in the 1980's and there was a recession at that time, and we did fair on the square. And I had a lot of hard workers and the church people pitched in and some men's group pitched in and the Friends and everybody. We had a girl in a swing and a cake walk and sold a calf and we raised \$11,000 which at that time was really good.

JK: Wow, that's awesome. So it sounds like you had to do a lot of the work yourself and get the community really involved.

AG: Well, yes at that time Kyle did not have anything but a bank. They didn't have a grocery store at that time, so there wasn't really anything pulling Kyle together except the churches, so we were trying to see that the library became more of a meeting place for new people, that it was a good place for them to get acquainted.

JK: So, tell me a little bit more about how you got the community involved, and what did you do to make sure that they valued the library?

AG: Well, usually in the library you have people who come who read and that's a good starting point. We had no computers in those days, but new people came in and we enticed them to be member of our Friends organization.

AG: In a small community like that if you have an outreach that's rural, that you would get now probably in some towns in West Texas out by El Paso where everybody knows everybody within 10 to 15 miles, so that you were able to get help from local people who even didn't use the library.

Gault transcript

AG: We, I think I was the one who started this, a program for water saving plants growing [outside the library]. We got some men with a tractor and we landscaped the front of our library so that we had plants that didn't need a lot of water, and some that needed just minimal and planted wildflower seeds. And after that I noticed that a lot of the community libraries were doing the same thing.

JK: Oh, really? So, they were planting gardens? Or they were focusing on using more natural, Texas based plants?

AG: Well, we were in the Edwards water district as we are here, and we went through the big district in San Antonio, and they were beginning to talk about water conservation and native plants. That was the 1980's and it's taken that long for people now to talk more about 'green' and not watering your grass.

JK: That's great, so you started the library being more green movement, at least in Kyle.

AG: Well, it wasn't called that but, yes.

JK: That's wonderful, and you saw that catch on in other areas?

AG: Other libraries, I think Bastrop started it, Marble Falls, some of the other community libraries, because we had our community library meetings, and shared library ideas, so that was kind of the beginning of a little snowball.

JK: So, you mention that you would have meetings with other libraries in other areas? Was that through a professional association?

AG: No, through the state through the regional system.

JK: The CTLS (Central Texas Library System)?

AG: Yes.

JK: So tell me a little more about what CTLS did to support the library or what did you get out of your association with them?

AG: Well, actually they were more advanced, not all community librarians had a library degree, so they helped people who didn't know how to do cataloging, and we did the ordering, and then they shared in the workshops like they do now. About things, how to get along with your patrons, how to get money, how to weed collections, all those things that a lot of people who just walked in the door and said "I'm the librarian" [needed to know]. And as I know, even after I was librarian in Del Rio, I was in the San Antonio region then, it was quite a drive to get to the meetings but well worth it.

JK: Are there any differences you can think of between the CTLS system and the system you were a part of in San Antonio?

AG: Well, it's the same, it's basically the same thing. They're founded on the same kind of organization. You just had different people who had different impetus.

AG: And when I was in Del Rio, computers were just beginning to come into the library scene and we had people there in our system who were training the librarians on how to use and order and set up those computers.

JK: So you saw computers kind of come into the library?

AG: I sure did, I started with punch cards at the library school and tried to get the Board in Del Rio to cut loose some money they had all set up. With interviewing people from Utah we

Gault transcript

had a system that we were going to put in our library and we had two younger, bright kids who understood all of that. But we couldn't get them [the Board] to let loose and go ahead and spend the money.

JK: Oh, so the will was there on the library side, but the means were left out by the city.

AG: Libraries depend a lot on their community. As much as people think that libraries are just a building and they're all the same, in my experience anyway it hasn't been that way.

JK: So were you ever able to get that technology into the library?

AG: No, I left before. In fact, the two young kids, I feel that if we had been there everything would have been great. They left, they married, he got his B.A. degree in San Antonio and then he decided he wanted to become a park ranger.

AG: He's gone to Alpine and he's got a Master's and she started college there and they're moving onto a parks and wildlife degree.

AG: So they were advanced enough then to know enough about computers and what we needed to do.

JK: Even though you weren't able to implement the computers in that role, you've still seen the library change as far as technology is concerned.

AG: As a user, yes.

JK: You said you started with punch cards. Do you think these changes are for the best? Do you like them, what do you think?

AG: Well, like other older people who find that all of this is like a merry-go-round that you have to grab and get in there, and some of these things I see when I go to other branches here in town I see more uses of computers than I can find books I'd like to have to read on the shelves. So those of us who are older still cling to the printed word and book.

AG: I see kids are way ahead of grandparents in technology and they have to keep up. It's their world now. And we just have to manage to get along.

JK: Well you seem to be doing ok.

AG: I don't know about that.

JK: Let's go back a bit. Tell me about your first experiences you remember in a library. Did you do you feel like you grew up in a library, was it a significant part of your childhood, or was it just something in the background?

AG: I had a mother who was a reader and I would say she would be responsible. We had a children's librarian who read and my grandmother read to me. She read Nicodemus stories to me.

AG: So, I had a family that reading was important and education was important.

AG: Which, I found for literacy programs in Del Rio that was one of the thrusts there for me was to implement programs for mothers and babies and go out in the community to work with people in the barrio. And we got some things going and I had some very positive, interested, intelligent young Mexican-American women to work with.

AG: So, those of us who know reading is important no matter what you do, just kept working on it.

JK: Tell me more about the programs with mothers and babies that you started.

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AG: One of the things in Del Rio, is that I was from here, originally from the North, and I do speak some Spanish and I felt that I know that children need to start young in order to read.

AG: And I had been interested in reading about the programs that other cities and states had tried. So we tried reading programs with a new thrust and we even took babies and toddlers and that was in the early 1990's that we had a toddler program.

AG: My problem in Del Rio was that I was the only person with a college degree. So I had to be sure when I hired somebody that they really did know a little bit about reading and I didn't want volunteers who couldn't read. The county a lot of times had people working off their debts and I said I didn't want them if they couldn't read.

JK: So what was it that you did? Was it a literacy program or did you take books out to the kids?

AG: We got grants and our thrust was we wanted a book in every kid's hands. And there was one pediatrician and he allowed us to put books in his office and we tried to get in touch with pregnant teenagers and get them hooked on books for their children. And I had an excellent woman, who is still a friend of mine, who was in charge of our program and she and I worked together and we had another lady who was a teacher in Mexico. So that we combined English and Spanish and we took these programs into the casa de la cultura.

AG: And that hadn't been done, people before had not reached out into that area of the town. And then we encouraged the mothers to come into the library. And they were afraid to enter that building, it was very imposing.

AG: My friend Maria knew if you had a program you had to offer prizes or food and that's what we did.

JK: So, is that how you got people to come? Did you find that, you said that it was kind of intimidating for people to come to the library, but once they came that first time, did that change things for them?

AG: I don't know, of course, I wasn't doing a study of before and after, so I had no statistics to prove that they didn't come and then they did and how much they used the library.

AG: But we had somebody who was then, chess was becoming important for kids, and we had some people who had really bright kids and we had a man who was teaching chess to the children. In fact, we sent a couple of boys into San Antonio for a tournament, and that was before it really got to be the thing.

AG: So, we had to do things to get people who knew how to play guitar, and. It took knowing people in the community.

JK: So, can you think of other types of programs that you created to get people to come to the library and get them excited?

AG: Well, yeah, there were grants at the time for like historical programs for adults and we applied for one of those. In fact, one was going to be going on when I left Del Rio. And we had professors from local colleges, and one thing about Del Rio was that they had the cave paintings, and so we used that as a logo for the coffee cups that we gave away and the t-shirts.

AG: I felt that we needed to play up the most important things that would bring people in, make people interested in going to it.

Gault transcript

AG: So those programs were for adults before they started the table top reading and all that sort of thing. We didn't have anyone who could conduct any programs who would take the responsibility. And I couldn't shoulder any more of my ideas; I needed more help than I had.

JK: So, how many people were at the Del Rio library with you?

AG: I had a staff, weekend staff that were part time, a cataloger who is still there, another person who I hired is still there, a person who processed books, another person who worked the front desk is still there, a children's librarian, reference, a couple people at the front counter, then three or four people and a secretary in the back room, so we had quite a number.

JK: Was there just one branch, or was there another one?

AG: That was the only one, they had tried one in Comstock, about 30 miles from Del Rio. The librarian before me had talked to that little school. In fact, that school got computers before our library in Del Rio did because it was out in the midst of nowhere and they neded contact with the real world. So the library thing didn't work because you had to have somebody who was driving books out and you had to have a group of people working together and with those types of things need a ramrod, and we just didn't have one.

JK: That's great though that you were able to implement some of the programs that you wanted to. And it sounds like you got the community involoved in the programs as well, that's great.

AG: It was interesting getting to know a lot different people.

JK: And I'm sure that there were tons of different types of people, especially in that area, there's all types of different cultures, a real mix of people. It sounds like you tried to appeal to both of them by having Spanish speakers, English speakers, and trying to connect to the roots of the community.

AG: Well, the Southwest is a very different world from Austin, Texas. Austin has always prided itself on being sophisticated, educated, and it's one of the things that's hard to understand, for Austin to be as full of people who are educated and to have the library that we have. It's long overdue to have a new library and to upgrade all of the branches.

AG: It's just one of the things that Austin talks about and doesn't get around to doing.

JK: What are some of the improvements that you'd like to see, some of the changes that you think should be made?

AG: Well, for number one this branch here at Oak Hill has been well overused and the staff runs with their tongues hanging out half the time they're so overloaded with work. The space isn't big enough, they could use more help. Some of the other quieter libraries are getting some upgrades, but I'd say I use at least 5 or 6 of the local libraries because I'm in different parts of the town so I can see.

AG: And as a librarian and being one who sees the full picture, I'm inclined to be critical because I think we can do better.

JK: Yeah, other than upgrading and spending some more money on things like library services, what things do you think the library can do better?

AG: Well, I was sorry to see they had "walking books" for a while and as I've gotten older I think that is an excellent program. I have a lot of friends who are older than I am and I

think they had a one or two year grant and then the money was not there anymore. Do you know what walking books is?

JK: No, I was just about to ask you that.

AG: Well, that's where somebody is a volunteer and they have a pretty much housebound person who has an interest say in quilting, or tropical fish, and they go and pick up a selection of, now I suppose it would be disks and everything else besides books, and take them to that person and then take them back.

JK: Oh, so if someone said "hey, I'm interested in this," someone would grab a bunch of books and different media and bring it to them so they could choose some of them.

AG: Well, have them serve as your own private librarian and then renew them and bring them back, and that's not in effect anymore.

JK: But that was something that the library had done for a couple of years?

AG: Yeah, I forgot who was the person that wrote the grant for that. But as I'm older and have older friends who are housebound, it makes sense.

AG: It really would be good because we have to go across all generations not just babies with the mirrors and the bells and that kind of thing.

JK: That's a great, a really interesting program. Like a bookmobile but more personalized.

AG: Very much so, it's like people who do meals on wheels. They get to know the people that they deliver their food to and people need people. Being shut at home in a nice air conditioned house doesn't really cut the real life problems.

JK: That would be a great opportunity for them to have to get that human interaction. And have that time to spend with someone, even if it's just a few minutes.

AG: Well, I have friends who have eye problems, I have a friend who has macular degeneration, and she can't put the disc in because she can't push the buttons. So there's a problem, I don't know what the solution would be to people like her but as people live older and longer there are more people who have problems with their eye sight so, maybe somebody can come up with a new program for folks like that.

AG: Austin's awfully big and getting bigger so I know it's not just my one friend. But I haven't sat around thinking about how you figure that out.

JK: Yeah. Better services for older adults in general because that is; it's a problem that America's having right now, there's people, like you said, living longer, getting sick, and who need someone to take care of them, so it sounds like that's a big opportunity for libraries in general to find ways to assist patrons through all of their life instead of just doing great kids stuff and having lots of services for them. So, finding new ways to serve their patrons.

AG: Well, there's a group called lifetime learning and I've known people and I go to some of the classes. Lifetime learning is slogan that libraries sometimes use. And I think maybe going back and taking an assessment of what other things can be studied and worked out in the future, maybe not today, but in the future, maybe next year or two years from now.

AG: There are people who like to deal with children, there are people who like to deal with older adults, so there's a place for everybody.

Gault transcript

JK: Great comment, thank you. So we've talked about some of the things that you've done. Tell me a little bit about your library school and how did that prepare you? What are the things that you learned there that got you ready for having real library jobs?

AG: Well, what I found is those things don't prepare you for the real world.

AG: You don't know how to handle that patron, at least at the time that I was there, who wants a book pulled off the shelf. You had to go through and figure it out, get some help from your central system.

AG: The real world was for me, different from library school and I've heard a lot of people say that. I rememeber one professor saying to friend I had made in summer school, we were taking statistics, she was a teacher, a librarian in the Valley. She was having some trouble and he said to the whole class, "don't you know you shouldn't take statistics in the summer?"

AG: Well, school librarians don't have a chance, now they can because there's long distance learning through computers and the internet, but at that time they had to come and physically be here. And I thought what a thing to say to people who are trying to finish up their degree "you shouldn't be taking statistics in the summer?" Yes it was hard, and as a librarian I figured I'd hire somebody to do that, I wouldn't be doing that.

AG: So, in my own experience I just found that I didn't get a lot of practical; it was on the job training.

JK: So you got lots of theory but none of the real how to.

AG: But it sound like now maybe you get more hands on.

JK: Yeah, more opportunities. Looking back, what are some of the things that you'd wish you'd learned, that you wish library school had prepared you for?

AG: Well, maybe to shut my mouth would be one thing. I'm outspoken and I usually tell it like it is and I would need more training in PR (public relations) I suppose. And I think that's very necessary. I found my staff in Del Rio had had no training at all and I made sure that when we had a national library meeting that they got a chance to go in and at least walk through the booths and see what was going on and know that that one building in Del Rio wasn't the library of everywhere.

AG: So I think, even the little rural libraries which they do more of now, people have an idea that they're not out there by themselves, that there are other libraries out there.

JK: So, do you remember what that conference was?

AG: It was an ALA (American Library Association).

JK: An ALA?

AG: And they had never, they had no idea. They knew the library in Del Rio and they knew school libraries, but they didn't have a vague idea what other libraries would be, what they would talk about. They came back with bags full of freebies and they had a great time.

JK: Where was the conference, do you know?

AG: It was in San Antonio.

JK: Great, so can you think about what was the first conference that you went to as a librarian, do you remember?

AG: Oh, I don't remember because Austin couldn't hold the state libraries, it wasn't big enough. I've been to Corpus (Christi) and Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio.

JK: So, tell me about what kind of professional associations you were a part of, what were you a member of and what did they do for you?

JK: That was weird. (The lights went out and then back on.)

AG: It was actually, I was on some committees for Texas Library Association, but just with working and keeping up with what I had to do, I was not in it. I'm not a real big joiner. So, I didn't want to do the politics. I'm interested in politics, but mainly state and national politics, not library politics.

JK: So, it sounds like maybe CTLS (Central Texas Library Systems) was more helpful for you.

AG: They were for small libraries and I was a law librarian at the Texas State Board of Insurance for, oh, 2 years and that was a different. The law libraries, and UT (University of Texas), I worked at the law library at UT for a year after I got my degree. So, they're all different.

AG: The associations are important, so I was a member, past member of ALA (American Library Association), and the state, TLA (Texas Library Association).

JK: Can you tell me more about the difference since you've worked in a law library and you've worked in a public library, how are they different? What are the things?

AG: Well, when I was at the law library I worked under a professor who was in international law and computers were just beginning to be used and WestLaw and Lexis (LexisNexis). In fact, one of the sellers of Lexis (LexisNexis) is in the lifetime learning, I met her in one of my courses.

AG: So that the library was beginning to make that change from books into being able to use computers to get what you need.

AG: Law libraries are professional, you have a degree of mainly educated users whereas in the public libraries you go from soup to nuts. You do people who want to come in and sleep, or people who want to look up something about somebody who's been diagnosed in the family and has diabetes. Or they had a child who is a special project, and in the law library you're really focus in if you're in a specialty area. Generally, it's all research heavy, quiet learning whereas a public it's noisy, lots of people coming in and out, where's the restroom, you know different questions that they ask.

AG: So, just different kind of people that you're serving with different goals.

JK: Talk to me a little bit more about what, you know we talked a little bit about things that you kind of wish you'd learned. What advice would you have for library students now? What are the things that someone like me who is wanting to have a career in libraries, and is going to school, what are things that we can do while we're in school to be more prepared and to be better librarians in the future?

AG: Well, I guess I would want to know how you got interested? Did you work as a kid in school?

JK: No, I didn't. I was always, just like you, a reader. I always went to the libraries and you know, graduated with my BA and thought, what am I going to do now? And I thought about what are the places that I like and libraries are one of them. So I thought, all right, I'll try that out!

AG: Well, I think what I'd say, which is what you're doing now, is to get some experience to know what kind of library you want to be in. When I went to library school I had four teenagers and was getting a divorce, so my quickest thought was to be a school librarian and at the time I got my degree, there were 200 schools in Austin and 1 or 2 vacancies, so it was pretty limited.

AG: And unless you can travel away, because I went to Houston and had an internship in the law library thinking I was going to go ahead and be a law librarian. So I think getting a taste of what kind of librarian you want to be and in today's library, of course is built a lot around computers.

AG: So, if you're going to do a community thing, go out to a small community and see what they're doing, if you want to be in a scientific library go and see what they're doing, because Austin does offer a lot of different colleges and places to go, and they're screaming for volunteers now in anything.

AG: So, I would advise trying out different things. And I'd hope that they'd be offering more classes that are practical.

JK: That's good advice, so you think that getting a feel for what the different libraries are like, and finding your place is important.

AG: I really do.

JK: I think that's great because they are really different, like you said, a law library gets really different patrons than a public library where you get everybody.

AG: And we're getting more and more international in our community. I know here when we first started getting some of the Asian books out there they were interfiled on the shelves and I said why don't you put them all together where somebody coming in can find them a lot easier.

AG: And I noticed they have done that here.

JK: Yeah they do.

AG: So, you know, when I was in libraries we didn't have anybody who spoke Chinese, or Japanese, Thai, or Korean. So that you really have to be quite versatile unless you are in a library where you specialize only.

JK: Think about, looking back on your careers, what are some of the hats you had to wear as a librarian that you never would have thought you would have to?

AG: Well, you get to clean the restroom and you get to take things out to the dumpster. There are things that you go in dressed for success and there are things that if there's a problem and the toilets overflowing, you got to deal with it if the janitors not there.

AG: In Del Rio, we had the same kind of problems because they came to the library in the winter because it was warm and they came to the library in the summer because it was cool. So you had people that were, I remember one time we had one man, and people were complaining because of how bad he was smelling. And you know you usually don't go up to

somebody who's acting a little bit different and say you know, could you leave? So, we got a hold of the Sheriff's department and they took him down to the Boys and Girls Club where he got a shower and they got him some clean clothes so that he was more accepted in the library.

AG: So that's something that you don't think you're going to have. I had a judge's son, and his girlfriend, and I can't remember which one was working off time and the other one came in and they were fighting. So we had to get somebody out the back door while the other one was there.

AG: And it was a judge's son and you now that's where your money's coming from, the county. And you have to be careful how you, you can't just call the police and say come and get them. So there are things that come up in the library that you just don't think you're going to have to face. Or you haven't been trained to face.

JK: No, I don't think anybody could train you for that. Wow. Are there any other things you can think of that you never thought you would have been doing that as a librarian?

AG: Oh, there are just things that people need to be, and as I grow older I know, that people need to be stroked more than they get stroked and people come into the library and they expect attention, want attention, demand attention. And a lot of people are quiet sometimes who come in but people are needing some contact and you really need to be able to figure out what that person has got going. Because they could be disruptive as that fellow and girlfriend and wife were creating for us.

AG: And you just have to, I mean you are a parent if you are the director and you have to go in there and have to make the quick decisions sometimes. But you need a lot of skills if you're in a public library and I'd say in the law library you need to know how to get along with people so you need to have some people skills.

JK: That's good, I wouldn't expect to have to be doing some of the things like taking out the trash or unclogging the toilet, but I guess it's just all part of the job.

AG: Well, running a house helps you take care of some of the problems.

JK: So, what do you think are the things that, like, in your life and outside of library school, what prepared you to be able to deal with that? Was it having four kids and knowing how to deal with them?

AG: Well, that's a good start, I think some people where you live you have problems and either you solve them or somebody solves them for you. And if you're just living sometimes if you have a flat tire out in the middle of nowhere, are you going to wait there until somebody maybe comes or are you going to get the tire out and see if you can get it on or whatever?

AG: There are just things that need to have solutions and in libraries I think a lot of it is solutions. You're dealing with people and when you're dealing with people, people have problems.

AG: So I think if you can figure out that you're not just coming out in your best bibb and tucker when you open the door to go to work because you're going to have people who are coming in the other door who have a kid who's sick, or misbehaves, their husband just lost a job. All the things that people bring with them that's their baggage and you have your own. So I don't

know. I can't tell people how to solve problems, it's just living. I know my mother used to say "I know this is right because I'm older."

AG: So, you have to kind of watch saying that. You do live life with some experiences, your life experiences but I think being practical is part of it.

JK: I'm thinking about the patron who you had to call the sheriff to take him away and get a bath. So, what are some of the things, what advice would you give to someone, a new librarian, how do you deal with those kind of disruptive patrons, or people who aren't following the norm of other patrons?

AG: Well, I can't say that I've always done this, but I see people who are talented in working with people and you try to deflate what's going on and don't put yourself in a situation where you can be bodily harmed.

AG: I remember reading about a librarian in Arizona, Utah? Anyways, somebody got off the train, went into the library and killed her. So, you don't know, in this day and age we have so many of these folks that have access to guns and knives and you don't know what's ticked them off.

AG: So the main thing is to try and be cool and I would say a lot of role playing. I would say libraries really need to train librarians and role play for the unexpected. We had name tags and we did not put names on them because I had read somewhere they can get your name, they can call you up, and they can harass you. So we had "ask me" with a question mark so that they knew those people wearing those badges worked there and they could ask them a question, but we didn't put names on them for safety's sake.

AG: So, I would say you're dealing with people, people have problems, and now this day and age they seem to be more violent in a way which you didn't have a lot of people coming in and just shooting randomly as they have in schools.

AG: You hate to put a damper on it but you need to be realistic too. So I would say some library school in PR (public relations) and safety.

JK: Wow, those are scary things to think about, but.

AG: It's not all just clean.

JK: Well, now that we've talked about some things that are bad, what are some of the best experiences and moments that you can think of in your history with libraries? What are the times that you look back on and you feel really great about what you did?

AG: Well, I think the Kyle library when we were able to pull together and in bad times make 11,000 dollars. We hadn't had a fundraiser in a long time and were a small community.

AG: I'd say in San Antonio sort of breaking me in with a big downtown library and then being in a branch that was, we were totally on our own, we had an excellent branch manager and she was very energetic, very good, and very interesting.

AG: And I'd say in Del Rio I was kind of able to do a little bit of everything there. The board, in the end there were problems between the board and me and that's why I say people skills because if you are a community librarian, a public librarian, you have people who expect you to do what they want when they want and you have to deal with them.

Gault transcript

AG: But I'd say getting the grants that we got, we got several of those, the grants and we got a grant in Kyle when we first started the literacy program. And we got a lot of books out in kids' hands in Del Rio.

JK: So that was the programs with the moms and babies and you applied for a grant and got it?

AG: Yes, and as I said Maria was the greatest helper and we had money in the bank to buy more books with and we started out with the well-known baby books, the old faithfus. And then we showed the parents how to make books you know if you didn't have any, out of magazines.

AG: And I was thinking the other grants we got for the historical programs, that was, Del Rio wasn't really on the map too much and we got some writers who came down. And we had a lot of good programs.

JK: So, in Del Rio you applied for a grant, tell me more about the writers who came down.

AG: Well, we had one from here at UT (The University of Texas), Hinojosa Smith is his name and he had the Michener Chair at that time. And he came down and he had a book that had just came out and he stayed with one of my library board members and went over to Mexico, and was all very friendly.

AG: And we had another writer who came down from western something, around or near Abiliene, and he came down. He's a translator and he did a program for our library and for the casa.

AG: We had a writer who had been in Del Rio, I don't know whether you know the history of Del Rio?

JK: Not much.

AG: Are you from Texas?

JK: I am.

AG: Okay, well many years ago the radio station was across the river in Acuna and that was where Wolfman Jack got his start over there. And lets see, Johnny Cash and what's the name of his wife, Rosemary or Rose? Her family sang on that station and it would boom clear up to Chicago. And there was a doctor who owned the station, well he was also a doctor who had a gimmick that the glands of sheep would make men more virile and that is how he was making a lot of his money.

AG: And a man named, I can't remember, I think his name was Brinkley, had written a book about the doctor and he came back to town when I was there. We had him visit the library and sign some copies of his book because he had researched the doctor.

JK: Oh wow, was that controversial at all, or?

AG: Oh no, the people of Del Rio were very proud of having him come back. The older families there had built the library there with a local relative who was an architect and he built a nice looking building but some libraries are not practical for running a library. We had a lot of space up high and we needed it down on the floor, but they were very proud of their library and having him come back to town and have his book for them to sign.

JK: So that was all funded through grants?

AG: Well, he came, I think we just knew he was coming but some of the other writers we had gone through the Texas Commission for the Arts. Through the casa, we worked together in some of the things that we did, because there was no point in getting a writer if he didn't really fit the community. So, that's what we tried to do.

JK: Following the topic of grants, you got grants for literacy both in Del Rio and Kyle, are there other grants you can think of that you'd applied for that you did or didn't get?

AG: No, mainly it was just the writers and literacy.

JK: And what was that process like for you? Did you write those grants or did someone else in the library?

AG: Well, there was a young woman here in Austin, she worked at the State Library and I went to her when we were trying to write the grant for the computers and internet and all that. And she went through step by step so that it was written so that it could be handled. And the other grants were easier to do and I had gone to some of the workshops on how to write grants.

AG: And Del Rio was so needy that it would really be hard to say no. When we were trying to help get more literacy.

JK: So, for the one you had someone else write it for you?

AG: No, I wrote it but she helped me put it together.

JK: But the rest of the grants, that was all you?

AG: Yeah, we did, yeah.

JK: I'd like to change the topic a little bit, I'm thinking about ethics, and you know you say you're outspoken and maybe sometimes that's not always a great thing. Did you ever find a situation where your personal or professional Bill of Rights for yourself, your own personal ethics, conflicted with something the library was doing, or was asking you to do, did you ever have a problem with that?

AG: No, not really because mainly people who are connected with libraries, they have an education and they understand sort of the functioning of businesses, and the library is a business. I didn't have any ethical problems.

JK: What about, you mentioned you'd had patrons ask you take books off the shelves, what was that situation like, can you remember any instances?

AG: Yeah, in Kyle when we had Al Gore's wife, Tipper, the book that came out in the 1980s that she wrote about music. And one of the pieces of advice in the book was that parents should know what kind of concerts their children were going to. And I had selected that book as a part of our collection. And we had a woman who was a nurse here in Austin, new people to Kyle.

AG: And she objected to that book because some of the pictures, I think that had some of the rock bands or something, I don't really remember what it was. And I told her she could go before the board and register her complaints and fortunately, or unfortunately, she fell asleep from working and she missed the meeting.

AG: So, it sort of smoothed itself out.

JK: So, in that case the bureaucracy worked for you.

Gault transcript

AG: Yes, well, she was tired that's what worked. And I don't know why she was so upset because she was telling people things they needed to know for their children.

AG: And we had a lot of homechoolers in Del Rio and one mother found a book that had a sketch on the front of a Greek goddess and part of her dress was not covering her, like the attorney general had objected to the statues in Washington.

AG: And so she registered a complaint and as far as I know Greek statues, Roman statues are considered fine art. But she didn't want her children seeing that. Well, the quick answer is don't let them check it out, but then, you can't tell them that. So we brought that before the board so that she could be heard.

JK: Did you have a big role to play in that or was it more things that were handled by the board?

AG: Oh, I was the one that started it and had to take it to the board, but the patrons needed to know that that was not my total decision. That they would be heard, they need to be heard, and then if the board agrees with them, then the book would be taken off the shelf. But I don't believe in taking things off just because one person objects to something in a book. Life is not going to go that way for all of us and wouldn't want it to.

JK: So, can you remember, if you ever did have to take the book off the shelf because the board had sided with a patron?

AG: No, those are about the only two times that we had any problem.

JK: Were you the one they always came to first about it?

AG: Well, the staff doesn't know how to handle it, unless your staff are professional librarians, and they don't have training that way. So I always told my staff to come to me because they didn't need to be abused and if patrons are angry they didn't need to be treated that way and to come to me.

JK: Great, well we're almost out of time.

AG: Well, that's good.

JK: What can you think about, looking back on your career or just your experiences in libraries, what advice would you give to library students or patrons, or libraries in general, what should they be embracing? What should be their mission of libraries?

AG: Well, I don't know because now I'm in a different position of libraries, I'm a user. And I was going to say I could be critical because I can see where things can be done better. And I think libraries may be jumping past what I like in libraries. I've seen the Kindle book, I don't want to buy that 350 dollar machine.

AG: I can't see falling asleep and having that thing, you know, hit me in the head. So I'm still into books that I can hold and I'm glad there's Amazon.com.

AG: I don't know I guess, young people, younger people, going into libraries, go with the flow, don't buck the system unless you see something is wrong. But you're going to have to handle the new stuff and try to explain it to people like me.

JK: Well, Anne thank you so much for your time, I really appreciate it.

AG: You're welcome.

Gault transcript

This interview was completed by Jessica Kirkland on August 6, 2009 at the University of Texas School of Information.

Hansen Transcript

AS: This is Arro Smith. I am here with Andrew Hansen at the Chicago Hilton Chicago, Illinois.

We are at the 2009 American Library Association Annual Conference. She [He] has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired/Retiring Librarians.

It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of the American Library Association, and may be published and used for scholarly research.

Today is Monday, July 13, 2009.

Andrew, thank you for agreeing to come in. You are not here at the conference, but you live in a suburb of Illinois, of Chicago now.

AH: Yes AS: And he has come into downtown Chicago, a very busy place, to help us with this archive.

You have worked the majority of your career was in public libraries. And you went to the University of Minnesota. And graduated with your MLS or Masters of Library.

AH: It's a Masters of Arts.

AS: Masters of Arts OK in 1962. Start from the beginning, tell us about your, about why you became a librarian and how you got involved with libraries.

AH: OK, my story begins, as a librarian, began at end of World War II when my dad returned from three years in the NAVY.

We lived in Storm Lake, Iowa. And he got a job in Omaha, Nebraska. I was not a happy camper moving in the middle of my junior year in high school, but in retrospect, it was probably one of the better things that could happen to me.

We lived about a block and a half from a high school in Omaha, at which my mother's aunt had formerly been an English teacher.

And she had several, she was no longer teaching in that school, but she had a number of friends on the faculty.

Among them, the head librarian of the school library, who called me into her office about a month after we'd moved there and offered me a job after school.

I pushed the chairs in, pulled the shades to the right level, put the periodicals that had been used during the day in their rightful place, and on Saturday morning read shelves.

And did that until I graduated, and when I was ready to go to college, my folks were not able to cover my expenses. They told me I could live at home and go to Omaha U.

It would be a commuting school, and that I was responsible for my personal expenses.

I could pack a lunch from what was in the fridge. And I don't have to pay room/rent, but that was it. So I looked for a job.

And was told that they were looking for a shelver in the children's department of the Omaha main public library. I applied on a hot late August day for the job, wearing a shirt, a white shirt, and a necktie.

And 15 minutes later, I was taking care of a backlog of children's books.

AS: You got hired on the spot.

AH: That hadn't been shelved, because they were lacking a page for a while. And the head of the children's was on vacation.

But when she came back, and when I was introduced to her, she said "now I didn't hire you, so I'm going to be watching you."

And 4 years later when I graduated from college, Uncle Sam was breathing down the back of my neck. I enlisted in the Air Force as a draft dodger.

And spent four years in the U.S. Air Force. I, all of this time, I was still planning to be a high school math teacher. And about 6 months before I was due for separation, I began investigating, I had the required courses behind me, just needed to apply for a teacher's certificate.

And one Sunday afternoon I laid down take a nap in the barracks, when I woke up, the decision had been made. I was gonna use the GI bill and get a library degree.

Become a librarian. The encouragement that I had received while I had been working in the Omaha Public Library had just got fallen on deaf ears for most of the, well all of the time, that I was working there.

And I suddenly woke up and realized that this was the direction I wanted to go. So I applied and was accepted at the University of Minnesota library school.

And enrolled there. This was in the, well I applied in the summer of 1955. And I was a student 55 and 56.

But neglected to finish a couple of term papers and take my oral exams, and my adviser had encouraged me to think about public librarianship.

When I enrolled I thought I wanted to be a reference librarian in a college library, but the fellow who became my adviser had looked at my application papers and he hired me as a grad assistant, which helped me with the finances and so on from library school.

And of course he gave me the encouragement to think about public librarianship. My last quarter there, the position opened up as head librarian in the Bismarck, North Dakota public library.

And I applied, and was hired. And finished the term, still lacking those two term papers and the orals.

But I went off and got wrapped up in that first job. Bismarck needed a new library.

It obviously had a small budget. But after 7 years there, Bismarck had a new public library building.

And I felt I had done what I could do in that community. And in the meantime, my dad had been widowed. And a position in the Sioux City, Iowa public library opened up.

And he encouraged me to apply. I really didn't want to move there, but I applied and I was hired.

And stayed there for four years, and again there were quite a few changes that needed to be made, and we made them.

And then my advisor from Minnesota had become the director of the newly established library school at the University of Iowa.

And he knew that I had always been interested in teaching, and we negotiated and I became an instructor the first four years at the University of Iowa School of Library Science was in existence.

And it was during my last year there that I received a feeler from the personnel office at the American Library Association.

And I was always interested in trying something new, and so, when they asked me to come for an interview, I did. And one thing lead to another and I became the, at that time, the executive secretary of the Reference Services Division and the Adult Services division.

And after I was hired and had been there, I was told that the goal was to merge the two divisions, and during my first year a committee report, a joint committee between the two divisions had come up with the recommendation.

And we were able to put that into effect. It then became the Reference and Adult Services Division of the American Library Association.

During my 20, almost 23 years there, I also worked for a few years with the Trustees Division.

And I had one period where I was responsible for Reference and Adult Services Division, the American Library Trustees Association, and the Public Library Association.

And then later, I had responsibility for the Association of State and Specialized Agencies, as well as RASD. But the common thread all the way through was the Reference and Adult Services Division.

I retired from ALA in 1994, and oh I should add, that I did go back to Minnesota and finish those term papers and took the orals. Belatedly.

AS: How belatedly did you do that?

AH: December 1962.

AS: OK

AH: I was given my degree.

AS: After you'd already been the director of the Sioux City library?

AH: No. AS: Or the Bismarck?

AH: I finished them all. AS: Well that's good. I'm glad we're all caught up there.

AH: The, but after I retired, I had hoped that I might find a part time job as a reference librarian, doing what I really love doing. I did not want any part of administration.

AS: Right AH: In retirement. And I was hesitant to push, because we lived in Wilmette, a second suburb, north of the city, firmly on Lake Michigan.

Wilmette Public Library is an excellent public library, and as a user, I was a little concerned about becoming a staff member.

Because I hadn't worked directly with the public in almost 30 years, and I was afraid if I fell flat on my face, I would be embarrassed, you know, show up in the library. So I, some friends had a retail shop in a shopping center not far from where we lived, and they needed staff.

So, I went, I worked for them part-time for several months, but they were not located in the good spot in the shopping center.

Hansen transcript

And ultimately that branch of their business did not succeed. And so, I was without a job, and I didn't want to transfer.

Retail shop work was not for me, but so I, I really got serious about looking for a library job. And one of my friends suggested that I work, or negotiate with, a temporary library agency located in this area.

And so I was interviewed, and they didn't have that many opening in the north suburbs. But it turned out that they had a part-time job in the suburb that was about 40 miles away.

And the head of adult services was somebody I had known at ALA, before she went to library school. And so she remembered me, and she said "sure."

So I worked part-time for three months, while they were between staff members, and it worked out. And then another job opened, almost as far in another direction.

And I worked two full weeks there, and again it worked out. So I felt encouraged.

I applied at Wilmette, and they didn't need anybody immediately. But they did like to have a rooster of substitutes, so I had an interview and was hired.

And worked there for 11 years, retiring from that about a year and a half ago.

The head of adult services there has since become the director, and after I had been working there for a few months, she said she really had been reluctant to hire me.

She was afraid that I might, basically, come in and try to run the show, and I was able, very quickly, to let her know I was not interested in administration.

I had ideas once in a while, and I would share them with her. But it was not my concern whether they were implemented or not.

Something else that happened, that was totally unexpected, was that during the interview I was asked, "how do you feel about working in the children's department?" And I said, "gulp."

AS: You'd never done that before have you?

AH: I haven't really done that, but I had worked on the Omaha book mobile at one point. And I paid my college expenses by shelving children's books.

I had a pretty good handle on children's books published before 1951. And I had taken a couple of courses in library school, because my advisor said a public librarian really should know the range of services in a public library.

And so I said sure. But I wasn't gonna push it. I hadn't been there very long when the head of children's asked me to come in for an orientation.

And the next thing, I was working probably as many hours in children's as I was in adult.

And with the understanding that I did not have a complete knowledge of children's literature. And, but the wonderful thing about that staff, besides having excellent resources, it's a very collegial staff.

And we were not embarrassed to admit when we didn't know something. Because each one of us had areas that we had more expertise than other areas.

And it it was just a very happy working relationship there. We were not in competition with each other. And that pretty well covers a career that I have loved, and

AS: Well that's quite a career.

AH: And I have often said I have never regretted becoming a librarian except every payday.

AS: Right. Well, we're not terribly well compensated financially are we?

So you've worked in a variety of public libraries and then with the American Library Association for, for over 30 years. During that 30 years, I imagine the library, the American Library Association grew

AH: 20, 23 years

AS: 23 years, OK, I'm not good with math. I imagine ALA grew significantly. So, tell me, tell me a little bit about that experience. The changes you saw at the ALA.

AH: Well the public relations program, Bob Wedgeworth appointed Peggy Barber, who was, I think she was there on a recruiting project to start with, but he saw some talent there.

And he put her in charge of ALA's public information office. And kinda, well I'm sure he didn't give her free reign, but he gave her the authority to do some things.

And we had news releases and interviews, posters, all kinds of programs that just had never been thought of before that. That's one thing.

During my tenure with the Reference and Adult Services Division, we established a number of guidelines.

Various committees developed guidelines for services to special clienteles, and special subject areas, business reference, service to an aging population, service to Spanish speaking, a number of different programs like that.

The interlibrary loan code was liberalized. When I, and this is one of the changes that I've seen in our profession. I can think of two very important changes.

One was, we dreamt about interlibrary cooperation when I first started, but when we needed to borrow something, we had to have absolute, total justification that it was very important for that borrower to have that material.

AS: And then of course there was the ALA form.

AH: Yes, and. AS: In? AH: We had no idea, who owned what we might need. And we would send it off to the nearest big library, hoping that they might have it, and that they might be willing to lend it.

But we never would have thought of borrowing fiction. In fact, I think the interlibrary loan code discouraged that. It discouraged people from asking for genealogical materials.

They were not forbidden, but the borrowing library, of course, is at the mercy of the lending library.

Well one of the changes that the interlibrary loan committee developed a model code for groups of participating libraries.

And so the concept of libraries with common interests getting together, or libraries specializing in different subject areas in a region.

So that if you needed more help in the field of business, you knew you could go to library X, and if you needed information in another subject area, you went to library Y and so on.

So that interlibrary corporation was being developed, and of course, so obviously the computer helped us get to a place that we would never have even hoped for when I first started.

The other significant change in librarianship in public libraries is, for want of a better expression, I would just say, children are treated like people. It is no longer necessary for children to get permission from the children's librarian to go to the reference department.

Children have access to interlibrary loan. And it's a whole different world for children and people who serve children today, as opposed to when I first started.

AS: That's interesting, because you know, librarians today, we just take those things, both of those issues, interlibrary loans and children's services for granted. And it's interesting.

AH: It ain't always been that way.

AS: No, I can see how technology vastly influenced interlibrary loan, and made it easier and more efficient. What do you think changed the, the perspective on children's services?

AH: The children's librarians, through ALA, the ALA had a long tradition of, you know, children's services division, young adult services division there now associations, and the adult services division.

There was three parallel, based on age group served. But the reference services division always had a universal age.

AS: I see. AH: And so, when I worked with the reference and adult services division, we had committees working specifically in the area of adult services, or services to adults. But when we thought about reference, we had the YASD and CSD.

Can't think of it, what the YASD acronym is now.

AS: Is it YALSA, maybe? Young Adult Library Services Association?

AH: Well it's something. AS: OK AH: Oh as well as the school librarians, even though they were concerned mostly with children and teenagers, they still wanted access to the public library full range of services.

Because the two libraries should complement each other. The children's' librarians, and my colleagues on the ALA staff, were always pushing the program, and so that it was automatic when I would be working with the interlibrary loan committee, or one of the other committees of RASD that I had to remind them, you know, children need service too.

And so, and this was not always an easy concept to get across, particularly if you've had librarians from large research libraries.

You know, how does this, how how is this going to impact on us back home?

And some of these problems were not always easy to work out, but over time, I think we found children were not borrowing books, or asking for books, that would be in those large research libraries.

Things have a way of resolving themselves.

AS: Right, right. So when you compare your early experiences, public library experiences, with your now, post-retirement library, public library experiences, that's quite a, almost 2 different eras of library work. As far as, as, well as far as the technology goes, can you compare/contrast?

AH: Well. AS: Do you miss miss anything about the old days?

AH: Most of them no. I miss the scratch cards from the discarded catalog.

AS: Right AH: They were always handy to have for a short note.

Hansen transcript

One thing I wanted to mention, though, is during my Bismarck, North Dakota days we were in the Mountain Plains Library Association area, and I learned of the Rocky Mountain Bibliographic Center for Research that was housed in the Denver Public Library at that time.

And we joined the Rocky Mountain Bib Center during my tenure at Bismarck. And that gave us access to services of an agency that had a union catalog of research libraries.

Bismarck had a number of geologists who had been exploring the Williston Oil Basin in North Dakota, and they needed research papers once in a while.

And we were able to send our requests to the Bib Center, and they then would send it off to a library that had the item. And also, because of the libraries participating there, they were agreeing to lend the materials.

And there was no question, these were for serious research. And so, we were able to move into interlibrary cooperation there.

When we moved to Sioux City, we were just on the east side of the Missouri River and not part of the mountain plains, so we didn't belong to the bib center.

And we didn't have a comparable resource there. Now, on a personal level, as a retiree using a library, I was trying to recall something that I had encountered while I was in library school in Minnesota.

Recently, when President Obama was asked to speak at Notre Dame, and there was a big hullabaloo about difference in philosophy and beliefs.

I recalled one of my classmates was from South Bend Indiana, and she had lived away from home for a number of years.

And when she finished library school, she thought she would like to return to South Bend for a time. And she was looking seriously at a position at the University of Notre Dame and also thinking about the public library.

And the director of the library school in Minnesota, at that time, was a very very strong advocate of intellectual freedom, and he suggested that she read a report on the University of Notre Dame Library that had been compiled by, I think under the auspices of the American Library Association.

I don't believe that ALA has done this kind of survey/report in recent years.

Anyhow, the report covering the library at Notre Dame in the period of 1950-52 indicated that students who wanted to read books that were the on the then in effect Index Librorum Prohibitorum.

Or other books of that might be of that ilk. These books were at Notre Dame were kept in a locked cage.

They had to fill out an application and have it approved by a religious authority. And the requests were filed under the individual's name.

And if a person had, I don't know what, I don't know what, what the number was, but several such requests filed under his or her name, they were called in for an interview.

And my classmate read that report, and she really didn't want to be part of a library system doing that stuff. She was fortunate and got a job at the South Bend Public Library.

Hansen transcript

But I hadn't -- and of course she had told her friends. And we had looked at that report, and we were all just a bit shocked.

AS: Eye opening, yeah. AH: That a university would have that kind of restriction on reading, and I just wanted to be sure that my memory was accurate.

And so I did a Google, or well no, I went for a search, and I located the survey and I went to the Wilmette library, and said I would like to borrow a copy of that report.

And the request was put in. Now, now I did not have to say this is serious.

AS: Right, right, you didn't have to justify it.

AH: research. All I had to do was say, "I would like to see this report." And it was obtained for me. I looked at it, and reconfirmed what I had remembered.

And returned it, and that was that. No questions asked. So that couldn't have happened.

AS: 40 years ago.

AH: Way back when.

AS: You're time at at, speaking of the change in what we consider library ethics, confidential-- confidentiality standards, were you able to see that, that change brewing within the American Library Association during your tenure there?

You know, the, ALA is, you know, responsible for, you know, our intellectual freedom manual, well a committee of the ALA is, and you know, those, the the Freedom to Read Statement, the Library Bill of Rights.

During your tenure there, did you did you see a movement where, I mean, during your tenure at ALA is is, was the time between incident at Notre Dame and our current, could you see that happening at the ALA? Or was it a more?

AH: Well there were some changes. I can think of one specific. I wanted to add that I was pleased by the change at Notre Dame, the fact that the president stood his guns.

I should have said that earlier, but Notre Dame had come a long way.

AS: Well we've all come a long way.

AH: Even though he was bucking the church administration on that. He saw, you know, the university as a place for the where the search for truth is.

AS: A free flow of AH: mission. I saw the Library Bill of Rights modified.

I was caught, in my early days, when a local group wanted to give us a book that when I looked at it, it was full of factual errors.

It was a polemic, from a very conservative standpoint. And it was not honest, and I was able to use the phrase in the Library Bill of Rights that said "books of sound factual authority."

You know, a requirement. And this book was not of sound factual authority. However, the library board persuaded me not to be censoring it.

Although, I was using the Library Bill of Rights to try to avoid putting it on the shelf. We did ultimately put it on the shelf, but in my younger brash days I would yank that out.

But the intellectual freedom committee went back and looked at that phrase, and it was removed from the Library Bill of Rights. Because it, it really permitted censorship.

AS: Right, there's a fine line between selection and censorship.

Hansen transcript

AH: Cause not everything that goes on the shelf has to be of sound factual authority. But I, I think we became a little more concerned, although we had always concern in my experience.

If books were on reserve, or books were checked out, we did not tell others who had the book checked out. That was always part and parcel of our practice.

So, but I think we got more of these things codified and communicated to the public that we did believe in privacy, confidentiality, as well as intellectual freedom. I have to add, I've said it many times that, I went to, I'm Presbyterian.

And I went to a national youth conference in the summer of 1950 on the campus of Grinnell College, and we heard some wonderful speakers at that time.

It was a very significant event in my growing up, but one of our speakers was a president of a college related to the Presbyterian Church.

And his statement was "there are no dark alleys down which a Christian need fear tread in his search for truth." And I've always said that that enabled me to be both Presbyterian and librarian.

And there was none of this, you know a few years later when I was in library school and found out about Notre Dame, and saw this was not an isolated case in schools related to the Roman Catholic Church.

So, it's again, I was glad to see that Notre Dame was able to make a change. That wasn't true though in the case of Creighton University.

A couple of year ago, my high school graduating class had its 60th anniversary reunion in Omaha. And the Omaha World Herald gave headlines to an incident where Creighton had invited a speaker, and she had accepted.

And then after that had been dealt with a book that she had just written was published, and when they read a chapter in in that book about how she had assisted her friend commit suicide, they rescinded the invitation.

Creighton, of course, got headlines for doing that. Interestingly enough, a group of ministers in the community contacted the speaker. And invited her to come.

She came without requiring an honorarium, and they found a different venue. And she gave her talk. But again censorship still exists in the university communities. And I was, I was so glad that Notre Dame rose above them.

AS: In your work with the public libraries, you've worked with, were there any other ethical concerns and ethical quandaries that you look back now, and see a different way of doing things in the library world? Or?

AH: Honestly, I, I don't recall other instances. It was more political.

AS: In the '50s, '60s, when you were working the public libraries, did you all have requests for deaccession books, because they were controversial? Or?

AH: I'm sorry, which? AS: Did people, did patrons ever request that a book be removed from the collection?

AH: Oh, there were people who objected, and I have often said that, I've been introduced to some wonderfully written books by people complaining about this. And in a way, I have been grateful.

AS: You mentioned that your board requested that you add the book that you felt uncomfortable about adding. Were there times when your, the same board did they, would they remove questionable books?

AH: No, I was, I was very fortunate in that both libraries I directed, the boards never interfered with with that kind of thing. They were defiantly pro-intellectual freedom.

And so I didn't have issues with the board. And I, I trying to think of situations where we might have had issues. There weren't that many.

In my Sioux City days, I had a visit from a, a young housewife who was looking for a particular book that we didn't own. And it had been published before my tenure there.

And a, so of course after she had been there, she said we didn't own it. I was kind of startled. I checked the, my predecessor had returned the book.

So we reordered it, and there was never an issue on that. It was interesting though, Sioux City was about 3 times the size of Bismarck at that point.

Bismarck has grown a lot since I've left there, but Bismarck was a cosmopolitan community. And I've had no qualms about ordering a book that, well for example, Lady Chatterley's Lover was published in this country for the first time during my Bismarck tenure.

And Peyton Place, another one that was an interesting one was Peyton Place.

The, anyhow, I went looking for reviews of Lady Chatterley's Lover, because it had been banned in this country.

And I wasn't finding any reviews in the current literature. And I was wondering, you know, it was banned, do we really need it?

Or what? And I found in, I think it's Best's Guide to Fiction. It wasn't Best Fiction, it was Best was the name of the company.

AS: The company name. AH: If I remember correctly. The annotation was, now this was a bibliography published in the early '30s. And the annotation was "a book rightfully banned in Great Britain."

AS: Well they weren't very objective were they?

AH: Our local paperback jobber who served that area of North Dakota, was not stocking their paperback edition of it.

And I think I had occasion of visiting family in California. And so I was able to buy a copy, well one for myself and one for the library in the San Francisco book store and came home with it.

And again, there wasn't an issue. My predecessor at Bismarck left at the end of October, and I arrived on the job the first of January 1957.

It was during that period that Peyton Place was published. And my predecessor told me that if there were any public repercussions from having it on the shelf, I would be the one who would have to deal with it.

So he was not buying it, he was leaving that for me. And so when I arrived, there hadn't been any books ordered for a couple of months.

And the staff said the public is asking so please get a book order together. And so my very first book order included Peyton Place.

The only complaints we had was had was I refused to spend our limited budget on multiple copies. We had a long waiting list.

AS: Waiting list for it. That was your main complaint.

AH: And we had to wait for a year before paperback edition was available. And so the complaints weren't that we had the book, it was that we AS: Didn't have enough. AH: Had a long waiting list.

And one of my friends published an article several years ago now about weeding. And the subtitle of her article was "is it time to weed Peyton Place?"

And it kinda hit me, because I remembered a movie when I was a child, Mark Twain was born under Haley's comet, and he died under Haley's comet.

And I thought, and I was still working part-time at the Momet library. I thought, ya know, my first job at a library was to buy Peyton Place, and if it is time to weed it, this AS: Your entire career. AH: This is my Haley's comet.

AS: Oh that's great, that's great.

AH: I've contacted my friend. I sent her an email, and she said, "no, it's still being checked out."

AS: You can't retire yet. Can't weed it, can't retire yet. Well, you know, also also your, your two stints as public lib, in public libraries in between those two online catalogs were developed and you've mentioned interlibrary loan, OCLC is now so easy.

What's it like when you walk into a public library now, and and you can go up to a terminal and do an online search to see not only what's in their library, but what's in other libraries.

How do you think that has affected library work in general? And also, you did so much work with reference, within ALA, how do you see technology has influenced basic library reference work, as well?

AH: Oh it's it's the rare question that we cannot find something that relates to it. Google has been a Godsend.

But there are so many resources, and working with younger colleagues, I noticed there were times when I would remember the printed resource and look there, where their first port of call might be the computer.

But there are some things that I wouldn't think of the printed resource, I'd think of the computer. But, but it was interesting watching our styles on that. But the the need for a librarian is not going away.

Somebody with critical skills to be able to access the value of the various resources, because there are there are times when the online resource is probably the only way, or certainly the best way to go.

But there are times when the printed resource is also the way to go. One time in, in my Sioux City days, we experienced something that made us aware again printed, and this was all before the online resources.

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I was going to have a party celebrating Danish constitution day. And three of us went to various books of days in the reference collection to find out when the Danish constitution was signed.

We found 3 different years. And so we had to sit down and compare notes, and discovered that Denmark had had 3 or 4 written constitutions.

Instead of have amendments they way we do, they AS: They start over. AH: They come up with new constitutions.

So we looked at the copyright dates of the reference books we were looking at, and they covered quite a span of years.

And that explained when we found the history of the constitution that it was separately approved constitution at different times.

So we all all of us opened our eyes and realized how important that it was that when you look at a book on an historic thing, you be sure you have the most current information on it.

Now, now I haven't done a Google on that, but I supposed if I did a Google, I'd find the history, eventually there you know.

But you never can be totally sure that you've got the right answer. There's always room for, you know, more verification.

AS: And it could be that there is no right answer.

AH: Oh I've, I've I've said it many times. I think research will bear me out on this: people will take the closest resource, not necessarily the most accurate. Now that's, see this is where the librarian comes in.

AS: Intervenes. That's right. Well we are coming to the end of our tape. Do you have some final words for future librarians out there?

AH: Well, if you've got an interest in a variety of topics, keep at it, become a librarian.

When you answer the phone or look up and greet somebody at the public reference desk, you never in a public library, you never have any idea in advance what topic you're going to be dealing with next. And this is what keeps life interesting.

AS: I agree, I agree. Well thank you for coming in and being part of our project, and and I hope they don't decaccession Peyton Place anytime soon. Thank you very much.

Interviewed by Arro Smith; transcribed by Beth Smyer.

Herring Transcript

MM: This is Michael McCombs, I'm here with Dr. Billy Grace Herring at Austin Texas. She has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Program of Retired and Retiring Librarians. It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of the American Library Association and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is October 21st, 2011. How are you doing today Dr. Herring?

BGH: Well, I'm doing fine now. I've had a little round with some heart trouble but it's over and, I think I'm doing well.

MM: That's good to hear. Well I really appreciate you taking the time to meet with me for this project. I'd like to start out the interview by asking you about the last library position that you held.

BGH: Well my last my last library position was a long time ago. It was in 19 well I was there from 1962 to 1967 and I was the elementary school librarian at Harris School which is the school over here in our neighborhood. A very different school now than it was when I worked there, but that was my last actual library job and I loved it. I had so much fun with the young elementary school kids. They're so responsive and so interested in what you do with them and for them and so on and uh I found the job very challenging in terms of the wide range of skills and talents that it required and I felt like it brought out a lot of things in me that I didn't know I could do but as a result of that job I was able to do them. It was, I think, really the most fun job I ever had.

MM: When you say that it brought out a wide range of skills and talents, could you elaborate on some of those?

BGH: Okay well, artistic things in one respect. I was never much for design and art and things like bulletin boards and exhibits and so on and that was one that I had to do all the time of course, in an elementary school and so I found out I could do a whole lot that I didn't know I could. Another area that just furthered my education was when I started to build a collection of art prints for the library and uh, at the time I left we were just at the point where we had enough uh, I should say reproduction not art prints I'm sorry, art reproductions. We had enough that we had practically every teacher kept a special bulletin board of the art reproduction and then changed it periodically and so on. We were hoping to get to the point where we could circulate those to the children but at the time I left, which was rather unexpectedly. We didn't have that volume to be able to circulate yet. But choosing those was a very interesting project for me.

MM: It's one of those where you kind of learn as you go sometimes.

BGH: You do. You learn a lot as you go. And I had never done storytelling before so that was another big one that I had to develop and puppets and what have you (laughs) everything you do to make story hour more interesting.

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MM:Mmhm...why did you decide to become a librarian?

BGH:Well, I had been interested in it from the time that I was a junior in college and took a children's literature for my elementary education degree and uh, which in a program that had that had so many upper division requirements in it that I didn't have any elective course to be able to take any more library courses at that time. But that was one factor and then a second factor, was our uh, well she's an alumna of the iSchool, uh Catherine Franklin spelled with a C (laughs) and uh Cate was the architecture librarian at UT at the time that she was going to school. She had been a school librarian and she was working on her thesis in the young adult material area and I worked there in the architecture library for, I guess, seven semesters and one summer school that I went to summer school, just as a student assistant not anything very librarianish. But all the things you need to do to keep the place open and running. And I enjoyed that work, but I was more intrigued by the children's materials and since my major was in education and I was very interested in seeing children and books get together, that idea stuck in my mind. When I graduated from college I didn't go into a librarianship immediately. I had two jobs as a director of education in churches. The first one was at First English Lutheran Church in Austin and that was where I met my husband and he was a student at the Austin Presbyterian Seminary and after we married I took a position as Director of Education at Westminster Presbyterian Church here in Austin. So I did those two things until Jim finished Seminary and then we moved away and he took up as a Pastor and I was expecting to be a full time homemaker mom. By that time we had our son Bill, and then after we left there and went to another community called Chrystal City I uh, I was just not doing very well. Our second son had been born and I was just not happy being a house frau. I needed something more stimulating so I worked for an abstract company for a while typing oil leases which was absolutely deadly and I knew I was going to have to get back to school and do something. I didn't particularly want to teach in a classroom at that point so I was in the grocery store one day, the only big grocery store in town, and I was in the checkout line behind the superintendent of schools and I told him that I was wanting to come in and talk with him about substitute teaching for them the next year. He said substitute teaching?! I need a librarian for the junior high school; do you have any hours in library science? Well I had three, but it turned out I was able to return to Austin and take courses that summer. My mother took care of the grandsons and I lived in the dorm and just went to school which was very luxurious even though well, the demands of school as you know, are (laughs) more than a little bit, but I managed to complete nine semester hours that summer and then went back and took the Junior High School Librarian position, which was a very easy job because absolutely anything that I did to promote books and reading, even putting up a bulletin board was quite an event and I felt like I had a pretty good year there and returned to school the next summer to complete my certification requirements. At that point my objective was to be fully certified as a school librarian and I didn't particularly think about any long range plans other than that but I did, at that point my husband needed to move to Austin to go back to school and so I was lucky to get a job in Austin and that's whenever we moved to Austin. I went over to Harris Elementary School and spent five very happy years there. I had a wonderful principal who said to me you're the librarian and you know what you need and you know what to do and

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I'm going to leave you alone, whatever you need come tell me and I'll see what I can do about it. So that was a very comfortable working relationship. I didn't have somebody breathing down my neck all the time, and uh I was not hesitant to go knock on his door and ask him for whatever we needed for the library and he was quite generous in terms of increasing our per student allotments for books and the few media items we had at that time we had some sound recordings and as I've already mentioned art prints and we used the central movie library from the school district so I didn't have any of those. This was the pre-video, pre-audio recording days.

MM: What was your favorite aspect of your work as a librarian?

BGH: That's a good question cause I think for me it would be about a tossup between selecting materials which I thoroughly enjoy doing, and working with the children.

MM: You seem very fortunate in that you had a principal that was supportive of you in selecting materials.

BGH: It was great. I got spoiled. I'm not sure the next one I would have had would have been that kind of person. But then things changed and I completed my Master's thesis at that time we had to do a thesis and I completed that, turned it in, and at that time the school had a record for being very very difficult to get the faculty to approve a thesis. There was always some change they wanted, something else they wanted done and so on and it would drag out for a long, long time. But what happened to me was that I uh, librarians who had to write a thesis at that time will appreciate this, I turned my draft into my supervising professor who was Dr. Esther Stallman and on a Saturday and or Sunday night she called me and said I'm approving your thesis for typing. She had made a few changes but nothing major and I couldn't believe. I said just tell me that again, (laughs) is this really what you're saying? And she said yes it is. Well, later that week I realized why. The Dean of the school was Dr. Robert R. Douglas, called me and said we have some fellowships from Title IIB for next year in the area of education for librarianship. He said we have five fellowships and we'd like for you to take one of them. Told me what the salary was which I don't remember now over a grand, which was more than my teaching salary (laughs). So that was an incentive to go ahead and do it. And the rest of it, in addition to take the fellowship was, when you complete that fellowship here we'd like for you to join the faculty in the school and children's area. You talk about a gift dropping in your lap. He wanted to know in a week's time so at that time my boys were five and eight. I was a little bit leery about embarking on something like that. As young as they were, the public school hours and holidays and everything are very convenient when you had children in school and after a lot of prayer and talking with my husband and talking with the principal and so on, I decided to do it. The principal was very gracious about asking the District to release me from my contract which they did. I with a great deal of trepidation started in on that year of school. Well it turned out to be wonderful. I thoroughly enjoyed it. There was no pressure of degree plan and that sort of thing. It was mostly taking courses that I chose plus one required seminar in education for librarianship and then a student teaching seminar the next semester. So I thoroughly enjoyed taking courses. It was the kind of thing where if I ran into something interesting but not right on topic, I had the time to pursue it and go off and chase a few rabbits as I've described it. That was a great deal of fun and so at the end of that summer then I became an Assistant Professor and by

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that time we had a new Dean um, Stanley Michaelderry who had come here from the University of Chicago and he was very patient with me and very supportive and so on. So I had prepared during the summer to teach cataloguing and a special reference course for school librarians and children's literature, which I had taught in the summer of 66' as a visiting lecturer there at the school. So I got through with registration and the reference class. The basic reference class for the Master's students was about double the size that it should have been. So the Dean asked me to teach a section of that class and we dropped the children's literature so what could I say but yes (laughs). And that was a frantic semester indeed because the special reference class that I developed for school librarians also had a lot of selection materials in it and it really didn't help me in particular in preparing for the general reference course. So I was spending every minute in the library getting acquainted with the reference materials and often skipped lunch because my class was at one o'clock and I was still downstairs in the library trying to get used to the (laughs) trying to get used to all those materials and get ready to teach. It was a pretty frantic time, but I guess was not all that unusual from any time you teach a course for the first time. There's a lot of preparation and a lot of thought that goes into it and a lot of time that goes into it. And I know in subsequent years I would say to my colleagues who came to the school perhaps right out of Doctoral study or something, and uh the first semester, the first year is the hardest. If you live through that year, you'll feel so good the second semester. The second year that you teach of course because you'll have something in your files that you can refer to and you'll have some experience with it. So that stood me, that experience stood me well as an advisor to the new faculty and so on. Now the next year we changed our curriculum and one of the things we did was to drop the master's thesis requirement I think this was in 1969 and extend the program to 36 semester hours rather than 30 which it had been cause the thesis counted for 6. The Dean had asked me if I would teach a beginning cataloguing course. I did teach that reference course one more time which was in summer school at the end of that first year and it wasn't nearly as intimidating so I found myself preparing for the basic cataloguing course for the next year and found out that I love to teach cataloguing. It's very systematic and it has an interesting progression of skills and the learning problems in it which got back to my background in education are quite complex. They're very different for different parts of the course. For classification and subject headings is very different from bibliographic descriptions and so on. I see you nodding your head (laughs).

MM: Yeah, I just got through taking a course over the summer in cataloguing.

BGH: Oh my goodness, in the summer? Wow.

MM: And it was an online course as well (laughs).

BGH:(Laughs) Yeah, you were kind of frantic I imagine.

MM: Yeah frantic, and we needed a course just in itself to orientate us to the history of cataloguing so we could understand where it was currently at almost before we could engage in the actual practice of it because it's a field that seems like its constantly changing.

BGH: Yes it is. And I found that that is over the years that tended to be my course from there on and I think practically, well not every year, but practically every year I taught that uh and, enjoyed working on a learning project with the campus sponsored grant and on a

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personalized system of instruction or PSI as it was called. That was a very interesting thing because the approach of that class was not to lecture to a class but to prepare materials that would let the students learn basically what they needed to learn and then to have them come in and with several proctors that I had working in the class with me would take a test on that particular unit and then if they passed it fine they could go on to the next unit. If not, the proctor went over the things they missed, the things they might not have understood and so on ,and then had them come in the next class day to go ahead and retake the test. So it was a mastery based theory and it was very, very effective in terms of student learning. But I did some real research projects later on and found that the thing that was the most significant in the learning process for students was the written materials which I had prepared. Now as you probably are aware if you took a cataloguing course, there's not a lot out there in print to provide textual material, so I ended up writing a very large part of that material also and I was frantically trying to finish it the day before so I could get it to the typist and have it ready for class handouts the next day. But it was an interesting experience and I ran into some faculty objections cause the mastery based idea ended up with a great many A's in the course. If they passed every one of those unit tests then they were in really good shape to take the final exam, and indeed there were a lot of A's in the class. and that bothered some of my colleagues. They felt like that was unfair to some of the students but wasn't that many of them that made A's so after about 5 years, we dropped that but I continued to use those written materials and found them very helpful. So instead of using a regular textbook with certain assignments in it, the students used those materials and then they had some textbooks to refer to if they wanted more information on a topic or if one needed a little bit more examples or something of that type. So that stuck with me through the rest of my career and the very last course I taught at UT in the summer of '96 was a cataloguing course by distance education with students in San Antonio and students in Austin. So that was, cataloguing was a lot of my career there though I had never worked as a cataloguer in an academic library or public library or anything of that sort.

MM: I was just wondering how you liked the distance education format?

BGH:It was workable but not ideal. I taught some classes from here in Austin. We used a studio in the College of Education building and then went to San Antonio to teach others with video coming back here to the students. Because I spent a lot more time in Austin than in San Antonio, and this was in summer school also the compressed schedule of summer school I think was a little unfair to the San Antonio students. I felt like I never quite reached them in the same way and while I firmly believe in distance education, just that one experience with it probably because of my inexperience with it was not the best in the world. And the Austin students weren't too terribly happy about having to look at me on the video some (laughs) rather than being able to see me in person but that's the way it was.

MM:Throughout your experience with teaching cataloguing, what are some of the changes that stuck out to you or that you feel is important in cataloguing?

BGH:Well I think the primary one was the development of the MARC format which had been completed just shortly before I started teaching and the ability to put cataloguing information online. Of course a big part of that in addition to the Library of Congress and then

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was OCLC--the Ohio College Library Network, is that right for the name?--I believe it is and that made cataloguing information so much more readily available to libraries which had subscribed to that service. It didn't make a lot of difference for very small libraries but concomitant with that was a great increase in getting cataloguing data and in some cases back then even getting cataloguing cards from the book vendors and the media vendors and so on and so that was one of the big changes. The other major one that I had to deal with was when the uh, Anglo American cataloguing rules second volume came out and we had to shift, rewrite all our materials and so on to go with that rather than with the first volume and so the theoretical changes in it and so on, was a big step for a lot of librarians. I understand now that AACR3 has appeared or is about to appear and it will be interesting to see what has happened with that. Perhaps you got a look at that in your course.

MM: Yeah, and there's also a Functional Requirements of Bibliographic Records FRBR and this is a whole new paradigm that's vying for the pole position for the American Cataloguing Rules. So it could change again, could be a new type of MARC.

BGH: Could be completely different. Well, that's the way it's gone over the years and it's not unusual. And of course we've always had updates on the subject heading list and classification schedules too so when you were teaching those you had to revise problem sets for the students to work and to take advantage of those new additions. So I'd say those were the major changes particularly the MARC format and now obviously there's something to take its place (laughs).

MM: Okay, we're resuming the interview. Dr. Herring, if you had one piece of advice to give to a librarian who was just starting their career what would it be?

BGH: One piece is hard to pin down but I think I would say, ask questions of anybody that might be able to supply maybe not the answer but some information about whatever it is that your concerned about, whether its background, whether its a better understanding of users or whatever it might be. I think that's a very important thing for somebody who's just starting out I guess there's no there's no point in going over the usual be on time be prepared etc. etc. but the one other thing I would say is expect to work very hard. Being a librarian is a very complex profession and there's a lot of information that one needs to have at one's fingertips but also one needs to know how to find information anywhere and from any source and that's hopefully what we're preparing those of you in school for. At the present time, with all the range of online resources and other information that's out there that was not there when I was a librarian.

MM: In addition to this change in technology have you seen the role of the librarian change over the years?

BGH: I don't know that in essence it has changed but I do think that it has changed radically in terms of information sources that are available. In terms of how to access those in terms of how to organize some of those especially if you're dealing with something like in-house records and that's continuing to change. I just talked the other night at the reception for scholarship donors with a librarian who had just graduated last year and she was saying that she was astounded at just how much has changed between the time she took some of her courses and the time that she has gone to work and what she needs to do now that she is actually on the job

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and I thought well this, this is interesting because I know I have some colleagues who finally just felt they were getting so inundated with online materials that they decided to retire (laughs) rather than to keep struggling to learn new things and new things and new things because it kept changing so much.

MM:What is your prediction about the future of libraries?

BGH:I'm hoping and I think (laughs) that libraries will continue to be with us. Their role may change in terms of the types of information or the way in which they make information available but I do think that as a social institution that's available to all and that has the responsibility to serve all citizens particularly in the case of public libraries. I think that that social function is going to remain and we'll just see the way that task is done change. I go to my branch library over here in, this is not a very affluent neighborhood anymore, and so the number of children in line to access the computers for their homework is just amazing and they have to sign up ahead of time or are limited in the time they can use it which is unfortunate because it discourages some curiosity and searching but it's a necessity given the resources that the library has and I realize how major the computer has been in information sources as well as in organizing information.

MM:How do you feel about the future of printed books?

BGH:I'm old fashioned enough to think that they're still going to be with us. I know that e-readers, people who have them tell me well I can access any book and I don't have to carry it around and so forth and so on, but I don't think everybody's going to have e-readers for one thing, and if we expect people to continue to study and grow throughout their lives which we hope libraries can contribute to, I'm not sure that the printed book can go away. I think we'll always need it. Frankly, from my point of view, being a very visual person I am not too happy with the current ebooks because of the fact that you can't go back and you can't mark things and a whole lot of little things like that you can do with printed books that to me are real plusses.

MM:What do you feel is one of the most important things that a librarian must keep in their mind at all times?

BGH:Excuse me, the users. That's kind of a glib answer but I think it's true. If you're not targeting what the library does and what it becomes to the particular users that you either have or that you're trying to attract, you may have them as a result of being a student or you may have them in a special library as a result of being in a company or something but I think that keeping in mind their needs and how they go about meeting those needs is primary.

MM: Okay then, to wrap up, are there any aspects of librarianship or teaching that you miss since retirement?

BGH:I won't say I've missed any of it badly (laughs). I was ready to retire when I did, I was getting tired and kind of feeling a little burned out and I'd always promised myself that if that time came I would stop because I think the mood which a teacher sets in a classroom by one's attitude and one's interest in the students and so on is so important, and if I couldn't do that genuinely I chose not to continue. I think probably just keeping up with what's happening in publishing is one of the things that I miss uh, and uh, the children's books and I know I can go to the library and check them out uh, and continue to enjoy them but I don't do it a great deal so

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that was always one of the great pleasures for me as an elementary school librarian was selecting new materials and having them come in and being able to share them with the children and that part of it I kind of missed even though it had been a long time since I'd done it directly.

MM: Children's books are one of those library materials that are often targeted for censorship. Have you had any experience with censorship of children's books or any library material?

BGH: I have only had one when I was a practicing librarian and the book that was challenged was the D'Aulairs that's Aulairs I believe uh, book of Greek Myths. It's a classic in children's literature. It's one of those things that practically every library has and the thing that was challenged about it were the illustrations because they felt that the and this was just one parent who or one pair of parents who objected. They felt the illustrations were frightening to children and I won't deny that they were fairly gruesome sometimes but not anything that I would call frightening. Not anything as frightening as the creatures in Where the Wild Things Are for example (laughs) but anyway that was the objection so we looked at the book together. I showed them the children's catalog which had it double starred as a first purchase item uh, I showed them some reviews of it uh, because fortunately I had a little time to prepare I knew that's what was coming and uh, they uh, said well if everybody thinks it's that good I guess it's okay just don't let my child check it out. So we came to that kind of an understanding and we didn't have to take it any further than that.

MM: Yeah, Where the Wild Things is another oftentimes challenged book.

BGH: Mmhm..and my own experience with my own four year old when that book came out was such that I would never worry about a child being frightened by it, he uh picked up the book at the bookstore after school one day and we read it together at home and Ted who was a real active child and not one to sit still for very long sat there the whole time very engrossed in it, "Mommy read it again," which I did. By that time he'd practically memorized the text and I had to go on and fix dinner and he sat there and went through that book at least 3 more times reading to himself. He was so enchanted with it and I decided okay, Sendak has hit a nerve here that we adults may not be able to understand but, in the case of this child, it was just the perfect thing to do and so I've, I think that taught me to be a lot more tolerant of illustrations and of course there have been a lot of things since then that he's done and others have done that might be called "frightening" but children love it.

MM: Is there any subject or topic that I didn't hit upon that you would like to comment on?

Well, uh I did spend a number of my years on the faculty in administration. I worked my second and third years on the faculty. My official title was Assistant to the Dean which was untenured at that time but what I was dealing with was uh, that clocks not right in case you looked at it and panicked (laughs). I handled Admissions and Placement and continued to teach my two cataloging courses so that was uh, a pretty big job. And then one day Dean Michael Derry called me into his office and he said, "You know, I've been looking for somebody to replace Sally McGuire when she retires", she was our specialist in school libraries and young adult services and he said, "I think I've found the person". I said, "Stanley why are you telling me

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this?" he said, "Because you're the person!" and, I, my immediate reaction was "Stan I don't have a Doctorate as you know, I'm not sure I would be eligible. He said "I know that, but I've been to the president's office, and we've made an arrangement that you can continue to teach and if you can find a doctoral program on this campus that you think is appropriate, and you can continue to teach, and be considered for tenure, then you can complete your degree." Well, that just wouldn't happen these days. You know, I mean, the degree is the foot in the door for the job rather than doing it in process like I did. So I had a hard time deciding I would do that because the dissertation was going to be a real bear for me. But finally I decided that the Lord is opening a door for me here and I might as well just go ahead and walk through it and see what happens. And during that time I turned down a position as Coordinator of Libraries for the Austin Schools because I really wanted to stay in higher education. And, I loved it until the very end. And then I spent eight years...I'm sorry I didn't finish that story. I spent eight years as associate dean under Ron Willis and I can't think of her name now...I'm blanking on it., but it was the female dean who followed him. Brooke Sheldon, sorry. So that was an interesting experience too because the graduate advisor handles admissions now, or used to, I think still does as far as the graduate school's requirements are concerned but I did double duty as the graduate advisor and associate dean for four of those years. And then I turned the graduate advisor responsibilities over to someone else, and continued with the associate dean's chores. During that time I taught one class per semester which was usually my Developing media Collections' or designing and producing materials which I was the only specialist on the faculty for.

MM: Where there challenges in administration coming from a faculty position and moving into that responsibility?

BGH:I didn't find it to be so. The dean and I agreed when I took the position that there were two areas that I didn't particularly want to be involved in. And, one of those was faculty selection, although I ended up on practically every faculty selection committee but, the personell in terms of office staff, I didn't particularly want to do. And the other thing was budgeting. And he very readily agreed. Sounds like an awful lot of administration that I let myself out of right away. But I spent an awful lot of time talking to faculty members troubleshooting with students who were upset about a class, concerned with how they were doing. I held many a hand and gave Kleenex for many a tear and so on as students would come in and just be real discouraged and what have you. And I felt like I was able to be a lot of help in those areas. And also in listening to faculty members. And that was a big part of it. Giving guidance to new faculty members who were just beginning to get there feet wet. And I have several beautiful letters from some of my colleagues who were so appreciative of that. So those were the kinds of things I did in administration, more than the budgeting and personnel bits. But I certainly interviewed everybody who came in and gave an indication of what I thought, but I didn't make those final decisions. At that time we were governed by an executive committee, which was elected from the faculty. And that was in common parlance a budget council. So part of the responsibilities of that group was evaluating faculty members and making recommendations for promotion and tenure and so on. And that was a time consuming process. And those kinds of decisions really determined where the school was going. I had a lot of input on those.

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MM:Do you have any viewpoints on whether the iSchool has become more or less rigorous through the years?

BGH:I think it has become more rigorous. I often said before I retired, and I know its true now, given what the Dean has told me about the academic qualifications of students, that I'm not sure I could get a degree there anymore. But I think the breadth of the program has expanded greatly and the academic qualifications of the students have improved a great deal and that tells me it's more rigorous because you have brighter minds that are challenging one another and asking questions and wanting to learn and I think it makes for a different atmosphere.

MM:I appreciate you for your time and thank you for your thoughts on your career.

BGH:Well thank you Michael. I appreciate your coming to do this interview and I look forward to seeing what you end up with on the website.

MM: Alrighty!

Interviewed and transcribed by Michael McCombs.

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Arro Smith: This is Arro Smith. I am here with Janet Swan Hill. We are in Washington D.C. at the 2010 American Library Annual Conference. She has agreed to be interviewed. This interview will be part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired or Retiring Librarians. It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is June 26 th, 2010.

So here we are at conference and let's start with how you know Dr. Roy and how long you have been on Council.

JSH: I know Loriene Roy because we served on the ALA executive board together and through the executive board on council. I am concluding my final term on council this time. I have been on twenty three years.

AS: Wow. Okay, well congratulations. (Laughter) Good deal. Good deal. Tell us where you live and a brief overview of your professional career so far.

JSH: Currently I am associate director of technical services at the University of Colorado Libraries in Boulder, and prior to that I was head of cataloging at Northwestern University Libraries. Prior to that I began my professional career at the Library of Congress as a special recruit. Went to work as a map cataloger at the geography and map division and then was head of the map cataloging unit before I left for Northwestern.

AS: Where did you go to library school?

JSH: University of Denver. Not all that long after I graduated from the University of Denver's Library School, the library school was closed.

AS: I was about to say I have never heard of it. (Laughter)

JSH: There's a new program there now but it is not the one that I attended.

AS: Okay, okay, and so you went to school in Colorado and then you have worked elsewhere in the northeast and the northwest and now you are back in Colorado.

JSH: Right. I was raised in Wyoming. I went to college in upper New York State.

AS: Uh, huh.

JSH: And then I went to graduate school in Colorado because my husband was drafted and sent to Vietnam and I had to do something with my life, so I went to library school while living with my parents who were in Colorado at that time. And then back to Washington D.C. and then to the Chicago area and then finally got to move back to the west in 1989.

AS: And have you always been interested in technical services or cataloging or...

JSH: Well, I am an accidental librarian really.

AS: Okay.

JSH: Because, because my husband was drafted and sent to Vietnam, I went to live with my parents. I worked for a – oh, about nine or ten months for the Rocky Mountain Oil and Gas Association because I was a geology major, and then I just needed something else to do with myself and went to the library school which I knew about because both of my college roommates had gone to library school.

AS: Ahhh. (Laughter)

JSH: And I played my figurative violin, and I said my husband is Vietnam. He gets a hardship pay of \$116 a month. I cannot afford tuition and they looked at my transcript and said you are in and we will waive your tuition. So there I was as a prospective librarian and I became a cataloger because that was the only opening that the geography and math division had when I finished my internship at LC.

AS: I see.

JSH: And I knew that I wanted to work for the geography and map division.

AS: Okay. Wow.

JSH: It is all a bunch of happy accidents. (Laughter)

AS: So, well I am also a cataloger and tell us in your career in technical services, in your career as managing metadata .

JSH: Yes?

AS: Tell us what it was like then, how it changed and what it is like now and your feelings about it.

JSH: Well when I first began cataloging we were using the AACR...1. Of course we didn't call it one at that time.

AS: We didn't call it one at that time.

JSH: And revised chapter six had been published but it was only being used for books, and so maps were being catalogued using pre-ISBD punctuation and I was also using obviously the Library of Congress Classification system. We would do our cataloging on a typewriter, and I tended to sit like this and do my typing because the maps are huge and you had to very carefully arrange yourself so that you could actually do it, and MARC tagging was considered to be beneath catalogers, so we gave our worksheets to somebody else who did the tagging who gave it to somebody else who did the input on a machine called the magnetic tape selectric typewriter or MTST. And then those tapes were then huge tapes carried physically to the Navy Yard and brought up and turned into the database which, of course, were just catalog cards.

AS: Okay.

JSH: And, because we didn't have anything on line at the time. And I was heavily involved in the revision of chapter six for the creation of the cartographic materials cataloging manual and also edited a revision of the G schedule for maps.

And I am personally responsible for the fact that the G schedule has maps in it because (laughter) because I had made maps up for myself to help in classification so this is my one little claim to fame in LC's publications. Of course working at LC, we did no copy cataloging. It was all original.

AS: Right.

JSH: And so that was my experience was of original cataloging did in manual manner that was then transferred to an electronic database that was used to create a manual catalog.

AS: Right.

JSH: I went to Northwestern as the head of cataloging there and of course went into general cataloging, so leaving behind the maps specialization. And Northwestern was a pioneer

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in library automation. It had operating at that point, and I went there in 1978, the NOTIS system, Northwestern Online Total Integrated System which included, which had automated even at that time serials. Of course when you told people, "yes, we have a serial system," they would say "No you don't. Nobody does." But we did. And we also implemented authority control, bringing up the authority format before I think anybody else did.

AS: Good, good.

JSH: We had an online catalog beginning in 1980, even prior to day one on the AACR2 and that was pretty exciting being involved in the development of an integrated library system.

AS: And was that home grown?

JSH: It was home grown. It was – the programmer's name was James Aagard who is still actually active, although an emeritus professor now. He came out of the computer science program at Northwestern. And the systems analyst was named Velma Veneziano. [She] also came from Wyoming as did I. And the two of them developed this system. John McGowan was the director of the library and had the foresight to say that we needed an integrated library system, although he probably did not say because that was not a term of art at that time. (Laughter) And it was done entirely without grant funding specifically so that it would be inexpensive enough actually to run.

AS: Right.

JSH: As opposed to relying heavily on grant funding which libraries like University of Chicago had done and turned into a system that was really too expensive to continue to run. And because NOTIS was an integrated system and because it did include many things that no other systems did at the time, eventually we began to sell it.

