

Oral History Project
Cedar Rapids Public Library

Ruth Richardson, 72, was interviewed, by Laura Derr on Thursday, March 28, 1996 at her home, 309 E 9th St, in Vinton, Iowa.

Laura Derr (LD): I would like to begin by asking you what is your birth date and where you were born.

Ruth Richardson(RR): Well, I was born December 30, 1923 right here in Vinton and grew up in Vinton.

LD : You were an Iowan from the beginning to the present.

RR : That's right, with a few little side trips.

LD : Ruth I would like to take a little time at the beginning and talk about your parents names, your growing up years and your educational background. Basically, how did you get to the point where you became a professional librarian.

RR : Well, that's quite a long story.

LD : We've plenty of time.

RR : My father was Ashley Riser Richardson, my mother was Elsie Schmidt Richardson. I grew up in Vinton where my father had a hardware store. My mother worked in the post office and the bank, but after marriage she was a housewife. We grew up during the depression, so it was rather a stressful time.

LD : How about your educational background. Where did you go to school, and where did you go to college.

RR : I graduated from high school right here in Vinton and I took a normal course, in highschool. so I taught in a rural school my first year out of high school.

LD : What is a normal training course? I have never heard of that before.

RR : Well, that means you're training to become a teacher. The teacher's college used to be called a normal college. I have no idea why. But, I taught in this rural school, which was quite an experience since I had never been in one until I did this week of practice teaching. Then I went to Iowa State Teacher's College and graduated from there in 1946. Then I taught English and Spanish

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at the Decorah High School until 1952. Then I taught in San Antonio high school for two years.

LD : Which was a great leap from Decorah to San Antonio, what made you make that change?

RR : Well, my sister and brother-in-law lived in San Antonio, he was in the service. And they liked it so well that they kept urging me to come to 'San Anton'. So I went to San Antonio. I went to school in Mexico City that summer, to take some Spanish classes. So, I stopped and had a job interview on my way down and they notified me later that I had the job. So I went back to San Antonio instead of returning to Vinton.

LD : That was an long departure from your mom at that time.

RR : It was, my parents weren't too happy with me.

LD : And then the next step was library school?

RR : Right. I got tired of teaching and thought that being a librarian would be more interesting than teaching.

LD : Specifically, do you remember what drew you to that field, rather than going in any other direction?

RR : Just that I, at that time, thought that my educational background suited me to be a school librarian rather than to go off into some other field completely. At that time we had to have study halls when we were teaching. And the study halls were always in the school libraries. And after spending all that time in the school library and getting acquainted with the school librarians, and helping them some, I decided, gee, this was a lot more fun than teaching. Not as stressful, especially if you had a teacher in there to do all the discipline.

LD : And you could be the resource person, which is a whole different kind of thing than being the teacher, right? And where did you go to library school?

RR : I went to the University of Wisconsin and I graduated in 1955.

LD : Why Wisconsin?

RR : Well there wasn't one in Iowa at that time. And Wisconsin had a very good reputation. I had a friend who had gone there and thought it was excellent, so that's why I chose Wisconsin.

LD : And you graduated in 1955, from Wisconsin. And what was your first job?

RR : It was at Iowa State University as a cataloger. I liked both cataloging and reference and they had promised that I would get to do both. But it turned out that they had such a backlog of books to be cataloged that I never got to any reference work. I got to do the type of cataloging that was most fun, assigning the subject headings and the call numbers. I didn't have to do the descriptive cataloging. So, I really enjoyed it. But I still wanted to do reference work.

LD : How do you do catalog work? Do you have to read enough of the book to know what area it fits into?

RR : You have to read enough of it and try to acquaint yourself with the subject. It was difficult over there because some of the subjects were very esoteric.

LD : Very technical I would think.

RR : Right. And we were doing some classification for the Library of Congress. I remember one book had a title that sounded completely different than the contents of the book. So, I assigned the subject heading of the book and the call number. And the Library of Congress wrote back and asked how this book happened to get this type of a subject heading and call number when it has this title. So I had to go to a professor, that I had consulted in the first place, and have him write an explanation-what the book was really about.

LD : So, in other words, you were right!

RR : Right, but I had to prove it.

LD : Interesting. Now, does that still happen, or do the classifications come primarily from the Library of Congress?

RR : Most of them now come from the Library of Congress, cards and everything.

LD : So, they don't utilize their professional staff in the field as much. They have their own staff.

RR : No not as much, I don't think.

LD : I'll be darned. So, you didn't get to do reference and then what happened?

RR : Well, Cedar Rapids called me, after I had been there a year (Iowa State) and wondered if I would be interested in a reference job. So I went down there for an interview. And it sounded pretty interesting to me. You were really not

supposed to, in those days, resign from a position unless you had been there at least two years. But I did anyway. They were not happy, but I was.

LD : So you moved to Cedar Rapids. Did you live in Cedar Rapids or did you come back to Vinton?

RR : No, I moved to Cedar Rapids. Most of the time, living in the Commonwealth Apartments.

LD : Oh sure, down on the Southeast side, so you could walk to work from there.

RR : I could if I had to. One time I had to, one day I had to, during that horrible blizzard. I think it was in 1973.

LD : Oh yes, the April blizzard. But it wasn't the way you wanted to do it most of the time? So you began in 1956 at the Cedar Rapids Public Library. How long did you stay at the library?

RR : Until the end of December, 1985, 29 years.

LD : So you lasted more than a year at that job. Nobody had to worry from that point on, 29 years you were at the library and spanned three decades in that period of time. Talk about, if you will, the positions you started in and how that changed over the years. Give us a little chronology of what you were doing at different times. And then I'd like to go back and talk about them in greater detail.

RR : They needed a head of Reference and since I had never done reference they were a little leery of placing me in that position. So they hired me as a professional assistant and I did mostly Reference work and then after a few months they made me head of Reference. So I did mostly reference from then on. Mr. Marvin was the director and so built up the Reference Collection. He was very interested in making it more productive. Then in 1959-60 school year I was asked to teach at Florida State University in the Graduate Library School while one of their teachers was on leave to finish her doctorate. So I took a leave and went down there and when I came back I was made head of Adult Services and I remained head of Adult Services until 1975, when I became Assistant Director.

LD : Until your retirement you were the Assistant Director, those last ten years you were there. Can we back up to your sojourn to Florida State? How did they know about you at Florida State? Had you published or...?

RR : My cataloging teacher had recommended me for the job at Florida State. He had taught down there, off and on, several summers. And they needed

someone to teach Reference, Reader's Assistant type work and Children's Literature. So he recommended me for the job.

LD : So, obviously, you impressed him as a student.

RR : I guess so. When I had my oral exams he was on the board, so I had studied my cataloging like crazy, because I figured with him there that would be all they'd ask me. And since I was going to a cataloging job, and I didn't get a single question about cataloging. I asked him why later, he said he knew I knew all of that so there was no point in asking.

LD : So they asked many different types of general things then?

RR : Yes. I had been his teaching assistant in library school too.

LD : Let's go back to the early days, up until right before you retired you were in that facility at Third Avenue and Fifth Street.

RR : Right, all except the last year.

LD : Give us a little explanation as to what you were doing as a Reader's Assistant and when you went into the Reference area, what were your duties in that area?

