

BETA PHI MU ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
"FAMOUS LIBRARIANS OF MISSOURI"

INTERVIEW: MRS. VIRGINIA G. YOUNG
MARCH 20, 1980

INTERVIEWERS: BILLIE H. SMITH
RODGER McGOWAN

ORAL HISTORY: PRINCIPLES & TECHNIQUES SEMINAR
SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATIONAL SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
PROFESSOR AURORA E. DAVIS

Interviewee:	Virginia G. Young
Date of Interview:	March 20, 1980
Interviewers:	Rodger McGowan and Billie H. Smith
Transcriber:	Billie H. Smith
Tape Numbers:	1 and 2

INTRODUCTION: Rodger McGowan

This is an interview with Mrs. Virginia G. Young, lay-leader in the American Library movement for many years. The interview is being conducted by Mr. Rodger McGowan and Ms. Billie Smith of the University of Missouri School of Library and Informational Science. The date is March 20, 1980.

Virginia G. Young is a moving force in behalf of libraries and education. She is an internationally known lecturer and author on library development and trusteeship. She has served as President of the American Library Trustee Association, the Missouri Library Association, the Missouri State Library Commission, Columbia Public Library Board and Friends of the University of Missouri Library. As an active member of the American Library Association Mrs. Young has served as a member of the ALA Council and major ALA committees including Legislation, Committee on Organization and International Relations and Awards.

For the past 14 years she has been a delegate to the International Federation of Libraries Associations. She was a trustee of the American Library in Paris for five years. Mrs. Young has been a key-note speaker at library meetings and governors conferences in most of the states of our nation and in a number of countries abroad. She has conducted many workshops throughout the country and has been a guest lecturer at the School of Library Services, Columbia University, New York City; the School of Library and Informational Science, University of Missouri; and at the School of Library Science, Louisiana State University. She has served as a member of the Visiting Committee of the School of Library Science at Case Western Reserve University.

Mrs. Young has been an advocate of a White House Conference on Libraries since 1957. She was named by the U.S. Senate as a member of the Advisory Committee to the White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services to be held in Washington in November, 1979. Mrs. Young is currently serving as a member of the Coordinating Board For Higher Education in Missouri, and she is a past chairman of that Board.

Mrs. Young has contributed widely to library literature. She has had numerous articles published in library periodicals in this country and abroad. Her book The Library Trustee: A Practical Guidebook, R. R. Bowker, 1964, revised editions 1969, 1978, and also a Spanish edition published in 1974, is a recognized authority on library trusteeship. Royalties from this book are given to the American Library Trustee Foundation, the income from which is used for trustee education.

Another of her publications was The Trustee of the Small Public Library, published by ALA in Chicago in 1962, a revised edition, 1978 and also a Japanese edition in 1970.

Mrs. Young attended the University of Missouri on a Curator's scholarship. Received an A.B. in English from Southwest Missouri State University and a Library Degree from the University of Oklahoma. She is listed in Who's Who of American Women, Who's Who in American Education, The Dictionary of International Biography, Who's Who in Library Service and Foremost Women in Communications.

Virginia Garton Young has been properly deemed by many as a pace-setter in the development of creative trusteeship, better libraries and education in America today.

TAPE 1 SIDE 1

McGowan: Mrs. Young let me begin by asking you when
 did your interest in librarianship first begin?

Young: Well I suppose almost from the moment I was
 born, because my family was a book oriented
 family and I began going to the public library
 with my father on Sunday afternoons to spend
 the afternoon in the library, which I thought
 was a real treat. Not only looking at children's
 books, but looking at things such as natural
 history books and books of flags and heraldry
 and this kind of thing. So I have been surrounded
 by books all my life at home and in libraries.

When I was in junior highschool I began to work
in the junior highschool library and by the time
I was a senior in high school I was being paid
for working in the senior high school library.
I came to the University /Missouri/ on a Curator's
scholarship. I had a N.Y.A. /National Youth
Administration/ job which paid 25¢ an hour, I
think at that time, and my job was working in
the University of Missouri Library.

So later on after I had my A.B. in English and
my minor in sociology, I was torn between
becoming a social worker and a librarian. I
applied for a position as a social worker at
the same time I made application for entry into
library schools at the University of Illinois
and the University of Oklahoma.

