

Jackson: This is the beginning of our second tape with Miss Esther Gilman. What trends and developments have you seen across the years, specifically at Trails Regional Library, and in general at county and regional libraries across the state?

Gilman: I suspect that the biggest improvement over the years started in the, oh probably in the sixties, early sixties and became much more evident by the end of the sixties, was the addition of professional staff in the state. Part of this was aided by the foresight of the aquisition of professional people.. The scholarship program had been going on for some time, which did keep people in the state at least for two years after they finished their education.

And then, oh Lord I can't remember, when was that? Along in the seventies I guess, The program that was a books and person deal that we got so much for books and if you had added certain personnel. The theory was that you needed personnel in order to do a good aquisitions job. This came along later in the seventies. It's one of the reasons that Trails [Regional Library] aquired a children's coordinator

Gilman: and reference coordinator that was badly, badly needed by then. The agreement was that you were going to keep them on, make a position for them, after the program ran out, which was on a three year basis. But in theory really, if you couldn't afford them in the first place, you couldn't afford them after the grant expired. Which is what happened to a lot of them. But at Trails [Regional Library] it was rather fortunate, because we went into that program a year before we got our second mil. So it worked out just fine, That we had people in place and we already started evaluating our book collection.

It was amasing in the sixties what happened to your book selection and book collection. Because suddenly so many areas of that were simply out of date. The 300's were being reworked, there were new ideas that we no longer had on the same old stuff. It became a popular reading area too, all the social concerns that came to the front which had not been of great interest to rural areas. Science was becomming more and more of interest, and the more traditional things, biography and the classic fiction and the old stand-bys were going by the board. The do-it-yourself thing was comming along. Suddenly in the last half of the Sixties you were suddenly aware that your book collection was becomming obsolete. In the early years we'd

been able to throw maby 20 to 25 percent of our budget into books to build the collection, but by the time we had worked it back for ten years there were parts of it that were becomming passe'.

I think that this all happened in all libraries about the same time that inflation started spirialing, book prices started going up and suddenly you started to panic because you weren't able to replace and to update the things. Around here we had quite a flurry of updating collections and really working at it in order to keep current with what was going on in society.

It affected also the towns. I suppose it was in the sixties, in the seventies too, that small towns were no longer unique, you were part or the wider thing. People became more mobile and more strange people in small towns that used to know everybody on the street, that had never happened before. We were affected by the great expantion of the college [Central Missouri State University] in the sixties. Also the reactivation of Whiteman Air Force Base brought in a lot of people from other areas.

So this is one of the points I was going to make a little while ago, that this community was really ready for library service. There was an eagerness and a market here that we used to laugh about in book selection, that it didn't make any difference what we bought, somebody would be interested in it. It was getting to be that much of a catholic taste community. This was pretty much what happened, so it's been a real good area.

For a while after Margaret Gates left Booneslick, this would have been 'long about in [19]64, [19]65, something like that, Booneslick was a two county, three county area that three of my friends had been in. 'This Verna [Nistendirk] that I had talked about, and then Jane Younger, who I met in Springfield when I was at Lawrence County, and then Margaret Gates, who I had known in the state Library. They'd all been librarians over at Booneslick. So I had known something about that operation, but when Margaret left, why I was kind of doing double duty. There was some thought of putting the two regional libraries together and so the state library did a study. While they were doing it I was doing administrative work both places, which was kind of a rat race. I was struck with the fact that the reading public over there, which was serving mostly the area outside of Sedalia, because Sedalia had it's own public library, was so much less sophisticated and so much less smaller range than our clientele here. It was really remarkable. It takes something like that, that you can compare. But here it has really been a joy to acquire a collection. From those 5000 books we first accumulated from that first order, I think

it is now 160,000 or so.

Jackson: Verna Nistendirck at the Dunklin County Library started a radio program.

Gilman: Yeah.

Jackson: Did you continue with that when you were there?

Gilman: Yes, I did. I did a children's program down there, it was taped. Sometimes I did it live, sometimes I taped it. I think it was on Sunday morning, I know because I always had to struggle about whether I was going to church that day or to tape. It was kind of fun. Considering like I said, I'm no stroyteller, but I'd get permission to tell various and sundry stories.

Jackson: You also wrote an article for the newspaper here in town, The Warrensburg Star-Journal.