AS: And was NOTIS. NOTIS was acronym. Do you remember what it stood for?

JSH: Northwestern Online Total Integrated System.

AS: Okay.

JSH: NOTIS and it was first adopted by, let's see, Auburn and Florida and Harvard. And then it went – it eventually became the Endeavor System. It became a wholly owned subsidiary of Northwestern University and then it went independent.

AS: Right.

JSH: But that was after I left Northwestern. We were at that point not working using OCLC. Instead we purchased tapes from the Library of Congress, mounted them, searched them locally and transferred them as we needed them. Eventually Northwestern joined the research libraries group and began to use the RLG system. Just before I left Northwestern, I began a program to study why we should switch to OCLC and after I left they did switch to OCLC and then of course then RLG disappeared.

AS: And what year was that?

JSH: Uhhh, what year was which?

AS: When you, when you left Northwestern.

JSH: Oh, I left Northwestern in 1989.

AS: Okay, okay. So OCLC, you all – Northwestern was rather late.

JSH: Northwestern was late to join OCLC but early to do automation.

AS: Right, right, right.

JSH: Yes, and had been with RLG as a bibliographic utility for, I don't know, maybe eight years before they switched to OCLC, because at that point it was thought that research libraries shouldn't be a member of RLG.

AS: Right.

JSH: For their automation and everything else. And OCLC was seen as a public library utility only, and at the time that the NOTIS system was developed, OCLC was barely in its infancy and so, I mean it had barely expanded out of Ohio and so purchasing Library of Congress tapes was essentially the only way to get the data. And it was early enough so that seemed a – it was entirely workable, and it took a long time to decide not to do that simply because it was so efficient.

AS: Right. (Laughter) If it's fixed, don't break it.

JSH: And while I was – when I moved from the Library of Congress where I had been a member of the Special Libraries Association, as I was about to leave the Library of Congress, I joined ALA and my supervisor, the head of technical services at Northwestern was the president elect of the Resources and Technical Services Division at that time. And I got my first committee appointment largely because of that which was on the newly created committee on cataloging description and access, on which I served for about – for a total of eleven years in one capacity or another, and I'm going into this because it provides the perspective that I have on the development of cataloguing.

And I was secretary on CCDA for three years, member for four, served as the liaison from the geography and map division for one and then was appointed to the joint steering committee for the revision of the Anglo American Cataloging Rules upon which I served for two terms – two three year terms, and as that was an ex-officio member of CCDA, so that accounts for the total eleven years during which time we moved from an AACR1 to a AACR2 to the first two revisions to AACR2.

And I would say that the largest, the most distinctive change in cataloging that I have experienced since I first started at the Library of Congress is not so much the changes in the rules, although we certainly have had those, it's been the degree to which we are no longer – no one is autonomous any longer.

Previously you could do almost everything all by – could – had to do almost everything by yourself and it didn't really matter very much whether you adhered to some standard or another, because it was only your catalog and you weren't really sharing it with anybody.

Even when you started to share things if you were in a research library, especially a very large one, there was the mental attitude I think that well my cataloging is wonderful, so I will do it the way I want to do my cataloging and other people are lucky to have it. (Laughter)

Then I went to the University of Colorado where they were using the CARL system which stands for the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries which the alliance members had actually paid to create. It was created – the CARL system was created for the alliance and they were using that system which, speaking quite frankly, which was not at all suited to academic – to a large academic library. It worked pretty well for small ones, but eventually it focused more

on public libraries which is why we switched out of it, but so I went from one home grown system to another and the home grown system at CARL was strangely configured in that they would create records field by field.

If you owned – the University of Colorado had such and such a book, it would be identified field by field as yours. Denver Public Library might also own that same book and it might have not all the same fields because they would have put in something special or we would have put in something special or they would – they were not a Library of Congress classification and we were, so that when you called up the record the system would pull out the fields that were yours and display it to you.

AS: Okay.

JSH: But the documentation for the system was the program itself and when they made changes there were surprises. You would go in one morning and you would search your catalog and you would find yourself calling up all the records that belonged to Regis University instead of your own. Or you would discover a record was half of your fields and half of the fields that belonged to Colorado State University, and that was because the documentation was the program, because they never knew really all of the threads that had to be connected or disconnected when they made a revision, which is what taught me something that I had taken for granted at Northwestern, that being that any deviation that you make from standard practice you will suffer for later. (Laughter)

AS: The unintended consequences.

JSH: Yes. Arnold Wagenberg was the principle cataloger of the University of Illinois Libraries and once gave a talk – no, he was doing the conference summary for a preconference on classification practice and made a statement that I have put on a little poster for myself which is “If you follow some nonstandard practice, some day, someone, somewhere will curse your name.” (Laughter) And it is all true. So I – so that I think is the loss of independence, the loss of autonomy is one of the largest themes that I have seen.

Another huge theme that I have seen in that period of time is we are still undergoing a period of grieving, I think, for the fact that we are learning that we have to put up with good enough.

AS: Right.

JSH: We are learning that we must – we are still in the process of learning this and we probably always will – that a record that is good enough for the University of Northern Colorado is just fine for us. A record that serves the purposes for a public library in Missouri may be just fine for us, because we can’t afford to do anything else.

And the other thing, of course, is that increasing we have identified things in the process of cataloging that we have devolved onto support staff that used to always be done by professional catalogers.

And it’s not that it’s not professional work, it’s that we don’t have the right amount of staff to deal with anything else, which is odd when you think that now so much of what we access – so much of what we give service with, our users are no longer going to librarians if they ever did. They are instead doing searching on their own at home or sitting at a computer in the

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library or at Starbucks or someplace else. They are doing their searching. They don't have an intermediary so the metadata is even more important than it used to be.

AS: It is more important than it used to be, yet –

JSH: Yet, library directors and management are still saying that we shouldn't move all of our – we should move personnel from technical services to front line service to users, but the users aren't coming there.

AS: Right, right.

JSH: Which is a very long answer to your question.

AS: And you touched on kind of a recurring interest in my examining these interviews is when librarians in the – in the array of librarianship – tell me, do you think catalogers in particular have specific characteristics or -

JSH: Definitely. (Laughter) I have hired –

AS: I don't want to lead the answer because I –

JSH: I have hired a lot of catalogers over time and back when I was first hiring catalogers at Northwestern, we used to have pools of a hundred, hundred and twenty five, a hundred and fifty applicants and so it was a little hard to make your way through all of them and what I began, I began to develop a secret set, but not so secret because I communicated it to others of things that I looked for.

People who do puzzles for fun, double acrostics are useful. People who if they sew, buy Vogue patterns and buy less material than the pattern calls for. People who took Latin or Greek for fun. And the other curious thing was that if you had taken a career preference test and had been told to be a forest ranger you were probably going to be a good cataloger.

I was told to be a forest ranger. My principle cataloger was told to be a forest ranger. The head of technical services was told to she should be a forest ranger and let's see, my predecessor who left Northwestern and went to the Library of Congress as principle subject cataloger had also been told she should be a forest ranger. (Laughter)

AS: That's interesting. I always have been told that I should be a mortician, but anyway. (Laughter)

JSH: Really? What an interesting career choice. And one hopes that career preference tests have changed since – since that group of people were all told they should be forest rangers. Umm, you may remember somebody tried to assassinate President Reagan, and that person was determined to have mental problems, and I remember hearing a report on the radio that said he has the characteristics that are common to forest rangers and to librarians. (Laughter)

AS: So someone did make a connection, oh no.

JSH: Which I have no idea what they have in common, but I noticed it at the time. But, yes, catalogers to say that they are detail oriented sounds so dismissive, but catalogers, I think, are the ones who can which details – that details do actually matter. That communication matters and what you write is what people convey, not what you mean, which is another reason I enjoy council so much I think.

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One of the things that I have also developed a private theory, which once again I communicate to other people so it is not exactly private, catalogers are very often accused of not seeing the forest for the trees. In my experience catalogers see the forest.

AS: It is the other way around.

JSH: It is the other around. Public services people see only each individual tree. They deal with this tree as a one-off, and then there is another tree and they deal with it. Catalogers look at a problem and say what are – what is the class of things to which this belongs, what precedents will I set by making this decision. What forest does it grow in? If I plant this tree here, how will that influence everything else, and so I think that it is a character trait that may not be terribly common among people to look at things in terms of patterns and catalogers are pattern seekers.

AS: Going back to the “good enough” cataloging record, uh as an administrator how do you communicate this to your – to your staff, because I mean –

JSH: With sorrow and pragmatism.

AS: You know it's – when I am in the middle of series authority work and I realize that it has been three hours...

JSH: And you still haven't figured it out. (Laughter)

AS: This was good enough to begin with, what is my..

JSH: Why am I still here? Well in some senses, there are some things that you don't have to communicate because if you make an economic decision that says shelf ready is the way you have got to go with materials and the catalogers never see it, well they learn pretty – I mean it's implicit in that decision that you have said these records that we get from this vendor are good enough to serve our purposes.

As problems are noticed we will fix them but only as they are noticed and then you tell them, especially the original cataloguers, this will free you to do the more interesting stuff. That there are -- and I think this softens the blow enormously -- there are in most libraries huge supplies of things that have never been cataloged or have been cataloged badly or incompletely. There are your archives. There are your special collections. There are government publications. There are maps. There are prints, photographs, sound records, scores. There are all kinds of things that you have done or not done. They were either done badly or not done at all. There are the gifts waiting to be processed that - we have gifts squirreled away in very many places that we are finally making our way back through.

We are finally making enormous strides in special collections. And then, of course, there's the Internet. There are the things. There are the born digital, the purchased digital, the leased digital. There are free Internet sites. There are paid Internet sites. All of those things could well be catalogued. There is the institutional repository. There are slides. All kinds of things that need metadata . That need somehow to be integrated into your discovery tools, and so goodness knows we have job security in that sense since we will never catch up with it.

Recently we did a full collection condition examination. Very robust study of all of our collections in terms of their physical condition and their environment, and we labored under the delusion that because we were a relatively young library – you know, not much more than a

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hundred years old – and because we were in an arid climate that we were protected from those things that beset books and paper products in more humid climates, and discovered that in fact – yeah, we don't have a whole lot of mold and we probably have less vermin than we might otherwise have. I mean that cockroaches come to the state and keel over dead because it is not moist enough for them, but based, but that based on those studies we probably had a twelve hundred year backlog in routine mending. (Laughter) So cataloging is kind of like that as well, we probably have a, at least a hundred year backlog of cataloging that needs to be done.

AS: There's plenty to do.

JSH: There is a lot to do, so long as you recognize the worth of all the things you have taken the trouble to acquire and to store all those years. You have to realize that without cataloging, without metadata of some kind attached to them, they might as well never have been purchased because they are lost.

AS: Lost completely, yeah. Tell me your thoughts on the future of cataloging and RDA.

JSH: Oh, my thoughts about RDA are not kind. (Laughter) I am a member of the Library of Congress Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control and it was I who uttered the heresy that said that our first set of recommendations should be suspension of work on RDA until such time as it had been, as a persuasive argument had been made regarding its worth as compared to the cost.

I suspect that we will go ahead and implement RDA, uh, after I retire. (Laughter) I suspect that many libraries will not implement it because one of the things that proponents of RDA are most eager to say is "Oh, it won't make that much difference. Your old records will be compatible with the new ones." So a lot of libraries are going to listen to that and say so why should I implement the thing.

AS: Right.

JSH: And they won't.

AS: Right. (Laughter)

JSH: RDA was probably a noble attempt. The Joint Steering Committee was never created or appointed to do that kind of work. It is a very small number of people who were appointed for a variety of reasons by their national associations or their national libraries, and it was created to maintain an existing set of rules, not to create a new set of rules.

So the fact that it has taken absolutely forever, been delayed multiple times, the fact that there has not still been I believe a persuasive argument in favor of the cost it will take to implement -- has a lot to do I think with, with that fact, with how JSC is appointed and what it was created to do and the fact that six people – is it still six? I think so – two from – seven people; two from Canada, two from Great Britain and two from the United States and one from Australia, although it may just be one from Canada. I think it is just one from Canada who represents both their library association and their national archives, and it is too much to do.

AS: Right.

JSH: In addition, one of the things that the Library of Congress Working Group concluded was that things are moving too fast to engage in whole scale revisions or rewritings; that we need to deal with one aspect at a time because by the time you revise the entire code,

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seven-eighths of it needs to be revised again. And so you might as well divide it into eighths or twelfths or, you know, different facets. Deal with this facet and move on to the next facet later while we are implementing the facet you have just managed to finish.

AS: Did, do you think that there will ultimately be a mutiny and people will say “let’s just have AACR-3 and work on one chapter at a time?” (Laughter)

JSH: No, I don’t think so. I think there is too much invested in RDA by too many people who have an interest in its publication. That is A - the AACR2 and AACR1 were the biggest money makers ALA had in its publications department, and so it is putting a lot of hope, I think, in RDA and its implementation. And if the tests that the national libraries and other cooperating libraries are remotely successful, my best guess is that they will go ahead and implement RDA. It’s very badly written. It – though if you read RDA now, it makes you so grateful for all those years of using Michael Gorman’s very clear prose.

AS: Right. (Laughter)

JSH: You could understand what the rules said because it said what it meant to say and if you paid attention to grammar, to syntax, to sentence structure and those other things that catalogers really ought to be good at paying attention to, you knew what it was telling you to do. And RDA just is not written that clearly.

It is full of ambiguous language and of course hugely redundant language because it was built for – not for print. It was built to be searched and hyperlinked and so there is an awful lot of redundancy built into it which, if it works as it is supposed to work, you probably won’t be seeing or you probably won’t be slapped in the face with all that often. But even in its redundancy, there is some disharmony where something that ought to be exactly the same isn’t.

I was also engaged in the process to harmonize all of the ISBDs and we went through rule by rule and made sure that the language was exactly the same where it needed to be exactly the same. And RDA mostly is. The language is mostly exactly the same where it needs to be, but not always so – well, it is a tremendous editing process, so I – the fact that there may be some things that were missed is no surprise.

AS: Right.

JSH: I think that the other thing that I am not a particular fan of is FRBR, not because I am not a fan of its concept but because it is also written opaquely. And that surely should be one of the things that we strive for in creating standards is making them very clearly written and not inventing new language just for the purpose of inventing new language.

You should be able to actually, if there is a term of art being in general use for that concept, use it. (Laughter) Don’t create some new term that you have to say “what did that mean? Is that different from...,” so if RDA grows out of FRBR, and FRBR is opaquely written, is it any surprise that RDA may not be terribly transparent.

AS: In your – can you touch on challenges you have had as library administrator specifically in technical services. You have talked about what you look for in - in hiring.

JSH: There are so many. One of the challenges which turned into a significant line of publication is the supply of catalogers. I said when I went to Northwestern and we posted for

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cataloguing positions, this was in 1978 through about '80, we had maybe a hundred, a hundred and fifty applicants for every professional position that we posted and then it began dwindling.

And by the early '80s, by about 1983, we were getting pools of twenty-five and twelve, and in one instance, two. Now that was for Hebrew so it required a specific language skill but I was in Metropolitan Chicago where there were three library schools and we still had those..

AS: And many seminaries.

JSH: And many seminaries. (Laughter) One even on our campus, and yet we could - and yet the pool of catalogers was that small so I went on a tear essentially. And founded a task force in ALCTS on education training and recruitment for catalogers. We wrote a report, discovered how little cataloging was being taught in the accredited library schools, how little it was being required, how little of it was actual cataloging, the cataloging appreciation courses, the introduction to the organization of information – that's not cataloging.

AS: Right.

JSH: And then that turned into a permanent committee which is now called CETRC, the Committee on the Education, Training and Improvement for Cataloging, but – and also published a whole bunch of things about it, but that is still true. We still have a dearth of people coming through library school as cataloguers. We have an incredible under supply, a paucity of people getting PhDs in organization and information and why not? Because there is nobody at the library schools to act as a thesis advisor. Why would you go into that field for your thesis and for your specialization, so the numbers dwindle. We are a minority within the field.

When you are a minority, it is easy to be overlooked and to have the rest of the faculty in the library school – in the LIS programs – not quite understand why it is important to what you are doing and emphasizing other things and giving – of course, those people advise students and they say “There’s no future in cataloging. Why would you want to do that?” With that kind of a – or they sneer at it, anecdotally they sneer at it or make jokes at the expense of the information organization, well of course people aren’t going to come into the field.

Also we don’t tend to attract into the field from many of the subject disciplines that would have a special affinity for cataloging – like music or philosophy or mathematics. If all you get is English and history majors, you are going to get English and history majors and they are not as likely to be interested in cataloging as somebody who took Latin.

AS: Right, right. (Laughter)

JSH: So you start with – you have self selected out most of the people who might be drawn to cataloguing, and then you subject them to a LIS program in which cataloging and other related activities are not stressed and may even be made a joke of.

AS: Right. It is the stepchild.

JSH: Yes. And yet, it is the foundation of the profession.

AS: Right.

JSH: We don’t have a profession if we don’t have information organization. There is no point in our existing as a separate discipline without it.

Hill transcript

AS: I'm – in my work as a doctoral student, the – many sessions are held around a conference table tearing hair out, trying to figure out what the very basis of our discipline is since we are a meta- discipline.

JSH: Yes. Or as we say in our faculty standards, librarianship is all disciplines.

AS: And – but and every time I bring this up, many, many people bang their hands on the table and disagree with me. And it's like every time this conversation comes up, I say "No, it's meta data."

JSH: Yes.

AS: Everything about our discipline is about meta data.

JSH: Everything.

AS: And then they look at me and they say "Oh, you are just saying that because you are a cataloger." It's like "No, no, I am saying it because I am right." (Laughter) But, yeah, I – I – I have made no headway.

JSH: No, and I continue to deliver this speech in one form or another, or to write it into a paper or to write a paper about it, or to be invited to speak about it, and I continue to say these same things and people go "Umm, umm. It's just Janet. There she goes again."

AS: It's key word. It is all about key word now. "Noooo." (Laughter)

JSH: No. The Library of Congress is working through on the future of bibliographic control and members from Google, Microsoft and - Yahoo, maybe.

AS: Oh, really.

JSH: And the guy from Google actually and the – the – two of them fell by the wayside but the guy from Google actually continued to be active and at one point said, "Yeah, we have these sophisticated search tools but, you know, we would be able to locate far less information if you guys were not putting in that meta data, because that is what we search first."

AS: Right.

JSH: "And if you stop doing cataloging, our product is much less good." "Thank you very much. Can you tell that to somebody who funds us? And speak to my budget office." (Laughter)

AS: Well in your career, and this question may not have – this question is really more for people in public services, but have you had any ethical dilemmas in your career as a professional librarian? Were there things you wish you – looking back you wish you had done differently?

JSH: Ethical dilemmas, yes, but most of those are in personnel management.

AS: Yeah.

JSH: And in many of those instances, you don't have a choice so wishing – you can wish you had been able to do it differently but you probably couldn't of. Not really. I tend to be a fairly hard-nosed person anyway in the sense of recognizing the ethical choices and I see ethical choices in places that other people don't which is another one of the things that I have written several papers about. Ethics in bibliographic control.

AS: Ah, okay.

Hill transcript

JSH: As a matter of fact I gave one of the key notes to the conference – was it just last year – maybe a year and a half ago – on ethics of information organization that was given at the university of – sponsored by the LIS school at University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

And I believe that there are ethical issues surrounded with things like “shall we hire entry level librarians?” That’s an ethical issue. If we don’t hire the entry level librarians, we who have a large institution with many people who can provide good background and training, who will hire them?

Authority control is an ethical issue. Do you go ahead and do that work to save others the work? Cooperative cataloging is an ethical issue. Do you sponge on others or do you contribute?

So, once many years ago, I was on AutoCat back in its early days and some library school student posted a message that said “I have to do a paper on ethical issues in librarianship and I can’t think of any ethical issues in cataloguing except for non-biased subject headings.” And I was aghast and immediately sent off an answer that said these things are ethical issues and if you don’t recognize them as ethical issues then you will make wrong decisions or you won’t make a decision at all.

And ended up giving that paper to the American Association of Law Libraries not all that long after that and I continue to try to tell people when we try to make decisions to say that this decision has an ethical component that you simply can’t ignore.

One of the things that we are doing at the University of Colorado Libraries also arises from not an – not an – from an ethical issue not specific to cataloging and that is, we are doing our best to host interns. We have gotten funding for several years from the Provost to have Fellows because we believe that it is the obligation of a research library to assist in the development of new entrants into the profession and that’s – we believe that’s an ethical obligation and we have had great success with that. We have sent a lot of people to library school.

AS: Good deal. Back to just general cataloguers coming into the profession, how many accidental catalogers as a percentage do you think you have worked with and cultivated? When I say accidental, I mean they started out as reference librarians, or maybe even children’s librarians and they got tired of the no-neck monsters and wanted to work in the backroom.

JSH: Not many.

AS: Really. Okay.

JSH: And I – and casting my mind back, there are some that I can recall who thought they wanted to leave the children’s librarianship behind or leave the school librarianship behind or leave public services behind and they tried cataloging and it was a mistake.

AS: Cataloging was also a mistake.

JSH: Yeah, yeah – that it wasn’t what they thought it was. That it’s not a matter of sitting there all by yourself transcribing things like a monk and that they are not all that well suited to it and some people who fall into cataloging are ideally suited for it, but mostly – but that’s the people that fall into it as opposed to those who tried it out as a retreat, because it is no retreat.

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AS: Right. (Laughter) Good deal. Well, we are coming up to end of our tape. Do you have any final words, something that additionally you would like to impart to our legacy of the profession?

JSH: Let's see.

AS: I hate to put you on the spot with that. (Laughter)

JSH: Well, it goes back to one of – one of the – it is sort of connected to ethics, and that is that I believe that we are all obligated to give service to our profession and service to our discipline, and so I would encourage – I encourage as many people as I possibly can to get involved in a substantive way in ALA, not just absorbing but contributing, and to catalogers and others I try to encourage people to get involved beyond their own division, to get involved at the association level or in some other division.

I adore Council. I have met people that I would never have otherwise encountered. I have been exposed to aspects of the profession that I might never have understood by service on the Council and service with two hundred other people who are involved in other areas of libraries. And knowing more about the profession as a whole helps you be better at whatever it is you are doing within your own specialization.

Within ALA a lot of people get impatient at the resolutions that come to Council about political subjects but the association has to have a place where librarians who are concerned about things because they believe they impinge on our profession can bring these issues and we can discuss them seriously. And if we don't pass them, well we don't pass them but at least we considered them.

AS: Right.

JSH: We gave people a voice and we gave a forum to those ideas and I don't regard that as a waste of time. It is sometimes aggravating. (Laughter) But it's valuable – it's essential to our profession for being what it is, which is about information and the exchange of ideas and open access to ideas and information, so we just have to provide those people and those ideas a place and a way to be heard.

So the association as a whole, it's a miracle it works. And I would – I keep hoping that people will get involved in it and discover the enormous satisfaction of working very hard with colleagues toward what eventually works into a common goal, even if it didn't start out as one.

And to realize that the association contributes to us as a discipline and as a profession in so many ways that it's wrong to say "I am not going to join the ALA because I don't get anything out of it or I don't – not going to join ALA because you guys passed this resolution that I disagree with." Nobody's job would be secure without ALA.

AS: Right.

JSH: Nobody would be educated without ALA. Nobody would get their continuing education in the same way without ALA. I mean we run the accreditation process. We – which is – has certainly a vital impact on every single one of us who is a librarian and on many others as well.

And we are active in the area of legislation that has impact on all us and intellectual freedom, and all of those things may not have a direct monetary value to us but it's like

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cancelling your subscription to Sports Illustrated because of the swimsuit issue. If you are really interested in sports, the whole rest of it (Laughter) Okay, throw that one issue...

AS: Give it to someone else to... (Laughter)

JSH: Give it to somebody – give it to someone who really cares about it and enjoys the coverage of hockey and figure skating and whatever else it is that interests you throughout the year.

AS: Good deal. Well, thank you so much for agreeing to be a part of our project.

JSH: You are quite welcome.

AS: Thank you for coming in on such short notice.

JSH: Yes, well, I'm glad we did this because now this frees up the rest of my schedule for today.

AS: Good deal.

Interviewed by A. Arro Smith. Transcribed by Margaret Ann Smith.

Hoadley Transcript

AS: This is Arro Smith. I am here with Joan Heath and Dr. Irene Hoadley at the San Marcos Public Library in San Marcos, Texas. Dr. Hoadley has agreed to be interviewed. Ms. Heath will be conducting the interview. This interview is a part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired/Retiring Librarians. It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of the ALA and may be published and used in scholarly research. Today is April 27th, 2009.

JH: Well, welcome.

IH: Thank you, I'm very glad to be here today.

JH: Great, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this project. I was thinking when I read a little information about your background, that it appeared - that your first job working in a library was in Texas. And then you went to - you spent some time in several other states - Kansas, Michigan, Ohio, and then I think returned to Texas and spent quite a bit of your career back in -

IH: The bulk of my career here, right.

JH: So I was just wondering just to start off with, what it was that attracted you, made you think of getting into - working in libraries? Anything in your childhood, or when? When that came up?

IH: I guess I was one of those people I think maybe of my generation that intuitively knew at a very early age that I wanted to be a librarian. Not because I'd really had any experiences in libraries, because I grew up in a very small community - no public library. The library in the school, the elementary school I went to was one little-bitty bookcase, and in the high school it wasn't a great deal more than that. But I always liked to read, and I had an appreciation of books, and so I thought - there wasn't anything else I really wanted to do. So this is what I decided was going to be the best career choice for me. And there was no question, having grown up in a small town, that I didn't want to stay there - I wanted a career. I wanted to be able to do something else with my life. And so, this seemed like a good fit for me.

JH: And you - did you start college, your undergraduate over at Sam Houston?

IH: No, I was a UT - University of Texas undergraduate and I went there with the idea of getting a library degree. But of course, I had to have an undergraduate major, and I did that in the liberal arts, as I guess most people did at that particular time. So I had an English and History undergraduate degree, and then I went on to grad school from there.

JH: Oh, okay. But were you over at Sam Houston?

IH: No, not prior to working there.

JH: Oh, okay. But you did work there.

IH: That was my first professional position.

JH: I see.

IH: I went to Michigan for library school because, frankly my grades were not good enough to get into the UT University of Texas library school at that time. Dr. Stallman?? and Dr. Douglas had very high standards and I spent two years in college not being a scholar, so...

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JH: So, okay. And so you did your undergraduate work at the University of Texas -

IH: Right.

JH: But then, library school you went up to Michigan - but you went on, and did you work right through for your Ph.D?

IH: No, I worked at Sam Houston and then I worked at Kansas State for a while. And then I went back and got the doctorate. Because again, there was that feeling I think at that point in time, that they didn't - most of the graduate programs, the doctoral programs, didn't want people who didn't have experience. That's no longer the situation, but I think at that point in time, that was always the - I'm sure there were exceptions to that, but for the most part they wanted people who had experience. Because most of those people were going to go into teaching. And many of the schools wanted people to have at least some founding in the profession.

JH: What made you want - were you just think of that yourself? Teaching?

IH: No, never. I did that once, and I really enjoyed it, in fact I did it at least a couple times, and they were very good experiences but that just wasn't my thing.

JH: And so, okay. After you had your master's in library science, that's when you finally went - I'm getting back to where I keep trying to make the connection with you at Sam Houston. As a cataloguer? Is that right?

IH: Yes, that was long before I knew you. That was back in 1961 and 2, probably. A long time ago. And I only stayed there that year.

JH: Yeah, it was a short time. And you - after Ann Arbor, where you were in school - where did you go from there?

IH: After I did the doctoral work or after the master's work?

JH: After the master's work.

IH: After the master's work I went to Sam Houston and then I went to Kansas State. Then I went back to Michigan to do the doctorate. Then I went to Ohio, and then I came back to Texas.

JH: What did you do in Kansas?

IH: I was the head of the circulation department there.

JH: So you were starting to actually, it sounds like you know you did some cataloging, you did a stint at cataloging work, and then circulation, and then - and then eventually you get to Ohio - Ohio State.

IH: Ohio State, that's correct.

JH: And you were there for a while.

IH: 6, 7, 8 years. I don't remember how long it was.

JH: What I'm wondering about is, is that where - did you just know all along, or is that where you started thinking about library management or administration work?

IH: I guess I'd have to say that, I always probably considered myself a manager. My mother was someone who said I could manage a broomstick. I guess I always felt very comfortable being in charge. And when you feel that way, then I think that's something that you naturally progress to. And it was also probably at a time in the profession, where there were not

many women in library administration--and I always hate a void-- and it was just a natural progression.

And I guess the other thing that happened is that being in the doctoral program at Michigan, and even when I wasn't - when I was in the master's program there, I knew a lot of the doctoral students because I worked in the library office. And I made those contacts and it was really those contacts - that's what got me the job at Kansas State. A friend of mine was an assistant director there. And he needed - I had no experience in circulation, but he knew me, and he hired me. And then from there it just became a natural progression.

JH: I was going to ask you if you felt like you had mentors along the way?

IH: Yes, yeah I think I did. The gentleman that hired me at Kansas State - Mr. Fad??? Haven't thought about that name in a long time - Anyway. He was very good and he helped me a lot. And then when I went to Michigan, Hugh Atkinson. He was very good about helping people and mentoring people. I don't guess I really thought about it in that context, with that phraseology, but he was just someone who was a good friend, that would always provide guidance, direction - And the other person would have been Louis Grants, who was the director at Ohio State.

JH: And at Ohio State, could you talk a little bit about the jobs - you had - it was more than one position there?

IH: Yeah, when I went there I was called the librarian for general administration and research. Probably the only position with that title in the history of time. And then I became the assistant director for administrative services, because that's really what I did. I was kind of an upper level assistant to the director, and whatever needed to be done is what I did. And it was just a great variety of things. I did some research projects when I first worked there, but that kind of diminished with time, as there were other things.

I was very fortunate, I was there at the time that OCLC was conceived, and actually the guy who was my office mate and I did some of the initial writing of the proposal for OCLC. And so there were a lot of opportunities. There were always a lot of things going on there. It was - Ohio State was one of those teaching libraries in a sense, and a lot of new people, a lot of activities, a lot of ideas. And it made it a very good place, a very stimulating place to work.

JH: And so, when you pursued your doctorate, did you leave there, or were you working on it when you were there?

IH: No, I finished - I had already done the coursework when I got there, and I finished the writing of the dissertation while I was there.

JH: What was your dissertation on?

IH: It was on the undergraduate library.

JH: At - which undergraduate library?

IH: All undergraduate libraries. The undergraduate library, because at the time there were only six of them.

JH: I know that Michigan had one.

IH: Michigan had one, Harvard had one, Cornell had one, South Carolina had one, Texas

JH: Ohio state?

IH: No, Ohio State did not have one. Texas had one - it was separate individual libraries - so those had their own buildings.

JH: The one at Michigan was called "the ugly", I remember that.

IH: That's right. Probably is still called "the ugly." It's still there - it still functions. Where as most of the rest of them, many of them anyway, have disappeared.

JH: Was that something that was - the undergraduate library, was that a developing idea at that time?

IH: It was at the time that it appeared, that it was going to be a concept that would expand. But that was not the case. It was a time-bounded concept, I guess you would say.

JH: So at Ohio State, it sounds like it was - a lot of good opportunities for you - the time you were there. What triggered you to go past that, to I take it - apply for the position at Texas A&M?

IH: A telephone call from a friend who was working at Texas A&M. That seems like how I got all my jobs. It's one of the reasons why being involved in professional organizations and anything else that has to do with libraries is very important. If you really want a career where you're going to be able to move and progress, in a sense the easiest way to do that is through people. Your accomplishments are important, but who you know is still very important. And I doubt that that has changed today.

JH: And so that really helped you make those steps.

IH: The person I had worked with previously was there, and they were looking for a director, and she called and asked if I might be interested. And it was a time when my parents were getting older, and coming back home was good for me. And it turned out to be a very good match, in terms of where I would feel comfortable, and maybe the types of talents I had for the institution.

JH: What was the - what were things like at A&M when you first went there?

IH: Very male-dominated.

JH: Was the corps - now -

IH: No, the corps was no longer mandatory then.

JH: And the camp - the university was co-ed -

IH: It was co-ed, right. That had happened - now I went there in '74, and that had all happened in the - well, it happened around that time. I guess the first entering class of women maybe was a couple of years before that. There were not many women on the campus. And there were not many female faculty members, and there were definitely not many female administrators.

JH: Were you the first woman library director there?

IH: Oh yeah. Yes.

JH: Were you the first woman ARL library director?

IH: No. there were about, maybe 3 before me. [The] woman -- Roselle -- at Pittsburg, the woman at UCLA, can't remember her name. I think there were 3 or 4 that were there at the time that I went to Texas A&M - oh the woman at Rutgers. And they were the first - I think the

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woman - I can't remember that woman's name at UCLA. Page Ackerman - she may have been the first. If she wasn't, Roselle at Pittsburg was.

JH: But even so - when you started going to ARL meetings you were - there were not many women I would take it.

IH: Oh, 4 or 5. And they were all at least 20 years older than I was.

JH: Well, and over, back at A&M, since there weren't a lot of women administrators at that point, was that something you were really conscious of, did it really manifest itself in any particular ways?

IH: No, I never had a problem feeling that I was a women in a male-dominated society there. But I never made it an issue either. And most of the people that I worked for did not make it an issue. I always felt that A&M, particularly in the early years, treated me very good. I'm sure they could hold me up as an example of their broad-mindedness.

JH: You said you thought that it was a mutual good match. Why do you say that?

IH: Many of the library faculty that were there, they were native Texans, they came from the same kind of background that I did. The institution was at a juncture where it was ready to make a lot of change. The overall institution and the library. And change was something that I was always very comfortable with. And so, it just seemed to work out really well. It's always nice when plan A works good, right?

JH: You're just so fortunate that - you were talking a while ago about how your mother said that, you know, she always thought you could manage anything and all of that, that you just had that character, that temperament - sounds like your whole life -

IH: That's probably so. It's one of the things that near the end of my career and even now, from the things that I read and all, that I have a hard time, I guess, really understanding - is the fact that many of our professionals today have to learn to be managers. In a sense, it's something that I guess I always just did kind of naturally. And many of my colleagues in the early years - they were all people like that. They didn't have this educational background in management. And I have a feeling that - but I'm too far removed - that you get a little different kind of management from someone who is an intuitive manager than you do from someone who has basically learned to manage. It's a different kind of, mindset, I guess you would say.

JH: So when you think back to the - because you were at A&M for -

IH: I spent 20 years there.

JH: and that's, you know, a pretty good span of time, but what things stand out in your mind when you think back to those years. Of either - what were the major issues in the library profession, or in the libraries at the time that to you were major challenges, or major accomplishments?

IH: Let me answer that a little differently. If I think of maybe the two things that were most important that happened during the time that I was there, those are not professional, but within the institution. And the two biggest things would have been the introduction of technology. A&M was very fortunate that we had - when I was there, and starting out, there was money. And that made it a little easier to do things. And so we were able to some things technologically before a lot of other institutions did them. The complete conversion of the card

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catalog. The computer center that we had for the student use. Those were things that happened there before they happened at a lot of other places.

AS: Approximately what year did you automate your catalog?

JH: You said you started working there - what '74, so was that something you started working on?

IH: Very quickly. Within - during the seventies anyway. Whereas I think many - most of the institutions really ended up doing that probably in the eighties.

AS: Late eighties.

IH: Some haven't done it yet, right? See, also - A&M was a good size. It was a manageable size. It wasn't so big that it was cumbersome to do things. It was small enough that you could kind of get everybody together and agreed on doing something. And people, I think, many of the staff that had been there a long time - and there were a lot of those people, had not had a lot of opportunity to use any creativity. So that once things - the atmosphere was a little different, they were very willing to take on new things. To change things, to do things differently. Some institutions, the bigger institutions - it's much harder to do that because it's so hard to make the changes. But in a smaller institution you can do some of those things.

AS: Give us a background - approximately how many volumes did A&M have at that time? Do you recall?

IH: When I went there, less than a million. I don't know. You can look that up.

JH: So that was - automating the catalog.

IH: That was one. The automation process within the library. The second one was fundraising. and that became - because it had become a very important part of the university, it then became a very important part of the library, because even then and probably maybe not as much as now, but it was important to be a part of what was going - the library needed to be a part of what was happening within the university. And going out and raising money put the library in a pretty favorable light.

And it provided the opportunity for us to do some things that we would not have been able to do otherwise. The student computing area. We would not have had that. Except for one individual who gave the money to do that. And being able to attract some of those kinds of things, some of those kinds of funds was good. The other thing it did was, it gave the library a lot of visibility that it had not had before.

Most people, if they thought of A&M, whether they were students there, or whatever their connection to the institution was, they have no real concept of a library. But once we got the mothers clubs involved, and some of the other alumni groups, former students groups, then that gave more visibility to the library as an institution, and as a result, it's - some of that funding, and some of that recognition has continued to evolve and to develop. And that's only good for the institution.

JH: Was the fundraising - was that something that - that a fair amount of your time then was devoted to that? Was it something that you were pretty comfortable? Cause I don't know how much they would have focused on that in your coursework.

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IH: Not at all. I don't know that they focus on it at all in library schools now. I would doubt that there would be very few schools that would have such a course. And even today it's even a more integral part of any library director's job. I'm sorry, I forgot my question.

JH: Did you put a lot of your time, did you have the assistance of - the benefit of a development officer? Or did you just kind of have to figure that one out on your own?

IH: Well, you kind of figured it out on your own, because at that time, except for a few of the very large, private institutions, libraries were not doing fundraising. Because the university was getting into this in a big way, we had the opportunity to have a development officer provided by the institution. So we had a development officer that they provided, and then we hired someone within, to basically be a library development officer, and those two people worked in tandem together. But I spent, I would imagine, a quarter of my time - once we got into this in a fairly big way.

JH: And so that was ongoing?

IH: Right, once we started - you don't stop. And we were fairly successful in a number of the things we did. And you know, when you throw a good party then people want to have another good party. It's the kind of thing that builds upon itself. And we had some people that had good ideas.

JH: Something that I thought you were going to mention but you didn't, was the building.

IH: Oh the building.

JH: Cause that was a whole undertaking during your time there.

IH: It was, it was. Somehow putting up a building I don't think is a very creative or challenging thing - I just would have never put it near the top of my list. Important to the institution, important for the library as an organization to have a much better space in which to operate and for the students to use. But in terms of being an intellectual challenge, it isn't that. Not like automation was, or not even like fundraising was.

AS: Could I interject briefly?

AS: Tell us about the origins of OCLC a little bit. You were involved in writing that original proposal. And from that original proposal to what it is now, could you ever imagine...?

IH: No. The idea of OCLC started with - what was I think was called an interuniversity council, which was the group of university librarians, state supported university in Ohio. And my boss, Lewis Branscomb[?], I think was the chair at the time. And that group saw the need of trying to find a way to cooperate fully. And this was just as automation was beginning. This would have been in the late sixties. And so Dr. Branscomb[?], John Langford who was the automation librarian at Ohio state, and myself - cause I did the writing - to try and put together a little proposal for this group. And it was from that small document. I don't remember much about what it was anymore. But it was from that document that the group then came up with the concept of what OCLC was, and Harford gi?? and ??? our part was really a very small part in terms of doing that, and it wasn't our idea really, in terms of creating a concept itself.

But it was nice to have an opportunity to have some input in what was to come. And of course it started out as a very modest proposal, in terms of something for the state of Ohio. But Fred Kilgour is not a person who has modest proposals, or modest aims or goals. And so once he

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came on board, and I was still at Ohio State when he came there. And he was housed in the library at that time, it grew from there. He was able to conceptualize it and take it on to the next steps that it needed to build to.

JH: What other issues - you were involved with American Library Association, Texas Library Association, maybe some other associations, research libraries - through all those years. What kinds of things were the more significant issues that were being debated or problems worked during your years?

IH: I'm not really an issues-oriented person. The things I guess - the biggest conceptual thing would have been cooperation of how library worked together better. Because before the fifties anyway, there was really not much cooperation. There were not many cooperative types of organizations. But with the coming of OCLC, that really changed the whole base of how libraries operated. And it provided the opportunity for much more cooperation and much better use of all of resources that all of us had.

And then that also tied in with the automation issue. I can remember some debates about online journals. About how soon we would have all of our journals online, and we would not have to have anything out there on the bookshelves. And from what was happening at that point in time, and I don't even remember when that was, probably in the eighties sometime.

I really thought it was going to happen fairly fast. Because the technology was there to make it happen. What's not there is the will to make happen. And that still doesn't exist. It's not necessarily the will of the librarians, it's much the will of the users, in terms of what is really practical. You know, technologically we can do a lot of things, but they don't work so well. I'm not going to sit and read a novel on my computer, you know. I don't even want to sit and read a long document on my computer.

Now, maybe in the next few generations that will change because young people have learned, have grown up doing that. But when you grow up with a different basic way of doing things, it's very hard, I guess, to change them. I've learned to use a computer, and I can do all those things, but it doesn't mean that I see that as the necessarily the best way of doing it.

JH: Course now we have students that have really grown up with very different technology.

IH: It's different.

JH: I was going to ask you earlier when we were touching on library school, if you - I don't know if you have really thought about it in recent times, but when you were working as a director, whether you had thought that just the way the graduate school for degree work for libraries was adequate, or had wished it'd been different, or would have changed it. I mean, just based on your experience as a director and working with as many other librarians as you have on your staff at times.

IH: I don't know if what library schools teach what they taught then, or what they teach now is the right thing or a good thing. What's important is what the individual that is coming into those programs brings to that background. In terms of the interviewing someone to hire people, I guess that's one other thing I should have talked about too, you look at the person as much as you look at the knowledge that they've gained in their educational program. You know, somebody,

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and I can remember interviewing people that were really very smart, but you know, they were not going to be able to cut it as far as being a librarian. They just - either they didn't have any common sense, or they didn't have any sense at all. They just weren't going to fit - they weren't going to be able to function in that environment.

You didn't want somebody that was going to come and wants to sit in a little corner. And that's what people's concepts of libraries was at that point in time. Maybe it is still for some people, I don't know. But I think the library schools probably do as good as they can do. They don't do a bad job, but I don't think they do a really excellent job. And if I knew what the - this is a question that I have thought about. If I knew what the right answer was, I would have told somebody a long time ago. They might not have listened, but I would have told.

It's just like the organization, the internal organization of the libraries. There needs to be a better way to organize libraries to function. What we have now, I think, is what we've always had basically. It's changed a bit, it's got different names, and a few different configurations and stuff, but it's basically the same basic organization that existed in the 1800s. There's got to be a better way of doing that. That was another question I thought about a lot, but I couldn't come up with an answer. Maybe that means there isn't an answer. Or maybe it means it needs someone that is smarter than I.

JH: You know you said you weren't much of an issues person, but you were - what did you feel was your responsibility, what did you focus on, these questions?

IH: I think if I probably focused on anything it was people. If you know at A&M, we hired a lot of people. And people I guess - we became a little bit of a training library like Ohio State was. That was a really good experience for me. And that was something that I thought was important. So you hire good people, and you use them for a while, and they go on.

JH: Yeah, I was going to bring that up, because I benefited from that experience myself.

IH: You need to give people - there was a while when no one wanted to hire a beginning level librarian. And we got a lot of benefit from a lot of people like yourself. And a lot of other people that came to A&M and they may not have stayed but a couple of years, but to me it was always better to have somebody good, that would stay there for 2 years then someone who was mediocre that might stay for ten.

JH: So it just kind of worked out that way? Was it intentional? Was it a strategy?

IH: It was intentional.

JH: Another thing I know, was faculty status was always - well I don't know when it began at A&M but is that something that was - did librarians even already have faculty status before you arrived? Or is that something -

IH: Yes it did happen at A&M. And I would not have gone there had there not been faculty status or a commitment to create faculty status. I had had that at Ohio State, well actually I guess I had it everywhere. Because Sam Houston also had -

JH: They do now, I think.

IH: Yeah, that's always been very strong there. It's almost more like a union there, or at least it used to be. That was an issue that was very important to me, because I felt that you need that to, in essence have more credibility with the faculty and the institution, and if you don't have

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some credibility with that faculty, you're not going to be able to accomplish very much. It was just something that was always important to me. And it was always important to me to be involved in professional organization and to do some publishing or research. The only way that you really encourage people to do that is if you force them to do it. And a lot of people came to A&M and a lot of them were able to do that - not all of them.

I remember the year I taught a class at the University of Texas, and a couple people did papers that were really good papers. And I encourage them to publish those. A couple of them did. And once they get oriented to doing that, then they're apt to continue to do that. Not all of them did, some of them just didn't have that kind of motivation.

But I think the same thing is true with faculty status. The people that come in- if you can motivate people to start, to see how they can contribute, and that's what they're doing by being involved in professional organizations and by doing writing and research. They contribute back to the profession. The people that don't ever do any of that - doesn't mean they're not good librarians, but they're not really helping the profession. They're helping their own institution and their own organization. But they don't contribute to the profession. And if we don't have large enough base of people who are contributing on that level, then your profession isn't going anywhere.

Look at part of what's happening now, that much of the technological things that are happening in libraries aren't coming from librarians, they're coming from people whose backgrounds are intellectual or discipline wise different. And they're driving the profession. They may be doing all the right things, I don't know, but it would be better from my point of view if those people were librarians, if they had some of that common core of knowledge, because it gives you a little different perspective. You know a lot of the stuff you learn in library school may not be worth very much, but at least it gives you a common background, right?

JH: There's some kind of core values there.

IH: I guess I just never wanted to be a second class citizen, and if you didn't have faculty status, as far as an academic institution is concerned, then you're just like the support staff. And I was never willing to be a support staff person.

JH: Talking about getting started in being involved in professional association and publishing, I know from my own experience which is my library school was also Michigan, that they were - the school was very - really encouraged us and helped make it possible for students when they were still in library school, to start going to go to an ALA conference. And so I had that experience that I think was very helpful. They didn't - at least I didn't have the experience of getting involved in working on a paper or possibly towards publication, at that early stage. How did you get started in publishing?

IH: By doing the doctorate. I don't think I'd ever published anything prior to that.

JH: But then, once you'd done that, because that was such an undertaking, such an achievement, then when you went on down the road, that when the notion of writing on something else, publishing, pursuing publishing or something else just wasn't -

IH: It was a part of being a librarian. It was a way of giving back. It was always important to me to be a part of whatever you do. I don't care if it's being a citizen here. You

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know I participate in the League of Women Voters and a couple of other things in town, because you need to be a part of what you do. You don't need to be a book sitting on the shelf all the time. That doesn't help anybody. And you want your profession to be better, and it gets better by your helping to make it better. You can't have people just sit off on the side.

JH: Well, I guess I want to ask - Irene, was there ever anything that you were afraid of? I don't think so.

IH: I'm afraid the answer to that would be no. I never learned that.

JH: Well, I think that was to your advantage.

IH: If you have an open mind and you're not afraid to occasionally make a mistake, and believe me I made a lot along the way, that you can do anything you want to do. And if you don't believe that, you don't have enough recognition of your own abilities, somebody needs to draw that out of you. Everybody I think has those abilities, but not everybody has someone that along the line will pull that out of you. And maybe that's what having a mentor is.

JH: I just was going to get back to that, and say how did you feel you mentored?

IH: Probably not in a traditional way.

JH: Yeah, I don't know what the traditional way is necessarily.

IH: I think of mentoring as sitting down with somebody and having conversations and being buddies, in a sense. That's what I see as a conceptual thing of mentoring. Mentoring I guess for me would be more setting an example. And if I can be a good example to some people and give them the idea that if I can be a library director why can't they be a library director.

JH: Well I remember when my first job out of library school, and at that time at A&M, the 3 people I think of as the administrators in that library were all women. And I think -

IH: And why would that be? At that point in time? Why would that be?

JH: Why would that be? Well, I don't know, I think because you were there.

IH: I think part of it was that at that point in time, not many men wanted to be seen as working for a woman.

JH: But if that was not something, I mean, just because I had the benefit of that, seeing that example, that was one thing to me was not unusual. I had that benefit, that there were women already in those positions.

AS: And, I need to interject here, that Joan is the director of the Alkek Library at Texas State University.

JH: Irene - if I may, tell a story, is - I wouldn't expect Irene to remember this, but, I was finishing library school and went to an ALA midwinter conference, and went to the placement center - I was trying to get my first job. This is unfortunate to say, because the economy is so bad in Michigan right now. Well it was bad in Michigan when I was coming out of graduate school. Anyway I just interviewed for this job at Texas A&M, and just total coincidence, at that day, at that hour, Irene was staffing your placement desk. And so I interviewed with her and then a couple weeks later I got a call from someone at the library. And this was the interlibrary services - the interlibrary loan job. Someone called and offered me the job. And you know, I hadn't even been to Texas. And I said well, I'd like to come and visit, and I did that. And when I was visiting College Station, I accepted the job.

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IH: Well, I never had problems making decisions, either.

JH: No, no you didn't. Fortunately for me in that case. Well, what do you think of - I mean I know you have your hands still - you've done work with Texas Library Association, I don't know how much you follow what's continuing to happen in libraries today, just kind of wondering what your thoughts are, you know. How do you expect libraries to change, are you concerned that libraries won't exist in ten years, or how they might change?

IH: I keep up a little bit, because being a very frugal person over the years, I have life memberships to ALA and TLA, and so I continue to get all of my journals, and I at least look through them, I don't read them so carefully anymore. So I have a little sense of what's going on. And I guess my overview would be that libraries haven't really changed that much. And my guess is that they aren't going to change that much. Just because of what I said earlier - if you look at libraries and you can't find a better way to organize them, that may be really good, and I think that says something about their ability to continue to survive as they are.

I think probably collections become less important, services become more important as time goes on. Just because there's too much information, and that's why the collection just really don't have that same kind of relevance. There is also I sense, not the same value placed on scholarship as once existed. So there's maybe less in the way of scholarly pursuit in the future. If you look at the books that are coming out now, and I don't really keep up really careful, my guess is that the proportion of scholarly books to the overall number of books produced is decreasing. I may be way off, but that's just a casual observation. And if that's really the case, then collection within libraries are not going to have the same significance they once did. With of course, the exception of the special collection kinds of things. But the general collections. I can really see academic libraries in terms of collection becoming more like public libraries.

JH: Say that again? You can see -

IH: Academic libraries in terms of collection becoming more like public libraries. Academic libraries really don't need to have all those books sitting on the shelves. Public libraries learned that a long time ago.

JH: That's true, yeah.

IH: As long as there's a repository somewhere for something that didn't have much value when it was published, and probably still doesn't have a lot of value, in terms of content, why does it need to be sitting there, taking up space.

JH: In a way that goes back to the resource sharing issue. Having it available somehow, but maybe not -

IH: I think that somebody used to talk about the big library in the sky - that had all of those lesser used things. The one resource. Many of the smaller academic libraries can buy into that, and in a sense they do, because they don't keep things like the large academic libraries are. It's going to take a very long time, and a very drastic change in attitudes for the big libraries to ever accept that concept, because big is still better. Doesn't make any difference what the institution is.

JH: Since I don't work at an ARL library, was that - I would think by know that that would be changing with ARL libraries.

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IH: I don't think so. There are still, I think, a couple of ARL libraries that will not, do not report their statistics because they don't want to be ranked. Even though they're up near - these are the ones near the top. When Michigan first pulled out, I don't know whenever that was, Dick Dougherty was there, that was a very major sort of thing to happen. But you know, they slipped one place one year, and he didn't want his institution slipping. And that's why I think at least when I was at A&M, that the growth of the collection wasn't necessarily the major thing. We had so much to do in terms of offering services. And ARL has accommodated that somewhat in terms of their index. Or at least they had, I don't know what it is now.

JH: What kind of advice would you give to someone thinking of pursuing a career in libraries?

IH: You can do whatever you want to do and be whatever you want to be. I think the career possibilities are still good. Well I say that, but I don't know if libraries are hiring now. Maybe if the recession has hurt enough that things are cutting back. But I still think that for somebody who has a certain amount of knowledge, and has the inclination to really want to be of service, that there are very good possibilities in terms of career advancement.

JH: Did you ever - cause I'm sure you were probably asked a question like that many times along the way, people asking well what should I get my undergraduate degree in. Do you just, based on what you said -

IH: Anything. It doesn't really make any difference.

JH: Computer Science, or something like that.

IH: Well, today if you don't understand the technology you don't have - you can't work at McDonald's, you know. You've got to have a certain, a level of expertise as far as the technology's concerned. But to have a degree in Computer Science, I don't think offers a lot. It's more important to be able to think . I didn't know very much about technology at all when I first started at A&M. Even when I was at Ohio state. But I could - if somebody explained something to me, I could conceptualize what it was that was supposed to happen, even if though I couldn't make it happen. And I think as long as you can do that, then you're fine. You don't have to necessarily be able to do everything. Well, maybe you do now. I guess - I was of the generation where as a director, and I did this until I retired, was I did not want a computer in my office. And I didn't have a computer in my office. You couldn't function without a computer in your office, right?

JH: Well, I can't imagine it. I guess I'll put it that way.

IH: Well, with the use of things like email, and stuff like that. You just really couldn't function. It was my opinion that it took a lot of my time to do all of those things. I don't know how I would find time to do email today. Just that one thing. And I can't hardly imagine the volume of email.

JH: It's a lot.

IH: But being able to think and to see how things interact, and to build on things that you hear. I was never really someone who had a lot of original ideas. But I could take an idea that someone else had and adjust it to the local situations - like cooking. I can take a recipe, and it's not exactly what I want, so you make a few changes, and you make it your own recipe.

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And its the same thing I think in terms of running libraries. You don't want to necessarily do it just like someone else did it, but you can take the core idea that exists and adapt it to your local situation. But you have to be able to think to do that. And people that don't learn to think, those are the people that will not have much of a future in libraries.

JH: So it kind of sounds to me like, well my sense of it is that you could have worked - you could have had your career in something totally different from libraries, and been very happy with it. But you were working in libraries and you did get great satisfaction and a lot of enjoyment out of it.

IH: Yeah, many of the skills I had, yes you're right, they would transfer to another organization. But I guess I always liked the academic climate for one thing.

JH: I was going to ask that - you didn't ever really think about working in a different type of library.

IH: I tend to focus on a lot of things. And I usually know what I want. And if you know what you want then it's much easier to get there.

JH: Arro, do you have anything else?

AS: Sounds great. Thank you so much. Any final comments?

IH: I don't know if this is the sort of thing you wanted.

AS: Oh sure, this is exactly it.

JH: He had a bank of some kind of sample questions I should have looked -

IH: I should have listened to Bill's, and I just - things have been kind of -

AS: You're fine, this is great.

JH: I never knew that you were in Ohio - I knew you had been in Ohio but I didn't know you were there at the time that that started.

IH: Well, you know when you're staff and you're working on something like that, its not necessarily, you don't - you're not supposed to get credit for something that's a part of your job. And I don't think of myself as originating the idea of OCLC by any stretch of the imagination. It's like you're recently - I was reading something it was in the Texas Library Journal, about the beginning of TexShare, and somebody was taking credit for having started that, I don't remember who it was. And I was reading that and thinking, that's not right. Now, I know who's idea that was.

JH: Speaking, I didn't even focus on that one but, to me, what eventually - well let's see what you say - I go back to - I want to say Robin Downs.

IH: Yes, that's exactly who's idea it was.

JH: Cause I remember him writing a paper, or at least that's where I came in on it. A paper that - and it was - it was resource sharing kind of ideas. But there were several ideas, and it wasn't called TexShare. And he - I remember it being presented at one of those -

IH: TCSUL meetings.

JH: TCSUL meetings.

IH: That's exactly how it started. It was his conceptual - I remember sitting around at a table someplace, several of us, and he was pushing this idea. He had much more of a technological background than many of us did at that point in time. He was just always a

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background person, he's not someone that ever took credit for anything. And it was really from that conversation that I think he had somebody, maybe at U of H write a document -

JH: Like a white paper.

IH: Yeah, went to TCSUL with it. And then other people were probably more instrumental in actually making it happen. But the core idea, it was really Robin's.

JH: That part I go back to. You know and Robin was at Michigan - University of Michigan in the library system.

IH: Isn't that where all the people come from?

JH: Well I guess so. I was in library school and he was like, the associate director of tech services or something like that. And he spoke, I interviewed him - I worked on the graduate school newsletter, library school's newsletter, and I had to interview on something on MARC at the time, but anyway - but he came and he spoke to the graduating class at some reception. And he was memorable to me because - kind of like what you were talking a little while ago. He was emphasizing to us that you know, just do your work, just do your job, and it'll come. You know, don't worry - and for myself at the time - because I had friends who were like interviewing at Yale and you know, all these places that probably didn't pay very well, but you know were pretty prestigious sounding places. Anyway - and I just - his advice to me was memorable at the time. And then he ended up down in -

IH: U of H.

JH: Yeah, in Houston for a while. That was a thing, the other directors in Texas always seemed to me to have kind of a - well I don't know, from your - were the directors in the state close, or was that just because - just the ARL directors?

IH: Everybody except Harold.

JH: Harold was his own, had his own -

IH: Well it wasn't just Harold, it was before him - Merle.

JH: Oh yes. I know, I can't quite remember it.

IH: Texas just always wanted to do their own thing. They didn't have much - they didn't see much reason to be involved with the other institutions within the state. And so it was really the A&Ms, and the U of Hs, and the Tech, depending on who was there at the time. Ray Janeway, he would have been, probably at that point in time when TexShare started, he would have probably been still a person there.

JH: Yeah, you're right. But I mean -

IH: You see, at UT, they never contributed hardly in any way to library development in the state. Within TLA - there was always this big void. And Harold knows, I think. I've told him this.

AS: we are running down to the last sixty seconds or so.

JH: I just want to say thank you - is there anything else you'd like to add?

IH: I don't think so. I didn't really come with any preconceived ideas of what to share because I really wasn't sure what kind of questions you were going to ask. I'm glad to have this opportunity. I'm always glad to talk about things like this. And this isn't something I had to remember much about.

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JH: Well thank you, and thank you for giving me my start. I really appreciated it.

IH: Well, I made at least one good decision, right?

JH: Many. Many, many. Thank you Irene.

AS: Very good. Thank you so much.

JH: Thank you, Arro.

Huetting Transcript

So, we are both here and can get the interview started. My name is Kathryn La Barre. I'm here to interview Gail Huetting. We are at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has agreed to be interviewed as part of the "Capturing Our Stories" oral history program, for retired and retiring librarians. It's one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association presidential initiatives. This recording will become the property of ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is April 29, 2011. So, Gail, I'm going to ask you a few questions. Please, tell me your name and your current library position.

Gail: Gail Huetting, and I am currently the Principal Cataloger in Content Access Management at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Kathryn: Okay. And tell me just a brief summary of your library career, and I'll ask you more specific questions.

Gail: Let's see. Well, I've always been a cataloger, even though the titles may not say that. And this goes back to when I was in high school, and I was a library assistant. I became interested in library work as a career in eighth grade, junior high, anyway, but the problem was that my hearing was impaired, so I wasn't sure whether I could be a reference librarian, and the high school librarian for whom I was a student worker, said she thought I might like to go into cataloging.

And when I found out about that, I'm also very interested in foreign languages. I speak German and I studied maybe eight other languages, I think, to various degrees, so I thought, by that time of course, it was only German and Latin by that time, but I -- the more I thought about it, the more I thought cataloging would be a good way to make a good use of those languages, without having to be a teacher. Another thing I thought I would like to do if my hearing was really good was to be a journalist, but as it turns out I was able to keep studying languages and do some writing because we have a research requirement here (at the University of Illinois). I also do cataloging of foreign language materials, and I've really been very satisfied with that career.

Kathryn: Well, good. We're very glad that you've been cataloging here.

Gail: I thought because the academic libraries are the ones to get foreign language material, and I've always been working in academic libraries, although I certainly appreciate the public library here, the Urbana public library and the Champaign public library as well, but only as a user.

Kathryn: So, tell us where you attended school.

Gail: I went to the Graduate School of Library Science at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and that's what it was called in those days, but now it's Library and Information Science, of course. I went there between 1971 and 1973, that's when I got out of college.

Kathryn: So what were your least favorite and your most favorite classes when you attended school here?

Huetting transcript

Gail: Oh, I think my favorite classes were the history of the books and history of publishing.

Kathryn: Who taught those classes?

Gail: Let's see, Don Krummel and I think Walter Allen was the one who taught the history of books -- I mean Book Publishing, American book publishing. Only for this class I did my paper on German book publishing, which actually turned out to be my primary research topic until 1990, when East Germany disappeared. It had been really quite fascinating to follow that development too.

Kathryn: Absolutely.

Gail: And after I graduated from there, I also got a -- was fortunate enough to get an assistantship in the cataloging department here. Little did I realize that they usually gave the assistantship to the student workers, so I might not have had a chance, except that Marian Mullendore who taught cataloging at that time was on sabbatical.

Kathryn: Oh, right.

Gail: And so I -- they had to ask Marian to hire graduate assistants in Cataloging to replace her that year because she was teaching.

Kathryn: That's right.

Gail: Because it was Kathryn Henderson who was on sabbatical--And so I never had a single course from Kathryn, though she knows who I am.

Kathryn: Of course!

Gail: She knows who I am. But it's very odd that I have all three classes from Marian Mullendore.

Kathryn: That's amazing.

Gail: So that's how I got my foot in the door, and then I was able to continue the second year as well, to work in the cataloging department. And I mostly worked on the, I guess, I don't know if it was the European blanket order at that time, but it was mostly books from Germany, copy cataloging, for the most part. I have to tell you that probably if I'd known how long I would be doing it, I might have dropped out that first summer, because they made me do a lot of catalog card filing all summer long.

Kathryn: All summer long?

Gail: All summer long.

Kathryn: That's tedious.

Gail: That's what they needed to do, and so nobody was gladder than me when OPACs came in and we didn't have to do filing anymore.

Kathryn: I can imagine. Oh, my.

Gail: Because we had a backlog, I think, for the eleven years that we had the card catalog, and I think we had a backlog all that time.

Kathryn: Definitely.

Gail: But I knew I would be able to get my hands on some books to catalog eventually, so then it happened during the fall and that is what I did during those two years.

Huetting transcript

Kathryn: Definitely. So, did you have any experiences while you were in school that you'd like to tell us about?

Gail: No, I don't think so.

Kathryn: How many students were in the program at that time? I know --

Gail: I think it was about 120 to 150 maybe? At that time. And some of the people who became my colleagues later were also in school at the same time --

Gail: Danuta Gorecki and Karen Wei who's also retiring this year.

Kathryn: Yes.

Gail: And I don't know if there are any others who actually stayed here. Nelly Gonzalez, also. I believe that was back at that time, too.

Kathryn: That's right.

Gail: I believe some of those were women who raised their families, and then had gone back to school.

Kathryn: Returning students.

Gail: And I was fresh out of college at the time. Yeah.

Kathryn: So, well, talk a little bit about the educational aspects. What do you think about the trend of schools that are taking "Library" out of the school name.

Gail: Well, they're not proposing to educate librarians anymore, I would say that probably that's what happening these days. And the profession has changed a lot, too, over the forty years.

Kathryn: Sure. I know that the name of the cataloging department has changed in the six years I've been here, at least three times. So do you think there are specific skills that are timeless for librarians or for catalogers?

Gail: I probably -- I haven't thought about that much. But we talk about cataloging being a basic skill in librarianship, and everybody should know about it. On the other hand, it's not really a requirement to take it. So we've been talking just recently about that. But as far as the skills for cataloging, you need to be able to analyze a book and quickly determine the subject, and get the information without getting too bogged down in reading it. Unfortunately, catalogers don't have time to read books all day long. And I really do think that having studied languages -- I really think that was very valuable. And I know that when we look for graduate assistants for cataloging, that's one of the things that I always look for, is having studied languages.

Kathryn: I've heard that for years now, that that's still so critical, to have language skills.

Gail: I mean, especially for academic libraries. People who know Spanish can find a job in a public library anywhere, also.

Kathryn: True.

Gail: But you know, I really do think that even though they may downplay it nowadays, I do think that for academic libraries for sure, that language skills are important. So I would urge GSLIS to keep admitting those students. But we can't hire nearly as many as we used to.

Kathryn: True. That's true. Things are changing out there. So, what do you think is the most important thing that you learned on the job, after school?

Huetting transcript

Gail: Well, I don't know. I think maybe -- let me think ... AACR2... you can actually train people to use the new rules, you know, without going crazy about it. So I think maybe the thing that we have learned, all of us have had to learn, is how to cope with change.

Kathryn: Right, absolutely. Because now you're seeing, you know, the starting of -- the consideration of a third code – RDA!

Gail: That's right, yeah.

Kathryn: It's an incredible experience – having this long view. So is there anything that you wish that you had known before you started your first job?

Gail: Well, I guess I wished I'd paid more attention to music cataloging and other formats, there was an opportunity to do some music cataloging at the University. But otherwise, no. And I kind of wish I had more experience with serials.

Kathryn: Everyone says that, don't they?

Gail: Well, I mean, unless they actually work in serials. Yeah. To me, working in the Modern Language Library at UIUC – it was a smaller library - but we had a fair number of librarians and staff in cataloging, so you were totally specialized. I found myself doing the medical books (at St. Louis University) because that was what was left, and nobody really wanted to do them. So it's good, it's really good to dabble. You can get broad experience.

Kathryn: Absolutely. So what were some of the, your favorite parts of being a librarian? What were some of the favorite parts of the job?

Gail: I think being able to read books, working with books was wonderful, working with books from all over the world. And also working with, especially working with graduate assistants, training graduate assistants and then other people who were being trained, who were young – just starting out. I think that was very rewarding.

Kathryn: So, did you have anything that you feel were your greatest triumphs over the course of your career? Anything that you felt most satisfied about accomplishing?

Gail: I don't know. I mean, I think -- yeah, I think maybe learning to do authority records and now that I've actually done the training for NACO for our library twice. The University of Illinois is independent - we're allowed to do that, so I was able to do our own training. First we got the materials from NACO, and then got the materials to someone who became a trainer, and later just recently they made them available to anybody. I guess they think RDA is coming in, so therefore we'll need them, and they won't need to be secret any longer.

Kathryn: Yes, it has changed.

Gail: So I think that -- I don't know. I think that some of the early discussion about what later became Cooperative cataloging, I remember one particular meeting at ALA and they were saying things like maybe we could commit to doing certain things, and of course by that time, OCLC was already making catalog records a reality, not only from LC but from other libraries, other academic libraries, and you know that part may not have, may not have, may not have developed as they thought at the beginning, but it did become a very robust program. My regret is that we were not able to go further and do more training, and BIBCO which is for the bibliographic record. It was because of organizational factors, I think, you know. For a long time, we were so decentralized here.

Kathryn: Right. Gail: And we came back together, in early 2002.

Kathryn: Decentralized in many different libraries, you mean?

Gail: Yeah. And we've only recently pulled in the music cataloging people and the Asian and Slavic cataloging into CAM.

Kathryn: So tell us a little bit about all of that. The process of bringing the catalogers that were in various units back together.

Gail: Well, I think maybe I should talk a little bit about how we got spread out. Actually, we were somewhat decentralized from the very beginning, because those units that I mentioned, Slavic and Asian and law and music, were always -- well, maybe not always -- there was some going back and forth of the music technical services operation. But basically they were working over in the Music Library. So we were always somewhat decentralized. And then it was Hugh Atkinson who didn't really want this big concentration, I believe, of librarians in one place. He didn't say all this -- maybe I shouldn't say it this way, but given that -- anyway, it was probably his idea. And then Michael Gorman didn't think it was a bad idea either.

Kathryn: Yeah. He (Atkinson) was the Dean of the Library, is that right?

Gail: He was the head librarian at that time, from 1976 until 1984 or 5. So -- and he died, of course. But, he thought well, you have all these subject expertise in departmental libraries. They know how they want their cataloging, and then they have the subject knowledge to be able to do the original cataloging. And then some of the people who were in cataloging at that time were then moved to the departmental libraries. Modern Languages actually got three Graduate Assistants (Gas).

Kathryn: Wow. Did that depend on how many books they were cataloging?

Gail: It depended on workload, but it couldn't possibly be equitable, because some of the departmental libraries only have one librarian.

Kathryn: Right. Gail: So this was very difficult for them.

Kathryn: So what did the catalogers think of that move?

Gail: Well, let's see. Several people left, retired, right around that time, but some of them because of age, too, and some of them probably because they didn't want to go to the departmental library. I certainly -- you know, I was kind of cautiously optimistic about it. I was doing inside, or at least doing training there too. We had GAs helping out. At that time, Modern Languages did get about 400 books a month to catalog.

Kathryn: Wow. Gail: And this was supposed to be only original cataloging that we got. Kathryn: Right.

Gail: So, at that time. But then it went down, in the last year or so I was in there, it went down quite a lot, so it was maybe 40 a month when I left.

Kathryn: Wow. Gail: And then I had actually continued to do cataloging, even when they had started to put things back together. And we had had discussions about that, certainly in the mid-90s, before Arnold Wajenberg retired, and after he retired. We had started having discussions about wouldn't it be more efficient to put it back together again, because the people in the departmental libraries didn't necessarily have time to do it, didn't necessarily know the cataloging rules.

Huetting transcript

Kathryn: Right. And there were some specialized schedules for Dewey as well, right?

Gail: Yes, we have always used the local scheme for literature, until very recently. That's one of the things I really like about working at Illinois. I was very good at using the local scheme, and very good about training people how to use it, too. That makes some sense. For the Germanic, Romance and Slavic languages, and I think Indic, what we do is we classify somewhat in the manner that LC does it, but I'd like to say, we didn't pull it out of thin air, because it's based on the Shakespeare classification in Dewey.

Kathryn: So tell me -- Gail: And that was something that I continued to do cataloging, when they were putting things back together, and they hired three new catalogers, one for Humanities, one for social science and one for the sciences. One of them had tenure, received tenure, and she's here. The other two have gone on to other pursuits.

Kathryn: Right. So how long was the local scheme in use here for foreign literature?

Gail: Oh, for a very long time. I think I found a reference to it being started in the 30s, and the documentation I've seen is definitely from the 50s. It was in use for a long time. I guess if you read through the shelf list you could tell from the dates on the catalog cards. Maybe I should go and do that sometime. Yeah. And so, but anyway, we -- we decided however that given the possibility of more changes to the codes OCLC wouldn't want to be bothered with that local scheme, it would only supply regulation Dewey -- given that and given the fact that the English library and the modern languages library were merging, that year we decided to go the Library of Congress Classification for that library, and now several libraries want to follow suit, especially the Undergraduate Library first of all. So that was -- you know, I mean, I think I became an expert in Dewey, although I didn't do, I didn't classify as broadly as a lot of people who are in CAM, because I was working mostly with social science and humanities material. But I have enjoyed working with Dewey.

Kathryn: So, tell us about your most challenging part of your career. What was the most challenging experience you've had, and would you handle it the same today, or differently?

Gail: Oh, I really don't know. Certainly the -- before the decentralization, we had 30 to 40 units within the catalog department, and for some reason, I was put in charge of the Humanities, and this was about 2 years after I started here. So I was still a pretty young librarian, and I had to, I won't say supervise, but I had to kind of coordinate and work with some librarians who had much more experience, so that was a bit challenging.

Kathryn: Yes! Gail: And then I don't think I had a lot of, apart from knowing how to train people, I don't think I had a lot of experience with supervision in other ways. You know?

Kathryn: Yes, that came quickly, then?

Gail: Yes. But then that actually came in handy, because when I went to Syracuse University, I wanted to work on the rare book cataloging project, because that was also very much with European languages, and I had been told that I would not continue to work on those books here, someone else was being assigned to that. So I decided to go ahead and take the job at Syracuse, and then I had to work closely with two staff members.

Kathryn: But you said you just took a leave of absence from here.

Huetting transcript

Gail: It turns out that I was able to take a leave of absence and then come back, because after that point, the University granted me tenure, which was not quite as hard in those days. Although I had begun to do my research on East German publishing, and I published maybe a total of maybe four articles on that, two were fairly substantial and two were more professional type publications. In 1990, when the whole thing was changing very rapidly.

Kathryn: Absolutely, absolutely. Well, tell me -- Gail: And then later on, someone else wrote the book that I would have liked to have written at that time. So I haven't continued that research. Someone who was in Germany, you know.

Kathryn: So tell us a bit more about bringing the cataloging departments back together again.

Gail: All right. Now, I was not too much involved, in fact I became less involved at that point, because when Arnold Rhinebeck Wajenberg retired, I was very fortunate to be the Chair of the cataloging policy committee, the Catalog Policy Advisory Committee, I think we called it at that time, for four years. And then they named someone else to be the manager of cataloging in the new, in the reconstituted unit, that we were putting back together. So from 1998 to 2003, I wasn't that much involved with it, as far as the policy goes. Although I would -- I thought it was a good decision to do that, because we'd been talking about it for several years before that, and I did not have the load in actually doing it and hiring the new people, except that one of them asked me to mentor her, on a research project, and I didn't know what was going on there.

Kathryn: I know. That's good. And over the last few years, you've had more and more integration as libraries --

Gail: Yes, that's right. And now we -- let's see, we put in Slavic first, I believe, and then government documents cataloging. The government document unit has been integrated into the reference library. Reference Research and government information(RREGIS), something of that nature. So that came, and the staff members who were working in that area came into CAM. And one music catalog came over, but who are still in music, but administratively part of our unit.

Kathryn: Right. Gail: And then most recently the Asian cataloging staff, the staff who were cataloging the Asian languages, have come down too. While they're doing the preparation for the Internet in the International and Area Studies. But the Slavic and Asian catalogers do public service as well.

Kathryn: Right. So besides the music library, are there any other catalogers in special libraries on campus? Or is that fairly complete? I was trying to think about that myself.

Gail: There were some in the Music Library, and then we have also allowed people, we have begun to train people to do some cataloging type things in Voyager but mostly just with the holdings and records, not so much with the bibliography. So it kind of goes back and forth that way. In the law library, of course, Technical Services has to be independent, but that's really the only one -- rare books, rare books! Kathryn: Right.

Gail: And they've had a very successful project, to get some of the big, big rare book cataloging backlog done, and provided employment to several GSLIS grads too.

Kathryn: Let's turn the talk to your professional affiliations, the associations that you've been involved with. So, tell us a little bit about --

Huetting transcript

Gail: Well, I'm a member of ALA since my student days, so I think it's now got to be 39 or 40 years on my membership card that they say. So, you know, I've always thought it's important to be a member. For most of that time, I was also a member of ALCTS, which of course was RTSD — Resources and Technical Services Division, and ACRL. I was never really an officer in ALA or in either of these divisions, but I did, I was a member of their Subject Analysis committee for four years, first as an intern and then as a regular member, and could have continued another two years, but by that time I was the chair of the Cataloging Policy committee and I had too much to do, being a departmental librarian and also chair, so I decided not to continue that. Kathryn: Right.

Gail: So that was the main thing that I did in ALCTS. But then in WESS I held two other offices, before last meeting I was elected to the vice-chair chair elect. At the same time, we were talking about the retirement package, and the retirement buyout and everything else like that, so it was a little bit awkward. I thought, well, maybe not -- I even told Paula Kaufmann that. And I said, well, you'll have time anyway!

Kathryn: That's exactly right!

Gail: So I told them another two year commitment after this ALA Annual because I'm chair of the Western European Studies Section in ACRL and then past chair, so that's another year.

Kathryn: Enough to keep you busy.

Gail: Not maybe enough, but I certainly thought well, my thought was well, maybe the other person, the other candidate will get elected. But on the other hand, I wasn't going to pull out, because I'd been a member of that section for so long, and it's, you know, finally they asked me to run, and I said, well, I want to do this.

Kathryn: Absolutely, yes.

Gail: So I want to be doing this. Kathryn: Yeah. So tell us some of the things that you learned from your committee work and from being a member of ALA and ACRL -- some of the most important things you've learned.

Gail: I have to say, there's a fair amount of bureaucracy involved in all the committees. I wish that there was some way to have less of that, and allow people to do the work that they're meant to do. I've learned that there are -- well, certainly with the Subject Analysis committee, you know, many conscientious librarians are involved in these things, and especially the chair of the committee has to put everything together. And now they do it with the Internet, of course, but back when I was the chair, they keep sending a lot of paper out, so it was a big envelope with paper, a very thick envelope, and papers in it, then, for the meeting and stuff. I think we were excited to get a lot of that by the Internet, but I think they did a lot of copies at that time.

Kathryn: I'm sure they did. Gail: So that general thing has changed a lot. Kathryn: A welcome change.

Gail: Yes, it is. But also means that people have to get the stuff ready so quickly! I don't have time to. Kathryn: So, how would you say --

Gail: I think there are a lot of people with good intentions and willing to work hard. I know I make sure I was always willing to work hard on things.

Kathryn: But you've done a lot, for a long time.

Gail: Yes. Kathryn: So is there any part of these, your membership in the professional association that has influenced your career as well? People that you've met, or places that you've been?

Gail: Not so very much. I don't think so, actually. Mostly my career has been here, and the people -- I think I've had the respect of most of my colleagues, which is important to me. But as far as -- I have to say, maybe not. But I've been a very [inaudible] kind of thing, I'd be happy to contribute the things I've done in WESS, for example. Kathryn: Right.

Gail: Some evaluations made reference to something that I compiled while I was doing that, you know. So couldn't we really continue this, you know? No, I can't continue, but someone else could. Kathryn: It sounds like you brought a lot from your career to your profession.

Gail: That may be the way it went. Kathryn: That makes sense. So --

Gail: As I say, it's important if you can to contribute, to be a member of the association. Maybe in some situations it would be more influential on your career.

Kathryn: Yes, I think it depends on the person. So, here is a question about ethics, certainly in ALA. So, did you find yourself consulting the Library Bill of Rights or any other American Library Association policy documents throughout your career? Were any of them useful or instrumental?

Gail: I don't think I was too much in a situation that required that. But certainly some other jobs would, and the faculty -- we did get into situations sometimes, but it was more the library administration that would deal with these things. For example, the Patriot Act, we had some announcements about that and so on. Kathryn: Yeah. So you were --

Gail: There may be things about cataloging and the Library Bill of Rights that I don't really remember, so I have to admit that I probably could have looked at it more. Kathryn: No, that's quite all right.

Gail: And some of my colleagues do, as I understand, work with information ethics and equitable, describing people the way they want to be described, which is certainly important for cataloging.

Kathryn: Yeah, I know. That's -- at least when I'm teaching, that's one of the places where we talk about the subject access part. So, how do we do a better job of that? So tell us about your involvement with the community generally. So as far as being a librarian -- are there ways in which you feel like you've been able to help the community outside of the library?

Gail: No, I -- I haven't been too much involved in that, although I know some of our colleagues serve on the Library Board at the public library. I did help the Urbana Library Friends with the book sales fairly regularly -- Kathryn: Yes, that's wonderful!

Gail: I will be able to do that more after I'm retired. I had to sit out this last time, because I couldn't be on my feet so much. Kathryn: That's true.

Gail: But there'll be one in August, too. Kathryn: Yes, I know. That's good. So, do you have any advice for librarians for new libraries, about learning how to handle homeless or people with special needs in libraries, for example? Just from all of your years of experience?

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Gail: No, I can't say that I do. I know that we had a problem patron who sometimes made his way up to Modern Languages, but I didn't encounter him too much.

Kathryn: So, do you remember the first patron? You said -- have you done any reference work? Gail: Oh, yes. I have. No, I don't --

Kathryn: What are some of the funniest things that happened? Gail: Well, you know, I mean, it -- I don't consider myself a very good reference librarian. Sometimes I can find information that a person needs, but unfortunately sometimes I think of the place to find the answer when they've given up and gone out the door. Kathryn: Right!

Gail: But I think it was -- I think it was valuable to me to be in the Modern Languages library, to be a reference librarian as well as a subject specialist, and I believe people should work at the information desk or the reference desk, even if they're Technical Services. Kathryn: Absolutely.

Gail: Although I hate answering phone reference questions, on the other hand, Internet and chat, I can do that pretty well. When I was a subject specialist for German for several months a couple of years ago, actually most of the questions I got was through the Internet, anymore. Kathryn: I think that anymore that's true.

Gail: So I could have waited them out and it would have gone my way anyway. E-mail is really my medium. It was very good for me.

Kathryn: So tell me about how you feel about all the technological changes that have happened. When you started, you were filing cards, and today it's changed quite a bit.

Gail: And today we're talking about how integrated library systems are inadequate, especially the public interfaces, and I say, well, it was that way back then, back then the catalog was only in one place, and we had the central card catalog, and we had the catalog in the departmental libraries, and we had to file them, so there was always a delay there, and today I'd say, OPAC is just instantaneous. So I would say I appreciate the changes, and I hope they don't -- I mean, part of me says they couldn't mess with it too much, but other parts say, yes, that progress does happen, and there will be new ways discovered and things like that.

Kathryn: So how has the technological changes affected your own job, how you do the cataloging?

Gail: Oh, yes, very much. I mean, it's much easier to do it now than it used to be. Oh yeah, oh yeah. Because all of our tools are online, as well as working with the OCLC, and not to mention integrated systems, it's definitely much faster than it used to be. Kathryn: Yeah.

Gail: I definitely think -- I still think there's a place for bibliographic information. If we don't do it locally, then we'll have to get it from somewhere else, like the indexes to the databases. There could be more integration there, for example, too.

Kathryn: So yesterday I went to the presentation at Grainger Library about e-books. So what do you think about the fact that e-books are coming to us in many cases without cataloging records? Do you think that matters? Do you think that we should be paying attention, and creating references for some of them?

Gail: Well, we did try to get a lot of records for some of them from the publisher or from the vendor, but -- and it's hard to say how much people want to use the OPAC anymore. Some

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researchers do. The discovery tools that we put into place here, the Illinois Search Aids, you know, it does include the catalog, but it also includes the databases and periodicals and so on, and so a lot of the use of materials is going to be through remote means, through electronic means. And so, it would still be good to have compiled a record for printed and electronic, if those are the formats that we have.

Kathryn: Exactly. I think that the part of the discussion that surprised me the most is -- I can understand not creating full records, but no subject access is being created as well. What do you think about that?