At that time library schools were very full
and there were waiting lists of people who
wanted to get into these schools. I had a
friend who was going to the University of
Oklahoma to do her graduate work in history.
Her grandfather had been the president of the
University of Oklahoma and she ask me to try
again. She said write them a letter again
and send my transcript and see if they wouldn't
make an exception, which they did and I was
admitted to the Library School of the Univer-
sity of Oklahoma.

I must say I was most pleased last fall /1979/ when the University of Oklahoma Library School marked its 50th anniversary, to be chosen as one of five of the graduates of the last 50 years to be recognized and honored on that occasion.

I was married two weeks after I got my degree, but took short-term contracts at the University of Missouri and when the Librarian resigned at William Woods /William Woods College/ for one semester I commuted between Columbia and Fulton to be the librarian there. Our son /David/ was born in 1945 and it was actually as a library trustee that I have been most active in the library world.

McGowan: Did your activity as a professional librarian stimulate your interest in becoming a library trustee?

Young: It was interesting how I became a library trustee actually. Our minister in the Christian Church here /Columbia/ was Mr. Clarence Lemon and I didn't know I was even being considered as a library trustee until I got a telephone call from him to tell me that I had been appointed to the Columbia Library Board. Not only was I a member, but that I had been elected secretary of that board.

So my great admiration for Mr. Lemon and my great interest in libraries took me into trusteeship. That was a wonderful experience serving on the local board here. I served three three-year terms at different times, and had the privilege of serving as the president of that board.

During the time that I was on the Columbia Library Board--when I first went on, they had a half-mill voted tax for the support of the Columbia Public Library, and then there was an appropriation of one-half mill made by the City Council. We decided that we should go for the full two-mill tax and we talked to the members of the School Board about going on the ballot at the time of

the school election for voting our increase. They said if you go for an extra half-mill we'll accept you on the same ballot with us, but a mill and a half is too much, it would hurt us, so we just said we'll go it alone.

We did and we won the tax. We had a very positive outlook. We didn't say vote for a new tax, we said vote for your public library. We had little buttons printed with "Vote for your Public Library" on them. The tax didn't pass by a whopping majority, but it did pass.

Another thing that happened during the time that I was on the Columbia Library Board was that we voted a tax for a new building. Missouri law provides for new buildings in two ways: either you can go for a bond issue--which requires a two-thirds majority, or you can ask for a tax vote--which takes a simple majority, but it takes ten years to accumulate enough money to build.

But we thought it would be better to be sure that the vote passed and wait the ten years for the new building and this is what we did. Fortunately we did it this way because it passed by a simple majority but certainly didn't have the two-thirds.

The beautiful new building that we have here in Columbia for the Columbia Library and Boone County Regional Library is testimony to what the people of Columbia have done in supporting the library here.

McGowan: I would like to ask you as a follow-up to that, would you tell me how you view the trustee function in relation to a library's operation?

Young: Trustees have a very complimentary but different role than the librarian. The Trustee is the one who makes the policy and the Librarian is the one who carries out the policy. But they are a team, they are a partnership in working for improved library service in the community.

I think that Trustees must realize that they must not get over into the business of administration. Theirs is a policy making function. They support the Librarian in such things as book selection in carrying out the policy the Board has made. But they are very different roles even though they compliment each other.

McGowan: I'd like to get into a little more about your first public service in a community library. This question then is when did your public service to a community library begin and what was your office? You've already told us about your first service on the Board...

Young: Yes and that was back as far as 1951. Things are quite different now than they were at that time. We were really making some beginning steps in those early years.

McGowan: Would you tell us then about your initial appointment to the Missouri State Library Commission and some of the significant developments that occurred while you served on that Commission?

Young: I was appointed by the governor to the State Library Commission in 1955. I served three four-year terms on the Missouri State Library Commission. The Commission as it was then organized, was an independent Commission not associated with any other department. During those years when I first went on the library development in Missouri was concerned a great deal with the establishment of library districts in Missouri. We were having bookmobile demonstrations, so that we could have county-wide service and regional library service. We were looking for larger units of service at that time to be sure that all citizens in Missouri had access to library service. Even city libraries then were merging with county libraries in order to make a single unit of service.