Gilman: Yeah. That was simply a publicity device. I ran out of materials kind of, I didn't have anything more to say. The whole idea behind that was pretty much like taking the picture books around to the kids in the rural schillol in Lawrence County, it was simply to tell them what the library was. They didn't know any better in these very small inadequate libraries that had inadequate referende and a range of materials that tended to brag about their best sellers that they got, but nothing else. I've always had a thing about best seller emphasis, that there's so many other things to read, and you waste an awful lot of money trying to keep up with the best seller thing that lasts for six months and there your are, stuck when you should have had five other titles beside that. But anyhow thats neither here nor there. Mostly that column was simply started to keep the community informed of what kind of books were being

at the library. So they were on almost anything that I thought that there might be some interest in the community.

Jackson: These media contacts--they were quite beneficial for promotional devices. But do you see any future trends for other media uses in libraries?

Gilman: Oh, I think there is. I think unfortunately even those coming from ALA [American Library Association] were so far afield. When they were marketed people were into shorts and a lot of other things, film clips and those kind of things all seem so amateurish or so quote professional they really miss selling anything. I'm not interested in them and I don't think nobody else is either. Unless they're done professionally, and I don't know what I really mean by Professional, it's just that I don't think they're very interesting. Some of those radio tapes and things that used to come out from ALA or MLA [Missouri Library Association] used to produce at the state library, or somebody did, and I never did like them. We've done this from time to time but unless you have somebody that simply devotes their time as a good writer, which you don't always get on staff, and have somebody that has some PR background, which we never had.

Jackson: How important do you feel publications are in communications with peers in the profession? I know you've written several articles for the Missouri Library Association.

Gilman: Have I? I don't....

Benjamin: Oh, for Show-Me....

Jackson: For Show-Me Libraries.

Gilman: Did I? I don't know. What'd I write about? (Laughter)
It was usually something somebody'd ask me to do, I never

tried submitting any on my own. If they said they wanted to know about it, why it was fine.

Jackson: One of the articles was on your in-service training.

Gilman: Oh, yeah. That was something somebody requested. Oh, that grew out of necessity, as I said, it was something that I'd had to do in Lawrence County and Dunklin, whether you called it in-service training or not. You had people that didn't know anything about the Dewey Decimal, how to use a card catalog and how to use a book, it was basically facts. So from the first here at Warrensburg, since we had all these old branches strung around and we had lay people there who did not yet get into the main library, and did not work with any of the other staff, I mean not every day, no model to follow. So we started these in-service training things and calling the branches. This was before we got some of the professional help. I think we've had a regional assistant administrator and branch supervisor. It's when we got branch supervisor that we began to do from these branches. Most of these were much older women that had been with the library for a long time, some of it took, some of it didn't. As the branch personnel was updated and as we got children's people and reference people, then we were able to kind of outline a course of study. We had a lot of turnover, like everybody does with their clerical at the main desk. The bookmobile people were more stable, which gorgeous. The branches and the main desk people were the important ones. I used to tell them, I don't care what position they are, how much experience they had, if there're the ones the public sees, that's the librarian. This is the only way you sell a library, is not by a lot of PR but if

every patron that leaves your library is satisfied you've done everything you can for him, that's the best publicity you can get. Once they become discouraged with you, forget it. I don't care, they won't believe you. This is in-service training. It also lets the individual staff member grow. I have watched the housewives that had never had any kind of work experience come into the library and we worked with them and they just blossomed. Or else they had done routine things, like working in a garment factory or garment factory or something, and they didn't know work could be so much fun. These are real satisfactions, because you are reaching the individual and part of that enthusiasm plays off to the public.

Jackson: You have also served on several of Missouri Library Association committees, such as the Library Development Committee, and the Legislative Committee. You also served on the Library Advisory Committee to the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education. Could you tell what importance these committees had for libraries in Missouri.

Gilman: I don't remember that we did anything soul searching when I was on the Development Committee. That Development Committee in MLA--its purpose has changed from time to time. However we worked on some legislation. Prior, it was to give some continuity, I think originally people that had worked in MLA for a long time, to kind of get into the continuity of review of current programs so that something started in one administration, if it would work well, at least the Development Committee could kind of keep it before the council to continue it, if it was a good thing, give some consistency. You know how if somebody is elected everything

old is off, everything new is on and the next one does the same thing, so it kind of makea a stop and start situation.

(BEGINNING OF SIDE 2, TAPE 2)

Jackson: Could you tell us something about how the county library system developed, and the people involved with this.