Gail: Well, when we started to work on e-books, for example, some things available through web sites, and we did try to do subject access. So I'm a little bit -- I was not able to go to that because that's when we had scheduled the NACO training.

Kathryn: Yes, that's unfortunate.

Gail: But I do think that -- well, we just have that -- they keep talking about training the rest, training the traditional catalogers to work on e-books, but I never -- I don't think they really got off the ground. I did a handful of them myself, but I -- if the people want a catalog, then I think there should be more cataloging of them.

Kathryn: Yeah. I was surprised at how much the trend seems to be not to make references.

Gail: But they say, in a lot of cases there's full search for everything in the document, in the book, so it's not as necessary, and people can use their own terms too, and not be bound by subject headings necessarily. So I guess the perception is that maybe subject headings aren't as useful as they used to be, and people don't make the effort to discover the correct form.

Kathryn: Right. That's very true. So, as the library is changing, tell me what you found hardest to give up about the way you did your job -- or what did you welcome? What change did you welcome the most?

Gail: Oh, I think having tools and everything available online was mostly welcome to me. But so much is now -- so much is done with -- so much is available to me so that you don't have to do much original cataloging anymore, so I kind of regret not having to do or revise more written cataloging, but we do still see it in things like special collections. I am just helping a student catalog the Spanish play collection now, it's just become the most arcane kind of thing to ask about, you know? So I thought, you know, special collections material, and the print becomes the special collection, and we will still want to do cataloging on that.

Kathryn: Absolutely. Absolutely. So what do you predict the future of libraries will be?

Gail: Think about it -- I kind of feel like 'stop the world, I want to get off!' I'm not sure I want to participate in what is going to happen, but I will be interested to find out what will happen. So I don't have -- I mean, I think we will get more and more material electronically, that's what people want to use, in the various types of libraries, and people will want to use those, but I think -- there will still be a lot of people who want to come and use the print, and so -- except for the special collections material -- print will become a special collection then.

Kathryn: So you think the future of print books will be that there will be increasingly less available, because there will be more that will be digital?

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Gail: I don't know. It will be awhile yet, maybe 10 to 20 years, because people still want to go to bookstores and buy books, you know. And public libraries are certainly loaning out books more than they are digital copies, although now the Overdrive will soon be available for Kindle, perhaps there will be more demand for it.

Kathryn: That's certainly true. So let's imagine that you're not retiring now, but in 20 years. What do you think the biggest threat facing libraries in 20 years might be, looking way into the future?

Gail: Paula Kaufman liked to look at these things, and I don't have a clue. I mean, I think that probably the question is whether libraries as we know them will exist in 20 years. I mean, I really do think that certain new forms of delivery might -- but then we have to be careful that information is still available to everyone too, because there are people who are uncomfortable using computers, and can't afford a newer computer anyway, so there will be a place for libraries to make sure. And then certainly one of the values of ALA and of libraries in the country is the equal access to information, and that will continue to be important, I believe. Kathryn: Absolutely.

Gail: The public library is probably the most democratic, un-segregated place in town.

Kathryn: Yes, I would agree, I would agree. So what is the most important function of the academic library right now, do you think?

Gail: Well, I think they have to provide the access to information, whether by buying the access and they also have to work on the online system because it is probably very important too, especially because people -- they think they can find things by using one system, for example, and they don't consider other ways of doing things. So they will be continue to be important.

Kathryn: So what do you think -- what would you like to see happen in either the public or the academic libraries in the next 10 years? What do you think is really important?

Gail: I am not really sure about that. Kathryn: That's fair.

Gail: I think that, well, as a reader, I want my mysteries to still be available!

Kathryn: Yes, don't take those away! So, if you have one piece of advice to give to a librarian just starting out, what would you tell that person?

Gail: I don't know, because it's very difficult for people to get jobs. So I think I would have to say that they should get as broad an experience as possible, because we don't know exactly what kind of work will be available in the future. On the other hand, knowing how to organize materials as you and I teach people, I think we're -- you know, that will still have some kind of a function, will still be important. So the principles that we learn now are not going to be -- are not going to be for nothing in the future. They should also make every effort to keep up with new technology because it keeps changing. Kathryn: Exactly, exactly. Gail: It's very possible.

Kathryn: Yeah. So, when you were looking to bring someone into your department, what are the top three personality traits that you look for in the people that you work with, that you hire?

Gail: Oh, well, certain -- background, and other -- you know, curiosity about a lot of different things is a good thing. Ability to work together with people, it's very important because

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unfortunately we don't have private offices in CAM, so we -- and that's how to judge at first. If we just have a resume, it's really hard to say if people can work together with other people and that. And I've made a few mistakes in hiring, too. Fortunately, people who were temporary and not permanent, but even so, it was not good for them and it was not good for the library, either.

Kathryn: Yeah. So, what I'll ask you to do is to compare your experience at the beginning of your career and now, at the end. So if you want to take a day and think about what was it like then, when you started, and what is it like now?

Gail: Well, obviously you don't -- you're not -- back then, you were not as connected to the rest of the profession by e-mail lists and so on. So I begin my day now with reading AUTOCAT, for example, but unfortunately that takes some time, too. So it's much easier to stay connected to the rest of the profession now than it was then. Back then we were more focused on life here, and building the catalog here, and now we can think about outside the library, make and think in terms of making a contribution to the whole of bibliographic knowledge, which is really quite astonishing. Kathryn: Absolutely.

Gail: I mean, the changes, I mean, I think that the changes have been fascinating, if a bit troubling sometimes. Especially like maybe no subject access to e-books, what is this all about?

Kathryn: Yes, yes. It's a stunning change, I'd have to say.

Gail: People will have to be teaching new techniques to get the most from, for example, Google searching books.

Kathryn: So, what do you feel is the most important idea or theme that you'd like to pass on to future generations of people that will continue in the profession?

Gail: Well, I think we need to develop more people skills among -- I am not the strongest in that area myself. But I think that it's really important to be able to work with people, and to find the people that can do that, as well as deal with the technical aspects and -- because you know, the days are getting too technical sometimes.

Kathryn: True, that's very true. So what will you miss the most about being a cataloger, about being a librarian?

Gail: What will I miss the most? Seeing the new material come in, maybe. Yes. I'm hoping to come back part-time in a year, but I found out I may need to talk to the Human Resources people and get that in writing, because the budget cuts sound pretty bad.

Kathryn: Definitely. So tell us what your plans are after you retire?

Gail: I think I'll be doing some decompressing for a while, and look at Internet stuff, and read my mysteries. I'd like to go to -- I've developed quite an avocational interest in mystery fiction. I don't want to write a mystery -- everybody keeps asking me that. I don't plan to do that, but I do plan to keep reading and keep doing -- maybe more reviewing, and things like that.

Kathryn: Good. Gail: I like to go to about two mystery conferences a year. I'd like to go to maybe three now. Kathryn: Good.

Gail: Including Malice Domestic which is always at this time of year, which didn't always work out for me.

Kathryn: Tell us a little bit about those conferences.

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Gail: Well, the one that -- the closest one is Magna Cum Murder which happens at Ball State, and that includes an academic component to mysteries too, so that's kind of interesting.
Kathryn: Yes.

Gail: They usually all have a guest of honor. I talk to people like that, and fewer or more authors come to them. The biggest one is Bouchercon which is going to be in St. Louis this next year. Kathryn: Not too far, then.

Gail: Yes. I went to one in Indianapolis, and I will be going to St. Louis. So I'll have more time for that. But that's mostly for fun, not for librarians. But some librarians do go, and authors and readers, those three categories of people.

Kathryn: Well, good. Good. Also, do you have any last thoughts that you'd like to share with us, before we conclude the interview?

Gail: It's been a fascinating time to be a librarian, although change is sometimes stressful and hard to deal with. I'm just amazed at how, for example, no cards to file. All of the cataloging tools available at your fingertips. I often forget to look up words in dictionaries, foreign languages online, because I've got dictionaries right next to me, but that's the last of the things that -- otherwise I like the online tools better. So it's been fascinating, and I could talk cataloging, as you know, for a long time. I don't know what's going to happen with RDA, and the whole thing is very mysterious to me, but --

Kathryn: Yes, and there are many changes in the department, as I'm hearing.

Gail: Well, we could be in good shape, though, especially by the time I retire.

Kathryn: I'll keep my fingers crossed. Will you hear soon, about that? Gail: Yeah.
Kathryn: Yeah.

Gail: And then, we are -- I think in the library we're tending to make people who do the day-to-day work academic professionals, putting some stress on them to get tenure, but it's kind of sad in a way that they won't be able to develop their research interests so much.

Kathryn: Right, right. So there are increasing numbers of positions that are academic professionals instead of tenure-track.

Gail: You know how I feel about that. I have always had mixed feelings about being a faculty member. I really think if you're expected to be there every day and work with people and get cataloging finished, you know -- Kathryn: It's very hard.

Gail: Is it, you know, is it the best thing to do to have to do research too? Kathryn: Right.

Gail: I'm not sorry that I did it, but I don't think I would get tenure nowadays.

Kathryn: Yes, it gets more difficult for all of us I think.

Gail: Unfortunately, the case like -- for the last 10 years or so, I don't think I've been able to do it.

Kathryn: Thank you so much for telling you about your life and your time in the profession, and your time here at the University of Illinois. So, thank you very, very much.

Gail: You're welcome.

Gail: Oh, did you want me to talk about...?

K: Oh, sure!

G: I just realized...I need to explain the frog in particular.

K: Exactly, yes you do.

G: I brought a couple of things along with me today at Kathryn's request. And so-- one of them is the Dewey Decimal system sixteenth edition, which we were using for quite a number of years, before I started and about four or five years after. --Classification-- This copy was used by several other cataloguers before me, so it has their annotations. We have kind of lost that a little bit-- being able to--but we can put local notes in WebDewey. But we don't do it very much. You can see where people have made notes--and most of these are not mine.

But anyway--Shortly before, maybe two or three years after I got to the library, I decided to have this copy rebound so I sent it downstairs. When it came back, they said, "You should not have done that!" But it's still going to be here. I think it is important to know what we were doing back then, especially because we used Dewey Decimal system for so long.

And the other thing I want to mention--I like to think that I became somewhat of an expert at Dewey, at least in the humanities and social sciences. But as I mentioned before, with the local scheme for literature here, which was primarily for Romance languages, which was the discipline I was working on; but it actually comes from the breakdown that Dewey uses for Shakespeare: the A, B, C, D used for Shakespeare, though maybe after the K or L, it's not like the Shakespeare anymore because we just used the little O for individual works. I was very fond of that.

And I think we used that for a very long time. --"A special table for the arrangement of works by and about William Shakespeare may be found at the end of volume two." This is volume one, so I can't show it.

The second thing I brought along is the C.A. Cutter three-figure Author Table. It's too bad that Cutter is only remembered for "Cutter" numbers. But on the other hand, he is immortalized that way. Because he was a very important figure in early twentieth century cataloguing. But this is an old Cutter table--this is an old one. This is one that we used--

And you had to be careful, to be sure that you got not just the right number, but the right column because sometimes they are right next to each other.

K: Yes, I can remember teaching students about that. And tell us about the frog

G: Oh, yes, the frog. When you are doing cataloguing, it is a good idea to have something to hold your book open while you are doing the-- this one is well-used, of course, and it doesn't need it. But you need something to do that with stiff books. And so when I got my first job at St. Louis University, I bought in the bookstore--I bought one of these frogs. And I used it. And this has become the very first in a very large collection of frogs that I have at home. I have a few of them at work, too, but mostly they are at home. This is one that a co-worker at Syracuse gave me to replace the first one. And for awhile, when they were available at Follett's, I used to give them to people when I felt they had pretty much mastered cataloguing.

K: Ah, yes, like a graduation present.

G: But, unfortunately, they were not--after several years they were no longer available any more, so I couldn't do that. But--so my interest in frogs is due to cataloguing, too.

K: That's wonderful. Well, thank you. Thank you for telling us about it.

Huetting transcript

Interviewed and transcribed by Kathryn La Barre at the University of Illinois.

Kaya Transcript

MB: This is Mary Bushing. I am here with Kathy Kaya who has agreed to be interviewed. We are in my home in Bozeman, Montana. This interview is part of the Capturing our Stories Oral History Program of Retired and Retiring Librarians. It was one of Lorene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is the 6th of June, 2010. That date makes me think we in sci...we are in some sort of a science fiction movie.

So, Kathy, would you tell us a little bit about your current or last library position? Where it was and then give us a brief history of your library career?

KK: I was a reference librarian at Montana State University Libraries. I entered the profession sort of through the back door. My very first library position was as a clerk in – in the University Library at the University of Wisconsin as a student wife, and then after we moved to Bozeman, I started teaching Spanish as a part-time temporary on-call kind of person and we wanted a little more stability so I became the library clerk, the paraprofessional at the Veterinary Research Laboratory and then later also at the Plant and Soils Library. And then after that, while I had these positions, I took a year's leave when my husband went on sabbatical and I went to the Library School at the University of Hawaii, and then I came back to my previous positions and shortly thereafter joined the library faculty at Montana State University, partly as a reference librarian and partly as the Medline analyst for the Montana Health Sciences Information Network.

MB: So how long have you been retired now?

KK: About five years. The time slips by.

MB: I guess it does. So what led you to decide to go ahead and get a library degree and become a librarian?

KK: I enjoyed the work and I was really enjoying it more than teaching Spanish. And, and I – in my two part-time positions, I interacted with the librarians at the main library, at the university library, and I wanted to be like them.

MB: (Laughter) That whole thing about mentors and role models...

KK: Yes

MB: Looking back at your library education, are there things that particularly stand out for you, valuable courses perhaps, important faculty?

KK: My advisor was Dr. Sarah Van. You may have heard of her. She, she was a Melvil Dewey scholar. She even had his little baby shoes. She was truly a lady and she was inspiring, but a lot of my courses were – what I came away was skills, and not the – not so much the professional thinking that you would expect, coming out of a professional school I think. I – I surprised myself and enjoyed cataloging so much that I took two courses. I enjoyed the challenge of the reference courses but again they were skills and not so much philosophy. Once I joined the faculty at the Montana State University Library, one of the things that I wished I had more of was a background in teaching. And looking at my personal background, one of the

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things that I had to learn to do in order to be a professional was to learn to speak out easily rather than waiting for my turn. It was a very difficult thing for me to learn.

MB: Based on that, that library school experience and I have to say it is very similar to my own, how -- what do you think -- is the remedy for that or do you think coming into contact with new graduates from various programs, that people are now getting more of that philosophical / ethical / social understanding of what it means to be a librarian?

KK: Well, I have to -- Here's an aside for you, Mary. I think that the reason these skills I learned worked so well for me is because of the experience I had working in libraries before I went to library school, so that is part of the coming in through the back door. If I hadn't had that experience, I think I would have been very raw and I am not sure how prepared I would have been to just go into a library.

MB: Do you think people now coming out of library school are better prepared? Or do you think it is about the same, just that some of the content has changed?

KK: I think...the content has changed. I think they are getting more of the philosophical underpinning for the profession. I think – it's been five years but I think, in my experience, some of what they may have needed more was the ability to create relationships. And I am not sure how you would teach that but I think it is important because of relation— you know a multitude of relationships that a librarian creates within the building, for us in the campus or whatever kind of library, the patrons, the community, I think that is important. And, and not just the ability, but to — to believe in it.

MB: What about...what, once you became a librarian, what was it that sustained the spark and the excitement? What was it about your work that gave you that excitement and energy that, that wanting to excel?

KK: There were two things. First, people -- working with the patrons, that was the highlight of my day to be at the reference desk, but also I think we had a dean who challenged us and expected our being able to accomplish things and so she created an environment where we tried harder and I think based on that we, we tended to work together and encourage each other as well.

MB: You have done part of your career, as mine, has been working with other libraries and, and staff members and librarians, especially in tribal libraries but in other kinds of, you – you even as an academic librarian you were involved with all the libraries in the state, partly through the association, but what did that work with other libraries, other librarians, what did that give you in your profession? What were the rewards? Because there sure were a lot of hard things about it.

KK: There were hard things but I think I ended up being part of a state-wide community of people who appreciated each other, who supported each other, and I think I learned from everyone. It was -- I mean librarianship is a wonderful profession made up of all these individuals that you -- you can appreciate.

MB: What about the biggest frustrations in your career? How might you characterize these? Some had — had personal names on them, I am sure, but that's okay.

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KK: That's right. I think -- I think it was related to being an academic librarian with faculty status and having to jump through the hoops. And I would have been happy going to the reference desk every day and working with the students or working with the faculty and doing library things, but we -- we really had sort of double lives in the library and as faculty on campus.

MB: As faculty, yes, we jumped through many hoops.

KK: Many hoops.

MB: Some of them we jumped through together.

KK: That's right. (Laughter)

MB: But, so there were frustrations about that pulling in two directions.

MB: What are the satisfactions of being an academic librarian, particularly one who is faculty and has the promotion and tenure work to be done?

KK: Right, right.

MB: What are some of the positive things about that?

KK: It made – it, it literally made me a member of the faculty community, and I could go anywhere on campus and be treated as an equal by all the faculty and administrators.

KK: And so they were accepting of us as well.

MB: Professional associations. I know you have been an ALA member. You have certainly been active in the state profession.

KK: Right, right.

MB: You have been involved with the Mountain Plains Library Association. Talk a little bit about your involvement with the professional associations and what that has given you. And what were your frustrations with such organizations that are just more bureaucracies in our lives?

KK: I always came away from conferences with new ideas. Librarians are very sharing people and we always – we, we shared ideas and we always ended up actually with more projects to work on but they always set a standard for how I could do things better and I wasn't involved with those associations but as well with the medical library association and the regional medical library association. And I think I enjoyed the smaller associations because I knew everyone and I was on committees, published newsletters. Worked on a lot of projects, not necessarily with a title behind my name, but always invigorating energizing experiences.

MB: Do you think that your involvement with the associations influenced your career choices and your career performance on the job?

KK: Not so much career choices, but I think they did influence my work in improving it, providing new ideas to share and to actually use. I think -- I am trying to -- for example at ALA I was involved with the Library Instruction Round Table and the Bibliographic Instruction Section, and we learned all kinds of things that we could bring home and build into, for example, our library instruction sessions because we had a strong program in that. That actually as library instruction coordinator, I had a big hand in developing.

MB: What about ethics and ethical dilemmas? I would suspect that with your involvement with the medical library community in particular that you might have had some

interesting situations to deal with. Not necessarily for yourself but maybe helping others work through them.

KK: With the medical library part, the biggest -- because we were a clearing house for online searches for the whole state for health professionals, sometimes we would have search requests from the medical people and from the lawyers who were suing, and so confidentiality was important. But the biggest, I think controversy occurred in the tribal college librarians' institute. One year we brought in a well known expert on censorship, Janis Rohide???, and we were lucky to have her come. And she started her talk and she got in maybe five minutes and major chaos ensued because she was talking about the right to know vs. censorship.

And we had some very traditional library staff people there who said, "no, no, no." I mean, one woman was almost in tears because she said, "I'll say people have taken sacred from us" and this was not a topic that we could address immediately in a cohesive manner, so for the next year we developed a program. We brought in a native faculty person, Dr. Patrick Head from MSU. We brought in a native librarian, Naomi Caldwell, from Rhode Island, and we brought Cheryl Matoyur, a native educator as the moderator. We spent half a day. Oh, and actually we brought a faculty person from one of the tribal colleges as well, and we had a half a day discussion on this and how the librarians could approach this because this was such a sensitive topic.

MB: And it continues to be.

KK: And it continues to be.

MB: Yes, I have – I have been on the edge of some of those.

KK: Yes, yes.

MB: How did you use your position in the library to help people? I mean other than giving them answers, you know or helping them find answers. What else?

KK: Actually, I made it a point to establish relationships with, for example, the faculty so if I saw books in our review area that might be of interest, I would send them a note or an e-mail or call them and -- and I would contact individuals for library instruction for their students to find out what their projects were, if there were ways we could work together and they would send their classes in or individual students in with questions and to work with me.

And, even at the reference desk instead of, you know, there was a lot of just providing answers and instruction; but as well I was able to develop relationships with, for example, graduate students so they kept coming back and coming back, and so there is a -- there is a contractor in town who still thanks me every day after thirty years. Every time he sees me, he thanks me for helping him get his master's degree because he was my student.

MB: Technology: During the course of our careers we have dealt with all sorts of technology and changes in technology, often with no preparation for same, but anyway. What sorts of unanticipated consequences do you see as potential problems with the use of library technology, and our dependence upon it? Do you see any difficulties?

KK: One is -- and this is the world in general: The students are so savvy that they have created – before they get to us, they have created their own way of looking for information without the, without the background of being able to judge whether it is good information,

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whether it's appropriate for their purpose, and so I – and this was true when I was working, but I suspect that it's maybe even greater that its having to undo bad habits rather than just teaching them anew.

MB: What do you see for the future of librarians, the role that they might play? Specifically, of course, in academic libraries where you spent your career. Do you think the role is changing? If so, how?

KK: I think that it -- I think the technology is making it easier for librarians to concentrate on librarianship and not having to worry about the details and the nitty-gritty of making things work. To -- for, for reference librarian for example, from my point of view -- to really look at information and ideas and sharing it with our community.

MB: I would like to, to sort of step back a little bit. And during the course of our careers, we have both experienced many changes in organizational structure, and this is continuing to happen. It has to happen as organizations evolve and change and respond to the environment around them. At a kind of mid point in your career when we had actually departments and department heads, you were a department head.

KK: Right

MB: And you were responsible for all the reference librarians.

MB: What about your experience as a mid level administrator? Or there pluses from that, negatives from that?

KK: From the change?

MB: Well, from the – from being in that position, not even addressing the change. Did you enjoy that kind of a job? What were the pluses? What were the minuses?

KK: There were parts of it that I enjoyed. ..

MB: Such as?

KK: It gave me a greater understanding of how our organization works. When you are at the reference desk it's all over there.

KK: And I think it makes you appreciate more what the administrators are doing, which in turn makes it easier for you to work together, I think. I think it gave us -- it gave me more of an opportunity to think and plan and it gave me more a sense of having a voice in what was happening in the work we were doing.

MB: What about the frustrations, if there were any?

KK: A lot of red tape and a lot of -- even at that level, a lot of, having to do things for the sake of doing things. -- And not always feeling that what we know from being in the field, from being on the ground doing the work, was actually taken into consideration. And hearing from both sides, administration and the librarians, and having to juggle that and actually no one being satisfied in some, in some ways.

MB: If the organization hadn't, hadn't radically changed overnight into a whole new model, and you had continued as a department head within the library, would you have been interested in moving on to higher administration?

KK: No, I don't think so. It would have taken me too far from the work that I enjoyed doing which was with the patrons.

MB: So you've had a very satisfying career, it sounds like.

KK: Yes, very.

MB: And really enjoyed what you did.

MB: What kind of advice would you give to new people considering entering the profession or already on their way, and then, well, let's do, go with that first. What kind of advice would you give them?

KK: I think that librarianship is a profession and you really have to — in, in which you really have to invest yourself. It's not an eight to five job where you can come and do certain things and go home. That, that you have to care and you have to — there's, there are always opportunities to go beyond the minimum level and that you should take advantage of them because it will help you grow and it will make your-- what you do even more enjoyable and fulfilling.

MB: Any final reflections? Things that we didn't cover that you think would be important to share?

Loriene Roy: More about the tribal libraries.

MB: Yes

KK: I think the highlight of my career was in creating the Tribal College Librarians Professional Development Institute. And I have been thinking about it a lot lately, and it was a lucky convergence that made this happen. In my work at the Veterinary Research Laboratory, I worked for a Dr. David Young, and I have to give him lots of credit because he — he had a vision for, for enabling native students coming into the sciences at Montana State University, and they really weren't at that time. This was in the '70s.

And the other factor with Dr. Young was that he truly believed in libraries, that any endeavor in research and scholarship included libraries, and he always supported me in that. And he -- he wrote a grant to the National Institutes of Health and created a program called "MAP," Minority Apprenticeship Program, which was the first program he created bringing high school students to the university in the summer time to do research and work with faculty and initiate them into scholarship and research. And in his planning, this was the first of several programs, and in his planning he created teams of faculty to go out to the tribal colleges in Montana.

And this was a -- this was an important move, because there are seven reservations and each reservation had a tribal college so he had a point of contact to the reservations in looking at students and education. And on every single one of his trips, he included me so I met — I had contacts and developed relationships at the tribal colleges, met the librarians or whoever was working in the libraries, and so I always had support and a means of making contacts.

And then in 1989, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium had their national meeting in Missoula, and again David Young's program paid my way to go and I met the librarians there. And the other thing Dave Young did was, not only did he create relationships at the tribal colleges but also on campus, so he had relationships with the Center for Native American Studies. He had the support of the President of the University and so everything was in place. And then in 1990 one of the tribal college librarians contacted the Center for Native

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American Studies for some training and with all of this background, they contacted me and I created a workshop for them.

And at that time the most -- the greatest need we had in order to make this happen was travel funds for the librarians because the librarians had no money. And so the Center for Native Americans for three years -- Native American Studies -- for three years in a row provided a little grant to provide travel stipends for the librarians to come to MSU.

And after that David Young's program which was then American Indian Research Opportunities, as an umbrella over several programs, started providing grants to us and we expanded with them so we moved beyond Montana to the Dakotas and eventually Washington [State]. And then we wrote a grant to the U.S. Department of Education for a grant to fund a national institute, a week-long institute to bring the tribal college librarians to Bozeman, and that was sort of the growth of the national and sometimes international programs that, that we have held every year.

I think, looking back, one of the earliest things we did when it was just Montana, we provided -- this was all dial up -- this was before internet as we know it -- so we provided an 800 number and gave them e-mail and a discussion group, and the librarians at the tribal colleges in Montana had Internet access -- text-based if, if you can remember that back that far -- text-based Internet access before anyone else on their campuses.

What else can I say? We approached the programming in three ways. One was skills because most of the librarians didn't have library degrees. They were just somehow or other recruited to do this with no training, no background in libraries, so we tried -- we provided skills. We, we addressed technology, starting with the basic Internet access and, and e-mail, and then we -- again because of their background -- we addressed for lack of a better term, professionalism. Being part of the profession and giving them the confidence to be the professionals on their campus that we knew they were because they were doing it all. And because on some of their campuses I think they were just considered clerks and we knew they were so much more than that and so we addressed -- if only to make them think about what they really were and not just clerks. And this was the highlight of my career. Very rewarding, and working with creative energetic people who, who are making differences on their campuses.

MB: Thank you very much, Kathy.

KK: You are welcome.

Interviewed by Mary Bushing and Loriene Roy; transcribed by Margaret Ann Smith.

Larson Transcript

JB: This is Janssen Bradshaw, Allison Steeger, Kimberly Francisco, and Timothy Arnold. We're here with Jeannette Larson at her home in Pflugerville, Texas and she has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is a part of the Capturing Our Stories oral history program of retired/retiring librarians. This recording will be the property of the ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is November 15, 2008.

JB: Will you tell us where you attended school?

JL: Yeah, my Masters degree is from the University of Southern California, which no longer has a library school.

JB: And what were your most favorite and least favorite classes while you were there?

JL: That's kind of a hard answer, for one thing it was a long time ago, and secondly, I was working full time in a library while I was going to library school, so I kind of took whatever was offered Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9am to noon so that I could work in the evenings. So for example, I never took children's literature even though that's what I've worked in most of my career. So I think, I really liked some of the reference classes and probably my least favorite class was cataloging. In some ways it was okay because it was like a puzzle to put the book in the right place, but it was also so task oriented.

JB: What do you think the most valuable thing you learned while you were in library school was?

JL: Gosh, I guess not to give up. I think sometimes I feel like there has to be an answer to everything someplace and you just have to be persistent. And probably also to kind of think of different ways to find an answer. If the most direct is not there, how else might I get to that answer or the information that somebody is needing?

JB: Excellent, thank you. Are there any specific library skills that you think are timeless, or some on the other hand that current student probably don't need to spend a lot of time learning about?

JL: Well, I think that probably some of the best skills that we get out of library science and library school classes is the critical thinking and the research and that is certainly timeless whether you're using the internet which was non-existent, we still did punch cards in my computer class and we got like two hours through the semester on LexisNexis to do some database searching. But whether it's the internet, or a dictionary, or whatever, those research and thinking skills are timeless.

JL: I think the other thing that library school really teaches other than what book to use or what source of information to go to is the interactions with people and whether you're the typical, stereotypical cataloging type person who "oh I don't want to be out in front of everybody, I don't want to be dealing with the kids" you still have people that you interact with and I think that's a lot of what comes out of library school.

JB: Excellent, are there skills that retiring librarians see new librarians as lacking? That they come into the profession with skills that they ought to have and don't?

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JL: Well, I teach online for Texas Women's University in their library school and I think that probably the one thing that I see as lacking is not so much a skill as an opportunity. That because the students are so isolated, they don't have opportunities to really interact with other librarians and talk about some of the basic philosophies of our profession, some of the ethical issues, some of the intellectual freedom issues.

JL: You know they've got the book knowledge or the articles that they've read but they don't really have the chance to sort of talk about it and have it tested. And I think that is probably more prevalent in the schools that are primarily or entirely online. I think that any library school student has some of those same issues because most library school students are working, they're on campus only when they need to be. And I think that one of the things that some of the schools do very well is to build in some opportunities for students to have those discussions.

JB: What do you think is the most important thing you've learned on the job that you couldn't have learned on campus or in the classroom?

JK: Gosh, there's so many things. Part of the philosophy of the University of Southern California was that your library degree was your starting point not your ending point. So a lot of it was the basic background and knowledge but not the skills. And actually because I was working in a public library I think that one of the things that I had the some of the other students didn't and that frustrated me sometimes, was trying to decide how you're going to help the patrons. That has to be something you learn from doing it.

JL: The same thing with, of course I didn't take any of the children's classes, but even if you do because I do teach programs for children, in libraries you have to have that on the job experience and mentoring of how do you deal with so many different kids with different needs and levels and that kind of stuff. And I think that that has to come from the job.

JB: And what do you wish you had known before you started your first job as a professional librarian?

JL: How much fun it was going to be, it really was fun. I was working in a library when I was going to school and I worked extensively on the reference desk and it really was a lot of fun. Just mostly doing reference all day long and I'm not sure there's as much reference work any more, but it just, you were always learning something. But I guess too if I had to say something, I wish I had known how much my undergraduate work was really going to help me, everything you've ever learned helps you in working with people in a library.

JB: What was your undergraduate in?

JL: It was in Anthropology.

JB: Oh, Anthropology.

JL: Which prepares you to do nothing.

JB: To be a librarian! So what do you feel like your favorite aspects of your work as a librarian have been, you know, over the course of your entire career?

JL: I think that the impact I've had on other people's lives that, I don't know, that you always think about until later. But especially working in children's work I've had two different people come up to me at conferences and actually, one person when I was speaking at UT (University of Texas) like the one you had the other day about how to get a job. And say you

know do you remember me and I'd say okay, you look kind of familiar and they were kids who had worked for me or volunteered for me at the library and now were at library school.

JL: Somebody emailed me from a library that I'd worked at, you know, 18 years ago and they said that they'd run into a mother of a girl that I'd taken to a conference in Dallas to let her meet authors and stuff, and she said "they still talk about you and about how much fun that was going to the conference." And I don't think, you know, teaching is probably the only other profession where you really have people come back and say you know you really made a difference for me.

JB: Right, would you mind giving us sort of a brief overview of your career? I mean, you were in California, now in Texas.

JL: Sure, my undergraduate degree was from the University of New Mexico and it was in Anthropology, specifically Native American Studies. Which, I told people later that means I know a little bit about everything and not much about anything because it was really broad. And so I sort of finished up school and thought okay now what do I want to do? I knew I didn't want to go on and get a masters or doctorate in Anthropology and so I started thinking about what I was going to do. And had a chance to volunteer at a school where my mother was working in the library and it was sort of one of those V8 moments where you kind of bonk yourself on the head and I said, I love reading and I love being in libraries and I love doing research, why haven't I thought about working in a library? But I had no idea what it took.

JL: So I went out to California to go to school and I got married in the meantime, my husband was from Southern California and while I was going to school I actually started working at Anaheim Public Library as a volunteer so that I could get a recommendation for library school and worked while I was going to USC because it was phenomenally expensive. I figured out in 1978 it was something like 25 cents a minute. So I had to be working full time while I was going to school.

JL: And Anaheim was really a very wonderful experience because it was not a huge system, it was a main library and three branches so you kind of rotated doing different things at the branches. And that's when I started doing story times because everyone did story times and worked with the kids and stuff.

JL: After I finished my degree we wanted to move out of southern California and there were some great opportunities in Dallas, we wanted to be in the southwest still so I worked for a little over a year at Irving Public Library. And that was the first real children's position that I got. And I still remember telling the person who was hiring me that I wasn't going to bail on them the first time an adult services or a reference position came up. I would guarantee her a year at least and then I just sort of never left from that.

JL: But I went over to Mesquite Public Library which is on the other side of Dallas, another suburban community, and opened a branch there as a children's librarian and then worked as Head of Public Services

JL: And through Texas Library Association, Pat Smith, who's the Executive Director said, "hey I have a job for you and I said, I'm not looking for a job." And it was a job at the Texas State Library as Continuing Education and Consulting Coordinator and Manager. And my

husband and I had really wanted to move to Austin but the last thing when we got out of college, the last thing that Austin needed was a fresh new librarian and a fresh new architect because there were schools for that here.

JL: So it was a great opportunity for me to move to Austin and it was actually a great position because I worked with libraries of all types all over the state. And after I'd been doing that for nine and a half years I was actually the Director of the Library Development division which works with moving the federal and state funding to local libraries and I realized that I was not enjoying that all that much because it was a lot of writing rules and regulations and huge budgets with, you know. And I wanted to get more back into the children's area.

JL: So Austin Public Library had a new position as a manager for youth services so I went over there and did that. And I told the director there that I would give her about five years and I said, you know, "my goal is to not have to work for somebody else. I want some time before I'm too old to enjoy it to make my own hours, do some consulting, travel, do projects that I want to do."

JL: And so two and a half years ago, almost three years, and I don't say I retired, I took my pension. Which basically means I have health insurance and a little bit of money so we're not out on the streets.

JL: And so since that I've taught 2 summers at UT (University of Texas) and I've been teaching online for Texas Women's and serving on award committees and things for ALA (American Library Association) and writing. I have a new book out, *Public Library Policy Writers: A Guidebook to Policies*, and whatever sort of strikes my fancy within the library and publishing community, I have the freedom to do now.

JB: Wow, so how many years total did you work in public libraries?

JL: Well, I mean libraries I worked for over 30 years, all but nine of those were in public libraries when I was at the State Library.

JB: Nine years at the State Library? And what would you say some of your greatest triumphs of your career have been?

JL: Greatest triumphs, that sounds so vain but, you know, I was thinking about it sort of in preparation for this and one of them is partially that, one of them is that, I have mentored several students who were entering library school, encouraged them. Somebody, I forget who it was but somebody in the profession said you know we can't retire until we at least replace ourselves. And I guess I sort of took that to heart and have watched in my classes at UT (University of Texas). One of the classes I taught was the undergraduate children's literature and so there was one young woman in there who I said, "well have you thought about library school?" And kind of helped her in getting into school so, you know, I think that's a good accomplishment.

JL: Gosh. I did a lot of stuff at the State Library and I think one of the accomplishments that I'm really proud of there was developing standards for the school libraries in Texas. The state legislature had said there's no guidelines, there's no regulation of school libraries and they gave the State Library the responsibility for doing that. And I think a lot of people thought that we were going to say oh whatever you want is a library is a library, and we actually went out and

developed standards that, while they are not mandated have sort of de facto become the guidelines for what makes a school library a good school library.

JL: I don't know, a lot of other things. I worked with getting the Texas Book Festival established.

JL: I started a disaster relief fund for the Texas State Library, TLA (Texas Library Association) to help libraries that have suffered natural disasters. And I still every year get a piece of children's illustration art that is raffled off for that and of course they give away a lot of money to help libraries, after hurricane Rita and now hurricane Ike, to help disasters that have befallen on libraries around the state. I don't know, lots of things

JB: Okay, discuss a couple of difficulties you have faced during your career either with patrons in the library or elsewhere and how have you handled those situations?

JL: Well, I think difficulties throughout my career, it's kind of ups and downs of funding. Because, you know, the funding is never there, and it makes it really difficult because you have patrons who want the services and are saying they don't understand why you don't have copies of these books, or why you don't offer this service, or why you're not open more hours. And they don't understand that you're doing the best with the resources that are there. So I think that that's a challenge that has been.

JL: I worked one year at a library that had more money than I could spend but the rest have all been very very tight budgets and having to make difficult decisions. And I think going back to your earlier question about what they don't teach you in library school is how to make those decisions. You know a lot of times in the classes it's, do I use this book or this book, well it's whichever book you happen to have been able to buy because you can't afford all of them. And how do you make the decisions to cut services knowing that you're going to make some patron extremely unhappy. So I think that's one of the big challenges.

JL: It's also potentially rewarding, but it's also frustrating dealing with some of the intellectual freedom issues. I had a lady when I worked in the children's department in Mesquite who was very unhappy about a video we had shown after school and wanted it censored. You know, "we shouldn't have it" but it was rewarding in the sense that I was able to make her see that she could choose for her child but not for others and that we were perfectly willing to talk with her about the content. And by today's standards it was a pretty mundane kind of thing, it was actually a movie about a girl who played on a boys softball team. And she just didn't like the fact that the girl was mixing with the boys and stuff.

JL: On the other hand, those issues are always there, some of them have been frustrating. When I worked at Austin Public and oversaw the Wired for Youth teen technology labs and a patron was just livid and was saying that he knew that Susan and Michael Dell wouldn't approve of this, you know the centers are named after them because they provided most of the funding for it.

JL: And his child had opened up something in the history on the computer and had seen a gay dating service. And it was like, first of all why was your child opening up someone else's history? And secondly, there was nothing, it was like he was saying that one guy was touching the other guys shoulder. And it was like, okay, so it's in your mind what you think was going to

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happen. And that man, there was no reasoning with him and you just had to say well, you know, perhaps you need to find another library to visit because there's just no resolution with somebody who's not willing to listen to options and reason.

JB: Right, what do feel like have been the biggest frustrations and disappointments in your career? I feel like you've already talked about some frustrations, any disappointments you'd care to share?

JL: In the library? Well, I mean, I guess I kind of don't look at things. I mean, I try to find ways around obstacles and I think the lack of consistent funding and the fact that sometimes that governing authorities don't really appreciate the value of the libraries. One of the jokes always was until the city manager has a child, they don't discover youth services and then all of the sudden they are like oh my gosh, story time, these are the greatest thing in the world. So I just wish that there were more ways that we could insure that we have more stable funding.

JB: So as far as career goes, what would you hope that the new generation of librarians experience?

JL: I hope that they experience a lot of the sheer joy of working with information. I also do hope that they retain some of the love for books as a format, you know. I think that a lot of us really recognize that information comes in a lot of different formats and I'm certainly not locked into "it's got to be in book format or its no good." I Google all the time, I rarely go to the library for reference materials anymore, I use my databases and stuff but at the same time there's something about holding a book in your hand. But at the same time I hope that they continue to have that joy and to foster that love of reading. I think it's one of the most important things that we do as a profession is help people discover that the world is out there in information.

JL: I think that libraries will continue to change as they become more and more relevant, but I think that one of the things that I've seen some of the younger librarians really do well is the book discussion groups with kids. They're not afraid to talk about books with kids. I had one young librarian in Austin who called her book discussion book On the Edge. And it was like all edgy books and a few of them I was like "okay, let's see how that one goes." But I, you know, just really making that community of readers and community of thinkers. And I think that a lot of younger librarians are really, really good at that, they're not afraid to take chances.

JL: I think that one of the sort of turning point things for me in my career was the day that I sort of realized just because we've been doing it that way doesn't mean we have to keep doing it that way forever. And just because you start something doesn't mean that it has to go on forever, you can have a pilot project. If something doesn't work, you can throw it out and say, "whoops, made a mistake there" and throw it out and let's do something different. And the danger is not in trying new things it is in standing still and I think that a lot of the younger librarians are much much more flexible in that way to try some things that are edgy or risky or new and different. Try, if it doesn't work move on to something else and let that one go.

JB: What kind of different hats did you wear as librarian that maybe you wouldn't have expected to?

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JL: Janitor was a big one that I never expected. After I left high school I thought I'd never have to work as a maid again or a locker room attendant. But when you work with kids you're always cleaning up some sort of spill.

JL: And I think a surprise to me and I think a surprise to a lot of younger librarians as they get into the profession is that how much of your work is managing people. That really the books are sort of and the information is a part of it, but it's really managing people whether it's other staff or the patrons. And I think that was a big surprise to me, I mean we had the basics of running a public library, but it really wasn't how to manage stuff.

JL: Budgeting, I never had budgeting in library school, and I'm not all that great with numbers and so that was one of the things that was kind of a surprise to figure out. So one of the things I tried to do as a supervisor was give new professional librarians at least some responsibility, easing them in to handling money. That justifying your expenses, figuring out the guidelines for spending, that there's so much bureaucracy to make sure that the tax dollars are being spent appropriately. And to really start to get them familiarized with that whole process.

JL: Because it's real easy, I think, for staff to say, "well, you just don't want to give me the money for this." And it's like no, here's the pot, you help me figure out how we're splitting it. And you know there's a lot of those types of decisions to make and I don't recall much conversation in library school at all about how to do any of that. I mean you might have talked generally about zero based budgeting versus line item budgets, but not really how to handle it and keep track of money.

JB: How have you maintained your passion for library science that it hasn't just become a nine to five job?

JL: Well, I think that I've been fortunate in working in libraries where I have a lot of flexibility but also I've pushed for new projects, different projects, trying things that kind of kept the passion alive. And I think that in part because I made the efforts to go out and do things and I was willing to say, "yeah, let me jump in and work with that even though it was sort of outside of the perimeters of what I thought librarianship was supposed to be, it brought some really great opportunities to work with some fabulous people and to do some really fun projects that just kind of let you keep that passion alive and not just get into that "I only want to do what I was paid to do." Which, you know, I do hear from some people.

JL: I interviewed somebody one time for a position, it was a children's or young adult position and I asked, one of the questions I always ask is about what you've been reading, not because I care whether you've read the latest Harry Potter but because I want to hear them talk about books and see what they can think on their feet about recommending a book. And I actually had one person say, "I don't read young adult books on my own time" and I was kind of like "okay, next."

JL: And I think a lot of people do come into any profession "okay, I'm doing what I'm paid to do" and no, you have to sometimes say, "sure I'll help with that" even though it's not in my job description. I think the rewards for doing that are great.

JL: I've met so many people. I was thinking about it the other day, and it was like, I had dinner with Robert Ballard, the guy that raised the Titanic. What other profession do you get an

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opportunity like that? I got to introduce Maurice Sendak at a speech at Rice University because the publisher asked for somebody to help and I said, "sure I'll do it."

JL: And I think one of things that was hardest for me and that people who knew me when I was growing up go "huh?" was that I never could speak in public. And they didn't teach you that in library school but I had to in making presentations to groups for the library and stuff. And now, you know, I was getting up to speak at a TLA (Texas Library Association) function one time and somebody said, "you know, this is bigger than the Newberry Caldecott Banquet" and I'm thinking, thanks so much as I'm looking out at the 1200 or so people staring up.

JL: And I think that if you, as a librarian, if you are willing to jump in and do some of those things, that the rewards are so great and you just have so many really wonderful opportunities for whatever. For me it was children's librarianship and meeting a lot of the authors that were writing the books that I love, but for any part of the profession, whatever field of librarianship your working in, there are those opportunities if you just open the door when it knocks, to be very cliched. Already.

JB: What ways do you think the libraries that you've worked in have interacted with the community?

JL: The libraries themselves, you know, the public libraries that I worked at for the most part were very involved in their communities. And probably more so Austin, working there, that the expectation was that the staff was out in the community, that we're with the community, that we're involved in the community and that the library is a big focal point for community events.

JL: It was kind of interesting in looking at changes over the course of my career in Austin, just the size of the community, I think I was surprised when I would go into the library in the middle of the afternoon and it would be full of people. Because some of the earlier libraries that I had worked in, it was pretty quiet during the day, you know, they were mostly bedroom communities. And but still in every one of those communities I think there were some real solid attempts to be part of the community and make the library an important place for people to come.

JB: And how do you think you've used your position as a public librarian to help people in the community?

JL: Well, like I said everything for me, the kid who's learning to read and is just so excited about books and loves coming to story time, the mother who's just thrilled that she's got 30 minutes while her kid is in story time to sit and read a book herself.

JL: But then also at the other end of the spectrum, I worked on some grants that brought some books and library services into really low income and non-English speaking parts of the community. And would get out there really to look for what are some opportunities for the library to partner with other organizations that have similar goals. And, you know, in terms of education and reading and information access.

JB: What kind of matter of fact words of advice would you give to new librarians about how to deal with, say in an urban library, homeless patrons or that kind of thing?

JL: Well, you know, try to maintain some empathy and a sense of humor. I grew up in a military family, so we lived all over the world and had to interact. And I think that's a little bit of

it for me is that I had to interact with all sort of people, and at their most basic level, most people are pretty human they're not out to get you.

JL: I think, working in Anaheim one time I was the only person who would help the Hells Angels guy, you know. It was just being polite and being as nonjudgmental as possible and don't assume. And actually the guy ended up being a really nice guy and was very happy that somebody was willing to help him and didn't act scared and scornful of him. And I think the same thing happens a lot of the time with homeless people, I think it is a part of public service that there are times that we have to work with stinky people. You know, get over it, there are worse things in the world.

JL: At the same time I think that one of the things that have changed in libraries, it used to be there was sort of the weird character. I still remember the guy that had tin foil over his head and was sure that the aliens were beaming things at him and it was kind of like, oh you know, just leave him alone and he'll sit over there and when he's done we'll put all of the books away and you know he's fine. He's harmless.

JL: That there are times now that there are people who intend harm or can become threatening and I think that probably the words of wisdom are follow your instinct. I mean, be polite, try to be nonjudgmental, and public service oriented, but at the same time if something is saying this is not safe, go get help. You know, excuse yourself for a minute in a polite way and go say this guy seems a little too weird to me, can somebody else help him? And let your security people know. I think that a lot of times as librarians we're afraid to call the police and say, "I'm just uncomfortable about this person but I think that if you're nonjudgmental and you're polite when working with people most of the time, when your instinct tells you that something is wrong, you're probably right, there is a problem."

JB: So, besides the Hells Angel guy, who have some of your most memorable patrons been over the years?

JL: Oh, gosh, memorable in good ways or memorable in bad ways?

JB: We'll take either.

JL: Memorable in good ways was like the day Lady Bird Johnson walked in with her security guys to check out audio books and it was like everybody was trying to help her.

JL: And I really have to say there aren't that many bad memory types of patrons. And like I said, the Hells Angel guy, he really was a fine patron, he was polite and a lot of times I think that patrons give back what they get, but if you're polite and, you know.

JL: There was a guy who called one time and I guess it was a bad economy again and he was asking me for some, not a stock price or something, but it was some, not like the NASDAQ or the S&P 500 and he used a term that I didn't know. And he got really nasty when I said I don't understand that, can you give me a little bit more information. And that was kind of like, I'm just trying to help you, taken aback, and he said just go get the newspaper and read this, you know and I was like okay.

JL: I did have a patron again in Mesquite, and I do use this story when I do some workshops on customer service, and he had been moved by his company out to Mesquite, which 25 years ago was kind of considered Purgatory I think. It was a suburb, it had kind of a goat-

roper reputation, and he had been moved from Pennsylvania to Mesquite by his company and like a year or a year and a half later they laid him off. And he couldn't move back to Pennsylvania yet, he was waiting for like a retirement community or something. And he would come into the library and he was always just angry about everything and very suspicious and nothing we did was good enough.

JL: And we finally, a couple of us got together and said, "you know, let's just kind of kill him with kindness." And he loved reading business books and we started putting aside new business books because he would come in every week, so we kind of knew when he was going to come in. And it was like, you know, we put these aside for you and at first he was very suspicious "why are you doing this?" And then he got to kind of relaxing and all and by the time it came up that he could move back, that he decided not to. He wanted to stay in the community.

JB: Wow.

JL: So, you know, the reality is we probably don't hear about the things that could have been a really negative experience because a lot of times those people don't come back to the library, they don't give us a chance to kind of rectify it and fix it. But occasionally you get an opportunity to do something.

JB: That's a great story, while we're talking about the best and worst of, when you worked at the reference desk, what were some of the funniest or most surprising queries that you got?

JL: Probably some of the ones that I remember the most were McDonald's had these contests where its like there was a question and you had to scratch of which one was the correct one and the prizes were big things like a Big Mac, you know. But the library would get the phone reference desk would get these questions like, "we were sitting around talking about who was the first prime minister of Yemen?" And we finally got to where we would say, "what are the three choices?" And they would "what?" "This is a McDonald's question." And that was really fun too because I learned so much about art, a lot of the questions had to do with politics or history or art.

JL: And when I went to the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, after we moved to the Dallas area, all of the sudden I saw a lot of those pieces of art and was sort of like, "did McDonald's do their research here?"

JL: And then there were cases where the person was making prank calls or sometimes a dirty call and the person who answered the phone didn't quite understand what they were saying. One of them got transferred down to someone who spoke Spanish because the person was speaking Spanish and all of us were sitting there and we heard, "que malo." And she said it was a dirty call in Spanish. So reference, especially the telephone reference can be an interesting place to work.

JB: Can you tell us about some of the things you do now, like you're on these awards committees and you do consulting and freelance activities?

JL: The biggest thing that I am doing now is of course teaching library school students. And some of the students are in the education department at Texas Women's University. And I'm

also doing some consulting with some publishers, what are libraries looking for, how to market their books to libraries.

JL: I've done some writing, I've done a lot of articles for Booklinks, a lot of them are interviews with various authors. Some other writing, I have a book coming out in 2010 for children. I did a book a couple of years ago with Adrienne Yorentz called Quilt of States and basically found librarians in all 50 states to write about why their state wanted to be part of the Union. And I wrote the Texas page and she and I are working on another book together. Oh, I'm doing some continuing education classes for the Texas State Library and also for Amigos, continuing education workshops that type of thing, so keeping busy.

JB: Sounds like it. How do you think libraries provide services that current users want without losing focus of what the library's principle mission is?

JB: Well I think that the first thing is that the library kind of has to decide what their principle mission is. And if it's helping people find the information that they need for their lives and for their enjoyment then the mission, the services, are always going to match that.

JL: I think the more difficult question in there is how do they balance what the traditional services that many librarians sort of are still clinging to with the services that patrons want. And that's probably the more difficult thing for people to do because you need to listen to your community and find ways that the information needs that they have and those kind of services are things that you find ways to provide. And I think that a lot of librarians still cling to the old ways of doing things.

JL: Just as an example, for many of us coming through library school in the 1970s and the early 1980s, it was like selecting the books and having the perfect collection. And I know we had a lot of resistance when we moved to, well wait a minute, especially in a large urban library book selecting is not that hard, you know. You're going to want at least one of most books out there someplace and how many copies do you need?

JL: That really the things that you need to be doing are connecting people to the materials that they want and the information in the forms that they want. I think that right now we're struggling a lot with some of the media formats, you know you've still got people who have got cassette players in a time when it's increasingly hard to buy cassettes. The other end of the services is what percentage of your population is looking for materials in say Blu-ray and how do you have a collection that is meaningful when formats are changing fairly quickly?

JB: Excellent, what are you, what do you think the greatest changes have been over the course of 30 years in libraries? And how do you sort of think that that has affected the libraries in a good and bad way?

JL: Well, I mean, I think that there's no question that the technology and the pace of change in how information is organized, you know what format it comes in, there's no question. I mean, if you look at libraries that were built forty or fifty years ago they weren't built for having computers much less for having wireless.

JL: Different formats of materials that sometimes even before you can start purchasing a format it's obsolete. And I think that that's also part of the challenge is that a lot of our collections, we don't want to get rid of all of those newspapers on microfilm because you can't

really replicate them, they're not necessarily available in the databases because the database companies would have to go back and digitize them. So how do you keep some of that equipment when the equipment not being made any longer? And yet that's maybe part of the heritage that maybe a handful of people a year are going to come in and look for it, but you want it available for them because that's the only place they're going to find it. But I think that just the cost of technology, the changes in technology, just make it really difficult and exciting for the libraries.

JB: And what would you say the ideal role of the library would be in a larger community?

JL: Well I think the ideal role of a library in any community is being a gathering place for ideas and information and being a place that facilitates people improving their own lives through access to the information that they need, as well as just the recreational aspects of reading. And just getting together and talking with people about what you've been reading. I mean, I don't think that that's changed and I don't think that that will change.

JL: The role of the library is to be there to be a place that you can go and get the things that aren't going to be for sale at Borders or Barnes and Noble. You know, it's got out heritage, things that in any other business would have been thrown out. But we preserve that information and at the same time trying to keep up with what's new and current out there.

JB: So with all these changes, what do you think has changed for a librarian's role in the library?

JL: Well, I think that we've talked a little about some of that, that the librarian's role is really one more of a facilitator and a manager. And it used to be, I can still remember some of the people that it was like oh well call so and so she knows every book we've ever had. And I think it is one of those stereotypes that we've read every book in the library and we've sort of had to come to realize well, no we really don't have all of the knowledge. We know how to organize it, we know how to find it and retrieve it, and we know how to share it with you

JL: And I think one of our biggest challenges but also where our source of expertise is, figuring out which book that person needs and whether its at this level or this level and making sure that they've got the right amount of information. And that's a facilitating and managing role.

JB: Well obviously in 30 years in public libraries you've seen a lot of change in libraries, what's been personally difficult for you to give up in libraries? We've sort of moved to this new way that libraries are run.

JL: I don't know that I could say that there was anything that was difficult, I think one of the things that's nice about working in public libraries is that you can sort of move and shift. So it's kind of like about the time I was sick doing story times, I was able to move into a managing position where it was like okay, now I'm helping other people enjoy doing story times and I can fill in once in a while. In terms of things that are hard to give up, I can't really think of anything that was like oh my gosh I hated that we had to stop doing that.

JB: Well, kind of in the same vein, how do you think libraries themselves have evolved you know, in the last few decades, kind of the look and feel of the standard public library?

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JL: Well I think that the look and feel, they've become much more open and airy and you know probably the greatest change and again, this is kind of stereotypical, is that we're no longer the quiet places. In fact we're often the loudest people in the building. But that they are supposed to be bustling busy places not quiet scholarly hideaways where everyone is sitting around reading. Now you've got conversations going, you've got machines clicking, you've got headphones that somebody's got up too loud, and they're busy, bustling places.

JB: What do you envision as sort of the future of public libraries?

JL: Well, I think that they'll continue to evolve with the technology. I think one of the things that's been hard for us to put a handle on is how we account for the services that are done remotely.

JL: You know, we always had patrons who never came into the library but they always called to have words checked, to have you spell a word for them. I always had court reporters who called with really weird words that they needed to have spelled. And so much of that we don't ever see that patron now, we never hear from them, they don't call us, but they're using our resources and the resources that we've organized. So I think that one of the challenges for the future is going to be, you know, how we get a handle on that.

JL: And I think that more and more of the information, especially basic information resources will be self serve. But I think that we're seeing libraries, the use of public libraries has increased not decreased, library card registrations have increased not decreased but I think that how people are using the library is changing.

JL: It is more of the community commons. Kids from low-income neighborhoods who come in and they never check a book out but they read them there. And really I think that libraries have continued, although we've always said we were the place for democracy and self-education, I think we're really starting to see that become a reality because we've really pushed to serve new immigrants and we've really pushed to serve the under-served and the people who need us most in the community.

JL: When I talk to librarians about summer reading club, it's not the little Jeannettes of the world that needed summer reading club, I was going to read no matter what. It's the kid that doesn't know that they're going to like reading, it's the kid who doesn't think that they've ever had the right to come in and take out a book that need our services, you know. And I think that's what we've been doing and I think we'll continue to do it even more so.

JB: What changes would you like to see happen in public libraries in the next decade or two?

JL: More stable funding. I think libraries in most of the United States are funded either by property tax or sales tax. And even if it's a dedicated millage in the areas of the country that have their own taxing authority, it's still property tax or sales tax and those are two very unstable sources of income and it's hard to...

JL: And they're always saying, "run libraries like a business." Well, no, because we can't borrow money to replace capital and we can't do some of that stuff and so it would be good to have some sources of stable funding that meant that we didn't have so many peaks and valleys.

Larson transcript

JB: Right, so if you have one piece of advice to give to librarians just entering the field, what would that be?

JL: Give it a chance, I think I've seen a couple of people over the years who have come out of library school spending several years getting their degree and certainly lots of money and a year later they're like, "oops this isn't what I'd like to be doing, I don't like this, I'm not making enough money quickly, I'm not getting my promotions quickly." It's like you know, give it time.

JL: Don't be put off by some of the bureaucracy, most libraries are part of, or at least public libraries are, we're either a part of the city or county government, learn to play the game so that you become part of the institution so you can become part of the institution and can make the changes and just give it time.

JB: So what do you think the top personality traits that a librarian ought to have are?

JL: Personality traits I think certainly for public library work it helps to be outgoing and not afraid to try things to experiment. To, frankly, at times admit that you don't know what you're doing, but that you're willing to learn. And flexibility, I think that flexibility is probably one of the most important traits for the next ten years or so because things are changing so rapidly that you kind of have to be able to go with the flow and make the best of it and find something good out of whatever the situation is. And be flexible enough to find a way to make it work.

JB: What skills do you think that you have that have been particularly useful, those kind of skills?

JL: Well for myself, I think I'm pretty forgiving and when I get mad at people I don't hold it against them forever. Which I think is good because you're going to have conflicts with people in any kind of an environment. A good memory and a lot of flexibility. I'm very willing to try a lot of new things.

JB: Excellent. And if you wouldn't mind comparing maybe your first day as a librarian with your last day? Sort of you know the differences between those in terms of experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

JL: Well, you know, trying to think back on a first day you come in and certainly for me I was sort of like okay, a little scared, am I going to, they've hired me, now what? And sort of trying to figure out my path and feeling frankly the first week or two of work like, my gosh, I've got nothing to do.

JL: I think it is important for new librarians to come up with a couple of projects for themselves that kind of give themselves time to learn. Just reading through the history of the organization. Often times the first thing I would do with new librarians is say sit down and read all of the memos because it gives them a sense of what's going on and keeps them busy for little while.

JL: And so, you know, kind of that first couple of weeks of I'm not sure what I'm doing I don't know where anything is. And I think the last day it was a scurry to finish up projects, and leave notes, and organize things so that the next person would be able to find things.

JL: And it's a little bit like the Mafia. They never let you out, you're never, they pull you back. Because I still get calls, you know I left the State Library 13 years ago, and I still get calls

Larson transcript

saying, "institutional memory, how did we get started doing such and such, do you remember why we made this decision and we did this" you know.

JL: And I also think that's one of the wonderful things about working in libraries and with other librarians is that we do talk to each other and we do stay. You're never sort of not a librarian anymore.

JL: And that's not true of other fields, my husband's an architect and they're very suspicious of each other and rarely share information with each other and rarely will help someone else if they don't know them very well. You know, I think librarians, we're very welcoming people and we want to help others so I think, you know, that's nice that we're a nice profession.

JB: And what do you think, what have you missed the most about working as a public librarian?

JL: Well, probably just the people, you know, I work at home now. I do try to make several appointments a month to have lunch with colleagues and such but definitely it's kind of very hard to go from constantly kind of moving around the building and seeing and talking to different people throughout the day and having different things going on, to making my own schedule. And frankly sometimes going a week without seeing another person other than our neighbors. So I think that that's been a big change.

JB: And you know, you've talked over the course of this about the number of things you're doing now that you're retired. And how could you have made that segue from in the public library and working for them into doing things like book reviews and being in these awards committees?

JL: Well I always doing some of that so that's not a change what's really changed is that I can really devote more time to it. I mean I always was doing book reviews partially to keep my hand in some of that. Like I said I review audio books, adult books because I love them and like to listen to them and it was something that was different than my reviewing of children's materials. So I think it's just more of letting people know that I've got a little bit more time to do some of that stuff.

JB: Excellent, well, I think that's all of our questions for you. We really appreciate you being willing to be interviewed.

This interview was completed by Jessica Kirkland on August 6, 2009 at the University of Texas School of Information.

Long Transcript

NT: Ninfa Trejo and I'm here with Sarah Long, Sarah Ann Long. And we are in Aheheim, California. Here at the ALA annual conference. She's agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired or Retiring Librarians.

It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Incentives. This recording will be the property of the ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is June 27 of 2008.

So, Sarah what is your name?

SL: My name is Sarah Ann Sanders Long Sager. That's all of my name, and I just go by Sarah Long.

NT: Good. What is your current position?

SL: I'm the Executive Director of the North Suburban Library System in Wheeling, Illinois.

NT: Can you give me a brief history of how you became a librarian in, in your career?

SL: Yes.

NT: You have a brilliant career, Sarah.

SL: Oh well, thank you. I'll give you the brief version. NT: OK.

SL: I always wanted to be a teacher. In the 3rd grade, I remember taking mental notes of Mrs. Carlisle, my 3rd grade teacher.

I thought she was an excellent teacher, and I wanted to be just like her. But as I grew up, and as my life unfolded, a lot of events intervened.

First of all, I was living in Atlanta, Georgia. That's where I was born, and my mother before me.

And it was at a time when there was a lot of difficulty with the schools and with integration.

And because of the integration initiatives, it seemed as though Atlanta Public Schools would be closed, between my junior and senior year in high school.

That would be, oh, somewhere around 1958. I had always taken extra classes, and so I was able to graduate a year ahead.

And I immediately went on to college. And in college I majored in education, because I still wanted to be a teacher.

But on teaching practice, I was in an over-privileged school in Sandy Springs, Georgia. But the children had everything.

This was the 6th grade. And I don't know where my supervising teacher was-- not around.

And as is my want, I tried all these weird and wonderful things, but long story short: I lost control of the class.

They were crazy. When April Fool's Day, I came in early and put lots of work on the board and told them that they had to finish all of this work by 9 o'clock.

Long transcript

And then shortly before 9 o'clock I said "Oh, April Fools! You don't have to finish." Well, silly me, I had set the wrong tone for the day.

And before the day was over, many things happened to me. And I was just so silly as a teacher.

When we went out to recess, as a group, they ran away. They just ran around the schoolyard, but it frightened me.

So I thought, "what am I going to do?" By that time I was married, I had two children. I had had to work. I needed a job.

But someone told me that I could get a fellowship to go to library school. So I thought, well I could do that. I've always loved to read. I'm sure I could be a librarian. So I agreed to be a school librarian for 3 years.

I enrolled in the graduate library school at Emory University, also in Atlanta. And a year or so later I was a school librarian.

And I loved that job. I loved being with the kids. I finally figured out what I did wrong on the teaching practice.

It's important to set a tone that establishes the teacher as the adult in charge and not as a pal.

And that you had to really keep order in order to get anywhere in a teaching situation.

So my first job, as I say, was with the Atlanta Public Schools as a school librarian. I did that for 3 years, and then my husband, at that time, was an academic.

And he was interested in getting his PhD in England. And so we moved to England.

And I had a terrible time getting a job. First of all, I was a foreign national. Second of all, the only experience I had was working in a school library --

And they weren't-- they didn't have school libraries in England in the same way.

But there was a job advertised at a teacher training college. It was called the college of St. Mathias.

And so I applied for the job, and I went to the interview. And there was an older woman who interviewed me.

And she asked me for a sample of my handwriting, and I thought, this, remember this is in the late '60s.

I thought, "cool she's into handwriting analysis." Oh no no, she was interested in library hand. You know, where you write on the card catalog, the catalog cards and so on.

Somehow, I think because I was sufficiently obscure to her, she gave me the job. And so I worked in a teacher training college in Bristol, England for, I think, 3 years or so.

Then I moved back to the US. I had, my husband and I were having difficulty.

And I got a job at the State Library of Ohio. And I worked there for a couple of years.

I was the consultant for children's services, and I traveled all over Ohio.

I liked that job too. I didn't know much about being a children's librarian in a public library, but what I found out is a consultant, you really didn't have to have all the experience yourself.

Long transcript

You had to be a good listener. And so if you could listen to the people, what they had to say in library A, and B and C, that when you got to library D, chances are they wanted to know something that you heard about in library A or B.

And so you just had to have good listening skills and a bit of a memory. And you could be able to pass on the list that you had learned from others. So that was a very useful and interesting experience for me.

NT: Was this something that you learned in library school or you learned through working in different places?

SL: I, in library school, I had sort of focused on working with children's literature, but I had not taken any courses on state library work or being a consultant.

So some of it I had background in, but some of it, I just picked up on the job, as it were, and being an adult in the world.

That I had learned different strategies for getting along with people.

So at the state library, being a consultant, I wrote a newsletter. And always in my career, writing has been very important to me, and I enjoyed that very much.

While I worked at the state library in Ohio, one of the things I got involved in was a grant.

It was, it was 1974 or 5 and the celebration of the bicentennial here in the US was a very big topic. And I wanted children's librarians, and librarians working in public schools to do cooperative projects.

And so I hatched this idea with some other people that if we could get a little bit of money, we could have a series of workshops around Ohio and help librarians from these two venues to work together.

Sort of a cooperative, corporative project. I was able to get a little grant from the State of Ohio from the Bicentennial Commission.

And we painted up a book mobile, and we held these workshops, 13 original workshops, for the 13 original colonies, around the US.

And that was, that was a very exciting project. And I enjoyed that.

But one of the people who I came in contact with during that period was Don Sager.

He was the director of the public library of Columbus and Franklin County. It has a different name then, now, but that was its name then.

And he asked me if I would like to come and be, he was newly appointed as the director of the Columbus Public Library, and he asked me if I'd like to come and be the coordinator of children's services.

By that time, my family had come back to live with me, my first husband and my two children, in Columbus.

And I thought it would be better if I didn't travel so much. So I accepted the job, and I worked as the coordinator of children's and young adult services' at that library for about 3 or 4 years.

Until about, oh 1982 I would say. And at that point, I had an opportunity to move up into the directorship of the, in the library world.

Long transcript

An opening came available at the Fairfield County District Library, which is oh about 30 or 40 miles south of Columbus.

A friend of mine, Hannah Macaulay, who was quite a mover and shaker in Ohio libraries, was the chair of the search committee.

And she invited me to apply for the job. I didn't know much about directing the library, but Don Sager was the director of the library where I worked. And I had admired his work very much.

I had two years worth of board packets. And I got the job and started a new job as a director of a library.

It made me very nervous at first, because I was used to working with children. And while I've always been able to talk easily, I got so nervous that I would write out these little cards for opening ceremonies. "Hello, my name is Sarah Long. I am the director of the library."

I was very nervous about coming across as adult and in charge and not being a children's person.

All of my friends had warned me that I would have to give up my feather boas and my cowboy boots and other crazy costumes that I had adopted as a children's librarian.

And I did for a while, but now I'm back to dressing up again. Anyway, I got along pretty well being a public library director.

We were in a building project, and we got grants to do things and have a lot a programs.

And it was, it was a very exciting time for me. I did that for a couple of years.

Meanwhile, my children were growing up and I had the opportunity to move ahead myself. And so my next job was as the director of the Dauphin County Library System in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

NT: What do you see the difference between being a librarian, a children's librarian, and move up into administration, so easily and so what was the difference for you? What was the most difficult part of it?

SL: Well I think for me personally, part of the issue was, as I said before, it was seeing myself in an adult role.

I sort of had figured out how to be an adult with children. I learned that the bad side of that with teaching practice, but moving up and being the director of the library, I needed to grow into that position of being in charge of an adult operation.

At my first job in being a director, we had this new building, and I was so over wrought at that fact that I was in charge of the building that one night I heard sirens in this small town. This was Lancaster, Ohio.

And I was convinced that the library was burning down. I don't know why this, but I had to get in my car and go make sure the library was OK.

I was just over-awed with this responsibility. So part of it was the responsibility of it all.

I think actually working with youth is pretty good preparation for being an administrator. If you can organize a program for kids, you can certainly organize a board meeting.

Now I'm not meaning to put down board members, but it's a similar kind of thing.

Long transcript

If you can organize volunteers to work with the children's program, you can recruit people to help you in any kind of management exercise you'd like to mention.

So I think that if you can work with young people, you can just about work with anybody. And children's librarians are legendary for being able to find the resources and convince people to help them for hair-brained projects.

And a lot of what you do as an administrator, at some level, can be considered a hair-brained project. So I think that in many ways I was well suited to move up into library administration.

NT: Tell me what was your thinking, I I know you were the president of the American Library Association.

What did you, why did you want to be the president of ALA, and before that, what prepared you to to to run for ALA president?

SL: Well, I wasn't one of these people who had, always wanted to be ALA president.

I was a member; I had been a member of ALA for many years. And I came to all the conferences, and I participated.

And, you know, was chair of committees and things like that. I remember when I was the director of the Dauphin County Library System in Harrisburg, someone called me up and said, oh I know it was a recruiter, called me up and said, "we're looking for someone to be the director of the Multnomah County Library in Portland, Oregon."

And he called me because I was then president of PLA, The Public Library Association.

NT: So how'd that came about? The PLA. I didn't.

SL: I think the rea-- the way I got to be PLA president was I had worked on a lot of PLA committees, and that was a very active and growing time for PLA.

And and I'm sure I just knew people who were on the nominating committee. And I was one of the people in the active circle and so they nominated me.

And so one of the things that happens when you're in that active circle, is that your name comes to mind.

A lot of people who do a good job in their hometown, in their home state, in their home association. They might come to conferences, but unless they are really involved, they aren't thought of.

So a lot of it is kind of being there. I think Woody Allen or somebody said that. So I think that I got the PLA presidency, because I had been active in the association and was well liked enough.

And I enjoyed being PLA president. It was a time when the federal legislation for the LSCA [Library Services and Construction Act] was being reauthorized, and I was very interested in that.

Joy Rodger was the Executive Director of PLA, and I remember she put together a symposium, which, well we thought in depth about the federal role in library circles.

And that was very important to me. And I think it helped PLA to kind of sharpen its focus about our legislative efforts.

Long transcript

So about the ALA, that's kind of a funny story. Let's just say I'd never thought of myself as ALA President.

But I got a call from a friend of mine who was the chair of the nominating committee, and she said, this was in December of 1978, I think, no no no no, I'm wrong.

1998, by about 20 years I was wrong.

And she said, "I'll tell you the truth Sarah. We have someone else who's agreed to run for the ALA Presidency, and I've talked to 25 other people. And I can only give you 24 hours to think about this, because we've had this other person since October, it's now December. And I have to have somebody do it, you'd do a good job."

And so I talked to my husband Don Sager, and I talked to my board president. And they both agreed this was a good thing. And I decided kind of overnight that I could do it, and it would be a good thing.

NT: Well obviously you knew all the ins and outs of ALA by the time, because you were in the council already.

SL: Actually, I wasn't in council.

NT: No? SL: But I'd been very active in PLA, and I'd been very active in PLA. And I had worked in a lot of states.

I had worked in Georgia. I had worked in Ohio. In Ohio, I had traveled around the whole state. And I knew a lot of people. And I worked in Pennsylvania. I'd been active in the Pennsylvania Library Association.

And by this time, I had also worked in Oregon as the Director of the Multnomah County Library. So I knew a lot of people.

And also, I am mother's daughter. My mother was older when I was born, and she brought me up with old-fashioned manners. And one of those things is writing thank you notes.

So everywhere I met people, you know, I would write to them and the things that people don't do any more. But now I send email notes.

NT: Right. SL: And so I think the reason I won, I don't think I was expected to win, was because I worked in a lot of states. And I knew a lot of people, and I had, for whatever reason, made a good impression.

NT: That's great. And I know you were one of my favorite ALA presidents.

SL: Oh thank you. NT: I think that, what do you think is your legacy from ALA? You know?

SL: Well. NT: As president.

SL: It's funny. I would say the cynical side of me says that no president has much of a legacy.

You're, You're on the stage so briefly. You have a year of being president elect in which you're crazed, as I was, with what you're going to do on your year. And your year, it flashes by.

And then it's June, or early July, and you're a past president. And you have a year of being a past president, and then after that they take the credit card away and it's over.

But but the thing about it is, the things that I think have lasted from my presidency. And who knows how long they will last.

Long transcript

Is I had a sister library imitative, reaching out to librarians in Mexico and in other countries, and there is some of that that lingers on.

And some succeeding presidents have taken that on, I think, Carol Brey-- I can't remember her last name.

NT: Casiano? SL: Casiano! Yes. She took on the sister library initiative and really gave that a boost, especially with librarians in Latin America.

My "Libraries Build Community" theme, I was the last president to have a theme in a formal way.

I noticed at this conference, that continues with a workday, which pleases me very much. Some of the other things that I worked on, I don't think they, they have lasted in the sense of being institutionalized, but I hope those initiatives touched people at a particular time.

But being ALA president is a wonderful experience. It certainly changed my life. It was extremely affirming.

It helped me as a person, but my advice to would be ALA presidents is to have a good time and don't take it too seriously.

NT: So what do you think that the challenges for librarians are now?

SL: I think the big challenge for librarians right now is being nimble. I think that our world has changed so much in the time that I've been a librarian.

Remember I talked about library hand? This is when cards were written for the card catalog with a certain, with a certain penmanship.

I mean, that's laughable now. And young librarians graduating today don't even know that that means.

NT: No. SL: And so, now I think, for example, we ought to think about a library not cataloging anything in the traditional way at all.

You know, I think maybe Dewey might be on the way out. We have tagging now.

This is kinda; I'm speaking heresy here. And I'm speaking to be provocative, but I think librarianship has to think about those people born after, 1990, what am I saying?

After 1980, because those people are very different from you and me. They have grown up with games, gaming. They are into multitasking.

They do things very differently, and there is some evidence they even think differently. And the library has to be a very different place for them.

NT: So you, we, probably change is the the most challenging thing that we need to change.

SL: Yes. NT: And we need to change very rapid, very fast.

SL: Very quickly. One of the penchants I think for librarians is that we like things to be correct and accurate, but as a person on my staff said, it's now constant beta.

You know that term? Beta? Means that it's in a test phase.

He said "it's never gonna be anymore than beta, just jump into it and do it. You don't quite understand it, but push some buttons and try it out, see if you can get it to work."

And so I, I try to tell myself that, it's constant beta, get used to it.

Long transcript

NT: Of the other things you may not credit yourself, but you probably mentor a lot of people. Do you see yourself as a mentor? How have you been working as a mentor for other librarians?

SL: I, I love the opportunity to, oh I don't know, talk to people about their career. I guess it's the mother in me.

That I'm very flattered when someone asks me their advice, and I give it to them. And I'm not sure that my words are, you know, that people always take my advice, but you know, for what it's worth, it's offered with a generous spirit.

And I I hope that my example and my words have been useful to some people.

NT: So would you like to discuss some of the enriching experiences in your career, during your career?

SL: Recent experiences? Well, for me personally. NT: Enriching. SL: On of the things that happened during my presidency, and I didn't know it was happening.

Virtually, I was gone from my job for 3 years, and during that period of time, the people who reported to me became a self-managed team.

And they really did most of my work, and so when I came back, I guess I thought I was going to do my old job.

And they were like "what? We like what we're doing now. So what are you going to do?"

Well I was pretty upset. I cried a little bit and looked around. And then one of these people said to me "so why don't you pursue the things that you are interested in?"

And the things I'm interested in, talking to people. I'm interested in library marketing, you know, public relations.

And so, I changed my job very dramatically. So for the last couple of years, I've written a column every week for a local newspaper about libraries.

I've gotten into podcasting. I've just finished my 100th podcast with Michael Stevens actually.

And for 10 years I've had a cable TV show every month. So, my career has been an opportunity for me to do the things that I think are my talents and the things that are easy for me.

And I would encourage people to find that, that spot in their career. And not try to do the things that are hardest, but the things that are the easiest for them.

More significantly for the organization where I work, is we were simultaneously working to become a learning organization.

This is an organization that's a lot flatter, a lot more emphasis on shared decision making, and so, while we we're a small staff, we only have about 30 employees, there's a lot of decision.

Most of the decisions are made by more than one person. They're certainly not all made by me.

And because of that, I think we've been able to accomplish much more. I think we have an excellent staff that is. I think these individuals feel very self-empowered. I think they really like their jobs, because they, they're in charge.

NT: There's a collective wisdom.

Long transcript

SL: It is. I think it's been very good for us. But I don't know that I would have been smart enough or brave enough to have given away so much power on my own.

ALA, bless its sweet little pointy-head; because I was president, I was gone. And so I lived through giving away my job.

And when I came back, it was easy just not to take it back. So that learning organization experience has been very powerful.

NT: So what is some of, some of the things, what was the most controversial time of your career in the information world? Did you do anything to contribute to hinter? Or that had an impact?

SL: During my ALA presidency, it was at the height of a lot of controversy about filtering and about ALA's stance on filtering.

I remember a significant conversation in my own kitchen with one of my husband's sons, and he had his first child in his arms.

And he knew about the controversy with ALA being against any sort of filtering of the Internet. And I remember him saying to me "but Sarah, why do you want Joshua," his brand new baby, "to see pornography?"

And so defending ALA's position on access to information. NT: It was CIPA [Child Internet Protection Act]?. SL: Yes, it was, it was a very difficult time. I remember one time being on MSNBC from some studio in Chicago, being in a cramped little, oh I don't know, some kind of box where they recorded, with a thing in my ear, sitting on a little stool, being interviewed by some reporter.

And they had someone taking the other side--a librarian from Oregon, if I remember-- who was saying that libraries should filter.

That we should be much more responsible for what, for the information. So it was, that was, that was very hard for me.

I certainly approved of ALA's position, but it is very hard to be the point person. And and to be pummeled with those kinds of questions.

NT: Well you find that intellectual freedom is important to us, but I think that, why do you think that people are so against that? Because intellectual freedom is not, liberty is not give you the freedom to do bad things. But intellectual freedom is give you the right to know.

SL: Yes. Well I'm no sociologist, but I think a lot of the people who are for censorship adopt a stance like that out of their own fear.

And and sort of out of some enhanced thought that they know best. It just seems foreign to me. I have my own insecurities, but I'm willing for you to have your insecurities too. For you to make your own decision.

And I would not deign to be the one to say what you can look at. I can look at it, but you can't, doesn't make a bit of sense to me.

NT: Right. How would you like to, advice for new librarians, what would be your best or one of your advice? I know you have, probably, a lot of advice to give.

And having overcome so many different careers, because within librarianship, I think the best thing about librarianship is you can change different environments in life.

Long transcript

You can be in art. You can be in different disciplines, and you obviously have been very successful in administration and dealing with people.

And I think that most difficult for any administrator is dealing with the human factor. What advice would you give to librarians to have acquired those communication skills and those the philosophy of librarianship, which is the right to know? How do you will recede that to new librarians, now being information at the level that it is now?

SL: Well, that's that's a very hard question Ninfa. I guess what I would say to new librarians is a couple of things. One of the things I've learned, especially in my current job, is if you don't know ask for some time.

I mean isn't that a good reference librarian approach? Well I'm not sure I understand about that, but let, I can research that and I'll get back to you.

The other thing I would say, on the other hand, is to follow your instincts. And to, to remember that these are other people that you are dealing with.

In a management position, often times you are in the difficult spot of you having to protect the organization. And sometimes that feels like it's not humane, but if you're, if you're the administrator you do have to protect the organization.

But as I was getting around to saying, a lot of times, what I find myself doing is I hire a consultant. I call an expert. I look to people who have trod on this road before.

And so that I will protect the organization and do the best for the organization. And bring the wisdom that I can find, the best wisdom to bear on the situation.

Librarians are employers, and when you get into an employment situation they're many, you can get into many difficult situations. One has to have policies and to be careful, and so on and so forth. I would put a strong oar in for kindness and for listening to others, and to, for trying to see things from other people's point of view.

And I think a lot can be helped by this approach and by trying to put yourself in another person's shoes, even if you have bad news to deliver. Whatever you can do to ease the path.

So many times when you look back in history, you can see where countries got into trouble because somebody's pride was hurt. And if you can protect people's pride, if you can give people a graceful way out. Oftentimes that goes a long way.

NT: Thank you so much Sarah. SL: Thank you Ninfa. It was a pleasure to talk to you today. NT: It was a pleasure, thank you. SL: Thank you.

Interviewed by Ninja Trejo; transcribed by Beth Smyer.

Luster Transcript

AS: This is Arro Smith. I'm here with doctor Arlene Luster Hennesy at the 2009 American Library Association Conference in Chicago.

She has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired/Retiring Librarians.

It is one of Loreine Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives.

This recording will be the property of the American Library Association and may be published and used for scholarly research.

Today is July 2, sorry, July 11 2009.

Dr. Luster, you are from Honolulu, Hawaii, and you have worked in several different kinds of libraries.

You have a doctorate in education, and you received your MILS or Master's of Library Science probably at Western Reserve University.

Before that, you got your undergraduate in my home state.

AL: That's right.

AS: In Denton, Texas at.

AL: TWU

AS: Texas Women's University.

AL: Texas Women's

AS: and uh, so tell me about about let's start with a little chronology of your library career, your different positions and what you've enjoyed doing.

AL: OK, I have I have worked in quite a few libraries.

My first library was in a medical library in Los Angeles, in Torrance. It was a medical hospital library.

And from there I went to the federal government. I worked for the department of defense.

I went to Japan, and worked there in the base library for 2 and a half, 2 years, actually.

Came back to Hawaii, and worked at the University of Hawaii, as an academic acquisitions, in the acquisitions department. I was the assistant acquisitions librarian.

From there I went back to federal and worked at Hickam Air Force Base. From Hickam Air force base I went to Wheeler base library.

Then from Wheeler, and these are this is Air Force. Then I went to the Navy.

I became a Naval regional librarian, and I worked with ships and shore libraries all over the Pacific.

Then I was promoted into the PACAF headquarters PACAF. It's a headquarters PACAF means Pacific Air Forces.

They took care of all the Air Force libraries in the Pacific, which was similar to the Navy except the Navy had a little more remote sites than the Air Force did.