Another thing that was done during those years was that we developed a scholarship program. We were interested in having professional librarians operate the libraries in Missouri. We used some of our Library Services and Construction Acts--well it was then Library Services Act--funds for getting scholarships for training librarians.

We had a stipulation that once they completed their degree they would spend two years working at libraries in Missouri. And I must say as I look over some of those scholarship students who went to library schools on those early scholarships and came back and got their training in Missouri libraries, I see that many of them have gone on to be the movers and shakers in the library world in America. I think we can be proud of the kind of program that we had at that time.

McGowan: How did the State Omnibus Reorganization Act of 1974 affect Missouri State Library?

Young: This was when the executive branch of our government, Missouri State government, was reorganized to concentrate many of the departments into just thirteen departments. One of those, the department of transportation, has been eliminated, so that we now just have twelve departments in the executive branch of government.

But there was great consideration given to where the Missouri State Library should be. It was felt that it would best serve the library world in Missouri by being in the Department of Higher Education. That way, in working in cooperation with all types of libraries, academic, school, special and public, it would be a base of operation where the most could be accomplished, and I think it has been proven to be so.

McGowan: Well you've already talked to us about your early years--or your years on the Missouri State Library Commission and some of the problems and issues that you faced there, I would now like to ask what major developments or issues in the libraries of Missouri have you encountered in your years of membership in the Missouri Library Association?

Young: Many things have happened in the Missouri Library Association. It has been an active group and the librarians in Missouri have been a very cohesive group too.

I started out by being active in the Library Trustee Association and the first year that I was chairman of this group I decided that the membership, which was then 63, was far too low, that many more trustees should be involved. We had on the State Library at that time a person who worked particularly with public libraries as a consultant and with trustees. We had workshops throughout the state and the two of us stumped the state doing these workshops and trying to build membership. In one year we went from 63 to over 300 trustees. The group has grown, of course, since then and there is much more involvement of trustees in the Missouri Library Association.

But some of the things that the Association has been concerned with--for one thing, they pushed very hard for the Library School at the University of Missouri. Also, they worked for certification of librarianship. They have worked for the re-codification of the Missouri laws and that was accomplished. There has been a public relations council and working to increase the visibility of libraries in Missouri.

During that time one thing that I'm pleased about because I was president of MLA at that time, was a film called "The Hottest Spot in Town" produced under the sponsorship of

MLA and the Missouri State Library. We had the premier showing of this film at one of the meetings of the American Library Association when it met in Kansas City in 1968.

The next summer after that I took a copy of this film with me when I went to a meeting of the American Library in Paris and the chairman of that Board was the Under-secretary of UNESCO /United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/ in Paris. He made arrangements for me to have a showing of the Missouri Library /Association/ film "The Hottest Spot in Town" at UNESCO in Paris. I expect not many state films have had that kind of showing.

Other things that we have done would be, trying to increase the appropriations for libraries, especially for state aid for libraries. I think Missouri has done very well in this regard. Back in the mid-60's we got about 5.6¢ per capita. We now get 36¢ per capita. We have a bill in this session /1980/ of the Legislature to go for 44¢ per capita and we're working toward the 50¢ per capita. So that we've jumped from about 350,000 in the mid-60's to a million and a half in state aid. The Association has worked very hard for that.

Another thing that was done when I was the president of Missouri Library Association was that I recommended that our association give a thousand dollars and that the Academy of Missouri Squires give a thousand dollars for the establishment of a Mansion Library to be used by the inhabitants of the Governors' Mansion in Jefferson City. Subsequently those organizations give a hundred dollars a year to continue to build that library. When the mansion was re-decorated a few years ago the library was the room first developed and re-decorated and the collection of books started by the

Missouri Library Association and the Academy of Missouri Squires were placed there.

McGowan: We've already talked about your travels around the state and one activity with the Missouri Library Association, but I would like to ask what influence do you consider you've had on these issues or major developments which you've talked about. I know that you've served on the committees, you've traveled around the state, but...

Young: Well I guess I really have a passion for libraries and this is the thing that I've tried to communicate to people so that they have an awareness of libraries and know what is possible for them through the library.

