

LD  
3745  
D42  
2007

## An Interview with Mary Dale Deacon

An Oral History Conducted by Dr. Shirley Emerson

---

The UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV  
University Libraries

University of Nevada Las Vegas  
2007

©UNLV@ FIFTY Oral History Project  
University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2007

Produced by:

The Oral History Research Center at UNLV – University Libraries

Project Director: Claytee D. White

Coordinator and Interviewer for Math and Sciences: Dr. David Emerson

Project Editor: Gloria Homol

Interviewers and Project Assistants: Suzanne Becker, Andres Moses, Laura Plowman,  
Emily Powers, Shirley Emerson, Mary K. Keiser  
Lisa Gioia-Acres

Recorded interviews and transcripts composing the UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project have been made possible through the generosity of CSUN (grant initiated, presented, and shepherded through the CSUN political process by Andres Moses) and the Libraries Advisory Board. Lied Library provided a wide variety of administrative services and the Special Collections Department, home of the Oral History Research Center, provided advice and archival expertise. The Oral History Research Center enabled students and staff to work together with campus community members to generate this selection of first-person narratives.

The transcripts received minimal editing. These measures include the elimination of fragments, false starts, and repetitions in order to enhance the reader's understanding of the material. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the narrator.

The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project. Additional transcripts may be found under that series title.

Claytee D. White, Project Director  
Director, Oral History Research Center  
University of Nevada Las Vegas

# Table of Contents

Early years in Las Cruces, New Mexico; choosing a career; undergraduate degree at University of New Mexico; graduate degree at University of Denver; interviewing at University of British Columbia; working in government publications.....1-5

Visiting University of Arizona in Tucson, 1969; husband accepts position as science librarian; applying for graduate program in history; working as research associate; accepts position as head of government documents department.....5-6

Personal and professional changes; offered position of assistant librarian for public services; overseeing the building of a multimillion-dollar library; interviewing at Harvard and SUNY Buffalo; nominated for director of libraries at UNLV.....7-9

Interviewing at UNLV; distress over the state of the staff, building, book collection; finding support from president and provost; inaugurating staff development; auditing all positions and finding upgrades for many of the staff; shock over budget cuts one month after arriving.....10-12

Initiating changes in automation; discussion on state of the library system; description of automation systems at major universities; proposing one system for all college and universities; major funding for integrated automated program.....13-14

Description of physical library facility in 1982; 10 years of filling old facility with materials; listing new library as the number one building project; synopsis of contributions to library system; comments on growth and changes.....15-17

## Preface

Mary Dale Deacon was born in El Paso, Texas, and grew up in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Her father was a Presbyterian minister who had been called to Las Cruces before she was born. She and her older sister and younger brother loved to read and spent a great deal of time in the public library. They all attended grade school and high school in Las Cruces.

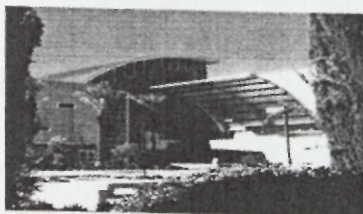
Mary earned her undergraduate degree at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, and also took some graduate courses in history. When she transferred to the University of Denver to work on her librarian degree, she was able to use the history credits as her minor. After graduating, she interviewed for a position at the University of British Columbia, requesting government publications as her field of interest, and worked there for the next three years. During this time, she met and married a Canadian who was also a librarian.

In 1969, Mary and her husband interviewed at the University of Arizona library, and her husband received a job offer. Mary became a research associate on a book which was published, and also had a research paper published. She was eventually hired as head of government documents at the university, and later took a position as assistant librarian in charge of public services.

Mary was recommended for director of libraries at UNLV in 1982. She accepted the job, with all its many challenges, and worked there until she retired in 1992. During those ten years, she was responsible for increasing the book collection and the funding, changing to an integrated automated program, instigating staff development and developing new positions, and finally getting a new library as the number one building project for the university system.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

Oral History Project @ UNLV



Use Agreement

Name of Narrator: MARY DALE DEACON

Name of Interviewer: SHIRLEY EMERSON

We, the above named, give to the Oral History Research Center of UNLV, the recorded interview(s) initiated on JUNE 21, 2006 as an unrestricted gift, to be used for such scholarly and educational uses as shall be determined, and transfer to the University of Nevada Las Vegas, legal title and all literary property rights including copyright. This gift does not preclude the right of the interviewer, as a representative of UNLV, to use the recordings and related materials for scholarly uses. There will be no compensation for any interviews.