RR : Well, as a Reader's Assistant you mostly assisted readers in finding materials. The Professionals also, were in charge of ordering the books for the circulating collection. So you would study various review materials and take suggestions from patrons and research them to decide if they were something that you wanted to add. In Reference, you would answer Reference questions and try to build up the Reference Collection itself, because it was rather inadequate.

LD : As a Reader's Assistant where were you positioned in the library, because today I don't believe there is a comparable position today, is there?

RR : Well, I'm not sure how the organization is now. The Reader's Assistant's desk used to be positioned right in front of the main doors. When you came in the old library, on the right was the circulation desk where you checked out books. And if you walked straight ahead, just in front of the balcony was the Reader's Assistant's desk.

LD : And your job was to help patrons that came in, help them with the needs that they had.

RR : Yes, to help them with the card catalog and help them locate the books.

- LD : That's a wonderful thing to have available! And I know a lot of college libraries have librarians where that is the major job. I think it's more of a self-starter kind of thing. I know that they are more than willing to help, but I don't know if there is still someone who is designated for that kind of position.
- RR : We had a desk where there was, well during the busiest times, two people were stationed at it; because there was so much walk-in traffic. Well, things were difficult to find in that building too; because things were so crowded and things kept moving all time.
- LD : So something might not be in the same place the next time you came. Well, talk about that. I remember that when we talked earlier you said that when you came to Cedar Rapids it was a lovely little library.
- RR : Yes, it was.
- LD : What happened?
- RR : It had just been remodeled. And so everything was fresh and clean and in its place. Nothing was crowded. And then we got good book budgets and so we were trying to build up the Reference Collection and so it just kept getting more crowded as we built up the collection. There was no real plan to get rid of obsolete materials.
- LD : So things kept building?
- RR : Right, yes. Well and many of the things were not obsolete, you still needed them. But there wasn't room for all of it. In the basement we had runs of old magazines, like "Harper's Bazaar" and "Atlantic Monthly" from the beginning of the magazines, I think. But, that was really unnecessary in a public library of our size. And they were on dusty old shelves and the lights were not above the aisles, they were above the shelves so when you got down there you really couldn't find anything. Ms. Grover and I cleaned them out one summer and sold them to rare and old magazine dealers. And then we made better use of the basement with offices and for the runs of magazines that we needed. They didn't even have all the magazines that were indexed in the Reader's Guide or didn't have long enough runs of them, or they let them circulate and so they'd be gone when you needed them.
- LD : Back up to the summer you cleaned those magazines out and the offices that moved in, what are we talking about in terms of time? Was that very soon after you came to work? Or had you been in the library position for a number of years at that time?

RR : Oh, I think I had been there, maybe, three to four years.

LD : But it was fairly early. So you began to become over crowded quite quickly.

RR : Yes, I began buying books like mad.

LD : You were doing what you were supposed to. Would you talk about what happened, I know you weren't a part of the library before the remodeling occurred, but how did the remodeling add room or space?

RR : The original plan of the library was, the back of the old Carnegie Library had what was called a temporary wall that was there until we left. And the idea was that they would just tear this temporary wall off and build out into the alley. Well it didn't work out that way. When they put an addition on they put the office wing on, facing the Gazette on Fifth Street. The first floor contained the Children's Room and the second floor contained the office area and the Catalog Room, it had been in the basement. Then they put another wing on to hold the Bookmobile, on the ground floor and Reference on the second floor. Well, I suppose it was because of the Bookmobile that they built it that way, instead of building it straight out from where it had been, because they had to maneuver that Bookmobile in and out. And I presume it was a matter of cost of buying another area to house the Bookmobile. It was very inconvenient having Reference up those flight of steps because it wasn't level with the main floor and there was no elevator. Many Reference questions are answered from the circulating collection, so you were constantly running up and down those steps to find the books you needed to answer the questions. And most of the magazines were housed in the basement, so you were also running down to the basement all of the time. Or we had what were called, at that time, Pages, I think they are called Library Assistants now. When the Pages were there, they would run up and down the steps getting the magazines, of course they were only there when there was no school. So most of the time it was staff, who were going up and down.

LD : That might explain your back problem!

RR : My back and my knees.

LD : My memory was that the Reference Section in the old library was in front of a large mantle. Am I right about that?

RR : Right.

LD : I didn't realize until after you'd moved out that there was a fireplace there!

- RR : We moved down on the main floor shortly after I got back from Florida, because it was just too inconvenient and there wasn't enough professional staff on the floor then to supervise things. And so we made the room, that had been the Reference Room, we named it the Magazine Room because all of the current magazines were held there and five years plus the current year in the Reader's Guide. There was a long corridor that runs behind the desk in that room and that's where they were stored. And of course there were books there too, various things like biographies at one time, I recall.
- LD : That was a very busy place. And by the time that we moved here in 1980, I remember that there were high book shelves everywhere. So it's kind of a wonderful space but you didn't appreciate it because of the ways in which you had...
- RR: No, when I first went there the shelves were quite low. They had been built, by a local carpenter, to fit the space and so some were six feet high and there were others that were just counter length and they were staggered on the area off towards Fifth Street, so it was very attractive looking. But finally we filled it up with these high bookshelves, as high as anybody could reach and a lot of them were higher than anybody could reach. And we had those rolling stools for people.
- LD : Well, that seems to be one of the reoccurring themes, the history of the library keeps coming back again and again to the almost heroic staff because of the necessity of dealing with inconvenient storage areas. As well as the moving of things, you continued to move parts of the collection hither, there and yond because of the need for more space.
- RR : And we never wanted to be closed, when moving, so we always did it on Sundays.
- LD : Oh, really. That was probably before the days of overtime too.
- RR : Yes, nobody thought of overtime. But, figuring out...first you had to measure the collection. Like if your seven hundreds were running out of space you had to measure your 700's and then figure out where to put them and still have some expansion room. So, fortunately we had a Page at this time who was very loyal and very smart. He went on to get his doctorate in Physics. He did a lot of this measuring and figuring, and that was a big help, because you hardly had time to do that and do your regular work too. And so we would figure out where we were going to put things and then we would call everybody in and we'd have all these book trucks lined up. And we would have markers the length of how much space you were to leave on the end of each shelf. We would try to leave at least twelve inches of expansion on each shelf, if we were going to go to all this trouble to know. And so they

would be stationed in various places in the building with their little markers indicating how much space they were to leave. And the problem was you had to move it out of one area and into another simultaneously.

LD : It was a domino effect, I mean everything had to go...

RR : Yeah, just perfectly!

LD : How many times do you remember doing that?

RR : Well, I think we did it three times before we moved the whole collection. Sometimes we would just move parts of it. But I remember it was quite an experience.

LD : Well, I remember you also said earlier, and I cannot even count them, but you said there were nine different levels in that building?

RR : Yes, because of those two wings that were put on. The elevator was on the ground floor with the offices of that new wing. But see, there was no elevator on the Reference wing and the elevator was added when the remodeling was done, there hadn't been an elevator until then. But there were several levels in the main building that the elevator didn't meet either. It didn't go to the basement, there were about four or five steps and see that was the problem with the Book Return because you get all the thousands of books coming in and you couldn't roll them on to the elevator and then roll them down to wherever they went. You had to carry them up these four or five steps to get them on the elevator. And then when they did the remodeling they had added the balcony, and there was no elevator to that.

LD : I don't remember what was up there.

RR : Well, the zero to the five hundred's mostly.