Going back to the State Library if I may, another thing that we have done there is providing more service to the State Legislature and other state agencies of government. And we've had cooperation with the large metropolitan libraries and with the academic libraries in trying to make all of the resources available.

McGowan: In your book The Library Trustee: A Practical Guidebook you state your philosophy of the necessity of library training for quality librarianship and consequently better libraries. How did this philosophy aid in the establishment and development of the Graduate School of Library Science at the University of Missouri?

Young: I was very excited about this idea when it was first proposed in the Missouri Library Association. As I sat in that meeting and heard this discussion I was stimulated about this idea, and when I came back home to Columbia I decided to go see my friend Elmer Ellis, who incidentally was my freshman adviser when I came to the University of Missouri. I talked to him about

what the librarians were considering-- what the Missouri Library Association was considering--and ask him what he thought about the possibility of doing this. He said "do you think this is the place to have it?" "Should it be in some other location of the state?" And we agreed that this was, in fact, the best place for it to be. Particularly when someone such as Ralph Parker, who is and has been a dynamic figure in the library world, was here to help get it launched and off the ground and to bring in outstanding people to teach in this library school.

So we were all delighted to have this library school established--because in my opinion to have good trained librarians-- people who can go through all of this material and this flood of information that is really tending to innundate us. Unless we have trained people who know how to sort out the pieces from the information explosion--because explosion connotes fragmentation--unless we have someone who knows how to bring these pieces together in a meaningful way-- it would be useless. Certainly this is the job of librarians and one that they fill very well indeed.

McGowan: I'd like you to talk a little more, if you would about your association and relationship with Dr. Ralph Parker.

Young: My association with Dr. Parker began when I first went on the Missouri State Library Commission. This was a six member commission, four appointed by the Governor and the University of Missouri Librarian, which was Dr. Parker at that time, and the State Commissioner of Education were both ex-officio members of the Commission. So I have known and worked with Dr. Parker for many years and have the greatest admiration for him and what he has been able to do.

TAPE 2 SIDE 1

Smith: Mrs. Young would you tell me about your participation as a congressional appointee to the Advisory Committee of the White House Conference on Library and Information Services?

Young: I'll be glad to. I'd like to back up a little bit though and talk about how this all came to be. And here again I can put in a word for the library trustees and their importance.

It was in 1957 in Missouri, in Kansas City, at a meeting of the American Library Association, that a trustee at a Trustee's meeting-- a trustee from Massachusetts--got up and proposed this idea and suggested that we start then to work for a White House Conference on Libraries. Some of us who were there were intrigued with this idea. We continued to pursue this and in the American Library Trustee Association established committees on Governors Conferences and committees on White House Conferences working for this through the American Library Association through the years.

So, when the legislation was finally passed the legislation called for the establishment of an advisory committee by the--five to be appointed by the House of Representatives, of Congress, and five to be appointed by the U. S. Senate, fifteen to be appointed by the President of the United States. The Congressional appointees were the first to be made and this was in 1975. I guess the U. S. Senate appointments were made first, and I happened to be one of the five appointed by the U. S. Senate. It was the Advisory Committee to the National Commission on Libraries.

The Advisory Committee working with the National Commission established the ground rules for the calling of the White House Conference. It was decided that two-thirds of the delegates should be lay-citizens and only one-third should be library-related people, that this included both trustees and librarians. So that we in the library world could be hearing what the people of the country wanted from their libraries.

It started with Governors Conferences in 57 states and territories, but this was preceded by regional conferences within the states where the state delegates to Governors Conferences were elected. So that more than a hundred thousand citizens across the country were involved in thinking about libraries--what they wanted from their library--what kinds of information they wanted--what kinds of services that they wanted. It was really a grass roots operation.

The delegates to the Governors Conferences selected delegates to the White House Conference. There were delegates, alternates, observers, so that there were a total of almost 4,000 people at the White House Conference in Washington, in November 15-19th, 1979, and it was a very exciting experience.

But what was even more exciting, I think, is what is yet to come, because there were 25 recommendations made by the delegates of what they wanted to have happen. Among the recommendations--the resolutions, was one calling for an Under-Secretary for Libraries in the newly established Department of Education.