Mary Dale Deacon 06/21/06  
Signature of Narrator Date

Shirley Emerson /de/ 06/21/06  
Signature of Interviewer Date

**This is Shirley Emerson and we're going to be talking today with Mary Dale Deacon. We're interested in your background as a child, where you grew up, and something about your parents; anything in your childhood leading up to your chosen profession and how you got to UNLV. You can put it in any order that you like in any order that you like.**

Okay, so take it away. My dad was a Presbyterian minister, and he had been called to Las Cruces, New Mexico, before I was born. So by all rights, I should have been born in Las Cruces. But it was just a little village at the time and my mom was chicken. So I was born in El Paso, Texas, and have always regretted being a Texan. I lived in Las Cruces until I left school. My parents left at the same time I did, so we all dispersed.

I was the middle child of three. I had an older sister and a younger brother. My sister is a genius and taught herself to read at the age of three. So by the time she was in first grade, she was reading at a fifth-grade level. By the time she was old enough to watch my brother and me, to watch us, she thought that the very best thing she could do would be to take us to the local library. So I practically grew up in our public library and also loved to read but never read with the same skill that my sister does. So I think from the time I was six years old I knew that a library was a special place for me.

Then in the ninth grade we had an assignment to research occupations that we thought we might enjoy and make a report. I chose social work and libraries as something I'd like to pursue. My role model for being a social worker was a lovely person. That was my great desire at the time, although I kept the library brewing in the background. But a few years later she had a nervous breakdown, and I talked to my folks about that. And they said, "You know, it can be very discouraging being a social worker because you don't always see immediate help coming and some people are in such desperate situations." And I thought, well, maybe I was a little too tender-hearted to go into that field. So I kind of dropped that from my mind. In fact, I dropped working from my mind until college.

Everything from college on has been more or less accidental, starting with what I thought was my senior year -- with just my senior semester. I found out at fall registration that I only needed 11 units to graduate and that put me in an immediate predicament of not knowing what I'd do when I left college.

So I cast around. I thought about perhaps being a teacher, but I was dreadfully shy and just couldn't imagine getting up in front of a classroom every day, which took me back to being a librarian. So I started looking at library schools that interested me, and the University of Denver interested me the most because it was closest to New Mexico and I did love the Southwest. So I applied at the University of Denver hoping to begin in January, but their program was structured in such a way that you had to be admitted in the fall and then follow a sequence of courses.

So when I graduated in December, I remained at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque where I got my undergraduate degree and took some graduate courses in history. When I left for Denver, I discovered that the library science school allowed minors in a discipline other than librarianship. So I was able to transfer my history courses into the graduate program at the University of Denver whereby I received my degree from the University of Denver in June rather than with my other classmates in August. So it accelerated my acquisition of the professional degree. Again, it caught me by surprise that I was going to be looking for a job sooner than I thought I might be.

In the spring of my year in library school, one of my professors asked for a show of hands for students who had already accepted a position in the outside world. I was the only person in the class that didn't raise my hand -- my hand. It should have raised my hand. I realized that I better do something promptly because it was April, and I was graduating in the first week in June.

So I proceeded to the bulletin board where we had sign-ups for interviews. Among the places I signed up for was University of British Columbia in Vancouver. When I interviewed for a position at the University of British Columbia, I was asked about the field that I would like to specialize in, and I responded by saying government publications because I was taking a course in government publications at the time and I really, really loved it. Being a history major in college, of course, set me up for loving government documents because the whole history of our country, the history of our relations with the rest of the world is right there and it's terribly exciting.

So he scratched his head a bit, the interviewer, and said, "I think we're going to have a position open in government publications, and I'll let you know in a few weeks." Well, a few weeks came and went. I was almost ready to receive my degree when I got a call from University of British Columbia offering me a position over the phone, and I accepted.



