



**Jefferson County Public Library  
Digital History Project  
Interview with Bill Knott  
Belmar Library, June 2 2008  
Interviewer: Ruth Anna  
Interview coordinated by Ann Cress  
Interview recorded by Patrick Farrell**

**Part 1**

- Ruth Anna      About this time last year, we knew that you were serious about retirement.
- Bill Knott      Well, yeah, beginning to talk seriously about it.
- RA      Because you talked about it at All Staff Day and you had talked about it to us for over a year, actually. But, the idea came, what was your first clue to you that you wanted to retire? That it was time?
- BK      I think my 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. You know 65 is different than 64. It isn't really. But it was kind of pieces coming together, I'd been here a long time, I had already opened discussions with staff and with the trustees about, it was time to start thinking about a succession. I turned 65, those kinds of things, nothing major came along. I certainly didn't leave out of any particular unhappiness with the way things were. Certainly didn't leave because of other reasons like that. It just seemed to me to be a good time to sort of hand it over. There's change coming along. I think the decisions about the future need to be made by somebody, like the trustees and a new kind of librarian who are looking more at the future.
- RA      Well at the same time the past, I would say, since I've been on the Board, the past six years, have been rather filled with changes.
- BK      Yes.
- RA      They've been filled with changes on the Board, as always. But changes in the way we govern the libraries and changes in the direction we want to take the library for the future of this whole system. So why don't we start with the governing changes, because you've been through a lot of trustees and had a lot of ups downs and probably changes I'm totally unaware of but a dramatic change was made in the early part of 2000's. And that was policy governance. What are your thoughts on that?
- BK      Policy governance is I believe an enormously powerful tool for an organization like a library that is governed by a citizen board and is professionally managed by somebody, by a group of people who are then answerable to the policy-making of the board of trustees. And, the effect that it had was to make it clear and I think ours was very well implemented. Make it clear who makes what decisions, and under what conditions, and what are the responsibilities of senior management's job in terms of what the trustees understand the library to be, and how they want the library to be run. It is done with a lot of clarity, it took a lot of work and a lot of time, but I think it became clear as the policy governance process came into being that here's what a policy decision is and here's an operational decision that's being done to support a policy decision. The Board spent, as you remember, all seven trustees, spent I think three days, solid days.
- RA      Almost four, actually.
- BK      Yeah, working with a consultant to write all new policies for the library and to make sure that the policies accurately reflected the way the trustees wanted the place run, the way they wanted it governed and with staff support, because the senior management team and the county librarian were in the room for most of that, so that we could help structure those policy statements so that they made sense, and also so it was comprehensive. So that this long list of policy statements

covered every aspect of library operations through personnel, through fiscal matters, sort of the list of things that have to be done in a big public agency. Jefferson County Public Library is a \$25,000,000 a year business. A Pretty good size business and has to be very thoughtfully, carefully governed so that it reflects what the community wants for its public library. That's the job of the trustees. And so that the County Librarian and senior management clearly understand what needs to be done. It is a terrific process. I think we modified it some, as we went forward. I think we made it fit our style a little better, fit my style for example, a little better or the fact that some trustees had changed during the time that we were going through this but I think the outcomes of it are now, that there is no confusion about who does what. The Board does not dig around in operational policy, and the County librarian has to be very careful about policy-making decisions that he or she would make without referencing the Board. These things have to be done with the trustees.

RA Well, I think it was, taking the John Carver example for policy governance, adapting it to what a public library, and specifically what ours needed but also it was a change in the way we talk. Such as, "Is the County librarian in compliance," which a lot of people attending a meeting start laughing but the idea is, is he following our guidelines as he's operating the library. So I think that's the key. We're not saying what the hours of library are, we're not saying how many trash cans you're going to have in the library. What we're saying is, you make those decisions within these parameters and I think that's a huge difference. But some of the stories you told as you went through, cause after we wrote the policies, you had to go through and make sure we were in compliance with each one and in several instances, especially in fines, but also in protecting patron's records, I believe we weren't.

BK We were not compliant.

RA You might give a few examples of those stories. They were really surprising.

