

Oral History Project
Cedar Rapids Public Library

Roy Kenagy was interviewed on February 20, 1996 at the CRPL, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Laura Derr (LD): Roy, I appreciate you joining us today. I know that you are currently working out of the Des Moines area. What brings you to Cedar Rapids?

Roy Kenagy (RK): I am responsible for Children's Services from the state library. And we had a workshop, this morning, at the CRPL.

LD :And so we will have wonderful summer reading as a result.

RK :That's right.

LD : All sesquicentennial...

RK : All sesquicentennial, that's right.

LD : I'd like for you, if you would, for the purposes of the transcript, tell us about your work in Cedar Rapids. When did you live in Linn County? I know you're not a native of Linn County. And what types of positions did you, were you, involved in here at the library?

RK : Well, I came to Linn County directly after library school, at the University of Illinois. And that was in 1977, and I left in 1985. I was hired by Elizabeth Schoenfelder as a Reference Librarian at the downtown library. I held that position for three years and was promoted to the head of the department, Head of Adult Services was the exact title. And that was in 1980, I held that position for the remainder of the time. I was also acting Director in the summer of 1985.

LD : Okay, if we back up for just a moment. I am curious, what led you into library work? Why did you choose that as a career?

RK : I had always been interested in libraries. I grew up in a small town, my biggest confidant and friend was the librarian of the town. She was kind of the matriarch of the town, in addition. We, she had been...do you want to talk about these kinds of things?

LD : Oh, I love hearing them.

RK : Okay, she had been, Dena Dier was her name, and they have a picture of her in the library now. And someday I am going to sneak in and steal that

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painting, I just would like to have it myself. Miss Dena had been there forever. And I remember, my father was a very dower Mennonite, actually.

LD : A serious man.

RK : Very serious, actually. And I discovered something about my father and Miss Dena that I hadn't known, she was probably in her 70's and he was in his 60's, and we had her over for Thanksgiving dinner, one Thanksgiving, when I was younger. And, I looked out the window, my dad had gone to get Miss Dena, they were skipping down the sidewalk together to Thanksgiving dinner. And I had never realized, that she had taught him in elementary school. And they had gone back a long way.

LD : So she worked with two generations.

RK : And many more I am sure. And really, when I was in high school, all I wanted to do was be a librarian, actually. I have, certainly an interest in literature and books and there are only so many things that you can do with that. That seemed, to me, to be an achievable one. When I got out of school I spent some time working in retail and I think that that's probably, my retail experience causes my approach to library work to be a little different than those who have gone straight into libraries.

LD : Now how is that?

RK : Because I am interested in it from a merchandising point of view and a service point of view. In a way that may not be the case. An example that I was thinking about the other day was, when I was in retail nobody got the weekend off because that's when the customer was there, that was the big day. And so, you worked Saturday and you worked Sunday, from the president on down, that was the deal. And I find, it never occurred to me, until I was a manager in libraries that people would even assume that you would think otherwise about when you worked. You're there to serve the public and that's the best time for the public to be there. It's just kind of a moral imperative, that's part of the business that you are in. That is accepted in the retail world, that is not necessarily accepted in the library world.

LD : Well, it's interesting you should point that out. From some of the people I have talked to, that was more of a creed in the past, in library work, than it is currently. And I'd be curious to know if you have seen that change as well.

RK : In which direction?

LD : That , in the past, there was always a policy or philosophy, that your most important job was to assist the reader as they came in the door. And whatever

else you were doing you would stop and assist the reader in any way that you could. And perhaps that has not continued as much into the current environment as it was in the past. There was more of a direction, you can find it here or you can go here and do that. But it's not as much hands on as it used to be.

RK : I think, that's an interesting point, and I think... I can't speak to the situation in Cedar Rapids, because I haven't been here since 1985. I do believe that the tradition of public service at the CRPL was very strong and I.....I'm sorry.