Then I had to apply for immigration papers, which was kind of complicated. Canada, as I believe the United States does also, has to justify knowledge workers. They have to say there's a shortage in the field. So University of British Columbia had to develop a case for me. But, evidently, that wasn't too difficult because there was a shortage of librarians at the time. So to make a long story short, my first job was at the University of British Columbia in Canada.

At the same time that I left for British Columbia, my parents left for Scotland. My parents' youngest son, my brother Frank, was in his last year at Beloit, Wisconsin, and my sister was already married and living in Alaska. So we really were quite dispersed. It was kind of frightening to be crossing a border into a foreign country not knowing anyone. That was probably one of the most difficult steps I've ever taken.

I bought my parents' little used car and drove myself to Blaine, Washington, which is where the immigration occurred, and I got stuck. I stayed in a motel for about five days. I just couldn't find the courage to cross that border. And, of course, the time for the beginning of my position was approaching and I knew I had to do something quickly.

So one night I decided, well, I'll make a first step. I'll wash my hair. In those days, we still curled our hair. So I washed my hair, put it up in curlers, turned on my hand-held little Sunbeam dryer, which made such a noise that it always put me to sleep. And that's what happened; I fell asleep.

At some point I became aware that the phone was ringing in my room. So I turned off the hair dryer and answered the phone. And it was the manager. She said, "Ms. Jones," she said, "Are there men in your room?" I said, "Good heavens, I don't know. Let me check." I looked under my bed, in the closet, and in the shower. Of course, I was dazed from coming out of a deep sleep. So I went back to the phone and said, "No, there aren't any men in my room." She said, "Well, I don't believe you and I'm coming down right now."

Well, she did come down and there were no men in my room, but there was a party going on next door, which I had never even heard. She apologized profusely, but that was the impetus for crossing the border. The next day I left.

I lived in British Columbia for the next three years. My job at the University of British Columbia was awesome. Our government publications collection was one of the premiers in

North America. We were depository, of course, for Canadian federal, Canadian Provincial, Vancouver and nearby municipalities. But we were also the United Nations depository, which was not an easy thing to come by. In fact, I never again worked in a library that was a full depository for United Nations documents. In addition, we had depository status for about 18 international organizations and we had selective agreements -- or rather reciprocal agreements with states in the United States near British Columbia that had the same interest. So we got material from Washington and Oregon and Montana and Idaho and so forth. We also received every publication put out by United States government on microform. Now, we had to buy that material. We were not a United States' depository, but we got everything that an ordinary depository would get. So we had this huge amount of material.

In addition, our second responsibility was that we were in charge of all the microforms collected in the library. They all came to our department. And it didn't matter if it were incunabula, you know, the first books ever published on a printing press, or if they were newspapers from the Civil War or if they were -- oh, what are some other -- oh, yes, Elizabethan sonnets. We just had an awesome, awesome collection of microforms.

The reason we were somewhat wealthy in materials was that we were in the midst of the most munificent gift ever given in a Canadian library. And that was that for each year for ten years the library was given \$10 million -- excuse me -- a million dollars to spend on library materials. Now, this was in the year 1966. A million dollars in 1966 was huge. The library was hard pressed to spend all that money plus the money in their regular acquisitions budget. That tells you how -- it was just like a kid in a candy shop.

**Was this from a donation?**

It was from a private individual who had made his fortune in the timber industry.

**A generous thing to do.**

It was a very generous thing, and it put the University of British Columbia Library on the map in terms of the size of the facility. So we became, during the time I was there, one of the premier research libraries in North America.

So those three years gave me a background that was accidental, but of incalculable importance because I used that knowledge I gained for the rest of my career.

Well, during the entire time I lived in Vancouver, I was dreadfully homesick for the Southwest. I had lived there all my life and I loved sunshine. Vancouver is not the place to live if you love sunshine, even though it was a beautiful city. At the time I was married to a Canadian, who was also a librarian. During the three years I was at University of British Columbia, the jobs for librarians dried up. So we went from a dearth of librarians in 1966 to a surplus in 1969. We discovered that it was going to be very difficult for both of us to find a job in the same institution, and we weren't sure when that would happen.