BK Well, the way the process works is the Board finally approves its statement of policy. It's a fairly comprehensive list of statements and articles and conditions under which the library will be run. It becomes the County Librarian's job in this case, or the Executive Director, or whatever that's going to be called, to take a look at those policies and report back to the trustees saying, here's what I think that policy means and here's what we have to do in order to achieve compliance with that policy. And the Board approves those things. Review them, discuss them, and say okay, you understand now what we want done, we agree with the way you're going about it, but you must tell us if we're not in compliance. So it provides a mechanism for saying, we're not doing this right. We've got to fix this, this is broken.

RA And we didn't know it in some instances.

BK Right. That's right. And it's done in an environment that gives the County librarian a great deal of comfort in going to the Board and saying, we're not compliant. We're not doing a good job here. Let's fix it. Some things are very hard to fix. And one of these is, the issue of fines collection. It's taken a long time and I'm still not compliant, I don't think. The issue here is not that people should pay fines. That is a policy that people pay fines if they don't return books in time. The issue becomes what happens when people don't pay fines? What happens to fines, in their aggregate, over years, where people have accrued fines from 15 years ago and we're still keeping track of that \$.50 or \$5 or \$50 or whatever it is with no expectation that we're ever going to collect those things. I think we had on the books, something like \$2,000,000 in uncollected fines. And that's broken. Something's wrong there.

RA And we're never going to collect all that.

BK Well, no. People who sort of look at the library from the outside, probably even new trustees, are stunned to realize how much money we collect in fines in a year's time. We're not talking about a lot of some nickels and dimes although, it's a lot of nickels and dimes. We're talking about \$500-\$600,000 a year in nickels and dimes, and that is a principal source of revenue, a major source of revenue for a public agency and we have to treat it the exact same way as if it was tax revenue.

The money belongs to the public and to find ourselves in an uncollected revenue posture of \$2,000,000 is simply not very good management. And that's what the managers of the library have to tell the trustees. The trustees say, you've got to be careful with and carefully manage receivables. That's a policy. And I report back and say, well these receivables, or those receivables are okay, but somebody owes us \$2,000,000, and that's not okay. So policy governance makes us report those things in a trustworthy environment. That the County librarian can sit there and tell the Board that we have this \$2,000,000 problem without fear of some sort of punishment or retribution or anything else. Everybody feels confident and comfortable in being able to say this piece of our work is broken and we're going to try to fix it. It proved to be a good deal harder to fix than I think any of us realized, but it's okay that we haven't been able to fix it. What would not be okay is if we weren't doing something about it. And I think that work is underway, and I think eventually will get us to a place where for example, fines collection, will be fine. There are other examples of that where in order to be compliant we had to develop certain kinds of documents, like the collection development guidelines. Since the guidelines at the time we implemented policy governance were not complete, we had to report that we were not compliant with the Board's requirement that we have a collection development statement. Once the collection development statement was finished, and it is now finished, then that work can be reported as compliant and the Board then has a degree of comfort, that says, we're not just out there buying stuff we're doing it in a carefully organized thoughtful way, driven by a published document that everybody has that concerns us. So, in addition to our having to perform in a complaint way, we have to develop documentation to the Board's satisfaction or to whoever's satisfaction is at issue, so that it is not just, we're compliant, but it is compliant to the extent that it is written down, it is developed, it is published, it is available for review by anybody who wants to see it, so that we have a clear articulate message as to what the library is doing in, for example the area of collection development. The library spends a couple million dollars a year, what's our book budget?

Ann Cress 3.9 million.

BK \$3.9 million. We have to do that carefully. You can't just go out and buy a lot of books. And I think because the Board required these things be done, I think that's a stronger, better run, better operated library for it.

RA Well, and I think what people need to realize, it isn't just our relying on your reports. We have the policies, you have to come and say you're in compliance, as you said. You have to prove it. But I remember one of the funny stories you told us, was when you went around checking on patron privacy and you found things, you didn't realize till you actually had to go out and make sure you were in compliance. But that was a good one, I thought. It happened in several occasions, on other issues.