LD : Roy, if you would, talk about the different areas in which you worked. Reference, what did that job involve? When you were a Reference librarian. And as a head of Adult Services. How did that encompass a different area?

RK : Okay. As Reference librarians we had basically three desks that we worked from.

LD : This was all on the first floor of the old library?

RK : No, actually it wasn't all on the first floor. There were two desks that were on the first floor, those were Reader's Services desks. And, I may have these names all wrong, maybe it was RA, Reader's Assistants, the Reference Desk and the Directory Desk was the third one. And it was on the Mezzanine where the magazines were held and where all of that information was. There were two classes of Reference workers, Adult Services workers, whatever. There were paraprofessionals, and again I am not sure I can remember exactly what the title was, I think it was RA, Reader's Assistant.

LD : I have heard that term used.

RK : There were Reference librarians, the RA's were paraprofessionals, the Librarians were professionals. Only Reference Librarians staffed the Reference Desk. The Reader's Services Desk, RA desk, was shared between Reference and Reader's Assistants, probably half and half as my memory serves. And the Directory Desk was staffed mostly by paraprofessionals. It was a fairly effective arrangement for splitting the services off.

LD : Did you work with Pages at all, during your period here? Or did they call them that at that point in time?

RK : Yes, they were Pages. Certainly the Pages were always around. I was, as head of Adult Services, I was the director...the Page Supervisor reported to me. I did know them and keep up with them.

LD : I was just curious, I know there was a lot of running up and down steps. In

order to provide things for people, because of the space constraints that you had in that old building.

RK : Yeah, the magazines and the directory resources were on the Mezzanine Level, which was built over the garage. And so that was, Pages spent a lot of time going up and down. There was a bell at all three Reference Desks that would summon the pages to go and get the magazines.

LD : That certainly has changed, I am sure. I know here, in this library, so much is either available on microfiche or microfilm that it is....

RK : Yeah, and we planned this library to be self-serving. Which is much more than it was in the old library. So, for instance, the periodicals are self-service here, where as before it was in a 20 ft. high, very narrow corridor, behind the Reference Desk.

LD : It was real labor intensive to provide those periodicals for people. Anything else, about the Reference position, that stands out in your mind on a day to day basis. Perhaps that is very different than it is now.

RK : Again, I can't speak to what the resources are now. Something that struck me, at the time, was the extensive nature of the pamphlet files that we kept. The clippings from the newspaper, that was a very large operation, it took a lot of people's time. And the degree to which there was local indexing and a pretty serious attempt to tailor the information to local needs. And keep control of local information. Again I cannot speak as to what has happened now because I don't know. But it has been my general impression that it has lessened some what.

LD : It may have. I know, in talking with Margaret Bradow, she mentioned that she worked very intensively on those files, over the years. And I guess that was one of Elizabeth Schoenfelder's favorite areas to work in. So there was, obviously a great commitment to them in the past.

RK : I think another, as I think about it, another change would be space. When I came in 1977, I had a small wire basket, on a shelf. And that was my personal space in the library. Well, actually, everybody had the same, it wasn't naughty to new boys or anything. But, I had a locker, down in the basement. But that was where I put all of my professional materials, was in a wire basket, on a shelf. That was the case....

LD : You didn't have an office is what you are saying?

RK : That is correct, I didn't have a desk. I believe...anyway we planned.... I think there is a tendency to, when you are planning a new building, there is a

tendency to pick out the ruts that you are traveling in. And you know that is not a criticism, necessarily, it's just the way minds work. But I came into the planning process for the new building, pretty much the program had been done years before, and one of the things that was an issue was staff space. We all grew up with this concept that all a professional librarians needed was a wire basket. And there was no provision for individual desks in the program for the new building. There was some, I did manage to bring that concept....

LD : To lobby.

RK : To lobby, yes that is a good word for it, for individual desks. But I became aware of the situation too late for it to be really done as well as it might have been if the space had been programmed that way from the beginning. What happened was we squeezed the desks into an area that really wasn't designed to support individual desks.