LD : I remember going up and down a lot, but I don't remember where things exactly were in the collection.

RR : That changed from time to time too.

LD : Right, depending on where you needed more space. I think that is one of things that we take for granted, especially with the current space, because there seems to be so much room to go out.

RR : Right, why we did that open plan. Because one of the problems with the old building is that you had these little areas, and you had to fit your books into that area to have them make any sense.

- LD : And you really needed something that was more like a warehouse space, where you could expand the interior, or redesign the interior to make space.
- RR : Right, without having to knock out walls. We even used the auditorium finally for some of our storage. And then when you did that you had to keep a record of all of it so you knew where things were.
- LD : So you could find it.
- RR : Right, and you didn't have computers in those days, so it was all hand recorded. So if you got a book out you had to record that it wasn't there, if there was only one copy.
- LD : So all of that was a manual process? Where was the technical services department in that library?
- RR : Well, when the library was originally built it was in the basement in one of those front rooms. And then when the office wing was built it was in the area that later became the office of the Assistant Director and the book selection area. Then they got so crowded, that they needed the space that Art Association occupied.
- LD : Oh, yes. They used to have a gallery didn't they?
- RR : Yes, so they took over that space after the Art Association left.
- LD : You launched the Cedar Rapids Art Museum didn't you?
- RR : Yes, in early days...
- LD : When was that, when did they have to move into the Art Center's space that, I remember, was downtown.
- RR : I don't remember, exactly what year that was, because I wasn't intimately involved with the problem. I was dealing with my own problems at that time.
- LD : But it had been, there was a room that they utilized for a number of years. Finally, you had to take over that space. And now, of course, they won out ultimately because they got the whole space back for themselves.
- RR : The whole building and a big annex.
- LD : That's one thing that I didn't really appreciate, was the close relationship

between Art Association and the CRPL and how they had really been under the umbrella of the library for a number of years, before they launched out.

RR : Right, and one of the women who worked for the Art Association, in the gallery part, even did some of the cataloging of records when I first went there. Unfortunately, when they first left I had to do the cataloging of the records for awhile.

LD : When you say records, you mean phonograph records?

RR : Right, phono-records. We had 33 1/3 at that time.

LD : As a volunteer?

RR : Right, she liked music and knew a lot about it, so she was doing that.

LD : But you lost her when you kicked them out!

RR : Right, finally I got the Technical Services Department to take over. We devised our own system then. It took so long to catalog them, because the Library of Congress catalog's them to death and we just didn't have the time to do that, or the desire or the need. So we devised our own system that was a little more streamlined. I don't know if they're still using that or not.

LD : Well, talk about that a little bit. Because there is a big difference between a general public library and a college or a library that is designed for research. What were your goals in terms of that collection? I presume that Mr. Marvin had ideas that he wanted to bring about.

RR : Right, he was an excellent Director. Full of ideas, and he wanted to improve the services and really make it a full service library. There are books you can use to build up your collection, as to what public libraries of various sizes should have. So that's what we worked on. But a public library has a back up always with the university libraries or the research libraries, because you can borrow materials from them. Obviously all the libraries cannot keep everything forever, that was part of the problem with our magazine collection, our old magazines.

LD : Did you have resistance when you began to call the collection? Were there those who felt that it wasn't the right thing to do?

RR : Yes, people can't understand why a library would ever want to throw anything away. And of course you don't throw them away unless they are positively useless. You offer them to other libraries or you sell them at the booksale or something like that. But it finally got to the point where we had

to do some weeding and nobody had time to do it. So Mr. Marvin assigned Elda Laptner to do it and she was a marvelous person to do it, because she wasn't a librarian, but she knew more about books than most librarians do.

LD : So she was on the staff, but not actually a librarian.

RR : She had worked as a Reader's Assistant and then in Reference. She went through the collection, area by area, and compiled books for us of essentially non-fiction and the fiction that we ought to always keep. And the designation would be on the pocket of the book, because the books always had pockets in those days. So this made it easier too when a book would wear out or come back damaged, you would look at the pocket of the book and well this is essential non-fiction so we'll replace it.

LD : Right, well I am sure it is a constant battle, especially today because there is such an incredible volume.

RR : Right, and such an explosion in publishing.

LD : When did things like microfiche and micro-film come into play? I would think that would've helped you with your storage concerns.

RR : Well, yes it helped as far as the newspapers were concerned. But a lot of people don't like to use it, it makes some of them ill with the movement all of the time. The newspapers that we had, some of them predated the Gazette and so we sent them off to be microfilmed. And some of the ones that we had we sent down to the historical library in Iowa City. It didn't help much with book and magazines, because people didn't like using it for the magazines, even less than they liked using it for the newspapers.

LD : They wanted to hold the product.

RR : Yes and because the magazines were used so much more than the newspapers.

LD : So really it wasn't a total solution, but just a partial one. I don't know with the computers, they might be able to do much more with computers. We now have a generation that is also really comfortable using computer screens than having the thing in their hands. I am not one of them! You mentioned the back-ups of university libraries..how did.. you were probably involved in that ILL system that was used. How did that evolve over the years, in your memory?

RR : When I first went there, it was kind of an orphaned child that floated around from department to department.

LD : Nobody had responsibilities!

RR : People just kind of did it at first. And then it kind of got out of hand. And then I was designated to bring something out of the chaos. So it was under my department for awhile.. Then the library systems came into being. First, there was The Seven Rivers System and then it was East Central. I think when it was Seven Rivers we got the teletype and so a lot of it was done by teletype then.

LD : How would that work? You would send requests on teletype?

RR : Right, all these little libraries around the area would send in their requests. I guess this was when it was East Central because we were the headquarters for it then. (Seven Rivers, the Iowa City Library was headquarters for that one.) But at that time, since it was something new the Director wanted to be in charge of it. Then when it got to be too big a mess it came back to me again.

LD : In other words, the Director didn't have time to deal with it!

RR : I think that was the problem, because we started getting all these telephone calls from all these little libraries saying, "We sent in our Inner Library Loan request two months ago, where are their books?"

LD : They never heard anything.

RR : Right.

LD : So did you walk in and find mountains of teletype that hadn't been processed?

RR : I didn't know how to run a teletype and so I grabbed my best magazine attendant and she and I learned how. And she was very efficient and so I knew I could leave her with that. And a lot of the requests then we would funnel down to the Reader's Assistants' desk. So when they didn't have a patron that they were trying to help, they would research the book and see if we had it and see if it was in and get it ready. That way the ILL person could get caught up.

LD : So you were actually fulfilling the requests, but did you have to send some of them on to other libraries. You may not have the book that was requested..I'm just trying to understand how complicated the process was.

RR : Right, but if we didn't have it I think it went on to other area libraries. I think it went to Davenport from us. Or it came to us from Waterloo perhaps,

and if any of them would have it, fine they would send it then. If none of them had it, it would go on to the university library.

LD : And in order for that information to get transferred, was that done by teletype as well?

RR : Yes, when we had the teletype.

LD : How did they send things? Did they literally package it up and mail it to the library.

RR : They were padded envelopes that we used.

LD : So somebody had to do that as well.

RR : Right, it was time consuming and rather expensive. But it was cheaper than buying the book, especially as the price of books went up. And you didn't have to store the book then if you didn't have it either. Space is also costly.

LD : It increased your space holdings, so to speak, without requiring the space to keep the book and maintain the book. And do you have an idea of how many of those you would do in the average of a day? Or would you bundle them and do them once a week.