BK Well, patron confidentiality is actually, we have policies regarding this, we have state law about this. We have Board policy. It is at the implementation level out over the circulation desk, where the policy really begins to apply. The County librarian doesn't do a lot with that sort of thing, but a circulation clerk at a public desk is responsible for the implementation of a very complex policy and where the issues were for us were areas where a new employee or in some cases an experienced employee, completely misunderstood compliance with privacy policies and were causing the library to be sort of non-compliant because they misunderstood how it was to be applied. The good part about something like that is that we have to make it clear to everybody who works in the organization and has contact with the public, that has to understand the importance of their making decisions about compliance. And often, not often now, but I think at the time, we weren't doing a very good job making sure that everybody understood how this policy was to be applied, so. There was some kind of odd...

RA Well I remember you found some records sitting around that hadn't been shredded and things that nobody paid attention to until you really had to go, am I in compliance?

BK Those records that came up were the records, a lot of these were paper records, of interlibrary loan transactions that were sort of sitting out, in a room in a series of files and it never dawned on

anybody, anywhere in the organization, that there were thousands of these pieces of paper that accurately, I think, reflected what somebody's use of the library was, and therefore protected by privacy policies and laws and we were just keeping them because nobody could think of a reason to throw them away. Once we took a look at the policy as it regards to those pieces of paper they were very quickly shredded, and are now regularly shredded, because we should not be keeping pieces of paper around with somebody's name and the book they checked out, or a book they had wanted. We didn't own a shredder until 3 or 4 years ago.

AC That's right.

BK It began to dawn on us we have this paper sitting around that we don't really need anymore and it has confidential information on it and so we now have shredders the size of small cars. And tons it seems like, of paper shredded all the time.

RA But it's good.

BK It's good. This causes us to get rid of a lot of junk that we have no reason to keep. Plus it's nicely recyclable. We can shred that stuff into plastic bags and the County comes by with its recycling vehicles and hauls off our shredded documents or whatever they do with shredded documents.

RA Well I've noticed in this current decade that there has been a lot of changes, number one, the economy has had its ups and downs. We had September 11<sup>th</sup>, which brought in the Patriot Act. We've had the change to policy governance. But at the same time we've realized that delivering our services to the people of Jefferson County, could be hindered if we're not able to control our funds better and control our decision-making better. And that's where it sort of came out of the mouth of the County Commissioner as a suggestion, and we've been running with it, and that is becoming a district. Perhaps you could explain some of those nuances.

BK Well, library districts are I believe, in public libraries across the country, becoming a sort of new style that in many, many states are working on legislation, and library operations and library practice to create library districts in places where there were no library districts before. Or, they were in sort of a strange, strange arrangement. Libraries traditionally have been, most libraries traditionally have been component units of city or county government, some cases, most cases, those two or any of those two arrangements, and were part of the way a city or a county dealt with its public and delivered services. What has happened with a lot of that is that libraries have not been for a variety of reasons, as completely successful in competing for funding and support inside municipal or county government and so a lot of communities have begun to look at particularly the Colorado model. There are County librarians in Colorado who are sort of out there on their ponies, talking in other states about how library districts can result in more efficient and effective delivery of library service largely because the libraries then become less driven by the day-to-day political practices of cities and counties. Cities and counties in Colorado, particularly with the home rule cities and counties, have a specific set of things they must do. The law is pretty clear about the work of a County government, and that they have to do law enforcement, and they do criminal justice, and they have a clerk and a treasurer and recorder, and they have all these kind of services that the law or in some cases even the state constitution says they must do. And so funding to support those things goes first to those places in the budget and then if there's money left over, sort of, the library gets some, and the health department gets some and other agencies and city and county government get some. But there is no specific driving force inside many communities to see to it that the library is adequately funded and well governed.

Library districts have begun to teach us that this new style results in a more effective delivery and in many cases results in better funding but certainly gives the library the ability to make the decision about how it spends its money as opposed to being told how to do it, or what to do in a political environment. Libraries are not political instruments of a community. Libraries are to the greatest extent possible, a-political, and they must be in order to be good, effective public libraries. But if they have to start making decisions in terms of who has been elected, or what kinds of political policies are being made, in terms of elected officials, libraries will, in many cases not thrive. And it