LD : And so it is not perfect in the new one?

RK : No, there is not as much room as we would have liked to have had.

LD : It is amazing to me, as well as in the offices upstairs, it really is a minimal space for the amount of administrative work that goes on. I think you are right, some of those old paradigms still hold, librarians should be out and about.

RK : I don't think that it's not necessarily important, if they're not out and about then you'd room to worry. And in the old building, when you had a project you worked with the public. You had to...

LD : You had to fight for desk space.

RK : Oh, absolutely, if you were weeding, you were weeding at a public table, there was no other place to sit.

LD : Did you have any sort of a staff lounge in the old facility?

RK : Yes, there was, in the basement, there were two rooms. And I remember there was a smoking controversy. I am not a smoker, myself, except cigars on special occasions. But I remember a controversy, first of all they separated the lounges. I remember there was some controversy, but I can't remember the details. The smokers all went into, let's see if I can remember this is very faulty...

LD : I'll just call it remembered history.

- RK : Right. First, the smokers got the south room with the round table. And the non-smokers got the one with the refrigerator. And the smokers began to complain, I believe it was the smokers that complained, because they didn't have access to the refrigerator. The final solution was to alternate, so every month or so we switched lounges.
- LD : Well, that's not an issue at all, anymore, you just don't do it.
- RK : You just don't smoke, yeah.
- LD : A certain amount of progress has been made in that area. When you moved into the area of head of Adult Services in 1980, how did your job change, from what you had been doing before?
- RK : Well, at that point I still did some work on the Reference Desk, I feel like it is very important for people in those kinds of positions to not loose touch with working on a frontline basis. I became responsible for scheduling, for hiring and firing, for doing evaluations. Probably the most significant change, well the management was definitely a change but, as far as the library content that I did, I had a much more direct influence in collections work.
- LD : In acquiring collections?
- RK : Yes, the person who was in that position sat on the Selections, what was it called, Selections Committee. I can't remember the exact name for it. And actually, that's an interesting experience. I hadn't thought about that and I don't. Even into the 80's the CRPL had a very traditional selection system that I kind of look back, now, fondly toward. Which was extraordinarily expensive in terms of time and....
- LD : Staff commitment....And how did it work?
- RK : There was a Selection Committee that met once a week, Wednesday mornings I believe. And we met in what was the corner of the administrative area, which was called the board room, it had a table that pretty much took up the compass of the room. And then the walls were completely lined with shelves. Ruth Richardson's office was located directly South of that, separated by a bookshelf. So it was not a very private room. Her office wasn't very private. The board room also served as staff break room for administrative types. Not that we were banned from the staff rooms, but.....
- LD : But there was a little hierarchy difference?
- RK : Yes. And Tom's office, the Director's office, was also off of that area. And I

say board room, what I am trying to describe is that it was just kind of a niche, in that corner of the administrative area. There was a person who, her primary responsibility was answering the phone, the switchboard operator. But she spent a lot of time, when she wasn't focusing on the phone, preparing cards which indexed book reviews. And they had a little stamp, which they had made up especially, that had the book review resources that we used. It was a check list of them, an ordinary rubber stamp that was very large. And the keystone of the system, I don't even know if they still do this, but the Library Journal published reviews on cards and that was kind of the backbone. Library Journal produced materials that other libraries would use. And so she, Barb was her first name I can't remember her last name, and so this was a very difficult job for her because she had poor eyesight. She had glasses that were about an inch and a half thick, poor girl, sitting there trying to go through all of that. But her job was to collate all of those reviews. As a review source came in she'd stamp the back of the card and put down the date and the page number that the review was on, now this is a lot of background and this doesn't seem bazaar unless you have worked in other libraries, I know. But it was a very genteel system, it kind of sprang directly out of the 1890's.

LD : And earlier time, yeah.