When our Advisory Committee went back for an evaluation of the White House Conference early in December it was fortuitously at

the same time as the inauguration of the new Secretary of Education Judge Hufstedler /Shirley Hufstedler? We were invited to a party in her honor and were able to tell her that we were very eager to have this Under-Secretary for Libraries in the Department of Education.

Oh, incidentally I want to say something personal that happened at the White House Conference that really please me. It was decided that a book should be given to the President /President Jimmy Carter?, and it was decided that the book, my book The Library Trustee should be the one in view of the fact that President Carter began his public service as a Library Trustee. The publisher did a beautifully bound-- leather bound hand tooled edition and had a calligrapher to do the inscription, and this was presented to President Carter and he seemed most pleased. I have had a very fine letter from him in appreciation of the book that was presented to him on this occasion.

But, going on with some of the outcomes of the White House Conference, another thing-- there will certainly be legislation that will come out of it, a National Library Act dealing with the libraries in the country. Moreover many things came out of the Governors Conferences leading up to the White House Conference, that will take place in the states throughout the country. Many of them call for the establishment of state-wide Friends groups, and the establishment of Friends groups locally throughout the states and this was a very important aspect of it. Legislation within the states will be enacted. I think library legislative acts in the states are going to be very important.

Smith: Yes, in line with what you're mentioning about the legislative acts, you've been instrumental--had some input into this political process, could you tell us about that?

Young: Well the political process is something that is very interesting to me. I began shortly after I was married becoming interested in the League of Women Voters and served as the Columbia League President and on the State Board of the League of Women Voters and also as a co-chairman of the Legislative Committee in the Missouri Library Association early on, so that I worked in the political process for some time. Trustees have been very active in this regard.

On one occasion we had what we called a March-on-Washington. This was when the federal funds had been cut back with zero appropriations for libraries. The trustees across the country became very agitated about this and between 150 and 200 trustees went to Washington at their own expense. We had a briefing session about what should be done. Our ALA Washington representative and I had the pleasure of speaking to these trustees and they made waves in the halls of Congress as they went to see their Congressmen and Senators and told them in very dramatic and very human terms what it would mean at home if these funds were not restored. Our ALA Washington representative said that this certainly made the difference in getting the full restoration and increase in those funds at the time.

Smith: The time period that you're speaking of was around the early 70's?

Young: Yes, it was actually 1969. But the trustees generally, I think, have taken a very important role in the political process, and it seems that another thing that...

Going back to the State Library Commission, one of the things that we have done on the State Library Commission is to be sure that we have fine buildings too. Working for a building tax or bond issue is not the easiest... but when you have support from the State Library--again through federal funds--this helps a great deal.

Smith: Yes, then you're talking about political process on both levels, both the state and...

Young: National, um hum.

Smith: National levels too. As you think about all the many service areas that you have been involved in, what do you consider to be your most significant contribution to librarianship?

Young: /Laughter/ Well that's rather difficult to say. I suppose the thing that has had the most visibility is the book The Library Trustee and it has had wide circulation and has been widely used I'm pleased to say. Also I've had the privilege of speaking throughout the country in a number of different settings, doing workshops for library trustees, speaking at Governors Conferences and doing workshops for librarians. So that when I think about your question--I like what the Dean of Columbia University said one time in introducing me, he said that I was a catalyst in stimulating people's awareness of libraries.

That was a very flattering thing to say but I hope that it's true because I have great enthusiasm for libraries and know what they

can mean to people. I would like to get people to think libraries and to use libraries. When they have questions or problems if they will go to their libraries to find the answers they will find information and more--knowledge. Many people just aren't aware of the many many services that are available to them through libraries. If I have done anything to raise the consciousness of the people in the various states--the non-library people--this is the thing I hope will be my greatest contribution.

Smith: I am sure that as librarians we are in full accord with all that you've done to help along in that direction. A little further along then with that aspect--what or which event in your career gave you the greatest sense of personal satisfaction or accomplishment?

Young: There again it's difficult to say. I have enjoyed writing and seeing the book come out, and seeing one in the President's hand of course was very gratifying. The ALA publication, The Trustee of A Small Public Library as was mentioned, was translated into Japanese and on one occasion when I was in Tokoyo I had dinner with the head of the Diet Library there. In his office he had the young man who had done the translation of this work come in and have a little visit, so that too was a high moment.