used to be library districts really got their growth going when they were useful for building library service in communities where there was none. Colorado is a good example, the Arapahoe County operation. Arapahoe County is a County of about the same size of Jefferson County, a little smaller, and there are four public libraries in Arapahoe County. For a long time, there were only three. Littleton, Englewood, and Aurora and the rest of Arapahoe County was more or less unserved. By forming a library district, because the law says they don't have to have a specific boundary, in or out of a county, they can be any boundary that the voters or whoever can approve, so that the Arapahoe library district was formed to serve the rest of Arapahoe County that was not served by Littleton, Englewood and Aurora. That has been a very satisfactory arrangement in Arapahoe County in a big complicated county like Arapahoe County. Jefferson County's experience would be a good deal different because there are no municipal libraries in Jefferson County and so forming a library district here would take a somewhat different form than it would take in Arapahoe County, for example.

But around the country, we are beginning to see many communities looking at library districts in order to get out of city government. A good example is the San Antonio Public Library. San Antonio is the seventh largest city in the country and has quite honestly, I have a lot of connection with the San Antonio Public Library, quite honestly not a very good public library simply because they were never able to thrive in the difficult community setting like San Antonio. It's a big tough town to get anything done, a town that was not very well-heeled, in any case, and the library never really got itself going. They had an interesting main library and interesting is putting it mildly. It's called the big enchilada, it's a great big red building up on the north part of town, but it is out of the downtown area. It is only about a fourth as big as it should be. San Antonio has got over a million people and they are actively pursuing and I believe that they will get it done, forming a library district to do the library service for San Antonio and actually they are a county, as a district rather than a unit of county government. And I think that that kind of thing is beginning to show us that that model is going to work better in a town like San Antonio where the library has its own independent relationship with the voters and the taxpayers and the citizens in a town like San Antonio. I think these are growing issues.

RA But in Jefferson County we have what would be called a dedicated mill levy, which most people may not understand, so if you could explain that and when it became that way.

BK Sure. The library is fortunate and in many ways looks like a library district partially because the library has its own mill levy rather than just getting its money from the County general fund. So when the voters or the taxpayers look at their tax bill every year when they get that from the County, it lists all of the funds that your taxes are going to support; schools, county government, city government, special districts if you are in a special district and the public library in Jefferson County, has its own levy. It's had its own levy, I'm going to guess, since the late sixties when the Colorado Library law was changed to allow cities and counties to have their own tax levy for support of a library. Jefferson County very quickly adopted that and the library levy, starting I believe in '68 or '69 was exactly 1.5 mills and for many years the library struggled along with 1.5 mills until the early eighties when it was pretty obvious, the County at that time was one of the fastest growing in the country, that a mill and a half was a dismal, very dismal way of funding the County library. So the voters in 1986 approved an increase from 1.5 mills to 3.5 mills. It made a profound difference in the public library and at the same time kept the levy sort of outside the decision making about budgeting done by the Board of County Commissioners. Almost without exception, since 1986, the library's levy has been at or near the voter approved maximum. For a variety of reasons it goes up and down but it hasn't been very near that and an approval of the levy for the library each year has been pretty much routine by the County Commissioners. There is an idea out there that the County Commissioners approve the library's budget, they do not. The library's budget is approved by the library trustees. The law provides that the distribution of the money from the mill levy is done by the library trustees, not the County Commissioners so that in most cases the issues of library funding are issues for the library trustees to make priority decisions about not to get more funding from the County. They can't get more funding from the County. It is limited by the voter-approved levy.

RA                    So what would the difference be if we became a district?

BK                    The difference would be, if you became a district, the levy would stay the same, the money that the levy produces would obviously stay the same. The library trustees could focus more carefully on reductions from 3.5 mills that are driven by TABOR. Right now the library law in my reading says, that the library levy shall be the voter approved levy, in our case 3.5 mills, less any temporary reduction necessary for Taxpayer Bill of Rights Compliance. And as you know Taxpayer Bill of Rights, TABOR, limits revenue and expense to certain levels recalculated each year and in some cases, if it looked like say the library fund was going to collect too much money, the library fund would have to be reduced by some fraction of a mill in order to stay in compliance with TABOR limitations on the growth of revenue and the growth of expenditures.