So in the spring of '69, we journeyed down to the Southwest, first to Las Cruces where I picked up the rest of the material I had in storage because at that time I thought I might be living in Canada for an indefinite future and there was a limit on the number of years you could bring materials into Canada without paying duty on them. So we picked up all my things in Las Cruces and then we journeyed on to Tucson, Arizona, where my grandmother and aunt and two of her cousins lived. My husband -- well, I had always loved Tucson, and my husband fell in love with it, too.

So while we were there, we visited the University of Arizona library and expressed an interest in working there. The assistant university librarian who had interviewed us said, "Well, you know," he said, "We are going to be having a vacancy in our science library right away." My husband was a science librarian. He said, "I think we will be having a position in government documents in the near future."

So we went home being very interested in the University of Arizona. And sure enough, about two weeks after we arrived back in Vancouver, my husband received an official job offer. Again, in the letter that we received, the assistant university librarian once again mentioned that there was a high degree of probability that I could get a job not long after we moved. On the strength of a job in hand and one a very big possibility, we moved to Tucson, Arizona.

What we discovered when we moved there was that there was no way I could work at the University of Arizona because of a nepotism rule and husbands and wives could not be employed in the same entity such as the library or same college or whatever. So there was no way I could work at the University of Arizona. The university librarian, though, of course, was not at all dismayed. He said, "Well, that's no problem." He said, "We'll get you a job in the public library."

And I said, "But I've spent three years specializing in a university library and I don't want to be a public librarian."

So my husband and I pondered the situation and he said, "Well, you know you've always loved history." He said, "Why don't you apply for the graduate program in history and we'll debate our fate as time goes on?" So I did apply for the graduate program in history and worked toward a master's degree in history and wasn't in any special hurry. But I still got the master's in a year and a half.

During that time the faculty women at the University of Arizona had won a class action suit with the contention that nepotism almost invariably discriminated against women. They won that suit, so I was eligible to work in the university library. It was just a matter of time until a position opened that interested me.

Well, while I was waiting, I went ahead and took three courses toward a possible Ph.D. in history, but I really did want to go back to being in the library. Those three courses also stood me in good stead because I became a research associate and worked with a professor who was publishing a book on the history of Jews in the South. Actually, he thought he was publishing it, but it had been rejected with copious suggestions about how that book could be made publishable. He said, "If you can make this book publishable, I will put you on as joint author." And that was a real incentive.

So I really did work awful hard on rewriting sections and putting it together in a different way, and it did get accepted for publication. That publication helped me when I applied at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. It helped on my resume and it helped me achieve tenure both at the University of Arizona and, again, here at the University of Nevada Las Vegas.

Oh, and also a research paper I did was published in a historical journal. So I had a book and a paper under my belt during that semester that I was research assistant.

At the end of that semester, the university librarian called me and said, "We have a position as head of our government documents department. Would you like to accept it?" And I said, "Oh, I'd love it."

So twice I accepted positions through a phone call, which is just extraordinary. It wouldn't happen again in a million years. I was employed at the University of British Columbia before they

even received my official transcripts, and I was employed as head of government documents at the University of Arizona and was never even asked for my official transcripts. So that was truly amazing. In that sense I've always called myself an accidental librarian because my career did take a somewhat accidental direction.

Well, while I was head of government documents, the library went through a major reorganization and my marriage went through a major reorganization. My husband and I decided to separate and get a divorce, and that was a very awful time in my life. I decided that I would just like to leave Tucson and start all over. So I started looking at jobs around the country.

At the same time, the library was searching for an assistant librarian in charge of public services, which meant all the service areas in the library system, including the branch libraries, the science branch library, the music branch library and the Oriental studies branch library. So it was a big responsibility. The search committee happened to be of an even number. When the candidates were interviewed, the search committee split in three different ways and no one would budge. So those of us who had a very big interest in who would become our next boss kept wondering why we weren't hearing a thing from the search committee.

Finally one day, the social university librarian came and took me out to coffee and he said, "The committee is at a standstill. We are either going to have to start the search all over again, or we're going to have to look within. A member of our search committee suggested you as a possible compromise candidate and the entire search committee agreed, so I am authorized to offer you the position of assistant librarian for public services."