And I was there about 24 years.

And during that time, I also taught at the University of Hawaii. I taught library management for 5 years.

Luster transcript

I also taught at the community college. I taught paraprofessional library work.

And then after that I left PACAF, went to Germany and worked at Ramstein Air Force Base.

And I was the systems librarian there, so called systems, not sure about that.

Anyway, after that, my mother was not well. So I went back to Hawaii and I worked at the Asian Pacific Center for Security Studies. And that was an academic library in the Navy.

And I retired from there in 2004.

Then I went back to Germany, cause I got married, and I went back to Germany.

And then, shortly after that, my husband passed away. He also was a librarian, and he was a command librarian in Europe.

Then after that, I came back and I didn't like being retired. So I went back to work.

I worked at the Tokai University Library, which is a school from Japan and it's situated in Hawaii. It's for It's a two year school.

Then shortly after that, I got picked up. I say picked up by the Army for a library in Germany. And I went to Hanau.

And it was a three year contract, and my first day there they said "by the way, the library is closing in 2 years."

So I said "OK." So but my mom got sick again.

So I went back to Hawaii, and my mom passed away last year.

And I am looking for a job. That's the real extent.

So I really worked in special libraries, academic libraries, as well as military libraries. And most of my experiences have been in administrative.

Because as a command librarian you are more like giving technical assistance to librarians. And they're they were in Japan, Korea, Guam, Alaska, you know, you name it. I've been all over the place.

And I traveled a lot, especially with the Navy. The Navy had a really small library in Western Australia.

And I thought we'd never get there. It took us two days to get there.

And I also worked in Diego Garcia. And I think this is something that library students never know. That I was the only woman on that island with 2,000 men.

Heavily Guarded at all times for a whole week. That was a very interesting experience.

So that really is the extent of all the and you know I've taught at many places. I also conducted a lot of workshops. And I do have a consultant business called Innovative Management Systems, so.

AS: So

AL: I'm sorry, it's Innovative Management Solutions.

AL: Solutions, AS: Solutions AL: I'm sorry, not systems

AS: Being a librarian with the armed forces. That's a particular niche of special libraries. Describe for us a little bit what what that entails.

AL: OK, I have to, I have to go back again. When I was at Western Reserve, we had a recruiter, and we also had, not a recruiter from the Department of Defense, but one of our

Luster transcript

professors said you never never want to work with the military, because they are so unprofessional.

OK, so I'd never heard about these jobs, OK.

So, what happened was I went to ALA in San Francisco, cause I was working at the medical library in Los Angeles.

And there was this booth, the Armed Forces librarian's booth.

And this little lady was there, and she had all these scrapbooks of all the different kinds of places in the Pacific where she had libraries. And she was a command librarian for PACAF.

I didn't know that. I didn't know anything about that.

And she looked at me, and in those days, librarians were in great demand, especially going overseas. Because nobody wanted to leave home.

So she looked at me and she said.

AS: And we are talking about early '60s?

AL: This was, this was '50.. '58?

AS: '58 OK

AL: '50, no '50 yeah '58 cause I went in '59.

AS:OK

AL: And so she said "would you be interested in going overseas?"

And I looked at her and I said "maybe."

Cause I used to have pen pals, you know, when I was growing up.

And she said "well why don't you just put your name down here?"

So I did. I put my name down there.

And she said "indicate what countries you'd like to go to."

So I didn't know. I put Japan etc. etc.

And this was in June. October, I get a phone call from Travis Air Force Base.

And they called me and said "you have been selected for a job in Japan, and you have been name requested."

And I said "how did that happen? I never applied."

And she said "I don't know how it happened, but I have this letter and it says that you got the job."

And I said "do you mind if we back up a little?"

Because I said "I would like to, cause I'm going home for Christmas in Hawaii. And I'm going to talk to my parents about this, because this is really sudden."

So, she says "OK, I can wait."

So I go home and my father and mother says "oh this is fine, you know, we can visit you etc."

So then they send me the application. So I applied and that's how I got the job.

My first job in federal was overseas, and it was wonderful.

AS: And tell me, what AL: Well OK AS: what did you do though?

AL: Well, alright. As a base library? AS: yeah

AL: In base libraries, they are really all combined.

They're public. They're really academic, also.

In the sense of, there are colleges that are sent. I mean I should say professors are sent.

Like there is a contract with the education for Department of Defense at the Pacific Command.

And they have about 5 different colleges that are contracted. It is about a \$25 million contract.

And they have schools from the University of Southern California. They have one, there was one from Texas also.

I can't remember the name of it, but anyway there was 5 schools.

And they send their professors, or they have schools located at the bases.

And they teach and they grant degrees to the to the military and their spouses, and anybody else that is working there.

It's also a special library, in the sense of that, it, especially in Air Force, because we have technical collections.

Especially, for the people like in, the people who fly etc. And we have a very designated collection for them.

And special monies that we spend for them also.

And we have children, we do, you know, we have, we have children's story hours. We have summer reading programs. So it's similar.

So we've belonged, in ALA, we've belonged to PLA. We've belonged to LAMA.

I mean you know, all these things. And we also participated in the John Cotton Dana Contests.

Which was with ALA.

The Air Force was smart, because what they did, I shouldn't release this, what they did was, was they offered money if you if you entered the contest.

You would get, if you won first prize. You would get \$2,000.

And you could spend it for whatever you want for your library.

Ok, so I used to take that, and I won sometimes.

And it was just.

AS: And for our viewers, tell us what the John Cotton Dana Award is.

AL: It's a public relations contest. And it there's many many series of, I guess there's school libraries, there's public libraries, there's academic libraries, there's special libraries.

AS: You document a campaign though?

AL: Right. Yeah, you take you take a scrapbook and you put down for a year's publicity and marketing that you did.

AS: Good Deal.

AL: And our libraries in the pacific won a lot of the awards.

And really really proud of them. I am so. I think it's great.

And it's just telling the story about what you did, you know.

And I think also it told librarians outside of Department of Defense of what military military libraries are like.

AS: Right, right.

AL: And it's a wonderful place to be, honestly.

And working in overseas you have foreign nationals that you work for, so it's a little bit different.

And most of them, most of them are very hard working people.

And I have to tip my hat to them, because many times we do have hard to fill positions.

And those nationals have to take care of the library with no librarian there at all.

AS: Right.

AL: But it's a challenge, it's a challenge, a real big challenge.

AS: So you were just as a fresh out of library school, strolling through ALA, stopped at a booth.

AL: Well I was working, remember, I was working in the medical library.

AS: Oh OK OK. But just strolling through ALA and

AL: That's right AS: and basically left contact information and that's how you got your first job in the Armed Forces.

AL: Yeah I didn't even apply, that's the beauty of that one.

AS: Well I hope you have similar luck today.

AL: No, it's a little bit different. It's a little different.

AS: So where, where did you where did you grow up?

AL: I grew up in Hawaii. I was born and raised there.

AS: And what was your early experience with libraries. and why what what, tell me what made you become a librarian. What gave you that idea? AL: OK

AL: At the age of 4, my mother took me to the library. And I couldn't even see over the top of the counter. It was really high.

And I saw this lady, and she probably wasn't a librarian, maybe she was a circulation clerk.

I'm not sure. She had this pencil and a stamp pad.

And she took the pencil, and it was attached to the pencil, ok, the little stamp pad. And she stamped it, she turned the pencil around.

And as soon as I saw that, I was convinced. I wanted to be a librarian.

Now don't laugh, because that stayed in my mind all the time.

And when I went to high school, the school had a field trip down to the public library.

And we went to the teen section, and this young adult librarian read the book "Momma's Bank Account."

I was doubly convinced that I wanted to be a librarian.

And that's why. That's why really. That's why. That's really my association with it, and I read a lot.

AS: And so you, so from Hawaii, you went to Texas to get your undergraduate degree at Texas Women's University in library science.

How on Earth did you end up in Denton, Texas from Hawaii?

Luster transcript

AL: It's a long story, because when I graduated from high school, I got a scholarship and went to Iowa.

I went a junior college called Ottumwa Heights College. It's no longer there.

Most of the schools I went to are no longer there.

But I went there for, actually, I was there, I was supposed to be there for 2 years.

But my father was not well, and so he called me back, actually he was homesick for me.

So I went back home, and I went to the University of Hawaii just part-time.

Because I told him I wanted to be a librarian, and my scheme was there are no library schools in Hawaii.

AS: Right. AL: At that time there were none. AS: Right, Right.

AL: And actually, he didn't know that you didn't have to have your bachelors degree in library science.

And so I pushed it, and I looked for a school.

So, don't ask me why, but I worked part-time at the newspaper, the Honolulu Star Bulletin.

And I was going to school at the university, and he told me, he says "you're not happy being here are you?"

And I said "no."

And so I don't know why, and I don't know how.

That I selected a school in Texas. And it wasn't Texas Women's University.

It was our lady of the lake in San Antonio. See they had a bachelor's degree in library science.

Now when I got there, they lost their accreditation. So, that's the reason why I went to TWU.

And actually, it was Texas State College for Women, and they changed the name when I graduated.

That's why. And I was going to do my master's there.

I already started my thesis. I went back to Hawaii that summer, and I was gonna do it on Hawaiian for children.

And didn't happen. So the librarians in Hawaii said "oh you don't want to go back to that school, because it's too new. You need to go back to an older school."

And so they were from Western Reserve, and so that's the reason why I went to Western Reserve.

AS: And where in your career did you receive your Doctorate in Education? That was...

AL: Twenty years after I graduated. AS: WOW

AL: I had a family, and I was working at I was working with the NAVY at that time.

And I had an opportunity to go back to school.

And the NAVY helped me a little bit, and the rest is history.

But I think my father wanted me to get a doctorate, and I really, it was just an opportunity that came about.

Luster transcript

And I was I was a mother, I had a full time job, I was president of an association, and I was also teaching at the library school.

So don't ask me how I did it. So if anybody tells you you can't do it while you're working, you can, if you really want to it you can.

AS: That's right, that's right.

Good deal, tell us...you spent the vast majority of your career working in these in these military libraries,

tell us you know, do you have some tell us humorous anecdotes, tell us what that was like, the fun side of that. The side we probably wouldn't associate with with librarianship.

AL: I'm not sure if I can tell you that.

AS: Oh it's classified, it's classified.

AL: Well you know I have a secret clearance.

No we've had a number of, I , ya know, having, I'll tell you what. When you recruit, and I did a lot of recruitment.

And I worked with the office of personnel management, also.

And I also wrote, with them, I helped them with the job description and what was required.

And what they didn't realized was how much management was included in a librarian's in a librarian's work, especially if you are the head of the library.

They couldn't understand that at all.

And they said, "well this is really a management position."

I said, "well that's what it is."

But you know, you wear several hats.

Because many times you're the base librarian. Say you're the base librarian or base library director.

You may have a reference librarian. You may have a cataloger. At that time, they might have.

We also had field services librarian.

Where this librarian would go, like the librarian, the first library I worked at we had a field services librarian.

She would take books to Iwo Jima, all the remote sites.

And she would take, you know, and if you want a funny story.

When she was supposed to take this box of books with her, she got on the airplane. And you guess what? She forgot the books.

They kicked her off the plane.

So I mean, you know, it is one of those things.

And really, fulfilling the need for the military, as, especially the single, single military person, who is away from home and is in a strange country.

I mean, the library is very very important.

And there is no other library outside of that base that offers the same kind of.

Luster transcript

And then of course, you know. I think we've grown quite a bit, as far, as far as, armed forces libraries go.

And I would not, I would recommend people to go overseas.

As well as, you know, in the states as well.

The, it's changed quite a bit.

But I think the variety of things that you have to do.

Well, you know, one of my, one of my technicians went to library school in Hawaii.

And she wasn't sure she wanted to finish.

I said "you need to finish."

So she did.

The first job she had was in Japan.

She went there, and she called me up and she said "you didn't tell me I had to wash toilets."

The contract for the for the cleaning was out, and you know, it was something she had to do.

Well you know, it's called in need, you have to do something like that.

And sometimes you have to mow the grass. I, mean, it's, you know, it's like that. It's a little different.

It's very, it's a little.

But it's also a lot of fun, you get to, you have a chance to travel.

And you also get to learn a different culture.

And the staff is fantastic.

And training local nationals is wonderful.

Because they're the ones that stay.

They're the continuity of the library, and I think that was important.

We also established continuity folders for all those places.

So that when a new librarian came in at least they knew where to, what was done, and what needed to do, what they needed to do.

AS: In all your years, have any of those local nationals that you trained for those base libraries. Have they ever gone on and become real, real professionals?

AL: A couple of them have, and we had paraprofessional workshops at the University of Hawaii.

I arranged that, and all the all the services, not only Air Force, but also Army and Navy paraprofessionals also came.

And we arranged it at the University of Hawaii.

And we had two of them. It was very very successful.

At least they, you know when you do interlibrary loans, you talk to a lot of people.

And of course in those days, you didn't have email and all that kind of stuff.

And when they'd get to see somebody, you know, one on one, it's amazing.

And I think, it's more power to them. I really really I really regard them as really really important.

And they're very very dedicated people.

AS: Now as a as a military librarian, you know the military has its own codes, and and we as library library professionals have our own have our set of code and ethics.

Were you ever torn between the two masters? As far as, I don't know

AL: No.

AS: Censorship or

AL: No, because we

AS: Confidentiality

AL: because we have our own regulations. We have Air Force Library regulations.

And the Army does too. The Navy sorta has them, but not quite, not quite.

And I think the DOD, the Department of Defense, also has an instruction.

They call it an instruction, though. An AFI.

Everything that's in there is based on ALA and PLA, or whatever standards there are.

Even ACRL is in there, because because we we support education it had to be in there.

So, we've used everything.

And as far as censorship, you know the bill of rights and everything is all in there.

I mean it's liking working in a regular library.

And people think it might be different, but it's not.

It's more challenging sometimes, because you don't have different departments.

That's all.

And sometimes you have to do everything.

But you know, what did library school teach you?

I mean, when, that's why when I went to the University of Hawaii.

Dean Jackson, who was the dean at the school.

He asked me to teach.

And he said. I said to him "do I have to just do it by the book?"

He says "no, if you want to do it differently go ahead."

I did it by experience, and I brought in I think, cause when I went to library school I never knew anything about public relations.

Didn't know anything about marketing, you know, how do you do that?

I didn't know anything about many things, and so what I did was, especially personnel management.

I always told the students "if you become a librarian, don't expect to do library work until after 4:30."

Because, your whole day, If you're the director, if you're the head, the whole day is gonna be based on personnel, and that that takes a lot of your time.

And I think I brought that in, I made them write position descriptions.

I made them create and an entire library for themselves. I mean in a group.

And I separated friends, did not have them work together.

I used, I used, I used a system I had, a system that I used.

And they didn't like it, but the students said "you know, we have this project.

Luster transcript

We're not going to be able to finish. This Russian girl that's in our class, she won't be able to, she won't be able to pull it in."

I said "do you know what? when you work in a library, when you get your first job, you don't get to choose the people you work with.

and you parent everybody that's there."

So and I also taught strategic planning and stuff.

Because if, I think that's the most important thing.

If you don't plan in your library, then where do you go?

And learning about how to budget, and how to, I mean that was very very important.

I mean, I always look at that, and when when we start when this libraries got automated, when we were going to automation.

I decided that we didn't need the cataloger, we needed a systems person first.

Because if that system goes down, guess what?

Nothing works. AS: Cataloger has nothing to do. AL: Nothing works.

We're not, so we did that too.

So I'm really proud of what we do.

We also had a committee, it's called PALS.

It's the Pacific Armed Forces. It's a it's a committee working with the education contract.

So we were able to put a clause in the contract itself about library support.

And through that, we got a committee of all the different DOD, which means Army, Navy, Air Force etc.

And we met once or twice a year in a different location in the Pacific.

And we got about \$350-400,000 extra a year from the academic institutions for library support.

And what we did was we divided them according to need, according to what, whichever library needed what.

And they came in and requested.

This went on for about, I'd say, eight years.

And it was really really fantastic.

It's no longer there, but I think it was something that I really am proud for.

AS: You mentioned the transition to the new technology and automation.

How did how did that affect what what you all do in special libraries in the military?

You know you, you were there before, you were there during, and you were there after.

What was that like?

AL: Struggle.

You know the word retrospective conversion. What is that?

The military will come and say "what is retro?" you know.

Also, I think the most important thing for new librarians that come into, and even old librarians, that come into a new library, they need to instruct and educate the person that's above them.

Because many times, they don't know what librarians do.

They absolutely don't.

They go into the library and the circulation desk. You know, they think that person is a librarian.

So, I I always said that you needed a desk for the librarian outside outside there.

I mean, absolutely, because people don't understand that.

Their concept, their perception really is when you go to a library and somebody checks out a book.

AS: The person stamping the book is a librarian.

AL: By the way, I've never used a rubber stamp.

AS: You never got to use that, even though it was your inspiration.

AL: That was my inspiration.

AS: But, you know, as a as a systems librarian, and I I imagined that..that the

AL: I'll tell you how I did it.

AS: OK

AL: I hired a consultant.

AS: Ah OK

AL: I hired a consultant from the University of Hawaii Library School.

And Dr. Osbourn was my my guru.

I think we did a personal contract for him, and he worked with us maybe about three four years.

And we were really probably lagging behind everybody in konas?.

But it's because we had special needs.

And when you're in, when you're in Korea, the lines are really old.

And so, you know, those things have to be rejuvenated and stuff like that.

And a lot of things happened.

And what we did was, what we wanted, what I wanted to do, and we did succeed.

Was to have one system for all the all the libraries that were under Air Force.

And what happened was the Army piggybacked on us.

So, so then then some of the Navy libraries also did.

And we used the education money to buy the commercial ISPs [Internet Service Provider].

Because when you're in a in a military base, especially overseas, and if you're on mil.com, you will not get everything that you need and internet is very very slow.

So I said "OK the solution is to buy a commercial ISP."

And we went through several systems and finally landed on SIRSI. And thanks.

And what I did also for Dr. Osbourn, I sent him out to each of our libraries in Alaska, in Korea, in Japan.

I had a conference in Okanawa. So everybody was there also.

And he was he was our our main speaker. And I think, through that, we got what we needed.

Luster transcript

AS: I mean , I know from my experience as a public libraries, that convincing municipal governments and city councils that you need to do this, it's like pulling teeth...

I can't imagine trying to convince the US government, the bureaucracy, AL: the military.
AS: Yes, the military.

AL: Especially, I'll tell you what. Especially because the military has their own squadron for computers and stuff like that. And they say oh, they will help you. Yes, they will help you, if they have time.

AS: Right, you were a low priority.AL: You are not a high priority. You got the word, priority is very very important. Because when you call them up you said, "so you know the system is down."

They'll say, "well we're really busy now." And of course, when you think about about it, their mission is more important than our mission.

AS: Mission Critical.AL: Yeah. And I always, I always tell the librarians, whenever they budget, they must use the word mission essential.

Because if they don't use the word mission essential, it's like gravy. OK. You have to have the meat and the potatoes. The gravy is, they don't look at gravy like children's books and stuff like that.

Now a lot of the wives' clubs also donate money for that. But children's programs are really really, in base library it's really a big thing.

Because we have a lot of young children. They used to call them dependents, now their called family members. And maybe they changed it since I left, I don't know.

AS: The the time line of a lot of automation, most libraries were doing this in the, in the mid 90s. Were you all following that same.

AL: Yes. AS: essential time line? OK

AL: I think we did it in '95 '96.AS: And how did your, how did your, the nature of of your librarian work, librarianship, how did it change with the technology?

Were you able to become more efficient with resource sharing? Or was it just more headache just trying to get the computers running? Or both?

AL: Both. Both. Both. And of course it depends on who the librarian was. Their, you know, their skills and everything. So we we did have a lot of, every year Air Force always had a workshop or training.

I just left one. The Air Force and the Navy just had training here this week. They always have some kind of training for the for the people. And they also have an activity.

They call it activity course. I never took it. But for new librarians they always bring them in and give them a week of, you know, training.

Now I always felt that, the military, whoever is gonna be over the library, should be trained.

And not only about different kinds of funding, cause we have different kinds of funding that we have to work with. To me, it would run smoother if the military knew more about libraries and not just I go to the library.

Luster transcript

Well that that's not enough. They have to know what you do, and why you do it, and how essential it is for their mission.

And if you don't bring that up, you know, you're just cast aside. AS: Lost. AL: Yeah, and I know that when I was working with the Navy.

The Navy had some really interesting. I used to work with the ship libraries also. I used to go down in the ships and help them clean out their libraries.

And I used to train the, I used to be a chaplain assistant. And my dissertation was on training in in the Navy libraries.

It was fun, because, you know, like one of the guys. I said, "do you know how to type?" Because we were typing catalog cards.

He says, " yeah, I have my own system." I said, "well what's your system called?" And he said, "Columbus." He said, "you discover the key and you land on it."

The Navy was the most fun, because it was, it was crazy really.

AS: Well, you know, so few of us have ever been on a Navy ship and even fewer have been on Navy ship, in a Navy ship library.

Describe what a Navy ship librarian, library is like. What kind of books do you have there? What do sailors like to read?

AL: It's like OK, like like in like on the Enterprise. They have about 5,000 volumes when I was there, but now they've got, they're all automated and everything.

When I was there it was the old way. They had about 5,000 volumes. And it's like a city really.

But when you go to the smaller ships, like the submarine, where do you put the library? You know, it's anywhere, everywhere.

And sometimes it's on a seat; underneath a seat you'll find the books. I mean, we try to catalog them, and some of them, you know, I told them you don't need to catalog them because you're too small.

And if you want to color-code them, this this is my little thing, I said "you can color them by fiction with green or you can have red for nonfiction or whatever."

And then of course the Navy especially subs, they always said, "why can't we have an encyclopedia?" I said, "because you don't have enough room."

And why can't we have one on microfiche. And in those days it wasn't available in that time. But, you know, now you can get it online.

AS: Get a disk.

AL: Right. And they do. And they do. And they are, it's mission essential for them.

I say that a lot. And I always tell them, you know, if you don't, especially the library the librarians in the shore libraries, if you don't have a strategic plan and we at, we, I always made them do a strategic plan, also a collection development plan and a publicity and marketing plan.

Those three, to me, were very essential. And as far as budget is concerned, there was always something on the budget. It was so important.

And I said, "you know, it's a continu-- it's a living document. You can you can write it down today.

Luster transcript

You might change it next week, but at least you've got something in writing. And somebody, your higher-ups will know what you want to do.

And then if you can combine yours with their master plan, it'd be even better." But I think it's very very important.

AS: So, you know, at I'm a public librarian, and we're always trying to figure out what it is that that men in the community want to read other than Chilton's car manuals.

And this is a recurring topic in public libraries. How do we get the guys in? How do we get them excited? So back to my question, what do sailors on a submarine, what do they want to read? What kind of books?

AL: They like mysteries.

AS: Mysteries, OK. AL: They like mysteries. They also like, well many of them, if they're officers, you know, they will want to read history, Navy history.

Except, I have to tell you this, because this was sad. The ships on that were harbored in Pearl Harbor, you know, I would visit them.

And whenever I went to the Philippines I used to visit the ships also. Anywhere I went there were ships I used to visit.

But we had a lot of books on World War II, and of course it had to do with Pearl Harbor and the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

And one fellow said, he said to me, "you know, I don't know why we have these books on Pearl Harbor. They're boring, and it's history."

And I said, you know, "it's why you're here. If you really want to get rid of them, you know, then we will try to do something else for you."

But a lot of them are, and of course, you know, the military, the Army, and the Air Force, and the Navy, and the Marine Corps all have designated lists for their military.

That they have, that's required reading for them.

AS: Oh OK.

AL: We had a Project Warrior for the Air Force we had a Project Warrior campaign where we, I guess it was books on like Sun Tzu "The Art of War" and all that stuff.

We had a really big campaign, and I made, I made paper airplanes. And I'm in one of the one of the encyclopedias with a picture of me flying one.

But it was a wonderful, it was a good thing. We even made little, for publicity, we made things for the bars.

When we had a list of books in it, and it was on the bar, you know, where people were drinking and stuff. "What is, what is this?"

I said because, "you guys, as soon as you come off the flight line, you're in the bar. Where else would you be? So that's how I want to reach you."

And libraries, librarians need to get out.

AS: So did that win one of the Cotton Dana Awards? I bet.

AL: Yes, it did. AS: That's great. That's brilliant.

Luster transcript

AL: But I, you know, you just have to. I guess anything that's innovative. That's that's new. And I think that's what you need to do. I can't understand why you can't get the men. There's hobbies also.

AS: Right right. Just getting them in the doors is our problem I think. Once we get them in, we're.

AL: We also work with other organizations like fitness, childcare centers.

There's so many organizations on base that we try to tie in the library as much as possible. We also with education we also invite the professors to come to the library.

And we give them an orientation. And we show them how to search. Some of them want to do it on their own. Some of them don't want to come to the library at all.

Some of them tell the guys and the girls, "hey, you don't have to go to the library. It's really a small library. It won't fit your needs."

But they don't know what we have. And that was one of our biggest challenges to get them in.

AS: You just brought up a, something I hadn't thought of. In the last two decades, there have been more and more women in the armed forces.

AL: Right. AS: Has that changed the nature of your work? Not a bit?

AL: Not at all. And we've had women colonels who were over us also. No, not at all. No, I think it's good.

AS: Let's see, we've covered. So your last, what was your last position?

AL: In Germany.

AS: In Germany. Oh oh that's my question. I should be writing down questions. Tell me your favorite base where you've been.

AL: My favorite base, you mean where I've worked in?

AS: Where you worked. Where you worked and why?

AL: There are different reasons for. You mean overseas?

AS: Where wherever you.

AL: Well, actually, headquarters PACAF, Pacific Air Force's Command was my favorite place, because that the most challenging job.

AS: And spell that, PAC? AL: PACAF, Capital P A C. We have a lot of acronyms.

AS: I got __? I have to transcribe this later.

AL: Pacific Air Force's Command. Alright, PA Pacific, PAC Pacific AF Air force.

Actually, it's Air Forces, not just one. It's HQ headquarters.

Headquarters Pacific Air Forces.

AS: OK. AL: That probably was my favorite, as far as.

AS: And where was that? AL: That was in Hawaii. AS: In Hawaii? Ok. AL: At Hickam Air Force Base. My, I also liked the Navy, because the Navy was challenging.

Because we didn't have any, I always told the library students that. I shouldn't say this.

But if you really wanted to be innovative, go into a library that's Navy, because they don't have the instructions that the other.

AS: More freedom then?

Luster transcript

AL: Yes, to do what you want to do. And you have more freedom.

You can also do what you want to do in the Air Force and Army, as long as you're not going way out.

I mean, they allow a lot of freedom, and you can be as innovative as you want to be. We don't charge overdues, OK so.

I mean people; well we had a librarian that wanted to charge overdues. I said "no." I said, "why would you want to do that?"

I mean, she said, "we have to make." I said, "you can't use the money anyway." You charge the overdues it goes back to the Department of Treasury.

Somebody loses a book; it goes back to the department of treasury. You don't get that at all, see? So, to me it's of no value.

And because we're appropriated funding, you can't charge. I think Japan was probably my favorite in, because it was my first library overseas.

Plus it was completely new to me. Germany was nice. I liked Heidelberg is where my husband worked. I liked Ramstien also. I like the overseas locations.

So, if you have a job overseas, let me know.

AS: And do you have any any final remarks to share with library students?

AL: I think I gave it all.

AS: I think so. AL: All I can tell them is that work is exciting, but you make it exciting.

I mean you don't, you know, it's not dreary at all. And if you have challenges.

I mean if you have problems, it becomes a challenge. And look at the positive side of it. And you know, my husband always said "carpe diem," seize the moment whenever you can.

And if you have an opportunity to go away for work. Well, I'll tell you what it used to be, and I don't know how much changes it is.

Because I know there are some changes now, but if you go overseas, the government pays. Pays your way there, pays your rent, pays your utilities, gives you sometimes you have a COLA.

You know, cost of living and allowances that you don't have. Things are cheaper.

You have a chance to travel. If you go on EML planes, it's only \$10. I mean, you know, it's called environmental leave.

In other words, you're just sick of the place. Well there are some places on Earth that you probably won't want to go, I mean but, and it's a hard to fill position, so you get more perks.

I mean you really, and of course, you know, we've had librarians. I hate to say this. But we've had librarians who go overseas and do absolutely the least that they can.

Because the staff there is so good, and they just carry it off. And you really don't have that, you know. But it's not every base, and there will be challenges.

And you're there to support the staff there between the military and you. And it's important, you know, I think it's really important.

But I think planning is the most important thing for any library, even even if you're, if you're a reference librarian what do you plan?

Luster transcript

You need to train the staff also. I think that's important. I think people when they say "we don't need the library anymore."

Cause I've heard that so many times, because we have the Internet. But how long did you take to search for that? You know.

And I think many times people don't, well it doesn't matter if you are with the military or if you're with municipal or with the state.

Like in Chicago, it's really well supported. I had an opportunity on one of my, we called it TDY Temporary Duty. OK, I used to travel quite a bit in the States as well as all over the Pacific.

I was upgraded to a first class ticket from Chicago to DC. And I was sitting there in first class, and guess who sat next to me. It was the mayor of Chicago.

And that whole trip we talked about libraries and how he supported them and how he loved them. And then when I got home, I had this huge coffee book from him autographed to me.

Telling me how he enjoyed talking to me. That was fantastic. And he's right his library is really really nice. So if I was to recruit, I would recruit, try to recruit people. Cause I do a lot of that at the university.

AS: Well, Dr. Luster Hennesy thank you for joining us today.

AL: I enjoyed it.

AS: Again, I wish you luck at this year's annual conference. I hope you get a serendipitous position.

AL: You know, one of those, one of those questions is when you retire what would you do? And I said, "I'm looking for a job."

AS: My experience interviewing retired/retiring librarians is that none of them actually retire. They all go on to be. My first interview, he has retired I believe 4 times.

AL: Oh really? I've only retired once.

AS: Because he retires and gets bored and another library position opens up and he takes it.

AL: Well, you know, I'm sorta picky though. This is off right?

AS: No, I'll turn it off. Thank you Dr. Luster.

Interview with Arlene Luster

Magavero Transcript

Jane: My name is Jane Brodsky Fitzpatrick. I'm 57 years old. Today is November 3rd, 2005, and we are at Grand Central Terminal in New York City, and I was a co-worker with Filomena for about ten years.

Fil: And my name is Filomena Magavero. I'm 83 years old. Today is November 3rd, 2005, and I am at Grand Central Terminal with Jane Fitzpatrick who was my co-worker for ten years.

Jane: Fil, librarianship, as we know, is historically a profession dominated by women. Can you tell me when you decided to go to graduate school and particularly to library school?

Fil: Okay, I went to Columbia after World War II. I had always worked in libraries, my high school library, and my college library. But when I went to Hunter to get my Bachelor's Degree, I thought I wanted to be a teacher. When I did teacher training in my last year at Hunter, I was disenchanted. I graduated from Hunter in 1943--World War II--I graduated in January of '43, so World War II had already been going for over a year, and I thought at that time, "I really don't want to go into teaching, I want to do something in the war effort like everybody else was doing at that time," so I looked for a job that would make me happy doing something other than teaching.

And one of my teachers recommended that I try doing some work with translating, because my major in college was Romance Languages, and I was quite proficient in Italian and French, which I was hoping to teach. But I never got there. So I looked for something that would do that for me, and I found out that The Office of Censorship was looking for translators.

What they were doing, they were looking to intercept mail coming out of enemy countries at the time, and reviewing the mail to see whether they could obtain any intelligence in those countries before our troops invaded, or whatever.

So I applied for the job, and it took a little while before the job came through, and in the meantime I looked for my great love [laughs]--I looked for a job at The New York Public Library until I was called by The Office of Censorship. And it didn't take long, maybe, maybe about six months, and I was called by The Office of Censorship, and I worked there until 1945 when the war was over.

And at that time I decided it was--I was pretty sure by then that what I needed to do was to get a degree in a librarianship. So I went to Columbia, and I was admitted, and I started in Columbia, and I guess it must have been September of '45, graduated in June of '46, and my first job as a librarian was at King's Point. And I went there as an assistant cataloger.

King's Point is to this day the Federal Merchant Marine Academy. Fort Schuyler is the state school for merchant marine studies. At King's Point I was not the only woman professional. The head cataloger, who was a Navy--she had been in the Navy, so she had some expertise with naval personnel and she knew how to handle herself quiet well with them. And they respected her very highly. And I was her assistant, and it was fine.

I enjoyed that very much; it was a beginning job. I wasn't being paid much, I think it was something like--oh, I don't know, very little. Because I stayed there for about a year and a half

Magavero transcript

or so, and was offered a job at Hunter College, for what I thought was a monumentally high [laughs] salary, eighteen hundred dollars a year. And the librarian at the time said, "You have to take it, Fil, you can't give that up." And it was head of the catalog department at Hunter College. And even though I was reluctant to leave King's Point, because I enjoyed working there, I liked the atmosphere and everything, and--but I did go to Hunter, and I stayed there about fifteen months because I didn't like the atmosphere [laughs].

But while I was there I met Terry Hoverter. And Terry Hoverter was the librarian at Fort Schuyler, which in those days was called The New York State Nautical School. So he was looking for a cataloger, and he said, "You know I'm going to have a vacancy pretty soon, would you like to consider coming to Fort Schuyler?" and I said, "Yes, I might," and I told him that I had worked at King's Point. And I said it's my understanding that the curriculum is very similar, and I do have cataloging background from King's Point, and also from Hunter. So he said, "Well, why don't you come out for an interview," and so I did that.

I went out there in the middle of a snowstorm [laughs] and I thought, "God, I'm never going to do this everyday," because there was no transportation. Fort Schuyler is on a peninsula of Throg's Neck. Throg's Neck is a section of Bronx, New York, and Fort Schuyler is on a peninsula way out into Long Island Sound, really. And we had just had a terrible snowstorm, and I had to walk from where the bus dropped me off to the fort which is easily about close to a mile walk, and in snowdrifts and all of that, and--but I did it, and you know he was happy to see me [laughs] arrive. And we had a nice meeting, and he said, "You know if you want the job you can have it." He said, "I'm really--I really need somebody, and my cataloger is leaving," so I said, "Yes, I'll take it. I'll take it." So we agreed that I would start on March 1st, 1949, which I did.

Now in those days, Fort Schuyler was really a male bastion, and I was coming on as the only professional woman. They had women as clerks, but I was the only professional woman. And the library was manned by the director, Mr. Hoverter, and I was the only other professional person in the library at the time. And I was interested because I was familiar with the book collection; it was very similar to King's Point, and I felt I could handle it without, you know, too much indoctrination. And I thought, "You know, I'll take it." And the most important thing of course was again the salary was higher than I was getting at Hunter. And all these things, you know, made it easy for me to make a decision. So I took it, and I didn't realize what I was really in for. [laughs] But it was okay; as I said I knew what I was getting into, and so I started on March 1st, 1949.

Now I went in with graduate studies. In those days Columbia was not giving you a Master's for the Library Degree, but still it was a graduate degree, I mean it was beyond your baccalaureate. So, I arrived there, and if you check, and this is something that can be checked very easily, if you check the catalogs of the era you will notice that one-third of the faculty at the time had degrees--not degrees--had had their studies only at the schoolship level.

Maritime College started on a schoolship. It started on the Saint Mary's in 1874. The Saint Mary's was kept until 1908. In 1908 we got the Newport, and then these people that I encountered there--and those were two-year courses on the Saint Mary's and the Newport. They

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were two-year courses-- they were professional courses in seamanship and marine engineering-- no academic studies at all. Now a lot of the faculty at that time, one-third, which is a considerable number, one-third of the faculty had their education only on the schoolship--two years. They [laughs] were high and mighty people. And here I am, with much more education, and I was hired as a clerk. Now I questioned that of the librarian at the time, you know. I thought, "Why should I be in the clerical line?" He said, "Well, there's nothing I could do, you know this is the way it is," and you know I accepted. As I said the money was better than I had before, so I took it.

But I didn't realize that these people [laughs] would start treating me like a clerk, and always did, and were mean-spirited about it, you know they really were. I had no restroom facilities. I had to walk two blocks outside of my office. In the winter I had to put on a coat, a hat, and boots to go and wash my hands [laughs]. And these men had--what they used to call them 'heads'--in the navy, a bathroom is a 'head.' They had 'heads' one on top of the other on two separate levels in the fort, and I had to walk two blocks outside, you know, and it was a little ridiculous. I thought that was kind of mean that they couldn't see it my way, but they never did. They just you know continued to--you know--one of--I call--I shouldn't even call them professors, they really weren't, [laughs] but they would come over and throw a piece of paper at me and say, "Type this," you know and I would say, "But, I don't type" --you know [laughs], that kind of thing.

And so I was--I coped with it for thirteen years. Believe it or not, for thirteen years I was in a clerical line. And as I said to Jane earlier, "In a way I think I did an injustice to the profession, not only to myself, but to the profession." Because I wasn't an activist. I really didn't know how to handle those guys. You know macho-ism was exuding [laughs] all over the place, and I just didn't know how to handle it. I used to go home and I used to tell my husband [laughs]--I used to cry on his shoulder, and he used to say, "There's nothing I could do for you. If you can't take it, leave, you don't have to stay there." But I said, "They're not going to run me out. I like my job."

I loved my job. My job was so--was just so fantastic. I went there as a cataloger, but, I took over the duties of government documents. I took over the duties of periodicals. I was the first periodicals librarian. I collected archival material, wherever I could find it. I did all of that. It was so--it was so varied, it was so interesting, I just loved it, and I thought, you know, "I'm not going to let these guys run me out of here, just because they want to treat me as clerk." So the way I handled it was to just ignore them; I just totally ignored them. I had nothing to do with them. I didn't have a single friend on the faculty, and I didn't care, it didn't bother me because I was busy with my work, and happy with my work. And that was really--that was for thirteen years.

Then in nineteen--in the 1960s, I think it was, that The Higher Education Act was passed. I'm not sure exactly what it was called, but it was something like that. And things began to change. But I have to say one other thing; librarians all around the university, all around SUNY, didn't have it much better than me. The only difference was that in my case, on top of not getting equal pay [laughs], for [laughs] for what they doing, there was sex discrimination, really.

That's what it really amounted to, and they didn't have that. They didn't have that because you know they didn't have the situation that we did, an all-male faculty.

But in the 1960s then, with The Higher Education Act passed, and things began to change. We got a lot; our budget increased by leaps and bounds. We were able to get much more money to do a lot of things that we were doing by hand. We were writing out the [laughs] catalog card--the subject headings on catalog cards, we were writing them in hand, you know, and now all of a sudden you know we could get printed cards, and so you know it was really--things had--were really changing drastically. And at that time too the librarians all around the university were beginning to feel like maybe they had some clout because there was much more money around, so they formed an association, The State University of New York Library Association, and so of course we were--I felt like I was a charter member of that because I really wanted to get in on something.

And so that began to change things, and I think it was around nineteen-I don't know maybe '61 or '62, we were all told that we could go into a 'professional line,' rather than a clerical line if we wanted to. So again, [laughs] I was called into the office, and the business officer said to me, "You really want to do this? You really want to get out of a clerical line? You have protection as a clerk, you know, civil service protects you," he said, "but if you go into a professional line, you work at the pleasure of the president." And I said, "Well, I don't care. I mean I'm doing my job, I know I'm doing my job, and I'm doing it well, so I'm not afraid of working at the pleasure of the president." So I said, "I'll take my chances." Oh, he was very--you know he really was trying to discourage me. But I think he was doing it--I think he had my best interest at heart, I really believe that. I think he just was afraid that maybe you know the president [laughs] might get up on the wrong side of the bed one day and decide to get rid of a librarian. But anyway I did go along with it, and I went over to the professional line, and that was the end of my stay as a clerk--well I wasn't a clerk, but in a clerical line.

But just to point out some of the--you know mean spirited things that happened at that time. One time, for instance, I had to sit in for the librarian at a meeting where they were expecting a visitor from Albany, and all the department chairs were supposed to attend that meeting, and [Terry] could not go for some reason--he asked me to go. Well I went to the--I knew I was going to be miserable, but I figured I had to go, he asked me to go, and when I get there, [laughs] they all look at me and one of them finally said, "What are you doing here?" And you know I just ignored him. I knew I was going to say the wrong thing, whatever I was going to say, so you know they're looking at each other kind of laughing, and again he said, "What are you doing here?" So I said, "Well, I'm sitting in for Terry," and that's all. I could barely eat. [laughs] I remember that meal; I'll never forget it. [laughs] I could barely eat. I thought this is hard. I don't know what went on at that meeting. Afterwards, when Terry said, "Well, what happened?" I said, "I don't know. I just don't know what happened. I wasn't listening to a thing." [laughs] I was so miserable.

But that was the kind of thing, you know, I had to put up with. And you know I didn't have--as I said we didn't have restroom facilities at all, and it was only because one day we had--we received a gift--and if anybody knows anything about gifts that you get from somebody's attic

or basement, it was moldy, and dusty. And I think I had to put on my hat and my coat to go to the restroom, really just to wash my hands, maybe four or five times that day, because the material I was working with was so dirty. So that by late afternoon, when I made maybe the fourth trip, I just walked into the admiral's office--because in those days the president of the Maritime College was not called 'president,' he was called, 'admiral' all the time. So I walked into the admiral's office, with my black hands, [laughs] and I held them in his face, and I said, "You know I've made this trip here, maybe four times today, just to wash my hands," and he saw I was practically in tears, so he said, "Sit down, Fil."

And so and I explained what happened, I said, "You know we don't have a washroom in the fort for the women." And I said, "that's awful." So he said, "Okay, I'll do something about it." So the next day-- was a man of his word, I must say, that was Admiral Durgin--the next day, he came over, he took me into the men's head, and he said, "What if we covered the urinals?" [laughs] So I said, "I don't care what you do. You could leave them just the way they are, just put a latch on the door, and when I'm in there, I'll lock myself in." So he said, "No, we'll fix it up, and this will be your Ladies Room." And he did. So I finally got a ladies room, after two years, after two years, I finally got a ladies room [laughs] which was good [laughs].

Jane: No, this is fine. This is exactly what I wanted to hear and the stories that we need to know about what it was like to be the only woman on campus, I just...

Fil: No, but one of the main things, of course, about library work back then, when you had a small staff, you know a librarian really was a jack of all trades, I don't mean--I mean professionally. As I said, I did everything there, everything, and I was involved in all of the professional collections that we had. And for--even to the very end--but--and the other thing was that when we had a vacancy, when we finally had a vacancy, in--oh, I forgot one very important thing. I started in March of 1949. In June of 1949 Mr. Hoverter hired a reference librarian, but he was male, so he came in as a professional. He came in as a professional. And I questioned that, I said, "You know, Terry, I was here before him." [laughs.]" He said, "There's nothing I could do about it. There's nothing I could do about it." So, Fred O'Hara, was an officer, got a bigger salary, was part of the 'club,' [laughs] was a 'member of the club,' [laughs], and there I was [laughs]--no but that was interesting.

But, I got off the point. I was going to say something else about the work, but--but no it was--it was a real challenge, but as I said, if I didn't enjoy it as much as I did I never--I never could have done it. And only because I have to give my husband a lot of credit, because you know he was--he was really so much support for me. You know as I said he was the only one I could complain to, and he always said, "You don't have to do it. Get out of there if you can't take it." And you know I--but it was really--it really was you know mean, because it wasn't necessary. I wasn't looking for their jobs, you know, and I just wanted, you know, respect? I hate to use that word. It sounds so old-fashioned, but I wanted to be treated the way I thought I should have been treated. And as I said I had more education than one-third of them at least, but they couldn't accept that, they just couldn't.

And in those days the school was so military. They all wore uniforms, you know, and so rank was so important to them. You know if you were clerk you were a clerk, and that's all there

is to it. You could never aspire [laughs] to be anything else. But that was too bad. That was really too bad.

But, you know, that passed. Like everything else, things change. And in 1973 the college changed totally, because up until then even the student body was all male. And in 1973 we finally got our first female cadets, so things relaxed even a lot more at the college. And you know it was really--it's really a different school than it was when I first started there.

The thing about our library--I really ought to say--put in a plug for the library--the library developed over the years one of the finest maritime collections in the country. We had-- that was another thing I enjoy so much--that we had researchers from all over the country corresponding with us, you know looking for information on ships, all kinds of ships, not just ocean-going vessels, but sailing ships as well because our periodicals collection went back to the 1800s, and you know they were so--you know they were so complete that people did--now of course with computers you can get this information anywhere, but it was fun without computers because you know it really brings out the sleuth in you [laughs].

I used to love digging into those things, you know trying to find an elusive fact that they wanted to know about a particular vessel, and we can do it because we had the resources. And after awhile you know people knew that and it was fun to get a phone call asking for me by name, you know because I had done something for somebody else, you know? But it was really great fun. I was sorry when the computers came in. [laughs]

Jane: Now when did they hire other women librarians in the library and what was the ...

Fil: In the library? Alvina came in 1969.

Jane: Oh, and she was the first woman in the library?

Fil: She was the first other one.

Jane: And there was faculty rank already at that point? When did you get faculty rank about?

Fil: I would say in the '60's probably.

Jane: So before then it was an all-male, even in the library, except for you?

Fil: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Jane: I know there were not many library directors, because they lasted for a long time, and they were always ...

Fil: They were--well there were a couple of women upstate, there were a couple of women upstate, but those are the big colleges, you know like Binghamton, and Albany, where they had a staff of you know maybe fifty-sixty people. You know their situation was really entirely different than what we experienced in the little places, you know like Fort Schuyler, where you know as I said--you know for a long time I was the only one.

Jane: Now were you head of reference services, did you...?

Fil: Well--all right I was cataloger for thirteen years. Then when one of the reference librarians left--oh, this is another thing [laughs] that's interesting. When the reference librarian left I asked to--I figured, you know, it would be fun to try something else. So I asked if I could be transferred to be a reference librarian. And let me tell you what he did. [laughs] This was not Mr. Hoverter, this was Dr. Whitten. He went around canvassing all the department chairs,

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"What would you think if we put Fil Magavero at the reference desk." I mean shouldn't she be behind the scenes as a cataloger for the rest of her life? You know, that kind of thing, that kind of stupidity. You know when I think of it now, nobody else would have taken [laughs] it as long as I did, but I was too chicken. [laughs]. But it's fun to look back on it. You know what? I outlived all of them, that's all I can say. [laughs] They're all gone, [laughs] and I was still there. [laughs]

Jane: But you had a very long commute. You never wanted to...

Fil: I did--no...

Jane: ...work in a library closer to home?

Fil: No, and I never got a car either, I never got a car.

Jane: I know that. [laughs]

Fil: No, you know, well I learned what to do on my commute too. I always had something I had--could read, you know, and so no that didn't bother me, I got used to that. But I was always the first one in, I always got there by 7:30, and I was probably always the last one out [laughs]. But, no that was okay, I really loved the job, I really did. And I loved working with the cadets, I really did, I still have people calling me. Just the other day Bill Steffenhagen called me from Oregon, [laughs], and Frank Critelli, from Washington, D.C., calls me.

You know I really--I think I helped a lot of them, because in those early years we didn't have--we never--I don't know whether we have a psychiatrist on campus now, but in those days I was certainly not a psychiatrist, but I was an advisor, let me call it that, I was an advisor. I was the only one--they had no liberty during the week, they only had liberty on weekends and only if they didn't have demerits could they leave on a weekend. So they were really tied to the campus, and if they had problems, whether they were physical, financial, social, whatever, they--I knew so many of them well, they worked in the library, or I knew them because I worked with them on research problems, or you know whatever. So they would come and they would tell me their sad tales, and I tried to help them as much as I could, and that was another thing, that was another one of my jobs [laughs], you know but--which I enjoyed doing if I could help them.

Some of them--you know in those days those first--in the '50s--most of those kids were first in their families to go to college, and most of them were from blue-collar families. And I identified with them, I knew exactly where they were coming from. And I thought, "Boy, they need help, they need help." Even if only to listen to them, you know? And in those days too the school was so regimented, it was so military. You know if you were caught cheating it was an automatic dismissal. If you--you know if you told a lie--you know that kind of thing. And I remember one kid, I'll never forget him, his name was Jim Conklin, and he came to me one day and he said, "I have a serious problem." I said, "What?" He said, "The kid next to me in the last exam was cheating." I said, "Are you sure?" He said, "Oh, I'm sure, and I have proof." I said, "What do you mean you have proof?" So he said, "He copied every word from my paper, and I know that because at one point he asked me what a particular word I had written down was."

So I said, "Well, Jim, if you have proof, you know what you have to do." He said, "I know, but I don't know if I could do it." He had to turn him in, because if you caught somebody cheating and you didn't turn him in, you were considered as much a cheat. And he said, "If I

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don't turn him in, I'm going to flunk this course, because how can I prove otherwise that I didn't cheat from him." So, I said, "Well, I'm not going to tell you what to do, you know what to do, those are the rules."

But you know it was very difficult, and those were the kinds of things that kids needed, they really did, they couldn't go to a teacher because they knew, you know, that they were going to get their 'F' right off the bat, so they needed somebody to kind of you know lead them along.

And there were so many other problems. This one kid who was married--they couldn't be married at the time, but this one kid, Joe Cook, was married with a couple of kids. "What am I going to do? I have to make some money, and I have to make the cruise, and I have to go on the cruise, so how am I going to make money to support my family?" And I said, "Well, you can't have it both ways. You're going to either have to ask your family to help you out, or you're going to have to fess up, you're going to have to come out and say what happened." [laughs] You know there was so many of these social problems that they went through, and they were all, you know pretty much--I mean in today's world you'd have to say that they were poor kids, poor, you know financially poor. And this was there first shot as trying to do something good for themselves, and some of them were botching it up, and you know what could you do?

Jane: No, I think The Maritime College is still--has a lot of students like that.

Fil: Oh, I'm sure they do, I'm sure they do.

Jane: One more question? Do we have time. Just kind of to sum up, there were like SUNYLA- other library associations, and I know you said you talked to your husband when you were having all these problems, did you ever talk to other librarians in other libraries, or in any of these associations about--

Fil: We never had any travel money. I never knew librarians from other campuses in those days. It wasn't until SUNYLA came out [to the Maritime College campus], that was already, thirteen- fifteen years later that I was able to make contact with librarians from other parts of SUNY.

Jane: And do you have any friends in libraries in other parts of New York City, or--

Fil: Oh, yeah, and most of them were in special libraries though, because those are the libraries I dealt with mostly. Our collection, even though we were a four-year college, we dealt with a great many people in the industry, and so our collection, even though we had all of the--all of the necessary English literature, and American literature texts and all of that, our most important collection was what we had in the maritime industry.

And so most of the libraries I dealt with were special libraries, and they had different problems entirely. They were considered--you know--like secretaries more, I guess, I don't know, I really don't know, but their collections were really so--so specialized. No it was--as I said it wasn't until the '60s that we really began to mingle with other libraries in SUNY, or CUNY even.

Jane: Well, I think whether on purpose, or by circumstance, you were a pioneering woman in that man's world of a maritime college, and I'm just glad that you were able to...

Fil: [Is laughing] That wonderful world--[laughs]

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Jane:...to share all those experiences with us, because although a lot of that still exists there, I think things have--you know--changed.

Fil: I don't know, does it still exist to that extent? I mean, I hope not.

Jane: Not to that extent, no. I certainly didn't have that when I was a librarian there.

Fil: No, it was kind of--yeah--it was foolish, it really was foolish when you think of it.

Story Corps staff member: Do you resent it still? Do you have...

Fil: No I don't. No I don't, because I learned to cope with it, I really did. I turned them off completely, I really did. I really ignored them. They ignored me of course [laughs]. That's how it all started, but I learned how to ignore them too, so it really wasn't--no I didn't resent it. I thought to myself I probably never should have done it knowing I couldn't handle it, you know in a more forceful way--I just didn't know how to do it, and I probably shouldn't have gotten into that. As I said in some ways I feel that maybe I did a disservice to the profession, because had I been--you know more of an activist, had I been more forceful, and--not demanding, but in speaking out about what I wanted, it might have made things easier for other librarians, but I didn't do it.

Jane: Well, that was a tough nut to crack at Maritime, you know.

Fil: Well, it was for me, it really was for me. But as I said I didn't--I never felt like I wanted to leave, because I meant--I don't know whether I said that in the piece, but I think I mentioned it to you, earlier, I never felt that I was harassed physically, I never felt that, I never felt that they were going to [laughs] trip me when I was walking along the street or anything like that. But I did feel that they were--that they were mean, that's the word that really comes to mind all the time. I always used to think, "That's so mean," [laughs], but they were mean, they really were, and they didn't have to be, but...

Jane: But you stayed in touch with so many of them anyway, and you were always very dedicated to...

Fil: Not with them. Not with them, because a lot of them are gone now. But some that--I only made two friends on the faculty really, one was Joe Longobardi, and the other was Norm Wennagel. They were the only two that I really became friendly with, but otherwise I never did make friends with any of them, because I just felt--I really didn't think--if they offered me friendship I really didn't think it was sincere, I think they were just--you know--"Well, let's be nice to Fil, because now she's on the faculty," [laughing] kind of thing. I really didn't think it was friendship. But those two guys were really good.

Jane: And did it change at all when they started hiring female faculty as teachers?

Fil: Well, I don't know. Maybe it did. As I said, I never really got close to any of them. It probably did for some of them. And then you know they had the cruises. That was another thing, and in the early days women weren't allowed to make the cruise. By the time women were allowed to make the cruise I was already in my sixties, you know, so I wasn't going to go on a cruise then. And--but all those things you know that you couldn't do, and you could do, and so--Finito?

Jane: Thank you very much, that was a wonderful group of stories that you told us.

Magavero transcript

This interview was recorded as a Library of Congress StoryCorps interview by Jane Fitzpatrick. Ms. Fitzpatrick later learned about Capturing Our Stories and secured the ALA waivers from the narrator so that the interview could be included in this project.

Ms. Fitzpatrick also contributed the two Corson interviews. Richard Corson also worked at a Maritime College library.

McLaughlin Transcript

AS: This is Arro Smith. I am here with Jaye McLaughlin in Fort Worth, Texas. She has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired and Retiring Librarians. It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of the ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is April 16th, 2011.

AS: Jaye, thank you for joining us.

JM: Thank you. I am looking forward to it.

AS: (Laughter) So let's start at the beginning. Tell us about how you got interested in libraries and librarianship?

JM: I think it is an interesting story because I had my children and they were starting preschool and they were starting elementary school and so I volunteered. I was an at-home mother at the time and I volunteered at both the preschool and the elementary school. And I happen to really dig on this labeling books. That was really exciting to me because it was the first time that I realized that's how they did it.

AS: Uh huh.

JM: And the elementary school librarian said "Well, why don't you go get a library degree?" And I was in Lexington, Kentucky at the time.

AS: Okay.

JM: And it worked out that I said "Well, that is something to look into" and so I did after having a refresher course on algebra.

AS: Okay.

JM: And actually passed a GRE and I felt very happy about that. (Laughter) So then I said, "Okay, and I went and interviewed at the library school and they said "Well, what kind of librarian do you want to be?" I said "What kinds are there?" (Laughter) So it is sort of a happenstance and sort of a hop skip and a jump to get there, and uh the gentleman that I interviewed with, he directed me into children's programming.

AS: Okay, okay.

JM: And that is where I have stayed.

AS: And so that was a rather late career decision as in the big picture. Had you had a career before? Uh, you went to college before – before you were married.

JM: Right. I went to college, we got married and I had a job that – well, I did work in the library at TCU in the Acquisition Department and to see if we have books before they ordered them. And so I had a very minuscule orientation to it as in like six months, I think it was.

AS: Okay.

JM: And then I wanted a job that had more money and so I had another sort of failed career.

AS: Okay. (Laughter)

JM: And then we moved and I was an at-home mom.

McLaughlin transcript

AS: Okay, okay. So when you went to – when you, uh, finished your master's degree, approximately how old were you? What decade of your life were you? (Laughter)

JM: It must been late 30s or something like that. It was in '83 when I did it. I went – it took me a long time to get the degree because I was doing it part time. I had three kids to take care of, and I got a grant to do the last year and do three classes each semester. AS: Full time.

JM: Full time. And so then we ended up moving to Fort Worth and I tried to interview and they gave me nasty "You can't interview until after you have your degree." AS: Hmm.

JM: Okay, so we came down in March before I graduated. So as soon as I graduated I came down, found out there was an interview for a position, went and interviewed and I got the job.

AS: And was that with a school library or with the public library children's department?

JM: That was the public library, Fort Worth Public Library, and it was a children's librarian in a branch.

AS: Um hmm, and quickly tell us the arc of your professional career from that point.

JM: Does that mean how it went? AS: Yes. (Laughter)

JM: (Laughter) Sorry. Okay. Umm, I was the children's librarian at East Berry Branch Library and then I moved to the other side of town and was the children's librarian at Ridglea Library, and that was my first seven years. I interviewed for a position as children's manager for the downtown library and I got that position in 1990, and that was where I spent the remainder of my career until 2005, moving from a two-person department to what by the time I left, there were five or six of us, depending on the budget year.

AS: Um hmm – wow. And when did you retire?

JM: In 2005 I retired March 31st, I believe. (Laughter) I retired on the most earliest possible day because I was also had been dabbling in storytelling and was anxious to begin to do that.

AS: Okay, okay. You were a children's librarian at a branch library and when you went downtown what kind of position was that?

JM: It was – I entered the world of management or mid-management, and I became the manager of the children's unit even though it was a small unit, and then it had plans to grow, and so I got to grow along with it. I think there was an ongoing problem because I still really saw myself as being a children's librarian, so I didn't make that transition into management as well as perhaps my supervisors wanted me to do.

AS: Hm, hm, hm. And you know within – within librarianship, how have you felt about the role of children's libraries and, and in public librarianship as a whole? Um...

JM: As a children's librarian, of course, I feel like you are creating the readers and the people who are familiar with the library. Therefore, I think, of course that it's a very important part of it. If you have management that has also had that experience and that learning about how children learn to use libraries, then they are much more in favor of the children's program. And if you have management that have really not had the classes and had the study and have looked at it, then they see us just as all librarians.

McLaughlin transcript

JM: And we see how some librarians work with children you realized that there are special techniques to work with children, and just as young adults, the older the kids when they get into middle school and high school, they are their own unique group and that takes a different set of skills also. Because what you are trying to do is not just help them with learning to read or find information, but you are trying to help them grow as people and it takes communication skills are different.

AS: Right. Yeah, right. Did you always feel like your – your position, uh, advocating for children's librarianship was respected within the whole organization at the Fort Worth Public Library or was it a come and go...

JM: You know, as a whole – as a whole, I think it was and I don't know if that's – there's a word there that I can't think of...you know, it's a big word I can't think of it at all... but it is sort of like that maybe that was my own perception. Because I simply didn't care what other people thought and felt like what I was doing was very important. AS: Right, right.

JM: And yet when I would talk with other children's librarians, they would bring up that they didn't feel appreciated. You know, so you – you have your own perception of things, and because I was also a manager and the other children's librarians worked under other managers, they may not have felt like they had the support that they would have liked.

As a whole, I think – my only experience has been in this one library – Fort Worth Public Library. AS: Right.

JM: So it is a limited experience in terms of how you do things, but I have met children's librarians from all over Texas and have met some from all over the country, and I just think we are a dynamic group of people myself, because you have to be ready to jump on one or the other.

AS: Um hmm. Um – how long were you at the Fort Worth Public Library?

JM: It was actually twenty two years. AS: Twenty two years, okay. JM: Point something. (Laughter) AS: (Laughter)

JM: And I do recognize now, looking back, that that's a very limited experience. Yeah, because one library system also that's the only view you have. So you don't recognize what other problems other systems are having.

AS: Right, right. Umm, when we were talking earlier and – and uh you mentioned that the importance of TLA, the Texas Library Association, and do you feel like you were able to network within that organization to – to, I don't know – learn new tricks?

JM: I think they have created some offices or procedures that might make it easier for people now as in new members round table and things like that.

JM: Um, I always sort of felt on the outside, and even when I was an officer of the Storytelling Round Table, I never got the grip for it – excuse me, the grasp of how things worked, because apparently it switches from one year to another year, so – and so it was very difficult for me to navigate the – I don't want to call it the bureaucracy but it is all the different levels. AS: Politics and ...

JM: The politics and the who-whos. I met a lot of people and I presented lots of programs, but um – so it was always good experiences but never really felt connected.

AS: Tell us about your programs.

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JM: Um, hmm. One of them was a Go-Figure program that the Fort Worth Public Library worked with and got a grant for and we worked with TCU students, and that was introducing math concepts to preschoolers through literature. And we ended up having a lot of -- a series of about six programs and they were aired on cable TV here in Fort Worth, and we decided that it was probably a pretty good program to take to TLA. And so with one of the librarians that worked with me, we went down and presented what Go Figure was. We got manipulatives in the library as well as teaching all the different children's librarians about the different concepts. And you know the interesting thing to me is I am a person that always likes to learn things and learning math concepts at such a young age, it was like I didn't feel like I had ever learned math concepts and now I understood them.

So that was a very interesting thing and maybe that is why I am a good children's librarian. I like to learn new things and things that are unfamiliar to me ????? I found out sorting is a preschool job to learn to sort things. Well, they use that in grocery stores and if you can't find something, you figure out how well they are sorting and putting things beside it, then you can go to those different places and usually find it. So there is things that I saw applying to the big world from these little concepts that no one had ever talked to me about in all my years of learning math, so I learned a lot. AS: Um, did you have any...

JM: Oh, another program, excuse me, if you are interested. The other thing was as vice-president of the Storytelling Round Table, vice-president or secretary – I don't remember, I helped bring in some storytellers and we coordinated a panel on trickster tales, that I thought would be really interesting. We had Native American, Irish American, Black American, and Hispanic looking at trickster tales from all those different cultures. AS: Right, right.

JM: And, uh, it was a concept that I thought was real interesting and people seemed to have enjoyed it and I enjoyed hosting all the storytellers and, and some authors. I don't know if it ever quite reached what I was looking for. AS: Okay.

JM: I think what I was looking for was a more academic study of it and not just a hour and a half introduction. AS: Right, right.

JM: So...trying to get my children's literature study in there. (Laughter)

AS: Now since retirement, you have - you are a part of a storytelling group. Tell us what you do.

JM: Currently and I have one more year, I'm on the board of the Tejas Storytelling Association, and that's an organization that has produced, I think this year was our twenty-sixth annual storytelling festival, which is held up in Denton. I got involved as a children's librarian. Our supervisor suggested that we go up to the story, first storytelling festival, and so many of us went up there and thoroughly enjoyed it. Not everybody kept their interest up but I did, so now I am on the board. I am an officer in the Tarrant area field of storytellers and I have my own nonprofit business of storytelling too.

AS: And it has an interesting name. What is it?

JM: The name of it is Tipi Tellers and that is T-I-P-I which is an alternative spelling and more in line with the Native American's spelling of it as opposed to the European spelling which is T-E...

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AS: (Laughter) And you will use – actually use a tent, right?

JM: We use a teepee, and what we have thought it was really good because you get people in sort of a cocoon, and we have had up to four classes in there and up to over a hundred kindergarteners in this teepee. It is a large teepee and we have about three or four storytellers, depending on the time of the day, and we sit and we bring the children into our teepee and we tell stories. More recently we have been doing a lot of Texas history stories but we started out doing multicultural stories and just having a good time with storytelling.

For all the different reasons that children's librarians learn that children need verbal communications and learn to read, we also need our storytelling and oral language development, and they need to hear that because you don't hear it so much. Children don't hear it so much except "do this, do that, shame on you, fill this out" and more orders from adults, and so you actually have the stories to share with them, and hope to develop their literacy skills and their language development, as well as an awareness of the culture and the history of different people's culture.

AS: And is - when you take the children into, umm, under your sacred canopy, do you – do you find it affects and makes them better listeners or – um – what do you – what do you think about that?

JM: I – I think that is very true because you have blocked out first of all, all the distracting things. You are bringing them into an unfamiliar area which if you either tell stories in the auditorium or in a classroom, or even their library, they know all those places. AS: Right, right.

JM: So if they were going to get distracted, they are going to get distracted. We have distractions in the teepee – grass is an amazing thing. AS: (Laughter)

JM: And you have no idea what the kids around the edge of the teepee, because we have a floor in it, that's where their interest goes for the people that cannot listen all the time. AS: Ah, okay.

JM: Okay, but for the most part many of them have not been in teepees before and don't understand it and we explain how people lived in them and like it was a family shelter, and so a whole family lived in it. Anyway, we go through a whole lot of explanation for the historic of it, about how we put it up. Part of our going to the school site is to have ten to twelve students come, fourth grade and up, to help us put it up. AS: Hmm, okay.

JM: So now they learn some team building and how we all have to work together to actually get it up. Safety things – how you can't swing twenty eight foot poles wherever you want to. AS: (Laughter)

JM: And the fact that we need all everybody's muscle to put up the lift pole which is last pole in place. So, yes, it is a very different type of place and they can learn lots of different things from it.

AS: Good deal, good deal. Umm, looking back on your – on your career, and now with this new venture, do you – do you see ways - do you wish you had done things differently when you were a traditional librarian? Uh, are there – are there – are there – with this new knowledge

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that you have with this storytelling would you have - I guess, yeah, would you have done things differently?

JM: I wish I would have and I think the excuse I used because when I was actually doing programs and doing the TV show that we had which was Somebody's Alley -(whisper) how am I going to describe ?????? Anyway I can't think of his name, and so we did it for cable TV preschool story time and I wish I had been able to tell more stories as opposed to reading books.

AS: Oh, that's a good point. What's the difference? What's the difference between telling a story and reading a book?

JM: Oh, try it sometime is my suggestion. When you are reading a book even to a group of children, you are constantly looking over and having to read the words so you are holding the book so they can see it and you are turning your eyes. AS: Um hmm.

JM: When you are telling a story, you are telling them and looking into their eyes, and that story becomes much more immediate to them. Many storytellers will say it is not just the storyteller but it is the audience and you are bringing it in and you are making something magical. If the audience isn't interested, it won't happen. If the storyteller isn't any good, it won't happen. When you are reading a book, the kids are focused on the pictures. When you are telling a story, they might create that picture in their mind. AS: Right.

JM: So it becomes a little bit more of an imagination and trying to understand, and -- and it's not somebody else's idea of what it looked like. And I heard some storytellers go through and ask questions when they were done, like – well, what color did that girl – what color was her dress? AS: (Laughter)

JM: It was a lot of different colors because he never said AS: He never said. JM: And so people put in their own color – right, right. AS: Good deal.

JM: The reason I didn't feel like I could learn the stories was because I didn't feel like I had the time. AS: Right.

JM: It was the concentration and the time to learn a story and it still takes me a lot of time to learn it. AS: Sure.

JM: But I am getting better at it. And more willing to be more creative myself. Okay. I incorporated those two loves toward the end of my career, because about the last five years I was working on a grant for the library that combined the Fort Worth Public Library, five museums inside of Fort Worth, uh, five schools at least, Imagination Celebration and several other entities to work together and the Tarrant Area Field of Storytellers to take storytelling into the classroom because we were such believers of story that we wanted to teach kids how to tell stories, and we got an IMLS grant that was a large sum that was to run for two years, and – but it took us two years to put it – to write it, to agree with all the different entities coming together to build the budget, to agree on how it was going to work, to figure how out how it was going to do.

AS: IMLS loves collaboration, but I didn't realize how much time collaboration takes.
(Laughter)

JM: Well, yeah. Right. Well, yes, and what was so funny is the first year we collaborated with this whole year so now we are ready to turn in the grant the day it's due? And we had to have people signing off for it from the city. I mean, I said, "Oh you can't ask my

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supervisor – you can't just take it down there and ask the city department to please sign it." No, and it was a good answer. AS: (Laughter)

JM: And we went back and somebody said "Why don't we make a time line for us to work on." So, I said "Oh, what a good idea." (Laughter) So we still laid a lot of groundwork, there were still people as personnel changed at the different places and you had to bring the new people up on speed and see if they were willing to do it. Anyway, it was a successful venture in some ways and in other ways it was not, and I don't lay everything at my feet, but a lot of not bringing the whole staff on board and having more library participation planned instead of my enthusiasm. (Laughter) They went a long with it and they helped and I got things passed but I don't know if the understanding and the love of the whole thing was there. AS: Right.

JM: Because the other part of that was that they could check out with their library card passes to the different museums and go in free. And — and so that was a really fun thing that the museums liked to bring people in to have all these kids going, and then they toured the museums and they had to get stories out of what they saw – pictures and... too bad I am getting old and I don't remember any ????(Laughter) But there was a lot going on there. Yeah. So that was a high point of combining both the storytelling and the librarianship as I saw that was for what we could be doing.

AS: Right. Um – within librarianship, within the - the corpus of librarians, the world of librarians, um – what are the things that uh, what makes children's librarianship different – children's librarians? Do you think there are certain traits other than patience and enthusiasm or um...

JM: Well, interesting. Um, I do think there is some in terms of love of the children's literature, because I have heard of some librarians that don't read children's books and so I don't understand how they can entice people to read them except through their own reading of reviews and things like that. But, no, they don't bring anything that personal to it and librarianship is changing a lot and that is another reason why I am a more per people person and not a technocrat. And as we went into doing more and more searching and more and more things online, I knew I was getting further and further behind. The things that interested me weren't necessarily sitting in front of a computer keyboard.

AS: Right, right.

JM: And that was what we were supposed to be teaching the kids where to find the databases, how to use them, how to research, umm – different things like that. I am trying to think if there's other things besides just a personal type way of communicating, because children's librarians – it's not just with the children but it's with their parents as well in terms of educating their parents. So they are dealing with several different age groups and needing to be able to communicate with them.

I always understood from my schooling that we really needed to get kids to read and if kids weren't reading well, then it was going to be not up to their teachers at school but up to their parents. So you had to really convince the parents and luckily a lot of people were coming down to the library. I am trying to think if there's other things.

McLaughlin transcript

I think you have to like children, and that is just a basic thing, you know. Um, I have thought recently because I really like history and I really like research and I discover that I will spend more time researching than probably is needed, and it might have been fun to have been a research librarian. And I was up at North Texas library and the librarian that was there helping with students. He looked very at ease with what he was doing and very approachable. And so you know I think those traits are something that we really need to emphasize because we really aren't the "shushing" librarians any more. At least not in the public libraries. (Laughter) AS: Right, right.

JM: And I don't know about the others but I don't think it was real quiet when I was up there at the university. There were lots of different groups going around and everybody seemed to be studying well any way.

AS: Right, right. How do you feel about technology as it – as it effects children's librarianship? Um, do you regret that technology is such a part of librarianship now? Do, do you see is there – is there a place for technology in children's librarianship?

JM: Oh yes, yes, yes, because (laughter) when I was in library school, I mean we were doing little Boolean searching type things and we had these weird little discs and, and you know, how far computers have come. And I have to tell you, yes, we need to be aware of it. I was talking with an author friend of mine who is a children's author and she just got back from TLA, and I think there the Barnes and Noble CEO talked to her, and the whole librarianship is going to be changing just like publishing is going to be changing. Just like our book stores are going to be changing with the advent of the Kindle and the Nook and whatever else is out there, people can self publish themselves and make money and they don't have to go through a publisher.

People can download the story books from the library on to their computers or their gadgets without even going into the library and just knowing how to access it. And my friend also said that the Barnes and Noble CEO said that he would give us two years and he was going to see major changes.

So no I don't regret that we are trying to keep up with it because it's with computers how people are going to stay connected, and if they can't afford to buy one or do the upkeep or get on the web, they are going to need to have a place to go to be part of the culture that we are in, and the interesting thing is that many of the children who are growing up with it in school, they are learning much more than some of the adults that they are going to. So librarians are having to keep up with it, yeah, yeah. And no I don't regret it, it's just that I am not on that bandwagon.

AS: Yeah, yeah. I am not a children's librarian but I am a public librarian. And um – and I just don't – I don't really – I don't see the place of technology in librarianship for the youngest children. There is something about....

JM: What is your youngest children? AS: A preschool child. JM: Okay, preschool. Yes, right.

AS: You know, there is something about handing a child a book that has beautiful gorgeous Caldecott-winning illustrations that it just doesn't happen on a screen. And, and there is something about – I don't know.

McLaughlin transcript

JM: You lose the tactile part of it. AS: Right, right. And so I don't – I don't see how that is ever going – and it could be that I am just a Luddite, but I don't think so. (Laughter)

JM: I totally understand because they talk about schools going to technology training and teaching and I said somewhere we are going to have to learn how to get along with people. AS: Um hm, um hm.

JM: And to me, I think you are right. Preschoolers need the librarians. They need people to learn about. They can add this but if we only grow up knowing technology, we are going to evolve into something real crazy – like we don't even know how to talk to people except through texting. And short words and stuff, and that is not to me education. That's not learning, but who knows what that future is going to be. I don't know. You know. AS: Right, right. (Laughter)

JM: I was looking at this big picture when she was telling me about this and I said that means the publishers won't ship things off to Korea or Japan to be printed. That means they can download Office and can self-publish. And she gave me an example of a young woman who made a million dollars on this way of doing it. You know, I'm - I am not understanding all of it, but now a publisher came to her.

But that is what I am saying with the whole publishing business which libraries have been getting all their books from publishers and then self-publishing comes in for authors. They don't have to go through that whole editorial group and everything. And so they can just put it out there and people will read them.

AS: But those books are never going to be able to withstand a child's – you know. Those self-published paperback books are – would last two circulations, whereas my Bound-To-Stay-Bound version... (Laughter) JM: Exactly, yes.

AS: They last forever and they are well printed, and you know, pretty pictures.
(Laughter)

JM: I told – I told my friend, I said "Well I just can't see cuddling up with your parent and reading on a Kindle." AS: Right, right.

JM: There's just something. And I asked her, "Well, do you take it to bed with you?" Because I read in bed and she said "Oh yeah, I have done that." I said, "Oh." So to me there is the tactile. There's the experience which is the thing you heard about from a lot of people but she brought out the point, we are saving a lot of trees if we don't print them. AS: Uh huh.
(Laughter)

JM: And, and I am not talking books for the youngest kids. I am talking about the books that seem so periphery, that you wonder why people keep publishing these same stories because it is somebody else's name and another title. You know, and just junky. And I guess that is a big slam at the paperback book. (Laughter) Harlequin, I guess. Which there must be a place for them because there are people that read them. And I asked her, "Well, what about all the baby boomers that maybe didn't get into the stream of all the new stuff?" They are retiring with limited income. They aren't going to all of them want computer books, the not more advanced. The ones that are willing to try new things may, but they aren't going to sit with a Nook. They

McLaughlin transcript

want to hold a book and see those pictures if there's pictures. But magazines and newspapers are going through this problem already. AS: Right. Right, yeah.

JM: So I just think there is some big changes coming, though I can't pinpoint them.

AS: Right, right. Well, back to your career, as you transitioned from children's librarian at a branch to working downtown, to dealing with middle management, at the end of your career as a manager, how involved were you still in the day to day I-am-going-to-read -to-children sort of?

JM: Okay, I got less involved, especially as it was pointed out to me I needed to – to manage things. I see the manager – now I do see things I might do differently, and go out into the area neighborhood more and do more networking for the library and trying to put different things in place. I sort of felt like I was doing it, but maybe I wasn't doing it as well as it needed to be done.

You know, you can always look back and see there is other things. However, you also get different people in there and you use whatever skills they have. I tried to work with the librarians I had and set up schedule but sometimes schedules – you have to stay in touch. Somebody called in and said they were sick or something, well then you don't just say "Oh I am sorry, we aren't going to have this." Somebody has to fill in, so but there were probably definitely things I should have been doing, could have been doing. Yeah. Because the transition was hard for me.

AS: Did you enjoy that part of your career as much as you enjoyed the earlier part?

JM: Yes, much more.

AS: Really?! Okay.

JM: Well, because I had more pull. I enjoyed managers' meetings and getting to know the other managers, because they all taught me a lot of things. Parts of the library that I wasn't aware of, you know, because we didn't have government documents in the children's department, you know. I cross-trained in business one time and I found that fascinating, so that is where you get how to start a business, what businesses there are, how do you invest, you know. There's a whole lot of things out there that helped me respect a lot of the different librarians, and realize, you know, that we all have our specialties, so I could very much respect what they were doing. Therefore, I assumed I had that same respect.

AS: Okay.

JM: Yeah, just different clientele and different sets of goals.

AS: Right. Uh, so as - as a manager you worked downtown and so you were managing the children's librarians at the branches as well? Or...

JM: No, that - that would have been a coordinator's position. AS: Okay, okay.

JM: And I was simply a – managing the youth center. Like I said, we grew from a two librarian department to a four librarian department and then when we moved up to cover much more space, that's when it was opened up with a six person department. AS: I see.

JM: And had – have you been down there? AS: Not in a couple of decades. (Laughter)

JM: We now have a Hazel Harvey PC center, and I got to be there when we opened it. And there is a separate area for preschoolers, for games, for parents, for display. A separate area

McLaughlin transcript

for the teens or the upper elementary and a whole range of different areas to explore. It is a huge area.

AS: And the downtown Fort Worth library is connected to a shopping mall. Is that correct?

JM: It has been in the past.

AS: Oh, it's no longer. That died.

JM: We did have a lot – we – I went through a lot of things. Tandy Center changed and Tandy moved and then we shut the entrance into the mall. AS: Oh, okay.

JM: When Dillard's moved out of there, it seemed like that was the – you know, you could see into the future and that was sort of showing what was going to happen.

AS: The death knell, huh? (Laughter)

JM: Tandy removed the parking lot and started building a new building. There was no place for people to park on the parking lot and ride the trolley up or the little train up, which was sort of an adventure for parents to take their kids on. And we got a lot of kids that way, but over the years as I was down there, this evolving thing was happening with downtown, so we are no longer connected there.

We only have one entrance and that's the entrance on Third Street and it is the main entrance. The Library Foundation has come into play, raising money for different parts of the library, and now they call one of them the East wing of the library. At least when they opened it, it was the downtown Fort Worth Living Room, so I haven't been there to see what that looks like, okay. We had great hopes and Linda Allmand under whom the plan went forward with, had great hopes of serving the citywide population. AS: Spell her last name. JM: A-l-l-m-a-n-d. AS: Thank you.

JM: She had been a children's librarian in her career. And so she was very excited and I was very excited when I got to be part of that, setting up the collection and moving and transitioning into the library.

And at that time, I did go out and try to find a lot of programs to bring down to the kids and worked with the Imagination Celebration in Fort Worth to use our new computer lab, as well as the library, as well as live presentation that kids could cycle through all these things and find out, research, and come down and answer questions and research in the library after the computers. And then also see somebody doing something that related to all that. And that was a very successful program for which I thanked them very much. It brought kids down to the library to see. It brought teachers down to the library to see, because otherwise people don't go downtown. AS: Right.

JM: And so it was really fun to share this new space that the library was affording to parents and children. [To see it] unfold. So that was an exciting time, yeah. There is now going to be a coordinator's position for children's library, and there was one when I started.

JM: So it is always interesting how things get rearranged and changed.

JM: And, uh, different librarians view things differently and – and decide that all librarians can plan a summer reading program.

McLaughlin transcript

AS: (Laughter) Oh, which is hard work by the way. (Laughter) For those of you that don't know.

JM: Right. And we expanded it from being for children to including everybody, teens as well as adults. So there is a lot of expansion and so everybody should all be able to work on it, and to some extent, you know, they have done a good job.

AS: Now at Fort Worth, your – the library director has always been a librarian, not a business person, right?

JM: I can't say always but the two directors I worked under always were. Yeah, right.

AS: And, um...

JM: And they were also city managers. The library is a department under the city government, so they were also department head.

AS: Did you find your – your prerogatives – the dictates – did you find that the city managers making decisions about the library that you didn't feel very, that you didn't feel were very librarily or did you always have a good relationship with them? With the budget people? (Laughter)

JM: Right, just like Fort Worth is facing a budget crunch right now, we went through an early '90s one and that was right when I had gotten this new position downtown and Ridglea Library that I left had three librarians. And there was one time that there was a manager's meeting for the manager and the other librarian, you know, she got to take lunch and I had a children's program, so they were both out of the library and I was running a children's program and some other concerns came up.

And suddenly you say, "How could they possibly get along with two librarians?" Which is what they were cut to, to two and a half librarians when I left. And because it was one of the busier branch, they had two and a half, and many of the other libraries just went to two librarians. And I recognize that budget plays a part and it has to, but how you serve your public is dependent on how many people you have. For when you keep your libraries open for so many hours, somebody has to be there.

JM: So I think becoming a manager helped me become aware very much of the budget problems, and I have to admit that in remembering everything, I don't.

JM: And so there were a lot I know we complained about. A short fall came and the librarians decided to take a – well, they are using that term now. AS: A furlough?

JM: Yes, thank you. The furlough, and I thought we did it well because we took the week between Christmas and the New Year.

JM: And that was a time when not many people came to the library. Circulation was low, business was low so it was easy to do that, and I believe now they are spreading it throughout the year. So if you were just not in tune with the news and everything, you might want to run down to your library and discover it is closed. AS: Right, right.

JM: So, um, so you know as – it's the ebb and the flow of the financial thing that the libraries are dependent upon.

McLaughlin transcript

AS: Were you ever involved in – um, the division of the book budget and did you always feel like you were supported financially as far as being able to buy the children's librarian - the children's books ...

JM: Materials?

AS: Materials that were – that you wanted and that were necessary or uh, did you ever feel – I don't know. Did you ever – did, did you have to fight for your share of the – the collection development budget I guess is my question?

JM: When I started at the Fort Worth Public Library, each librarian got a budget for her different or his different department and branch.

JM: Now how they divided because I wasn't a manager at that time – how they divided up that money, I don't know. There was a children's coordinator and we all got to go down and preview books and order them or not, and then we all read all the reviews and over the years, so many things changed a long that way that we ended up not having a children's coordinator and trying to relieve the branch librarians of that ordering of all the books.