RK : So we took those cards, and she filed them alphabetically as the new reviews came in. And as the review came in she would change the, she had a file and it was very large. And the Selection Committee would meet and we would start with "A", every week, and we would pull out the card, and this would be books that we had not purchased, we would look at the reviews. And each one of us was responsible for a different review source. I was the New York Times Book Review and so the NYTBR's were on a shelf behind me and we would read reviews outloud to each other.

LD : Oh, my!

RK : And have literary discussions about whether we would buy this book or not.

LD : It sounds like a lot of fun!

RK : It was a lot of fun, actually. But it was very time consuming.

LD : I bet. How long did those meetings go on?

RK : They went on all morning, into the, they would start about 8 or 8:30 and go on until lunch. And I have often thought that if you did a statistical analysis, I'm sure it has changed but at the time, if you had done a statistical analysis of the Cedar Rapids collection you would find that there was a abnormal proportion of books with the author's names beginning with A-M. We never

made it passed the middle of the pile.

LD : That could be an issue, I can see how that could be a problem.

RK : What I did to change that, it was very genteel and if you liked books it was a lot of fun. But the members of the committee, Ruth Richardson was the chair at the time. I had no idea how long they had been doing this, but I suspect for a long time, scores of years. I sound critical, but I don't want to be critical.

LD : The world changed.

RK : At the time they had started it, there weren't as many books and there weren't as many reviews. It was a perfectly reasonable way and what it focused on was the quality of the material.

LD : Well, I am curious as to how you'd make a decision. Did it have to do with how many reviews there were, whether they were favorable or unfavorable?

RK : Basically favorable and unfavorable. And we had a rule that, for instance, a medical book, we couldn't purchase a medical book unless there were two favorable reviews.

LD : So if it wasn't widely reviewed, it was in trouble.

RK : Well that's an issue and I think libraries, public libraries, these days are a little bit more focused on providing representative materials than necessarily just materials that meet a certain quality. And, I think we were insuring a quality collection. I think one of the things, I once saw some numbers, somebody was doing a dissertation or something, I worked on a survey that was done, it was a survey of several Iowa libraries. And Cedar Rapids had the most, and this is kind of a contradiction to my previous statement, but we had the most typical collection of all of the libraries that were surveyed. That is to say that we would have the collection that was the most solid, down the center of the survey, for the broadest number of areas, of subject areas. And I think that that selection technique led to us having, that was probably one of the results of that.

LD : For many years, it was a very successful process.

RK : I think that the big issue was time, staff and how intensive it was. And, to a certain degree, I think that the decision process became removed from the needs of the frontline people, of the patrons. And also from the input of the frontline staff. And so basically...

LD : How did you change that?

- RK : Well I changed it in the adult collection. Prior to the change the head of Adult Services was basically selecting everything, each Reference librarian had the responsibility for looking at a certain sub-set of reviews, basically a certain stack of L.J. Cards, in particular subject areas. When I started, my subject areas were psychology, philosophy, I can't remember what else I had, 800's in general. Not fiction, that was a plum.
- LD : Oh, yes.
- RK : But the literary criticism in those things, poetry, I can't remember what other subject areas at that time. It seems like I did some things in history, but I don't remember for sure. What I did, in doing that, I would read reviews and then initial it if we should buy them. The Selection Committee really made the decision. The draw back of that was, the person who was directly responsible for the collection, because one of the other things that you would do was weed, might have a clearer idea of why this particular title was needed, where as the Committee getting together, just because of the way the structure was, they would focus more on the reviews than on the interaction between the book and the patron. Which the frontline person had a closer....
- LD : Right.
- RK : View of....
- LD : I am sure they heard what people needed and wanted.
- RK : And again, I think that there are things to be said for both ways. But what I did was basically empower the frontline people. I just announced, I gave them a budget and I said, "Now you have to stay within this budget, but whatever you initial, I am going to buy."
- LD : Oh, wow. Well that would just make anybody so happy...
- RK : Well, no they still...
- LD : Really? I would think that...
- RK : I started out, we did the budget by subject areas. And I wouldn't do it this way today because I have come to become suspicious of Subject Specialists, not the Subject Specialists themselves, but arranging it that way. I started out, and I wanted to have some flexibility here and so I set aside 5%, of the budget, and that was my slush fund. Therefore I could buy whatever I wanted with that 5%. Well, what I found, in the first year of using the system, was that there would be these books that it was obvious that we needed to have them. But