I was dumbfounded, absolutely dumbfounded and didn't know what to make of it. So I said, "Well, I've really got to think about this." He said, "Well, yes, we understand that, but please make a decision soon because we need to know whether we need to start over." So I said, "Okay, by the end of the day, by the end of the day I will let you know."

I sort of took a half-day off and went and sat in the park and thought, well, I'm really as down as I can get personally. I don't see how I could ever feel more miserable than I do now. And if I took this job and it didn't work out, I don't think it would hurt. I just can't see that that would hurt anymore than I'm hurting now. So I might as well go for it.

And that's what I did; I went for that job. Again, never in a million years would that kind of an

appointment be made now. In fact, there would be lawsuits I'm sure. But I think most people accepted it. I never heard by the grapevine that there were huge pockets of resistance.

And so I started knowing that most people supported me and, at the same time, knowing that my ex-husband had found a job in California and would be leaving soon and that took a great pressure off of me because I couldn't imagine supervising my ex-husband. So it all worked out very well. I was in that position during an awesome time of change.

Again, the library received just a huge amount of support this time from the new university president who made the library his number one goal the entire time he was president of University of Arizona. He started filling millions of dollars into the acquisitions budget and he also made the library the number one building commitment on campus.

So while I was head of public services, we built and occupied a new multimillion-dollar library, a library as big as the current Lied Library is here at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. It was just gorgeous and I was part of the planning process from the word go and learned how to tape measurements and collection growth and all those good things that you have to go through. We also talked about how we viewed a library of the future.

One thing we knew was going to happen was that we were going to be part of the computer revolution. So we had the new building wired in every possible way that we can wire it. We also were all concerned about people who had limited access to our facilities. So we had a Braille room, which had a new machine called the Kurzweil machine that for the first time could read books and talk to a person. It was just a huge breakthrough for the blind. We also did everything we could think of to make our library wheelchair accessible in such ways as having automatic doors and accessible restrooms and so forth.

This was in 1975. The Americans for Disability Act wasn't passed until about the mid 80s. So we were ahead of the time. And I just thought this is the way things should be. I mean I never questioned that we were ahead of the time. And this leads into what happens when I come to Las Vegas.

Well, anyway, I served as head of public services for several years and saw the transition from the old library to the new library, from a mediocre research library to a top-flight research library. I was starting to run out of things to do, new and exciting things to do. I mean we could always do

things better. So I talked with my boss about it a lot, and I wasn't really sure what I should go for next. My thought was to go to an even bigger library, but stay in the same field of public services. And that's what I tried at first.

I interviewed at Harvard and SUNY Buffalo, the New York system of Buffalo, and realized that it was just really stupid to even think of leaving the Southwest. I wasn't going to leave the Southwest. When I arrived at Harvard, I happened to have a very dear friend there. Oh, it was a glorious May day and she said, "You know, this is the first weekend in 17 weeks that we could even go outdoors. The weather has been so miserable." So I knew Harvard wasn't for me. And then I interviewed at Buffalo. And, again, I was there just at a beautiful time. As I was touring the campus, we were walking along walks that had handrails about waist high. And I thought that was rather interesting.

**(End side 1, tape 1.)**

-- of the campus at SUNY Buffalo explained to me that the rails alongside the walk were for the winter when the snow would drift so high you weren't always sure if you were on the sidewalk or not. These kept people from wandering off into the wilderness. And I thought, oh, no, I don't think Buffalo is the place for me.

So I went back to Tucson rather discouraged, wondering what in the world I would do because there are not a lot of major university libraries in the Southwest. While I was mulling that over, my boss, the university librarian, must have received a letter from the University of Nevada Las Vegas asking him if he knew someone who might be capable of being the new director of the libraries at UNLV, and he had promptly responded with my name. I don't know if he just thought he shouldn't tell me and wait to see if I got a letter or if he thought I'd like to be surprised or what.

But the first I knew of this was when I opened a letter saying that I had been recommended for this job by the university librarian at Arizona and would I consider applying? I thought, "Las Vegas, oh, what a dreadful place!" My background, my strict Presbyterian background had led me to believe that gambling was a terrible, terrible, terrible thing and I shouldn't be affiliated with that in any way.