JM: So we went to a central ordering area. If we saw books we wanted, we could submit them and then went through lots of manipulation. Oh, we - we even – yeah, there was a period of time that we contracted out our ordering with Brodart. And the young woman that helped us, Linda Hummel, she ended up coming out and visiting us and getting the – the uh what each librarian said was important in their area, in their branch, so I need more books on this, I need more books, I don't need these books, and so she would listen to all that and then she would order from that.

We didn't like it, but it was one of those other budget things. Um, there was a period of time then that we took it back from Brodart and said, oh, good, we are going to order them ourselves, but it was one or two people in the acquisition department. One did children's and one did adult, so it was still sort of the same thing, it was just local. So now you could call her up and talk to her.

JM: And so I think what happened with that is they took out the immediacy of knowing what books were coming out, because it - that was just too much to keep up with, and you are being assistant branch manager and dealing with all the problems with adult patrons as well as children's, and as well as planning your programs, as well as, you know, taking care of the pages and supervising. You know, well, then something gave and so the collection development to me wasn't the same as what I had enjoyed before.

JM: Yeah, and you felt like that was sort of a big part of your job. At least that is what you learned it was.

JM: You know, so many things have really changed over those twenty two years that I worked in and I know that at the time you get really frustrated with it and I was that. But looking back...What difference did it really make? I don't know.

JM: But because kids were still coming in and reading. They were still picking up books. They could ask for something. Myself – oh I am still reading and I am still doing research, and I don't find the popular fiction being what I am reading necessarily. I don't find that we are getting what I want to read, but then I am a really an unusual reader, you know. And

McLaughlin transcript

I know we can get it right now through interlibrary loan if I would get on the ball and get them that way. So it is just sort of interesting.

I like traveling around and getting books for locations and, of course, we are not going to buy them here. You know, because it is specific and it is not a pop – popular title. A lot of things have to go with budget crunches, but even if you have a lot of money, you buy a lot of junk too.

JM: You know, and so you can't always but you are trying to meet everybody, every reader's, every reader book, book, their own reader, you know, whatever that was.

AS: Ranganathan.

JM: Yes, and all these neat little phrases that were just – just so smart. Well, well.

AS: I – I think that – that is Ranganathan's third rule. (Laughter)

JM: Yeah. Well he had three of them that went real well together I forget what they were.

AS: Well, what are your favorite – what are your favorite kind of stories? What – what are your favorite stories and what do you think are the most useful stories for children hear?

JM: Hm. Oh, my. A lot of the schools go for character development and I would say that maybe that's what they are. Uh, character development and how people handle problems and how they still are--are good people. That type of thing. It might be really good stories that – for children to hear. My interest is in historical stories and if I am doing Texas history, well then I find parts that I am interested in because as a storyteller I can only tell a story if I am interested in it.

JM: So I guess the other thing, oh and also another emphasis is I have my own personal concerns about the world and the earth that we live on, and want to encourage people to have a little bit – change some of the ways, the patterns that we have gotten into with our conspicuous consumption of a lot of things. And let them know that there is a world out there, outside of their computers and TV, and there's people that always will be with us that don't have nearly as much as many of us do. And for some reason I think children need to know that. And I don't think it is ever too late to learn that.

AS: Now, it occurs – just now it occurred to me that uh your position as children's librarian downtown um might have been a very interesting – you might have had an interesting storytime. It occurs to me that there is some very poor children that live downtown. And -- and then perhaps really the only privileged children would be able to come into downtown. What, what was that storytime like?

JM: For the preschoolers we ended up having the YWCA across the street from us. And so many times they – we had scheduled times for the 3's and 4's and 5's to come in and before they – before Tandy built their new building we did have the housing project that was down there and so

JM: And we were a hangout place for them. They mainly came on Saturdays and so we just offered lots of different things and it wasn't storytellers. Maybe movies or maybe a program or maybe a guest. And you try to find something that they might be interested in. Everybody might be interested in for a reason to come and be there.

McLaughlin transcript

My experience at East Berry told me that I wasn't very good at finding out what they were interested in, because they would be hanging out at the library and then it was time to start the program and suddenly everybody left. Swoosh. AS: (Laughter) Oh.

JM: So you know, maybe on the other hand, maybe their needs weren't at all what I had been taught that children need and maybe they just needed more one on one attention and be able to talk and gather. I mean, I don't know. I never did figure that out, so. (Laughter)

JM: (Laughter) Programs – well, I always come up with these eccentric type programs that I think were real exciting, (laughter) but everybody didn't come. (Laughter)

AS: (Laughter) Nothing worse than a program that you have worked really hard on. (Laughter)

JM: Oh, this will be fun. (Laughter) Oh, well, absolutely.

AS: I have to grab my glasses so I can see the screen. We are coming down to the last four or five minutes. Um, umm. Do you have anything that you want to share that – that I – hasn't been brought up so far?

JM: The only – the only other thing I could think of when you are a children's librarian, I was in a position to meet an awful lot of people, and one of the people I ended up hiring was the mother of some of the kids that I had worked with and she came in and asked me if there was any future for children's librarians, because then she was going to go back to school. And she did, and she became a children's librarian, and she was a good one and so we hired her down there, so it's interesting. And then the author friend that I mentioned, I met her because it was a children's writing group that met at the library when I first went downtown.

JM: And we got to be good friends and so you are in an opportunity to make a lot of connections with people and it was always very fun for me because there were very interesting people. Interesting people come into the library.

JM: Yeah. Challenges - with home schoolers and people of different thoughts than what I have. I only ran into it one time. A very active family that used the library a lot and they asked me why this one particular book was on the shelf. And I don't remember using the standard that, you know, we -- I tried to approach it from different children's points of view saying "You know there could be a child in that situation and so that book is for them, whether it is for you or not, your children or not."

And just left it and there were several books that we ended up for a period of time taking off the shelf and people would have to ask for them. And then after I guess those people grew up or moved on. Their children got older, well then we put them back on the shelf and there was never a problem, you know.

So I – we did that a few books but not that many, and I didn't feel like I had convinced her about other children needing to read it. She was very – umm, looked at the world in her particular way of looking at it.

JM: And I am not use to dealing with people like that abundantly for a lot so I am sort of thinking that I followed the library's policies. We all need to know things, you know, and be exposed to different things, and it is our parents that choose to help us to be exposed or not when we are very young.

McLaughlin transcript

AS: With – with ethical decisions, uh – you know when someone challenges a book, I am always thinking is this the book that I am willing to lay my job on the line on, or is just not worth it. (Laughter)

AS: And – uh, did you find when a book was challenged, did you ever find yourself saying “You know, this one really isn’t worth the fight.” (Laughter)

JM: Really you know, I was at the position when we had that there was a children’s coordinator and so she got to handle it. (Laughter) AS: Okay. (Laughter)

JM: And I think, you know, we can get together and we can talk strongly as librarians.
AS: Uh huh.

JM: But in the long run, I don’t know. Harry Potter had a lot of problems with it, I think, when it first came out and... AS: Right, right. Anything to do with witches.

JM: Yeah, exactly. Exactly, and at the time though I just didn’t have to - I didn’t have to personally deal with it and they always wrote letters. We had a procedure to follow and they had to write letters and then the coordinator looked at it. So I never felt like I was laying my job on the line. There might have been a couple of other things. Budget cuts and things like that, that just...

JM: Luckily, I got through it. (Laughter)

AS: Well, we are right at the end of our tape. Thank you so much for being part of this project and I appreciate your making the time to join us. JM: Well, thank you for asking. Yeah. AS: Very good. Very good.

JM: I had a great career. (Laughter).

AS: Good deal. Thank you so much.

Interviewed by Arro Smith; transcribed by Margaret Ann Smith.

Mears Transcript

Today is Friday, February 29th. We're at the San Marcos Public Library. My name is Arro Smith. I am the director of the Capturing Our Stories National Oral History Program of Retiring/Retired Librarians. Today we are interviewing Dr. Bill Mears. He is the former director of the Texas State University Library in San Marcos, Texas. He is currently the director of the Kyle Public Library in Kyle, Texas. Doing the interview is Stephanie Langenkamp. She is the director of the San Marcos Public Library.

Stephanie Langenkamp: Bill, thank you so much for coming today. We appreciate your involvement in this great project. Can you give me just a brief rundown of your career--all the different steps in your career?

Bill Mears: Well, I'll just restrict that to my library career. I started off as a--kind of a--a forced volunteer at a junior-high library. I was involved in a program, and the principal said, "When you are not doing anything in this program, go help out in the library." And that was my initial introduction to being involved in working in a library.

After that, I went to library school and [I] was very much involved from that point forward in libraries. I was the assistant director of public services at the University of Southern Mississippi. I was the director at a community library in Ohio.

I came back and started off as the assistant director at Texas State University, formerly Southwest Texas State University. I was there for twenty-five years.

After I retired I went to help someone out--they called me and asked me to help automate the Episcopal Theological Seminary while they were hiring a director--and it was only supposed to be for three months. Well, the search fell through, and I ended up being there for eight months--and I really enjoyed that stay in a seminary library.

After that, I went to a prison library. I was the director of a men and women's prison library for two years. And then a friend of mine told me about the availability of a public library's director position in Kyle. And I took that position and I have been there ever since--and I really enjoy that.

S.L.: Wow, that is quite a spectrum.

Mears: So it's about being involved in seven libraries; but in six different types of libraries.

S.L.: I guess you make a great first candidate for this oral history interview because you have been in every kind of library, except--let's see--Library of Congress, coming up. So, which one of those did you like the best?

Mears: At the time, I said I enjoyed every single one of them. I've always liked work, and I've always liked whatever library I was working in. And I can say that and mean it. Now that I'm in a public library, I can say that I like that one the best.

S.L.: So, what's the commonality between all of them?

Mears: They are there to serve people. That has been my guiding belief in every library that I have worked--in whatever library you are in, you are there to serve the public that comes into your library.

S.L.: So is it safe to say that when you were in junior high, you already knew that you wanted to become a librarian?

Mears transcript

Mears: No, that is not safe to say. As I said, the principal told me when I wasn't being involved in this organization to go help the librarian-- The main thing I remember from that is-- At the end of the school year, we taped newspaper over all the stacks so they wouldn't get any dust on the books over the summer. I remember stuffing paper down in the back of the shelves so that no dust could get back in the shelves. And I really didn't know at that time that I was going to get involved in libraries. It really wasn't until--this is a long story, is it too long?

S.L.: No, go ahead.

Mears: Okay. I have seven undergraduate majors. I kept going back and getting another undergraduate major. I met my future wife, and she said "You're not very smart are you?" I said, "Why?" She said, "You could have had a doctorate degree by now. Why don't you go on and get your master's?" Having just completed a major in library science, I said "Yeah, okay. That sounds smart." So I went and got my master's in library science. And finished my master's, and my wife said, "Now that you've got that, why don't you just go on and get your doctorate degree?" And had just taken a vow that I would never go back to school again. I had had enough; but then I went back to school, and got my doctorate.

S.L.: And where did you get that?

Mears: University of Southern Mississippi.

S.L.: Okay. So, after that is when you started in with the community college library?

Mears: No. First, after I got my master's degree, they hired me on as the head of public services libraries at the University of Southern Mississippi. And it was from there that I went to the community college.

S.L.: Well, that is quite a career. Now, where there things in your childhood, either a relationship to books, or just little hints when you were a kid, that made you go--looking back on it--"yeah, I think I would have become a librarian?" based on this or that--

Mears: I don't know; but I did have one unique experience--I don't know if I should tell this one; but I will--they can edit it if they want--. I did have one unique experience in a library when I was very young. I used to--there were really two experiences: Being very cheap, I used to save up Coke bottles and get two cents for every Coke bottle I got, and I would save up and get ninety-nine cents. And once I got ninety-nine cents, I could go down to a stationery store, of all places, and buy a Hardy Boy book. And I would do that so I could keep reading the Hardy Boys, because I loved the Hardy Boy books, and I suddenly found out that the public library carried the Hardy Boy books, and I didn't have to spend my ninety-nine cents on the Hardy Boy books anymore. So I could use that to go to the movies on Saturday, which only cost nine cents at the time. Anyway, so that's one thing--I loved the idea of saving money.

But the second thing--and I think that I will always, always remember this--I can still see this scene in my mind: Being a young boy, and being interested in things, I one time--I kept looking in the library for books on a certain subject--I'll tell you it was sex. And I could never find this book, so--I didn't want to go up and ask at the desk--but after enough weeks of looking, I finally went up to the desk, and I asked this librarian that was at the desk, "Do you have such-and-such book?"--I can't remember the title. And with that, she started, "Why does a young man your age want to look at that type of book--?"

And about that time, a nice woman from behind the scene came onto the scene and said, "Mary"--or whatever her name was--"I'll take care of this." And she came up to me, and she said, "We keep that book behind the desk. Do you think you are old enough to read this?" And I didn't

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know what to say, so I said, "yes." And so she gave me that book, and I got to look at all the pictures in that book, and was contented and turned it back in.

And I always to this day remember the kindness of that woman, because I was so embarrassed. And love that woman for that, and I still think of that woman kindly, and always insist that my staff treat people with respect--especially kids. That's a long story; but--

S.L.: So, that woman may have had an effect, in terms of inspiring you to become a librarian. Was there any other person that you think--was pivotal--?

Mears: I would love to say something dramatic and interesting; but my wife told me one time, when I was getting my degree, she said, "You need to get a master's degree." So, we were going to marry, and she said, "I want you to be able to support me, and make enough money to take care of us." And having the master's degree--and it just turned out I got it in library science--turned out how I got in there. I can't say there was any--anyone--that really just turned me on to being a librarian.

S.L.: So

AS: What date did you get your master's degree in library science?

Mears: 1970.

AS: And was that part of--at that time the LBJ administration had an initiative to--push people through PhD programs in library science. Were you part of that initiative?

Mears: No, I didn't get my--I got my master's degree in library science. I got my PhD in administration.

S.L.: College administration?

Mears: Yes.

S.L.: Did you ever want to be a university administrator or?

Mears: Well, I kind of thought that I was, when I was head of the university library

S.L.: I guess you were then (laughter). I always thought of you as a librarian.

Mears: I do too.

S.L.: Once a librarian, always a librarian.

Mears: True, true.

S.L.: Your heart really seems to be in libraries, as opposed to administrative things. I should tell the people--for the audience--that I actually know you in a rather personal way, from having worked for you and with you on the library board here [at the San Marcos Public Library]. I think it is fair to say, that you are a true librarian, and not much of a bureaucrat.

Mears: Oh, well, thank you (laughter). I'll tell you what--it's interesting--my sister is a librarian--was a librarian and opened libraries for a school system, became a principal, and has now gone back to being a librarian again. And my son-in-law--interestingly enough--is a librarian. So, it kind of runs in the family. And I assure each one of them that it is the best profession that you can get into.

S.L.: I would have to agree with that. One thing that I do remember--I worked for you at the University library here, and I--something very striking about you is that you always continue to work at the reference desk, even when you became a university administrator. Can you tell us why you felt that that was important?

Mears: I could say a lot of noble reasons--but it was because I liked working with the public. That's the bottom line of it. I truly found that much more enjoyable than pushing paper all day long. And so it was almost a relief to get out and work with the public. But I really liked

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working with the public. I like to do reference, because it's kind of like solving a puzzle--you know--finding the right answer. And because people usually appreciate that, and appreciate you--is another rewarding part of it.

S.L.: Now, you have had an opportunity to do reference work in a lot of different kinds of libraries. How does that vary? You have been at a prison library, for example--how would that be different?

Mears: In the prison library, the primary reference work that I did there was helping the inmates find the law books that they needed to do an appeal, or something of that nature. --Very little reference work in the traditional sense of coming in and having a question about whatever--and looking and using the reference books for that--most of that did not occur in the prison library.

S.L.: Did you enjoy working with the prisoners?

Mears: Oh, the prisoners were just great to work with. First of all, it was a privilege to come into the library [for the prisoners]. And they always did real well in the library. There was only one thing that didn't do well in--and that is--they had--it was a male and female prison, and it was separated, of course--but they used to have women in the library--in the prison--that would come in and cook each day--and the inmates that were in the library were not supposed to look at them as they went by. And I was supposed to insure that they did not. Well, you know, that was just impossible. (Laughter) And so, in that sense, I wasn't too successful. But they were great. They would come in there--and the workers--the prison inmates who worked in the library--were just super. You would just say, "I'd like re-do all the spine labels." That's all you said. And they just went and did it. And they loved to just do some work in there. They were great.

S.L.: Oh, that's interesting.

Mears: Can I tell you a story?

S.L.: Sure.

Mears: I think one of the most pleasant experiences that I had, is that after I left the prison--and it was about a year after I left the prison--I got a call from a woman. And she said, "This is Mrs. So-and so, from Fayetteville, Arkansas." And I said, "Hi." And she said, "Are you Bill Mears?" I said, "Yes." And she said, "Did you work in a prison library?" And [I] said, "Yes." She said, "I have spent months running you down, and finding out where you were." She said, "I want to tell you something."

She said, "You told my son about inter-library loan." And she said, "You have made his prison stay a real, real positive thing--in some ways." And she said, "I want to thank you." And she started to cry. And it kind of got to me, also.

S.L.: Sure--

Mears: It made me feel good. And that was one of the nicest compliments I ever got.

S.L.: Oh, yeah. That's a great story--. Do you feel like your library school career prepared you well for your work in libraries? Or was it more learned on the job?

Mears: A combination of both, I think is the diplomatic answer. And, in truth, the real answer. There are some things that I learned in library school, that I think were helpful--especially in the area of cataloging, although how much I remember remains to be seen but I think that helped me when I started doing cataloging. But I think a lot of it was learned on the job. And then there were things that you had to know, that I never learned in library school--or any school at all.

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An example of that might be: At the University, one of the little things that I know how to take care of, was when the mens urinals ran over because the handle got stuck. I knew how to go in and unstick that. And they would always call me and say, you know, "Dr. Mears, can you go to the restroom (laughter) and fix it--." And--

AS: That's a guy-librarian thing.

Mears: And I would always think, walking there to do that job, "This is what I went and got a PhD for? (laughter) So I could ____." But anyway--I like every part of being a librarian. I like that part. I like every part of being a librarian.

S.L.: It has a bit of everything in it, doesn't it?

Mears: It does.

S.L.: So, tell me about some of your triumphs--you know--. You have mentioned this touching story about this prisoner; but in terms of--you know what you see as your big accomplishments in the library field. Talk about a couple of those. And I know you have some. --Well, you built a big building, for one thing. Why don't you talk a little bit about that experience?

Mears: That was a unique experience. And I think that's an experience that every librarian should have, and would I hope they would have. That is being involved in a new library. At the [Southwest Texas State] University we were growing short on space, and the president called me in, and said, "Bill, how would you like to have a new library?" Well, of course, you say "Yes." And I got my hopes all up, we thought we were going to get a new library; and he said, "Well, the political climate isn't right to ask for it--I'll get back to you." Yeah, I know what that means. But, he did.

And we became involved in building a huge seven-story library. Each story was about the equivalent of one football field. So it was the equivalent of seven football fields, stacked one on top of the other. It was a big undertaking. And what made it special, was the fact that the university had never involved the department in the building of a building before. What they would do, is they would have the university physical plant work with the architects, and then they take and build the building, and then they would turn it over to the department people.

So, I don't know why they chose us--and it turned out to be a very good experience. We worked--I worked very closely with the project architect. I got way more credit than I deserved for the building. But the real credit belong to the staff, because what would happen is: I would get the plans from the project architect, and then I would take them to the different department heads. And I would say, "Would you talk to your people about this. Look over your area, and see how you think this is going to work and what's not going to work." And they would say, well--they would find doors that were going to open where the desk was going to be, and that wouldn't work. And so they constantly refined the plans. And we really--I think we got a very functional building.

The building was very impressive, physically. The materials used on the building were impressive. And I always felt like what most people missed was the functionality of the building. I felt like the building functioned very well. With one exception--and it was something that I worked on with the head of circulation for a long period of time.

And that was the book drop. We worked on the location of the book drop, and making sure the book drop would be just so--so that we could put a cart under there and roll the cart from the book drop to the circulation desk in the shortest amount of space. And--when they put in the book drop, they didn't have the floor down. There was some granite flooring they were putting

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in, and it wasn't down--and it wasn't down. So, when they measured it, they measured it wrong. And then they put the book drop in--and either I didn't figure it right, or somehow or another it got wrong--and the book drop had to empty all the books onto the floor. And everyday--to this day--people have to bend down and pick up one book at a time (laughter) and put it in the cart, and then to the circulation desk--. It is the major one thing that went wrong. So I like to talk about the things that went wrong with the building better than the things that went right--. Seriously, it was, I believe, a very functional building. I still like the flow of the traffic in that building. I like the way a lot of things were done. And I do have to attribute my staff--not myself--for all they ways it worked well.

S.L.: Well, it is a very, very beautiful building--a real asset to the university.

Computers have changed a lot about libraries since you started your career, and I know you enjoy computers a lot. Could you reflect for a few minutes on the change that came with computers to your library?

Mears: Okay. When I started at the library--the library at the [Southwest Texas State] University library--let's see. Where should I start? The first--

S.L.: How about the first computer that you interacted with in your library?

Mears: As an online catalog? Or as a PC computer?--just trying to figure out where to start here--.

S.L.: PC.

Mears: PC. That's a good place to start. The first--I'd also like to take credit for this; but, again, I can't. I had a friend that was very, very much into calling himself and identifying himself as a futurist. And he told me that computers were the thing of the future--that I really needed to be aware of what was coming, in terms of the future.

S.L.: Was that Charles Johnson?

Mears: It was Charles Johnson and Dave Huffman. And I think being smart is getting smart people around you--and I've always tried to get as [many] smart people around me as I possibly could. So I got--the first computer that we got--was a little Radio Shack computer. We got one of those. And then we--then they were talking about--they came to me and said, "You know there's a four K [kb] color computer out there." "Four K, what are they going with all that?" (laughter) And so I ordered those, and those were called compu-colors. They were constantly breaking. And I embarrassed that I had ever ordered them. And then from there we went to Apples, from there we went to PCs, and the whole scene exploded.

And today, I don't know how people kind of--can even think of a library with the personal computer there. The interesting thing that I see coming is that we have gone from the "dumb" terminal, to the pretty much independent PC terminal, and now people are starting to talk in terms of going to the "thin client." I'm just--I find it hard to believe that we are going to go back; but we'll have to wait and see, is all I can say. It has made a huge difference. I think that one of the main services, that our library today provides to the public--to a certain aspect of the public--are PCs, to get on the Internet. For those people that don't have a PC at home--don't have something that is hooked up to the Internet. And to show you what a futurist I am, when I took this job, they had nine computers in the library--

S.L.: And you are talking about the Kyle Public Library--.

Mears: --Kyle Public Library--and Kyle was a very small town five years ago. Most people won't know how much it has increased in size in the last five years. But anyway, it had

nine computers, and two of those computers were for the staff. So they had seven public computers. And my thinking at that time was: everybody will soon have a computer in their home, like everybody had a microwave, and so we'll probably need less computers in the future.

But right now, we have nineteen computers in our library. I am ordering five more--I just got permission to order five more computers for our library--and I would say a good portion of our patrons come into the library to use the Internet.

I think it has had huge role in changing--at least in my mind--librarians argue with me about this--I think it has changed the role of the library significantly. I know that we have talked about how you have answered reference questions--and I've answered reference questions; but most people today come into the library and they sit down and they Google their answers. It is when they can't find their answer--that's when the librarian comes into play. But I think that I've seen a change in the way reference has taken place--in the last five years--in so far as people just sit down and Google things. Now, I know we could talk and argue about this--. I remember being in a meeting about two years ago, and bringing this up, and some of the librarians there vehemently disagreed with me--and pulled me aside after the meeting, and told me I was totally wrong; but I know from our experience in our library at least, that happens--that happens all the time.

S.L.: What skills do you think are most important for being a good librarian?

Mears: I think the most important skill that any librarian can have, is good people skills. When I hire, I just look to see if I can determine if the person is going to work well with the public. During the course of my forty years of being a librarian, the people that I have had to let go, have been people who have not been able to work well with others--whether that be fellow staff members, or the public. They didn't have the ability to have good people skills--they could have been outstandingly bright; but if they can't work with the public, if they can't work well with people, I don't think they can be a good librarian.

And that even applies to the librarians that are in tech services, if you have a tech services department. Again, that ability to work well with others just comes to the fore all the time. And it makes for a better operation; it makes for a better library; it makes for a better cooperation among the staff, when you have people that can work well with one another. I just--I could talk all day about this, and I don't think I could get to the next part, because I think this is so key.

S.L.: Absolutely. But obviously--beyond that--there are some specialized skill sets that you would seek out in a professional librarian, besides the good people skills. What would you look for if you were hiring a second-in-command for the Kyle Public Library, for example? And you've got five candidates that are all great people-persons, what would you look for next?

Mears: Next, I would look for a person that would be willing to--maybe--I hate to use the term "think outside the box"--because it is when you think outside the box, I think that's when you make progress. I think the person ought to have a degree of curiosity--and also, have a degree of--liking to solve problems. I love to solve a problem. There is nothing more that makes me happier than when someone says, "I have a problem." I say "Oh, boy. Let's go. What is it." And once I hear about their problem, then I'm looking for a solution. Or they come in and say, "You know, this just isn't working out at the circulation desk--we've got to do something else. What can we do?"

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I like to bring people together, and sit down and talk with them, and collaboratively work with them. So, I guess I like that quality also--to be able to work collaboratively with others, and to be a problem-solver. Those are some of the other things I think they should have.

S.L.: Now, I understand you are getting ready to build a new library in Kyle. So, how has this process been different from the--political part--of building the library at the university?

Mears: Well, there is politics involved in both aspects, and in both situations. At the university there was politics involved. Most of it--no, ninety-nine percent--I was not involved in it at the university. I am involved in it more at the public library. I remember reading something in Wheeler's book, when I was studying and trying to figure out how to build a library--what happened when I was told we might build one at the university--and that is, he said: that the librarian has the least influence in the designation of the spot of the library. And I find that to be true.

Although I am involved in that politically in Kyle, there are groups that want the library "here;" there are groups that want it "here;" and there are groups that want it "there;" and there are groups that don't want it "here." And so, I--if it comes to a bond issue, I want to have all of those groups voting for the library, and so the way I handle that is, I say, "I don't care where it is, we just need a new library to serve the patrons of Kyle better." --What was your question?

S.L.: Well, how the politics differed at the university versus the public?

Mears: Just working with the key people is the same. At the university, it was the president, and the regents--I didn't have too much to do with the regents, although I did meet with them on one or two occasions. In the city, it is working with the city manager, and the different council members, and the board on the library. So, it is working with all of the different people that influence the situation.

S.L.: Do you find that there are people out there who feel that the library has become sort of an anachronism, and that it's not needed anymore? Are you confronting that at all?

Mears: No. No, I have yet to--I always think of the library as something like motherhood and apple pie. People don't have a tendency to look at the library as something not worthwhile. You might think, in this age, where people have Internet access, that the library is not necessary; but some of those people that are highly computer-oriented, come into the library to get books to read. They want to spend their money on computer and electronics, and so there are also readers saying they--rather than have to go out and buy a book, they use the library. So, I haven't encountered that--I can't say I've encountered that a single time.

S.L.: Oh, that's great, great to hear. So often, it seems like people do want to jump to that conclusion.

Mears: Well, I guess maybe it's because most of the people I'm talking with are in the library. And they are there because they want to be there; so I'm not meeting that other end of the spectrum.

S.L.: Do you take special effort to get out into the community? I know at the university, you always loved to walk across campus and go meet everybody, all over campus. What's your equivalent process now that you're a public librarian?

Mears: I jump at the opportunities to speak with groups--the Lions, they need a speaker--I'm always glad to jump in there and say, "Oh yeah, I'll come talk about the library. And it's pretty much the same talk. I'll talk to the Lions--I just had an opportunity recently to talk to the Friends of the Library's Board in the neighboring town, Buda. So, anytime I can get out and talk

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about the library, I do so. Other than those groups, I really--well I did go to a ribbon-cutting of the bank so I could meet some people. Anytime I get an opportunity or invitation, I go because I am one of the faces of the library, and I like that face to be out there--so people get to know about it.

S.L.: Kind of just sum up a little bit: What do you see as your biggest challenge? Here you are, you have had a great, long career--none of your enthusiasm seems to have lapsed at all. You seem as enthusiastic as you did thirty years ago. What keeps you going, and seeing new challenges everyday?

Mears: I think the challenge of seeing new challenges. I like to do new things. I don't know--I just like working in the library. Like I said, it's a great job. It's putting in--I think you know--we put in a new automation system to call people and remind them they have overdue books. I like to find new things that will make the library more productive: make it more service-oriented. What makes that for me? I don't know. Like I say, I've always liked work, and I've always loved being in the library. It is just a great profession to be in. Why I still have the enthusiasm? I don't know. I just do?

S.L.: So, what's your next challenge? After the Kyle Public Library, what library will you go to next?

Mears: Probably the library in the nursing home (laughs). So, after retiring four times, maybe after this time it will be the last time. But, I don't know. Hopefully I can stay there a little longer, and be a contributor: help [the] people of Kyle--.

S.L.: Get that new library built.

Mears: Yeah.

S.L.: Is there anything you would do differently, in the whole arch of your career?

Mears: If I had one thing to do over again, I think it would center around the one regret I have about working in the library. And the one regret I always had, in working with the library, is in the people that I've had to fire. I've always felt--I've never been real successful in taking people that worked in the library, that were problems, and changing their attitude or their characteristics or whatever was the problem that caused me to fire them--I never have been able to get a good enough handle on making people change the way--so that they--so that I wouldn't have to fire them. I've always felt badly about that. I have always wanted to know that secret--that key--that you put into a person--whatever you say to a person to turn them on--and get them to change and be a better person so that they can stay with the job. I remember, I remember every single person that I have had to fire; because I dreaded it, I didn't like doing it, and yet I felt like I had to do it for the good of the patrons that came to the library. And I always wish that I was--could have done something to help those people.

S.L.: That's a hard situation. In terms of the outer part of the profession, I see you very much as totally committed to your own library, and that sort of thing--what about your larger obligations to the profession? Have you been very active in the professional associations, and reaching out to other libraries through that?

Mears: Yes, to a degree. And probably not as much as some people. I always looked at reaching out as trying to find a balance between reaching out and being involved in a lot of organizations related to that outer area that you are talking about, and also doing the job that I was paid to do. And even though the university, especially, encouraged you to be involved in different aspects of the profession, I always wanted to find that right balance between being there

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when I was needed, and going out and running whatever organization that needed running. And if I erred, I always erred on the side of being too much involved in the library--in the running of the library.

I did--I was involved in T.L.A. [Texas Library Association] and involved in T.L.A., I was active as chair of the Presentations, Papers for five years. One year I was involved in the creation, with a team, of the theme--which took eighteen months. One year I served--just on a bunch of committees for a year or two. But I was always reluctant to get too much involved, for example, in A.L.A. [American Library Association], where I would have to be off in San Francisco when I felt like I should be in our library. And so if I erred, I erred on the side of being close to home, as opposed to being on those outside areas.

S.L.: Has it been difficult to balance your demanding career with your family life?

Mears: Yes. I don't have too many regrets. I look at--my career has enabled me to provide for our children and my family, and my wife, and myself, in a good fashion. Were there times when I wished I could have been at two places at once? [I] haven't learned to bi-locate yet (laughs); but I wish I could have sometimes. I remember taking my daughter to a tennis team tournament when she was in school, and just wishing the whole time I was there, "I wish I was back at the library." And then I can remember times and occasions when I was at the library, and wishing I could be at my daughter's play, or something of that nature. So, it's always kind of a stretch in both directions; and, yeah, there are times when I wish I could have been more with the children, and there are times that I'm glad--and especially--I have three children that have turned out way beyond my expectations, and have done very well--not because of me; but because of their mother--and I wish I had spent more time with them. But they turned out well, so I think all's well that ends well.

S.L.: Well, are there any other things that you would like to bring up at this time?

Mears: Yes. You know--being in the library has just provided so many unique experiences for me, that it has just been--I just wonder if there is any other profession where you could enjoy the experiences that I have had. And they are just really weird things--dealing with--. One thing that just popped in my mind--we have a brick building made of native brick, and there is a lot of space in-between it--in-between the bricks--and someone said, "I think there's a snake outside." And so we went outside, and we started poking around. And out comes this snake that's about this long--and it's wrapped up--I thought there's just a tiny hole about this big. There's that experience. There's the experience of helping a person having a seizure in the library--that I remember helping. There are so many diverse experiences that I've had being in the library. Giving a letter of recommendation to one of the inmates that we talked about earlier, that worked in the library--and giving him a letter of recommendation to work in one of the libraries in the Dallas area--that was kind of a nice experience that I've had.

The librarians that I have run across, in my career, have all--almost to a person--been exceptional helpful, with sharing their information, and sharing their knowledge, and sharing their ability to teach me, as I went through my profession. You have helped me so many times--and that's just one person. One person that has always been very kind to me--and if I ever had a question about things in the circulation area--I always called--God rest her soul, who just died this past week, or so--JoAnne Hawkins. I could call on her, and she was always more than kind to give whatever knowledge she had. People--librarians--I think librarians--libraries--attract a certain quality of people. And maybe that is why I became a librarian, because I wanted to be

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one of those--that kind--of people. I think that--I really do believe this--that they attract a quality patron; I think they attract a--there are some that are not--but I think overall, that librarians that I have met during my profession, have just been wonderful people--above the average--way above the average. That's been great. The people who use the library have always been great. The staff that I've worked with in the libraries--just really good people. I just really think that's one of the real things that I've enjoyed about the profession.

S.L.: What about books?

Mears: Books? I was fortunate in having two mentors that really helped me in my career. My first job was given to me by my first mentor, who was one of my teachers. I don't know, I guess he saw--though he saw--something in me. I hope he didn't make a mistake. Usually you start out as a librarian in some job--well, I started out as the head of public services. That's kind of skipping a step. Of course, I was a little older; and I had--whatever--. He was a real bookman. And my second mentor, Dr. Lou Maloney--he was a real bookman. (Stephanie's watch makes a chiming sound.) We have a few more minutes?

S.L.: No, that was--.

Mears: Okay. Dr. Maloney was a real bookman, also. I don't know that I am a traditional scholar, in the sense of books, as they were. But I knew current fiction better than they did. I'll take that title from those two. I can talk with the patrons about who the current authors are. And I've been around long enough to have a recollection of the older popular authors of the past. But being a bookman, per se, and--I would say I'm average in that area. I can hold my own in a fair crowd.

S.L.: They do add a lot to the job though--you have to admit that.

Mears: What's that?

S.L.: Books.

Mears: Oh, you're talking about as to how it adds to the job?

S.L.: Well, not really. That's not how [I meant] the question led in. But you've talked about how great being a librarian is--and you have to add that into the whole mix--that it is fun to be around the books.

Mears: It is fun to be around books. And it is fun to have the right book to help the right person out at the right time. And I've always been accused of being--what was Bill Griffin's term for me?--what's the old library of ancient Greece?

S.L.: Alexandria?

Mears: The Alexandria--he would always call me an Alexandrian because I wanted to keep everything. I never wanted to weed. And I told him that it was my philosophy that a book was like a fire engine at the fire station: it was maybe not needed at the present moment; but when it was needed: you really needed it. And that's why I didn't want to get rid of it. That was always the logic I used for keeping books that other people wanted to throw away. Yeah, I like to have them around.

S.L.: Do you think that has changed any, now that you are finding more electronic books, and Google is digitizing so many books, and the way the Internet is revolutionizing reference--do you still feel we need to hang on to as much?

Mears: Oh, definitely. Books are still the cornerstone. That may change with all this digitalization that's going on--all those big programs that are going on by Google and others--and the different universities that are digitizing different aspects of their collection; but I still think

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that there is nothing as good as picking up a book, and sitting down and reading it. And being able to look for the thing you want in that book. I don't see that changing--. I've been wrong about other things, and I may be wrong about that; but not to my mind. And I don't see it happening soon.

The electronic book--one of my board members is always quizzing me, "What do you think about the electronic book?" I said, "The electronic book has been on the scene for a good while now. You might not realize it, but the electronic book has been around for about fifteen or twenty years." And I said, "You hear all of the sudden, this is the way things are going to be," and then it fades away, and then it pops up again, and then it fades away. And now it's popping up again. And maybe this time it will catch hold; but it still--it's still not going to take the place--when you are riding on that subway and the battery runs out--it's still not going to take the place of that book that you can open right there and read. I think there is nothing better than sitting in the doctor's office waiting room, or taking an airplane ride, and having a book in your hand. I think we're in a safe area there.

S.L.: You know, a lot of library schools have changed their names, and they don't even include the word "library" even in the title of the school--. What do you think about that trend?

Mears: You know, that trend is alright. I don't have any problem with it. It's usually information services now, or something, or information sciences, or whatever they want to call it--. We all know what it is. I think that there are new areas that are opening up for people in the information field, that weren't there before. I interviewed a young lady who is working in an architectural firm--and they hired her because she had a library degree and help them organize and categorize the information that they had there--architecture plans, or whatever. So, it is opening up different fields for them--and that's great. But there are still going to be librarians needed. I don't see libraries on the decline. I see bigger and better libraries being built all the time--in small towns, and bigger towns, and metropolitan areas. More libraries are coming with each passing day.

S.L.: Is there anything that you really wish you had known when you started out your career, that now--after forty years--you do know?

Mears: I wish there were a lot of things that I had known back then. But one of the nice things about life is this kind of unraveling of things as they happen, as you need to know them. I think you learn things as you need to know them. I don't--very seldom--I shouldn't say very seldom--seldom do learn something before you need to know about it--at least in my stage in life--and even while I've been a librarian. As you need to know something, that's when you usually learn about it. If I needed to know how to knit next week, then you know, I would find out how to knit. So I'm glad I didn't learn how to knit twenty years ago--if I needed to know it next week--because I probably would have forgotten it by now. So, there were probably a lot of things that would have made life a little simpler for me; but then I would have missed out on the fun of learning about them when I did. So--no--I don't think so. I would have liked to have; but I've also enjoyed finding out about them when I did.

S.L.: Well, you know, Bill, it sounds like you really, truly, more than anybody I can think of, have totally enjoyed your career. And it sounds like you've got enough enthusiasm to keep you going for another twenty years--and the profession is much the better for all of that. We really appreciate all you have done, and will do--and especially our neighboring community of

Mears transcript

Kyle--I think they are very, very fortunate to have a man with all this wisdom behind him; but also the enthusiasm of a young, new graduate out of library school--running their library.

Mears: If that isn't the nicest wrap up I've ever heard--I'll never hear a better one. Thank you. You are more than kind.

S.L.: Thanks for coming today.

Mears: Thank you. It has been a pleasure to be here.

Middleton Transcript

Gustavo Soto: Today is Wednesday, November 12, 2008 and this is the training room of the Austin Public Library main branch and we are on the fourth floor and we will be interviewing Kent Middleton.

GS: Good morning, we are here with Kent Middleton and my name is Gustavo Soto and we're here at the Austin Public Library, the Central branch, on the fourth floor training room. And we're in Austin, Texas of course because there are other Austin's in the United States, and Kent has agreed to be interviewed. And this interview is a part of the Capturing Our Stories oral history program of retired/retiring librarians. It is one of Dr. Loriene Roy's Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of the ALA and may be used for scholarly research. Today is November 12, 2008 and it's about 10:05 am in the morning. Kent.

Kent Middleton: Good morning, Gustavo.

GS: Good morning, we'd like to ask you few questions, the first question is what was the last library position that you had?

KM: My last one head of the Manchaca Road branch on the south side of Austin.

GS: All right and that of course is in Austin, south Austin, and we'd like a brief history of your library career.

KM: For better or worse I was with Austin Public Library for 33 plus years, went to the University of Texas, what was then called the Library School, and was fortunate enough to get a job with Austin Public Library as a reference librarian right after that. One of my professors, Don Davis, had a big role to play in that. For three years, which in many ways were my most enjoyable years, I was a reference librarian at the Central library.

GS: Which is this at this branch?

KM: Well, well, it was at this location almost. Because at that time the Central Library was the building that is now the Austin History Center. In my fourth year with Austin Public Library I was administrative assistant to the associate director of the library system. My main responsibility was to plan the interior layout of this building, the new Central Library at that time, and to plan the move from one building into the next. And that responsibility actually continued into my next job which was Head of the Information Services section of the library, which encompassed reference services at the Central Library and the adult non-fiction collection for the Central Library. I was in that job until 1988 and then became head of the Walnut Creek branch on the north side. I was there for 5 years until 1993 and then became the head of the Manchaca Road branch.

GS: Was Manchaca one of the largest at that time?

KM: Both Little Walnut and Manchaca were built to be regional branches but in the late 1980s, for political reasons interconnected with budget reasons, the concept of regional branches fell by the wayside, most unfortunately I might add. So although those buildings remain relatively large buildings in the Austin Public Library system they continue to have large but

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increasingly outdated collections. They weren't regional branches in any other sense other than they remained open on Sundays.

GS: So you worked on Sundays?

KM: I did at times, yes.

GS: I don't know if we asked you but back then when you went to the University of Texas it was called the library school, library science?

KM: School of Library Science period.

GS: And I guess now it's called the iSchool but now I guess the question we want to ask you is why did you want to become a librarian and what was your relationship with books?

KM: Well, that's a complicated question--I suppose it is for most people--as a child of the 1960s I went through various thoughts of how to find employment that also had some social impact. My initial plan was to get a Ph.D. in International Relations at UT (University of Texas), but partially because of my politics at the time that could have been difficult. I was a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War for one thing, I then did two years of alternative service for the draft.

GS: You didn't burn your draft card?

KM: No, I did not burn my draft card, no. I then decided to become an urban, well actually my interest was in policy analysis and if there had been something like the LBJ (Lyndon Baines Johnson) school then I would have gone to that but instead I went to Wayne State University and the University of Cincinnati in their urban planning departments. The University of Cincinnati was moving towards policy analysis and social planning but that was still pretty peripheral; my interest there was in education planning and that was what led to librarianship eventually. I realized that being an educational planner meant being a part of the state bureaucracy and working within the existing system of education which didn't hold much interest for me. And being an intellectual dilettante as one of my friends says, with some respect and some mockery I think, decided to become a librarian. That all in all turned out to be a good choice for me.

GS: Can I ask you what book have you read that you can say that it sort of stays, I don't know if changed your life would be the word but that stays with you?

KM: That just had a lot of personal impact?

GS: Yes, did you have any favorite book, like this book was?

KM: That's very hard to stay I do still have some of my early children's books. There very well may be a gene for reading. Because my maternal grandfather in the middle of the Depression, he was an insurance agent in the small town of Waxahachie in the middle of Texas, greatly raised the ire of his wife because he went and bought the 50 volume set of Harvard classics, and he had five kids, and I inherited that set.

GS: So did they, I guess.

KM: And he probably, unlike me, he probably read most of the 50 volumes. My father tells the story about, you know, reading H.G. Wells very thick one volume History of the World while the kids were swimming in a big spring fed pool in Glenrose.

GS: Well, that's.

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KM: But I would have a very hard time pinpointing the books that made an impression on me. I was very fortunate having wonderful English teachers in high school. Read lots of Dostoyevsky, that's one I wrote a long paper on, The Brothers Karamazov, but subsequent to high school most of my reading has been in the social sciences and history

GS: Okay.

Jane Stimpson: I'm sorry to interrupt, where there any particularly influential librarians that you met in your high school or college career?

KM: No.

JS: Okay.

KM: No, I became a librarian somewhat through abstract consideration, Jane.

GS: Did you belong to any associations?

KM: Professional associations?

GS: Yes.

KM: Library connected? I've always belonged to the ALA (American Library Association). I'm somewhat guilty about that fact that I've not been a member of the TLA (Texas Library Association), I'll readily admit my guilt to that. Certainly financial considerations were one factor, another factor was that back in the 1970s my impression was that TLA did not have the concern with lobbying for libraries with the legislature and promoting education for librarians to extent that it does now. That's a fault of mine, not being a member.

GS: Did you go to ALA (American Library Association) meetings?

KM: I've only been to one ALA (American Library Association) meeting that was in Dallas back in the late 1970s again, there were financial considerations. One of the criticisms I've had with the Austin Public Library is that it has a long history of not promoting education or continuing education or conference attendance for its employees. There was a period when Austin Public did not even provide time off, paid time, to go to conferences. There's also the fact that I've always preferred obtaining information through reading rather than sitting and listening to somebody talk, unless it's a really good panel discussion.

GS: Okay, I'd like to ask you, in what ways did the library you work at interact with the community?

KM: Well, a public library by definition is continually interacting with its community. In all of my direct public service jobs there has not been a need to try to attract them to the libraries, the problem has been trying to find the resources and manage the resources and try to find efficiencies that try to permit one to maximize service with what resources exist. There's always been an oversupply of demand comparative to the resources. That's not been true of other libraries in the Austin Public system as you all know, but one can see there is a divide within the system very frequently when it comes to the consideration of different policies and procedures. I, in my branch jobs another fault of mine was not making better contacts with the school librarians in the area and neighborhood associations. More could have been done on that score, but again, we had plenty of people to serve as it was.

GS: As the Austin population has been growing very rapidly as we've noticed.

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KM: Both of the branches I've managed are ones that have grew to some extent outside of the city boundaries.

GS: I'd like to ask you how have libraries changed from the moment, I guess, you started work to the present, can you tell us how in your view they have changed?

KM: Well a lot has changed and a lot hasn't changed. Certainly, as you were in the meeting before we started the filming, technology has been the driving force for change and the continuing impediment for change has been the budget or lack of budget. And I would say that in the case of Austin Public Library, and from what I read, with other public libraries too, a lack of explaining to the public what the possibilities are for public libraries and certainly lack of explaining to the folks that cast the vote for it.

KM: When I first became a librarian the big application of technology was to use computers to print catalog cards. Or in the case of Austin Public, and at that point Austin Public was something of a leader in technology. We used computers to print book catalogs which is something people don't even know about.

GS: What's a book catalog?

KM: A book catalog is a listing of bibliographic records, usually very brief bibliographic records. It could be by main entries or could be, as was the case with Austin Public, Author volume or volumes, Title volume or volumes, and Subject volume or volumes and we then could have all three types of listings. Obviously, one of the problems is that as the collection grows, the number of volumes grows. So I think by the time we dropped the book catalog, the total collection, author, title, subject, encompassed nine or 12 volumes.

KM: The big advantage, of course, is that you can have at least a list of the things the library system owns at all locations. Though, of course, it told you nothing about the availability of things; and the entries were very, very brief-- [I] can't tell you exactly what they were, but anyways, that was--it was innovative at the time.

GS: Okay, so there was volumes, instead of being a card catalog it was all in a book and that was, I guess, the new thing.

KM: Yes, the new old thing. The book catalogs had existed previously but they had to be typed or hand written and it was very difficult to make changes in them before computers came along.

GS: So computers have been changing.

KM: Yeah one of the things that is most interesting to me and that I feel best about regarding my career has been the development of technological applications, particularly to reference service. As Head of Reference at the Central Library I really pushed for that and made some difference. And it has been really exciting to see all of the databases that we now have going on. But that's been dispiriting too because with Austin Public's quantity and scope of databases it's gone up and it's gone down, it's gone up and it's gone down.

GS: According to the budget?

KM: According to the budget, right, right. And that's been particularly because the standing orders for print publications have been cut due to the replacement by databases and then

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the databases get cut. So it's been a frustrating life's work and we haven't advertised enough in my view the ability of databases or the access to databases.

GS: So you enjoyed your job as a reference librarian? Would you say that it's one of the most rewarding jobs that you did in your career?

KM: As a plain vanilla reference librarian? Yes, I found it to be very satisfying because at the Central Library one did get a big variety of questions, a lot of the questions had substantial utilitarian value to customers. The people I was working with were very collegial, helped me learn a lot. In particular, prior to the move to this building, Austin Public had a business and public information center and the library director decided to dispense with that as a separate service when we moved to this building, which I think was a big mistake in terms of marketing and recruitment of work and customer service. So I was lucky enough to work a lot in my three years as a reference librarian, to work a lot with the woman who established and ran that center, she taught me a lot. That was Caroline Simon.

GS: So it would cater to people who wanted to know about business or?

KM: Right yeah, principally, or I guess almost entirely, small business people.

GS: Okay now the City of Austin has another department that --

KM: Yeah, at that time the city did not have small business support service, which made the the library's cessation decision more radical.

GS: Okay, and have you seen that librarians have changed in the, like, when you graduated did libraries have a different perspective or scope of things do you think?

KM: In general terms I would say no, all librarians I've worked with have been people who are concerned with serving the public and trying to make the best of meager resources and to varying degrees have been interested in technology and the application of new technology to library service.

GS: Okay.

KM: There are some exceptions to that.

GS: Okay. So what changes did you like or did you not like during your career as a librarian?

KM: Well I always liked being a librarian as I said earlier, I think that was good choice for me. I've always been very frustrated by the bureaucratic aspects of the job, and as I've already made clear, the continuing budget struggles. I've also been frustrated, at Austin Public at least, with the lack of collegiality and top management of the library system. And connected with the budget difficulties is the fact that the management of Austin Public, and I perceive this as being the case elsewhere also, that it's been the thought that if we just strip some more we'll gain the goodwill of the City Council and they'll recognize what good guys we are and therefore they'll support us.

KM: Well, the world just doesn't work that way, or at least that strategy has failed miserably here.

GS: Do more for less.

KM: Yes, that has been almost the official mantra over the years. So even though we've had budget cuts, we've tried to maintain more or less the same level of services. Often we've

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even gone so far as to add services, even though there hasn't been an explicit budget for doing that. That to me is just dumb.

GS: You stretch yourself so thin. Did you get satisfaction from any service in your branch you might have developed?

KM: Well I always described the services of the branches that I managed as bread and butter services because given the quantity of customers relative to our resources it seemed to me that all we could do was to provide a somewhat decent responsive collection, efficient circulation services, some children's story times, which for the most part during my career were actually provided by a separate division of the library system, and to try to be doing anything else would just be pulling resources from those basic services.

KM: The other thing I should mention in connection with the library stretching, is that back, it's hard at this point to keep track of the budget downturns, but one of the big ones was in the late 1980s connected with the real estate bust then. Austin Public cut reference positions to all branches, subsequent to that time there has been no reference, actually at the Manchaca Road branch one 20 hour position escaped for a number of years, but effectively from the late 1980s or at least by, well she hung in until the mid 1990s, but aside from that one, from the late 1980s on there was no reference position at any of the branches, and supposedly reference service was centralized at the Central Library but we never really informed the public about that.

KM: And the situation has been exacerbated by the fact that the library system, and again I have the impression this applies other places too but can't say with any authority, would never try to educate the public about the distinction between librarians and the rest of the staff. So at least 90 percent of our public or more thinks that everybody who works at the library is a librarian even though for our circulation clerks we only require a high school degree.

KM: And there was a time during, this is one of my pet gripes, so let me talk about this one, there was a time up until just a few years ago, and it lasted quite a few years, where we supposedly were not able to take account when hiring clerks of any education a person had beyond the basic high school requirement. That was explained by the assistant director of the system at the time as a affirmative action plea. He more or less admitted, not for public attribution but to branch managers, that was a very misguided approach to affirmative action.

KM: So, in other words, in making the initial, in selecting people to interview for clerk jobs we can not, and we had to rate, as we still do, rate people for interviews, we could not take into account any of their education beyond a high school diploma.

GS: Yes. I think I've experienced some of that.

KM: That's one of my prime examples of how the bureaucratic environment, if that's the right word, get in the way of service.

GS: Have you felt that the internet has changed the way libraries operate?

KM: Well certainly, yeah. The most fundamental change I think is the fact there is a widespread belief that all information is authoritative information, accessible by the internet. And from what I read, demand for reference service has steadily decreased. From talking to the people on the reference desk at Austin Public, that has been the case. For a long time I thought that librarians could play a role in guiding people's use of the internet and certainly I think public

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librarians and academic librarians have played that role. But at least in the case of public librarians I don't think we've done a very good job of that. And I think the time for doing that has passed, everybody thinks he's an expert now in the internet.

GS: There are some sites, sites that recommended, library sites, I'm not sure. Library, like a website that libraries recommend?

KM: Oh yes, Librarians Addicted to the Internet is just one for example.

GS: Would you like to ask some questions, I don't want to, cause you're working on. Cecelia, in this case if she has any questions to ask. Jane?

JS: What are some examples you think of guiding people's use of the internet, you say the time is passed to do that, but what could we have done at the time to help people?

KM: Well, as Gustavo suggests, one elemental thing would be to, through various means, guide people to more authoritative sources and help people understand that all information is not the same. In economics there's a law called Gresham's Law that says that inflated currency drives out, inflated currency being currency that has decreasing value, drives out currency that does have more value because people want to horde the currency that does have more value. A somewhat similar thing, I think, happens in the information world. Information that is easily obtained, regardless of how authoritative it is, is the information that people grab and circulate. And people don't even realize that that's the case.

KM: Austin Public has had, since when, since the late 1990s or around the year 2000, has had a Wired for Youth Program funded by Dell Foundation which has, as its stated purpose, to educate kids particularly teenagers on the sorts of applications for computers. Certainly the folks, the librarians who have run that program have given some attention to what at least used to be called literacy education, or information literacy. But there hasn't been very much of that. That program has become all too focused on entertainment, mostly to draw kids into the library.

KM: And again to follow up a little bit more to Gustavo's earlier question about changes in librarianship. My perception is that there has been at least something of a shift towards emphasizing more the entertainment and recreational aspects of public libraries as opposed to the education related utilitarian aspects. The hope has been that at least more people will come into the building. Whether or not that has happened, I'm not sure. I think long term it's a losing proposition though because there's just too many options for entertainment and recreation. Does that answer your question at all?

JS: It does. So you don't think the library should put itself in this entertainment role where the goal is just to get people through the doors and hope it trickles through.

KM: Well, public libraries have always been multifaceted institutions but I think there's strength in the long term particularly, as I say, when there are so many options for everybody. Even people who are making so little they perhaps should not spend money on cable tv, have cable tv and god knows how many channels. So I think that in the long term if public libraries are to survive and for me that's something of a question whether they will or should, I think the best hope is to emphasize the more educational and utilitarian roles?

JS: How would you begin to answer that question about public libraries, how can they, should they survive?

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KM: Well, I've really become something of an agnostic to the subject, I really don't know. I had a brief discussion on this topic with my brother in law the other night, I think he knows it's a subject I remain interested in. He was pointing out how his kids just love the public library, and I said oh, and his kids are grown up now and I said well right, my kids did too. And a lot of kids still come with their parents to the libraries to story time and check out piles of books. And I asked him when was the last time you went to the library?

KM: And like a lot of people he acted kind of embarrassed by the questions and I mean people shouldn't be embarrassed by the question because there are all sorts of options other than public libraries. I mean he's an attorney, he reads widely, and has all sorts of information needs but he meets those needs through sources other than the public library, as is the case with most professionals. In fact, I don't know any of my relatives who make much use of the public library, or friends for that matter.

Cecilia King: Do you feel there's any specific skills or talents that new librarians should have going into the future, trying to meet future needs or difficulties and challenges?

KM: Well my usual answer to, Cecilia, is to think really hard about whether or not, I probably shouldn't be saying this to you at this point since you're about to finish your Information School degrees, I usually encourage people to take some other approach, get some other credential at least. The exciting thing to me is the application of artificial intelligence to information retrieval. I think that's where the world is going to go.

GS: That's very interesting.

KM: The question about time frame is the question of predicting what the stock market is going to do. It's always going to go up, it's always going to go down, the question is when.

GS: So in, do you as a librarian in your long twenty some odd years,

KM: 33

GS: 33 years, can you tell us one experience in your life that you think might have changed someone's life or helped them?

KM: Changed the customer's life?

GS: Do you have any memory of something, "oh this is what I was looking for and thank you?"

KM: A lot of questions run together at this point, though certainly a very common category of questions was related to consumer, consumer product evaluation and tax information. Various questions related to life planning, career choices, educational choices, financing education, and it's those kind of questions in my earlier remorse under the category of utilitarian aspects of public librarianship.

GS: But do you remember any case any specifics?

KM: No, no, not really. Lots of folks did express thanks for help but no, I don't remember any reports of life changing experiences.

GS: Okay, well they might have written letters to the Director.

KM: Well, some people did write letters, that was always nice.

GS: Do you have any other questions Cecelia, Jane? Jane?

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JS: You mentioned at the beginning of the interview is that one of the aspects that drew you into librarianship was the social impacts that librarians could make, could you expand a little bit? I would love to know more about that.

KM: Well, as I was saying, I was interested in educational planning, my educational philosophy has long been that everyone is interested in learning, they just aren't interested in learning in a traditional school atmosphere. Austin Public has a slogan promoting life long learning, I'm not sure we do a very good job of implementing that, but that's the overarching role that I think public libraries ought to play, helping people learn whatever they need or want to learn.

KM: That encompasses job skills, learning to play the guitar, learning how to cook better tex-mex food, whatever.

JS: So was that a conscious decision then, to go into public service, the public service aspect of librarianship?

KM: Yes, there used to be talk certainly at the time I became a librarian the term People's University was applied to public libraries, I don't know if that term, are ya'll familiar with that term?

GS: I've heard that term, but.

KM: Well, that's the very capsule phrase that sums up my view of public libraries. You don't have to make any applications or arduous applications to get a card, you can proceed at your own pace, there can be a problem with getting hold of materials. And this is another instance where I think libraries, public libraries, missed the boat is where I see some hope of artificial intelligence being applied to it. We do not do a very good job of helping people select authoritative non-fiction whether it be in printed form or electronic form, that is applicable to a person's particular circumstances, reflecting a person's educational background, exactly what one wants to use the information for.

KM: All too often we at best we find the right catalog subject heading or help the person select keywords, or frequently at Austin Public given our staffing situation, we aren't even able to do that. All the clerk does is say the books are that way. Which, say the person is looking at the United States Civil Rights movement, for instance, the books are split between the 320s and the 970s and the clerk may point to one or the other but not both.

JS: Is there something we can do to remedy that, what can we do, do we need to conduct more in depth reference interviews, is it just a question of time and resources that we may not have?

KM: Yeah, my perception is that we just don't have, yeah. Regardless of what one might dream public libraries might be, I don't have much hope of the resources being attractive. Even libraries like Seattle who have built magnificent new buildings have had to cut hours of service, just a very pessimistic outlook.

KM: Here we're talking about building a nice new Central Library but it doesn't have the additional space that's really needed and part of the space that is being built is going to be left unfinished. And some of the operating costs that are needed are going to be financed by a special fund, an endowment fund in effect, that is going to contain city funds if the Austin Public

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Library Foundation can raise five million dollars. Which based upon the track record of the foundation so far is a huge challenge. So whether or not that works out I have questions about whether the operating expenses should be paid out of a special endowment fund as opposed to out of the city's general budget.

JS: Well, you segued magnificently into one of my next questions which was, since you saw and were very active with the move of the library from the History Center over to this branch and now we're contemplating in the next six, seven years the opening of the new Central Branch, what do you think are the biggest challenges of building the new building? You already mentioned some of that, or making the physical move even?

KM: I'm not sure I'm a good person to ask at this point.

JS: I mean, do you have any advice based on your experience moving?

KM: Well, there was, in regard to the design of the building, there were numerous questions, involving questions of what the goals are to be. I have some fear that the building will be built as an architectural monument without sufficient consideration of the day to day working needs of the public and the staff.

KM: There was a good Library Journal article in the last few years pertaining to, I think the Seattle Library. And as I was saying in the meeting earlier, certainly the new Central Library is needed for various reasons. But it should have been built as an overall plan for facilities. Austin Public does, I think, but I'm not up to date on this, does I think have a system-wide facilities plan. But it's certainly not being pushed and as far as I can see the Central Library is not being built as a part of an overall plan for facilities.

KM: If you look at a map of our facilities, you'll readily see we've built a number of small branches which have been popular with the public because they are convenient and because we do have a delivery service that once a day, most days at least, delivers the materials that people have requested from one branch to another. And that's one of the better things we do, that ties the system together. But the branches are not spread evenly, there are no plans at present that I'm aware of, you may know more about this at this point than I do Gustavo, there are no plans, concrete plans to build branches on a regular basis to encompass the physical growth of the city and we haven't educated the public of what the tradeoffs are in terms of service in having so many small branches.

KM: They are convenient for delivery materials, for story times, but they're expensive to operate. By spreading our staff out so much we exacerbate our staffing problems and we can not have any sort of specialized service, even reference librarians.

GS: So you would suggest like having regional instead of 20 branches maybe have three or four located?

JS: What would be the biggest differences between branch libraries and regional libraries, I'm a little unclear on that?

KM: Well, that's because it's a rather arbitrary line, there's no clear cut distinction. But a regional branch is just one that has a bigger building, bigger staff, bigger resources, as opposed to not regional branches that have less.

JS: Reference librarian.

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GS: Maybe reference, they would have a reference in the regional. Do you want to ask anything to Kent?

CK: Actually, you answered my question about the branch. I grew up in south Austin and I visited the Manchaca branch as well as that Pleasant Hill one that is just down the street from it.

KM: So you remembered, do remember, I'm sure the state of the Manchaca carpet in recent years, which was literally held together with duct tape?

CK: Well, there was a renovation fairly recently in the last couple of years.

KM: Yes, right, right. That started in the spring of 2006, proceeded at the regular pace of city operations, it took two years. I was telling friends that I saw a PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) American Experience documentary on building the Empire State Building. The Empire State Building was built in a year but branch libraries are so much more difficult to construct, it took two years.

GS: Kent, do you have any, towards the future and all, you have a not so optimistic view of it, is there a chance that libraries might prosper, maybe morph into something better? What's your future maybe 10, 20, 30 years? Do you see any hope for public libraries?

KM: One of my favorite quotes because I have always been interested in, or long been interested in social planning, is from a theoretical physicist whose name escapes me said "forecasting is always difficult, particularly about the future." And I have a collection of poorer technological predictions. As you've probably read, when the telephone first came along nobody could think of any particular use for it aside from emergency calls. It was thought that it would be sufficient for every town to have maybe one or two telephones and that same thinking applied to computers. Nobody could envision it all, the uses that have been made of it, certainly not the ubiquity of it, so I'm hesitant to say. Life is full of surprises, public libraries may very well reshape themselves.

KM: One thought that keeps coming up, that I have very little faith in, that is that at least public libraries are needed to serve low income people and there's certainly truth in that, but I don't think public libraries are going to survive on the basis of that truth. Low income people won't provide enough political support for one, number two for better or worse, low income people are generally not big public library users, perhaps because they're just trying to survive. And then there's the argument that public libraries can provide technology that the poor can't afford.

KM: Certainly that has been true and will continue to be true but I think, just as I was saying with regard to cable tv, every home is going to have some sort of computer equipment and internet connection. So to talk about public libraries surviving so they can provide internet connections to people I think is very fallacious. Public libraries can provide a faster connection but I think everybody's going to have, nearly everybody. Ya'll ask good questions.

JS: Well a lot were actually supplied by last years public library class, as an assignment. There was a funny question and I can't help but ask it, and the queston was, what were your greatest triumphs as a librarian, and this was irresistible to me, so?

KM: Well as I was saying earier, I certainly wouldn't describe it as a triumph in any means. If I were applying for another librarian job I would emphasize the role I played in

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pushing electronic information at Austin Public Library. When I became Head of Reference Services, maybe just two years previously, some of the reference staff had started playing with Dialog's information service.

GS: What's Dialog?

KM: That was one of the earliest companies that offered an array of databases. We were at that time, for the very few customers we had for that service, charging the complete cost and it was quite expensive for a search. One of the things that I tried to do as Head of Reference Services was make a distinction between questions that could be quickly and relatively cheaply answered electronically and much more in depth, much more costly searches. The thought being that we would integrate the first category, the quicker and cheaper services with our everyday service that many of the reference staff could be capable of doing. Because searching was much more difficult back then, you had to use special commands, format the commands in certain ways, you still do the same stuff but it's a lot more easy. We did that to some extent but the Library Director at that time really, I don't think could understand what the goal was, and there were also staff members who had to really work hard to get to the point where they could use databases. So that was a mixed success.

KM: But it did I think create something of a foundation for introducing CD-ROMs in later years and subscriptions to databases in later. I remained a member of the Database Committee for many years to select databases and try to make the most of the funds that were available.

JS: What's your favorite database? I know Dr. Roy will be interested to know, and if it's a TexShare Database?

KM: Well among the Austin Public ones Factiva and MasterFile, those are the big. I use those just constantly for personal research.

GS: Do you have any advice on, I don't know if you answered it, but someone who aspires to be a librarian, did we ask you that question?

KM: Well, sort of my answer was think about getting some other credentials.

GS: I don't know if, do we still have?

JS: We have about five minutes left on the tape.

CK: Well, there's a couple of final questions, is there anything you find yourself missing as a librarian, have you had the time yet to really miss out?

KM: Well, I told friends and relatives that I was really more of a city bureaucrat during the time, about 15 years that I was, from 1988 to the last few years, when I was a branch manager than I was a librarian. Because my time was almost completely taken up with staffing problems, purchasing problems, and customer complaints and I got very tired of that. So I don't miss any of that at all. When I was able to help customers directly that was, that was always satisfying.

KM: And it was also satisfying to work with some really good people over the years, very interesting people. Libraries do attract a very eclectic group of people. I remember that there was a guy from The Netherlands on my circulation staff one time and numerous artistically inclined people. Of course there were always people who were going to school and I always

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admired people like Gustavo, maybe ya'll too, who were able to work and go to school at the same time.

KM: So there were certainly satisfactions, so I'd like to make clear when expressing my negativism to make clear that there were some satisfactions. I'd say one thing, and I'm not sure how much I want to say about this, I did not move to branches of my own volition. The Library Director at the time thought I would be happier at branches. We had different ideas about lots of things and continue to have different ideas.

KM: So, and then when I was transferred after five years from the Little Walnut Creek to the Manchaca branch, I was really irritated about that because there wasn't really a particular reason that I could perceive for making the change, and there were lots of other changes in branch managers at the time too. In fact, the Assistant Director at the time said "well, we just like to move people around, we think it refreshes people." But it means you have to learn a new staff, learn a new community, a new collection, where the light switches are, plumbing problems, etc, etc. Of course some people, like me, like stability more than others.

KM: But in any event once I got to the Manchaca Road branch I came to realize that I probably was not going to get fired at least, in fact it came increasingly clear over my years that it was almost impossible to get fired. And I had intimations of that earlier, on my reference staff there was a guy who for whatever reasons, I'm sure he had a physiological problem, but he was sleeping at the reference desk, but that didn't get him fired. It was only when he made misuse of the city vehicle that he got fired. And there were other instances of that too. By the way, that was one of my big dissatisfactions, it was very difficult to get rid of people who were just awful, you had to do something just abominable to get fired.

KM: But in any event, I realized that the flip side of that was it was going to be almost impossible for anyone to fire me. So I took some pride in becoming a gadfly. And one of my better moments was, I forgot whether you were around for that or not, when I made my presentation on the snakes, rubber snakes, you weren't around for that?

KM: Well, the Head of Branch Services and her Assistant at the time, this was maybe ten years ago, were being quite mistreated and being held accountable for problems at a branch that they really shouldn't be held accountable for. They were being mistreated by the Library Director and the Assistant Director. And that opinion was widely held.

KM: (Tape was changed in between and some of the interview seems to have been missed.) And "go lease another space" but when you build a library and you own it, you can't do that. And of course that's why the neighborhood groups who thought about it understood that, so they'd lobby not just for a leased space library but for a city built and owned facility, and that's what we ended up with, 20 some odd of them.

JS: Okay.

KM: Well, I was telling you about the snakes.

JS: Yes, we left off with your story about the rubber snakes.

KM: Aside from the use of shotguns, the head of, or a person high up, in UT (University of Texas) facilities management suggested that maybe putting rubber snakes on the ledges of this building would perhaps retard the pigeons to some degree, but he didn't make any promises. So

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one of the things ordered for this building along with the tables and chairs were boxes of rubber snakes. For many years you could see, if you looked out any of the windows, you could see a rubber snake out the window. I think they've all gone by the wayside now. And at best they had mixed results. Certainly that alone did not keep the pigeons away.

KM: Well, due to the fact that the culture of Austin Public Library, and I guess the culture of, I guess all bureaucracies inhibits one from being very explicit, particularly about problems involving somebody above you. I could not in this gathering of branch managers, I could not speak, or did not think that people would be comfortable, with my addressing explicitly how I thought that my boss and her assistant were being mistreated by the top people at the library. So I decided to speak allegorically about the fact that sometimes one could be a pigeon and sometimes one just had to put up with the pigeon droppings, and said unfortunately I think this is one of those times where I think you're going to have to put up with the pigeon droppings, but maybe you can slow down the droppings by making use of this rubber snake. So then I gave her a rubber snake which I think she still has in her office.

GS: Oh, so that's where that came from?

KM: Is that still there?

GS: I think so.

KM: So, that was one of my better moments. As I said before, one of my underlying dissatisfactions with Austin Public Library is that the decision making, on the big issues at least, is made by a very small group of people at the top of the organization, and that's been detrimental in a lot of ways. Of course the problems are exacerbated by the fact that they do not explain, as I was saying earlier, they do not explain to the public what the possibilities are for public libraries. And we have tended to focus on whatever we think might sell at the moment.

KM: During one budget cut we just went way overboard with children's programs because a council member was big on programs and children's programs are always popular, but that I think was around the time we cut reference positions in all of the branches. If we made a, what's the word, a more long term conscious decision to concentrate on children's services, that could have made sense, but it was a more knee-jerk reaction I perceived. I've talked enough.

JS: Have you?

GS: It's interesting. Well I don't know if, do you have any last word to give us, philosophical or any last words, ideas?

KM: No, I admire ya'll that have the gumption to become librarians, good luck to you. There are rewards as well as frustrations, that's for sure.

GS: Well we wanted to thank you, especially, I want to. I have worked with you and I know you are a man of your convictions and I want to thank you for accepting our interview.

KM: Well, thank you Gustavo, Cecelia, and Jane. I feel honored to be interviewed.

GS: It will be archived in the iSchool on some website and will be used for future reference and scholarly research.

KM: Well, thanks again.

GS: Thank you.

JS: Thank you.

CK: Thank you.

This interview was conducted by Gustavo Soto, Jane Stimpson, and Cecelia King. Coding and transcription was completed by Jessica Kirkland on August 6, 2009 at the University of Texas School of Information.

Mitchell Transcript

AS: This is Arro Smith. I am here with John N. Mitchell at the 2010 ALA annual conference in Washington, D.C. He has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired and Retiring Librarians. It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of the ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is June 27, 2010.

AS: John, thank you for joining me at the conference for this little interview. Let's start with – tell us, you just retired last year.

JM: I retired January 2nd of this year.

AS: January 2nd, and how long had you been with – you retired from the Library of Congress. How long had you been with the Library of Congress this last time?

JM: Well, I ended my federal career after going on thirty one years of service. Not all of that time was with Library of Congress because when you work with the federal government, other kind of other federal services also accrue and also can make you eligible to retire after thirty years of service. Those years of service included also a time in the military as well as about a year service at the National Institute of Health.

AS: Which branch of the military?

JM: I was with the Navy.

AS: Okay. Tell us first where you are from, where you grew up and what were your earliest library experiences.

JM: Well, I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and lived in Pennsylvania most of my life. During the early part of my youth we were in Philadelphia and stayed there and then moved to central Pennsylvania and that is where I ended up graduating from high school.

Earliest kind of experience, really, with libraries of course was in high school and I had the opportunity to really use the library way more as a young kids much taken to the library and where we grew up and so I didn't have a lot of use of the public library. But, of course, as you grow older you get to know the value of the library particularly if you are not from a very well-to-do and you want to have access to materials that you can ill-afford that you make use of the library, so of course that is what I did.

And the same thing as when you are a struggling student at an undergraduate school, you necessarily maybe didn't have to go and have the newest textbook, but you were able to go and get used textbooks or go to the library and check out materials that may have been on the on-call or on-reserve. So I think that is probably in a nutshell my earliest exposure to the use of libraries and the value in them, and while I was in the service, I also had an opportunity to have the responsibility of serving as a librarian of sorts to a specialized collection and was trained to categorize, I am not going to say catalogue, the materials for quick access. And so, of course, I think we all develop our own quick modes of categorizing and putting away things even in our own house, and that's what I did when I was doing the special access in the materials when I was in the service.

AS: And did that experience inspire you to go to library school or...

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JM: That definitely inspired me to learn about more certifiable techniques for categorizing which I came to find out was called cataloging and/or shelf listing and providing some kind of shelf retrieval system, so I think that inspired me and intrigued me.

I also had skills that came into play in seeking employment when I first left the military. Of course, what I was doing in the military really with my background was able to be marketed in the Washington D.C. area very quickly, so I came here immediately on discharge from the military and got active employment almost immediately, marketing my clearance and my language skills that were quickly snapped up. So I didn't have a hard time finding a job.

There were some things that had taken place. I was working for an engineering company and their concern was for development of teaching foreign languages with use of computer technology and they soon lost the contract to the Navy. And a friend of mine happened to work at the Library of Congress and said to me at the time I think somebody like you would have no problem in getting some kind of employment at the Library of Congress. So I went to the employment office and immediately found an opportunity that looked like it would be a real good fit and, of course, in those days I was hired in probably about two weeks, which of course today is now unheard of.

AS: ...Government work... (Laughter)

JM: So it was kind of like a perfect fit. I had the perfect foot for the Cinderella shoe and I got immediately hired by the Library. And that first experience was very, very positive and very uplifting and very encouraging.

The chief of the division was someone who – the job that I applied for, there were many applicants for it and he chose me as a result of my military background and he also was aware of the school that I had attended and was very glad to have someone from the military even though I didn't have a PhD after my name, so I felt very fortunate and felt also really indebted to him for taking me over some of the other candidates that had more academic credentials.

But that confidence in selecting me as a candidate where I worked for at the library and as a library employee on a project that was outside of the library, and I was hired for the European division. And I was able to make use of my language skills on a bibliography called ABSEES, the American Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies. And with that, the language kind of knowledge, it – it just – it just worked perfectly so I felt like I was in an international community using skills that I had honed also in the Navy and then learned a great deal about librarianship. And it was then at that time that the chief encouraged me to look into going to library school to get my masters in library science which I did at Catholic University.

AS: I want to come back to that but I want to clarify and issue of the acronym for the bibliography ABSEES, could you spell that out for us?

JM: A-B-S-E-E-S, ABSEES.

AS: Very good.

JM: So American Bibliography for Slavic and East European Studies.

AS: Okay, okay.

JM: Surprised that I even remember it.

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AS: Later on when we are transcribing this, those little details are the ones that make me pull out my hair. (Laughter) Catholic University is in the Washington, D.C. area.

JM: Yes, yes.

AS: And so you went to library school while you were still working for the Library of Congress.

JM: Yes, I – I went to library school and I think that I only had the opportunity to have two classes under my belt at Catholic University before the position that where I was working was still available but it was in a position that was tenuous within the library because as I explained it was outside the realm of the Library of Congress even though I was technically hired as a Library of Congress employee.

AS: Right.

JM: So to avoid any future possibility of losing a job where I had already my foot in the door at the Library of Congress, there was a – because of the language expertise that I could offer, there was within the Slavic community someone that really liked my medical background and who was in charge of the medical subject section at the Library of Congress and as smaller language communities are kind of looking out for their own, he kept on insisting “we need you, we need you. We need you over on our team and we think we are going to have a job and why don’t you apply.” And of course, it could appear based on that, that it was pre-selection, but I don’t know who – if there were any other candidates but I was already there and the supervisor already knew me so then I switched directly from working on the bibliography and left the bibliography because of that tenuous kind of position with the bibliography to go to work as a medical subject cataloger for the Library of Congress.

AS: I see.

JM: So I worked with medical materials as well as biological sciences and did that for a number of years.

AS: And that is your undergraduate background.

JM: Yes.

AS: So you were in a – had a really unique position of – of working for the National Library before and after getting your official library school credentials. Tell me what – or can you tell me – can you tell me the difference before and after? Were there things that you – were there things that didn’t make sense before your edu – specifically library education – that afterwards you thought “oh, that’s silly now” or vice-versa or – or I guess the real question is was that library education useful? That’s the real question.

JM: Well, it certainly was and I did learn things about librarianship in the course of doing the degree at Catholic University that said that I was probably in the right area, that I was, that I belonged in the technical processing area in cataloging and that I certainly didn’t belong in reference maybe although I love people and I am a people person, and I am very outgoing which is quite the contrary to the normal Myers-Briggs catalogers. (Laughter) And so I think that it was also a nice fit because they didn’t have at the Library of Congress someone with the skills who was comfortable to speak with people about cataloging and the techniques that we used at

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the Library of Congress, and so it was right at the time that the Library of Congress was also moving into the electronic environment and Henriet Avram , of course, was at the library.

AS: Can you spell her last name?

JM: A-V-R-A-M

AS: Thank you.

JM: And so it was an interesting time. So not only – I think I had the advantage of – of course I was working in subject cataloging but learning the different MARC fields at library school that were far outside the realm of those that were employed at the Library of Congress wearing a subject cataloging hat.

AS: Right, right.

JM: Because as you may well have realized, years ago that there were very, very specialized positions at the Library and they do still tend to exist today although there is more homogenization with those positions at LC, and they still have an awful lot of specialization but there is a broadening of the kinds of librarianship responsibilities that are now shared in some of those positions, that didn't use to happen at LC.

But it was just at a perfect time, so I – I did have those --I think advantages--in going to library school just at that time to learn the different MARC fields that would be employed in a MARC record that really set me above and gave me some opportunities that many other folks that were in subject cataloging didn't have.

AS: Because they were so focused on their...

JM: Yeah, because they were only there, and they were also, many were old-timers or had been there for – for quite some time and moving into the electronic environment was something for them at that time was also a new skill. Where at library school, although it was being taught, it was – you were young enough and quick to pick it up just as you see younger folks today doing tweeting and what have you.

AS: Tell me what year you graduated from Catholic University.

JM: I graduated in 1989 from Catholic.

AS: And –

JM: It took me about six years to finish my library degree because I generally went almost a like one course a semester at the same time that I was juggling life on the outside and of course working at LC as well.

AS: Right, right. And so, your work as a cataloger – I am also a cataloger – I believe that we share – catalogers share a certain affinity – a set of personality traits. Would you agree? Compared to the rest of the other library positions.

JM: Well I alluded to that. Yeah, there are as general – I think in general there are some personalities that are probably more suited to those that are in technical processing areas and the primary one of those I think is attention to detail which is far and above that which sometimes we lose sight of the forest for the individual tree some times in cataloging.

And that doesn't mean that I am espousing a management kind of thing but I do think that you have to realize and base your work on providing access to the material at a far greater pace than the perfect subject analyst of a particular item.

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But I do – I do find that there are some traits that probably catalogers do share and that's particularly one of them and also attention to rules and wanting to follow those rules and there's a way that we want to categorize or place things that may be sometimes an enigma to our colleagues.

AS: (Laughter) Yes. But speaking of rules, in your career have there been rules that you found particularly boneheaded, and or rules that you have personally changed or had a hand in changing?

JM: Yes, and I would say that there are things that you just accept and know that you are not going to change them. I think that there are new techniques that have now been employed and the use of new fields within the format. The one thing that I would like kind of extrapolate from my experience as a cataloger was what I felt was a broad applicability to other disciplines that kind of landed me the opportunity to serve as the chair of a task force on natural history.

And because I felt that there was a real need to provide some kind of structure and what I wanted to suggest was a data base structure that of course I was very familiar with MARC to help the museum community and particularly the natural history museum community on cataloging their data, their specimens, their objects which we needed to bring to their attention to show or highlight how they could use the same database structure and name them something a little bit differently in order to help share the wealth of materials that would be found within museums and natural history collections with library communities, so I was – I always try to find a broader application if you will so I don't know necessarily if I could say that some things were boneheaded but that I wanted to broaden the use of the structure.

And I think that the end result was that it has been used to explore options and of course there are very many new scenarios now in – that have been developed to record in electronic format some data that can be shared between institutions and are not necessarily libraries, and so I think that, of course, that's important. That's important.

I think that having had the language expertise, also being aware of the structure of MARC and the way LC employed it and the way there differences that other institutions would make use of the information that was contained in the record and the way it was structured, I still find today when now that I am retired though I haven't spoken to someone really necessarily in six months, but there are many libraries out there that manipulate the data in ways their own catalogers don't even realize is being done and so I felt it important enough to try to educate the catalogers to be aware of that...of those differences.

AS: You – you have spoken about languages and the language of cataloging is its own language. Tell me what at the Navy were your language specialties that you...

JM: Well the language specialty that I had in the Navy was Russian.

AS: Russian, okay.

JM: Yes.

AS: And do you agree that the language we use in cataloging is like or not like learning a foreign language and using a foreign language.

JM: I think that there are similar structures and ways of the syntax used within the world of the catalog could be likened to rules of grammar and the construction of a language. And in

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particularly also in the development of subject heading strings which is of course is my area of expertise in the world of cataloging doing subject – cataloging subject analysis and the construction of those strings using LCSH which is the Library of Congress Subject Headings. (Laughter) I don't know if I needed that.

AS: Not for this particular audience but it is always nice to clarify. (Laughter) And so your thirty year career at LC, after your initial move into medicine and natural sciences, is that where you stayed?

JM: No, no. No, I – the Library of Congress as you may well know went through several reorganizations and the way that the teams developed during the time of reorganization, I ended up in a purely biology team where I was not doing any medical materials. I was not concentrating on foreign language materials and the opportunity presented itself to be the head of cataloging at the National Institutes of Health.

AS: Okay, okay.

JM: So I applied for that position and it was within the federal government and I was selected to go to work at the National Institutes of Health, not the National Library of Medicine. Two very--very disparate different institutions and NLM is one of the institutes of the National Institutes of Health, and I worked in the clinical center so that really offered me a great deal of hands on. I got to do grand rounds with the physicians once a week.

I was able to listen to the-- the National Institutes of Health have so many patients from around the world that are a variety of individual illnesses, diseases, syndromes, whatever you would like to call them, that are being researched and so it was always cutting edge and I found the value of looking at materials that were coming into the library and making them available after going to grand rounds – and, oh yes, I had seen that book on this particular subject or received an article in a journal and then bringing that to the attention of the physician -- with the physicians group that were treating the patients — and hopefully thereby also really emphasizing the importance of why the library was even at the clinical center so that it was being used more and more frequently.