everybody was very jealous of their funds, so if it didn't quite fit into their subject area, narrowly defined, they wouldn't buy it. Well, you know that's fine, but if nobody else picked it up it would just kind of sit out there. And so my slush fund kept getting bigger and bigger, not because I wanted take away everybody's fund, but because I was finding that there were some decisions that weren't being made. If it didn't exactly fit the definition, it didn't get bought.

LD : Well, empowerment takes time, doesn't it? I mean, it's one thing to hand over that, what I would consider to be a wonderful responsibility, but they almost have to be educated as to how it fits in the the larger picture. Over time, people maybe accepted it.

RK : Well, yeah. I think, again, I have reservations these days about getting down to too detailed a level of subject analysis in you bi. Basically, the system I was using was copied from what Lolly Hagers was doing in Iowa City. And, they had a....

LD : I'm sorry, now say again, who was....

RK : Lolly Eggers, who is the former Director of Iowa City Public.

LD : Okay, fine.

RK : And her, she had a much more formalized Subject Specialist approach to it. Where they did a lot more in terms of analyzing the collection. And filling out forms. The budget was much more tightly accounted for, than we could do. Because I really never wanted it to be an accounting exercise. It was really more of a management exercise.

LD : What other things changed? Or did you oversee changes in? Anything come to mind?

RK : Well, of course, there was the building project itself.

LD : Which began to evolve in what, in the early 80's?

RK : There had been, I don't know when the program was done, the building program. That was in place when I started. There were at least, let me think, I believe during the time that I was head of Adult Services, there were three failed bond referendums.

LD : I think eventually there were five.

RK : Those are officially recorded somewhere.

LD : Yeah, there were five.

RK : And I can't remember the date of the Hall...

LD : The Hall Grant was in 1981, they pledged 6.8 million to build a new library.

RK : Well, from 1981, which was fairly soon after I...so they kind of had three while I was the head of Adult Services. It must have been, at the time that it was at Cedar Rapids, there must have been one or two when I was still a Reference librarian.

LD : I think it had been going on for a long time, yeah.

RK : Of course, that took up a lot of my time, once that project was started.

LD : When you say the program was in place, does that mean the architectural drawings had been completed or...?

RK : No, no. A program is a document, kind of manual or description of the needs of the owner, in this case it would be the library. It lists what the rooms are supposed to be, a rough estimate of how big they are going to be, how many people are going to be in them and what furniture is needed.

LD : So it's what you do prior to a drawing.

RK : Exactly, it's prior to the drawing. The architect takes the program, and basically the program is the subsistive instruction to the architect, as to what the building should contain.

LD : And the program had already been completed when you...?

RK : As far as I can remember, now I certainly didn't have any input to it. I describe the situation with the office space.

LD : It was an afterthought, sort of.

RK : Yeah, it was. And I think I would have noticed that, if I had been putting the program together. That's entirely reasonable because, quite frequently, a program is written because there needs to be some way of estimating what the cost of the building is going to be. An architect can then take the program and get an estimate out, doing drawings, of what's needed. You need that before you can do a referendum.

LD : Let's move to that area. I think you were more key to that than anyone else

that I have talked with, some of the other folks were either involved in extension work or were no longer involved with the library at the time of the move. So, what goes into the process of moving a collection? What things really stand out in your mind?

RK : Now you are talking about the actual, physical move?

LD : Well, preparation for and....

RK : Or preparation of the building, or what?