RR : Oh no, we would do them everyday. I don't recall at all what the statistics were anymore.

LD : But the Reader's Assistants' would pull them off the shelves and actually prepare to go out.

RR : No, just get them. The person who was doing ILL had to package them.

LD : So it came back to you. I think it's just one of those tasks that we, the consumer take for granted. We don't realize what is involved.

RR : I used to come home and tell my mom some of these things and she used to say, "If they only knew what goes on in a library."

LD : They wouldn't be so insistent or so demanding. And of course you spoil the public because you try to give them everything they want and so then we assume if you can do this-you can do that.

RR : And some of the things that are the easiest they're the most thankful for and some of the things that you turn you self inside out for and are practically impossible they just take for granted, it is very strange.

LD : What kinds of things are easy that people are grateful for?

RR : Oh, like a number out of a telephone directory, or just looking up some facts that you can find in the World Almanac, if you only had a World Almanac. And they would just be so grateful that you could give them this information. And then a question may sound simple, but the answer might be difficult to locate and they expect you to locate it. And you do.

LD : And that's the sort of thing that's kind of fun in Reference library work.

RR : Oh yes, I always enjoyed it, it was my favorite thing in library work, I think.

LD : So you would get a wide variety of questions?

RR : Yes, that was the joy of a public library, you would get a wide variety.

LD : Do you remember any that were particularly outlandish.

RR : Well quite a few of them were outlandish. I remember one that had me puzzled for quite awhile. A woman came in and she wanted to know who the Sagrada family was, she had been to Spain and she saw the church of the Holy Family of the Sagrada Family and she wanted to know why the Sagrada family was so important that they would name a church after them! It was in Barcelona, I believe. So, I looked up various guide books and travel books in Barcelona and I found this description of this church of the Holy Family and sometimes it was the Sagrada Familia and finally it dawned on me that Sagrada Familia was Holy Family in Spanish.

LD : In other words, it was not a surname.

RR : But the way they ask the question can throw you off. So, you are lucky if you could find the answer sometimes.

LD : Yeah, that would take a bit of pondering and backing up to the original problem.

RR : One of my early questions too was from an oil firm in Texas, looking for someone who apparently owned the land that they wanted to drill on. And they were trying to locate two people and they had an address in Cedar Rapids, I think was back in the twenties or something. So, I went through the city directories to find these people. And I found them at various times at various addresses and suddenly they were at the same address. In an era when people didn't live at the same address unless they were married. But they still had the original names and finally they did marry, but then they disappeared from the city directory. So, I called the neighbors at the last

address and they knew where their children were. So we forwarded that information to the oil company and I suppose they made a million dollars on it.

LD : Probably, they bought the land and struck oil. And what you do, you do those things gratis and if you had to figure up the hours on that particular question.

RR : Yes, it took a lot of time to find the answer to that question, but it was so much fun at the time.

LD : I think that is one of the things that grabs you in that kind of work and there's just a lot of puzzling that goes on.

RR : Yeah, it is like a big puzzle. And it's just a challenge to find the answer.

LD : And it would make everyday a different work experience.

RR : Some days were frustrating and others were not because you could right what you wanted right away.

LD : If you would, talk about the numbers of people who were on staff. Like from the time that you started to the time of your retirement how did the size of the staff change and how many people were working with you in reference and how did that change?

RR : Well, when I first started out I was the only full-time person who was doing Reference, full-time. But there were a number of people who were part-time that would come up and help at various odd hours during the day. Then one time, I remember we were so short of help I, was training our better Pages to do reference work, including Jerome Sabakey, the one who was doing all of the measuring.

LD : Jerome was quite a star, obviously.

RR : Right and then training some of the Reader's Assistants, they all had a college education but they didn't have any library training. I would take them through the beginning stages of the beginning reference book and teach them how to answer quick reference questions. But then when I would assign them to the desk, my office at that time happened to be down in the basement, I would have to sit down at my desk in the basement because they were so scared.

LD : They would be fearful of answering things in your presence? Is that it?

RR : No, they would be scared that they would not be able to find the answer. So I might as well sit up at the Reference desk myself. But I was able to get some work done.

LD : But did you eventually get more full-time?

RR : Yes, finally I think there were about nine people that were doing Reference work, actually they started getting so good at finding extra money for extra staff that I didn't know what to do with all of them. Because there were not enough desks to assign them to a desk all of the time. And by this time Elda Laptner had died and no one was doing the weeding anymore. I was puzzling with what to do with all of these people I decided we were going to have to start doing our own weeding because it wasn't getting done and so they would choose areas that they were qualified in or interested in and I would assign the ones that nobody was interested in.

LD : So they would literally be out in the collection, working in those areas.

RR : Right, reading reviews and so on , checking various sources for lists of..

LD : We were talking about the people who worked with you in reference and the various jobs that they had. You mentioned that you didn't have enough desks for people. Do librarians have desks and offices? How did you deal with that when you had all of these people working out with the public? Where did they put their things?

RR : They put their things in baskets, wire baskets.

LD : Kind of like the swimming pool, you took your clothes and put them in a basket.

RR : Right, and there was a shelf where they kept their baskets. And they'd have to haul these baskets around with them where ever they went. And that was their storage space.

LD : Did they also have lockers?

RR : They had lockers, yes.

LD : But no cubicles or personal work areas of that sort. Well, I don't know if that is available in the new library or not.

RR : Well it is in the new library for the Reference staff who were assigned specific duties. Behind the, I am not sure it's where the Reference area is anymore, but it was the Reference area was when we first moved in there.

There is that door part way down that goes into the office of the head of Adult Services off to the right. And there is kind of a long narrow room there, and there were enough desks, actually they weren't individual desks I don't think. It has been so long I can't remember. Anyway they had a chair and space, before they had to work at tables out in the library.

LD : Well, talk about that. A typical day, how much time did you have where you were actually back at a desk working away from the collection and how did that work out during a typical day?

RR : Well, it would depend on what year we would be speaking of. After I became the Head of Adult Services I had more office time than I did in Reference. I didn't really have an office when I was in Reference. It was the Reference desk.

LD : And you were out with the public the whole time.

RR : Yes. Then after I became the head of Adult Services, I think my office was behind the Circulation Desk at that time. They threw up some shelves and put it off from the public. And I worked with the circulation staff a lot then, they put that under Adult Services. Before it had been a separate department. Now there wasn't a head of circulation, but at that point there wasn't a head of circulation. And so I had to learn all of this circulation riga-maroll and supervise that. Then when we remodeled the basement, my office was in the basement and that wasn't an ideal situation to be in the basement when your staff was upstairs, and I was there for several years. And then they made this office space for me behind the Reference Desk, in front of the fireplace.

LD : And that's where your final office was, back in that area.

RR : When we had bond issues, library bond issues, they loved to photograph that office from up above because it was such a cluttered mess. It was made by rows of pamphlet files, from the fireplace, up to the Reference Desk so that people couldn't just wander in there. You had to get into it from the Reference desk.

LD : Kind of a maze. Well, since you mentioned the bond issue, I think one of the most interesting things about that library...and when I came to Cedar Rapids it was really at a climax, because you had totally maxed-out the space that you were in. (Early 1980's) Even with a very talented Page to measure space there was really no place to go.

RR : There was no space there anymore.