So I went to my boss and I said, "David, do you really want to get rid of me? Is that what's happening here?" He said, "No, no, no. Sit down. Think about this dispassionately. First, Las

Vegas is in the Sunbelt. And while it's not technically the Southwest, it's very close." Second of all, Las Vegas, in fact the entire Sunbelt, is due for a tremendous spurt of growth. We're going to be the next place where everybody goes. The University of Nevada Las Vegas is still young. The library is still small. But you would be part of a huge growth spurt. You've enjoyed that in the past and I think you would enjoy that again." And he said, "Then you could immerse yourself in the university life and in the community life and you could just forget about the Strip, forget about downtown Las Vegas. You wouldn't have to go near them."

So I thought, well, maybe I really should apply and see if they invite me for an interview, which they did. The interview was truly, truly distressing. I never dreamed that a situation could be as bad as it was here at the library at University of Nevada Las Vegas. It was bad in every major way you could think of. They were terribly short on staff. The staff was demoralized and insular because there were no other university libraries nearby, not within hundreds of miles. Very few of them were active professionals, and they weren't really part of the foment, part of the computer revolution that was going on, except for ways that I will get to in a minute. So the staffing was huge. We needed more and we needed to upgrade their skills.

The collection was pitiful. It could not support the programs that existed then. The numbers weren't so bad on the surface until you actually looked at the collection. What you would find out just in a casual browsing would be that we had second and third copies of many books that were textbooks and already out of date, that we had a huge pulp fiction collection, and that we were supporting categories that belonged in a public library as far as I was concerned. We had a fantastic philatelic stamp collection. And we had a fabulous -- oh, my mind has shut off -- but we had a collection about collecting coins, collecting rare coins. And those --

**(Indiscernible) or something like that.**

Yes, yes. Anyway, those collections would have been a coup for any respectable public library I would have thought -- so I did think. I was discouraged that not only was the collection fairly small, but that it also simply didn't have the materials that were needed to support the programs that the university was offering.

Then I met members of the campus community, and they had very few things that were good to say about the library. There was just a lot of hostility about the library and the direction that it had



been going. So the collection, the staffing...

Then I looked at the budget and the budget was just pitiful. The book budget was totally inadequate. As I said, there weren't nearly enough staff. The budget for supplies was so bad that most of the staff bought their own pencils, their own office materials. The money wasn't there to buy it. The student regents' budget was tiny. And libraries, especially university libraries, rely on students a lot for getting books shelved and for helping with the circulation activities. So the budget was just terrible.

There wasn't an awful lot that was encouraging. I kind of stepped away that first day wondering, you know, why in the world I was there and then thinking, well, maybe I need to try to find out the second day what kind of support there is to turn things around.

So to the best of my ability that's what I did. I talked with the university president and the provost and several of the deans and with the library staff. I had two meetings with the staff where I asked them, you know, what did they want to see happen?

At the end of the second day, I realized there was a huge amount of support for change. What people needed was direction. Then what we needed was a budget. I knew that there would be an element of luck in that, but if there were money, there was a commitment to allocate it to the library.

**What year was this?**

This would have been the spring of 1982.

**Who was president?**

The president was Pat Goodall and the provost at the time was Dale Nitzschke, both of them very solid behind the library, both wanting to see it get a lot better.

So I went home kind of pondering everything I had learned. I talked with my mentor and my boss, and I told them what I had seen. They were appalled and said, "Don't go. There are too many problems. Eventually, there's going to be something that will offer you an opportunity to really shine, but I think that position would be too risky."

So I thought about that a lot. I was offered the job, and then I really was in a quandary. So I said, "Well, I'd like to come back and have a second visit before I make up my mind." I talked to my boss once again and I said, "Okay, I'm going to go back. What should I look for?" And he

said, "Well, if you really feel as though you can do some good, you've got to be certain you have the support of the library staff, especially the library office. If you're not supported by the staff in the library office, you're dead in the water." And I thought, well, that's sage advice.

So when I went back, I asked for interviews with all the people that I would be working with in the library on a daily basis. I fell in love with the staff in the library office, and I believe they really liked me, too. I believe that was also true for the people that I talked to in the library. In fact, we got really excited about, you know, what we might be able to do. So I accepted the job and I came here. I started on July 1st, 1982. On August 1st, 1982, our entire budget was cut by seven percent.