Gilman: The people that I knew when I first came to the state in [19]47, a lot of them were fugitives from Kansas City Public Library. The ones I knew best in this half of Missouri. Dorothy Profert, who is still in Atchison County, and Jane Younger, who finally went to Wisconsin she was at Greene County, Dorothy was at Perry County, which she started. There were several others, Cass County was started by a former Kansas City staff member, Livingston County, Jackson County. There had been some trouble there and so it kind of depended on whose costume party you went to which side you were on. I think the whole fun of the thing was that we used to go to Jeff City [Jefferson City]. And there'd be 10 to 13 that might meet regularly. But Sunday would be the only time we could meet 'cause everybody was busy doing bookmobile stuff, and so Sunday was about the only day that everybody was free to come into Jeff City with out the whole darn thing standing still. We'd meet the State Librarian who had little things on her mind, like the film grant or whatever legislation, what not. This was a kind of camaraderie that came about because we had no guidelines. This hadn't been done before, and there weren't very many that had any kind of expertise in rural library work. We knew small towns maybe, but not county wide service and so we were really dependent on each other. Stuart Smith, who came from St. Louis County, was an outstanding leader of that county group because he'd come from Macon where he'd been an administrator. He recognized the suburbia that St.

Louis County was, or was going to be, and set out to do it accordingly. He was the most sophisticated of the whole group of librarians that werethere. The rest us were more or less service people, either from children's librarians, branch librarians in the city or school librarians, or much smaller units that really hadn't very much experience. In fact the county library system exists in Ohio and there wasn't too many in this concept of library units of service, as we used to call them.

We were very dependent on each other. We didn't like the way MLA didn't think we were doing anything important, So we started our own division which was the first, outside of the trustees, divisions in MLA. Otherwise there's been a whole crew. Then the municipal libraries thought they had to have a group, then the college and so forth and this got started.

Well, eventually the county librarians, who always thought they were so different from everybody else and nobody understood them, finally decided they were public librarians and got together with municipal librarians and formed the public library association. But the group, the cohesiveness, probably the interdependence of the county libraries and the things we were interested in, the co-ops, the state funds when they came along, legislation, and the appropriations from state aid, and these kind of things all were things that really drew us very much together.

And as some of the old hands in the city libraries changed they were a little more flexible. They didn't think we were really strange critters that didn't do anything according to the way the book said for running libraries.

Some of the people in St. Louis Public for instance, were real facinated by what we were doing. Others of them, in a larger more established librarky, thought we were the scum of the earth. I'm not sure it was anything that we did, we were very poor, which didn't sit very well with them. We were somewhat ignored in MLA 'cause we weren't very conventional.

When the federal funds came along in [19]50, [19]55, [19]56 that permitted these in-service training that Paxton Price set up. These were really excellent, they were kind of in-service training for regional administrators who were in libraries. Because we couldn't use the funds for city libraries, it was county libraries that got together. We did a little of everything, a variety of things

There were people form University of Illinois for several of the sessions, a whole range and variety of things. Some of the county group played together and learned together, and argued together, which could be pretty fierce at times. The whole question of whether we needed 5 members or 9 members on the board, or all these kind of things that were argued out. Everybody still spoke to each other while you argued about it. But it did give a kind of cohesiveness to the group. At the same time the administrative in-service training things went on there were other levels for the non-professionals. Finally the whole thing was wiped out when no one came. It didn't matter what you were doing in the library anyway, the subjects kind of picked their own levels. But I do think it made for an awareness all over the state that probably wouldn't have been realized.

Jackson: This led to the development of regional libraries, when the county libraries went together to form the region?

Gilman: No. Ozark Regional was probably the first one in which 4 counties were put together as a regional library. This was the concept. Then about the same time I went to Lawrence County Willard Dennis had suggested putting Dallas and Cedar county down there together to form one [Regional Library]. You know I said the one of them didn't have enough money to do a decent library. So Willard Dennis put the 2 of them together, and in between them was Polk County. Later that was voted too, so Southwest Regional had 3 counties down there, later added Hickory and dropped Hickory and added Dade and then took Hickory back on again. I think it's 5 counties now.

The first regional library was down in Ozark and that was in the early seventies, so that came along early.

The counties were still demonstrated separately and it wasn't until the mid-fifties that the concept of demonstrating the group of counties in order to form a regional library was really pushed by the state library. In fact I don't really think the state library did any single county demonstrations, they were always done in multiple. That didn't mean they all went together. That Rolling Hills area was supposed to have been, we used to call it the A-B-C district for Andrews, Buchanan and Clinton counties. The one in the northeast part of the state, which is the Northeast Library Service. Scotland County and 5 of them were really poor counties. Five were loaded, but Scotland, right in the middle of them decided to go their own way. When

When Ozark was added and detached and added again so

that it changed it's boundries. Even when the lawyers who've looked at these contracts, under which the county libraries operated with regional libraries, they just shake their heads, they don't see how they even existed. They were on a year to year basis, anybody could give notice and pull out. Camden County pulled out of Kinderhook and the Stone/Christian thing broke up, and Bollinger County pulled out. But otherwise of the 60 regional libraries this has been a rather remarkable thing.