The difference for the library would be more nearly important to understand. It is not in the terms of the amount of money that the library would have, there would be only minor changes, I think, in the amount of money available to the library. The library would do a lot more careful focus on Tabor compliance, mill levy reductions than perhaps the County does. But, for the most part the amount of money would not change a lot. What would change a lot would be the distribution of the money. Right now the library spends some million dollars or more in buying services or being charged for services performed for the library by County administration and it is my belief and I'm certain that if anybody looks at this with any care, the belief is and the understanding is that we would spend less money buying those services from the County than we would performing those services ourselves. So instead of spending a million dollars a year and I'm rounding that off, a million dollars a year buying services from the County, the money could be used to develop the same services as necessary but there would be money that could be redistributed into library operations for things like books and library staff and programs instead of buying services that are costed to the library outside the library's ability to even argue about it. We are just being handed a bill, saying pay this, when in fact it is clear on our experience with other public libraries in Colorado, that we could do the services less expensively.

RA                    Well now as we are approaching this and who knows where the district issue will end up and we've built a lot of beautiful libraries, how do you see the future of the delivery of library services as we're proceeding in to the 2000's, where are we headed because as the trustees know we've seen all sorts of styles and models that are delivering library services around the country, how do you see us proceeding?

BK                    Well I see the library proceeding with certainly a lot of care and a lot of thoughtfulness about what's the most efficient and effective way to continue doing public library business in a place like Jefferson County. On the one hand, you can look at the cost of building and operating these big buildings like the one we are in, the Belmar library and wondering how much longer people are going to want this kind of big bricks and mortar. How much longer are these places, these big buildings are going to be necessary? So before the next big ticket expense is made and I'm assuming maybe Fehringer Ranch on a site owned by the library at Kipling and Quincey, do we need another one of those? And there is a lot of arguments that say, no you really don't, we can deliver a very high level of service in a lot less space for a lot less expense.

On the other hand, anybody that you talk to that uses Belmar or anybody that works at Belmar or Columbine or Standley Lake or virtually any of the rest of our buildings, would like to see a little diminution of the amount of foot traffic because the buildings are not big enough to deal with it. Columbine is not big enough to deal effectively with the traffic that it gets and that causes congestion and overcrowding and limitations on the quality of service and other things and the only way right now that we know to fix that is to add more space, somewhere. Fehringer Ranch, which is halfway between Belmar and Columbine, would certainly do that but Fehringer Ranch, as we have learned, would develop a whole new group of patrons that never used the library before. This happened here. Library's foot traffic between the old Villa building, which is over on South Pierce about four blocks, five blocks from here, when we moved from the Villa building to this building the library business doubled overnight, stayed doubled. It wasn't just the new thing it was all of a sudden it is big enough to handle the people who want to use it. Libraries tend to be self-limiting in

terms of foot traffic. Arvada, a library that had been there for many years, it did a level amount of business over a period of years. You built the new Arvada library six blocks away and business went up by 150%. All of a sudden we were more capable of handling the number of people who wanted library service but when the building is too small, when the building is overcrowded, when the parking lot is always full, people don't go when you build an inadequate building. So there is that side of the argument, what do we do about these 35 to 40,000 square foot buildings? Do we need more of them? At least at the present moment if we were to build another one of these things in a place like Fehringer Ranch or West Woods in Arvada or someplace like that, it would be easy to demonstrate the need and the necessity just because of the foot traffic that would result.

On the other hand, these things are expensive, they are beginning to look to a lot of people like sort of big white elephants. Can't we do business in another way? And those choices would include storefronts, small service locations scattered around the County that do a small amount of business in terms of traditional library service and would probably do a very sizable amount of business in terms of computer application and computer based information and circulation coming from the bigger buildings. It would be a place that would be more convenient for you to go to get things than it would be to say get to this building here at Belmar. So certainly the library has to be very careful in thinking about how it is going to use its capital money in order to develop and continue the highest level of library service with the resources that the library has. I don't have an answer to that question but as I looked around the country and visited cities and talked to people in county libraries and elsewhere, everybody has this sort of same dilemma. There is an idea out there that says we don't need big library buildings anymore but when people build big public libraries these days, they get filled up. The Denver Public Library tripled in size?

RA Yeah.

BK And I think they had a four-fold increase in the amount of business at the downtown main building when they opened the new one. It is a little hard to point to these things and say nobody wants those big things anymore, because when they build them they come.