**Just the opposite of what you expected.**

Just the opposite, and that was the low point of my career at UNLV. I really thought I had made a terrible mistake, terrible. But, once again, I thought, well, I'm here. I can't really go back to Arizona. What can I do? And I thought, well, staff development can be accomplished with a minimum of expense, so I think what we should do until we get the money we need is to work on staff development. We're going to grow our own experts.

So what I did when I could was use our discretionary money, which was the fines money for overdue books, I used our discretionary money to help our professionals go to national meetings and become part of what was happening nationwide in libraries. We also did all kinds of staff development training sessions with our career staff and our classified staff.

Next, we went through a complete audit of all of our classified staff positions giving their new job descriptions and then asking for an appropriate assignment. Based on that, half of the positions were upgraded. And that was a good start. That was a great start.

Of course, the university had to come up with the money. Let them worry about that. So that's how we worked for the first two years. We worked on developing our skills in the best way we could.

The big, big, big change I knew had to happen was in the area of automation. I hadn't mentioned that before, but automation was becoming the wave of the future for libraries. There was no way a library could ignore automation. And, indeed, the University of Nevada Las Vegas was already involved to a limited degree, but it was in the wrong direction I felt.

First of all, we had a cooperative arrangement with our public library system to share a circulation system so that books throughout Southern Nevada were all checked out on the same system. In a way, that was good because everyone knew what was located where to some degree, although it was a very rudimentary circulation system. So you couldn't search it like by author or title or subject, but you could get a known author or a known title and find out if it was in the system and if it were checked out. That was the good part.

The bad part was that the public library held the purse strings and the mainframe computer. So they dictated our circulation policies. Because of that, we couldn't put our reserve book function on the system because they didn't want a reserve book function. We were limited in the categories for lending materials so that -- you know, we like to give faculty a semester or a year privilege, our graduate students a different privilege, and our undergraduate yet another and the members of the public.

So that was a problem for us. We managed to make it work, but it wasn't easy. And we had to abide by the fines that were established by the public library. The system was very rudimentary so that we didn't see how that system would grow into a unified, integrated system that would take care of all library needs. There was no room to make that system work for us in terms of future programs.

So, knowing that that was limited, I looked at other things. The other thing that was happening in our library that scared me half to death was that a very, very bright young man in our computer system, the university computing system, had written a software program for cataloging library materials. And it, indeed, was functioning when I joined the library, but it was really limping along. It was not on line. The catalog was being published quarterly on microfiche and then for current -- I believe they were doing monthly updates and then a quarterly accumulation and then an annual accumulation. It was very difficult to search in that system. The record that we were creating was not a standard machine-readable record that was being used in the rest of the country.

So I was concerned that we weren't going to be able to make that system grow with us. It didn't allay my concern to know that the University of British Columbia where I worked for three years was at the forefront, at the vanguard of the revolution in making libraries computerized. They

were in that when I was there. They had to abandon their homegrown program ten years later. It just got too cumbersome. They weren't able to keep modifying the software to deal with all the new things that were coming down the track. So that system collapsed, and they had put millions of dollars into it. The same thing happened at the University of Chicago. The same thing happened at University of Virginia Polytechnic. So I knew that bigger and better libraries than ours had tried developing their own integrated system and had failed.

The trouble was the very bright young man that had invented our software was married to one of our reference librarians. So that was a slow process of bringing our staff along to joining the rest of the library world in terms of library automation. But we did it. We elected to join a consortium of catalogers from around the country where we shared cataloging data. The Library of Congress was the primary contributor, so most of the material we collected in our library had already been cataloged by the time we received it, and it just really speeded up our cataloging enormously.

Then, of course, the idea was that we would want to integrate our functions so that we would order material on line, catalog on line, and circulate it on line. One record would suffice for everything. That was our first major, major funding goal along with the acquisitions budget, which remained a funding goal every year I was there. That was always huge.

But we were fortunate with our automation in that the four community colleges in the state and the two university libraries decided that we would probably have more clout if we went to the state legislature with a cooperative proposal that we would buy one system and it would be available for all of our college and university libraries. And, indeed, that was a success. That was a huge success. We got the funding to begin what we called an integrated automated program. That was one of our first major funding breakthroughs.