Now we have the consolidated law, which Jim Leathers got through so that now 4 consolidated districts, in which Trails is one, there's no divorces in the consolidated district.

Jackson: So once you've become a member of a consolidated district....

Gilman: You're not a member, this is a legally established district. So that instead of voting each county in your regional district, it's the same thing as a school district that amalgamates country schools. So it's all together, sometimes it's an advantage, sometimes a disadvantages.

Jackson: You mentioned as one of the trends in library service the qualifications of the library personnel. Do you see a trend for more qualifications or for hiring of people less qualified for library jobs? There's been some mention about hiring less qualified people.

Gilman: Oh, I'm afraid this has happened in the last few years, particularly on those desk types of jobs that meet the public. I think maybe this is one of the biggest criticisms of libraries, the inept person meeting the public. Usually the professional people are off doing something else. I

don't think it all works that well. I'm not sure that as far as meeting the public is concerned, I've seen some non-professional, so called, people do an excellent job of serving the community because they understand the people, they're interested and take the pains to learn as much as they can. On the other hand, society is getting much more sophisticated, everybody expects special expertise.

I really don't know, libraries have always consumed an awful lot of piddle-paddle work and I don't think computers are going to change that. There's still going to be an awful lot of routine and dull work. It may not be what the pages used to do, erase cards when paper was scarce, you know, erase the pencil marks on the cards so you can use them again. It's not quite...well, it's just about that piddling, some of the work that will now be done on the types of things. It is now in, sometimes, circulation systems, doing overdues and endlessly tedious. You'll need a computer whiz. But it's still going to be a tedious, routine job. For some of the others, I hope, since most of my work has been done where we've all been generals, nobody's been very specialized, except being specialists in being general. Which means you can do a little bit of every thing. I hope that isn't lost. I think personnel themselves lose a lot when they focus too minutely on just one small aspect, they don't know what goes on, they don't know what the end result is, they only know what they are doing. Library work is....you get people and books together. There is an infinite variety of complications, just as there is with a computer, and it takes somebody to make judgements as to what goes where. I don't think being minutely specilized

in one type of library work or another really gets the whole thing done. I know too many catalogers who lose the whole reason as to why you catalog a book. Cataloging becomes an end in itself, whether it's done on computer or where ever it's done, because it's the commas, the spacing, the blub, blub, blub, blub, blub. The whole point is, this is the only reason you have a book, the only reason you catalog is to find that book for the person that needs it, and sometimes that gets lost. I don't know much about computer search, reference search, on-line searches, but I'm sure it's the same thing, if it gets too technical, to expertise you forget the person you're doing it for.

I hope this isn't lost, particularly in friendly, small town, regional, rural libraries. Because it's that personal touch that kept bookmobiles going. Farmers in this area are the most mobile of all our population, they go all over the country to do things. There's no reason why they can't go to a library anywhere they can use. But there's something special about the bookmobile coming to their community, they see Mrs. So-and-So, they arrange for a community meeting and they get to talk to the librarian, and this is special. Library work is really personal, personal service.

Jackson: Do you foresee any future trends for the libraries of Missouri?

Gilman: For the moment I'm afraid it's mostly because it's only
On the other hand, probably the belt tightening hasn't been all that bad. It may bring about things that were innovative as the cataloging co-op itself in other times when money wasn't around. And I hope it does, it will take some

immagination

I think the networks have had a real big boost, I don't think they've gone far enough. But with additional expertise in local libraries, networks can work a little better. I don't see the time when the small libraries can get along without something like a network or inter-library loan, because I don't see that they're going to be fully equipped to utilize OCLC

I think these are cooperative efforts and I think in fact the only reason that networks have gotten started in Missouri, is because librarians have had an awful lot of experience cooperating to get a job done.

I worked on one in Kansas City, on the network there, and I was working with people who were not county and regional librarians. They were college people, school people who hadn't the remotest idea what it means to reach a consensus his own little king in his own domain. On the other hand, you were meeting with people in colleges who were heads of departments that knew all about submitting budgets for their department that hadn't the remotest idea of how to manage a budget. Once they were submitted somebody else told them what they could or couldn't spend. Which isn't the same as construction a budget and managing a budget, which they were completely unaware of, and the mechanics of budgeting and expenditures and accountability are concerned. Because somebody else worried about it, the head librarian at the college or institution where he'd get the money. So you met a whole different group of people, but nevertheless they cooperated.

It was kind of interesting.

Jackson: This concludes our interview. Thank you very much,
Miss Gilman.