I also enjoyed serving on the Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commissioner of Education in regard to libraries and information services. Working in the legislative process that we have already mentioned, this is always very interesting to me.

Smith: Which of your publications have you found to be either controversial or influential, or which has seemed the most pertinent at that time to your career?

Young: Well I suppose the Library Trustee I would have to say was the one that has exerted the greatest influence. On two occasions I have done seminars at Columbia University for library trustees, with library trustees and librarians having communication so that the trustees recognized what librarians were as they were becoming librarians and could talk to them about what they could expect from trustees. And these future librarians had a chance to talk with trustees so that they could know what the kinds of people that they would be meeting. We were able to use my book really as a text on that occasion too.

Smith: We know that you're also quite active in the Friends of the University of Missouri Library and have been, I understand-- were instrumental in getting that group...

Would you tell us Mrs. Young what do you as a Friend of the Library of the University of Missouri envision for the future of that system?

Young: Let me back up and say a little bit about the Friends of the University of Missouri Library. This year marks its 20th birthday, in fact it was started on my birthday 20 years ago in January. One of the most active people was Dr. Lewis Atherton and he had been a professor of mine here at the University. Dr. Elmer Ellis again was very influential and Dr. Ralph Parker, Dr. Richard Brownlee were all instigators in helping to get the Friends group started.

This organization is not only statewide, but nationwide, and has been a splendid way of developing the collection, building the collection, creating an interest in this marvelous resource and research institution that we have on the campus here in Columbia. Of course we are a multi-versity and have four campuses.

To talk about the future, the Friends are interested in the whole University library system, but it is a fact that the greatest research collection is here on this campus. In the future computers and data bases will make the whole collection on all campuses more useful to everyone.

But the Friends have been able to provide special rare editions for the collection here, they have encouraged students to start library collections, and the Friends throughout the country have their eyes out for special collections that may be given to the University, or purchased by the University

The Friends also have a book sale, the proceeds of which go to the University Library and the Library Science students have been very helpful in this tremendous undertaking as a book sale that is held annually.

Smith: You have an interest in groups of Friends of the Library in other areas than Missouri, or in...

Young: Well yes, I had the privilege of speaking to Friends groups. Oklahoma was one of the states that had as one of their Governors Conference resolutions the establishment of Friends groups. I spoke to their statewide organization group on the occasion of their first meeting, as well as speaking to the Oklahoma City Friends, which is well established. I have also spoken to Friends groups in several other states. They can be really a tremendous value to libraries as they go out and help with the collections and help keep people interested in libraries.

One of the things also--as far as trustees are concerned--Friends groups are fine active workers who can make good trustees and at the same time it's a good place for people who have served on library boards to continue their service as a Friend.

Smith: Would you address yourself to what you see for the future of libraries, what you would like to see accomplished or how you see libraries coming to be...

Young: Well here in Missouri we have been working very hard on getting networks established. We have six networks in the state now that are going very well and the seventh will soon be launched and on its way. And I think this is a trend of the future that we will have networks throughout the country.

Another thing that we are working on is on--here in Missouri, is the establishment of a bibliographic data base. The Coordinating Board For Higher Education put in the budget for the State Library this year a figure of a hundred thousand dollars for the establishment of this bibliographic data base, so that the total collection of all libraries in the state can be put on computer tapes that will make it possible for anybody to know what is available, and where, any place in the state, and know it immediately. I hope very much that this passes the Legislature during this time. If it doesn't we will try again.

Smith: This then will require a cooperative effort among all the state libraries?

Young: Yes, all types of libraries, school, public, special, university, academic, libraries of all kinds.

Smith: As we conclude our talk this afternoon, our interview, do you have anything special that you would like to add, apart from what has already been discussed?

Young: Well I must say that I have great expectations of what may come to pass for library development in Missouri. Because libraries in Missouri have been really leaders in the library movement throughout the country. Many people have pointed to Missouri to see what is going on here.

I think that as we look to the future, as we work together, that what will be possible in the future so that all information, all books, all materials, all knowledge, will be available to every citizen in Missouri. Not only the collections that we have here, but collections throughout the country and indeed the world.

Smith: Thank you very much.