The next one was our book budget, but it took longer. During the ten years I was there, we went from a budget of 600,000 to a budget of over 2 million. So we really did -- we added money as fast as we could spend it because, of course, adding staff was another problem.

The other thing that I didn't mention that I saw when I visited the University of Nevada Las Vegas was the facility itself was in my mind unworkable. It had started as a round building of one story. Two stories had been added to the round building, and then a complete new addition of four

stories had been added as an adjacent facility. The adjacent new facility was connected to the original round building by an overhead tunnel -- I don't know what you would call it -- overhead enclosed passageway on the second and third floors.

So the tragedy was, though, that the book collection stayed in the round facility, which wasn't conducive for storing books. A lot of the library's special services and some university activities that weren't library-related were housed in the rectangular building, which would have been much more amenable for storage of books. So the whole scheme was ridiculous.

I also thought that when they built the brand-new four-story addition they also added exact shelving on the first floor of the round building. The faculty was fit to be tied. In fact, I think that might have caused the change in leadership in the library that people couldn't believe that the director at the time had allowed that to happen. But when you did the math, it was easy to see that with the way the collections were organized, we would outgrow that facility if we got a decent budget to add onto the collection.

So I arrived a year after the new addition had opened. The provost knew that I felt that the physical library facility was untenable but that I wouldn't make that a vocal concern for a few years. It would really cause a lot of consternation, especially among the folks who were occupying library space in the new addition to the library. But that certainly was in the back of my mind. I never for a moment thought that that facility could somehow be improved so that it could become a place that invited people to come and stay, a place that was easy to use. It could never have happened.

I decided that the way I'd go about accomplishing this background goal of mine would be to fill the library with materials. If we filled our facility there would really be no option but to build a new library. I thought that -- again, it would be depend on luck, but that we could do it within seven to ten years, and we did. In ten years the facility was absolutely full.

The last thing I did as dean of the libraries was to get our library as the number one building project for the university system; that the next building that was going to be built would be a new library.

**(Indiscernible).**

Yeah. And I left feeling so good about that; that I tripled the budget, we were going to have a new

library, we felt good about what we were doing in the university community, we had an outstanding automated system that really addressed most of our needs, and that we could hold our heads up with pride.

So that was what happened during the years I was there. We did automation, we grew the book collection, we worked on staff development, we'd even got some new positions, and we got us to the point where the next logical step was to build the new library.

**Do you miss it?**

No. No, I don't. I don't. I think that, you know, a lot of professions -- we saw a lot of professions change dramatically in the last two decades of the 20th century. They were so huge. I could not go back now. Things have changed so much since 1992 when I left that I wouldn't be qualified. The only thing I could really do would be to shelve books.

**You could always be a (indiscernible).**

Right.

**And work for three cents an hour.**

Because automation has gone way beyond the skills I had in 1992. That's how far we're going and are still going.

**Just for my curiosity, have you visited any library training schools now to see how the curriculum has changed, training of the --**

No. But I do know that even by 1992 it was huge. When I graduated from library school in 1996, they had one computer course that was --

**Wait. '96?**

Excuse me. '66, 1966. We had one computer course that was offered one time every other semester, and it conflicted with my government publications course. So I didn't even take it. But I was so fortunate that at the University of British Columbia they were already experimenting with automation.

**That's OJT for you.**

Yes, it really was.

**That certainly covers the changes in the library. Do you have any comments about the changes in the form of the university? We've both observed a great deal, of course, of**

**growth. It's unprecedented.**

We have. I know when my husband Jim Deacon retired, he said, "You know, I really do feel like a fossil because the new faculty members are so much better qualified than I ever was." So I know that we are attracting really, really fine faculty, and that is very exciting.

Again, I think funding always is an element of concern. So I don't know if we've captured enough funding to achieve areas of international excellence. I know probably our hotel college is premier, but I'm not sure about some of our other programs and where they now stand. Do you know? We'll interview you.

**(Indiscernible) changes.**

**Well, thank you very much. You've had a very interesting career, and I wish you a happy retirement.**

Why, thank you.

**(End side 2, tape 1.)**