LD : When did you begin to lobby for a different facility or bond issues? Because I

know that there was number of them, could you just talk about how they impacted the staff, over the years, because they kept failing.

RR : Well, they would get their hopes up of course, working on the bond issue. And then it would fail, but we always felt good because we always got a super majority but it never was a big enough majority, 60%, to quite make it. So they always felt that the public was behind us, because the public would come in and commiserate with us. They were the ones who had to put up with it along with us. And so we would make plans and try and try again.

LD : And the final one of those was about 1981-82. I don't recall exactly, it is in our list.

RR : I don't recall exactly, its all a blur that I have mercifully forgotten many of the details of.

LD : Blotted it out. Well I know that there were other proposals to expand the space where you were instead of moving into a new building. And you were involved in that question as to whether the space could be expanded. We had discussed that a very notable citizen of Cedar Rapids, Robert Armstrong, was very much in favor of seeing that building as the library with some expansion. Now how did you get involved in that expansion question?

RR : I wasn't involved in the first several. But by the time Mr. Armstrong got involved I was Assistant Director so I was working on ideas for expansion. So he had his store designer design a library for us next door.

LD : A store designer, people who do the window things, right?

RR : Yes. They designed one that was replica of the old Carnegie Library more or less, at least on the exterior. And I had to critique that plan. It would have been worse than the situation we were in, to tell the truth, because it would have added more levels and more problems than it would have solved.

LD : When they did this design plan did they ask for any input from the staff to determine what was really needed.

RR : Not that I was aware of.

LD : So the purpose of the plan was an example of what he thought should be done.

RR : One element of the plan was to tear off the front steps. And Adrian Anderson came up from Iowa City and said in an open meeting that the front steps were one of the main architectural elements of the building and to tear

them off would be a desecration. Well, that was the end of that.

LD : So you did bring folks that had some architectural knowledge.....

RR : He also pointed out that building a replica next door would diminish the value and impact of the main building.

LD : So he didn't want to expand the building, he actually wanted to build a second library?

RR : Right, next door.

LD : And then would the library just move into the new building?

RR : No they would use both buildings, you see, that was part of the problem. For example the Book Return would still be where it was, you would still have to walk up those five or six basement steps to the first elevator and then if the books belonged in the new building, the replica next door, then they would have to haul them to another elevator and get to the place they belonged in the replica building, so it was just impossible.

LD : Well I know that was one of the alternatives before the decision was made.

RR : We wanted to save the old building as much as anyone. Because we loved it, we worked there, 30-40 years. But we didn't think that was the way to save it.

LD : Well, as it turns out, I think the best of both worlds has been accomplished. Because that building shows so beautifully as the Art Museum.

RR : It looks more now like it was when it was originally built. The colors that they chose are the original colors that the building was painted. And it's open, it's wide open. It's like it was when the building first opened up. It wasn't that crowded mess.

LD : No, you can really appreciate it now. And the auditorium space has been returned to its original use. And so, I have been up there for a couple productions and it's very nice.

RR : Yes, it was a wonderful plan, I think.

LD : In relation to that process. Once the Hall Foundation actually got involved and made the grant that just simply had to be matched I think by, it was a 6.5 million dollar grant that had to be matched by 1 million dollars in funds that were raised around the community.

RR : Yes, The Friends mostly took charge of that and raised it in record time.

LD : I worked as a volunteer, very much on the fringe of that and I know that they really had some tremendous people involved in that process. How were you involved in actually helping to design and plan for the new building, as a staff?

RR : Well, first we had to write up for each department what was needed by each department and each area and then that was written up in a document. And then some of the things that we would like to have, like no flat roofs. The new building has a flat roof, architects love flat roofs for some reason. We wanted windows that opened and no window opens. But most of the things that people in the various areas wanted came through. Various plans would develop and then we would look them over and there was also an expert from Minneapolis that came down and critiqued the plan and so it was quite a long process.

LD : And that took place, I am sure you were doing those things in addition to your regular everyday jobs.

RR : Right, and that was the fun part.

LD : The dreaming part.

RR : Well because it looked like it was going to happen at last.

LD : I am sure that had a tremendous effect on the morale because you knew it was finally going to take place.

RR : It was a big stimulus to the staff.

LD : Over the years, and I'm back tracking a little bit, but it seems to me that one of things that comes out in looking at the history of that library is the tremendous service and outreach that the public library had in the community and I know you were not involved in the extension work or the branch work or the bookmobiles, but is there anything you would like to add on the outreach efforts on the part of the library. How did that fit in with the philosophy...most of the time were you working with Mr. Marvin or at a certain point...I know there were several people who came in.

RR : Mr. Marvin, then Mr. Smith and Mr. Carney.

LD : How did the outreach fit into the philosophy that you had as a staff.

RR : Well it was all service, service, service. It was drilled into to us as a staff and

they had these little stations all around town and they were rather unproductive because there were so many of them. And they were so small that there wasn't a big enough collection to do much good. And I don't think they changed much, from what I heard. By the time I got there they already had one or two Bookmobiles and so they decided this was a way they could get to various neighborhoods that didn't even have a station and they could take a changing collection. The Bookmobile staff were always running back and forth putting new books on the Bookmobile and changing the collections, trying to have popular things. They didn't try to be a research library. And they would take ILL out if people wanted something from the main library. Then they would take it out to that stop. They had the Kenwood Branch when I first went there and the Edgewood Branch was opened shortly after.

LD : From talking with other people, I have come to understand that the decision not to continue the Bookmobile after a certain point was tied to the expenses of that had become too high or what...?

RR : It was expenses and more people had automobiles. And it was felt that the money could be spent on more advantageous things.

LD : Sure, in the fifties if a family had one car that was typical. But there came a point when people were much more able to get back and forth.

RR : And the Bookmobile got more expensive too and they had decided to expand the Kenwood Branch.

LD : Even the garage space was a big deal.

RR : Right, one of the Bookmobiles came in and it was too high to go in the garage. I wasn't working, but I think I was Reference Librarian at the time. But I think they had to lower the springs on the thing. And I think lower the floor a little bit, chisel it away.

LD : Oh, man!

RR : It was all that they could do to get that Bookmobile in there.

LD : Yeah, in talking with Lan Nowotny, he said it was quite a change, just driving in and out of that space in the alley.

RR : Yes, it was very tight quarters and there would be cars parked back there quite a bit of the time that would also add to the fun.

LD : When they shouldn't be. Yes, I remember he talked about how there were several times when they had to seek out owners of the vehicles to even park

the Bookmobile.

RR : Yes, they always thought that the NO PARKING didn't not mean them, you know, they were just going to run for a minute.

LD : Sure, I'm one of those people, so I better not make any comments about that. I'd like to shift a little bit to the kind of working environment that you had at the library and how that changed over the years. I know that you said it was service, service, service. And you also talked about Pages and how they were the top students and how that was quite an honor. And I know that job has changed quite a bit because anyone can apply for those jobs now. What happened over the years...at a certain point unions began to have an impact on the staff. And would you just talk about how that evolved and what you saw as changing?

RR : One of the library board members came and talked to the staff and encouraged them to start their own union. When the law was passed, public employees could form their unions and I think they did it to forestall them from joining any union that would be harder to handle. And so we did have our own. We called it the staff association and even the supervisors belonged to it at first, but that didn't last too long. Because the board down in Des Moines ruled that that was not the way it was supposed to work.