LD : Yeah, anything that you want to focus on, in that regard, because you were here- up to-through-and after that period of time.

RK : Well we did, basically because that's the way the money was found to do all of this, in addition to the new building, the collection was automated and the online public access catalog was brought up simultaneously. That's not, normally, something that is done all in one fell swoop.

LD : It was very stressful for your customers, I can tell you that.

RK : It was extraordinarily stressful for the staff also. And so many of the issues over that time in the 80's had to do with, not just the building process, but with the automation process. We had to select a system, that was an interesting process, we ended up, the primary vendor at that time was a company called CLSI. A vendor of library systems for public libraries. And we did not go with that vendor. We went with a relatively unknown vendor called Data Research, we were one of the very early public libraries to go with DRA. And it was kind of a gamble, they had some, we thought, some advantages and actually they have become stronger and CLSI has lost a lot of the market shares.

LD : So in retrospect...

RK : So it really was not a bad decision.

LD : Were you involved in making that decision?

RK : Yes. There was, I don't know what the official records say, but there was a group, that would be Tom and Ruth Richardson and Chris Cole, who was the head of Cataloging, and myself. That was probably the core group that looked at it. Ruth went along and had some ideas, but she was kind of not too interested in learning the details of that kind of stuff.

LD : I would think that that would be the biggest problem. None of you could

have been, perhaps you more than anybody else, could have been computer literate.

RK : I would say Chris was, he was the cataloger and he would have been the most computer literate. We had to learn quite a bit.

LD : Did you go and visit other systems?

RK : Yes, we did. The DRA System was developed for the Cleveland Public Library, which is a major research library. Cleveland comes in for some share of jokes, but the Cleveland Public Library is quite well respected.

LD : That's why all those Cleveland Collection items showed up at the very beginning when you would go through checking for things.

RK : That is exactly why. I remember when we visited Cleveland. We drove out there, Tom drove the whole way out and the whole way back. I guess the fruits of his work on the Bookmobile. In his station wagon, which was also the library's.

LD : Wow, that's a long drive. Did you make the decision, I mean..., this really transformed the library, and it's all for the better. We look back and we say, we're state of the art here this is great, of course everybody has had to learn the root of it. How to call up information on the monitors and go look for it in the library. I don't think it's an issue at all now, but did you have any resistance within the staff, among the staff, to the move to an electronic catalog versus a card catalog? Or did everybody just assume that it had to be done?

RK : I think that there was some resistance, but I think it was not, so much to the concept as it was to the implementation. And the fact that we were much too stressed and hurried to really do it right.

LD : To do it in conjunction with opening your doors in a brand new facility was pretty gutsy.

RK : So I think the staff, a lot was asked of them. And they came through, there were not funds, for instance, to do the conversion of the paper catalog into the automated form. And so that was, basically, done by staff members as an extra added attraction for their daily routines. Everybody had to spend so many hours a week, per day, I can't remember exactly what it was, sitting at a terminal and converting. And the way you did that was you looked at the book and, you know we had the Cleveland tapes. We had a tape of their holdings and you compared the book to their holdings and if it was part of their holdings then you inventoried it and it became part of our file. But that

was done, ordinarily, these days that whole process is farmed out to Taiwan.

LD : To some service.

RK : To, actually, a lot of it is done offshore. Or the state library is doing it right now and it is a project that has been bid on by the men's reformatory.

LD : They have a lot of time there.

RK : Yeah.

LD : But the staff had to take that on as part of their responsibilities.

RK : Yes. I think that there simply, what the staff perceived was this was being done in too much of a hurry. That there hadn't been proper support for it. And that they were carrying the short end of the stick. And so it was a very difficult time because we were really asking for a major sacrifice from people. And it wasn't a sacrifice that people felt appropriate and necessary.