And we worked sometimes with our – our colleagues who were in reference who did – provided extensive bibliographies on subjects that somebody might come in that wanted a wealth of information so we also worked very much hand in glove with the folks in reference because they would want to know the new materials that were coming in. Now we as catalogers also at that same time because I had worked at the Library of Congress, I was aware of the program that allowed if we could not find something within the existing LCSH subject heading list to propose new subject headings and often we needed to do that as a result of materials that were kind of cutting edge that were being acquired by the National Institutes of Health.

AS: So you were still using, you still use Library of Congress subject case, not DLM. What – what that's

JM: No, no.

AS: What does DLM stand for?

JM: I don't know what DLM is...

AS: Uh, uh in my..

JM: Mash is what?

AS: 0404 field.

JM: 0404 always is - is the field that identifies the institution.

AS: In the subject authority.

JM: The MeSH.

AS: MeSH, right, okay. That's what I am thinking of.

JM: Those are MeSH headings. Those are done by the National Library of Medicine but the National Institutes of Health does use LCSH.

AS: Hah..

JM: So there was also quite an interesting ?????

AS: (Laughter) Did you - did you feel like you were – were having to reinvent the wheel?

JM: No, not at all. MeSH headings were for medical subject materials and – and then for National Library or the National Institutes of Health were using LCSH.

AS: Okay, okay.

JM: So we did not feel in any way that we were stepping on their toes and that – I mean that sometimes we worked hand in hand. The other thing is I want to point this out so that it is not misconstrued. I was the head of cataloging; I wasn't the head of technical services.

AS: Okay

JM: So a lot of times people will get the strange idea that I was the head of technical services but I was head of cataloging and there were two of us: head of cataloging and the other person who was under technical services was the head of acquisitions. So the two of us reported to the head of tech services at the National Institutes of Health, but I was only there for about a year and while I was gone, I consistently was, I'm going to say recruited. I was consistently asked how did I really like it at the National Institutes of Health. (Laughter) And I was consistently asked if I wouldn't like to come back to the Library of Congress.

AS: Ah, okay.

JM: So it was less than – it was just, I guess it was about eleven months or so and I returned to the Library of Congress. And when I came back to the Library of Congress, I was able to come back to the medical team but they, meaning the management at the Library of Congress, knew that I had worn hats of quite a different variety while I was working as the head of cataloging and wore a budget hat, wore a hat where I was required to provide evaluations of performance, worked in a supervisor capacity, had to create bibliographies using different programs.

I don't know if you heard of PROCITE --and so they knew that I had had far more exposure to things in the library world than I would have had, had I stayed at LC during that time. In addition they recognized that I wasn't your cookie-cutter cataloger and that I was not about to be pigeon-holed and to only allowing myself to be identified as being interested in cataloging, and that there had been opportunities that had presented themselves for me to do training about the way subject headings were constructed using LCSH.

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And one of those opportunities came very, very early at the National Agricultural Library, so I had an opportunity to go over to NAL and do training for folks that NAL had brought in from many of the agricultural land grant institutions in the United States, particularly on the East coast. And it was there that I met a very good friend of mine from the University of Florida who was saying this was the kind of program that they would like to have at the University of Florida, that their staff there would benefit from that kind of training, one on one, and would the Library of Congress be willing to have me come and do a training at the...

Well, of course, it was at the time that the, at that time we were developing this is the precursor to the program for cooperative cataloging, called the Cooperative Cataloging Council, the CCC. And one thing led to another and I eventually ended up going to the University of Florida to do that training on the use of subject headings and the development of new subjects as well as the creation of strings and appropriate with looking at the techniques.

At the same time it was a great opportunity because we were also at LC undergoing a--I want to call it really--a great growth in understanding that we needed to codify the techniques that we employed and that we needed to write those decisions in a way that could be shared to, if you will, demystify how cataloging is done at the Library of Congress. I think so many librarians out there felt that cataloging at LC was a mystery and how could people learn that and master it, and that -- I give a great deal of credit to Barbara Tillett who came on board during that time to codify those kind of oral traditions that we had passed on by word of mouth from skilled and older cataloger to those that were new and coming up in the ranks, so that codification..

AS: Tell us what is this document called, this codification?

JM: The codification now is called basically it is kind of like the bible of subject headings and it's now called the Subject Headings Manual, SHM.

AS: And but before that, it's previous incarnation it was...uhm

JM: The Subject Headings Manual.

AS: Wasn't it called something else before that? Okay

JM: Now, now it is called -- it's now called the... Now I have forgotten it. (Laughter) The subject -- wait -- the subject headings manual -- the catalogue... I don't remember now.

AS: I know. I can grab it on my shelf at my desk. It's right there. (Laughter)

JM: I will come up with it.

AS: And tell us -- let's spell Tillett. T-I

JM: T-i-e-l-l-e-t-t.

AS: Thank you. Hmm, so you came back to Library of Congress and these reorganizations...

JM: Yes.

AS: Um, oh what is your impression of these reorganizations? I don't want to lead the question. (Laughter)

JM: What was my impression of it? Well, the original reorganization which was done back in 1991-92 time frame at the Library of Congress was an attempt to pull catalogers together into teams, and that it was looking at material from -- so that it would not migrate from a

descriptive area to a subject area, but that it would -- the material would be divided after acquisition based on subject and that it would all stay in the same team.

So that it didn't have to traverse the entire building in the Library of Congress where a lot of the processing is on the fifth floor of the Madison Building, and that the – I really do feel at that time – at that time, I think there was a great deal of fear that the degree of specialization of the subject specialists was being diluted and that those that were really subject specialists were being dispersed and that you would no longer have the same type of access as a subject cataloger to other subject catalogers, even though they might not necessarily be in catalog materials of the same discipline but those that had skills in the application of creating the strings.

AS: I see.

JM: So there was – I think there was an original resistance. However, I would say, in defense of LC that it was – it made a great deal of sense in that the materials did not have to migrate from one team to another. They all stayed within the same team and sometimes the people that had the expertise in doing the descriptive part may have also had subject knowledge in that area, and so it was also a responsibility that the Library took very seriously to do adequate and appropriate training to sell the team management concept.

There was subsequent revision and reorganization and really I am not unhappy that I am now retired because (laughter) I think some of the implications of that are probably outside of my ability to accurately assess for understanding management's purpose in realigning, although now acquisitions is also part of the same team and as well as the inclusion of many of the serials catalogers so each team materials are no longer having to leave – they are acquired and regardless of format and all processed within the same team.

But there was a – there was also a reorganization that dispersed some of the language expertise that used to be found in many of the teams that it wasn't as well, I thought, distributed although some may argue. But I don't really have the overall picture to assess that. I would like to state that on record that this is far beyond me.

AS: Well, I am going – I am assuming that you believe in the mission of the Library of Congress and that you believe your work has been important in the Library of Congress...is important. And tell me what you think of the future of – you can disagree with my statements – what do you think the future of the Library of Congress is?

JM: Uh, I think – let me break down into a couple of different areas. The Library of Congress is a government agency and often government agencies move at a snail's pace. The procurement of newest and most up to date technologies are sometimes largely dependent on having appropriated funds and the source of those funds are often being scratched away by other needs within the community – within the government. In spite of that, I do feel that what has been really difficult at times – I'm not in a position to – to really say, but I feel that the Library of Congress has been very, very supported by members of congress to fund national programs.

That is probably the most politic thing that I can say and so I offer that as groundwork to say when you ask me about the future of the Library of Congress, I think that the Library of Congress is in many ways much further ahead, has access to many, many great intellectual

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individuals who are working there who are very committed to the profession in all aspects and all facets.

I – the budget for acquisitions is far beyond even my scope of understanding but we, I think, will continue to acquire materials that many other institutions don't have the luxury of having in their collections.

So in terms of the future of the Library of Congress, I think there will always be a niche within technical services for those individuals that provide access to materials that are in that niche because there may be very, very limited number of individuals on the outside who also have that expertise but who don't have necessarily the opportunity to provide access to those materials which is one of the main focuses and features I feel for the sharing of bibliographic data and the program for cooperative cataloging. Whatever form it will develop into or become, we need to understand that the wealth of information with the increased number of digital kinds of volumes, we need to have experts in so many different areas that provide access other than just a search engine that provides access without some kind of human intervention.

So I am answering the question: The future of the Library of Congress is also dependent on the future of all libraries in providing access to materials in far, far better and newer ways. I think that there is a great deal that the library can offer. I don't see the library in any way diminishing in stature or in any way being threatened in its existence. I hope that that – I don't – that's my gut feeling. I don't have an awful lot to back that statement up. I just have that as a gut feeling.

AS: Within your career-- has been exclusively within the federal government and-- do you ever wish you had been another kind of librarian? Or did anything else? Or have you been essentially satisfied and content with your career path?

JM: I could say that there are often times you might see things that you wished you had had the opportunity to have had while you were at the Library of Congress, but the grass always looks greener on the other side, so I often go to academic institutions and look at the access to the young minds, those that are coming in to use the library, the exposure to more intellectual stimulation not just from the folks that you are working with but actually from the patrons, the users themselves and being in that intellectual and academic environment has always been what I felt would have been a very rewarding to have been at a university library.

I didn't pursue that path because-- when I was in library school I had a professor who I happened to two years ago run into on my way to IFLA. And he immediately remembered me and but one of the things he that he said that back then was if you are at the Library of Congress for five years, you will retire from the Library of Congress. (Laughter)

AS: If you make it through the trial by fire, you are there for good.

JM: I must honestly say that at the time that he said that, I think I had been there for about four years and I thought to myself: Oh that's just – that's just – I don't know where he's thinking that people that are here for five years will retire. But, of course, I proved that he was true. (Laughter)

And he said "Oh, I'm sure you are still at the Library of Congress." I said "Yes, I am, but I think that had I not had the opportunities – one of the things that I will say is that the

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opportunities that I did have at the Library of Congress probably was sufficient to satisfy my thirst for opportunities outside of just sitting at a desk and doing your normal cataloging.

The extensive--the extensive-- world traveling that I did, the opportunities to teach everywhere, and that wasn't just an opportunity from the Library of Congress, but I am going to say was also recognition from other institutions by word of mouth about my reputation for teaching, and in teaching the subject and my enthusiasm for sharing my knowledge of LCSH and how I lived and breathed it – and so those opportunities, although might have been presented to Library of Congress, they wouldn't have been there had I not been asked by other institutions or other kinds of libraries to come and share my expertise.

AS: And are you continuing to guest lecture, etc after-- in your retirement or have you been taking six months off? (Laughter)

JM: Well, I have been very intrigued with RDA and its implementation.

AS: Okay.

JM: I was to be working on RDA and through ALCTS and although I am officially retired from the Library of Congress, I will be going as an official registered Library of Congress member to IFLA in Sweden in August of this year, so I will be very interested to hear about future developments with FRSAR and with – which is the Functional Requirements for Subject Authority Records. I thought I might...

AS: Thank you, I was about to ?????

JM: And so I am exceedingly interested also in seeing the program for cooperative cataloging continue to grow, and of course, I am going to say, I don't know if it is appropriate but I may be the grandfather of the SACO program.

AS: SACO.

JM: Yes.

AS: Which stands for...?

JM: Subject Authority Cooperative.

AS: Thank you.

JM: That I am very, very always interested and go to the website to see about its development and what continues to happen, and I am encouraged when I see the numbers continue to grow about the number of contributions that are coming in to LC that are being processed. And so I try to show an active interest, whether this will continue to noon next year, you don't know. (Laughter)

AS: Well, I for one am exceeding grateful that you are helping to supervise RDA and the next generation of cataloging. (Laughter) Because it's terrifying for me.

JM: It's going to be – uh, it's a big learning curve. I do think that one should feel a great-- sense of taking patience and time to implement or to study the possible implementation. I had better phrase that a ????

AS: Politic

JM: There is a testing phase right now about future implementation and how those records will sit in the database that are being developed using principles of RDA versus AACR2. So I think though that there is a great deal of commitment to move forward, but this -- there's a

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great number of testers out there that are moving forward, I think, as you well know, that RDA was issued finally last week. I think that it was on Tuesday of last week that it was issued.

I am sure that there are bugs but one can expect that in any electronic product which is being released, and there will be continuing ongoing updates and I would encourage folks not to be expecting 100%. And I am not even a spokesperson for the ... (Laughter) Not to expect, you know, no glitches. I think there will still be some glitches in using the product but it will improve I am sure.

AS: What we are wanting to know – we have a few minutes left, do you have final comments? Do you have something special you would like document as your legacy to the profession? (Laughter)

JM: That's so weighty.

AS: And, and – uh, an alternative question is one of my particular fascinations with studying libraries and librarianship in the last half of the twentieth century involves stereotyping, cliche--and do you have feelings or comments about the stereotype of librarianship.

JM: Well, by answering that question, I am assuming that we are agreeing on what is stereotypical for librarians, and I just want to say that I always probably go back to the Meyers-Briggs where the catalogers are introverted and very ... I am going to say that

AS: Meyer-Briggs obviously did not really know any librarians . _____ only catalogers.

JM: I want to say no. I said earlier I was never a cookie cutter librarian or cataloger and that in terms of my lasting contribution or some kind of statement, I would like to say what I have always said, and I think that I said it as well when I was presented my “thank you” certificate by the Program for Cooperative Cataloging. I don’t think it was necessarily about anything that I have said and I hope that you can understand that it’s not really about what I have done but the way that I have made catalogers feel about the profession and about the important service they provide in providing access to materials and that if they understand and can approach cataloging, particularly subject cataloging, with the same kind of appeal and gusto that I felt that I had, that I have served the profession well.

AS: Very good. Very good. Well I appreciate your taking the time to be a part of our oral history program and especially during a busy conference, it is hard to fit in a session, but thank you so much.

JM: Thank you.

Interviewed by Arro Smith; transcribed by Margaret Ann Smith.

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JJ: This is Jennifer Jones, I am here with Jenifer John Patterson here at the Central Texas Library System, Inc. She has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is a part of the Capturing Our Stories oral history program of retired/retiring librarians. It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of the ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is November 12, 2008.

JJ: Hello Jenifer, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed.

JJP: You're welcome, glad to be here.

JJ: Before we get to the nitty gritty I'd like you to state your full name for the record.

JJP: I was born Jenifer Spalding John and married a man named Revis, so for a while I was Jenifer John Revis and then I divorced and married a man named Patterson so I'm now Jenifer Spalding John Revis Patterson.

JJ: That's a lot of names. And what is your current library position?

JJP: I'm a consultant, CE (continuing Education) consultant here at Central Texas Library System.

JJ: Okay, and what was your position before that?

JJP: Well, they're a long string but most recently I was a branch manager at Austin Public Library for about eight years and three years at Austin Public Library as organizational development coordinator.

JJ: Can you tell me a little bit about what you did in that position?

JJP: That really started, I was at the State Library before that as the continuing education and consulting manager and I got really interested in training, staff development, while I was in that position. And did a lot of intense training myself both as a trainer joining the American Society for Training and Development, and also in a spiritual program called Programs of the Heart, which had to do with getting in touch with who you really are and what you really want to accomplish in this life so it was also a facilitator training.

JJP: So by the time I'd gotten through that period at the State Library, I really was totally in a position to work with the library staff, or I thought I was totally in a position to work with library staff, and help develop the staff towards a more functioning, collaborative way of doing business. So I coordinated staff development day, I coordinated all of the training that was being offered for staff. We set up a database of everybody's training experience, which I think is still maintained so you can actually look back and see what someone has had training in throughout the time that they'd been there at Austin Public.

JJ: Have you noticed more training opportunities in the time that you've been a librarian?

JJP: It comes and goes with the economy, it's not stable. When times are good there will be a staff development officer in a library, in a large library, let's say, and there will be active training opportunities and there will be investments in the staff, staff will get paid to go to conferences, etc. But when money tightens up, that's really one of the first things that goes.

JJP: The ten library systems, of which Central Texas Library System is one, are about the only stable source of training for public librarians that is offered whether times are good or bad,

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or has been. That has been changing in recent years, our budget has been cut fairly radically year by year in very recent years because the State Library's focus has shifted to digital delivery of information, digital delivery of training, rather than face to face training.

JJ: So, can you, you've worked at the State Library, you've worked at Austin Public Library, you work here now at CTLS Inc. (Central Texas Library System), can you give me a rundown, kind of your whole career from start, from the very beginning?

JJP: Okay, I started out thinking I was going to teach and I spent one day in a seventh grade classroom and the kids were throwing spit wads and the coach had to come in twice and I had no experience with classroom management and I really didn't understand what would be required to teach middle school English. I was just an English major and it sounded like a good idea. So I walked out of there thinking, well, I better think of something else. And I was only 21 I guess, 21 or 22.

JJP: And I had a small child so I decided to start a cooperative day care with the parents being collaborators in the daycare. And we made it through a year before we sort of all had a nervous breakdown and got through the school year so everybody could finish and then we decided, oh we're closing. So I decided, okay what do I do now? I always liked libraries, maybe I'll see if there's a position open at Houston Public Library where I lived. And there was an evening and Saturdays job in the literature and biography department which was perfect for me.

JJP: So I worked that for about a year, a little bit more than a year and by that time I had realized that it was a non-coercive way to teach, that being a reference librarian was a perfect way for me to continue to learn and to share what I knew with other people and help other people find what they were looking for without having to be a disciplinarian.

JJP: So I went back to library school. So in 1973, 1974 I went to The University of Texas and I went through fast. I just went through in a school year and a summer. I took, actually, I took dance choreography and I took urban planning for minorities, and I took effective media on contemporary culture in the communications school. So I was in the planning school and the communications school also. So it was a totally wonderful experience. My peers were mostly the other library school students who had worked for a while so we kind of knew what we wanted, we were pretty focused on where we thought we were going.

JJP: And what I thought I was going to do was be a performing arts librarian, I wanted to have video collections of performances. And when I got out I realized, well, I'd have to go to New York or L.A., there isn't anything like that in Texas, there was nothing like that. So I came back to Houston Public because I had really only taken a leave of absence. And I was offered a job here in Austin at Austin Public, but at that point they always hired people part time to start and I couldn't justify taking a part time job after having come up here and gotten a Masters degree so I refused it and in the end I'm glad I did.

JJP: Because at Austin Public, too many people stay there their whole career, they don't get any other experience because they don't want to leave Austin.

JJP: So I went back to Houston and I was actually put in the Business and Technology section rather than Fine Arts. And I liked it because it was busier and it was like a game you would play to answer a question while someone was still on the phone so you didn't have to take

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the question, to write it down, you know, and spend the time to do it later because you never had a later. So I got really good at using paper resources because that's what we had only in those days and finding answers quickly for business men.

JJP: And you learn a certain demeanor when you work with business men, it kind of changes the way that you carry yourself, the way you dress, the way you think about your career. You sort of become a little more ambitious and a little more focused because they are, you know, they have to be. So at the end of, what was it, about two and a half years, I decided to apply for a branch manager job because as far as I was concerned I was ready.

JJP: I had been coordinating the collection development in the business, science, and technology department, I had written a couple of grants that were funded, I was overseeing the work of the pages. So as far as I was concerned I was ready. And they said you're not ready. You haven't been out of library school long enough, you need to stay working at a line position for a while and learn more about management before you are ready. So I got angry and I quit and started my own business.

JJP: And at the time, this was 1977.

JJ: This was, excuse me, that was four years out of school?

JJP: Well, I graduated in 1974 so it was really only three years out of school, it might have only been two and half years out of school. But I knew there was an opportunity. They were talking about information brokers in the literature and information brokers were principally people who had already gotten their feet wet in online searching, which really didn't exist even two and a half years before that, except to meddle in. And it was all offline, it was all setting up sets of data and then printing them out offline, there were no CRTs, there were no personal computers, none of that existed yet.

JJP: So I decided I would start this business and my first client was this guy who wanted me to go to widows who had lost their husbands who had been in the oil business and buy up their library collections and give them to him. Paying me an hourly salary, give them to him and he would then turn around and donate them to universities for a large tax write off. He was a land man, he was a petroleum land man, and he needed a way to shelter some money. And I didn't care, I was just trying to get a business going, so I would make them, it didn't go on very long before I kind of got a bad taste in my mouth.

JJP: But, I'd go visit these widows, of course they would say "oh honey, you can just have them, I don't have any use for those old books." And they were old books, I mean, they were really not, for the most part they were not useful to anybody. It was rather ironic that he could take a substantial tax write off for them, so that was how it started.

JJP: And then friends who were still in business, science, technology would refer business men to me if they had a project that was beyond what the reference librarian could tackle. And they ended up being reorganizations of libraries and records. We did continue to do online searching and we started a document delivery service, rather like inter-library loan, but fast.

JJP: So, we kind of ended up with two arms: one which did reorganization, cataloging, sorting records, color coding records, microfilming records and setting up databases for retrieval

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using various resources whether they were mainframe or word processor, which is all we had at the time, not PCs, or online searching and document delivery. So we kind of became two companies and we made it about four and a half years bringing in young people who had worked as librarians or had an interest in organization. Some of them were musicians which, interestingly enough, have a natural aptitude for math or structural systems. And so I started hiring musicians to help do the sorting, classifying, and indexing because you couldn't really afford to hire all professional librarians.

JJP: And we grew to be about 21 to 23 people, something like that, mostly young women, we had three or four men over the course of that time, and we had a great time. I mean, we got sent all over the place, we got sent mostly in Texas. But we did a project in New Orleans, did one in Midland, I did one up in Canada. You know, just, we were kind of there, we were reliable, we were fun to be around, we were smart, hip young women and so we had an easy time getting jobs and then the recession hit. And this was about 1981, must have been about 1980, 1981.

JJP: The oil business tanked because of changes in the tax law, changes in the structure, OPEC became a major provider of oil instead of offshore Texas and everything just came to a screeching halt, and even engineering firms which were our other principal clients besides oil slowed way down. It's just like right now the same kind of thing happened back then where it just stopped the economy dead in its tracks. And we were a discretionary service, we weren't necessary. So I could feel it happening, it was just visceral, I wasn't getting called for quotes, we weren't getting new jobs and I just sort of slammed the door shut basically. We finished up what we had going but I knew if I didn't stop there was going to be no money left, it would all be spent.

JJP: So we very quickly stopped the business and closed it. And a small group of the women who worked for me survived it and started another company called Information Network and on a smaller scale were able to survive that time and keep the business going. In the mean time I went off and started thinking, okay what do I do now?

JJP: And I went very briefly to work for Tenneco oil and realized I was not really suited to the corporate environment. I found it deadly. I had a hard time staying interested in it.

JJ: What did you do there?

JJP: I was doing office automation, which isn't really anything I know that much about. I had a different person in my organization doing that, but I'm a good consultant so I did the first part of going into offices and interviewing the staff and figuring out what kind of documents they were generating, how often they were shared. And this was to set up a shared word processing system with a mainframe type server. So that period lasted a very short time because, you know, I could just tell I was not the right person for the job, and they could tell I was not the right person.

JJP: And then I went to work for Information Handling Services briefly which was a company that provided military specifications and industry standards on microfilm. And I was what was called a Sales Service Technician which meant that I went out and installed systems and trained staff on how to use the systems. And that lasted not very long, I don't know, six months or so.

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JJP: And I was kind of casting around in my mind and decided to try being a medical librarian for a little while and went to work for the Houston Academy of Medicine Texas Medical Center Library, which was really the only time I had real intense experience with online searching and that was Medline. But I never really was quite methodical enough to set up my search strategy in advance, figure out how to narrow down my terms. So I can remember my first big search was on, the doctor had just asked for research on calcium, he didn't narrow it down, and I didn't understand how bad that was, and printed out a stack, it was about this thick of references to calcium, I mean you had to cross it with something. And my boss at the time was a very organized, orderly person and she was just appalled, just totally appalled.

JJP: And I've always kind of been that way, it's very hard for me to be as orderly and methodical as a librarian is normally expected to be. So I didn't stay but a year but it was a good, it was a really good way to get back into the library world and start thinking like a reference librarian. I did bibliographic instruction while I was there which was again, realizing that I had an aptitude for training adults, and I at least learned something about the online searching world. And I've always been interested in medicine and health and nutrition, so I liked it. But my contract was not renewed after that year.

JJP: And again, I was sitting there thinking, okay, what do I do now? And I, I think I went back into doing a little bit of consulting for Information Handling Services and restarted the business for a while and did a couple of organization projects because the economy had picked back up. But in the end it wasn't right because I just didn't, I didn't want to go back into business for myself at that point and I thought about being a school librarian.

JJP: So, I heard through the grapevine, oddly enough, that the Episcopal High School, which was a new high school, was looking for a second librarian. The first librarian broke his hand had started the library and the school was only a year old I think, a year or two old, I can't remember, and that was a wonderful time. I loved being a school librarian, we really had a good time, it was a very close knit faculty, it was an exciting time because the school was just starting, they had a lot of money. We were in the same office as the development people so the fundraisers were there in the same building as the library. We helped them put on some luncheons and I learned a little bit about fundraising and I made it about two and a half years.

JJP: And then I took an Outward Bound course the summer after the second year because I had summers off for the first time in my life. And one of the things they do in Outward Bound is they leave you alone for three days by yourself. And I woke up the morning of the third day after, you sort of fast, they give you like a bag of granola and the water was potable because we were in the boundary waters in Canada, so you haven't really eaten. And I woke up crying and realizing I had to get out of Houston, it was time to go. I had a relationship that, I had divorced before I closed my company, and that was a relationship that wasn't working, and my son was in trouble with drugs, and I just went "I gotta get out of here."

JJ: How long had you been living in Houston at that point?

JJP: All of my life essentially. I had gone to college in New York, Sarah Lawrence College, for my first two years of college, but then married and moved back to Houston. So I'd really been in Houston for my whole life. And I just realized I gotta get out and my first thought

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was Austin because I had come here to school. So I started applying for jobs and I got one interview with The University of Texas and one for Austin Community College and one for the State Library. And University of Texas wanted me but didn't pay much of anything. They did not and probably still do not have very good salaries for library personnel.

JJP: And I was also a little bit put off by their attitude for reference because you don't really help the students, you help the faculty. Or at least that's how it felt to me, that the students had very little priority in terms of service, and I was so used to the public library model that whoever was in front of you is who had priority.

JJP: So I graciously declined and did not ever actually interview with Austin Community College but the State Library was very interested because they needed two new managers. They had just lost top people and they'd all moved up and they needed to replace two managers and my experience was varied enough that they figured I would be a good match.

JJP: So for about three and a half years I happily was the manager of Continuing Education Consulting and then my desire to be a better trainer took over. And I was always out all the time, I was always out doing training. I started learning how to teach organizational development type topics and so I was doing customer service, and dealing with difficult customers, and Myers-Briggs type indicator, and team building, and Total Quality Management which was a hot topic at the time.

JJP: So I was doing to these things which were very popular, very hot topics and I was out all of the time. And finally we did an upward review and my staff said, "Jenifer doesn't seem to want to be the manager" and I said, "yeah, they're right, you know, I would like to be demoted, I would like to just be a consultant." And they were kind of, you know, "oh no!" But in the end it was a good decision and they hired Jeanette Larson to become the manager and I was a consultant.

JJP: Right about that same time, I remarried. I had come to Austin, built a house, and my two goals were to build my own house and remarry. So I built the house, met someone who was as open to building a new life as I was and so we married. And so while I still continued to work as consultant for almost another year after we remarried, it was less fun to leave town all the time, you know, I wanted to be home.

JJP: And so I started looking around for something else and, coincidentally, Austin Public really needed to fill that position so they already knew me, liked me, and I had done training there for them. So it was a good match.

JJ: And this was the staff training positon which is what you'd been trying to do before?

JJP: Yes, yes, and it was like a chance to do it on an intense level with one group instead of scattershot all over Texas, you know. Because it's really hard to really get anywhere when you're just going once a year or twice a year to a library.

JJ: Okay, so that's a really varied career.

JJP: Extremely varied.

JJ: What was your favorite job out of all of those?

JJP: Oh boy, I don't know. They were all my favorite while I was doing them you know? I truly loved almost everything I did. There were very few like the medical librarian and the

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Tenneco Oil that weren't a good match, but other than that I truly loved each thing as I was doing it.

JJP: And I wouldn't trade that approach to a library career for anything. Because it's like, you really got to try every possible avenue, you got to try all the different things you've could do with that degree. And now there are even more. You know, now it would be to be a webmaster somewhere, and publish an information type journal, and design online databases, and now the options are even greater than they were in many respects.

JJ: How would you say that the role of librarian has changed during the course of your career?

JJP: Well, when I was in library school, I took a course with Glynn Harmon and it was an information science course. And at the end of my time in library school we had a written exam and an oral interview, that was as much as we did to complete our Masters degree. And on the written exam one of the essay questions was, "compare the term 'magic helper' with the term 'information scientist.'" And I defended the concept of 'magic helper' and they wouldn't graduate me unless I rewrote that part of the essay and said no I can see why it's important to be an information scientist.

JJP: But really to me, that was the essence of librarianship, that was what drew me to it, was that ability to magically connect someone with what they needed the most to know. And it was like magic, it was like something that you could do for people that they could not easily do for themselves.

JJP: And as we moved into the current era, it is much much more obvious because of Google, because of search engines, how to find what you need to know, and so that role has indeed pretty much gone away. The only thing that is still left of it to me is like readers advisory, that is still very personal and very magical when you can find the books that someone really wants to read that they don't even know exists. So that is there, but it has indeed progressed to a much more self service approach to information seeking. And that was happening all during my career.

JJP: In library school, they were first having search it yourself type approaches to the databases, Dialog and BRS were both coming up with client-based searching, search strategies, rather than the information specialist doing it. So you know it kind of evolved over that time.

JJ: Do you think that libraries are in trouble with web 2.0 or do think library 2.0 is going hand in hand with that, or how what do you feel about the future of libraries?

JJP: It's pretty interesting because it is so unclear what's going to happen. It is so unclear. I don't think the role of information specialist will ever go away. I think there is something, you know, when you concentrate on that, when that is your focus instead of on the discipline itself, you become adept in a way that other people can't be.

JJP: However, I was talking with Chris Peterson from Amigos, was it only yesterday, yesterday? And she was talking about the world of social software and she was talking about how that arena, she was talking about how in Second Life the first instinct people have is to build a building, when a library gets onto Second Life, they build a building. And she said, "that is so

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ridiculous. In this day and age why do they feel they have to portray the library as a building? Especially in Second Life, I mean, does that make sense?"

JJP: And I'd never thought about that. I mean she said, "it's something ephemeral, it's something almost invisible that libraries are becoming. You know, it's air with data flying through it. It's not a place." So, it's evolving so fast that only somebody like Chris who spends a lot of her time out there on the edge is able to even begin to form a picture of. You know what I mean?

JJP: My reality is still so book-based. You should see my bedside table, it's just this big block of stacked books. And periodically I have to take a few out and find a place to put them. And the bookshelf that is one whole huge wall at the end of our house is full and I have to decide what to throw away periodically and get rid of. I'm still very book-based. And I use internet but I don't just sit down to play on the computer, it is not, it's not like that, even yet, to me. It's not something I do except in a task way, to fulfill a task. So it's hard for me to even speak knowledgeably about where we're going because I don't like the idea about the things going away.

JJP: You know, I like, when I had my branch, my ideal was something that was all media in one place beautifully organized. Nice, new, shiny CDs and DVDs and audio books, just a beautifully ordered collection of materials that were interesting and helpful and useful and beautiful. So it's really hard for me to get past that picture.

JJP: Because yes, of course I want download-able, and of course I want all the other ways, I want computers, I want internet, I want all of these other ways that users connect to information. But most of all I want this to be a place where the information resources themselves are visible so that people can see all of the choices that they have. It's almost like when people don't see it, you don't even have an idea of all of the possibilities that are there. That's what makes me a little nervous about a bookless library. Because in a way, you're just kind of burying it all, you're sort of making it back into a privileged persons world where poor people and people who don't have education have no idea of what the possibilities are.

JJ: The lack of ability browse, just walk through the stacks.

JJP: Yeah, the browsability we've always known is a huge part of the danger of online catalogs for exemple. They originally visualized, which they have come to make more real now, browsability online so that you can look at the books as they are displayed on the shelf and pull one out, on your computer, and look at the table of contents. And that was a way for us to imagine how we could salvage that browsability in an online world.

JJ: How do you feel that programs, such as the one used by Amazon to recommend books, that they will effect future organization of libraries and books and other materials?

JJP: I really like Amazon, I use it quite a bit when I'm building bibliographies. We did a workshop on non-fiction for small libraries, must have non-fiction for small libraries, last year and I did cookbooks and cooking and restaurant management, sort of that world. We each took a different topic, and I used Amazon to build my bibliography along with my favorites, the things I use all the time. Because five stars means a lot to me. I mean, you know, if everybody who used that damn thing said it was five stars, it's probably a good cookbook. So I would then go and

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look at them to see if I agreed, but still I think that's very helpful. I think customer reviews built into catalogs is a wonderful idea, I think anytime you can get what regular old people think about something accessible to everyone you're doing a wonderful thing.

JJP: Now how that's going to effect the order of libraries, I'm not sure. I'm not sure I think it's a good idea for example to do a bookstore approach to a whole collection. It's okay if it's a little collection, let's say if you have 20,000 items, that's okay, but if you've got 65,000 items, how the heck are you ever going to find anything?

JJP: I mean, what you notice if you go into Barnes and Noble, or Bookstop, or any of the local bookstores, is that the staff are the ones who really know where everything is and they almost are having to memorize locations, they're doing a lot of studying things when they unpack things and put them away, you know, because they can't tell you much more than a general category as to where things would be found.

JJP: And I've had, even knowing how to use that, using the same book store for years, I have some difficulty even if I've seen that book before because some of it is visual recognition, you know, what color was it, what did the print look like. And I don't see it in a big collection being at all feasible. So, to me the organizational structures we have are just fine, I don't think they're broken, I mean I'm not sure why, other than the recent, who cares how they're displayed? Face out people can see the covers, you know, browsability for recent materials is fine, but for your backstock, it just doesn't quite make sense to me.

JJ: Okay, so a little change of topic. Library school. Like, looking back on it, can you say what was the experience was like? Are there classes that you took that were particularly useful to you throughout your career? Are there some that like are just completely obsolete now? How did your education prepare you?

JJP: Well, not having been recently, I can only speak for what I've heard, you know, from people that are just out of library school or have come out in the last five years or so. And the main thing that I remember is that, it was all interesting, it was all intriguing, but bear in mind that I was weaving in dance choreography and communications theory and planning theory, so I had some substantive thing to hang what I was learning on. It's kind of hard to go to library school in a vacuum, when you're not taking any substantive courses that are about some discipline or other than how to organize and retrieve and manage information. But I really liked library school.

JJP: But I was older, I have always had this sort of fascination with knowledge for its own sake, it just seemed like such a perfect thing for me. It was just so, it was such a match for how I thought and how I was as a person and it didn't stress me out to have something be not quite as challenging as I had expected, not quite as interesting as I wanted it to be.

JJP: But what I hear now is we don't learn enough about management, we didn't learn anything about how to build an effective team in a workspace, we didn't talk about budgets, we don't talk about the politics inherent in getting money and working your way through a highly politicized world. That's huge really to run any library. It is huge to understand human politics, human psychology, why people decide to do what they decide to do.

JJP: We sort of pretend as if it is all scientific and it is absolutely not, it's just not. It is human, it is emotions, it is anger, it is resentments, it is revenge. It is all of those things and so,

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you know, if there's anything I would say that needs to be done it is to have more practical, pragmatic management training.

JJ: Okay, and kind of along some of those same lines, when you see new librarians coming out of school, are there skills that they're lacking, practical skills that they need that they're not, that they don't have?

JJP: I would say not in the realm of information science, not in the realm of creating websites or tools for retrieval, that kind of thing, no. I think they for the most part are so adept that it's sort of intimidating for those of us who weren't born into that world. But there is a lot of you know, my most recent experience is as a trainer and so that knowledge of how to teach is always a stumbling block.

JJP: And unfortunately to me college professors are singularly lacking in knowledge of how to teach. They lecture and they don't really know the things that trainers know about adult learning, about setting up exercises that help you learn things, and interacting in a discussion level, and allowing differences of opinion so, you know, to me it's something about that. It's something about the fact that librarians are also teachers on some level and we need to understand some things about education theory and teaching others that aren't necessarily taught either.

JJ: Okay, what would you say to a new librarian just starting out, what advice would you have to give to a new librarian?

JJP: Don't work at the same place your whole life, don't be afraid to change jobs. Don't ever think that there's not another job out there for you because there always is.

JJP: Work on believing in yourself, work on your social skills, work on knowing how to be charming and interesting to other people. You know, all of the same things that anyone else needs to succeed in life, we need to succeed in life. It's not a place to hide, its not a place to rest, it is challenging. If you want to advance, you really have to think about it and be aware of it and work towards the things that you have to know to advance.

JJ: Have you noticed, you did a lot of training in your career, do you think that the training that librarians have had over the years that you worked, has it been able to keep up with all of the advances in technology and the changing in the role of librarians during that time? Or has that lagged and how have librarians been able to keep up with all of the changes?

JJP: I think we're doing a good job, at least here at Central Texas Library System, we spend a lot of time monitoring the literature, going to conferences outside of our discipline so that we're talking to people that are social workers, or people that are doing manga, or people that are writing romance novels, or people that are writing science fiction, or you know. We just spend a lot of time kind of scanning the environment looking for what is needed at this time.

JJP: So we don't let ourselves be complacent in terms of what were offering. And I think that's true in all of the training entities, we're constantly looking for what the hot topic is, what people want to know more about, and we try very hard to make the things that we teach be what people want at that time.

JJ: Okay.

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JJP: So I don't really think that training is the problem. I think, the people that I notice that I think are stuck are the people who are hanging on the same job waiting to retire. I think that's a very dangerous place to be because you start becoming complacent and you start thinking that you know everything you need to know to do your job and you become more and more reluctant to continue to learn and grow.

JJ: Okay, do you see public support for libraries, has that stayed steady or do you see that falling off as people see Google as the answer for all questions? Or how has public support changed or stayed the same during your career?

JJP: Again, it rises and falls with the economic tides, it's not been consistently rising or consistently sinking. It certainly has gone from relatively modest when I began my career in 1971, it rose astronomically and then dropped, and then rose astronomically and then dropped. Right now, as I'm sure you know, we're in pretty uncertain waters because local governments are having to tighten their belts again. You know after just having done that what, three years ago, four years ago they were totally shrunk down. So I think, I think it's a permanent state, I don't think that you can say that we're on our way out nor do I think that you can say it's going to be smooth sailing from now on. I mean, it's just not like that. It's so much a political animal because we're all tied to a University, or a city, or a county, or a state which has fluctuating prosperity. So.

JJ: Okay. So when you went to library school, was that a common career path at the time, or was it?

JJP: No, I've been thinking about that recently because you're kind of not aware of what you're doing when you're going through it, you know. It takes a while to be able to look back and realize what you're really doing.

JJP: But the federal government offered scholarships for people to go to library school in the early '70s and that's actually where most of us jumped in. There were very few people with Masters degrees in 1970, there were almost none. But the fact that the federal government was financing that movement making librarianship an advanced degree program like law, and their willingness to give grants, was what stimulated the library schools to hire more faculty, bring in more staff, and grow.

JJP: So even though those library schools already existed, they weren't well attended, there weren't very many students until the early '70s. And almost all of those people that you have as faculty, the library directors, the people that you would consider the senior members of our profession, who are all getting ready to retire, we all got into librarianship simultaneously, we're all like peers. That's what so scary about this change is you're losing this whole generation of people at the same time.

JJ: Are you concerned about the graying of the profession? And there's a lot of concern that so many librarians are leaving the profession all at the same time. Is there concern about trying to fill that void with a lot of inexperienced new librarians?

JJP: I'm not worried about the inexperience so much, I really believe that youth is a powerful force for change and improvement. I do not think that I am the best candidate any longer to do many, many jobs. I am pretty obsolete in terms of technology because I just can't

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quite get myself to want it enough to overcome the barriers, you know. I'll learn what I have to. I'm sure that once I'm freer to do things I'll start to get curious about Second Life and stuff like that, but I don't know, we'll see.

JJP: So I am really encouraged to have more young people in the profession. What I'm scared of is can we recruit enough? Can we get enough people who don't care that they're never going to make a lot of money? Because that's become much more of an issue, kids don't necessarily, well, that's not really true, kids still major in whatever the heck they want to when they're undergraduates. They still don't think how am I going to use this for making a living, they still major in History, and Political Science, you know, English, just like they always did, so that's not exactly true.

JJP: But there is a much more, at least, the kids that I talk to, they are much more thinking, can I afford to be a librarian? You know, and I spend a lot of time saying you know it's true, I never made a lot of money, but I always owned my own house, I've always had a nice car, I've always managed to take trips when I wanted to, you know, you figure it out, you make it work, you know. It's just like teaching, it is, it is a calling. It's a calling and we've got to figure out a way that it calls and continues to call to young people.

JJP: I mean I feel like that is one of my responsibilities now, and have felt that way for a while, to go to career days and to talk to kids when they show an interest. And I have a couple of nieces that are kind of interested, and you know.

JJ: Is there a lot of mentoring for the new librarians coming into the profession?

JJP: Chris Peterson was telling me that that's becoming less common instead of more common, that mentoring is less important or considered less important. I do it actively because I am kind of a bossy person and I love to tell people what to do and what to think. But I don't know, I don't know if we're losing it or gaining it.

JJ: Okay, what do you feel that new librarians are bringing to the profession?

JJP: Creativity, broad ability to think in the ether, sort of ability to do abstract thinking, energy, productivity, drive.

JJ: What would you like your legacy to be?

JJP: I would like to have the knowledge that I helped some people in my life.

JJ: Well, that's really a noble goal. Well, thank you so much. It's been a real pleasure interviewing you today and I learned a lot, so thank you very much.

JJP: You're welcome.

Interviewed by Jennifer Jones; transcribed by Jessica Kirkland.

Richwine Transcript

KA: This is Kacy Allgood. I am here with Peggy Richwine at the History of Medicine room, in the Ruth Lilly Medical Library at the Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis, Indiana. Peggy has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired/Retiring Librarians. It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association presidential initiates. This recording will be the property of the ALA, and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is August 27, 2008.

KA: Hello Peggy! Thank you for being here today, thank you for doing this [interview]. Can you tell us a little bit about your current position here at the library, and your career?

PR: My ending position here at the medical school library was outreach. Meaning that I worked with all the health facilities in the state and all the other campuses for the IU School of Medicine that were not specifically on IUPUI campus. And that, by working with them I gave them access to our resources as appropriate, offered them training, helped them get their interlibrary loans and all that kind of thing.

KA: How many outlying campuses does IU have, besides Indianapolis?

PR: Okay, for the school of medicine now, we're talking about, there are eight other campuses, other than the one here in Indianapolis, and that is for the first and second year of medical school training, and then they come here [Indianapolis] for their third and fourth year of their medical school training.

Now my career here, began about 21 years ago [1987]. I started as a reference librarian, and at that time reference librarians did a lot of online searching for folks. We were very very busy with online searching. It wasn't very long after I started that we began teaching them how to search their own... for their own information.

The technology was changing and this was in the late eighties, and user friendly software was becoming available for them to search the resources that were important to medicine. And so, very early in my career, my reference position changed from just searching and answering information questions to searching [and] answering information questions and awfully lot of training. To acquaint people with how to do it themselves.

That kept up for about three years and then, at the end of about that time period, I had an illness, where I was no longer able to keep up the frantic pace of a reference librarian, and a position came open in cataloging. And I had had... I had had a little bit of cataloging, so I applied for that position and I became head of cataloging, here at the medical school library. And we did some projects, getting a lot of resources in the online catalog. It was an interesting time, to get all of our books in the online catalog.

Shortly after we finished those projects, the interlibrary loan position needed a head, but the school was not able to employ someone to head up the department, so it was given to me to manage, and that was how I got started with outreach, as an interlibrary loan person, I had a lot of contacts with the hospitals, and I liked that, it was fun.

And as time went on, there were opportunities to write grants and get money, to offer services to the hospitals that I was working with, so it just kind of grew. I still had my cataloging

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position, but I also had... was taking on interlibrary loan, and then I started grant writing, and it just kind of transitioned very slowly into something different.

And at one point though, we had a major, major grant, for federal funding for a subcontract with the National Library of Medicine. The National Library of Medicine came here for a site visit, and in the whole process of trying to get this arrangement made with the National Library of Medicine, it was decided that I was no longer going to do cataloging, and interlibrary loan and outreach and everything else, that I was going to be strictly outreach. So that was in '95, or something like that, and since '95 then, my focus has been projects, grant writing, outreach is the title.

KA: Okay, now when you started in reference, how many searching questions did you get in an average 4 hour or 8 hour time frame?

PR: We needed to sit at the reference desk, probably, six out of the eight hours that we were here. We were that short staffed, and there were two of us on the reference desk all the time, that's how busy it was. And it just constant, someplace along here, there's a question about, 'Do I remember the first question that I was ever asked.' No I don't remember that first question, but I do remember a situation where one of my colleagues, was new. I'd only been here a few months, and she was newer than I was, she said, 'It's okay for you to go onto lunch, I'll be alright.'

KA: Uh-oh, famous last words.

PR: When I got back, she grabbed me, 'Don't you ever do this to me again!' So it was a very frantic time to work at the reference desk. It was exciting, but it was also very demanding. We had a lot of important people asking a lot of difficult questions. As far as searching, the researchers would come in, fill out a form, and leave it for us to do a search. And in a month's time, we would do probably 125 searches apiece. So, in a month's time that amounted to about 500 searches, because there were four of us in the department. So it was a lot different then, [then] where we are now.

KA: Yes, oh my goodness, and you did... you do four hours worth of reference per week now, on-call, is that right? And how many search requests do you get?

PR: Oh, one a week.

KA: One a week now? Quite a change.

PR: Oh yeah, yeah. But yes, I very much enjoyed reference, I hated to have to give it up, but I physically was no longer able to do it. And I'm glad my career made the changes, that's what made it fun.

KA: Well, who would you say your primary clientele was for reference? Was it faculty, the medical students...?

PR: Not medical students. Faculty, outsiders, by that I mean like pharmaceutical representatives, people from law offices in the city, a physician who might be from another city in this state. It was just a wide variety of folk, but not generally medical students. Medical students didn't use the reference services very much. They would go to the circulation desk and checkout materials that were on reserve, but they didn't come the reference desk very often.

KA: Okay. Well, can we talk a little bit about your library background?

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PR: Sure. Oh, one of the things I didn't tell you about. One of the reasons I ended up as a medical librarian because of my previous career. And that previous career was that I had been a teacher, and a high school teacher of chemistry, and that... because of that, I was very much interested in getting into a field that would utilize that background that I had. And so I looked at the medical librarianship here as an opportunity to use that background. As it turned out, probably didn't use it very much, but it gave me acquaintance with some of the vocabulary, that helped me understand what people were asking for and that kind of thing.

KA: I'm sure the teaching experience is valuable too, because you teach for us here?

PR: Absolutely. My library background? As a child, I went to a very small school, we only had four classrooms in the whole school.

KA: And what grades were these?

PR: First and second in one room, third and fourth in another room. We had two bookshelves of books, and my goal was to read all the books in the classroom.

KA: Did you reach your goal?

PR: Yes, every time. Yes, yes...

KA: Well very good.

PR: And that was my library, that was really the only library we had at that point. So I read every one of them. And I'd take one home every night and read it, and return it the next day, and take another one home the next day.

KA: Oh, wow.

PR: That was the way we did it. And why did I decide to work in a library? Teaching was a satisfying career, but it was something that... I had other obligations, that I couldn't handle both teaching, and the other obligations, and I began looking at librarianship as another option for the situation that I had to deal with. And it looked like a fairly good option. And as I said, I always enjoyed books, and I felt like it was something that could utilize my background, my science background, and I had every intention of going into the pharmaceutical field, that was my intention, but things didn't work out that way.

KA: (laughter) Things change.

PR: Yeah.

KA: Well, was librarianship a common career path at the time?

PR: Na, not really, and many of my colleagues as a teacher couldn't understand why I would want to go into librarianship.

KA: Well what was their point of view on it? Did they... Do I want to know?

PR: They just didn't understand why I would want to do that. My sister, who is a teacher also, she just couldn't, she could not, understand it. Now, as a retiree, she has volunteered in a library and she loves it. So she's had a complete about face. I was able to convince her.

KA: (Laughter) That's good. Well, are there any social stereotypes tied to being a medical librarian?

PR: Well, I don't know. I think there are. Whenever I would be working with the researchers, now this is back in the days when we were dealing much closely with the

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researchers, they would come in, and they would have questions, and I would sit down and work with them. If they were to discover that I had been... had a chemistry background and so forth, they could not understand why I would ever become a librarian.

PR: So I think there is a social stereotyping that goes on there. I personally, feel that it's been a rewarding career and it's a career that I've enjoyed, but it was something that the stereotype was not flattering.

KA: That's unfortunate.

PR: Yeah.

KA: Well, can we go onto your library school formal education, questions about that? Where did you go to library school?

PR: First of all, I had another master's degree before I went to library school, and that was a master's degree in education.

PR: And then... and I had taught at the university level, at the University of Indianapolis, I had taught nursing students there. And so I... part of my career decision questions were, 'Should I go for a Ph.D, or should I go for a Ed.D?' Or... and then I looked at this as another option. And the Indiana University library program looked very inviting to me because it would be a way to use my science background, as I mentioned before, and I could get it accomplished, I could get the master's degree and go into a pharmacy situation, or at least that was my thinking at the time, and so it was a very inviting possibility for me, to make the changes that I needed to make.

KA: Okay.

PR: And what did I not like about library school?

KA: Oh-oh.

PR: I don't think there was anything I... it was all, probably almost all of it, a matter of endurance for me, having had a first career, and this being a second career, some of the materials, particularly the management kind of materials, seemed so unnecessary to me, but they were necessary, I realize they were, for the beginning students. And so there were things like that, that were just kind of an endurance test for me, but it was necessary. I loved the reference kind of classes, cataloging I endured, and truthfully, as I talk to you about some of the projects that I've done, that cataloging happens to be what I've ended up doing an awfully lot of. So it's okay, I like it.

KA: Okay, well now when you went through [library school] did they have special classes like medical libraries, law libraries?

PR: Yes.

KA: They did offer that.

PR: I took... there was no medical library program, but I took the special library program.

KA: Okay.

PR: And I enjoyed that.

KA: Okay. And did you attend in Bloomington or Indianapolis?

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PR: At that time, most of it was in Bloomington. I ended up with about a third of the classes here, and two thirds of them in Bloomington.

KA: Oh. Okay.

PR: It worked, I took what I could here.

KA: Okay, well, you live in Indianapolis?

PR: Yes, I lived in Indy.

KA: While you were going after your MLS, were there any other internships, or jobs or anything you were doing at the same time?

PR: Well, I was still involved with my first career, I was teaching at the university while I was going to library school. It was just a couple classes, it wasn't any big teaching load. And so really when I completed my library degree, I really didn't have any library experience. I'd never had any. And I would never advise a person to try to get a library job without having had some experience in a library, it's not an advisable thing to do at all. But that's where I found myself.

KA: Well how did you come across the job here then, without any experience?

PR: I actually did an internship in the summer, as one of my last classes.

KA: Okay, what did you do at your internship?

PR: Oh, they had projects for me. One was analyzing interlibrary loan requests, and I forget, I forget what the projects were. But they were mostly projects.

KA: Okay.

PR: It's been too long ago. I didn't get to do any reference though, I wanted to do reference, but they didn't want me on the reference desk.

KA: Sounds like it was crazy busy.

PR: Yeah.

KA: Well, what do you think about some programs taking out the "library science" description of their degree?

PR: That's an interesting question. Having been in a hard science, before I came to library science. I once heard it said, and I pondered this statement quite a bit. Any profession that has to use the word science in its title, is not a true science. So I've always thought that was kinda crazy to call it library science, but librarianship as information management is an important part of what I do, information management. So, I don't have a strong opinion about taking the word library science out of our degree program, because to me it's information management, and that has to do with the fact of where I came into the field, my own personal background, and where the field was at the time. I came in, probably at the very cusp of when it started to change, from managing print materials to where the electronic took over more and more and more. So to me, it's a natural... and it doesn't bother me at all.

KA: Okay, what do you think... what are some library skills that you think are timeless and others [library skills] that current library students don't have to worry about.

PR: Well, I think a lot about standardized vocabulary. Is that timeless, or is it something that people shouldn't have to worry about? For instance, the example I use is standardized vocabulary, when I talk to medical students, is the term that's used for a newborn, is the term

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newborn,neonate, infant? Now in Medline it's... or in MeSH, medical subject headings, it's 'infant, newborn.' It's a standardized term, and... the more we get into automated systems, you can retrieve the information without standardized vocabulary, it becomes more awkward without the standardized vocabulary, but you can do it. So the question becomes is that something that should be done totally in the background, and the medical... excuse me, the library students, shouldn't have to be bothered with it? Or is it something that's still important in their training? And I don't know the answer to that, it's just something I think about.

KA: Yeah. I think everybody is now. I don't know if we know the answer yet. Okay, so do you have some advice as a retiring librarian to us new librarians, to tell us what we're lacking, so we can pick up on some practical skills?

PR: You know what I put down there, I put, I can't answer that. I think there's probably a lack of management skills, but that only comes with experience, as far as I'm concerned.

KA: Yes.

PR: You just can't expect a person to have management skills when they come. And so I'm very tolerant of a new librarian who needs that kind of experience. And hopefully I can mentor them and help them get that experience. But I don't see it as a deficiency.

KA: Well thank you for that. What is the most important thing you learned on the job that you could not have learned in school?

PR: I... the thing I identified here is the reference interview. I don't know, perhaps you could have learned this in library school. But... the innocence of some of the questions, and the... trying to get to the point of view of the user, of the person who is asking you the question is really really tricky at times. And you just have to keep working with the individual until you can really say, 'Oh, now, I know what he's trying to find!' Sometimes it's easy and sometimes it's not. And it is really... and when you finally get it, especially when they've been beating all around the bush and not saying what it is that you think they should've been saying, you say 'Oh wow.'

KA: Sense of relief?

PR: Yeah.

KA: What do you wished you would have known before you began your first job?

PR: I don't, again, this is because it's a second career for me it's probably not so much what I wish I had known, but a contrast from my previous job that I'd like to speak to here. And that is, I had had so much autonomy in my classroom as a teacher, and when I came here, I had a lot of close supervision, some very rigid expectations, and I found that very stifling. I had a very hard time adjusting to that particular environment. Now as time has gone on, that environment has changed as well. It's... everybody has autonomy here now. But it was not true at the time I started here.

KA: Was that due to the academic field in general, or was it the directors' guidance...

PR: It was more the administration.

KA: Okay.

PR: The expectations. It was a different time and a different era.

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KA: Okay, and one last question for you in the formal education area. How well do you feel your education prepared you for the field?

PR: I have... I feel like I was pretty well prepared. Again, I had a lot of other background. This was a second career, so you know, I didn't feel an inadequacy.

KA: How long had you been teaching before you started...

PR: Well, I only spent 3 years in high school, and then I had eight years at the university level.

KA: Okay.

PR: You know, there was a difference.

KA: Okay, so some general career questions. What were your favorite aspects of work as a librarian here?

PR: I liked the projects best of all. That was in the later years. I started out with reference, and then I did cataloging, then I did interlibrary loan, and then I did outreach projects, and those were what I really enjoyed the most. You set up a plan, you implement the plan, and then you have a finished product. And that's... that's satisfaction.

KA: Yes. Now what were some of these projects?

PR: Well, the first... the first project really was when I was still in cataloging, and we... I hired some folks, and we had an intense project to get what we called the analytics into the online catalog. And it was about 12,000 volumes, and we just... we just pushed and pushed and pushed and got that project done.

KA: Oh wow.

PR: It was something we did in I think probably a year's time. And then the projects then toward the end were the outreach projects, and that would be things like my SHELSI project, which was a consortium of hospitals, it's called Shared Hospital Electronic Library Project of Southern Indiana, and it was funding that I got from the National Library of Medicine to bring resources to these hospitals. And by resources I mean some of the library resources that they needed like textbooks and journals and that kind of thing. And so that was another project. It developed relationships with those hospitals that are still wonderful relationships, so it was a fun project. And then I had the MedlinePlus project, the Go Local project, I had a public health project, so I've had a lot of projects.

KA: Can you tell us a little about Go Local?

PR: Maybe we can talk about that later.

KA: Okay. What were your greatest triumphs as a librarian?

PR: Well, some of those projects. One of those things you just asked me about, Go Local, I'll explain that to you. The National Library of Medicine is kind of the parent in a way for medical libraries around the state. And, as the Library of Congress is for public libraries. They had put together a database of health information for consumers, called MedlinePlus. As that project developed, one of the enhancements they could make to that would be so that as people looked for medical information, they could then locate services related to their condition, in their locality, where they lived.

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And that project then was called the Go Local. And they... the National Library of Medicine, once they got their plan together on how they were going to do this, put out a request nationwide for proposals, and we responded. We were one of the earliest responders. And they accepted our proposal to create our database of local services. And then that database of local services can be searched by city, by zip code, by county, and they you can find all the health related services in the county or city or zip code that you're looking for. So we were one of the first that responded, and we got it up and it became public, and it became a model for the rest of the country, us and a couple of others. I can't take credit for everything. It was a very successful project, and we're very proud of our Go Local, it's called INHealthConnect.

KA: And how many health providers do you have listed in this, Indiana Health Connect?

PR: Oh there's 10,000 records in that. One of the decisions... once you start doing it, it becomes almost a cataloging job, it really is a cataloging job. One of the decisions is you have a web site for like, in my case the example I always use is the Indiana Heart Physicians. They have locations in Greenfield, and in Shelbyville, Columbus and Indianapolis and so forth. Do I put in a separate record for location, so that it can be searched by zip code? Or do I put them in by county, and then these... the linking with the National Library of Medicine's MedlinePlus is very very exact if you're looking at heart disease, you can link over and find these Indiana Heart Physicians, wherever you're interested in finding them. So that's how it works, it's a relationship of the information about the condition, with the services [you can find] locally. I was very proud of that project.

KA: Thank you. As a member of the community, I have that to use.

PR: Yeah.

KA: What are some things about your work here as a librarian that you will remember forever?

PR: When I read this question, the first thing that came to my mind was working with the foreigners that I've worked with. Foreign students, foreign faculty, foreign researchers, they come in and somehow they're always funneled to me. I don't know how that happens, but I've gotten a good number of them. And they've been from China and Russia and Kenya and Angola and Nigeria and Liberia and I've just had a wonderful wonderful experience of dealing with people from all over the world, that are doing training here at the medical center.

KA: Wow, that's pretty good, I wonder how they got sent to you? I don't know. Do you speak any foreign languages?

PR: I think somebody downstairs at the reference desk or at circulation knows to send them to me. I think that's what happens.

KA: Well, that made your work experience unique, what else made your work experience unique?

PR: Well, of course the fact that the last 10-12-15 years have just been projects, is probably a lot different from what most people have ... the grant writing and the getting funded, going from one project to another. At the same time, keeping touch with what goes on here inside the library has really made it unique and fun.

KA: What are some of the most enriching experiences that you've had during your career?

PR: Well... Enriching in the light of funding?

KA: Well, either funding or cultural enrichment, either way.

PR: Or enhancing my own self-esteem. I'll tell you one of the projects that I have enjoyed the most, and has brought me a lot of recognition is the MedlinePlus project. And let me explain what the MedlinePlus project is. I've hinted at MedlinePlus already. When I was talking about the National Library of Medicine building this database of patient education consumer health resources. They started developing that in 1998 and they put out a request for proposal for someone to help them build it. And I saw the request for proposal, it came across my desk. It was right around Christmas time in 1998 and I said.. and it said they had to have the proposal by the first of January, and you had to mail it. Had to be US mail, couldn't be email, and you only had a week to do it. And it was Christmas time.

KA: Ahhh, this is Uncle Sam. Okay.

PR: So I said well, 'I don't think so.' But I had someone push me, a hospital librarian here in this state, sent me an email and said, 'Peggy, I want to do this, but I can't do it, but I know you can. So if you'll do it, I'll help you.' And so I said, 'Well, you know, it's an impossible task to do it within the time frame we've got.' But we don't just say no just because it's impossible. So we worked together and we submitted it and by the time we got it submitted, the time frame had changed they had moved up so it didn't have to be in 'til the end of January, so we actually we were able to work within the time frame they had.

And we submitted the proposal to help NLM develop MedlinePlus, and we got a response from them like in early March, saying, 'We want you to come to NLM, and we'll train you, and it's gonna be the end of March that you come.' And so I had 6 people on the project, and we all got together and we went to NLM and we had training, that was in 1999, April of 19... last of March, April 1999, and we thought it was a one year project. We really were convinced that we were gonna help them develop this database and our goal was 300 topics, we were gonna get 300 topics in it and that was the end of it, but as the year completed, they said well now, 'We're gonna renew your contract.' And... so it got renewed, and it got renewed, and it got renewed, and it got renewed, for eight years... it kept on.

And so that was a very interesting project, it brought in money to the university, it brought in status to me as I worked with my colleagues around the country. And in the end, in 1997 [Peggy meant 2007, not 1997] when we went to renew the contract, I was informed it could no longer be given to a university. And it had to do with the fact that it was now more appropriate for a small business than for a university. So they could no longer offer it to a university.

So my young ladies that worked for me on the project, there were seven of us all together. Well there were eight of us all together, there were 7 others, decided that we wouldn't give up without a fight. We could no longer work for Indiana University on the project, but we could create our own small company. And so eight young... eight women, from all over the

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United States went together and created a company and we competed for the contract, and we got the contract.

KA: And what's your company called?

PR: And the company is Knowstone Information Associates. And they have been in existence for a year.

KA: Congratulations.

PR: Yes, yes. We made it through. We had some pretty rough times, financially. In that we wanted to pay everybody on time, but we weren't getting the money from the federal government on time, and so we had to do some pretty... scrambling around to find money. Even charge cards had to be under one individual's name. So there were just some big financial issues, but we made it through the first year, and now we have a little bit of a cushion. And so... it's been enriching, it's been rewarding.

KA: Good. Financially rewarding as well as... enriching?

PR: And so, as I retire, I still have a job. I retired from Indiana University but I still have this and it's a librarian's job, it a cataloging job. It started out as helping NLM develop the database, it has now evolved into maintaining the database. And I have no idea how many records there are in that database, it's a huge database. And what we do, every six months we have to review every topic, and there's close to 800 topics now in the database.

KA: So you guys go in, into every topic in MedlinePlus, and every six months you review the information and make sure that its current on common health issues, and this is information that's geared towards the public, for public users, for their health.

PR: And it's quality filtered, and by quality filtered, we mean that it is only from certain approved organizations that the National Library of Medicine says fit their criteria of being a qualified writer of health information. So that's... that's the strength of MedlinePlus.

KA: And I like the way you spell your company Knowstone. How do you spell the 'know' in Knowstone?

PR: K-N-O-W-S-T-O-N-E. Knowstone.

KA: I do like that.

PR: Now I'm looking for a nice icon for that, I'm gonna buy my some tee-shirts, or sweatshirts or something like that for all the women that work for me. And I haven't decided what my symbol's gonna be. We do have, we do have something on the website and on our business cards, and I may just use that. It's a very impressive...

KA: Now I'm gonna have to go check that out. So what have you been able to... You're the CEO of Knowstone, is that correct?

PR: I guess I am the CEO, yes.

KA: Oh boy. Well you've been able to transition your library career from here to your own enterprise, and that was hopefully some wonderful experiences, but what were some rough experiences during your librarianship days?

PR: I think one of the roughest experiences had to do with bureaucracy. And the fact that we're in an academic environment. Where things have to go through so many stages before they get accomplished. And at times I had trouble getting bills paid. [On behalf of the library.]

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Getting my... the employees on projects paid. The system just was too slow and too cumbersome to work well with what needed to be done. And yea, that was my main frustration.

KA: Has anything changed in 21 years? Is it still a little bit slow?

PR: In that regard, the bureaucracy is still... and it's because so many people have to touch a task before it gets accomplished. If it could just be one person, and that person is someone you could depend on, you know, then it's done. But because it has to first go here, and then it goes here and then it goes here, and then it goes here, and each time it takes at least a week...

KA: Phooey.

PR: Bureaucracy is a major frustration for me.

KA: And advice you have on... for new librarians on handling bureaucracy issues?

PR: Probably not to do what I did. Which was, which was to challenge the bureaucracy in a way that it was not helpful. I ended up going to the next level in administration, and that did not, that probably was not a good thing to do, and I would say not... do as I say, not as I do.

KA: Ahh, okay. What have been the biggest frustrations or disappointments in your career?

PR: Oh well, let's see. Oh I see what I wrote down here. Just a few months ago, as I was... you know... the retirement thing has been on my mind a lot. I wanted to be recognized by my employer, for the things I'd accomplished. I didn't feel that I... I didn't feel that there was any recognition, and I was really frustrated by that. I think that's a very very fundamental need of people to feel that they're appreciated. And I didn't feel that that was forthcoming. Now recently, there has been something that's happened, that I've come away feeling differently about it. But, it was a long time coming. And I ... that was a real major frustration for me.

KA: Well, I'm sorry, your colleagues, and your staff are very sad to see you retire. I mean sort of, we're happy for you, but we will miss you.

PR: And I do feel that my colleagues respect me and treat me very well, it was just that I wanted that respect from my employer as well, and I didn't feel that was what I was getting that. So as I say, it's changed recently, but it was a long time coming.

KA: Well that's good.

KA: And your official end retirement date is when now?

PR: September 30th.

KA: September 30th. So just a little over a month from today. What do you hope that the next generation of librarians will experience?

PR: Well that's a real interesting one. I would say more respect.

KA: From their administration?

PR: From society, from... yeah, society, the people that they deal with on a day-to-day basis. To recognize that they're doing a very complex job, and that it requires a good deal of intelligence and ability to perform, it's not just somebody that likes to read books.

KA: True. Do you feel that our users here show you that kind of respect, or not necessarily show respect, but just understand your experience and your knowledge and what you have to offer them?

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PR: When you sit down with an individual and work with them in a close relationship on a give and take basis, they do appreciate that very much, and respect what you have to offer. But that doesn't happen very often with the people that you're working with. Most of the time, it's a very quick interchange. And it generally requires a good, long interface before that appreciation develops. And I understand that.

KA: Okay. What different 'hats' did you have to wear as a librarian that you never thought you'd have to?

PR: Well, I don't think I ever anticipated that I would be a teacher as a librarian, but I certainly have been. I had no idea that my teaching background would be so... so heavily utilized in what I do, but it has been.

KA: What percentage of your work here has been spent teaching oriented, either one-on-one or in groups?

PR: Oh probably 30-40%. A lot of it is and then the projects, managing projects, and then the actual library, and that what librarianship trained me to do, and that is finding information, organizing information, that kind of thing.

KA: Well, what made you stay here for 21 years?

PR: The fact that I didn't get stuck in a job doing the same thing forever. I enjoyed moving from job to job, and then when I got into outreach, I could make, I created my own job. And I developed my projects, so I became pretty much... I pretty much got the autonomy that I craved so much when I first started here, I was able to go out and get grant money, and do outreach the way I saw fit, and it was a wonderful experience.

KA: Is that kind of autonomy typical for academic, medical or law librarians?

PR: Maybe... maybe so.

KA: Okay.

PR: I think so , I think so. At least to a degree. It didn't used to be, as I mentioned earlier, I didn't have that experience at first. But I think it is more now. I think we're more... have more freedom, at least here we do, with a different director.

KA: How did you maintain your passion for the library field?

PR: Oh, new projects, new people to deal with, I mean that's really what it involved. One of the things I had to be very careful with was not to take on more than I could handle. My one of my latest mentors is downstairs right now struggling with how much she's taken on. And that becomes a real problem sometimes, you see yourself, 'Oh I can do that,' and you yourself... you know, you write a proposal for funding, and while you're waiting for the funding, you start another project, and you get and you write a proposal for funding, and they by golly they both come at the same time. It's almost like... you just not any control over it, you take what you get and you... you make it work.

KA: Is there something that you wish somebody would have told you before you started your career?

PR: I don't think so, I looked at that question, I didn't see anything that I...

KA: Okay.

PR: I think what they didn't tell me was how much fun it would be.

KA: Oh!.. Well that's a good thing...

PR: It's been fun. I've really enjoyed it, and as you said, you used the word passion. People say that to me, 'You know you're quite passionate about your job.' And I am, I love it.

KA: Yes, you're a very good advocate for any of the library's resources. As well as eternally cheery.

PR: Well you know there's a story that my colleagues that I had in my early years tell about me, but I don't know whether I'd call it complementary or not, but. There was someone that had scheduled a tour of the library, and so someone came to the door of the library and stood there, and so I went up and started showing them on a tour. Well, when they left, they thanked me for the tour, and there were the people there who had actually scheduled the tour.

KA: And they [the walk-in guest] went through the whole tour with you? It was in the current building?

PR: I don't know if it was in the current building or the old building. It was just hilarious, that they were just so.. I guess they thought it was just standard treatment.

KA: Maybe they did, boy, they... (laughter) This is a three story library, I don't know how many thousands of square feet...

PR: And my colleagues, they were just cracking up. Because they couldn't believe I was so enthusiastic, that I'd just grab the first person that came in the door, and gave 'em a tour.

KA: You know though, they probably thought the librarians were very friendly, and more than willing to go out of their way to help. Somebody was probably like, 'I just came for a book, and I got a whole tour!' Ohhh, that's pretty good.

KA: Well, here's one I'm gonna spring on you. It's not too bad though. What was your experience in interviewing for your first professional position?

PR: Oh gosh, I... it was not here. My very first position... was at the University of Indianapolis. Now remember I had been a part-time faculty at the University of Indianapolis. And... they had a librarian opening, just as I finished my degree, and I mean they coincided, just perfectly. So I went in and interviewed, and I wasn't impressed by... by the director at all, and I started telling him, 'Well I think you ought to do this, and I think you ought to do this.' I came away thinking, 'I don't think I wanna work there, because I don't think I would have much respect for somebody who lets me tell 'em how to run their library.' I shouldn't have done that, but on the other hand, he just was not - he wasn't... and then he hired me.

KA: Congratulations, I think.

PR: Well, I didn't stay very long. I was there only a few months before I started here.

KA: What was your... what was it like to interview here for a professional, or a tenure-track position?

PR: Oh gosh. That, the words tenure-track position are key here, because that was a very major issue for me. Was how you met the requirements for tenure, when you had to work all that time on the reference desk, and do all the searching that we had to do. It was a very difficult time. And I remember asking the director in the interview how this all worked together. And that... for me the first few years I was here, that was a very major focus of what we did, was

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how on earth, how on earth, am I gonna get all those requirements for tenure, while I'm doing all the work that is expected of me.

KA: How many hours a week did you have to work while you were obtaining tenure?

PR: Well, it was at least 40, most of the time 45, and sometimes 50.

KA: Okay.

PR: I mean it had to do with... I mean your hours were 8-5 but if you had to get your searches done, you had to get your searches done. And that might require more time.

KA: Tell me about your involvement with professional associations?

PR: I'm a member of the Medical Library Association. I have worked with the local, with the chapter, that is the Ten State Chapter, and I've worked with the statewide organization, and I've been involved, all the years I've been here, 21 years, I love it, I enjoy working with librarians at all levels, and it's a way of learning how other people do things, and helping you consider other ways of doing the things you do. So I love it. And my first choice for a professional association, my very first professional meeting was ALA. And then when I came here, I switched to Special Library Association, then I didn't go to any of their national meetings, I eventually switched to MLA then.

KA: Okay. How did participation in MLA influence your career?

PR: Oh, I think it increased my satisfaction with my career, I think it's just more rewarding when you can share it with other people that do the same thing you do. I think it's just reassuring that you're doing the right thing.

KA: What was the most controversial time during your career in the information world?

PR: I would say in the most recent era, the issues of open access versus paying the publishers the amount of money that they're asking for the journals. Journals are such an important part of medical information, and they're just... publishers are pricing themselves out of business. It just is to the point where, libraries cannot afford what they're being asked to pay for the research journals. This is... there's a trend to, for them to publish in a different media, with electronic available, that's understandable, what they're looking at. The new NIH [National Institute of Health] initiative, where anything that's funded with NIH money has to go into PubMed Central as full text is a real interesting thing to watch.

KA: What do you think that it holds for the future, open access?

PR: Oh I think that's where we're headed. Not that it eliminates the publishers, it's just that things... things will change. They just won't be the same, and of course, nothing's ever the same.

KA: Of course. Okay. Onto some questions about library service. In what ways did the library you work in interact with the community?

PR: Well our library is a medical library, and the only academic medical library in this state has an interesting role to play. It has always been the place for people to come for professional medical information. And by people I'm not necessarily speaking of you and I as consumers, but rather, I'm talking about attorneys, and pharmaceutical companies, and all kinds of health care people who come to or library to use it. But in recent years we've also assumed a patient education consumer health role. And so in that role, we do interact with the community,

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we created Go Local database which is a database for the state of Indiana of local health services. So it's very... in that respect we do have an impact on the community. I've lost my train of thought. Oh, health literacy is another trend right now, that some of the librarians are wanting to get involved with. And they have written some articles, and done some work in that area, so it's an exciting way to interact with the community also.

KA: Okay. How have you used your position in the community to help people?

PR: I like to think that pointing them in the direction of where the services are, and where they're available is an important way to help people. We've done some actual training of senior citizens on how to use the computer to find health information. And we've done that through the Marion County Public Library [in Indianapolis] and some of the not... Marion County Public Library but also the, oh, what's it called, the Indianapolis Foundation Library Partners Fund. That's who funded it, and Marion County Public Library is a part of that. So they were partners with us on the project. It was really a good project.

KA: What was the funniest or most surprising query you ever received?

PR: [Laughter] Oh goodness, well, there's one or two that has to do with health information, that's... are so typical people's not understanding what exactly it is that goes on in the human body.

KA: Oh oh.

PR: But the one I remember was, I don't remember who the celebrity was, they were dying of liver disease, and I got a call from someone in the public saying, 'How do I, how do I go about donating one of my livers to this celebrity?'

KA: Oh. You can't fault them for their generous nature...

PR: I thought it was very generous of them. Those... they're really some interesting questions. Oh, I don't know whether I should share this one or not. Now how is it? This guy calls and he says 'My secretary calls me an anal retentive asshole, what does that mean?'

KA: [Laughter] What did you tell him?

PR: I don't remember.

KA: That might be a good thing, I don't know.

PR: But those are real interesting questions.

KA: Do you remember, you mentioned this earlier, that the first patron that you handled on your own, or the question that was asked?

PR: Oh gosh. No, I don't remember the first patron on my own, I don't remember that at all. A couple of things that I do remember, back in those early days, and I mentioned one before, is that a colleague who was really very new encouraged me to go to lunch and leave her at the desk, which was not a wise thing to do, because when I came back she was ready to kill me. But then I remember another situation. This person was also new at the same time, at the same time that the first one I mentioned was new, they came in together, at the same time, and back in those days we searched databases by logging in and our time we were being charged by the minute, for how long we were online.

KA: Ah, yes, okay...

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PR: You know it was not a small amount of money that was being charged per minute, it was hundreds of dollars on some of those databases, and I remember that I had gone downstairs to the stacks to help a patron find something, and here came this new little librarian who said, 'Peggy, how do I log off?'

KA: [Gasp] Oh oh...

PR: So she was on all this time, trying to find me in the stacks, oh my gosh, so yeah... It was just one of those things.

KA: Yeah.

PR: One of those learning experiences that get costly.

KA: Oh yeah. Oh my goodness. Who were the patrons that you remember the most, and why do you remember them the most?

PR: I think I mentioned this before also, and I think that probably the foreign students. Their gratitude, I have gifts sitting around my home that were given to me by foreign students, and they're most unusual gifts, so I can't help but remember well, that one came from Yon-Sook, and that one came from Lincoln, and that one came from... and so it's... their little gifts help me remember them.

KA: Yes. Do you have a particular most memorable patron?

PR: I don't think so... I don't think I do. Oh well let me tell you this one. I had a fellow who had a medical condition that he had done a great amount of research on his own, and he ended up writing a book about it, and he gave me a copy of it. And so as I cleaned out my office, I found his book, and it wasn't a published book, it was just something that he assembled himself. But it was large enough to be a book, on his condition, and I can't remember what the condition was, but that one was quite a memorable...

KA: Wow.

PR: So I must have taken an awfully lot of time with him, I think I must have, I don't remember much...

KA: Wow, I'm glad he could use our resources for that. Was there any resistance among the staff regarding serving patrons using the Internet and not necessarily using the library in a traditional manner?

PR: No. No I don't think so. I think this is the cutting edge library, and people come here with that realization.

KA: What are the greatest changes you have seen to library services?

PR: In this environment, in the medical information environment, is that we've moved from print/paper products to electronic. Now, that does not mean that we've gone away from paper, it just means that you can access them electronically, and then put them on paper. The access is different. But, at least as far as I can observe, people still print off paper copies of the things they really want to read. So... it's not a paperless situation at all.

KA: Now when you were giving your retirement speech, you said that we got our first electronic journal in 1993, or something like that, at this library, and in 2008 we're looking at going to almost completely electronic, so...

PR: Fifteen years.

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KA: Fifteen years. What is the role... ideal role of a medical library in the larger community?

PR: I personally feel that it's making the research information available to those that need it. That's the primary role. And that would be... that would be, not only the researchers here at the medical school, but anyone in the biotechnology arena within the state, and then we have an obligation also to make sure that patrons have access to quality consumer level information. And that is what they can get on MedlinePlus.

KA: Yes. Well, onto questions about technology. How do you feel about all of the technological changes that have taken place in the library over the course of your career?

PR: I love it.

KA: Has it made your job harder or easier?

PR: I don't think I'd be interested in my job if it were just strictly print. It's made it the job it is. The fun job.

KA: Well that's good! What sort of unanticipated consequences were there in incorporating new technologies into the library?

PR: Oh I think there's always that problem of working yourself out of a job. Sometimes I've observed this with hospital libraries, or at least there's always that... that fear as more and more work is done electronically and with software and so forth. The skills that a librarian formerly used to organize and arrange information may or may not be valuable, and sometimes, some of our staff have lost their positions just because they're no longer needed.

KA: How have you dealt with the technological divide that has existed for the last 30 to 40 years?

PR: Well, I was reading my note, I couldn't read it without holding it up close. My patience is growing shorter... for those expecting things to remain unchanged. Now that does not mean, that I expect everyone to adapt the technology immediately, as soon as it becomes available. What it does mean, is that after so long a period of time, they need to recognize that the technology is not waiting for them to catch up. That if they did not chose to join the technology revolution, then that's the consequences. And there are people like that, one of them being someone I live with.

KA: We won't show this tape to him.

PR: Actually, he's actually joined the technology revolution, but it took him a long time to get there.

KA: How has digitization changed the way you access information for personal use or for patrons, and is there a difference in [meth]odology depending on your audience?

PR: Well again, it's almost like that question is unnecessary, because my career has pretty much paralleled the transition. I really didn't do reference work back when it was all print. It's... I've been very much involved with the transition from day one, so I don't identify with that an awfully lot.

KA: How did technology change your job?

PR: My job was to adapt to the technology, and I did, and it made it interesting and fun. And it also made it so that you could find more information for people, at least in my

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perspective. I never ever was a skilled person using the print resources, again, that's where I came into the field... when the transition was in place.

KA: Okay. How has public access computing in your library impacted the demographics of library patrons?

PR: We still have some very... some folks who have not adapted to the print, but almost all have, and that's... it's been... it's permeated the medical school. Probably has been for the least, at least the last 8-10 years that there's been very little... very few people who don't use the electronic resources. But it was a long... it seemed like a long time coming for some people.

KA: How have you learned to develop, adapt to and take advantage of advances in information technology?

PR: When I was in charge of interlibrary loan, this would have been about '92-'93, I had a directive from the... the director of the library to design a record keeping operation, where we could import the data from the electronic systems we used and create a database of data that we could mine as we needed for all kinds of information. Like what journals people were requesting articles from, and who the requesters were. Were they hospitals, were they other academic libraries, who... that kind of data.

And it was a real interesting experiment... in that I tried and tried, I finally bought an off-the-shelf product that was already available. It was not entirely satisfactory. And through the years there had been continuous off the shelf products that have tried to improve on that first one or two that we were working with, so it was an idea that a lot of libraries had and finally someone has come up with a really nice product. Now that is the ILLiad product that is used for interlibrary loan now. It keeps the data we need and imports the electronic records and that kind of thing. Back when we were trying to do it, we still had to key in about a fourth of the transactions, and when you're doing thousands of transactions a month, that's a lot of keying in.

KA: Oh yeah.

PR: So it just was not a practical thing.

KA: Okay. Onto questions about the future of libraries and librarians. How have libraries and the role of librarians changed over the years?

PR: I remember this has probably been four or five years ago [2003-2004], going to a meeting with one of my colleagues, and she's been my colleague since the very early days. And I remember her saying at this meeting, 'You know, what I do has not changed significantly. I still answer peoples questions, and I know... and it's still the same resources, they've just changed the way you use them.' And it makes them much more available. Now the fact is, we do still answer reference questions and we have a lot of them, but we do do a lot more education, here in this environment, than we did, fifteen years ago [1993]. Primarily back then we were just doing volume searching. So yeah... we've actually changed a lot from searchers to educators.

KA: Okay. Did you like these changes, or not like them?

PR: I liked them. They suited my style. I liked searching but I like education too.

KA: What did you find hardest to change about the way you did your job?

PR: I'll tell you the hardest thing for me was when I left reference, here, this was in 1990. I had had a health condition that I could no longer do the stress that was involved in the

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reference desk. And there was this position open for cataloging and I went into cataloging, I just... it just hurt me so to give up reference, I loved it. And I didn't actually just give it up, I was not quite as involved in it. I mean, it was not the primary thing I did. Through the years I've gone back to reference, I still, I do quite a bit of reference now.