LD : There was labor and there was management.

RR : Right, if you're a supervisor, you're management. I think that went on for a couple of years. Where they just had their own staff Assoc. But they didn't have enough punch and various unions wanted to get more members and wanted to get the library staff. So several different groups came and talked to them. And so they decided to join the Communication Workers of America. Because they seemed to be turned off by AFMSE and I think the Teamsters or one of their affiliates came and talked to them.

LD : That's a stretch, the Teamsters.

RR : Well, because of the Bookmobile drivers.

LD : AFSME was the Association for Federal and State Municipal Employees?

RR : Let's see, American Federation for State and Municipal Employees.

LD : Oh boy. I was all wrong.

RR : It doesn't include the federal, because they had their own set-up. So it's just State and Municipal.

LD : And CWA is Communication Workers of America?

RR : Right, they are mostly the telephone workers. But they decided we were highly involved in communication so they went with them. And they thought they were more compatible with some of the goals that they had.

LD : Was that, do you know when that occurred? Was that in the 70's?

RR : I don't remember. I think it was probably in the late 70's, maybe the mid-70's.

LD : How did that change your hiring practices or your pay practices?

RR : Well, I don't think it changed the hiring policies as much as the laws did. Oh, like the disability laws and the Veteran's laws as far as hiring went. It did mean that sometimes, of course they negotiated for their salary. But the city only had so much money so there wasn't too much negotiating that really could be done. But some of the things, like personal leave days or vacation could be offered to them more than salary. It did effect the relationship between management and staff.

LD : In what way did it?

RR : Well, it more of an adversary relationship. It wasn't so much with everybody, but particularly with the ones who were negotiating. Before we kind of, and it also kept us many times from doing things for the staff that you would have liked to have done. But you didn't dare do it because it wasn't in the contract and if you did it once then you were setting a precedent and then you had to do it forever. Or maybe one person had a particularly unusual problem, that you couldn't solve because if you did that for them then you had to do it for everybody. So in some ways it was a disadvantage.

LD : It limited you in some ways.

RR : Yes it did.

LD : The actual negotiations took place with the city because you are a city entity, right? How did you fit in to that structure? Did it come under a particular council member?

RR : The mayor was in charge of the library.

LD : The mayor. Did that, over the years, get to be.. I mean was it ever a difficult situation, depending on whether you had a mayor that liked to read or not?

RR : Well, yes. Most of the mayors were quite supportive, however. But sometimes people who had a complaint about a book they went to the mayor instead of the library. And if the mayor got involved with that it could get a bit sticky. So when you would get a new mayor, you have to educate the mayor. The library director was the one who had this problem. Educate the mayor as to what the library was there for and the freedom to read and all of those things.

LD : Talk about the process you used when people complained about a book or wanted to have a book pulled off the shelf.

RR : Well, sometimes they'd just complain and they weren't too serious about it. If they were serious then they had to fill out a form about why they thought nobody in Cedar Rapids should read this book. And if they were really serious we formed a committee of some Cedar Rapids librarians and some other librarians, like Coe and Kirkwood some of the college librarians. And then everybody would have to read the book and decide whether it was appropriate for the public library to have the book. So we would have a meeting, an open session, and discuss it and give a recommendation to the board and it would be the board's final decision. The board would read the book too. But of course the committee would make a recommendation to the board.

LD : Do ever remember a book being pulled from the shelves?

RR : No, fortunately the ones people found that they were objecting to were not what many people would be the most objectionable books in the library and so many of them were innocuous. I remember there was one science fiction book that one person was very adamant about. His son had gotten it from a friend who had gotten it from the library. And he just thought it was terrible that such a book would be in the public library. But it was the least of our worries, because we were just glad he hadn't found some of the others.

LD : I know it is an ongoing challenge.

RR : I know it still goes on in school libraries. I think they probably have a worse time than public libraries. Especially if it is a book they assign the students to read. I can see why some parents might not want their students to read those books. But in a public library you are serving the public. I mean you don't have outright pornography, but there are objectionable things in some of the books that I can see a parent not wanting their child to read them. But that is their problem to keep their children from reading them.

LD : Yes that debate is going on in a lot of arenas. With the violence on television and the 'V' chip. Who makes the decision? And do you censor

everyone, or... some of things that you think are settled are never settled. And I think that's because each new generation has to be trained.

RR : They have to go through that. And I understand nowadays that so many families...both parents work or there is only one parent. But it seems to me that the parents can teach their children what they can and cannot do. But sometimes they won't follow the rules. But it seems to me that, if they're firm enough they will follow them.

LD : Speaking of children, you are a public library and you have lots of young people who use that facility. Have you had difficulty over the years with children in the library, attended or has that changed in any way...?

RR : Well, I think they did sometimes in the children's room.. I can remember Evelyn Zerzanek complaining because mothers would drop their children off there while they went downtown shopping. And they would end up babysitting for several hours and the children, if they were young enough would get very unhappy sometimes before their mothers would get back. Or they would need disciplining, more difficult than even in school, I would think.

LD : Sure. Because you didn't have any authority over them!

RR : Well no. And you didn't even know their names some of the time or who they belonged to, or how long they were going to be there ...But I don't think it was a terrific problem.

LD : Well, I know, in reading through the history, that there were different ways that it was dealt with. And, obviously a lot of children's programming has grown out of it. Simply because it is an attractive place for young people to come. So, that's another kind of outreach. I was walking by Beems Auditorium on Saturday and there was a young man with a guitar and a room full of young people and they were singing along with him. So those are some of the real positive things that have come out of that process. But in that vein, when did the library really begin to do a lot of that programming? Did you do much of that in the older facility?

RR : Well, there used to be children's programs up in the auditorium. But then when the auditorium got crowded with books there was no place to have it. They had story hours for the children, down in the children's room. But I remember when my niece and nephew were young, they would come to visit me and there was a program on Sat. morning. Dr. Max, was, I think, the name of that. And they just loved to go to it. And, I think, there were other programs, book discussion groups and so on, the Great Books program. But

that auditorium wasn't ideal for much programming.

LD : It has a little bit of an echo deal...

RR : And then there was the problem too to plan all of these programs.

LD : Well, did you have any staff whose job it was?

RR : No.

LD : I know, that currently, there are staff there that that's their job.

RR : It was the same way with volunteers. We would try having volunteers sometimes, but there was nobody who was really in charge of that. Unless you have someone that is in charge of it and can train them, it is more of a headache than a help.

LD : You spend more time trying to get somebody else to do that work than if you had to do it yourself. But that has changed dramatically with The Friends. That group seems to have done a great deal of wonderful service for the library.

RR : They are very efficient and very dedicated.

LD : And, primarily, they are fund raisers rather than working in the shelving area or anything of that sort. I am presuming, I am not an active member of that.

RR : Especially the board members. I think some of the regular members do volunteer in various capacities.

LD : There is a Friends, board and there is a Board of Trustees for the library, is that right?

RR : Right.

LD : Initially, it was just that board of trustees. What was the relationship between that board and the staff? Did you interact with them at all?

RR : The Board of Trustees?

LD : Right.

RR : That would depend on the board. When I first went there the board, I think, spent more time in the library and were acquainted with the staff, more than later. As the staff got larger and board members got busier, there was not as

much of that.

LD : How about the directors, what was their role in terms of the, with the staff? And how did that change over the years? Did the directors ever actually work out on the floor ever, with the staff?