LD : And from a totally different angle, was the other thing that was happening was that, not only did you have a new facility and this new computerized system, but you had a public walking in the door who was illiterate as to how to use that system. And if I would guess, just from the experiences that I personally had, that there was probably a lot of frustration that was vented on the library staff as a result of that, during that time. So they were probably hearing that from both sides.

RL : Yeah. I think that we may have expected more of that than there actually was. That whole thing probably didn't come to crunch time until a time... at the time that it really exploded my attention was elsewhere. I really wasn't working on the floor at all and I should have been there. My attention should have been there, but I had other things to think about. So I really can't, I don't know how well I could speak to the public reaction of that in detail. I remember there were really vociferous complaints from specific individuals, but there were always that kind of thing.

LD : I didn't know if it was more or less, right. Looking back, I think it was an incredible time and I am surprised that you didn't have everybody. (SECOND SIDE OF TAPE) We are at an interview with Roy Kenagy on February 20, 1996. I'm sorry, we were talking about the stresses of the staff at that time.

RK: I think that they did, I was a part of the staff, it was my first professional position, I had good friends who were on the staff. And I think that they came through just admirably. But, I think, that too much was asked of them.

LD : Yes, at that period of time there was.

RK : And I think that the resentment that they felt was called for.

LD : It was perfectly well justified. Now, that occurred, that move occurred, after a sort of unionizing process had occurred among staff members, did it not?

RK : HmMmmm.

LD : The union, kind of, came in in the late 70's.

RK : Yes.

LD : Was it of any help to people, if they had grievances of concerns at that time? Do you have any memories that there was any union concern, that was voiced about the demands that were made on the staff?

RK : You know I don't remember there being an official complaint or concern expressed from the union, about that particular issue. That doesn't mean that there might not have been. But it doesn't hit me that there was. I think everybody saw that if it was going to happen, it was going to have to be the way that it was coming down. We were going to have to do it the way we did it. Because there were no real resources for doing it some other way. And so, again this is just off the top of my head here, I think that the union got involved in issues where there was some reasonable hope of making a difference.

LD : Winning.

RK : Well, not necessarily winning, but just...

LD : Yeah, just making a change or an alternative. Now I am going to ask you a question that may not be fair. You are a male working in a, and were, working in a female dominated environment, at that time, I am guessing. You, Tom Carney, the Director, were there other professional Reference librarians who were male in the...?

RK : Actually, that was one of Elizabeth's innovations. You should ask her about this issue because she would be, she has very firm opinions about it.

LD : I will.

RK : She hired, I can't remember before my time, it may well have been an all

female staff, before Elizabeth started hiring people. She hired Carl Hampman. When I came there were three, I am pretty sure, I would have to count them all out. But there were two other males on the staff and I was the third, and I think that balance remained during the time that I was here.

LD : Out of a staff of how many?

RK : There were 7 Reference librarians. Carl and John Hiatt, and then I replaced myself with a male. I am trying to think, I think it ended up that there was just one male after the...

LD : But you were definitely in the minority? How does that effect the working Environment?

RK : It's great at conferences! You never have to stand in line for the bathroom. Oh I think there are some effects, I don't know if I would want to go on record about them.

LD : Well, I am applying a bias to this question. And it's not a fair question, but I was just curious if the kind of sense of tolerance and the willingness to do whatever had to be done. Do you sense that it was related to the fact that most of your staff were women who, all their lives, had done what had to be done and did it. Or if that had any impact on it at all. I was just curious, or maybe it's just that professional librarians just do what has to be done!

RK : I think that there is a double issue there. I think that that's the general attitude with librarians, but then librarians are generally women. But it is hard to separate the two. But I would say that males that end up in library work are just as likely to be, to have that same kind of approach to things. And I don't know if that's a good thing, necessarily, but I don't know if that's a bad thing. But I think there is a willingness to do whatever needs to be done.

LD : It's the gender...

RK : It may be gender related in a broader sense.

LD : I knew it wasn't a fair question, but I always wondered. So I thought I'd just ask.