KA: What is your prediction for the future of libraries?

PR: Oh gosh. I looked at that, and I didn't write down anything, that must mean 'Don't ask me!' I feel it's... When I was looking at these questions, I had just been to my public library, and actually having returned from my public library I thought libraries are going to be here to stay. They may change what they do, and who their patronage is, I doubt it, I doubt that that changes a lot, but they will change. And... the example I give is when television came in, movies were threatened. Radio was threatened... and those things definitely have changed. They don't do... they aren't quite the all encompassing way we get the news nowadays, but they're still around. And they're still an important of what we do, and the way we get our entertainment. So I think libraries will still be around, and I think they'll serve a very good purpose, I'm just not sure they'll be as many and that they're there for storing books, they're there for other purposes.

KA: Okay.

PR: And I guess that... number six there, 'What is the future of printed books?' I think that speaks to the same thing, and that is that there will still be books. People love reading books. They don't... not all people do, but not all people like watching TV either. I'm not a TV watcher. Course I don't know very many young people that do a lot of book reading, but I think there are a book readers, and I think that there will continue to be.

KA: Now if you get an electronic journal online to read, would you print it out, or read it on the screen?

PR: I would print it out. Wouldn't you?

KA: Oh yes.

PR: I can't read those things online.

KA: Me neither.

PR: And that's why I have much more paper in my office because I have to print off everything. And then I lose track of what all I've got stacked up there. That's a challenge. Is there a question here about challenges? I have to print everything, and no I don't have any filing system, and me and my colleagues... Have you noticed how many colleagues around here have messy offices?

KA: No, of course not. Imagine you're not retiring now, but twenty years from now, what do you feel will be the biggest threat to libraries in the coming years?

PR: Oh, I think the application of technology is a definite threat. And I see a lot of hospital libraries... hospital administrators saying 'We don't need librarians.' 'We don't need librarians at all.' Now my feeling is that in 15 years, the pendulum will have swung back to a point where they will have to hire some kind of information managers, to provide the information needed by their health professionals, in a hospital organization.

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I'm not sure that those people will necessarily be called librarians, but I think there will be an interim.... Well, it's already underway, where the hospitals will let their librarians go. And all they have is a few books and journals, print, and the rest are all electronic. I think as I say, things will change, it will come, the reality will set in, that they do need an information manager, but it will have to be something that there will be some hard times before they begin to realize it. So I don't think it's imminent, but it will take place. That the information manger will be an important person, I don't know what the title will be called.

KA: Has it felt or looked any different around here in the last 20 years? I know do our clients still prefer quiet in the library for the most part?

PR: Well that's an interesting thing. I don't think you hear anything about that. I don't think stereotyping is here anyway. And definitely our users love to have the resources right there at their desktop. And why wouldn't they? The resources that we provide are not entertainment. They're needed to accomplish the task that the health professional is trying to do. And for that reason, having them at their desktop is vitally important.

KA: So the library is no longer this brick building, really? It's just wherever they're [the patrons] accessing the information.

PR: Yes. That's correct, it's a virtual library. And if we don't accept that as who we are, then I don't think we have a roll.

KA: How do you envision the future of medical or public libraries and the role of librarians?

PR: I think I've touched on that one. I was saying that I felt like, especially....I think a lot of administrators are questioning why there is a need for a physical library. I think librarians can if they've done their job and been proactive, and made themselves known to the primary decision makers can make a case for themselves. I don't think they can make a case for a physical library though, in the medical information field. They can make a case for themselves, if they've been proactive and made themselves valuable.

KA: What about your job would most surprise those outside of the library profession?

PR: What... say that again?

KA: What about your job would most surprise those outside of the profession?

PR: That it requires a great deal of skills and intelligence and effort. I think people have no idea what's required of being a librarian. Training and experience all come together to make your role as a librarian much more valuable. And that.... as in any profession. The better your training, and experience, the better you perform the things that are necessary to do what you do.

KA: Why do you think being a medical librarian is ... not necessarily difficult, but it takes so many years of experience, and so much effort to become really good at it? Is it the range of subjects? Or the medical terminology, or all of the above?

PR: Yes, yes. Oh, all of the above. All of the above. In other words the library school did not prepare me to be a medical specialist. And that was up to me to either have that background when I came into the field, or to develop it once I got here, and for me I had to develop it. I didn't have that. I didn't understand a lot about medical education, and those were things that just happened over the years. I finally figured it out. I'm always proud of myself

when I finally figure something out. [Laughter] That I should have known 20 years ago, I mean...

KA: Well, it takes time to learn some things.

PR: Well, you know Kacy, I've been working in hospital libraries since I left here full-time, and it's very interesting to sit there and think 20 years ago I would not have understood what it is they're [health professionals] talking about. There's an awfully lot of what they're discussing that I understand at such a different level than I would have when I started in the profession.

KA: I liked what you were telling us about your retirement speech, when you were in the hospital [as a patient], one of the nurses responded [when talking to the nurses' colleague] 'Be careful what you say, she knows what you're talking about.'

PR: Yeah, yeah. I must have said something to them about, 'Well, I know what that is', or something to that effect. Because I don't remember why else they would have said that.

KA: What do you believe is the most important function of a medical library?

PR: Oh, I think the breadth background is important, to help them answer all kinds of questions. The librarian has a coordinating role in my mind. Coordinating the expertise of the researcher with the organization aspects of somebody else, with the community needs. I think there's a real important coordination process there. And of course we don't have very many opportunities to play that role, but I do believe it's an important thing about what we do. The consumers, when they come in and ask for information. That's because the health professional didn't give them the information that they needed, or they gave it in such a way that they didn't understand it. And so we can help them in that regard.

KA: What changes would you like to see in medical libraries in the next ten years?

PR: What changes would I like.... Oh I like this emphasis on consumer health and health literacy, but I also realize the need to keep focused on research materials as well, but I do believe we have more of a mission to serve the public than what we have accepted in the past. I think in ten years I'd like to see us having that as a part of our mission statement.

KA: It's not currently?

PR: Well, it's very minimal.

KA: Okay. Well, now it's time to go onto some more advice from you, and final reflections. What's the one most important thing a librarian must keep in mind at all times?

PR: I wrote this down. Respect all people. And treat them with the same integrity you want to be treated with. I think we get an awful lot of difference in clients coming in here, and I call them clients, we were taught by one of our directors, that you don't call them patrons, because the word patron, means patronizing, and she did not like that term, so I adapted the term, client. So the people that come into our library are our clients and we treat them with the same respect and helpfulness, no matter whether they're the big shots over here getting the millions of dollars of grant money, or someone off the street.

KA: Good advice. What are the top three personality traits that a successful librarian must possess?

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PR: Boy I don't think I wrote that down. What are the top three... I like a librarian that has some social skills.

KA: [Laughter] Always a plus.

PR: Is persistent, and is empathetic.

KA: That's what you'd want in your librarian if you were going to ask for services?

Okay.

PR: Now what did I... social skills, well I think social skills, empathy, and what was the other one?

KA: Ahhh... persistence.

PR: In addition, I'm gonna name a fourth one.

KA: Well, go right ahead.

PR: I want them to be very good at their job. I mean, know their stuff, what the resources are, what ones answer what questions, and know their stuff, and be really good at it.

KA: I think competency is a good fourth trait to add.

PR: Competency, thank you.

KA: Well, can you compare your first and last day as a librarian, in terms of your experiences, thoughts, and feelings?

PR: I wrote down just some notes here. First day, 'I can do this. I know I can do this. Just show me the way,' that was my comment there. And last day, 'It was great fun, what next?' I did enjoy it.

KA: Well that's good. What skill has been most useful to you in your career?

PR: I put down empathy. And by that I mean when someone comes to me, and asks for information, I feel like that person has taken a chance, they've come to you and said, I don't know this. So my role is to help them find the information they need without insulting them in any way, and helping them find their way through the maze of information we have here. And I think that means just helping them, and not in any way making them feel smaller for not knowing the answer.

KA: Yes, there's a lot out there to not know, it's not a field where most people know anything more than just the bare minimum.

PR: I can empathize because I try to find things in the legal information, and it's worse than trying to find it in the medical [information].

KA: Yeah, sounds unpleasant to me. Well, is there anything else you would like to share, a thought that you made you reminisce... and made you either happy or sad?

PR: Well, here's one thing I said. I don't know where this came in. This must have been... I see it says Beth and Kacy, and this must be advice to a new librarian, that must be it. My advice is to get a broad background. The broader your information background, the more flexibility you have in answering questions, you become much more able to respond, if you come in with great deal of information in one field that helps you in that one field, but in our role here, we have, we touch on a lot of things. Healthcare, and medicine and pharmacy and just every specialty there is in medicine. So you need to understand business as well as social work,

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as well as technology, I mean, there's just... the broader your background the more responsive you can be to your public, the people that come in frequently... that come to you for information.

KA: Okay. What do you feel is the most important idea or theme you'd like to pass onto future generations?

PR: Managing information is a skill that adds value , okay, that makes sense, because all organizations have a wealth of information that needs to be managed. And that's what we were trained to do. Organize it in a way that not only we understand how to access it, but the people who need it can access it. I thought a lot this week, or the last few days, about how John McCain surprised us as to who his vice presidential candidate was, and how media librarians must have been scrambling like heck to find information about that person.

KA: Yeah.

PR: And that is the kind of skill the librarians have and should promote that skill in some way, so that it is known that's what their there for, that's what they're trained to do.

KA: Yeah, I didn't think about that. Yeah, there was somebody going through some records they probably hadn't looked at for a while whenever he made his announcement for vice president. What's the accomplishment that you are most proud of?

PR: Well, let's see, I wrote down some things here too... I think the fact that I've got the Go Local database as my legacy, the MedlinePlus project has been really wonderful, both for IU, and myself, personally, it's been a personal reward. I've enjoyed, very very much, the relationship I've had with hospital librarians throughout the state. And I don't know how that developed exactly, I've thought about that quite a lot. But certainly they appreciate me and I appreciate them, and that's been a real nice relationship. And I don't... I think that's an unusual thing. I don't think the IU people generally cozy up with hospital librarians very well, so it's an accomplishment right there.

KA: Well, what will you miss the most about being a librarian?

PR: The people. I get a lot of strokes, from helping someone. And I'll have to get those strokes someplace else.

KA: Well, there's always plenty of work to do around here. You're welcome back anytime. What are you going to do after your retirement?

PR: Well, I'm not totally retired. As I explained to someone yesterday, I'm retiring from Indiana University. I still have Knowstone company activity, and that's about 10 hours a week. And then I have this half a day work at the hospital library. So I said I have my first retirement, they'll be a second one, and they'll be a third one... But I also have some family situations that require a good deal of time and that's important to me, to continue that work with my family, that would be grandchildren, that would be older generation folks that need some attention, so I have that. I have a garden, I love my garden, I spent all day out there yesterday, and I could do that for the rest of the fall. I just like being out. I like sewing, I like cooking, I've got an herb garden now, and I'm experimenting with all these herbs, my poor husband has to eat all these dishes that I come up with. Sometimes they're good, sometimes they're not. But, I just have a lot of ideas for what I want to do.

KA: Well that's good.

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PR: I've got a lot of social... I've got a lot of involvement in my church activities, so I could easily be swallowed up by that. I try not to let that be the only thing I do, I seem to not be able to say no, is what it amounts to. And the need just keeps, there's always a need.

KA: Yes, true. So are you going to be busier while you were working here, or after you're done working here?

PR: We'll see. I don't think I'll be less busy. I just won't get up at five o'clock in the morning.

KA: Ahhhh, that sounds kinda good, actually. Someday I'll know that. What ways did you find to make librarianship financially rewarding?

PR: I haven't answered that already?

KA: Well, I think you touched on it with your Knowstone...

PR: Financially rewarding? I've enjoyed ... First of all, IU has a nice program for professional librarians, and we're treated well as far as I'm concerned. We have faculty status, and we get the benefits that faculty brings with it, and that is a good retirement package, and a good health insurance, as well as a good salary. So there's been some really nice things about working for Indiana University.

I mentioned to you that one of the projects I had while I was a librarian here no longer became available to IU, that's the MedlinePlus project. Because it needed to be... a government regulation indicated that it needed to be a small business [contract] rather than a university. And so we went together and formed a small business, and competed as a small business for the contract, and it was awarded to us. And so that's been financially rewarding.

There's been... it's been a nice career, I have no regrets. It was not at all what I envisioned it would be, far more fun, than what I envisioned it would be. I went into librarianship with the attitude, it's a job I can do. I was afraid of some of the other options for someone with a chemistry background. I didn't want to teach anymore, because of the students, and classroom control, I didn't want to do laboratory work, so I like... I like organizing information and I like helping people so I think those were the things that attracted me to the profession. And as I say, it's been far more fun and exciting than I ever thought it would be. I have no regrets.

KA: Do you have any advice about the best ways to deal with the amount of bureaucracy that most libraries are fraught with?

PR: Patience. One of those virtues that some of us have, and some of us don't have. But also persistence. Patience and persistence, you just don't give up. I know I have no real good advice.

KA: That was pretty good advice. Well, and last question here for us... Did you have a mentor?

PR: Did I have a mentor? I would say I did. And that did not happen right off, right at the beginning... It happened more mid career, and that's an interesting thing though. It... it would be Dana, the former director. When she began to realize that I could write grants for her, then she began really working with me, and helping me develop in my career. We used to walk at lunch time. Because she needed to walk for her circulation, and I needed to walk, for my

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circulation. Now we're not talking book or journal circulation, we're talking vascular circulation system within our bodies. And so we would walk, and walking together is a wonderful opportunity to talk about a lot of things. And so, and we did it daily... it was 45 minute to an hour walk.... And when she retired, I really missed that, I missed that drastically. That relationship and the walks.

KA: Well, do you have anything else you'd like to share with us?

PR: No, but it's been a nice interview. If it never gets beyond here, it's been a nice interview, the conversation with you.

KA: Yes, thank you. It was fun, it was fun to learn...

PR: What's nice is to have a framework of questions.

KA: Well, I couldn't have thought of all this.

PR: It also made me stop about where I came from, and all the places I'd been. And how my whole perspective on things evolved. It's just so interesting, sitting in there, in that room, with those doctors there at Westview, and listening to their conversations and realizing how much different my outlook is than it was when I started. You know, twenty some years ago. It just is so much different.

Ricklefs Transcript

AS: This is Arro Smith. I am here with Dale Ricklefs. She has just retired from as the director of the Round Rock Public Library. Also present is Pat Touhy of the Central Texas Library Association [CTLS, Central Texas Library System] and Stephanie Langenkamp, director of the San Marcos Public Library. Dale has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is for the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired and Retiring Librarians. It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of the American Library Association and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is April 8, 2011.

AS: Hi, Dale. How are you today?

DR: I am fine, thank you. (Laughter) I am enjoying your pleasant home.

AS: Very nice, very nice. So you have just retired from the Round Rock [Texas] Public Library and how many years were you there?

DR: At Round Rock for thirty and a half years.

AS: Thirty and one half years.

DR: Yes.

AS: Wow. That's quite a career.

DR: Yeah, it was.

AS: Let's start from the beginning. Where were you born and what made you interested in librarianship?

DR: I was born in Chicago, Illinois, and in the city, not in a suburb and being in Chicago where ALA exists and really strong libraries exist, it was what I would think most libraries and library systems should be like. It was – we had good school libraries. We had good public libraries, so a common thing for me to do on a hot sultry day in Chicago was to go to Welles Park and go swimming and then with my hair soaking wet, go into the high-ceilinged Hills Public Library Branch Library and take advantage of the nice cool breezes because, you know, this kid grew up in Chicago and didn't have air conditioning and days got muggy, and it was nice to go there. A nice escape. It was solid granite and probably twenty foot ceilings on each floor and open windows and it was just a pleasant place to be. Good librarians. Good youth services librarians. Just like we have today, they had summer reading programs.

I was involved in the summer reading program. And then when we would have school assignments, high school assignments, we could go into Hills. It was a good size library, a good branch. It was like what we would consider today a regional branch. I think they call it that now, and I would go in there and sneak into the adult section, because even though Chicago is the home of ALA, they still had the adult only section. And so when the librarians weren't looking, we would kind of sneak in and look at some of the books we shouldn't be reading and at the age of twelve and thirteen, they were pretty boring for us at that point in time.

But I enjoyed being there and when I would use the card catalog, I thought in the back of my mind, I want to know what is sitting downtown. I want to know what's at the other branches. Surely, someday there will be something out there that we would really know what's in the other

libraries. And they were in the early stages of needing photocopy. It was really cool and ten cents was a lot of money then, but to do a ten cents photocopy which was white on black.

(Laughter)

It was just all that was available and to cut and paste your notes onto your note cards, and not have to do longhand for your note cards in your high school research. It was just – it was, it was nice and I had been a volunteer in school libraries in the elementary and high school level. My work study was in the academic library, at Illinois Wesleyan University, so my life had always revolved to some extent around libraries and even before the directorship at the Round Rock Public Library, I was corporate librarian at Radian Corporation. So somewhere a long that path...

AS: Could you spell that please?

DR: Radian R-a-d-i-a-n

AS: Very good.

DR: It became URS. It was on Shoal Creek Boulevard here in Austin. And it was an environmental firm and I was there for about five years. And so I have really worked as a volunteer or as a paid staff member in every type of library that has existed. You know, at least what we normally, you know, consider libraries.

AS: Going back to the childhood memories in Chicago, what were the sort of things that you liked to read back then?

DR: I really was a nerd and reading literature. I liked the old classics. I loved Henry James who most people won't go near. I loved Dickens which most people won't go near and the – mainly the literature of the late 1800s and early 1900s, European preferred, American not so much. I really preferred more the European literature.

AS: And were those the things that were in the children's part of the library or were those things that you snuck into to adult section for?

DR: Oh, no. They made sure that the young adults and teens had a secure place to go to so they had a youth – young adult collection that you could walk up the stairs and it's to the right and there were all the young adults and they probably duplicated what was in some of the adult selection as well. Yeah. Oh, and I – and I will say as a younger child, my favorite book, and I have even written about this before and in other places was Madeleine L'Engle's A Wrinkle in Time. She does a-- it really is some of the earlier literature for children on author...authoritarian control.

AS: Right, right.

DR: Yeah, and the scariness behind it. Thought control. Yeah. It was a great book.

AS: Where did you do your undergraduate work?

DR: I have my undergraduate degree from Illinois Wesleyan University. That's in the middle of the state of Illinois, a liberal arts school. I was a philosophy and religion major, and as I am not a Christian, religion wasn't really a great degree because I wasn't planning to be a minister. My faith, you know, the Baha'i Faith does not have a clergy so you don't do much about that, but it was fun to learn about the roots of Christianity, you know, through the curriculum and philosophy was – I just like philosophy. I had so much science in high school. I

had taken the AP courses in high school and I wanted to balance that, but even still in college, I did take physics while I was there. That was one of the things I had not finished taking yet, so I am happy I decided not to be a science major.

AS: And did you go directly into a library school or did you – you had - you said you clerked some, was that before or after?

DR: No, what I had done is – mainly my husband was accepted at the University of Texas at Austin for grad school. He was not accepted at U of I which is where he would have preferred to go at the time, and I really didn't want to come down to Texas because I just had visions of – of cattle and brush and, you know, John Wayne was really, you know, in my mind. And so we came down and I was pleasantly surprised with it and the first job I applied for was at the corporate library. With a library background it was easy to get into and it was there that I had done that service, and I sat out a year and then applied at UT and then went to graduate school at UT and graduated in '77.

AS: I see. And then it was called the Graduate School of Library and Information Science?

DR: And it was just Library of Science. It was just Library of Science at that point. Information science hadn't crept in yet.

AS: Right, right.

DR: And I graduated. When I went to Illinois Wesleyan we were using punch tape for computer program and then I graduated to Hollerith cards when I came here. (Laughter) Which is a lot easier. It's a lot easier because when you programmed wrong and our tape had to be sent to Illinois State University down the road to be put through the computers to see if it would work, you would have to wait to get the tape back so it was usually a two-three -four day delay, because we didn't have laptops or computers right now, we could do a basic program. Right. You were doing all these long tapes. If you made one error, you had to repunch the whole tape, so I felt like I had graduated when we got the Hollerith cards and you could always throw out the bad card. (Laughter)

SL: You used the punch tape at UT or ...

DR: No, when I was at Illinois was when we used the punch tape.

SL: Oh, you had to use a punch tape for a philosophy degree?

DR: No, everybody was required. Schools were forward thinking. Everybody had to take a computer science course and everybody had to take basic programming which for me when I took it my second year was kind of tough because I never really had any curriculum anywhere where I had to think that way. Had I maybe taken psychology first or some of the other courses first before I tried to do that where I could come up with logical if-that statements that made sense. But, but no, we kind of muddled a long and I passed it.

AS: And then the next technology was – I am not familiar with it.

DR: The Hollerith cards?

AS: How do you spell that?

DR: H-o-l-l-e-r-i-t-h. They are the punch cards. There are the long, narrow with little punchy things. Yeah.

AS: Okay, okay. Good deal.

DR: Yeah, yeah.

AS: And do you remember who your dean was at UT.

DR: I think it was Dean Sparks when I was there.

AS: Sparks. Glen – Glen Sparks.

DR: Yeah, Glen Sparks.

AS: Okay, very good.

DR: Right, right.

AS: And so after graduation, how did your – what, well, tell us a brief history of your career path and then we will go into it in more depth.

DR: Okay, well outside the volunteer part I was, as I mentioned, when I came to Austin I was immediately hired by Radian Corporation. Radian Corporation paid for my education basically, and they were very generous. The corporate libraries in Austin always had been fairly generous with their staff to go to school. So I was on campus. We were doing a lot of research, being environmental, going into the at that time – well we did have automated databases. We were using the old

PT: Lockheed?

DR: Yeah, the Lockheed type systems. Yeah, with all the kind of paper that would turn black in your car on a hot day. Thermal papers, thermal papers. Everybody has a lot of advantages of the technology today and you would just punch in your – your information and then we would get the things that we would need to look for, for the scientists and engineers, and then we would go to campus. It's mainly chemistry and engineering, and pull the articles that they needed, and kept them. And then when copyright became a bigger issue, this was in '75-'76, and so copyright clearing house was formed around '78-'79. And so then we had to start filing what we were copying because we were clearly out of the bounds of copying. We kept some periodicals but not all. Most of the work they did was for the Environmental Protection Agency, and so the articles we were collecting was actually for EPA and ultimately in the country.

So we spent a lot of time on campus which worked out well because then I could do my runs on campus when I was going to have a class. And I was very trim and fit because I spent about three or four hours a day running around on campus so I definitely had my exercise at the time. And so I went to school while I worked at Radian and then I sat out for about a year and while I had my child. I worked part-time at Radian for a while and then sat out a few extra months. And about a year later from the time I went part-time to the time I was hired, I stayed at home and then got hired on at Round Rock Public Library as one of several that were interviewed and the comment that was made to me by the city manager is, "I don't need a librarian as much as I need a politician."

Even though the library skills were needed, he had interviewed many librarians who were very much the librarian or librarian's librarian. He was looking for someone who could manage to go with the flow when necessary which is what happens in politics. Would you say that that is a pretty fair assumption, Stephanie?

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SL: That sounds good. Yeah. (Laughter) Try to survive, go with the flow.

DR: Sometimes you have to because it isn't always – I went out to lunch yesterday with somebody and we were talking about another employee and who always got to do what she wanted to do, and she was always puzzled about that and I said because it was politics. She was the wife of a former mayor pro tem and even though I may not have wanted her in the position, it ended up that that was something that you just deal with. And she wasn't a poor performer; she was actually an excellent performer but we were growing and becoming more complex, and I needed more flexibility in what had to be done, and that was the bottom line, go with the flow. Thank God, she was a great performer.

SL: So you were hired directly into the Director's position?

DR: Yes, I was directly hired into it. Round Rock at that time, to give the viewer a sense of what it was, Round Rock's population in 1970 was twenty seven hundred people.

SL: Wow. (Laughter)

DR: Yes, it was twenty seven – it was not a wealthy community by a long shot. Until probably around the mid '50s, it was predominantly a Hispanic and black community. It is very heavily black and Hispanic.

SL: What – what year was that then that you started?

DR: I started – I started at Round Rock in 1980.

PT: 1980.

DR: Yes. In 1980 the census was 11,700. Today Round Rock , the 2010 census, is roughly 97,000 population. So Round Rock until recently had always been a place where one could be engaged because we were growing so fast. Technology was growing so fast. My master's degree, the specialty area, was information systems, so I was obviously well – quite capable of handling that aspect of where libraries were going.

So Round Rock grew very quickly. I was one of three individuals on staff. I think we had two and a half full time equivalents, made four people on staff. And my budget started out at, when I started at Round Rock, at \$70,000. So our salaries were not that great. I actually took a "pay cut" to work there but I could see what the potential would be long term and enjoyed it.

And, but, yeah, it was unusual walking into there because I went from a corporate library to a public library, but I always had the experience of using the Chicago Public Library System libraries behind me. When I came to Austin I was, you know, disappointed with the quality of the Austin Public Library but still young and wasn't really aware of the difference – different ways that they were funded. And at Chicago you had excellent state aid at the time. You had all sorts of funding streams that did not and have never really worked for Austin.

PT: Here's an aside about Austin. I worked for Austin Public during the '70s, early '70s to about '77, and Austin continually congratulated itself on being the highest per capita-funded public library in Texas and congratulated the city on having this fine library. And a bit of humor is there ???you see them today.

DR: But probably relevant for the state of Texas. It's ??????????. It is, and Texas funds itself in social services 42nd to 48th in the nation, but money has got to come from somewhere and if people don't really want a state income tax, I guess that is where it is at. But, but the

library – it grew and people began to respond to the library and its services. The biggest struggle for us have always been what we call the nonresident fee because so much of our population that rings our community is in what is in what is called MUDs in the Austin area and Round Rock in particular has the largest MUD presence. And those are municipal utility districts where a developer comes in and contracts with the city to provide services the city would normally provide.

And people pay a separate MUD tax which isn't a tax; it's not deductible but that means that around the city of Round Rock right now with its 97,000 population is roughly 35 to 40,000 individuals who are unserved because there is no county system. And even getting the county commissioners which I tried to put a branch in one of those areas and ??? at all, you know. And they have been reluctant to do it. So that's always probably been the biggest struggle for Round Rock because of this rather unusual paragovernmental kind of agencies surrounding the city.

SL: So did the city always want to charge a nonresident fee then?

DR: No, we didn't go into the nonresident fee until Austin instituted a nonresident fee because what happened, Austin in 1982, I think it was, was it '82, Pat?

PT: It could have been.

DR: In '82 – '83 period, they instituted a nonresident fee in Austin. My use went from 15 to 20% nonresidents to 45% nonresidents. And you might - reminder that this is still a young small library, 5000 square feet. When I walked into this library I withdrew 5000 of 17000 volumes because they were dated and they were meeting state mandates in terms of number of collections, never addressed quality. And I remember one thing finally that I threw out which when someone gave me a hard time, I pointed to it and said, "Do you really want to keep this in the library?" It was a 1932 book on raising sheep in Texas, and there weren't any sheep in Round Rock that I knew of. It was mainly cattle. (Laughter)

SL: Were you the first professional librarian?

DR: Yes, I was the first professional librarian. They offered the position to the mayor pro tem's wife and she had attended a lot of the system meetings and she knew - she was smart enough to see what was happening, how things were going to be going forward. She said, "No, you really need at this point forward, you need to have a professional on staff." So the Central Texas Library System meetings were very good for her and the staff at the time before I got there because they got to see the role that professionalism does play in libraries and she appreciated that.

PT: And Biruta Kearl was the coordinator.

DR: Exactly.

PT: Of CTLS at that time.

DR: Yeap.

AS: How do you spell that?

PT: Biruta, B-i-r-u-t-a. Kearl, K-e-a-r-l .

AS: Thank you.

DR: And is she still over in the main..

PT: No she is retired.

DR: Oh, she has retired. Okay.

PT: She's retired. She would be worth interviewing.

DR: Yeah, she definitely would. Definitely would because that is when all these cities started to pop. This was in that period of time. When did you take over?

PT: Eighty nine.

DR: Eighty nine. Yeah.

AS: And prior to - to your getting this – becoming the director at Round Rock , were you interested in public librarianship? When you were in library school was that – was that something you were thinking or were you thinking I am going to be a corporate librarian. That's what I am doing now.

DR: Obviously, since I have been surrounded by libraries, it ultimately didn't matter. The only one I knew I did not want to work in was school libraries.

AS: Okay.

DR: And that's probably - and it is not that I think they are terrible; it's just that I did not want to work with school system. I wasn't even sure that I would really be interested in academic libraries. I guess I really enjoy the more hands on that you get when you work in a corporate library, when you are working with the scientists and engineers. They really want you to find the information and besides they want to interpret it. So, so that was always great and having had physics and chemistry and biology in my background, it was always an easy thing for me to do.

And then when the public library position became open, my, my... I guess I really did like the idea of the public and Sam Witten at one time was trying to pin me on this. He said, "Well, don't you like public libraries more?" Sam Witten was a professor at University of Texas in Austin and really a probably one of our greatest public library advocates that had ever come out of that school, and he has since passed away, and I just had to look at him and I said, "Well, (and this is a great professional response) they all are users who have very specific needs and you just have to figure out what it is that they need and give it to them." And I can't say that I loved one more than the other. The advantage of the corporate libraries you got to know your scientists and engineers very well, so when you had a party you knew who they were and you knew their family, and they had pictures in behind them so you knew you were like a big family. In the public library environment, there is a lot more diversity and I like diversity.

Growing up in Chicago you have diversity. One reason I didn't want to move to Texas was the diversity. (Laughter) First of all there's three main ethnic groups. Up in Chicago where I grew up there is like, I don't know. We brag now about Round Rock having sixty-seven language groupings. I think I had that when I went to school in Chicago. (Laughter) So, so what is new. There is nothing new.

And – but the public library I enjoyed the most ultimately because in part because of Round Rock, because there is all this change. Part of my reason to retire was that there was not a lot of change. The economy really has come to a screeching halt. This is the third recession since 1980 that I have been in, and but this one is worse and I think it is because the city grew fast and it was picking up more and more things to do. When you do that and you hit a recession

like this, everything cannot be maintained and funded so even though the library should have a branch right now, it is only a 42,000 square foot facility and it will eventually get one. But, you know, working on my PhD and working, and I have hobbies that I would really like to do, I thought, "Well, I can stay here and not really enjoy, not dislike but be neutral with what I am doing which isn't good for the library either or I can go home and I can do these other things I want to do and need to do for this phase of my life."

AS: That's true.

DR: Yeah. Did I answer that question? I kind of danced around a bit, but ... (Laughter) but the public library, it is good and did I – when I was about the fourth year of my public library directorship, being at Round Rock, I thought I want to be the director of the Chicago Public Library, but I don't think that my husband was ever going to be willing to move back to Chicago and they actually have hired people who are like attorneys and other types of positions to head up that very large, complex system.

SL: So that's interesting. You had some dreams and ambitions as opposed to saying I am really grooving on this place and being here. You might have brought a branch out to a different locale.

DR: Sure.

SL: And it was mainly your husband's position that held you back.

DR: Sure. Yeah, and he is happy with the University of Texas at Austin and he has worked in corporate before. He doesn't like the corporate environment. He likes the academic environment, so there is that and then as the kids grew up. You know, as my son grew up and then he got married and they are in Buda not far from where you are at. You know, it just came to a point where your priorities change and you kind of stay with family.

SL: Right.

DR: For me, anyway..

SL: What sort of plans do you have in terms of using the PhD that you are pursuing right now?

DR: The – a couple of things that are out there. My PhD will be in business leadership. It will not be in library science, so I thought since Round Rock now has opened up the ACC campus and the Texas State campus, and I have taught business communication at Mary Hardin Baylor, that I could easily go in and teach introductory business courses. I have no desire to be adjunct and to be permanent faculty. Adjunct is fine. Just keep my mind going and be with other people who are energized and want to talk about these things. The dean at UT has - he keeps asking me when I am going to finish with my PhD, and right now the proposal is in the IRB [stage] at Capella University. So...

SL: What is IRB?

DR: The Institutional Review Board. They are the ones to make sure that you are not going to harm anybody. They are mandated by the federal government to make sure that the research that is being done is done according to certain parts of the code of federal regulations in terms of safety of human subjects.

SL: Oh, okay.

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DR: Yeah, so they have to get the blessing. It has passed the scientific merit review and its grounded theory qualitative study. And, but anyway the dean has asked when I am finished, because he wants me to come and teach. What that is that I'll be teaching--I have talked about developing a leadership curriculum for the library school because my biggest concern in the library profession right now are people who are willing to be managers and be directors. And I was at a speed date--speed dating (laughter)--speed interviewing session at UT iSchool a couple of days ago and only one of the maybe ten graduating students I met was interested in going into management or a directorship position, and so when I talked to that person, my only advice was to go into a firm where – and she has a library institution, to ask the questions what to do you do to groom your people to advance. You need to find that out so you are not stuck. This is the most terrible thing is to have people who want to be leaders, who want to be managers and directors to be stuck. And so what is their how do you groom, how do you mentor, how do you bring somebody forward so they can go forward and take the position somewhere. If not there, at least somewhere.

SL: Do you think that this is just a function of the age of the students that you are talking with? I mean, do you think when you were in library school for example, did you know that you wanted to be a library director?

DR: Oh, yeah. And so did several of my peers. I think it was a different environment.

SL: Really.

DR: Yeah, I think it was different environment, and maybe it was because I was in more of the special library classes.

SL: Right.

DR: In the special library classes, many of them were single librarian or they could have been working to become the head of a division so maybe it's the class of people I was with. I mean the special library people. But even it's not just age because when we have been replacing managers at Round Rock Public either from people retiring or people finding out that this isn't the best situation for them, especially the academics who try to come in the public libraries, and they find that it is a different animal. It's fast. It moves quickly and everybody is not coming with the same skill set obviously when you are using the public libraries or respect for the institution for that matter. That - the – where was I going with that?

SL: Whether or not they wanted to be directors.

DR: Oh, yes. Yes, it's been very difficult. I have got thirteen professionals on staff of a staff of thirty two, and most of them do not want to be managers or supervisors.

SL: Oh, when you think of all the toilets that you have to unplug and floors that you have to mop and it's no wonder that they don't want to be the director.

DR: Well, thank God, at our city we have people that take care of those things.

(Laughter) I think that is true in small libraries, but, but I understand that and I definitely understand that, but I know in talking with Rob Pollock who is the placement officer for UT until last year and he retired, this was a big concern of his too. And he had sessions at Texas Libraries Association about the lack of folks who want to go on and be the next ????, the next leader. What that does too is when you have a work force that is not engaged, self inspired, self

motivated, whatever, then you have a work force sometimes – I am not saying that it is everywhere and it's everybody – that without that fire in the belly, there isn't the level of service or quality that it can be, because librarians are smart. They are capable, but if they don't have that fire to succeed, then those areas don't succeed. So...

SL: Do you mind if I ask, how many people applied for your position when you vacated it?

DR: Yeah, when I left we had forty applicants, I think it was, and based on paper review, we down to twelve. We did six phone interviews and three face-to-face, and everybody who we did face-to-face were from out of state. The problem I think our city is that we only went through the PLA and the TLA mines rather than what we should have done the first go around was to e-mail invitations or send invitations to the larger libraries so we could get some people out of their branch.

I understand in talking to Michelle who did eventually take my position – she was an internal who I had been grooming to take my position that we did end up – they did end up interviewing a couple in town. At first they were looking for people with branch experience because there will be a branch, and it would probably those experiences help in the next go around. And the new city – and the other problem with us is that we had city manager that was leaving at the same time I was leaving. And he left in November. We knew by late October who the new city manager would be but we had to repost it in October so whoever was looking at the job post at the time did not have a clue who their city manager would be. And if that is your boss, then you want to know who your boss is going to be and frankly you want to interview with your boss first, your potential boss, to see if you click.

So whoever would try to even take that position would be taking a risk but you know Steve, the new city manager, said that he really wanted us to go ahead with the process and I met with him in January or early February and we went out to breakfast and I said – we were talking about this – and I said I don't know why you said that though. It could have waited. The staff is capable of managing without me, and they did, you know, until Michelle took it permanently three weeks ago. So..

PT: I must say that was a surprise to me. I wasn't aware she was a part of the first group to apply.

DR: She did not apply. She did not apply. Michelle did not apply at all. Michelle felt that she wanted to have more grooming in leadership, and she actually moved quickly in the organization. She came in five years ago and she came in as a cataloger and then about two years ago was public – was technical processing manager. And then when the public services manager left, she took that position because she said she felt she needed to do that before she was a library director which was probably true as that is the toughest division, you know, to work. It has the most staff. It has the most complexity. It has the most public interactions, and she did that for about eight, nine months and then finally we were talking and the city manager did another round and wasn't really interested in the applicants that he interviewed with and approached her once more.

I had been approaching her. A couple of council persons had been approaching her to take the position. And I finally just told her, "Well, you know there's a different set of issues being a library director. When you are public services manager, you are working nights, you are working weekends, you are covering for people who aren't there. I won't say it is easier being a director, but your time you can define better as a director." And I think that may have helped. And I said, "As far as leadership is concerned, at some point you have just got to do it."

You know, and she has read all the key works in new and contemporary leadership, outside of librarianship, just in the business world. She can quote different people. She has worked wonderfully with the public. I am sure she has learned a lot and has helped you a lot on the Central Texas Library System Long Range Planning Groups. She is amiable. She is friendly and, thank God, she took it. So, yeah, and I think she will be good and she is a very strong Latina and Round Rock's population is now 30% - almost 30% Latin American, so it's time. Yeah.

AS: So in your – in your career as a director, have you ever felt the tension between running a city department and providing – and, and kind of the ideals of librarianship?

DR: One of the ideals of librarianship is freedom of information and as one of the few who kept very stalwart in, and the library is still stalwart, that we would not take for example funds from the federal government related to Internet access for the child decency act, you know, related laws and implications, and so we chose not to accept any e-rate funding because I didn't want the federal government telling me what I should and shouldn't do, and what the public should have.

In terms of gay lit, lesbian lit, that kind of thing. We do have those collections in our library, and if people want to protest it, and sometimes they do, we go through the formal procedure for consideration of material. Usually – I can't think of any time we removed a book in that genre because of that. So we have been pretty strong in that. That may be in Round Rock since everybody is from someplace else and everybody is new, that you don't have a lot of long-term people in the community who politically can make it uncomfortable.

PT: Well, that is not for the ISD.

DR: No, it's not true for the ISD. And it's really great when, when the ISD, whenever they have a book that is being challenged, our circulation of that book goes up, and we have to buy more copies of it. (Laughter) It became a best seller.

PT: TTLY.

DR: Yeah, TTLY. One was "I Know Why A Caged Bird Sings." Wasn't that Maya Angelou's book?

PT: Oh, that's right.

DR: Yeah, that one I felt, what is this? This has been around for twenty years and now people are complaining about this. So, but we don't get as much as the ISD might get, and the ISD is a whole different issue because those, those, the faculty and the teachers are parenti loci--whatever it is called. The Latin word for it. You know, they are, and so that is a whole different ballgame but here you have a choice, you read it or you don't. I mean, you know, you just don't. So, we...

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SL: Have you ever had any pressure though from your city government to cave to any of these?

DR: Only when I first started.

SL: --To get the e-rate?

DR: No, never. Never had it.

SL: In order to keep a tighter rein on the collection or?

DR: Never. I have never had the challenges because in our city, one thing that is unique for us, we don't have a library board.

SL: And when did you – how did you get rid of that? ?????????? (Laughter)

DR: You see the grins in the room. (Laughter) The library board, the city – it was a unique city for a long time, and when we were doing the quality effort and the quality initiatives in the late '90s and the early 2000 period, and it got down to many library boards. They work on the library budget. They give advice about staffing, whatever, and in this form of government, it's a council man...it, it's a council manager form of government which is unlike Chicago and Houston and places like that where the city manager takes very seriously what his responsibilities are and his departments responsibilities are in terms of budgeting and so the - the board deciding on the budget wasn't going to work because all the department heads together at that period of time were working on each other's budgets. Everybody was playing in each other's playground, so there was no way that the board's recommendations, ideas, thoughts were going to be considered by anybody, least of all the city manager. And so when we formed a foundation, the library foundation, the library board was dissolved and the board members were moved into the foundation board, and that was a separate

PT: So, so the ordinance was amended to delete.

DR: Yes, yeah, it was dissolved. It was dissolved.

SL: Well did they delete at the same time the parks and recreation board?

DR: Parks and rec never had a board.

SL: Oh, they didn't?

DR: That was the other, that was the other thing. Its why is the library which really doesn't ruffle many feathers have a board and the parks board doesn't have one. There is no police review board. There's no - you can name all the boards in the world. The only boards that really existed were the federally – were the state mandated boards for building inspections and development, and the planning and zoning commission in particular, and we had a historic preservation board which never was listened to half the time anyway by staff or the public at times. So it was like why? And...

SL: But did you have a role in requesting that it be dissolved?

DR: Yes, yes, it made no sense because these people were frustrated. If they can't – well, if you are sitting on the board, any board, any nonprofit board, your key roles are to monitor the function of the agency, is to make sure that you hire the executive director of your agency, and to deal with the funding issues. Those are the three main responsibilities.

SL: Well that would be true of a governing board but not an advisory board. So..

DR: And for us, we...

SL: It is true that the board doesn't have a large role.

DR: And so they were frustrated because they couldn't really do much because the city was, unlike some other libraries perhaps, the city was really engaged in its library, administratively and finance department, everything was really, everyone was engaged in that library. I didn't try to keep the library away from city government and its functions. I tried to force it into their face so that they would be sure to have funding and they got to know the staff and all that, which worked well for, you know, the thirty years that I was there. So the, so it wasn't that the board was doing anything wrong.

We also – keep in mind – we have always had a very active Friends of the Library Group, so if I want to get advice about anything it would be from the ten to twenty member, depending on who is the president, board because there were always good at, you know, giving advice and we always listened to it because I don't think it was harmful. So, so...

SL: I think the way our advisory board ordinance is written is that the board is--exists to advise the city council, not to advise the library director. Now we don't actually do it that way. They don't advise the city council nor do they advise me ever? But, I mean, I think that is the way it--That's the comment I have...

DR: Right, and ours is the same.

SL: So it is not really to advise me. It's really to advise them, but of course they don't.

DR: But exactly and that's the point and that's the practice, so they would get frustrated because they would be appointed by the council. Toward the end there people were appointed and they never used the library. Some of them didn't have library cards so they were appointees for an agency they didn't really know what they were doing. Sometimes it could be a step up into other forms of government service perhaps, but that wasn't happening in our institution either. So if the council isn't really going to listen to them and the city manager was not interested in being caught in the middle between this board and the council, and the group of people who were making all these decisions anyway, and all the department heads for each other's departments, why?

PT: I think you have identified the main dilemma of advisory boards in Texas, and this is certainly the case in many communities of all sizes. A lot of library boards want to know what is their job. They are advisory. They don't – their whole job is really political. It is a political job and many library board members don't want to touch the political side of it.

DR: Exactly.

PT: Which makes them useless to the librarian who is trying to ?????????? the whole ball of wax.

DR: Even to get these folks to do something that has nothing to do with local government, to be going to the Capitol every other year to lobby or to speak toward issues, it doesn't happen, and you are absolutely correct. There's a lot of these people are -- they are either well-meaning, and they really like libraries, or they are political appointees for other reasons just to put them in a position because they asked for it and maybe they are not going to fit in the P&Z or the ZBA or some of these other boards.

And so they get frustrated and you know after two or three years of the frustration, there is no reason to maintain it. So by giving them a 501(c)(3) which gives them governing responsibility in strengthening the Friends of the Library Board which is governing for themselves, it ended up working better and channeling people who can raise money, do what they want with the money, and promote...

PT: They really can't do that if they are on the advisory board. They can't go out and raise money on behalf of the library.

DR: Nope.

PT: The city manager wouldn't like that at all.

SL: But have you found that – I don't have any experience with a library foundation and really honestly rather modest experience with Friends of the Library group – but have you ever found that they have wanted to make decisions about the library that you wouldn't necessarily agree with, like say in relation to fundraising? That they might - they might decide the configuration that the new library building or that they would prefer that you buy fifty new computers instead of, you know, of books or something of that sort, where you felt that you were in conflict with their deciders.

DR: No, I never felt that because this is all about and something that librarians are--some are better at than others, and that is the relationship building aspect of the being the library director, being that politician that the city manager talked about when I was hired, and that is always engaging your key leaders in what you are doing. So whether it's the foundation board president or the Friends of the Library president, always engaging them and giving them your rational of why you are doing something, and if they do have a question about it, you could point to instances where that may or may not have worked or why it may or may not have worked in the agency.

The only thing that ever happened in the library that the foundation president, then Henry Latham, and where we have the rooms named after him upon his passing, was that the city and it was – I didn't catch it either in the construction – when the expansion of the library from the 11,000 to the 42,000 square feet was made, instead of using limestone they used formed concrete blocks and he was furious.

He would sit out there and he pulled the mayor over and he would give the mayor an earful. And that was always kind of a joke with the mayor. I always see Henry out there with his umbrella to keep the sun off and he always would tell me about the construction of the building, what happened. And that was, you know, somewhat beyond my control. That was in the documents that was way pass.

It was nothing to do with any money they raised, and it didn't affect what they raised. When it comes now with the Friends of the Library with what funds that they raise, we just kind of give them a menu of options of things we need and they choose because they are all needed and they just choose among those options. And when we have Lone Star Library grants which is unlikely over the next few years, we would do whatever they couldn't fund. We would use the money for those one time thing, and never use the funds for ongoing costs. Never. I know that

there maybe it'll be there this year. Maybe they won't, and I'm, you know, and I am not using it for ongoing costs.

PT: Yeah, and you are not stuck like Austin is right now with using their Lone Star Library for four positions. They have since, I don't know, three or four years and used their Lone Star money and now they have got to grab positions from somewhere else to fund those. The webmaster for God's sake. They aren't going to lay off the webmaster.

AS: Well, speaking of webmasters and technology, do you have some thoughts about how technology has influenced librarianship in the course of your career?

DR: Yeah, one thing I didn't mention in my introductory about myself is that I have also been the city's public information officer and I was their first webmaster, while I was also their library director--and I was their quality manager. All of this was great for me because I always continually want to learn. The whole web thing, I am conflicted. Only because I have watched how people use it and first of all, if you are not using these databases regularly, you know this probably working on your PhD and I know from my working on my PhD, is that there are nuances to these databases. Unless you really have to get in there and use them, you really do not understand them, so in some ways it's like when I was librarian using traditional library materials, we were helping people on the floor. Some people didn't know how to use an index. Some people didn't know how to use a table of contents. Somebody, you know, it's really kind of strange what they did and didn't know. Usually a child would come in with a compass and a protractor and ask you how to use it, and you would do that.

In some ways these databases are not any different but I don't know and I am not going to put a blanket statement that all public library reference librarians, how much they spend time to develop scenarios and go in there and try to really understand these databases, so they can give back. It's more complex now, but the index, when they come – when people come for help and you just kind of show them basic things, how far do we go in showing them and how well do the librarians understand each of these databases because of the nuances.

And if, EBSCO wants to come with a new way of doing searches or if you get into federated searches, and that platform becomes, you know, a little more solid--in all these other areas. I think it's going to be very confusing to the public and the staff, also how well equipped they are to do that. My concern now with the loss of funding that we are getting, for example the databases, and we are going to have keep up some of the databases because we don't have backlog of magazines any more.

AS: Right.

DR: So when people are coming in and they want to go – and this has always been my fear – but as we have grown so fast and did not have the space because we hadn't expanded, we have gotten rid of our backlog of magazines as well. We only let a year out for circulating and then they are gone. So each month the oldest one is gone, because we don't have the space we used to have. And so we are going to have to make the financial commitment even if it means going into print material or the library is going to have to. It's not we anymore. (Laughter) If the library goes into it, they are going to have to make these hard decisions and they may have to

fund less and less print because we have depended on the technology in some areas but not in all areas.

Now, the downloadable books, those kinds of things, with the publishers saying that they want to charge a dollar or two dollars for downloaded past twenty five downloads on books, whatever, you know downloadable books, that doesn't make sense to me either because they are already paying higher fees to the vendors who is providing – you know, Overdrive for example, it's higher than getting the 40% discount by going to the jobber for these hardcopy books. We can circulate those a hundred times and we are not being charged for it, so the logic doesn't exist for me.

PT: The business model is very flawed.

DR: The business model is very flawed and it goes to - back to the English model where they do, people do pay for--different dollar amounts depending on the popularity of the author--for rental of materials, and whole first use philosophy is down the drain, and I just don't know if the federal government has the stomach to put a kibosh to it, because that – I think that more than anything is going to be harmful for the libraries.

PT: Unless the libraries can own the electronic version that they purchase multiple times.

DR: Literally own it. Yeah, we did not just lease it.

PT: It is just going to drive us to bankruptcy.

DR: Yeah.

PT: We will have to choose between electronic only or print only or really savage the print collection.

DR: And I don't know long term, you know, and if you want to be very negative about it, so you have Borders closing. I have talked to a...

AS: Borders was a bookstore.

DR: Yeah, Borders was a bookstore for those who will see this years from now.

(Laughter) Borders, I talked to the – one of the managers at Barnes and Noble, another bookstore, and how they are reconfiguring their store. They are taking out all of their comfortable seating, and I kind of tease them about that.

SL: They are what?

DR: They are taking out their comfortable seating and I tease them about that. I say, "Well, that's a shame because I consider you my south branch." (Laughter) Yeah, but he – I always wondered about the business model because he said exactly what I have been thinking. They will sit there and they will read and they won't buy. Duh. And (laughter) it actually makes a lot of sense to me, and so they are taking out the comfortable seating to get people to buy and they are putting out their Nook, which is a handheld reader, out for people to see and buy. And so that is the first thing that they see when they come into a Barnes and Noble store, at least in Round Rock which is true, it is, and they are getting rid of the media, their media, so it will just be books.

So Borders closes, then is Barnes and Noble which has been under- they have been trying to sell it now for a couple of years and no, no takers so if they fold, now do the libraries fold because they can't afford the media or for the electronic media we can't afford more than maybe

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just best sellers by that point in time and so what happens? Are do we just stay print, but if they choose not to print which is possible, does it go the way of the buggy whip, you know, and the jeweled watch, you know, does it?

So, you know, I don't want to be pessimistic. In the past being information science, you know, majoring in the graduate program, I go, "Yeah, they will have it someday. Yeah, they'll have it, and I already know that's something will happen." And a lot of it didn't happen, so but some of this is happening and I am concerned about all that and then I really think about the written record.

You can go back into churches and monasteries from the 1500 and look at their print records and things that are done and look at letters. Well, we have got a lot of e-mail. Nothing in print. I almost feel at times two hundred years from now, if you can even read this media, that two hundred years from now that there is going to be this loss of intellectual content.

PT: The correspondence between individuals and corporations.

DR: The correspondence between individuals, corporations, all that is going to be lost. And then when we have efforts like the state to not have the document collection function of the state library from its agencies. Those agencies aren't going to keep up their records. Those that are already there, the state library is pulling out their hair because they can't get the records to begin with, so our documentation of our history is going to be atrocious, so I hope this is being transcribed in print format. (Laughter)

SL: On acid free paper.

DR: On acid free paper. Chained to a desk somewhere. (Laughter) Yeah.

AS: As you look back on your career, are - other than staying in Texas - are there things that you wish you had done differently?

DR: I think that if I had the flexibility, I probability would have left earlier, maybe after ten or fifteen years of service and move on, because at some point you can grow, at some point you stop growing. And other environments give you that ability to grow as an individual in who you are intellectually, all kinds of ways. And I advise people now when they are young and in other professions and other places, whatever, if you really want to advance, don't stay where you are at. And...

PT: And, and I would like to say something about that because from my viewpoint of watching Dale's career since '82, Dale has always been the early adopter of everything, technology and library practices and management and all of these things so we have always used Dale as the example of the leading edge of everything. And, and it's hard to think of you not thinking of yourself as progressing because you have been out there and been the leader and, my God, it has taken so much for people to even try to get close to emulate what you have done, to replicate what you have done in your library, so...

DR: Well, thanks.

PT: You know whoever did it first, anything having to do with electronics it was always Round Rock. This is what they do in Round Rock. This is how Round Rock's doing it, and so that is my view point of...

AS: Oh, and...

DR: Thanks, Dale.

AS: Tell us about your first computer at the library and how did you use it?

DR: The first computer, the first computer was an Apple2E. There, there is a woman whose name is Mrs. Goodrich and when you go into her house, the mansion on Main Street in Round Rock, Texas. It's the only mansion; it's the old Tom Nelson home for fifty years from now, and she gave a grant to the library to buy a computer. And since I had worked on automating the library at Radian Corporation, I worked with the programmers to automate their little library, I thought, "Well, the one thing I did not want to do, you know, in the public library you have catalog cards, and the inanity of doing all these cards and then having to proof each one of them--I want to step back even further:

Technology is anything to expedite work of the human being, right? In management literature that is what it is. I was not going to proof all these cards. I bought a little library card mimeograph machine and we cut stencils for the library card and we produced stencils so all I had to do was proof the stencil and then all we had to do was correct one stencil. The cards looked like "bleep," but (laughter), but it didn't matter, it was there and I didn't have to proof them all and so then when she said, "Would you like some ?????" Yeah I want to get an Apple 2E because I had been keeping up with what was going on with card creation programs. I think it was called Library Card Reader or something like that in 1984.

DR: No, it was – it was before the Apple2E, so we went ahead and got that and we created our library cards on perforated card stock and now we went from smudgy mimeographed to now we had something that looked decent. And so the first one was the Apple2E, and then we started getting grants from the state – from the Central Texas Library System and I was on that early automation committee. Yeah, we started getting grants and then we had an IBM 8086.

PT: Oh, it had a hard drive.

DR: It had a hard drive. Woo hoo. A hard drive, and so we had that and the library was – had the most advanced computing equipment outside the mainframe in the City of Round Rock. They had the most advanced. We had the first PC and it didn't take the big, you know, disc. It took , you know, the five and a half rather than the eight and a half. And the city had a TRS80 which more of a game thing than it was anything serious so this was the first, you know, professional level for a big computer in the city.

In 1987 we contracted with Dynix, then Dynix, to put in a system. We were the first public library in the state to be in Dynix. There was a private school that was on Dynix at the time. And I thought for sure we would go with ??? and we didn't. Because the way, their database functioned, I didn't like it not compared to a true database function that Dynix had, and they were very user friendly and the people were really helpful. And you can get the principles to come through the library and say, "I don't like the way this works," and then they changed it. And then it would become a release for everybody else.

PT: That was the old Dynix.

DR: That was the old Dynix. Yeah, that old Dynix. This was - it was heaven, and talk about, we had a full one megabyte drive. (Laughter) And it cost us thousands of dollars, and we had one for backup in case it was needed, and but it was cool stuff because I didn't have to deal

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with library cards anymore. They were gone, and I was in China in January 1988 and I told the staff that while I was gone they were to throw out the card catalog.

AS: While you were gone.

DR: While I was gone. (Laughter) Yeah, and, and I remember I was calling from Beijing and I was talking to Linda Burns and she said, "Are you sure?" And I go, "Yes, because we are not going to create a new library cards, I'm getting rid of it." And they did. And I sort of got – I never had anybody say--now maybe they felt it and they didn't want to tell me and upset me, but nobody ever said, "Gee, I sure we wish we kept the card catalog or sure I wish you had kept up the shelf list. We did keep the shelf list up for six months, just to make sure – just to make sure that the database wasn't going to crater but after that, that was it.

SL: What did you do with the cards?

DR: Threw them out.

SL: Oh, you didn't use them for scratch paper? DR: No. ???(Laughter)

SL: We still do.

DR: No, no, no.

AS: Real quick. We have, we have two minutes left. Do you have final words?

(Laughter)

DR: Ahh.

AS: Your legacy to the profession.

DR: I think – I think that the legacy of the profession is if you go into librarianship, do it with passion. And do what you like with passion. And in one of my interviews with one of the youth – these are mainly youth – a couple of days ago at the school, she said, "Well, I kind of want to be a reference librarian and all I want to do is reference library." And some one said, "Well, I just want to work in a library. I don't know what it is," and my response to them was find the passion and do that.

Just don't settle to go to any library job just for the library job. Maybe you will have to, to feed yourself but don't get caught into that because you are not going to be the best professional. You are not. This is a profession. It is not a job. If you want a job, go work as a clerk somewhere but approach this as a profession. You will do yourself and the profession a favor.

AS: Very good. Well thank you for joining us. I have appreciated the conversation. Thank you, Pat. Thank you, Stephanie.

PT: Thank you, Arro.

AS: Very good.

Interview conducted by Arro Smith, with Pat Tuohy and Stephanie Langenkamp; transcribed by Margaret Ann Smith

Sick Transcript

KR: This is Kristy Raffensberger. I am here with Karlan Sick at the Morningside Heights Library in New York, New York. She has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired/Retiring Librarians.

It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association presidential initiates. This recording will be the property of the ALA, and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is May 19, 2008.

KR: Hello Karlan.

KS: Hello Kristy.

KR: How are you today?

KS: Ok.

KR: Good. So we're going to start off by just talking about your childhood. We won't go into too many details! Did you spend a lot of time in the library as a child?

KS: Well, I was introduced to the Boston Public Library during World War II, when my dad was stationed there with the Navy. And it was wonderful. Then we moved back to suburban Kansas City, where I grew up, and there was no public library.

The Johnson County libraries in that area now are award-winning libraries, but when I was a child there were no libraries.

It was a long drive into downtown Kansas City to go to the library, so I would get a book for my birthday or Christmas and read it over and over. No bookstores, either.

KR: What were some of your favorite books that you liked to read?

KS: I read Little House on the Prairie when I was little. I loved Robinson Crusoe; I used to like to think about what it would be to be stranded on an island. Those were real favorites. And then I just read them over and over. Robin Hood, Little Women-- those were books I loved.

KR: What lead you to decide to work in a library?

KS: Well, I got married right out of college and went to Morocco. My husband was in the Navy. Then we came back and I taught French for a year, and I realized that it would be very difficult to teach and have kids.

In those days the classes were huge; my favorite class had forty-five kids in it. Then we were abroad again for some time, and when we came back I did substitute teaching in Rhode Island and got to know the school librarian and the guidance counselor there.

The next year, my husband went to Columbia to get his PhD so I got a library degree, thinking that would be a good degree to travel with because librarians are needed everywhere. So I worked a couple years after library school as a school librarian here in New York.

Then we moved to Washington, and then Northern Virginia. I worked as a school librarian in the public schools. So I did travel, but then we came back to New York so we didn't get any more overseas adventures.

KR: When you were in school libraries, were you mostly the younger grades or were you ... ?

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KS: The first job that I had was terrific. It was third through twelfth grade in a private school. And then I was in a kindergarten through fourth-grade school for about three years and then I was in a school that was seventh through tenth grade.

I enjoyed all of them. Very interesting and much more intense than working in the public library, much more demanding because the students would be there at the crack of dawn and I usually didn't even have lunch.

KR: Oh no. Going back to library school, you said you want to Columbia. What was your favorite class?

KS: I had a terrific teacher, Frances Emmy, who was famous. There's a grant that is in her honor at ALA. She taught the young adult literature classes. She was a great woman.

KR: And what was your least favorite class?

KS: Oh, I suppose cataloging. Like everybody.

KR: Did you feel prepared when you graduated to enter the field?

KS: Yes. I worked at the New Lincoln School, which is on 110th street. At that time it was a very liberal private school and there were two other librarians working there, although it's a small school.

In library school, you didn't really learn the practical things, how to help kids check books in and out for instance, but working with two other librarians was a nice experience.

KR: Do you remember your first day?

KS: Not really. It was too long ago.

KR: What were some of your duties? Day-to-day duties.

KS: It was a wonderful school that had all kinds of things going on. Students could come to the library whenever they wanted to. We read aloud to the younger kids and we worked with the seventh grade especially. It was the first year that they did term papers.

If I had had a teacher like the seventh grade teacher there, I would have been a better student myself. He really did a wonderful job helping the students. Then we would help them working on their papers.

We were also doing an inventory there for the first time in living memory and I think that was one reason they wanted to hire an extra person. So I helped them with their inventory and we discovered that there were a lot of really old children's books in the children's section.

Justin Schiller came and looked at them to see if they were really worth anything. Unfortunately when they get that property stamp in them it sort of ruins them as a collector's item. But many of them were books of great interest, historical.

KR: Do you have any memorable kids or programs or stories in general from that school?

KS: From that school? There was a girl who had the most wonderful voice and I've always wondered what ever happened to her. We heard music one time, very loudly, in the library. We went through two sets of double doors and then another door, thinking somebody was playing the radio or a record too loud and she was singing!

And she was also on a different floor of the building. It was coming all the way up. It was gorgeous. And there was a boy I really liked who played the piano beautifully but he also loved ice hockey. He carried his hockey stick. It was a fun school.

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KR: Did the kids like to come to the library?

KS: Oh yes. They enjoyed the library.

KR: What was one thing that you learned on the job that you didn't learn in school, besides checking in books?

KS: The theory is what one learned in library school and on the job, you really had to learn how to make your schedule and learn how to work with teachers. These things really were not talked about much in library school.

KR: Where was the next library that you went to?

KS: Then I went to the Douglas MacArthur Elementary School in Alexandria, Virginia. I arrived there the first year HEW [Department of Housing, Education and Welfare] ordered integration in northern Virginia.

And the school where I started working had been an all-white school and it was in a very affluent neighborhood. Former President Ford lived in that neighborhood and his children went there. And there were black families in the neighborhood who were well-off but their kids didn't go there before. So they started attending.

But what Alexandria did was match up schools. It's a very small area geographically. So they matched one school for grades one, two, three, four and another school for grades five, six and paired them.

So all the kids from one neighborhood went to one school and all the kids went to the other school. Nobody went to a school that their next door neighbor did not go to. And yet it was well-integrated that way. It worked out very well.

The first year that I was in that school, there were a lot of children who had come from the section where more black children lived, who really couldn't read at all. And by the next year, that wasn't true anymore. It was a good system.

And my own children were school-age at that point. So one bad thing about this system was that you had siblings who would be in different schools because they were far enough apart.

One was in the five/six building and one was in the three/four building. But it worked out very well.

KR: So there was never any political or environmental tension that was happening outside of the library or the school? It never affected ... ?

KS: No, everybody accepted it very well. But I think they had already been through a period like that before we moved there because for some reason they started with the high schools instead of starting with the children.

But it worked out very nicely because none of the schools were very far from each other.

KR: Are there any particular kids that you remember from that school?

KS: That was a very hectic year because I was the only librarian in the school and the architect won a prize for the lighting design. It was a new addition to an older building and it was really lovely but there was a break-in more than once.

There was no vandalism, really, in the library, but the kids had figured out how to take a panel of glass out of a wall and just lift it out and climb in. I remember those kids. So the lighting was nice, a lot of glass!

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We had a piano so I used to sing songs with the kids. And when the weather was nice we could go outside in nicely landscaped gardens around and be outdoors for story times. It was a real media center; they had a lot of equipment.

So it was just me and there was a clerk who came twice a week. But she wasn't very much interested in any of the library work, really. She tended to be absent a lot. So I had some other volunteers who came and helped.

It was an open school so whenever anybody in a classroom area wanted to go to the cafeteria, wanted to go to the gym, wanted to go to the front office, they had to cut through the library. So it was like a highway. That was pretty funny.

KR: How did collection development evolve? Or what was your role in that in the school libraries that you worked in?

KS: I had a very good budget there. So being able to select books and buy them was nice. They were really very supportive in libraries in Alexandria. Only going through the fourth grade, you had mostly books for the younger readers. The I Can Read sort of thing.

But we had video equipment and it was new; it was before the days that everybody had a video camera and so I took pictures of all the kindergartners and the first graders and then they could see themselves on television.

They loved it. It was a wonderful thing to do for them. They had a lot of fun doing that.

KR: Did you learn about the new technology by just experimenting yourself?

KS: No, they gave us time off for a two- or three-day workshop, all the librarians in the district.

KR: Then, where did you go after that?

KS: Then I went to the seventh- through tenth-grade school. It was a big old high school. About half the kids in the school got free lunch and about half the kids in the school were children of government employees in the area.

The principal was terrific, but he felt that everybody should be able to go to the library during their lunch period. So one person's lunch period would be another person's English class. So it was like Grand Central Station in the library.

And a lot of the kids came in who had no interest whatsoever in looking at a book. So I set up tables with puzzles and games.

The place was really a mess when I arrived because there had been two little old ladies who had worked there forever and they never threw anything away.

I actually found books on the shelves that said, "Some day the moving pictures will talk." So it was a huge weeding job and all. But the kids came into the library and I cleared out an adjacent classroom that was full of junk from the library, and we had programs in there.

Very much like public library programs. We had films once a week; I would show short films that were really good. We had people on the staff volunteer their talents.

Somebody taught them how to make Christmas ornaments out of dough and one of the guidance counselors turned out to know how to do hypnosis and self-hypnosis. We had all different sorts of paper-cutting talents.

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People did different hobbies and would share them with the students. About three days a week we had a program going on to keep the extra kids on their lunch hour entertained.

KR: Did you see a difference in the kids coming to the library?

KS: Oh yes. They behaved much better when they had something to do. They no longer played handball between the stacks.

KR: So then where did you go after that?

KS: Then we moved to New York. When one retires from the Navy, the Navy will foot the bill for a move anywhere you want to go. We had been in New York those three years during graduate school and we really loved it, so we moved back to New York.

I had always been curious what it would be like to work in the public library and started out as a children's librarian in Washington Heights. I spent a year there.

KR: Did you have an overall plan for your career or was it more organic?

KS: I thought I might switch again, I didn't know. But the New York City public schools did not appeal to me from what I had heard. I really didn't want to commute out to the suburbs. And at that time, the private schools really didn't pay at all.

That has changed, but it was pitiful in those days. That was 1980. So I really enjoyed the public library and by then my children were grown up so it was nice to be able to take vacation when I wanted to, rather than being attached to the school schedule.

I went to Jefferson Market as a young-adult librarian for two years; that was fun. I was the only young-adult librarian in all of lower Manhattan so I did all the schools down there, including Stuyvesant.

Then I went to the Bronx as the Young Adult Specialist for the Bronx and supervised some programs and services in thirty-four libraries.

KR: Can you remember any special young adult programs that you started, or to get young adults into the library, especially since you were the only one?

KS: Well, that was at Jefferson Market. I found that having young people do the programs themselves was the best thing. I met a young boy in seventh grade who did origami, and my first thought that he could display his origami but the display cases were booked for years ahead.

So he did some workshops while he was in seventh and eighth grade there and he really enjoyed doing it. And other kids came because he was doing it.

Then we did similar things. There was a boy who wrote a cookbook; he came and did a program on his book. Those were the kinds of programs that I really liked, having young people be the program.

KR: Did teens travel all around Manhattan to come?

KS: Oh no, it was the local area.

KR: Then you became the young adult specialist for the Bronx.

KS. Yes. That was a very demanding job. I know retired librarians who have told me they thought that was the most demanding job they ever had. But it was fun.

You could decide what you thought needed to be done. I think every individual who's had that job sets their own priorities.

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And I felt that we should be doing outreach to the high schools. So I scheduled as many ninth-grade visits as possible. And I would take new librarians along with me so, if possible, they could spend the day, but usually they came for at least half a day.

They would see me to a class and then they would do a book talk or two with the class. Then they would do a class and we'd share a couple of classes. It really got them over being afraid to go into the high school.

Because the students in the high school just wanted to hear about stories also. They really liked having us visit.

KR: When you were a young adult librarian in the branches, did you have anybody who took you around as well?

KS: No but Lydia LaFleur was the Manhattan specialist. We made appointments but they never quite worked out. But I was an experienced librarian; I had been a school librarian for ten years. I did book talking as a school librarian so I had practiced then.

And I really enjoyed going to the schools. And made a lot of good friends who are still friends. We get together often. It was a very good experience.

I enjoyed working with the new librarians and it makes you sad how many of them didn't stay and went on to other jobs, but I think they had a good time while they were there.

KR: What were some of the fears that the new librarians had that you remember, that you had to help them with?

KS: They were nervous doing public speaking. Once they could do it more often, then they got over it. I think part of the reason people have a hard time doing a class and doing book talks or storytelling is that if you only do it once a month, you're always going to be nervous.

While if you do it several times in a day and then a week later do it several times in a day, you get over being nervous.

KR: Did you notice an increase in teen participation in the libraries after doing a lot of outreach?

KS: Yes. In that, going to the high schools, we would give out what we called "fresh start slips," which made us very popular. The fines were forgiven and they could make a fresh start at the library. Whatever branch they used this fresh start in, stamped at that bottom.

In the Bronx, I would get slips returned to me from all over. Kids travel a lot in New York to go to high school.

KR: In that position, was management a skill that came naturally to you, or were there parts of it that you had to learn?

KS: It was not difficult. Mostly it was a matter of setting priorities. It was important to keep in touch with all the new people and keep in touch with the people who were having problems and to be sure and return phone calls.

The invention of the cell phone helped a lot in that regard because when I would visit a high school before there were cell phones, I would ask the head of the English department if I could use her phone.

They would always say yes if they didn't need it, but it was very nice to have a phone when that became available because I could return calls in between classes.

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KR: How many branches had a special teen librarian at that time?

KS: It changed all the time. I was in the Bronx for twenty years and there were times when we had someone for every three or four branches and then it would really dwindle, and then it would come back.

There was a lovely period when it seemed a lot of the new people who were coming to the system really wanted to work with teenagers, which was very heartening.

KR: Was there anything that you missed of being in the branch?

KS: As opposed to being in the office? Seeing individual readers more often. And Jefferson Market has a large population of senior citizens and I found I really enjoyed working with them too.

That was not dissimilar from working with children and teenagers because if they need help, you get up and help them. You don't just sit there.

KR: Do you have a favorite age range that you've helped over the years?

KS: Thirteen to fifteen probably.

KR: How did you keep yourself motivated to go to work every day?

KS: The job that I had in the Bronx was very exciting. Every day I would have to look at my calendar to see where I was going. So I didn't do the same thing over and over. There was a lot of variety. I think that's what made it really appealing.

I might be going to a book discussion group, I might be going to a film committee to buy films, I might be going to look at Spanish language books. Different things every day.

KR: Was there any part of the teen program at NYPL that you specifically changed?

KS: I think I did a lot in the Bronx for bringing in more teen participation and actually doing the programming.

KR: Were there any different hats that you had to wear as a librarian that you never thought you would?

KS: Well, I knew very little about being a librarian when I started out so it was just all interesting and I figured I could go back to teaching if I didn't like it. So no, not really.

It surprised me how much in common people who went into guidance work or social work had with people who were attracted to librarianship. That there's that wanting to help people aspect.

KR: You might have just answered the next question, but what about being a librarian would surprise those outside of the profession?

KS: I think how much one enjoys it. I read somewhere that the lucky person is one who's avocation is his vocation, and I feel -- going in a bookstore I have to bite my tongue not to recommend books to people.

KR: Did you have a mentor, or someone who greatly influenced you that you can think of?

KS: The first woman I worked with, Naomi Noise, was the children's specialist. She was a wonderful woman who just died recently. She was very inspirational. You'd just think, "How did Naomi do it?"

Sick transcript

Then when I became the young adult librarian, I worked more with Lydia LaFleur and she is a lovely person. Always gracious and kind and very hard-working and intelligent so I felt that they were setting wonderful examples.

KR: In all of your years in librarianship what professional organizations did you join and what did you find the most beneficial?

KS: I joined the Virginia School Library Association when I was there, and my children were young then so I really didn't do that much with it. I edited a newsletter for them.

Then, at New York Public -- well, I belonged to ALA all along, but I never got on to a committee or do anything until I came to New York Public. Lydia LaFleur was the YALSA president and she helped people get on to committees.

My first committee was Outstanding Fiction for the College-Bound and that was wonderful. I went on from there to be on a lot of good committees. I was also involved with the New York Library Association, which was very interesting.

I was on the board there for a term. I wish I had gotten involved sooner with the Ethnic Services Roundtable. I had not really known what they did until right at the end of my time with the library and I did participate in that for a couple of years.

But that's a really worthwhile organization that I recommend to everyone. I was a French and German major in college and later learned Italian and Arabic, and so the Ethnic Services Roundtable people and programs were just wonderful to me. A great interest.

KR: You were also on the first Printz Award Committee, right?

KS: Yes, I was very fortunate. That was the year that we gave the award to Walter Dean Myers for Monster. Such a wonderful book for teenagers and a real young adult book. I thought we were really lucky to have that book eligible that year.

And the people on that first committee were all wonderful, well-read people, so it was a wonderful committee to be on. I'd been on Best Books before that -- I'd been on Best Books for five years, actually, two different terms.

And then I was on the Alex Award Committee for four years, two different terms. I loved those book committees, they were fun.

KR: Was there a different energy in the room at the conference when they were announcing the awards when it was the first Printz or all announcements equally exciting?

KS: Well, the first time, they really didn't have a really good organization of when to do it and so on. I don't think our committee even all got our picture taken together. The usual, what's now tradition, hadn't begun yet.

But everybody was very pleased with that choice. A very good book.

KR: Do you have a favorite conference memory?

KS: I really enjoyed going to San Antonio. Everything was close enough together that one could walk and it was fun to walk up and down the river. And it was fun to go into the tourist area, just if you only had twenty minutes free.

I really enjoyed going to New Orleans. That was so sad when it didn't happen. I was ill when ALA was held there after Katrina, so I didn't get to go. But I had a wonderful time in New Orleans too. But I never had time to do any of the tours or anything.

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That's the problem of being on the book committees, they meet all the time! So you just get a little break here and there.

KR: Did you go to conferences when you were beginning as a librarian?

KS: No, my children were little and I didn't really know how to get involved because I was really working by myself.

In Washington they have a very active children's discussion group. I've forgotten what they've called it -- District of Columbia Library Association, something like that.

They would get together and have very interesting meetings with authors and mock Newbery, that sort of thing. So I did that, but I didn't really get involved until I came to New York.

KR: Would you encourage new librarians to get involved?

KS: Oh yes.

KR: So these are the grand, sweeping questions now. What are the greatest changes that you have seen to library services?

KS: The introduction of computers, without a doubt. That has really changed everything. It's still changing. The old reference room is no longer as important as it was.

Originally, with New York Public, reference and young adult were one specialty in recognition of the fact that there were high school students coming in, needing reference help.

We used to always work part of the time in the reference room as well as working out in the general information areas. I think everybody's just using the computers now.

KR: Was that difficult to adapt to or did you find it easy?

KS: Well, I was in a supervising position as this trend began so we were trying to teach young people to use the computers and gradually more and more students had their own computers.

In fact, fairly early in the game, there were kids in south Bronx high schools who in the class had computers at home.

Now you don't know what kind of access they had, whether it was dial-up or if it was slow, but they really were very familiar with computers, and very excited about it. Which I thought was a good thing.

KR: Where would you like to see new librarians lead the future of libraries?

KS: I think the future really lies with those who work with children and teenagers. I think most adults and college students now are using the computers and are doing their research.

But young people need to learn to read and read for pleasure to ever be able to read fast enough to be able to be good readers. That's why I think the children's librarians and the young-adult librarians are very important.

KR: I don't know if you saw this month's American Libraries but there was an article by Julia Keller and it was titled "Killed by Kindness: How Well-Intentioned Nostalgia Harms Today's Libraries."

She says, "Today's libraries are not yesterday's libraries and nostalgia won't pay the electric bill. Libraries are robust places, crackling with energy. Libraries are the archive for the

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full range of the human experience, which means they cannot just be about books and periodicals anymore."

KS: That's certainly true. Definitely.

My husband teaches in the graduate school at Columbia and he, thanks to my suggestion, always made it a part of his class to take his graduate students early in the semester to have a tour by the university librarian to know what was available.

And the last couple of years, the university librarian has just come to the classroom with a PowerPoint and told them about different electronic resources. That's the future.

And they don't go and work in the library the way they used to. They're at home on their own computer.

KR: So you see that as the future, but you still also believe that we need to encourage kids and teenagers to pick up a book.

KS: I think that's the only way they are going to learn to enjoy reading and read rapidly. I think young people like to read just as much as they ever did. When they're looking at the computer screen, of course they have to read.

But for many of them it's sort of slow and it's hard to acquire those skills just looking at a computer screen. I think the book is valuable, especially for young people.

And they say that even though reference use has really gone down at New York Public, as most places, that even adults are still checking out lots of books to read for their own enjoyment; that circulation is very good. So I think it's really just the research aspect.

You can find so much so quickly online, it's wonderful.

KR: So you said you don't really remember your first day. But what were you feeling on your last day?

KS: I don't remember my last day either! It was in July, so it was probably hot. I was involved with getting ready for the office where I worked to close and move to another building, a new library.

So after school was out in the spring, that was where most of my work was done, was trying to weed things out and get things ready for the big shift and the new Bronx Library Center.

KR: And you're still involved in libraries, even after retirement?

KS: I have two projects that I'm enjoying. I was on the Alex Award still after I retired, but I'm not on a new committee this time. But I'm on the Bank Street School's list of best books of the year. And that's fun. It's a list that is kindergarten through high school.

The printed list is kindergarten through eighth grade and the young adult part is online. We meet every Thursday for a couple hours and talk about the books that we read.

They really do a conscientious job of looking at the books, and they have more than one reader for each book. So that's a very good way to do it, so that's fun.

And then, right at the end of my time working in the Bronx, there was a budget cut for the outreach to prisons and nobody was visiting the schools in the secure juvenile detention centers. I said that I could do that also.

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So I went and visited the two prisons in the Bronx and it was the most heartwarming experience because they really appreciated having somebody come who they didn't see all the time, somebody who was interested in them.

And I was shocked to learn that they could not take books from the nice, little classroom library that they had in one of the buildings. The teacher had gotten a grant and had gotten a really nice collection of books but they couldn't take them out of the room.

So I started taking over books that I got from publishers from having been on Best Books and some excess good condition paperbacks and I'd take them over and do book talks and just let them take them. If they just shared them informally that was fine.

Now that I'm retired, I'm on the board of a group called LIT -- Literature for Incarcerated Teens. It's a tax-exempt organization and we're trying to make sure that there are school libraries in the juvenile detention centers of New York City.

So it's just begun. I was amazed that they didn't have school libraries since they have mandated schools; you'd think that they would have libraries also.

KR: Is there any last, final piece of advice that you'd like to give? Or any advice that you had gotten?

KS: Just to enjoy your job. It's a wonderful career and I really enjoyed working in the school library as well as the public library. Both were fascinating.

KR: Well, thank you very much.

KS: Thank you.

Interview conducted by Kristy Raffensberger in May 2008 in New York, New York.

Transcript indexed and places marked by Vivi Hoang in Fall 2008 at The University of Texas at Austin School of Information.

Trejo Transcript

This is Sara Ann Long. I'm here with Ninfa Trejo at Anaheim California. Ninfa has agreed to be interviewed today. This interview is a part of Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired/Retiring Librarians. It is one of Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is June the 27th, 2008.

SL: Good afternoon, Ninfa.

NT: Hello, how are you Sara?

SL: It's so nice to see you. I always enjoy seeing old friends at these conferences. Isn't that one of the reasons we come?

NT: It is one of the reasons that we come.

SL: So, you've had a long and illustrative career in librarianship. And certainly your late husband was one of our legends and so on. Could you give me a little bit about your most recent position in librarianship?

NT: My recent position right now - I'm the director of the Northwest campus library for Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona. That's my current position, thank you.

SL: And can you think back and give us what was before that, and before that?

NT: Before that I went to the University of Arizona, I worked for the University of Arizona eight years as the social sciences librarian. And before that I was in a public library environment.

SL: That's very good.

NT: So I went from the public to the academic. I graduated, believe it or not, in 1992 from library school. So this is like my third career. So this very interesting, although I have always worked somehow with books and languages. I worked for bilingual education, in marketing for the San Diego Public Library before I became a librarian.

SL: So your career in the public library was at San Diego?

NT: It started in San Diego, working for the San Diego Public Library as public relations. And when I saw the work of the librarians, I thought, this is what I want to do.

SL: Oh, I see. so it was the example of librarians on the job that inspired you.

NT: Exactly. and every librarian I met, they were so knowledgeable, and I thought, this is what I really want to do. When I got to work at the San Diego Public Library and I went for the interview, before that I was working with Governor Brown in California.

SL: Oh really? So high flown.

NT: I was working with a conference of border governors. Which is the six governors of Mexico--the border states--and the four from the United States. And I was the representative for the California office, so we worked really directly under Governor Brown's office.

SL: How exciting. What year was that?

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NT: It was '79 - '82 that I worked. Because when Brown lost, it was a kind of political decision. So when Brown left, you know we all left. They offered some positions that were not really appropriate. So I was looking for a job, and I had some interviews, and I went to interview at the San Diego Public Library. When I got in there, I thought, I want to work here. No matter what they offer me, I'm going to work here.

So I started as a substitute, and then I started working in public relations - they had an opening in public relations. So I had background in marketing, in public relations, that's what I was doing with Governor Brown. Although I was doing it in two languages. So I thought, and when I was substituting, and you work with different libraries when you substitute, you know, with all the system, San Diego city system. Everywhere I went, I fell in love with the work the librarians do. And I thought, this is what I want to do.

And then I found out I needed a master's degree to do that. So I was looking for a library school, because San Diego didn't have a library school then. They told me - you have two choices - the UCLA, which is on weekends, you can go on weekends to UCLA and come back. And that's it: there was nothing else. The head of the regional libraries knew me because I'd represented the libraries so many times. And he said -

SL: Sure. Who was that?

NT: The time I had with - my son was about 7, 8 years old. And I thought, I cannot do the weekends because those are for my son. I cannot leave him, and I can't take him with me. So, I thought, Joe - I can't remember his last name -

SL: Yes, I know him. Joe - I can't remember his last name either.