RR : None of them ever actually worked on the floor. But Mr. Marvin, for example, always made it a point everyday to make the rounds and chat with all the staff to find out what was going on and keeping in close contact. More than the other later directors did, of course it was a smaller staff in those days too. When I first went there it was more like a little family. And then it became a big family.

LD : Do you remember how many people were working there when you left?

RR : I think it was about 60 all together.

LD : So it would be very hard, even to touch base with people everyday.

RR : Right. This included the extension of course, too. But there were approximately 60.

LD : How did you...you mentioned that it had that kind of feel as a family. Did you have certain traditions or rituals or parties or any things that you did as a group?

RR : Not really. because when you are open that many hours a week it is almost impossible to get everybody together.

LD : Somebody's always working.

RR : Right, right. But when I first went there they were only closed Friday evenings and Saturday evenings. They used to be open those evenings and even holidays in the early days. They were open on Christmas Day for heavens sake.

LD : No kidding?!

RR : Can you imagine the staff working on Christmas day now?

LD : That's where the labor negotiations came in!

RR : But we were open enough hours because we were open four nights a week and Saturdays and sometimes Sundays. So it was difficult to get them together. When Mr. Marvin was there we used to have a Christmas party

down in the Children's Room. But you had to go early in the morning before the library opened.

LD : You had a Christmas party at the seven in the morning!

RR : Right. And we didn't have much entertainment. One of his sons would croak like a frog. One of the daughters would play the violin.

LD : So it really was a family event, huh?

RR : It really was! But then there was the feeling that the staff couldn't afford to go out for a nice dinner. But the staff finally put up a complaint about that. And then we started having dinners on Saturday nights where the staff and spouses would go out to dinner for their Christmas party instead of going down to the Children's Room in the dark, early morning.

LD : I think that is something again...You don't appreciate what people have now unless you go back and see the sacrifice that was involved. It was a job that wasn't just full-time, it was overtime. And you were just expected to do that, there probably wasn't a lot of discussion.

RR : No, you just did it. Which is like teaching in the olden days, you didn't have teacher's aides and people to type your tests and correct your tests, you did it all on your own time.

LD : I am sure there are things that are really good that have changed. Because it gives people the opportunity to have a life. But your life was your job.

RR : And some people didn't even hardly know each other. Especially the part-time people who had shorter hours, like maybe nights or Saturdays, or something. They hardly knew some of the other staff, because their paths wouldn't cross. And we had an annual meeting in the morning too, before we opened up.

LD : So everything was outside of the regular hours. And what did you normally do at an annual meeting?

RR : Oh every department had to have to give a report as to what the department had done during the year. Get a pep-talk from the director. It was just kind of a get together. We would have kolaches and coffee.

LD : So that was a little bit of fun. Another area, that I have heard people talk about, that was an activity that was a ritual, was the selection committee, the book selection committee. How did you..you were involved in that I am sure as the head of Adult Services and Reference, both.

RR : Right, the department heads would meet. When Mr. Marvin was the director he would also attend meetings and Ms. Grover was there. And the head of Extension, the head of Reference, the head of Adult Services.

LD : And what did you do in those meetings?

RR : All of the professional staff had review periodicals assigned to them to read. So they would read the reviews and then there was a various series of initials that they would put on the review if they thought we should buy it or whatever. Like, AOR meant we should await other reviews and you couldn't really tell. Or they would initial it and put a question mark, it is a good book but do we really need it? All of these review periodicals were brought to the business office and the clerks at the switchboard. We had an order card and on the back of it were listed many of the review periodicals. And so they would go through them. And in the front was the order card, they would type the title, author and price and so on. On the back, they would list these reviews then and what the recommendation was and what page number it was on. So it was all very well organized, so if a book got two really good reviews it would come up at book selection meeting and one of the clerks would go through this and pull the cards that we were to discuss at the next book selection meeting. And so we would sit there and discuss all of these books. It was a lot of fun!

LD : And you made the, literally, the decisions for the whole collection, out of that committee!

RR : Well, for Adult Services. And Extension would choose the ones for extension. Maybe the Director or the Assistant Director would overrule, but not too often.

LD : How did that fit into a budget? Did you have a budget and when you ran out of money you stopped?

RR : Yes. You were supposed to spend it kind of evenly throughout the year too.

LD : Because something might come up!

RR : Well, right. And also there had to be an even flow going through the Catalog Room. You couldn't just buy everything at once! So you kind of knew what you were supposed to spend every week. I had one of those rotary calculators, and I used to sit there with that and roll them up as I would order them and that way I would keep track of how much I was spending.

LD : So that you would have funds throughout the year then. Well, I know that that was viewed with a lot of pleasure by the people who were involved in

that. That committee no longer exists, does it?

RR : As far as I know it doesn't. I am not sure how they order their books now.

LD : Just generally, the selections are made from within the departments.

RR : I don't know if they have someone who compiles all these reviews. That was the beauty of it, because the reviews didn't agree with each other. Somebody loves it and somebody hates and somebody doesn't care. But that way you had them all together.

LD : I can understand why you had to work with reviews because nobody had time to sit there, well you didn't have the book for one thing.

RR : No, some libraries have books come to them so that they can read them. But I don't how they have enough staff that all those people can sit around reading all those books. It would be fun if they could.

LD : One of the things that you said, when we were talking earlier, you had said that some of the events that occurred at the library were out of the range of the normal. Such as the appearance of a ghost who had walked through the library. A lady who had, apparently, been a patron. Were you involved in that at all?

RR : No, I never saw the ghost.

LD : But you were on staff at the time?

RR : I was on staff, when I heard about it.

LD : Well I know there are others who have vibrant memories of that. And even you were nowhere in sight, I don't even think you were born, when the shooting occurred at the library in 1921, you said the bullet hole was still there?

RR : Yes the bullet hole was up on the second floor and a dent in the wall was always pointed out as being one of the bullet holes.

LD : Yeah, because the shootout occurred on the steps didn't it? (Between one level and another.)

RR : I guess it did, yeah.

LD : Anything else, that you remember, that was outside the realm of normal activity? Any anecdotal things that occurred that really stood out in your mind, you were a public facility and lots of people came through, most them

looking for books, but not all.

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RR : Well, most of them were very complimentary to the library. But once in awhile you would get an irate patron, they stood out in your mind. I remember one time, I hadn't been there too long, and some man came in I don't even know what his problem was anymore. And he was just tearing the library apart as to what a terrible facility it was. I don't know that it was something he wanted that wasn't there. And he was just screaming and hollering and carrying on at a great rate. I remember that I was so upset after he left, I was up at the reference desk I ran into this corridor where we kept all these magazines and burst into tears. I was so upset that anyone would think that about the public library where we were working so hard to.....

LD : And so few people were aware of what goes on, to make that kind of facility work. And I am sure you were also required to be very professional in dealing with that person, you couldn't say what you were thinking either.

RR : Nope, you had to hold you tongue.

LD : I hope that that was more rare than common.

RR : Very rare, that's why it stuck in my mind, I guess. And the effect it had on me, if I had been used to it it wouldn't have bothered me.

LD : I think most people are just tremendously grateful for that facility. And sometimes when you have to stand in line for ten minutes to get your book checked out its a little wearing, but certainly not enough to....

RR : It doesn't seem to bother people too much.