RK : There was something about gender that I wanted to say, about the staff, and I couldn't think about what it was. Maybe I'll remember, we're about done here aren't we?

LD : We're kind of coming, unfortunately I am not done, but we're going to have to quit here pretty soon. You did say earlier, before we started taping, that you

worked with volunteers fairly extensively and I was curious if that was outside of The Friends organization?

RK : Yes, it was, in fact, it was the same kind of....we were just talking about women as a kind of exploited group and librarians in general.

LD : Librarians in general, right.

RK : A lot of times, particularly when things got kind of hot and heavy, I had a lot of projects that I wanted to get done and couldn't do with the staff that I had. So I got into the habit of recruiting, on the side, there was no official volunteer program as I remember, like my next door neighbor came in and did a major project for me in his spare time. He was retired and looking for something to do. I had several people where it was me and them, basically. It wasn't an official thing, particularly.

LD : But that, to me, is a wonderful opportunity for people. I am geared toward volunteering, but it does surprise me that there has not been more of that. Bringing in enlightened volunteers and using them. And perhaps, maybe at this point there is some difficulty in determining what is paid and unpaid.

RK : That was pretty clear under the cases that I was using. They were one time projects that were not....

LD : They were not replacing a librarian.

RK : Right, it wasn't something that was routine.

LD : What kinds of projects did they do for you?

RK : Well, Bob did a cataloging project, for the conversion. We were trying to, and I don't know what happened, this is kind of a...the only reason why I used a volunteer is that it was the only way that I could get it done. We would never get official funds for to something so crack-brained. But I started, the fiction was shelved, by the author's last name only. So if you had, you know, 20 different author's named Jones their works would all be filed on the shelf, author's last name and then the title of the book. And that was hard for the public to understand and hard for the staff to track things down. And so I lobbied, for years, to have them shelved by the author's full name so that all of Fred Jones' stuff would be in the same place. That's the way people are used to looking. What Bob did was, I did get the cataloging people to run labels, and we actually cuttered them. Cutter is a technical library term for assigning numbers and letters to shelve by last names, or by full names. And they did do that cuttering and Bob stuck the labels on all that fiction. And

again, it was something that we wanted to get done as far as the conversion project. Because if we didn't get those converted we never would. And he stepped in and did that for me. So it was that sort of thing, kind of an esoteric thing, but I had been lobbying for it for years.

LD : Well, I just like to say, for the record, that it was in the period from 83-85 that as a volunteer I was involved in the oral history project. It was co-sponsored by the library and the Junior League. The Junior League was providing all of the labor intensive part of the project. But the library had committed to copying and cataloging and shelving and preserving the information that we collected. I think without your commitment to that it would've never have happened. In fact I am sure of it. And I know that was a time when everything else was going on, we were talking about the move and the computerization of the collection and tremendous requirements of the staff. But we never asked for anything that we did not find, or were not supported on. We had, we were given space, we were given a place, and it ended up taking another two years after you left, to copy all of those materials. And get them all to where they needed to go. But only because of your enlightened attitude toward the value of that in addition to the collection, that it occurred. And I am very grateful for that.

RK : I appreciate that.

LD : I don't think we would have had that, otherwise, on the shelves. Well, Roy we are, I think we've only touched the surface, but I am very grateful for the time that you have given to the interview. I would have to just say that if there is anything else that you would like to add about the library, or your memories of that era, I would certainly be happy for you to share that as a kind of coda or closure.

RK : Well, I touched on it earlier. I would say that the legacy for me, and I think that I learned and the thing that I remember most fondly about my time in Cedar Rapids was the absolute commitment to public service, on the part of the Reference staff and the Reference management. I think that it was a wonderful place to learn to do library work and to Reference. I have never seen....

LD : That level....

RK : Before or since.

LD : Yeah.

RK : An operation that was focused, that was....

LD : Totally professional and beyond, I think, at times. Well thank you very much. I hope, sometime in the future, we can finish this interview.