NT: And he said, Ninfa, they are having an extension at Fullerton from San Jose State. And after that, I found a flyer on my desk, that said they needed a Hispanic liaison for the Fullerton public library. And they described just who I was - for the job requirements. And Luis Cerrera . Who I was working at that time with - you know Luis - and I said, Luis look at this! And he said, that's you Ninfa, apply for it. So it was in Fullerton. So if I was working in Fullerton then I could go take the MLS at Fullerton College State.

So I applied for the job, and then they gave me a leave of absence from San Diego. So, we want you back. When you do the degree come back. So I had a leave of absence from San Diego Public and I went to the program in College State Fullerton. And I applied for the job. I was to call a week after the interviews, and they offered me the job. And then moved with my son, we rented a little apartment close to a library, because the library was like in the same avenue that is in College State Fullerton. So we rented a little apartment there and I moved all my things, rented my house in San Diego and left.

SL: Oh my goodness, what a story! And it's all driven by your interest in librarianship.

NT: And librarianship, I think it was - how do you help people? Because I think somebody said that library's not about books, but about lives. I noticed when you answer a question in a library, it's like you change somebody's life, you know. So in a public library, you can see that, you can touch it. In academic it's not as well, but in a public library you can see the face of the people when you give them what they need. And it's very rewarding.

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So I thought, you know this is what I want to do. So I went to library school, I graduated. And then before I graduated, I had a lot of work offers because they needed somebody to speak Spanish in librarianship. And there were only a few librarians who speak Spanish. And I said well, my language is pretty good, so I can fit in perfectly. So they offered me a job in Santana Public Library after I graduated. And when I went to work in Santana Public Library I had like 3 years in there or 4, and the California Library Association was here in Anaheim and that's when I met my husband.

SL: Oh, how interesting. What a love story. What year was that?

NT: It was 1994.

SL: And how did you happen to meet him?

NT: Well, we had REFORMA, I was involved in REFORMA, I was the president of the chapter of REFORMA in Orange County. So we did a dinner before the conference like they did last night but I wasn't here. We always do a dinner for the REFORMA members and everything. So we did a dinner, and I don't know who invited him. I didn't invite him, but he was there. He knew and he was there. So he came to the meeting, to the dinner, and I went around to say hello to everybody, he stood up, there were a lot of men, but he was the only one who stood up to say, you know, how are you? And I said well,

SL: Good manners.

NT: Pleased to - immediately I knew he was a gentleman. And so I went around and then I sat at the other end of table, and he sat at one end of the table. Then the next day I was looking for a book, and I went to his booth, he was having a booth, and I said -

SL: Now let's say for our audience, what was your husband's name?

NT: It was Dr. Arnulfo D. Trejo. D is for Duenes.

SL: And his book -

NT: His bookstore was Hispanic Book Distributors. and I had requested - I had asked - how do call them? Materials from his HPD, which was Hispanic Book Distributors. And then I know, he must have this book. It was a book in Spanish, I think. And I asked him, you don't have this book? And he said no, I don't but I can get it for you. But I want your opinion on this other book. So he gave me another book, he had a little bench in there. And I sat and looked at the book and I told him what I thought. And I said, okay well I'll come tomorrow or the day after tomorrow when the conference ends to see if you got the book. He said, I'll have it here for you. That was it.

So I went on to the conference. The end of the conference was a Sunday, and almost forgot, when I was at the door going with my friend from San Diego, I said, you know what, I need to at least tell Dr. Trejo that-- as a courtesy. So, I went back, and he was closing the booth. And I said, Dr. Trejo, I'm sorry I couldn't come before. And he said, oh, you know, I couldn't find the book. And I said, oh well, okay. And he said, but I wanted to ask you if you want to go to dinner. And I said well, you know, I already have another commitment. And he said well, how about after your commitment?

SL: He was persistent, man.

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NT: And then I said, no, I live in Fullerton, and this is Anaheim. And I had to go pick up my son to go to Mass, it was a Sunday, and we go to Mass. And he said, how about if I see you at church?

SL: What a sweetheart. You knew immediately.

NT: And I thought, when you tell a man you are going to church -

SL: With your child -

NT: Usually they say, "well go ahead." And I said, okay. this is the church, and this is the address, and I left. So I went to pick up my son and we went to Mass and I told my son, and I said Dr. Trejo invited us for dinner, but I don't think he's going to make it, because the traffic was horrible, it was in the afternoon, and I said I don't know if he's going to make it. I was certain that he couldn't make it to the church. And he said, oh no mommy, he's not going to make it. So we went to church, I turned around - we always sat in the first bench of the church, my son and myself, we always sat in the same place. and turned around - there was Dr. Trejo behind us.

SL: Oh my goodness. And how old was your son at this time?

NT: My son was 16 I think.

SL: Oh okay. So he was a young man.

NT: Yeah, he was young. He was a teenager. But we went together everywhere. And then after the Mass we went to dinner, and then -

SL: The three of you?

NT: The three of us. And then I said, it was a Japanese restaurant and they didn't have - do you really want to know all this?

SL: Oh yes, I think it's fascinating.

NT: Okay. And I said, you know I want something for desert. And he said, why don't we go leave Francisco at home and we can go for a coffee? And I said, you know, we need to do a lot of stuff that I didn't do with him - we have to go grocery shopping, all the things that we didn't do on the weekend. And he said, oh okay. So he left us, my son and I went grocery shopping and did all the things that we needed to do, and got home and the telephone rang.

And it was Dr. Trejo. And he said, Ninfa, I just want to ask you if - I would like to write to you. And I said, yes. I would love that. I was thinking, this is somebody that I want to read. And what a wonderful thing that he wants to write to me. And I said, of course, you know, you can write to me. And he said, you know, it was a subtle way of saying - he said, but I don't know if your other admirers will say something. And I thought, it was when it dawned on me that he likes me. And I said, oh don't worry, I don't have any admirers. Don't worry about that.

SL: That was very subtle.

NT: And he laughed so hard, he said - I can't believe that you're saying that. Are men blind here in Orange County or something? He was very, you know how he was.

SL: He was very courtly.

NT: And so he said, I wanted to invite you to Tucson, for Thanksgiving.

SL: Is that where he lived? In Tucson?

NT: In Tucson. And I said, well I already have plans to go with my brother, who lives in California. And he said, well I thought you might have plans. What about Christmas? Why don't

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you come for Christmas? And I said, well let me talk to my son and we'll see what he has to say. So he left, and he called me the next day and he said, I just wanted to let you know that I haven't written the letter, but I'll send it to you. I just want you to know to wait for the letter. And I said okay.

And by the way, I discussed it with my son and he said oh, sure, let's go to Tucson. Because my son and I always go to Tucson to see my mother in El Paso. So we always stay overnight in Tucson and leave the next morning. So it was our point to stop, my son and I. And we always thought: what a boring town. And when he said he wanted to invite me to Tucson, and I said, you know we don't like Tucson, it's kind of boring. And he said, but I want you to look at Tucson through my eyes. You'll love it. And I said, well, okay. So my son said okay, and then he called me to tell me to wait for the letter. And then in about 4 or 5 days I got the most beautiful letter.

SL: I bet. You still have it? I bet you do still have it.

NT: I do. It was the most beautiful letter.

SL: Now tell me again what year this is?

NT: It was '94.

SL: Okay. And so that's the beginning of a great romance.

NT: It was the beginning of a great romance because I fell in love with him through his letters.

SL: I bet. How long did you write?

NT: Well we wrote to each other, after I received that letter, I thought, oh my God, this is the most beautiful letter. The library where I was working, the head of my department, she was a student of his. And her name is Martha. Martha Garcia ??? and I went to her and I said - Martha tell me everything you know about Dr. Trejo. I need to know who he is as a person. I knew who he was professionally, but not as a person.

And she said, well - because his wife had died like 2 years before that. And Martha said, well I can tell you - because she worked with both he and his wife in the bookstore. What bad thing you can say about Dr. Trejo? There's nothing. And she said, Ninfa, he is very kind, he is very considerate. When I worked with him he was excellent. And he was a very good teacher, he was really the reason I'm a librarian, and so forth and so on. So she said, but you have to know how you feel. And so I answered his letter, and he called me after the letter arrived. And in the letter he said, my life changed since I met you.

SL: Really? My goodness.

NT: And he said, so all the way back, I was thinking that I could write to you and communicate with you. So we wrote to each other, and we talked over the phone. And we called each other every day. It was each week, and then everyday.

SL: Very intense.

NT: And we just couldn't perceive that we don't talk everyday. And so it was through his conversations and mine, he said I want to know about you. And I write poetry, so I sent him some of my poetry and I said - well if you want to know me, I think through my poetry you'll know who I am. And that's true, because poetry is -

SL: Very much about your soul.

NT: About your soul. So I thought, I'm uncovering my soul to this man. But I think he liked what he saw.

SL: I guess he did. So how long before you got married? And how did he propose?

NT: Well it was when we went for Christmas, finally. My son and I went for Christmas there.

SL: That was very quick.

NT: Yeah, it was Christmas, and by then, like I told you, I fell in love through his letters. I was really in love with him before personally, physically be with one another. And it was the most beautiful thing that ever happened to me. To fall in love with someone just through your thinking and your speaking and your writing. It's a spiritual level that very few people have.

SL: I think you're right. Sort of the marriage of true minds.

NT: And when I went for Christmas, he introduced me to his family and everything. And everybody told me, oh welcome to the family and everything. And I said, what did you tell these people? They're welcoming me into the family. And he said, well, the only way they can understand I invited you is that you're somebody that I'm - so I said, but, I want you to be my wife. He proposed at that time. And I said, well why don't we just - be - so every fifteen days he traveled to Fullerton, and I traveled to Tucson, and it was becoming - so when he proposed again, I think that it was - he insisted, you know during the months after that. And he came to Fullerton. In my house I had a blessing of - I just had bought a townhouse. And he came for the blessing of my house and knew all my friends and everything. And we had a lot of friends in common. So he said, you know, I want you to come to Tucson and I want you to be my wife. And I said, well, let's wait until my birthday - my birthday is in April. And in April he gave me the engagement ring.

SL: Oh, how sweet.

NT: And then he said - and then I said, well, I talk to my son. And I said, you know, because he and my son respected each other very well. And my son was very nice with him and he was very happy for me. But when he saw that we were very serious about it, then my son started like -

SL: Oh, a little jealousy.

NT: But my son was leaving to college.

SL: Oh, that was good.

NT: Leaving to college. He was at the University of California - UCI - Irvine. So in August my son, in fact, he went with me - Dr. Trejo when we went to visit several universities my son had applied. We went to San Diego, we went to the University UCLA, and he was accepted at UC Irvine. And he was accepted at all the universities, but he decided to go to UC Irvine. So at that point, when I knew my son was leaving in August, then I started looking for a job in Tucson, and I said, well, if I go to Tucson I need to find me a job. And he said, well, you can work with me at the store. And I said, no I don't want to work. Because his daughter -

SL: Had worked. Oh, was working.

NT: She was working, and she was the manager. And I thought it would be very uncomfortable for her, for me to be there.

SL: And you had met her, but you didn't really know her.

NT: Well I did meet her at Christmas when I went, she was very nice to me, and everything. But I thought that - I wanted to be a librarian. I went through a lot of stuff to be a librarian. I wanted to be a librarian.

SL: And you felt a real calling to librarianship.

NT: Exactly. And I said, no I want to be a librarian. So he took me to apply at the public library, at Pima Community College, and we never touched U of A. Because I thought I didn't have the experience to work in an academic. And one day he called me, he said Ninfa, they have two openings at the U of A for a social sciences librarian. I said well I don't have the experience. And he said, and the closing is tomorrow. So he faxed me the application.

And I stayed that night until 1:00 in the morning filling the applications, and the letter and everything you have to do. And send it out by fax the next day because it was due the next day. And then I thought, well, you know I don't have any experience, but I had experience in outreach, because I did a lot of outreach when I was a Hispanic liaison and then in Santana I was working with the bookmobiles. How more outreach than the bookmobiles, bookmobiles are really outreach for the libraries.

SL: And you had the two language skills, too.

NT: The two languages, so. And he said, no you are academic material, you'll be fine. So they called me from the U of A, and called me - first they interview by telephone. And after that they do a selection, who they invite to campus. So they called me in a couple of weeks and they interview me by telephone. And then they called me and they asked me to come in to an interview. Which happens I was going to be in Tucson because it was - Arnulfo's birthday is the 15th of August. And I was going to be there for his birthday. And the 18th I think was the interview. So they interview me at the U of A, and after that I think about two weeks or so, I was called and offered the job.

SL: Oh, that's great.

NT: So I told him, well you know, you have to wait - they want me to come but you have to wait until I - need to put things in order here.

SL: Sure, and your house and everything.

NT: So I moved in October, I think. The end of October, to Tucson. And moved all my things, in his home. And his home was large, but I had to leave a lot of stuff. I moved in November and we got married in December. New Year's Eve.

SL: Oh, that's wonderful. So - a respectable engagement, but certainly your love was carrying the both of you.

NT: Yeah, I think - it's you know, when I move in to Tucson, and then I had an idea of what I want. When you live by yourself it's different. But it was never a problem. He let me do whatever I wanted.

SL: That was wonderful.

Trejo transcript

NT: And my son was a little jealous, but he said - I talked to him, I love this man, and I don't want - he's not taking the place of your dad. You have your dad, and they love each other very much. And I said, but you can see him as a grandfather, or as a friend.

SL: And the other thing too, your son was going off to his new life. He was going off to college.

NT: Yeah my son left in August, and I left in October. So I was already by myself when I left. But, and then I came to visit my son, you know, every month or so. But it was a really, something like, everything falling into place. It was meant to be.

SL: Yes. So now you all continued to live in Tucson?

NT: So I continued to live in Tucson and, as you know he died in 2003.

SL: Yes. And you know, one of the things that interests me - I have this fantasy, I don't know if it's true or not. But your husband was so responsible for many of the librarians who are our leaders today, coming into librarianship. And I sort of had this fantasy that your house was this salon, where the two of you really - encouraged these young people to get into librarianship. Is that grounded in reality at all?

NT: It is - it's, you know, we both have that kind of - you have to plant all the time. To plant for the future. And it's the planting, the work of planting and nourishing those people so they grow.

SL: Who were those people?

NT: Well, he mentored so many. And mentored me, by the way. Because I was in academia, which I never was before. And we had people in REFORMA, you know and then after he left, I think I had one of the students, that I worked with - we also worked with the University of Arizona - the school of library service, to you know, help the students and everything. But I noticed that the people - the Hispanic people in the library, or some students, they waited for me until I was at the reference desk, for asking a question. Because they felt comfortable. And so we - and he was more into the business area and everything. But he mentored so many people, I can't tell you.

SL: Well I know Martine Gomez.

NT: Well Martine is one of them, Luis Cerrera, who else is there? Amanda Castillo. It was Liz Miller, Elizabeth Martinez, Liz Miller. She was a city manager - assistant city manager of Tucson.

SL: That's right.

NT: But before that she was a director of public libraries. So she's one of them. And there are six or seven people like her, that got off at the same time. And of course, the one that I was working with, Martha Garcia, was also his student. So I got a lot of contact with the school and kept working with the school. And when he left - and of course we were with him at the foundation - the Trejo Foster Foundation, then he showed me how the foundation works, and everything.

SL: So what was the purpose of the foundation? When was that established?

NT: The purpose of the foundation is to get - improve the education of librarians. To improve them in cultural competences, that they have more awareness of how different cultures,

Trejo transcript

they have different ways, different seeking behaviors, you know in terms of finding information and everything. And of course the language is very important, how you talk to them, and how you speak with them. Not only the language, but in the way you speak with people. So the purpose of the Trejo Foster Foundation was to work with library schools to improve the education so each of the institutes, we have 7 right now - institutes.

SL: Is that every year?

NT: Every other year.

SL: Okay. And when did you start?

NT: The first one was the U of A, before I met him. It was in '93. Cause in 1995 was the second one. It was in Texas with Brooke Sheldon.

SL: Oh, how interesting.

NT: Brooke Sheldon, and that's the first institute that I went, and I helped him with everything. So I went to the first institute, and it was about public libraries. And each institute is about different issues in public libraries.

SL: So did some of the people come to all of them? Or -

NT: Well, it depends - if you're public library, you want to go to the one that is public libraries oriented. and it was more for public libraries, how to serve the Hispanic population. Then the third one was on leadership for the 21st century. It was a big boom of technology and all of that - and information overload and everything. So it was leadership, and Betty Turock was the -

SL: Oh my goodness, another legend.

NT: Yes, Betty was the director of - and Martine Gomez. Both of them. So we had that institute in leadership. And so the fourth one was in the University of Florida, and it was about young services - services to the young children. Young adults. So that was dedicated to children's services, and youth. Children and youth services. And I think Kathleen -

SL: De la Pena McCook.

NT: De la Pena McCook. Kathleen directed that institute, but also she wrote the proceedings of the institute.

SL: Excellent writer.

NT: Yes, and the book is published. That is the only institute that has published. Because after that one, we had one at the University of Madison, Wisconsin. And I can remember the doctor -

SL: Jane?

NT: Aman -

SL: Oh a man.

NT: No, no, it was a woman - Louise - who was at the University of Madison?

SL: Oh yes, I know who you mean. I can't think of her last name either.

NT: You know what I mean, Louise. And she was the creative director. And Dr. Aman was at the other -

SL: Oh he was at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.

NT: In Milwaukee. And she was at the -

SL: She was the dean of the library school in Wisconsin.

NT: And she was in Madison.

SL: Louise - oh I'm sorry, I can't remember her name.

NT: I can't remember.

SL: But anyway, we know who we mean.

NT: And it is though - if you go to the webpage of the Trejo Foster Foundation - all the institutes are in there.

SL: All of that information is there. And do you remember that web address?

NT: It's www.tffoundation.org. So that's how -

SL: And you say there's been 7 of these?

NT: Yeah, that was - the fourth one was in the University of South Florida, and then the fifth one was in Madison, Wisconsin, and then, that was about Latin American literature. And global literature, really. And it was a lot of global issues coming up, with you know, the internet and everything.

And then, the 6th one was planned for - was Clara, Dr. Clara Schuh from UCLA, directed that one. It was the first one in Memoria. It was called Memoria Voz. It was about recording the music, and the films for the Hispanic/Latino experience. So it was very good, because it was archival. It was all about archiving, and how the big archives, and how Latinos are in the history, and UCLA was the perfect place to do that. The perfect place to hold that. Memoria Voz y Patrimonio. Memory, Voice, and Patrimony. That was the name of the institute. And then - but this was in 2005. Because in 2003, he -

SL: He passed.

NT: He passed. So we didn't have an institute that year. So we had it in 2005. And then 2007 - last year - was in the University of Arizona. He came -

SL: Full circle.

NT: Full circle, back to the U of A. And it was health information for Latino population. Salud Se Puede. And it was about health information, because health is, you know, very important. So it was a public and health science library. And we had the health science library right there.

SL: Very appropriate

NT: Perfect. Very appropriate.

SL: So will this continue?

NT: We have planned one for the University - we have a meeting this Sunday, and we will decide on that. In 2009, the University of Rhode Island. Michael Havener. You know Michael. He initiated the one to do an institute. So I will know Sunday, more about that. But then we have another one planned for 2011, at the University of Panama South Chihuahua, in Chihuahua City in Mexico.

SL: Oh, my goodness. Yes, that's great.

NT: So that's the history of the institute.

SL: So you're still very involved.

Trejo transcript

NT: I'm the chair of the board of directors. He was a chair. When he left, they elected me to be the chair. And I plan to continue working on - I thought the best way to honor him, is to continue his work.

SL: I agree.

NT: So I'm trying to keep this - when we - if we see that there's another function for the foundation other than the institutes, maybe we just dedicate to recruit, to do other things. But so far that's what we have done.

SL: That's very good. So when did you move from Tucson? You still live in Tucson?

NT: I still live in Tucson.

SL: Okay, I was confused.

NT: Well, when he died, I couldn't live in that house - too many memories. And it was too big for me. Too big, because I was planning - if I'd retire, I don't want this big house.

SL: Too much to take care of.

NT: And he had a lot of land around it. I couldn't see my neighbors. So it was also a safety issue.

SL: By yourself.

NT: By myself. And so I bought a smaller house in Marana, which is like a suburb of Tucson. Marana is between Tucson and Phoenix. But it's north of Tucson, is Marana, Arizona. I moved to a smaller house.

SL: I bet he had a lot of books, your husband.

NT: Well, let me tell you about his - he left all his library to the University of Arizona. And his collection of Latin American - he had a collection of Inca crafts.

SL: Oh how interesting.

NT: And when he was in Peru, because he spent two years in Peru and two years in Venezuela. And so he brought a lot of those Inca artifacts. And he had a collection, and he left that to the University. So when he died, I helped evaluate it -

SL: Sure, packed up everything.

NT: And passed on everything to the University of Arizona. So it was done the way he wanted.

SL: So your son didn't become a librarian, did he?

NT: No, my son is into computer - you know, the graphical, he designs things. It's like, they design what is coming on the web. He works with designers - that's called - T3, the company. And they do the websites for hotels, big corporations. And they just won a prize in designing a website. And my son was on the team that did it. So he's into that.

SL: That's very good. So, you're living in Tucson, you're still working.

NT: I'm still working.

SL: Your son is very involved in his life.

NT: He just got married.

SL: Oh, that's lovely.

NT: In March.

SL: And no grandchildren yet.

Trejo transcript

NT: No, he just got married on March 29, with a lovely, lovely girl. And I love her like my daughter. Just like the daughter I never had.

SL: And so, what do you see next for you, and what do you see next for librarianship? And are you still in love with libraries?

NT: I always will, I think. It's in my blood. When it's in your blood it's always there. I remember as a little girl, going to - this library was only for secondary school, but I was in elementary. But I think that whoever was in charge liked me, because they let -

SL: They let you in.

NT: They let me in. And I studied there. I think that - I'm going to retire at the end of this year.

SL: Oh, are you?

NT: Yes, I'm retiring, so - I'm going to leave Pima Community College. And I'm happy to end my career, in terms of librarianship - although I continue to work with libraries, because I'm still working with - on the advisory board for the University of Arizona. And I will work with the foundation. And I will still do a lot of work for libraries even though I'm retired. But I'm going to retire and I'm going to move to - because my son lives between - my son lived in San Diego, before he met Laura, his wife. And when he met Laura, she lives in San Antonio.

SL: Oh, big difference.

NT: So he moved. He got a job and moved to Austin. Because his work is with big cities. San Antonio's not a market for him, but Austin is. So he moved to Austin to be with -

SL: Oh that's a lovely place, I understand.

NT: And then Laura - she's a lawyer. And she was living with her parents, of course. It's a very traditional family. And I'm so glad, because he got married to - I think they are so right for each other.

SL: So will you be moving there? To be close to him?

NT: So when I retire, I'm going to move close to them - either San Antonio - they live in New Braunfels, which is between San Antonio and Austin. Because she works in San Antonio and he works in Austin.

SL: So it's halfway.

NT: Halfway. So they made that commitment to do halfway.

SL: So that should be pretty exciting. A new chapter in your life.

NT: It's going to be a new chapter, and I'm going to still work with the foundation. I'm still working with - Arnulfo and I always wanted to have - to write about our families. And we never did. I don't know if I'll retake that, because it's kind of painful, because he's not here. It could be one of my projects.

The other one is that I write poetry - so I've been writing in Spanish, and then in English, and then translating from Spanish to English and English to Spanish. And I thought well I don't know who I am anymore. So I'm going to - well the work I have I'm going to translate. I took a translation certification. It's offered by community college. And it's like, six courses - no eight courses that you need to take. And I'm doing my practicum this semester, so I will finish.

SL: Can you become a student?

Trejo transcript

NT: Yeah, I became a student. I've been taking classes for three, four, five semesters I think. I want to, when I publish, I want to publish in both languages.

SL: I think that would be great. Because I think you have such facility with both languages, that I think that they will be equally strong.

NT: And I think coming from our families - like Arnulfo's and my families came, our parents were in the Mexican revolution, and all that.

SL: Significant period of time.

NT: Very significant period of time. And I saw Arnulfo, that my father was very, you see the force of a leader, a visionary, that they have a vision, they know how to - they know exactly who can do what. That's vision, I think. And he reminds me so much of my father.

SL: That must have been part of the attraction.

NT: I think so. And his kindness, my father was a very kind person. My father said, he was a campesino, you know, and he said, you want an educated family, you need an educated woman.

SL: That's wonderful.

NT: And he gave an education to all of his - and he always told us, you need an education. I don't want you to be dependent on anyone. And he was so right. He was ahead of his time.

SL: It sounds like it.

NT: Ahead of his time. Because at that time, nobody thought like that. His friends criticized him.

SL: Especially girls.

NT: Because he sent us to college. "Why are you sending them? They are going to get married." And he said, you know, if you want an educated family, you need an educated woman. So he was very right.

SL: Well, I really appreciate your taking the time to talk to me this afternoon.

NT: You're very welcome. And I hope you edit it because I think I repeated things, and -

SL: No, no, no. you did very well.

We've been talking to Ninfa Trejo. This is June the 27th, 2008. I'm Sara Long.

Tuohy Transcript

Jessica Kirkland: This is Jessica Kirkland and I'm here with Patricia Tuohy at the Oak Hill Library in Austin, TX and she has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is a part of the Capturing Our Stories oral history program of retired/retiring librarians. It is one of Dr. Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of the ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is June 17, 2009.

JK: Well, Pat, thank you so much for being here today, I really appreciate it. So, let's get right into, tell us a little about yourself, a little of your library career, in brief.

Pat Tuohy: In brief. Well, I am a native Texan, born in San Antonio, raised in Corpus Christi. My senior year of high school I became a library aide after I was kicked out of the Spanish class I was in, Spanish four. So, I have always been a library user. In Corpus Christi I grew up near the La Retama Public Library and it was a natural extension to actually work in a library rather than just hang out in a library.

PT: I graduated from The University of Texas in 1970 but before then I had been a huge user of the University library of course, the Latin American collection, and at that time it was in the main building of the University on the 3rd floor. And we shared a corridor and a bathroom with the library school when it was there on the 3rd floor and as I hung out in the hallway with the Cokes, because you couldn't take those into the library, I talked with library students and asked them "what's library school all about?"

PT: And I can't even tell you who these people were but they were enthusiastic about library school. And most appealing to me is how you get to stay in libraries and hang out in libraries and since my life was revolving around the Latin American collection I thought, oh wee that would be wonderful to just hang out here and get paid for it.

PT: So I investigated library school and my last semester as an undergraduate I took the two preliminary undergraduate courses, so they're a part of my undergraduate degree and then started graduate work the spring of 1971.

JK: Awesome.

PT: Way back in the Dark Ages before there were computers. In fact, I think the University of Texas cataloging department got its first OCLC [now known as Online Computer Library Center, but then Ohio College Library Center] computer in 1972. It was a long time ago and I was in library school and became disenchanted with university libraries and much more interested in public libraries so my specialty was changed in my second semester to public libraries.

JK: So what was it that led to you becoming, as you say, disenchanted, with academic libraries?

PT: Cataloging.

JK: Oh, okay.

PT: Let's be perfectly clear, it was cataloging. It was AACR1, it wasn't even two, and the notoriously difficult cataloging teacher at the time, who I'm not even sure who that was, but it was a prerequisite for academic libraries and I knew I couldn't make the cut because I could barely make a B in Billy Grace Herring's beginning cataloging course. And Billy Grace Herring needs to be interviewed for this because she is a wonderful library school teacher, Dr. Herring, and you need to interview her very soon but she is a wonderful woman, guided the careers and positively influenced library school students for years and years.

JK: That's wonderful.

PT: And I owe her an incredible debt because I didn't earn a B in that class, but she saw in me a love of libraries and she really gave me a B which is exactly what you had to have. And I'm eternally grateful to her. She wouldn't remember this, but I of course do.

JK: What was it about her that made her so wonderful and inspiring?

PT: Well, a very genuine caring person. I believe she was a lecturer at that time working on a Ph.D. in library science at the University (of Texas). But she really cared about students and as you talked to her you revealed things to her that she saw very much the humanity in all of these students that she was an adviser for. And when I told her I was looking, much more interested in public libraries and she was very enthusiastic about that change and she said, "yes, you would be a great public librarian and I think that's a good career choice for you to pursue." A wonderful adviser, a wonderful teacher, and a great library humanitarian.

JK: I love that. So what was it about public librarianship that appealed to you and drew you in, aside from deciding that cataloging wasn't for you, what prompted that change?

PT: Well, it was hanging out in the hallway with a very charismatic, controversial teacher of public libraries named Sam Witten. Sam W-I-T-T-E-N, was a legend among the old timers in the library school. He taught public libraries, he taught publishing, he taught library history, and he was a non Ph.D. He was a practicing public librarian who had spent many years on the reference desk and head of reference at Dallas Public. He knew public libraries, he knew reference, he knew people, he knew the organization, he knew the rough and tumble of public libraries which are very out front in your face political and they always have been. We pretend as public librarians that we're above the fray but we're not, we're right down there with police, fire, scraping for money. We're in the public arena and Sam was very forthright about the need for public librarians, or all librarians really, to get involved and to try to influence the political process for the favor or to the benefit of public libraries.

PT: And Sam was a great character and his wife was a school librarian for many years at the Westlake, or Eanes district, but Sam was a library raconteur, very active in ALA (American Library Association) and especially TLA (Texas Library Association). He was librarian of the year I think in 1972 or something like that, one of those years, a great man and just a great influence on what a public librarian is going to be faced with, what they need to think about, what they need to know at least beginning their career. And he was very much a big influence on me and he had a large circle of very liberal democrats in Austin and that was very energizing during the old days.

JK: That's wonderful, what are some, you mentioned that he talked about the things you needed to know before you started. What were some of those lessons that he taught you?

PT: The most powerful that I can clearly remember several classes on was the obligation, the sacred duty, no less sacred duty to preserve and promote and guard intellectual freedom in the public library setting. Intellectual freedom is a core principal of public librarianship and we as librarians have to defend it even though we may not agree or are scared to death about what it's going to do to our career or our job or that we could lose whatever job we're in trying to defend intellectual freedom. It was a sacred duty and founded on those core American values and principles and he really believed that, or he taught his students or I learned, that was the most basic element of public librarianship was preservation of intellectual freedom and going to the mat for it.

PT: We had many lively and scary discussions in classes about it with people who were from the marketing field who thought, "give the customer what they want, they don't want that book take it off" because that's what you do in a retail setting, right? Well, Sam was real strong about, "we are not in retail, we have a public responsibility, a sacred duty to preserve intellectual freedom for our readers in our community and to defend it."

PT: And he's lived through the McCarthy era, he's gotten his library degree at UT (University of Texas), one of the first MLS's declared, or granted back in the 1950's. He'd been around a while and he'd lived through those rough years of blacklists and Red Scares and terrible oppression that is certainly possible in any community in America that is absolutely sure that they have a lock on the truth and "you ought to believe it and we shouldn't have that smut on our shelves" and he was so inspiring about that, he was so adamant. And I adopted that as my personal philosophy and one of the guiding principles of my career is a strong belief in that.

JK: What an amazing mentor to have had, to have someone that convicted about it. That's wonderful. Can you think of a time when that philosophy that you adopted from him, that you had to really stand up for that?

PT: Yes.

JK: Have there been some professional situations you've been in?

PT: Yes, absolutely. In 1980, 1987 I want to say, the City of Austin adopted an anti-apartheid ordinance that basically said we will not do business with businesses who

do business in South Africa. This was probably before you were born and I could probably go back and look at what dates they were. But the key thing about that that affected libraries was that at that time the publishers of Encyclopedia Britannica and the Buena Vista film company which is a part of Disney, they sold directly to businesses in South Africa.

PT: In effect, they were on the blacklist we created, by this ordinance a blacklist of businesses who did business with South African businesses.

JK: Ok.

PT: So, suddenly the library could not buy directly Encyclopedia Britannica from the publisher.

JK: Oh my gosh.

PT: Yeah, think about that! We couldn't buy Buena Vista films and I was the coordinator of Central Texas Library System so it had to be, not mid 1980's, more like 1990 or 1991, sorry about the dates.

JK: Don't worry about it.

PT: But we had a film collection, a 16mm (sixteen millimeter) film collection funded by the state to serve public libraries in a 30 county region and we couldn't buy Disney films. You know, Disney! Like the short 16mm things that were The Legend of Sleepy Hollow or Winnie the Pooh and we could not buy these from Buena Vista. Well this is censorship, right?

PT: And as the impact of the ordinance became clear the woman in my office who was the film librarian, Susan Nyeffler, came to me and said, "I know that this is out of line, but I really need to make a stand for intellectual freedom here against this type of commercial censorship and I know you probably may not want to support me on this but I just want you to know that I have to make a stand." And I said, "well, yeah, you're right. We do have to make a stand."

PT: And so with her in the leadership position we made a case first to the city council, first to the library commission then to the city council that this was de facto that this was out and out censorship. Based on business practices of a company not on the content of the material, not on the suitability of the material. That this was censorship, pure and simple.

PT: The Director of The Austin Public Library, David Earl Holt, allowed us to do this. And he could have at any time, said don't do this, don't do this. He wasn't going to take up the charge because it was politically impossible for the Director of the library to go against the city council and the city management because this was an adopted ordinance. But he let us make our case and we made a very strong case. We also went and took it to the council. What we were asking for was an exemption from the ordinance so that we could buy library materials.

PT: And I do want to say that the city attorney's office, spineless city attorney, by the way, whoever the hell he was at that time, spineless city attorney, would not take a

position on our request. Even though they bought the tax code that everybody buys, it's the definitive thing, published by one of the publishers on the blacklist. And of course what we did would benefit them because then they could buy the books they needed, the law books for their continuing practice and internal, but they wouldn't take a position on it. Spineless attorney, whatever his name was.

PT: Anyway, so we took it before council and we won the day and we got an exemption to allow us to buy Encyclopedia Britannica.

JK: Congratulations.

PT: Yes, it was for us a situation we never thought. And I have to tell you that within the public library community people were conflicted about this, professional librarians. And I had a professional librarian tell me that we were wrong to go after an exemption because it was immoral, the government in South Africa, and this was the way we were going to get them to change. And that yes, indeed, it was censorship but it was censorship with a purpose.

PT: Well, all censorship had a purpose. On my staff at the (Central Texas Library) System there was a very thoughtful, respectable librarian who said I know it's censorship but I abhor the apartheid system so much I cannot support you, I support the censorship. So there were librarians who saw this as an exception.

JK: It was controversial.

PT: Very.

PT: But we did win the day and we were able to continue to buy Disney films and Encyclopedia Britannica.

JK: That's a great story. And what a great opportunity for you to really stand up for what you believe in. Because I can see that other librarians point of view and it's right to stand up against when injustice is being done. But at the same time, you're giving up so much, like you said, intellectual freedom.

PT: We were abrogating the rights of citizens of the United States to benefit the downtrodden citizens in South Africa, and that wasn't a trade for me and that wasn't a trade for Susan. And she really took the leadership role on this, she really, really brought, waved the banner.

JK: What a great example.

PT: Yeah. It was stirring.

JK: Yeah, on one hand I think, oh I would love to stand up for something, but how much courage that must have taken is incredible to think about, to stand up to the whole city and say, "I'm not okay with this."

PT: Well,

JK: That's wonderful.

PT: You know it would have been much less successful if the Director of the Austin Public Library didn't agree with us and told us "no you cut it out, you go this far and you're going against city policy, you're going to be fired." I can't tell you what I

would have done then. You know, I may have backed down, I don't know. But there were people who agreed with us who didn't bring the barriers that they could have to stop this. So, even though they didn't step up, the Director of the Austin Public Library, David Earl Holt, he could have stopped this, nipped this in the bud, but he agreed with us but he couldn't say he agreed with us. The reality of the political environment in an organization, he could have been fired if had he raised the banner.

JK: Interesting, so one of the ways that he tacitly supported was by letting, was it Susan, by letting her take the lead and you be support for her so that he wasn't stopping anything, but he wasn't necessarily putting his rubber stamp on anything. Very interesting. And what a great way to start out from learning from Sam, learning that libraries are political and having to really implement that in your own career, very interesting. Wow, thank you. What a great example for current library students to really internalize and try to learn from and be willing to accept that and stand up for what we believe in and what we really think is right. That's great.

PT: Yeah, but it is like that scene from Harry Potter, the movie, where all these kids want to learn how to do magic and fight evil and what he says is it doesn't feel fun, you don't feel elation, it's scary, it's really scary and you don't know what the outcome's going to be. So it looks more attractive and inspiring from the outside that it is when you're doing it.

PT: It's much more scary when you don't know what the outcome could be. And it could be your job.

JK: So, how did it feel, what was it like?

PT: Well, again, not as scary as it would have been had I really had my job on the line and I didn't feel that I did. And it wasn't on the line for Susan either. So we knew that there could be long term bad consequences down the road with a promotion or something like that. But it didn't mean out livelihood and when it means your livelihood and you've got kids and a house payment and a car payment, that's. My courage was not tested, as the courage of other librarians had been tested when they've really got their jobs on the line.

JK: Wonderful, thank you for sharing that story, I really appreciate it. So let's go back a little bit. You went to school at The University of Texas and you got your?

PT: MLS, Masters of Library Science, no fancy information business, no iSchool.

JK: It was no iSchool back then.

PT: It was library science and I graduated the first semester of summer I completed my work and received the degree in August and then I was extremely fortunate to be hired by the Austin Public Library as a branch manager.

JK: Oh, wonderful, great, straight out of school?

PT: Yes, straight out of school, no supervisory experience, needed, yes needed, but required. And I was made the branch manager of the Twin Oaks branch library.

JK: Twin Oaks, wonderful.

PT: Very small branch 1,100 square feet 17,000 titles, right next to the Minimax in the Twin Oaks shopping center. We looked out onto the parking lot that looked out onto Oltorf. The library Twin Oaks has moved twice since then. I moved that library back into the second tier of shops that was built in the middle 1970's and it was 1,700 square feet, oh it was so big. It was one of the, it was the first storefront branch established by the Austin Public in 1955.

JK: Oh, tell me more about a storefront branch, tell me what that means.

PT: Well, imagine a uh, let's see, what kind of storefront, like in a strip center like a Baskin and Robbins.

JK: Oh, okay, as opposed to a freestanding library.

PT: Oh, yes.

JK: Oh, thank you, ok.

PT: And the Austin model at that time was to go into a neighborhood with a storefront because you could lease space very cheaply and you could put a library into a storefront. And the first Twin Oaks was a 400 square foot a little up the hill in that strip center and then it was slightly larger and then it moved to where it was when I was the branch manger in probably the mid '60s like 1965. And I was the branch librarian there, I supervised, five people. They were all part time and we were open six days a week and we were open four ten to six days and ten to eight one day which was Thursday and Saturday nine to five.

PT: And we had a good circulation, usually it was about, oh gosh I can't remember, but it was for such a small branch, it was a respectable operation.

JK: Oh wonderful, so what changes did you see from the time that you started there to moving to another location to then when you left? What did you see evolve about the library?

PT: Oh my word, a lot and here's my first show and tell. Austin Public was considered kind of cutting edge technologically because they had a card catalog based on computer records. Now they developed like a freestanding punch card system with the author, title, subject, and they created a book catalog, have you ever seen one?

JK: No I haven't, I'm interested to see this.

PT: This is a book catalog.

JK: Lift it up, there we go.

PT: And this is 1976 and I don't know when they started publishing this but they went from the card catalog to the book catalog and I'm not sure when they started doing this, maybe late '60s, early '70s, and there would be a punchcard for each one of these titles and it was like this. And this is the subject, so you'd look up the subject, you'd look up the books, and you'd get a call number and as I recall there were no locations, no locations, and there were at that time 15 branches. So you had to take the catalog to the shelf, or write down the number depending upon the size to see if the book was on the

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shelf. So you didn't know if you owned it but you did know that it was owned by the system.

JK: Somewhere in the system.

PT: And you could fill out a reserve card and get it. And it would at least give you a place to start browsing. So this is where I learned the Dewey decimal system, really, really learned it. When you're going to the shelf looking for a cookbooks, how many times do you have to look up the number to know where to go? Well, after two or three times you know where to go.

JK: You start to remember.

PT: You start to remember. Now this was, this is a 1976, and this was, there were three volumes for this year. And this was pretty cutting edge at this time, no really computerized systems because you know we didn't have the technology, the software was definitely evolving. And the catalog would be published in a book form once a year and then there would be supplements sent out. So you got to look in this and then you got to look in the supplements.

JK: So what was it that made this so different from using the card catalog?

PT: Well, card catalogs were based at one location so you would have the holdings of your branch in a card catalog in your location, you would have no idea what was available anywhere else. This was a leap forward.

JK: Because you were able to find what was available anywhere in the system. So if that book was at the branch down the road, you'd be able to request and this was a way to find it and not have to go to every other branch.

PT: Right, and what we would do, depending upon how many people were needing help, and what we would do we would find a title in here and we'd call the neighboring branches and if it was on the shelf they'd hold it and the patron would go get it. Or sometimes they would say send it to me and we could send it. But you know it was crap shoot, you didn't know if the Southside or South Mall, what was it, that other branch that was on Ben White? You didn't know if they had it or not, so you would just call around to locations that the patron would be willing to drive to and if that came up, you can only do so many phone calls. You would fill out a reserve card and collect 25 cents and put it on reserve to get the book for the patron. But it would at least tell you if you owned it.

PT: Here we have subject.

JK: How cool.

PT: We have title,

JK: Oh wonderful.

PT: And we have author.

JK: Wow, and were those the three ways you could search for things in the catalog? Subject, author, and title.

PT: Yeah, your basic three entries in your shelf list, which, you probably don't know what a shelf list is do you?

JK: Tell me more.

PT: Okay, the Austin Public Library was for years and years, maintained shelf list based on cards even when they were computerized, mechanized. This is mechanization because this is data processing cards to compile this. The computer catalogs that they subsequently bought and moved into were actually databases and rudimentary database searching was possible but the shelf list, the cataloging department for years did original cataloging on everything. Or titles might come in and they might request the cards from the Library of Congress with the card catalog number on it.

PT: Because when publication in source started, which was on my watch sometime in the mid 1970's, the cataloging information was inside the book and there's your clue, there's the catalog number and you would buy it and they would ship it. Or you would sit down in a room full of catalogers and they catalog and they would create a shelf list which is the main record of possession of that book. And they would file it away in this huge bank of the card catalog and they would file the main entry by main entry and that was the original record of ownership of the material. And these are the mechanics that just don't exist anymore, these are very old school. So that was the basic shelf list. I lost my train of thought.

JK: That's okay.

PT: That's the way it was in the old days.

JK: That's wonderful, so from card catalog for just that one branch to the collection catalog of everything the Austin Public Library owned, so what happened next?

PT: They went to, this was pre-MARC record you have to understand this was pre-MARC. And sometime in the middle '70s, I can't even remember, Austin adopted the MARC standard. And that was done through the leadership of a woman named Dr. Ann Bowden.

JK: Ann Bowden.

PT: Ann Bowden, she was working on a Ph.D. and became a lecturer and a professor in the library school. And she was very much old school but wanting to adopt the best, newest technology to make library access a reality. She was very much on the technical side of libraries and she was an early adopter of MARC records and so all of these old catalog records that we had in punchcards were eventually converted to MARC catalog standard records. Which I, again, I believe they bought and I'm not sure the mechanism of that, the best person to talk about the mechanism of all that was a woman named Sharon Justice.

JK: Sharon Justice.

PT: And she was a cataloger at Austin Public through this period and she started in the mid '70s and she could really correct all of the information I'm giving you. She

knew the technical side, the technical evolution of Austin Public. But from that, the book catalog, we went to something called the ROM catalog. Read Only Memory and it was a strip tape of microfilm that was in a cabinet and you could advance it forward and back and it was basically the book catalog by author, title, subject, searchable that way. And it was more quickly updatable and producable, you weren't publishing, you weren't printing but again, that became very cumbersome.

PT: So we moved from the book to the COMCAT and that was done probably '76, '77, somewhere around there. I can't really remember.

JK: That's ok.

PT: And then the next step after that was the acquisition of the Dynix Automation system. That was the first automated system that Austin bought and with the terminals and searchable and, you know, the integrated records. So that was the very first and and it was one of those full blown big old systems with the big RFP and all.

JK: RFP?

PT: Request for Proposal, RFP, the big deal in library automation acquisitions.

JK: So tell me about, what were you thinking when these new technologies were coming in? What was that like, being a librarian who had gotten used to using one system and then got used to using another? What did you think when this Dynix automation system came in?

PT: Well, I actually left the employ of the Austin Public Library and went to Europe.

JK: Well, there we go.

PT: So that all happened there was a five year period where I worked for the state and all before I could get back on. That all happened when I was not there so I did not live through the agony of Dynix, of the implementation. And when I went back to work in 1982 I wasn't working with the public and the catalog on a day to day basis like I was before. But I was a consumer and I found as a consumer of the catalog hard to search, but still easier than the ROM, easier than the book, so there were improvements as we went along. Those were improvements.

PT: But by 1980 when I started with the System (Central Texas Library System) in 1982 we were working directly with public librarians in small public libraries, and large public libraries, in a 30 county region. They weren't there, they were still in card catalogs. They were still in the old technology and it would take a long time to get to automated catalogs and, in fact, we have two system members today who are not automated, they do not have electronic records, they need to go through the whole conversion process.

PT: So Austin left that behind quite some time ago but new libraries being born don't have that automatically. They usually go through a step with cards or some sort of rudimentary catalog before they have some sort of automated library management system or automated catalog.

JK: Interesting, even still? Or do you find that now, this year if a new library were to open up would they still start out with the card catalog or would they start out with some sort of more technology based system?

PT: Depends upon how much money they have.

JK: Really?

PT: Yeah, it's all about money. When you start a public library in Texas you are doing it on your own dime. There is no public support. It is truly a group of people who come together to establish a library for altruistic reasons. Their community needs a library, there's nothing else for the kids to do, there's nothing here for people, we need a library. People come together that donate time, money, space, enthusiasm. They get their friends to come in and do things for free. It is truly an altruistic act, a group act of citizens, concerned citizens coming together to do this.

JK: And then just eventually everyone works hard enough and it gets important enough that then they can start asking for funds from the city?

PT: Well, yes, they have to ask for funds from the city or county or school district. They eventually get to the point where they can apply for system membership in the state library system. The criteria for membership are set up in rules. And they are pretty cut and dried: you need this much money, you need this many hours, you need this kind of personnel, you need things. So when they get, when they reach that threshold then they can apply for system membership and if they qualify, then they become a system member and then they qualify for state aid, real cash money.

JK: But they have to meet those requirements for membership before they can get any real state money?

PT: Right, and we're not talking about a lot of state money, we're talking about 2,000 dollars. But that's what it takes to get to system membership. And when I started in 1982 we had 34, maybe 35, the number is really fuzzy, system member libraries in 30 counties.

JK: And this was in Central Texas Library System?

PT: That's right. I was hired in January of 1982 to be the Children's and Outreach Consultant. And about that time there were 30, mid 30s, member libraries. And member libraries are an administrative unit. So Austin was one member, not 15 members. So we had 35, let's say, free standing libraries in 30 counties and we now have 79.

JK: Wow, and that still means Austin Public Library counts as one? Amazing.

PT: Yes, so that's what happened in the 28 years, or whatever the math is, that I've been associated with the System. There's been more than a doubling of public libraries. So many communities have made that decision many altruistic community groups have decided we need a public library.

PT: And you don't have to go far to find those libraries: Westbank in West Lake Hills, Elroy which is on FM 812, on the east side of Austin at the bottom end of the airport, Pflugerville, Hutto, Round Rock. Who else is out there? Cedar Park, Liberty Hill,

Leander. Lets' go south and we'll see Buda, Kyle, Wimberley, Dripping Springs. San Marcos was an original member of the System, they were already there.

PT: Okay. Those are just north a little and south a little but that's the growth we've seen in public libraries.

JK: Wow, and those are all libraries that you've seen start out as just somebody in the community saying "hey, I think we need a library." Everybody getting together, making it happen and now they're full fledged member libraries of CTLS (Central Texas Library System).

PT: Yes, they're going and going. When I visited Cedar Park in 1982, I think the library had gotten membership in 1981, it was in a converted laundromat. Concrete block, cinder block laundromat, it was as big as a laundromat, not very big. It had the worst air conditioning, sounded like a freight train and it blew out cold air and it condensed water and it was nasty. And the librarian was Pauline Lamb and she is still the Director. And Cedar Park used to be where the cedar choppers used to live. Do you know what a cedar chopper is?

JK: I do not.

PT: It is, think of poor, white trash hill country style. These are the poor white people, working class people who chop cedar posts to put on the side of the road so you can put fences around them. They did manual labor, you know, these were cedar choppers. They used to have a cedar chopper fest in Cedar Park, glorifying, not glorifying, celebrating the kind of working, hill country, ranch kind of rural roots. Well, they don't do that anymore. That's not what Cedar Park is all about. Now it is a high-tone suburb of Austin. Those days are long behind, nobody remembers that. Those old properties where those cedar choppers lived, big acreage plots of dust and rock and cedar are gone. They are subdivisions and they are very expensive. So that's what Cedar Park was like when I went out there.

JK: So it was those cedar choppers as they were called that started the movement to found the public library?

PT: It was their better cultured wives is really what it was. In my experience, it's the women of the community, usually better educated, or just they love to read, they don't have to be better educated, but they have a love of reading and education and a real respect for it. And they were the impetus to start the library. And I have seen this in all of these libraries that have started, it's mainly women that are doing this. And there are men involved, don't get me wrong, there are energetic male volunteers, but it is heavily women and it's women in the community who have standing.

PT: Whether they're newcomers to the community or they're the old grand-dames, or the daughters of the old grand-dames, they have standing and they're doing this for their community. They're doing this for Moody or Mart or whatever community they're in to make it better.

JK: Why do you think that is? Do you think it's they maybe grew up somewhere else that had libraries so they were used to them being there and wanted to see one? Or is there some other reason that these women are the reason it starts?

PT: Well, that's a big factor, but it isn't like 75 percent of the people that start a library fit that profile. Maybe they lived in Dallas and had good libraries and wanted to bring it back to there. These are also indigenous folks who maybe they went off to college or maybe they didn't, maybe they spent their whole life in Jonestown, but they wanted something better for their children, but there wasn't any outlet that wasn't connected with the school or wasn't alcohol related. And they wanted something better for the community.

PT: And this is an established pattern for public library development. It goes back to the women's clubs. The Texas Federations of Women's Clubs, the old time libraries, like Llano, were established by the Literary Guild or the Ladies of Fortnightly Club. The Fortnightly Club in Brenham, Texas is over 100 years old and they established a public library. And that could have been a bookshelf in the county courthouse or in the basement, but they were the impetus to start a library. And this is like 18-something, '90 or 1901.

PT: So, and many of these women's clubs, they were literary societies, they read books and talked about them. They cared about the education in the community and they wanted a library. And these had to be the better educated, more affluent members of that community.

PT: Llano is another great example of being established by a women's club and growing from that. And eventually the county took over the function of the public library in Llano county and in Brenham the city took over the operation and support of the public library. So I want to say the old style libraries, the older, more established libraries fit this model.

PT: The Austin Public Library came from the University Women's Club, or the Association of University Women, in 1920 something. Austin sort of got started later than places like Llano or Brenham which is kind of interesting given the heavy educational influence of Austin, or of the University, in Austin's life. So it kind of is the heritage of the public library movement in Texas as I know it. And I do not have a broad view of it, it is confined to 2500 square miles, 30 counties of Central Texas communities.

JK: Wow, that's great though. And it's interesting that over time you have seen these libraries over time grow. The same pattern is always happening even today.

PT: Yes, even today.

JK: Yes, wow, so tell me a little bit more about just your work history with Central Texas Library System. Tell me about what you did. You started out as a children's coordinator?

PT: Children's Consultant and Outreach Consultant or Specialist, something, I forgot what my title was, it was a long time ago. My main function was to consult with

public libraries on services for children and also run the film collection, the 16mm film collection, and that's how I learned to do consulting.

PT: And it was more than children's, it was general library operations. You don't go into a library that is 1000 square feet and look only at the children's materials, you look at everything. And I was one of two consultants at the time in 1982. One was adult services, and the other was my position.

JK: So you did half and she did half, basically.

PT: Yes, and I guess I did that for about seven years and in 1989 I was appointed the Coordinator for Central Texas. And by that time computers had arrived. We had an Automation Consultant which we had added and a Media and Children's person which evolved and the Adult Services, so there were four consultants, including myself because I still did consulting.

PT: And we are completely supported by state and federal money and always have been. And we always are associated with the Austin Public Library. When the Systems act was passed in 1969 and then enabled with money, the Austin Public Library became a major resource center. And the law set up what a System office did, what their responsibilities were, and the state library wrote rules about the grants and what we do every year is set out well in advance, six months in advance, with performance measures and all that horrible bureaucratic stuff.

PT: And our job was library development which means helping libraries that are existing libraries to improve their library operations and their services to the public and to help new libraries become established. And we've done that since the beginning of CTLS (Central Texas Library System). And I was Coordinator in '89 and after a lot of history in 2004 the membership of CTLS, comprised at that time of 75 or 72 member libraries, voted to leave the Austin Public Library to form a non-profit organization and have the governance of the System by a Board of Directors elected by the lay representatives.

PT: So we left the Austin Public Library September 1, 2005 and we've been operating as a non-profit since that time.

JK: Interesting, so when you were associated with the Austin Public Library, was it like you were housed in the Austin Public Library offices and you operated as an arm of Austin Public Library?

PT: Yes, we were city employees, we followed all city rules and regulations just like they do out at the front desk. The actual head of the System was the Director of the Austin Public Library, they were the Director of the System and I was the Coordinator. I actually ran it, it was a division of the Austin Public Library. And we were part and parcel of everything involved with everything and on all the committees. The difference was our funding source, we were completely funded by grants through the State Library. So every expense involved in our operation was paid for by the State or federal government. Not a penny came from City of Austin taxpayers. So our operation in that way was insulated from the ups and down of the Austin budget. And it continues today,

it's still the same. We have that same money source, same contracts, and we answer directly to the State Library, not to the city council.

JK: So it's really more just on paper you're no longer associated with the Austin Public Library, but lots of things function just as they did before.

PT: Yes.

JK: Oh, okay.

PT: And Austin always was a member but you might think of it as first among equals, because when you boss is the Director of the Austin Public Library, what Austin wants is what counts.

JK: That's what happens. Got it.

PT: And when you're a non-profit and you have nine Boards of Directors elected from all over the region: Bryan, Fairfield, Hillsboro, we have a Austin representative, Westbank, Hays County. You're answering to a different set of individuals that are not librarians, they're library supporters, that are looking out for lots of people and not for just the interest of the public library.

PT: But I do want to make it really clear that the Directors I have worked for, David Earl Holt and Brenda Branch, never took advantage of the opportunity to plunder the grant as other library system MRC directors had done for their system grants.

JK: Really? That's good to know.

PT: No they both were very scrupulous about being evenhanded and fair. And you really can't say that, in my observation, you can't say that about all the Systems around the state. And for that the CTLS (Central Texas Library System) owes Austin an enormous debt of gratitude, just for the way they administered the grant and the way they operated with such integrity.

JK: Wow, that's wonderful to hear. So, we're running low on time, do you have any more show and tell items?

PT: No, that's all I have.

JK: Oh no, that was wonderful, I just wanted to make sure we got to everything. So, it sounds like you've had a really cool career and had some really important people who were involved in shaping it, Sam Witten with him giving you that really strong stance that intellectual freedom is what matters and that that's what libraries are here to defend. And working under great directors it sounds like, David Earl Holt, who was willing to support you and Susan Nyeffler when you really felt like it was important to take a stand, I love that. And it sounds like you've had an opportunity to sort of guide everything as the Coordinator of CTLS (Central Texas Library System), what a wonderful position.

PT: It is, I've been extremely fortunate in my career, I have been very blessed and I don't know that I deserve it. But it is, I'm personally very gratified that I feel like I've had a career that had made some difference. And then I've worked with wonderful people librarians are wonderful to work with, every one of them.

JK: It sounds like it. All of the people you've spoken about, I wish I could work with them, I mean, they all sound so wonderful.

PT: Well, Susan Nyeffler is still around she still works with me. She is our Youth Specialist in the non-profit library system, blowing and going and doing a wonderful job and is a star in the state and I am so proud to still be able to call myself her boss.

JK: That's great. So in closing, what do you feel like is the most important thing that a librarian needs to keep in mind at all times? Like what would be your Prime Directive for a librarian?

PT: Oh, you know, it's so easy to be distracted by the crazy bureaucracy we find ourselves in and libraries can, librarians can not avoid bureaucracy, we are part of it, we are integral to it. And to keep reminding yourself you're doing this for people, the people you care about: the public in a generic way, but also people in a small way, like the kids that live down the block, the senior citizens you may know. It's really hard to, with all the bureaucratic crap that comes down, the reason you're there is to serve people. And you're doing the Lord's work with helping them connect with information, reading, viewing, whatever it is that enriches their lives in a positive way. And that's what you have to keep reminding yourself, that there's a reason you're putting up with all of this madness. That the end result of your efforts are worthwhile and people are going to benefit and they may never know your name, but you may be planting a memory in a child about how they were helped finding something that expanded their life and their vision.

PT: You hear this from successful people, you hear them say, I remember when I went into the Brooklyn Public Library, or the Honolulu Public Library and got what I needed and it had an impact, it had an impact on their life, a positive one. They will not remember your name or your face, but they'll remember what you did for them. And keeping that in mind that that's the real reason you're there is the hardest thing to do but the most important, or you will go crazy having to put up with the craziness.

JK: So, it's about taking care of people and that's really what our job is about as librarians is serving the people in our community who need us.

PT: Yes.

JK: Wonderful, I think that's a great thing for us to keep in mind. Well, Pat, thank you so much for talking with me,

PT: You're welcome.

JK: I really appreciate this.

This interview was completed by Jessica Kirkland on August 6, 2009 at the University of Texas School of Information.

Yamashita Transcript

AS: This is Arro Smith. I am here with Kenneth Yamashita at the 2010 ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. He has agreed to be interviewed. This interview is part of the Capturing Our Stories Oral History Program of Retired and Retiring Librarians. It is one of Dr. Loriene Roy's American Library Association Presidential Initiatives. This recording will be the property of ALA and may be published and used for scholarly research. Today is June 28, 2010. Thank you for joining us.

Tell us first uh, uh, where you are from and how you got interested in libraries.

KY: Where I am from...let's see, I am from Stockton, California, but I was born in Topaz, Utah, which is one of the ten Japanese-American concentration camps that, that, that the government erected during World War II, and so I actually grew up in New Jersey. Bergenfield, New Jersey.

AS: Were you born in the concentration camp? Do you ...

KY: Yes, I was the last child born in the this particular Topaz, Utah camp in 1945.

AS: Wow. Okay, and so you grew up in New Jersey and then you came back to California or...

KY: Actually, no...

AS: The other way.

KY: My career took me all over the place but eventually I came back to California.

AS: Okay, okay. And where do you live now?

KY: In California.

AS: Okay, okay, and tell us about your first experience with libraries...maybe, maybe do you have childhood memories of libraries? Did you use libraries as a child?

KY: Yes, yes. Very much so in Bergenfield, New Jersey. My mother would take us to the Bergenfield Public Library every other week and especially during the summer and we would enjoy checking out books and reading, etc.

AS: Now, you are a public librarian?

KY: Yes.

AS: And uh, so your first memories are, I am assuming, are during the '50s in public libraries.

KY: Right.

AS: Tell us – compare contrast the library of your childhood in the '50s to the twenty first century public library at the end of your professional career.

KY: Well, um, back in the '50s, library collections were exclusively print materials. I don't remember, I don't remember records or any other kinds of media materials being available to check out. Certainly there were no computers, online databases, anything like that back in those times. It was purely print materials.

AS: I am assuming as a child, you used the children's collection.

KY: That's correct.

AS: And um that's kind of what I am interested in.

KY: Uh huh.

AS: Your experience as a child...what would a modern child transported back in time to the library of your childhood – what would they find, what would be the difference?

KY: Um...

AS: Other than media type.

KY: Yeah, I think that the big difference would be in a child like myself, a person of color, I think they would be surprised that there were no children's books that um – or stories that were about their particular ethnic group and certainly if their parents wanted them to read stories about their particular ethnic group or language group, they wouldn't find those materials.

AS: Nothing there.

KY: Right. But it is interesting because of the experience of Japanese Americans during the war, most Japanese Americans wanted, especially the parents wanted the children to become fully Americanized and so we weren't looking for materials about our ethnic group. We wanted to read about – you know, the majority community's experiences.

AS: Now it seems like in the last, say fifteen – twenty years of publishing, the Japanese internment camp experience has been a fertile ground for young adult and children's...

KY: That's true.

AS: What are your thoughts on that?

KY: I think it's - it's good. In fact one of the premier authors of children's and young adult books on the internment is Yoshiko Uchidashe was interned in Topaz and was a friend of my mother's and so after she got out of camp, she wrote "Journey to Topaz," "Journey Home," "Desert Exile" which I think is an adult book or maybe young adult. Anyway, she was one of the first people who wrote about that experience back in the '70s I think.

AS: And when you – perhaps not maybe you, but when your parents or older siblings read these children's books, do you find it an accurate portrayal or...I don't know. What – any thought there?

KY: Yes, yes. The portrayals are accurate and of great interest. When I was growing up, the camp experience was not mentioned in my family and when my mother or father would say, "Well, when we were in camp blah, blah, blah," we thought they were talking about summer camp and not concentration camp, so it was not a topic that was discussed.

AS: Did they ever come to a time – your parents – when they would actually be able to discuss it with you?

KY: At the time, I guess it was in the ‘70s when the Asian American movement was starting up by third generation Asian Americans or third or more generation in the case of Chinese Americans, the – I guess they felt freer to talk about it.

AS: You went to – where did you do your undergraduate work?

KY: At Rutgers, Rutgers University in Piscataway.

AS: What did, what did you study?

KY: English literature.

AS: ...which is a fertile discipline for librarians to come out of. When did you decide to pursue a library career? What, what was the decision?

KY: Well, basically it was... Well, I went to Indiana University initially to major in Chinese Language in Literature, and then I switched to Art History, Fine Arts History, and after I got out of Indiana University I was looking for a job and was not successful in finding a job in a museum. And so, I went to the Montclair Public Library and spoke to the director about a job in library. The director at that time happened to be Arthur Curley who immediately told me about library science and going to Rutgers to earn my MLS.

AS: Real quick, Curley for the record is spelled C-u-r-l-e-y.

KY: E-Y. Right, right.

AS: What year did you go to Rutgers?

KY: 1971, and he was instrumental in getting me into Rutgers. He – in this interview, he got on the phone with the Dean of the Library School and said “I have this wonderful candidate here who has Master’s credits in research and could those be applied to a Master’s Degree in Library Science?” Up until that point, you know, librarianship was not a career that I had thought about, but he talked about “well, this is a way that you could give back to your community,” and I was – I was kind of perplexed because in Montclair, New Jersey, there really wasn’t a community – an Asian American community to give back to.

But I think he was speaking broadly about communities of color. There was a large African-American population in Montclair. So then he gave me a part-time job, a work study job, and then when I started library school, I commuted to New Brunswick for my classes and he gave me a full time job as a librarian intern.

AS: Very good. And after you graduated from Rutgers, did you work - continue working for that..

KY: Yes. Arthur said that his philosophy was that a good librarian working anywhere is a benefit to libraries everywhere, and so I wasn’t – I didn’t need to feel that I had to work in Montclair but I decided yes, I definitely wanted to work in Montclair, so he offered me a librarian job there.

AS: How long did you spend in that first position?

KY: I would say three years – three years, and then I applied for a job in Decatur, Illinois, and moved to Decatur for that job and I was in that job for about two years. Excuse me, two years and then I applied for a job at the Chicago Public Library and moved to Chicago for that job.

AS: And has your entire professional career been in public libraries, and what kind of positions within public libraries? Were you in reference, technical services...

KY: Um, the first job was reference. The second job was head of extension services – that's in Decatur, and in Chicago I was assistant to the commissioner, and let's see... After Chicago, I applied for a job with CLSI which was one of the first library computer system companies and so I was a marketing sales person for southern California, and so I moved to Anaheim for that job. And I was – um, I have to say I was really (laughter) really wasn't a very good salesman and so ...

AS: Most public librarians aren't good salesmen. (Laughter)

KY: Well, um – it's interesting the philosophy of that company was rather having computer people going to libraries and talking to librarians and library directors, that it should be librarians. So they trained us in all the computer jargon, etc, etc. And so at that point CLSI was hiring a lot of librarians for their marketing.

But then I was let go, and ... but I had found out about the Simmons College doctoral program while I was in CLSI because their headquarters were in Massachusetts, and we would go back to Massachusetts for training. And so I decided to apply for the doctoral program – the doctor of arts program at Simmons after I was let go from CLSI and got into that doctoral program and received a HEA Title 2 scholarship. I think, I - I think, yeah, I think it was HEA.

AS: What would that stand for?

KY: Higher education Act, I think, and so I earned my doctor – doctorate at Simmons.

AS: And that's uh, not a research degree but a – what do you call it – a doctor...

KY: A Doctor of Arts.

AS: Okay, okay.

KY: And, yeah, I was told that with this degree, I would not be able to teach. Then a few years after I got the degree, one of the people who had that degree became the Dean of the Rhode Island – University of Rhode Island Library School so I guess it was possible.

AS: You never know. (Laughter)

KY: Yes, but any how I didn't have any desire to teach. I wanted to use that to help advance my career to become an administrator, and so then I applied for a job at the Stockton-San Joaquin County Public Library after that.

AS: In California.

KY: In California, right. And that's where I remained for about twenty-nine years and retired from that position.

AS: Very good. Very good. Briefly I would like to go back to your experience with CLIS..

KY: CLSI.

AS: CL...Okay. And I am remembering that vendor as being on the cusp of Internet – excuse me, integrated library systems.

KY: Yes, they were.

AS: And – and not as a techie, as a librarian selling this product, talk about – can you talk a little bit about the paradigm shift that had to go on in a librarian's mind – that switch from analog card catalog to this brave new world of computing.

KY: Yeah, touch screens and all.

AS: (Laughter)

KY: It was very exciting and it was also a challenge to convince a lot of library directors that this is the direction that their library needed to go. And so that - I think that was the most difficult part of the job and frankly one of the reasons why I was glad to be let go was I remember one training session where we talked about some of our challenges, etc, in marketing and the instructor told us, "Well if you are getting resistance from the library director, then you should go around them and go to the head of IT. Well, it wasn't called IT then.

AS: M.I.S.

KY: Right. And that was very disturbing to me as a librarian.

AS: As a librarian.

KY: Yes, I – I thought along what if the roles were to reverse and I was the director, and some salesperson is going around me. And so that was – that was kind of upsetting. So when I got the pink slip and was told "okay, well we are letting you go," I wasn't that unhappy.

AS: Right. Having said that, were you excited about the technology?

KY: Yes, I was.

AS: And the ... and the

KY: Yes.

AS: Okay.,

KY: Uh huh. Right. I – I was very excited and I think that certainly the resulting automation of – um, the way we were trained to sell these systems was I think – I think at that time it was – um, it was so that it would displace some of the more routine mundane tasks for the staff so that they could concentrate on public services or that you would not need to have as many staff, so it was sort of economic and service as the selling points.

AS: Right. Um – as a, as a person of color, at Rutgers at Library School, were there others in your cohort that were minorities.

KY: Yes, in – uh, in fact there was another person from Montclair. Arthur was recruiting a lot of people of color to the staff at that time so there was an African-

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American woman who also went to Rutgers with me. I don't think there were that many other students of color, however, at that time.

AS: Um...Often when looking at the sociology of the profession, a recurring topic is its pink collar nature that's dominated by women.

KY: Correct, right.

AS: And there aren't very many men.

KY: Right.

AS: And another – uh, uh – common way of looking at it is, is most people are Anglo in the profession. There aren't many people of color, so you are a double winner here. (Laughter) You are a male person of color. Any reflections on, on that?

Or, you know, the stereotypes involved with gender in librarianship. You – what I gather so far is that very quickly in your career – you became involved in administration which is in the literature is a - it's been demonstrated for men, that's – that's the career path that comes very naturally for whatever reasons. But I don't know – do you have reflections on both gender and color and the intersection.

KY: I...well at that time before I got the doctorate, I don't know if that was my aim to eventually become an administrator or director, etc. I think that my mentors, Arthur Curley, Betty Tourok– who took Arthur Curley's place at Montclair Public Library, Ella Yates, um – David Reich, all kind of pushed me to or encouraged me to advance to administration.

AS: And have you always been happy as an administrator or do you look fondly back in the days where perhaps you were just a reference librarian? (Laughter)

KY: Yeah, especially towards the end of my career. Yeah, I did look fondly back at those earlier times when I was directly serving the public and for instance in my first job with Arthur, I was responsible for collection development, the African American collection in Montclair Public Library, and so I was given a lot of – a lot of really good responsibilities for serving the public and I really enjoyed that.

AS: So, talk about some of those challenges of administration.

KY: I think the biggest challenges occurred in the last years of my career, especially in the last two years when we were having budget crises and considering laying off staff and cutting hours and closing branches...and that kind of thing. And it, it – and

AS: And for our future viewers, the entire state of California fell apart...
(Laughter)

KY: Right.

AS: Economically at this time.

KY: Exactly.

AS: It wasn't just the luck.

KY: In Stockton San Joaquin County, that was, was the epicenter of the mortgage crisis and one of the...the towns in San Joaquin County was the ground zero for sub...

AS: Subprime mortgages.

KY: Sub...subprime. Yeah, or underwater, underwater mortgages so it...it was really, really bad.

AS: Uh hmm.

KY: And because the...the, the city county system depended primarily on property taxes for its budget, it was really difficult.

AS: Approximately what per cent of the tax base did you lose in this last few years.

KY: Oh, gosh.

AS: Forty, fifty per cent?

KY: Yeah, yeah...uh hmm.

AS: And that was directly reflected in your operating budget.

KY: Yes, right...right.

AS: So how did you make those difficult decisions?

KY: Umm, well the...when I retired I was the city librarian for the city county system but prior to that, the...the library director was laid off, and so the director of community services assumed the oversight of the library and so...

AS: And that person was a non-librarian.

KY: Right, right...and so initially my position was deputy director of library services as one of the second-level deputies under the community services.

AS: Ethically, librarians have...

KY: So to answer your question, all of the decisions about ramifications of the budget cuts, closing branches...we didn't close any branches or, but we did shorten hours and shifted staff around, etc. Those were made as a team rather than my individual decisions.

AS: Were there conflicts between you and the non-librarian administrator...uh, uh, where you could look at....these are values and principles of librarianship and the city administrator was thinking these are values and principles of...I don't know...civic government, and were clashes that you had to hash out?

KY: Actually no, it was very fortuitous that this particular director of community services had...had, has an education background and she valued libraries and how they contribute to the education of the community and so we...we were very much in sync.

AS: Good.

KY: But...she, she depended on me and the division managers and supervising librarians to provide her with the knowledge about the library side of her operation, so it was a very good relationship, and in fact she had her members of the community services staff, the recreation staff helping on the library side and vice versa so there was a...we, while I was there we started to really combine and collaborate between the divisions and so that was very good.

But, unfortunately, since I left the financial picture in Stockton San Joaquin County has gotten even worse, and so for next year...next fiscal year, they had to eliminate some classifications and layoffs, and close a branch and shorten hours across the whole system. And it's...and the county side of the operation went out for an RFP to have some outside agency oversee the library.

AS: Wow. That's a bitter pill. (Laughter)

KY: Yeah, yeah, it's unfortunate. Hmm.

AS: Yeah, I don't think anyone has had a good experience with that. (Laughter)

KY: Well, at the budget hearing the director said there are a lot of questions about the proposal that came in, and so...yeah.

AS: So...tell me about the balance between...in a financial crisis that you have just gone through, trying to keep the library afloat, uh...I see three, three things that are, three balls that you are juggling as an administrator. One is to protect the legacy of the collection...to keep on continuing to buy materials for the future. The second would be, you know, to keep access to patrons, and the third would be, you know, keeping the troops intact and not laying off librarians. How did you make those decisions in that triage of what is most important? And this isn't a trick question. (Laughter)

KY: No...no, uh hmm, it was a...it is my philosophy and it was the philosophy of the director of community services and the philosophy of all of the directors that I worked for was that the staff as a resource really is the most valuable commodity that needs to be saved and there are other ways...and, and the staff then are the ones who provide the access, so there are other ways to raise funds to support the collection, and so the primary goal is to avoid laying off people if at all possible.

AS: Good deal. So you were at the Stockton Library System for almost thirty years.

KY: Yes, right.

AS: And uh hmm...when you first got there with your experience having just been a library automation vendor, was Stockton automated at that point.

KY: Umm, no.

AS: And how did that go? What was it like taking a...a traditionally, traditional analog library into the digital age?

KY: Umm, well fortunately that wasn't...they had a division manager for technical services who oversaw that conversion and so umm, the uh, and we kind of did it gradually. We went to a microfiche catalog before we went to the online catalog. And so, umm..

AS: Was the...my memories of microfiche was there was two different ways of doing it. One was kind of just photocopies of the actual cards in the microfilm format, and then there was also kind of the spreadsheet method of microfilm that would be ?????. Which one was...

KY: I think we sent our catalog to be put into machine readable format.

AS: Okay.

KY: And then that would then pave the way for eventual automation. Yeah, yeah...so the microfilm catalog – microfiche, excuse me. Microfiche catalog was a sort of interim step.

AS: Umm, what was it like working with microfiche compared to our...(laughter). The people viewing this probably won't have any idea what we are talking about, so let's, let's – I just wanted to kind of spell it out because it was hellish.

KY: Yeah, it certainly was and we would have kids kind of spitting on the glass and then crunching the microfiche into the reader and oh...it was terrible and people not putting the fiche back in order and you know, uh...not good, not good at all.

AS: (Laughter) However for a library with multiple branches, it was...you know, a huge leap forward because you could easily update the microfiche and send it out and everyone had a fairly recent catalog that was shared. And so, it was...it was a brilliant solution at the time. (Laughter)

KY: Yeah, yeah, it was.

AS: And so your first truly automated catalog, do you recall the vendor? Was it Dynix? Or was it...

KY: Well, initially, umm

AS: Or did you do it inhouse?

KY: No, initially it was Cincinnati Electronics and at that time, that company was selling a product that didn't exist. Who is going to see that? (Laughter) Anyway, and so umm, we got kind of burned on that and this was in 1984, and so fortunately, we then contracted with what was known as DRA (Data Research Associates) and they came to our rescue.

Yeah, yeah, and so Stockton San Joaquin County has since stuck with DRA and then they became Sirsi or were bought out by Sirsi, and so now it is Sirsi Dynix, but I mean they have saved that company.

AS: Good. And um...back to kind of the culture of librarianship and the popular media -- popular culture -- has definite ideas of who librarians are and what they are like. Do you have thoughts about that? Um, do you think there is...is there a type that makes a good librarian and does it match the stereotype of popular culture?

KY: Umm...

AS: And actually more, more to the point, how has this affected to you or has it affected you?

KY: I don't think it has affected me. Um, that – that popular stereotype is someone middle aged Caucasian female with a bun who has her hand up here [shushing] and...um, what I think makes a good librarian which is completely different that the stereotype is someone who doesn't necessarily love to read and sit in the background reading a book, but someone who is passionate about public service and has good communication skills and is able to offer help to the public when appropriate and do

outreach to communities that are under- or un-served, and more service-oriented than...than book-oriented, I guess.

AS: Do you have in your career, so you have things – your service outreach to the community initiatives that you are particularly proud of?

KY: Well, in my very first job at the Montclair Public Library I was put in charge of the summer outreach program to Montclair...the City of Montclair's large African American population. And...I think it was a really -- this was a kind of a book giveaway program. We put a little card into each book saying that if you choose to return this to the Montclair Public Library, that's fine but otherwise you can keep for your home collection. And that was a very, very successful program.

Let's see in Chicago I helped the commissioner with a Latino librarian recruitment program where he scheduled himself to go talk to various library schools that had Latino students like University of Arizona.

And then within ALA, I was appointed to the Spectrum Initiative Planning Committee and then prior to that I was involved in a – what was it – executive directors affirmative action – Headquarters Affirmative Action Taskforce, where the then executive director wanted to diversify the headquarters staff.

AS: The staff within ALA?

KY: Yes, right. And as a result of that, the Headquarters Minority Fellowship Program started. This was before Spectrum, and we had a few – several minority fellows. I was appointed to the selection or search committee for the OLOS director twice.

AS: What does that stand for?

KY: Oh, Office for Literacy and Outreach Services, and this was after Gene Coleman who was the original director retired and so I was appointed to the search committees for a successor. Those are a few things that I am proud of.

AS: And you have worked with Dr. Roy on this Spectrum [project]. Is that how you know Dr. Roy?

KY: Oh, and that's another thing. The Joint Conference of Librarians of Color. I worked with Dr. Roy. She was one of the two appointees from the American Indian Association to serve on the steering committee and I was from – I was appointed from the Asian Pacific American Librarians Association to that and then I was selected as a co-chair for that steering committee.

AS: When you uh – when you look to the future of librarianship, what issues do you...what issues do you see on our horizon as a profession? What things are you...do you have worries ...or where do you think we are going?

KY: Well, I – I do have worries about funding, particularly for public libraries. And public libraries, especially those that are supported by single revenue streams need to diversify and – and, you know, find other ways of being funded and that is maybe the...the top concern.

I also think that the Spectrum scholars will sort of permeate the profession and help to diversify...develop into directors. And then there is a IMLS program for scholarships for underrepresented groups for PhD programs, so that the library schools will – the faculty will be diversified as well.

AS: The uh...I imagine that from the beginning of your career to today in public librarianship that I imagine that you would agree that public libraries do a better job representing all of our many cultures in the United States. And I am also assuming that you would agree that they don't do a good enough job though. Is that correct? What are you thinking?

KY: I – I think in terms of collections, they are a lot more materials available that represent all the various cultures, ethnic groups, language groups in the U.S....

AS: But that is really more, I mean, essentially because the publishing community has done that. (Laughter)

KY: True.

AS: What do you think our profession – librarians, aside from collecting what is published, what do you think we could do to become more culturally inclusive?

KY: Well certainly hiring. (Laughter) Hiring the Spectrum scholars and, other than – excuse me, Spectrum scholars, and then develop them so that they could one day take over the direction of the library, or least get them into the higher levels of management so that they have influence on the decisions that are made as to the services being provided.

AS: And, and when you speak of services, I am assuming that you are talking about not just the circulation of books but programming.

KY: Yes.

AS: Are there programming initiatives that you think we could do a better job with, and ...

KY: Um...programming initiatives. You mean, the ones that ALA...

AS: On a local level. What, what can local librarians, librarians that may not have a culturally diverse staff yet because it is either the legacy of hiring decisions or a legacy of not having people to hire. What can...do you have thoughts, you know, what can be done to do a better job there?

KY: Well, I think one...one thing that such programmers could do is contact ... contact any one of the five ethnic librarian caucuses within ALA.

AS: Within ALA. Uh hmm, hmm.

KY: Affiliated with ALA. And for ideas, bibliographies, certainly they are – they are probably the most well equipped groups to be able to offer that kind of assistance and advice.

AS: Remember to use our resources within ALA. Good! (Laughter)

KY: Right.

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AS: Well, we are coming up to the – we have about five minutes left on the tape, so do you have any final words, advice for future librarians, any final comments about your experience in the profession?

KY: Well, advice for current librarians everywhere who may be in the midst of financial crisis, crises, in their institutions is to um...just hang in there. Times will get better. You know if you have to be shifted to another job in order to stay employed, then – you know, take the shift with grace and do your best job in that new job – new position and responsibilities.

For future librarians, I would say this is really a great profession to go into. If you feel you need more training or would like to try a new program or a new service, don't – I would tell them don't hesitate to go to their supervisor and let them – give them your ideas and then work with your supervisor to accomplish those ideas and programs.

AS: Any regrets? Anything you would have done different in your professional life?

KY: I – no, I don't think so.

AS: Good deal.

KY: I am really happy that I didn't get a job in a museum.

AS: (Laughter) Fortuitous.

KY: Right.

AS: Good deal, good deal. Well, thank you for agreeing to take time in your busy conference schedule for this – for this interview and including your experience in this project – for our legacy library. So thank you very much.

KY: Oh, you are welcome.

Interviewed by Arro Smith. Transcribed by Margaret Ann Smith.

Glossary

The following acronyms are part of the basic professional lexicon of twentieth century librarians. Each term is defined in this dissertation upon its first instance. This glossary is supplied to aid readers, especially those not acquainted with the profession or scholars finding this research long into to the future, when these acronyms may also be anachronisms.

AACR	Anglo-American Cataloging Rules
AACR2	Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, second edition
ALA	American Library Association
ILS	Integrated Library System
LIS	Library and Information Science
MARC	Machine Readable Cataloging
MLS	Master's of Library Science
MLIS	Master's of Library and Information Science
OCLC	Online Computer Library Center, formerly Ohio College Library Center
OPAC	Online Public Access Catalog
RDA	Resource Description and Access

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Vita

My library career began in 1990 when I graduated from the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Texas at Austin. I was one of Dr. Loriene Roy's first students at the beginning of her career as a professor. She inspired me to become a public librarian and I have worked at the San Marcos (Tex.) Public Library my entire professional career. I am a cataloguer.

Dr. Roy and I stayed in touch after completing my MLIS and I always enjoyed sitting with her at the alumni suppers held during the Texas Library Association Annual Conference. It was at one of these conference suppers that the Dean of the Texas school, now known as the School of Information Studies, implored the practicing librarians present to consider returning to school for a doctorate so that we could teach. He mentioned many of the prevailing statistics about the "graying" of the profession that are cited in my Literature Review and the fact that many of his faculty were quickly becoming *emeriti*. Dr. Roy kicked me under the table and whispered, "You." I took up Dr. Roy's challenge, and she has served as my Committee Chair for this dissertation.

I have always loved my career as a public librarian—and specifically, as a cataloguer. It is my hope that I will be able to inculcate the values and ideals of public librarianship that I hold dear to a younger generation of library students as a professor after my retirement from the San Marcos Public Library.

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This dissertation was typed by the author.