LD : I think they've got some pretty good management techniques with the new technology. And that was something that I wanted to ask you about. Well, I want to back up, I certainly want to talk about the changes that occurred when you moved. But, you have mentioned a lot of people, Thelma Grover or Evelyn Churesanik, James Marvin who were significant in your life there. Do have anything that you would like to say about those people, any memories because we lost Thelma Grover just last fall and were not able to talk with her.

RR : They were all, Thelma and Evelyn were both such lively, vivacious people. I can still see Evelyn charging around the Children's Room, her eyes, she had big brown eyes, and they were always snapping with some idea that she had in her head. And of course she was carrying on this correspondence with the authors, or the illustrators, getting them to send her copies of their illustrations. Thelma, I remember her always tearing up the steps back and forth across the main floor. And she always carried her keys in her pocket,

she always had pockets made in her dresses and if her dress didn't have a pocket she would take it to the dressmaker and have pockets inserted. And she was everywhere, knew everything that was going on in the library.

LD : Would you go so far as to say that there were times she really was the one that really made things happen.

RR : Right. It was unfortunate if you got the bad side of her, because it took a lot then to get on the good side of her.

LD : Oh, she was one of the people that took a long time to get upset, and then....

RR : But she always seemed to have her finger on the pulse of everything that was going on and was managing a lot of it.

LD : Did you have any idea of , the illustrations that Evelyn brought in, of the value of that collection?

RR : Yeah, we always did. We didn't have a lot of money to frame all of them and the first ones that were framed probably weren't done properly because at that time they didn't know what materials to use to preserve them. But there were always some of them on display.

LD : I know that they were a great source of pride and still are. And I think that The Friends are now matting those.

RR : Yes, I think they are taking that on as a project. I don't know how many they still have left to do.

LD : I don't know but there is like 800 of them. And that's incredible!

RR : And it is expensive to frame them properly.

LD : It is an expensive proposition. But what a testimony to her love of books and of the correspondence, that she made that extra effort to

RR : She did them at a time when nobody else was doing them and they were just sending her these things that probably they sell now a days if they give them up at all. Or send them to museums or something.

LD : I would think that even a scribble by Maurice Sendak would be of value.

RR : Right and to think that he even did this letterhead for her, I don't even know if they still use that or not. But for a long time the Children's Room

used that letterhead.

LD : That he designed?!

RR : Yes.

LD : Well, to me, that says a lot about the brotherhood of the business. There is a different standard that people have and more of an, I don't know what the word is, an openness between professionals and among professionals. I don't know if that still occurs...

RR : I don't know either.

LD : About the move.. lots of things were changing at the time that you were preparing to move into the new building, one of which was the advent of computers. And certainly when you did move into the new building there was kind of leap into computer technology with the new computer cataloging system, or the new computer catalogs. What was your involvement in that process?

(SWITCH TO SECOND TAPE.)

Okay Ruth, we were talking about the transition to the computer technology and your involvement in that. And I know you were involved in choosing the software...

RR : Right. We went to Cleveland to examine their system, several of us, the head of Circulation and the head of Technical Services and the Director and I, I guess were the ones that went. To see how their system worked and how they liked it. But as far as actually using it, I didn't/wasn't involved in the cataloging at all.

LD : Did that have anything to do with your decision to retire?

RR : It help to move me along. I was at the stage where I knew I had to come home and take care of my mother. But I stuck it out at least through the move and through that first year.

LD : Which, I am sure, was a very stressful time. All of the things that you had, that familiarity were gone.

RR : Yes and all the relationships were different between the departments. Before we had been sitting on top of each other all of the time and we were spread out in this big building. And sometimes you hardly saw people from one days end to the other.

LD : You kind of would lose some of that closeness. Yeah, that's true.

RR : Some of the ones that I still get Christmas cards from talk about that closeness that we had in the old building.

LD : Literal.

RR : That was missing in the new.

LD : Sure, and the space has so much to do with it.

RR : What we wanted was space and we got it!

LD : And now you can't find each other anymore! What other challenges were there in the move? How did you physically carry it off? Because, as I remember, there was little down time.

RR : Well I think we were closed about a month. Pat Hamilton, who worked in technical services was put in charge of the move, because she was just taken off cataloging. Somebody just had to work on it full-time, planning it and how it would be accomplished. And then each department would have to plan their own move too. But they had to coordinate the trucks and equipment that they had with what was going where and how they would get it into the right area into the new building and so on.

LD : Well you had said that, when you had the departments ready, how did they move all the materials? Did they box them? Did they just move whole shelves from one building to next....?

RR : They were on trucks. You just took the trucks on the truck and moved them. I was not involved in that as much as I was in trying to get the office moved. The other people had a month to get going after we got to the new building. But in the office we only had that weekend.

LD : You had to get up and running.

RR : We had to get up and running Monday morning. Because you still had to get out the payroll and pay the bills and do all of the things that were carried on in the office.

LD : The administrative duties.

RR : Right.

LD : So, you had a long weekend?

RR : Very long.

LD : Did you find that, I know there was some stress for patrons who walked in the doors of the new library and found that they had to use a computer when they were trying to look for a book, did you find that stress was also found in the staff? Were you trained well enough that you thought you were comfortable with it?

RR : Well we had the Card Catalog, of course for quite awhile also.

LD : You didn't have it where I could use it.

RR : Both of them were used simultaneously for awhile.

LD : Oh I didn't think that the card catalog ever showed up in the new building! Maybe I am just remembering wrong.

RR : Well, I thought it did. I thought it was there for awhile. I didn't do much work on the main floor after we got there.

LD : Well, it may have, but it wasn't for long!

RR : Yeah, it was stressful for staff as well as patrons.

LD : Well, I think the thing that was amazing about that was, now we take computers for granted because now as new generations come into being it's just used as a fiat. But that was a real departure for everyone, but something you had to do. It just made sense!

RR : It was the only way, it was going to be possible to survive in the modern world. And a modern library.

LD : Well, and now you have all kinds of things that are possible by virtue of modern computers. ILL can even take place, through modems and hook-ups and all kinds of things. It's progress, but that's the difference too, in the accessibility you have to know the process. I can see how it would have been hard for others.

RR : Well and in the Children's Room and maybe the main floor too, they had volunteers that were helping people learn how to use the computers.

LD : There were yes, and there was lots of support that way. And then mainly over time there were cards that showed you how to do it. (informational sheets) It took time, but the beauty of it was everybody learned, because they needed too. And that was a glory in the system, whether it was planned or

not, was that you had no choice. You wanted something and you had to do something to find it. What other comments would you like to share, or thoughts or memories that you, I know have kind of forced you into a topic area, but memories about the library that you would like to make sure are captured.

RR : When I think about the library I mostly think about the Carnegie Library, that's where I spent 28 of the 29 years. And that's what I always picture in my mind, that and the people that were there. And the good times we had working together. We always had fun working, most of the time at least.

LD : So you didn't really need a lot of outside events?

RR : Right we were just happy doing our job. I think most of the time, it was fun.

LD : Well and that would mean that even if you were dealing with some physical limitations the relationships between the people were important. You always knew you had the support of the administration and the support of the public.

LD : It was a win, win.

RR : Right.

LD : And you'd do it again, I guess.

RR : I think I would.

LD : Since you stuck it out for 29 years I would guess that you'd do it again.

RR : At this age I wouldn't, but if I were young I would.