## Part 2

Ruth Anna One of the things that I've heard staff mention a lot, Bill, is that from the time you arrived at Jefferson County to when you did retire, and I'm sure it's a policy that will continue, it's been the development of a phenomenal collection of materials. Everybody says books, but libraries are so far beyond just books. And I wondered if you could kind of explain what you found and what your philosophy was as you went through the years.

Bill Knott One of the good things about public libraries in communities like this, particularly when they're well governed and well run, and things are moving along in a sort of an orderly fashion, is that you can kind of custom craft what the library is, your library, and how it should work and how it's going to work, how it's going to serve the community. And you can look around at models in the rest of the, say the state, or around the country, and you can pick up pieces of what people are doing that seem to work well. And while we understand there's a paradigm, there's a picture that says a public library is this, but as a practical matter, inside that box, there's a lot of tinkering and adjustment, so that the Jefferson County Public Library can look a lot different from say, the Douglas County Library. And that's as it should be. That we ought to listen very carefully to the community and how the community uses the library and what their needs and interests are so that you are compliant with them. Going back to the policy governance, that sort of thing. That it is compliance with patron interests and patron needs, that have to drive a lot of decision making.

RA Well, and they certainly vary in a County this size.

BK Yes, sure.

RA Its diversity.

- BK Its diversity. And this is becoming a more diverse, as most of the United States is actually, becoming a more diverse community, and so the library has to develop diversity along those kind of same lines. So to a certain extent the library however, is not just sort of driven by community interests, patron interests, it also has to come to some sort of basic understandings about what the library is and what it does, and add those things to its pattern of service for example. Leading the way, saying to the public, you may not be ready for this kind of service, or you may think that we should do this, but as a practical matter, that isn't as good as you think it is, we're applying a professional judgment here, that enhances your interest. That takes you in a different direction so that people who use the libraries kind of learn and grow along with us, as to what's the best way to use the resource. For example, people complained when books began to disappear from the reference collection. When a book that somebody had always used in the reference collection is no longer there. What happened to my book? The information is now in a computer database and here it is and it's much more up to date and it's much more accurate, and it serves you much better if you can get away from the print material into digital material. Certainly can't do that with everything, but we have to provide a certain kind of leadership. Where people say, don't get rid of the books. We're not going to get rid of the books unless the book has proven to be sort of useless, because there's a new way of looking at it.
- RA How'd you find the collection when you arrived?
- BK The collection when I arrived was I would guess a third of the collection came from donated books.
- RA Oh.
- BK Things that had turned up and this was a library like a lot of poor libraries and it was a poor library. I don't mean in terms of its quality, I mean in terms of the amount of money they had to spend. Just about any book that was in reasonably good shape that came in through the gifts and the libraries get thousands of gifts a month, we do. It was a collection driven more by what they could get their hands on than a lot of conscious decision making about what the collection ought to be. And so over time, as we developed more resources and we thought more about this and we began to develop collection development guidelines, that explained how selection should be done, and who should do it, the collection began to grow in more useful ways. At the same time we began to be a little more aggressive in getting materials out of the collection that were no longer being used, if they ever had been. There were books in the collection that came from buying exhibits or book exhibits at national conferences. Ended up with some very, very strange materials on the shelf. The library, and this was a mistake of mine, now I can't think what they called them, was a sort of a plan where you entered into a contract with major publishers and you bought, sort of, and paid for in advance, one copy of everything they published.
- RA Oh.
- BK We did that for a number of years. Oxford University Press sent some wonderful things and sent a lot of really strange. Oxford University Press is a strange publisher. And so we were getting a lot of materials that we probably wouldn't have selected if we had thought about it but since we were getting them cheap, that seemed to be a good way to build the collection. Well, getting things cheap is not a very good way to build a collection, so. Part of what happened, however, was, there's a growing interest around the country, particularly in suburban public libraries, and a good example of it was the Baltimore County Public Library serving suburban Baltimore, that entered into the understanding that the people will vote with their feet in terms of the stuff they want. And so give them what they want whereas a County library like this one might have bought five copies of a book to serve a hundred reserves, or holds on the book, Baltimore County would buy fifty. They would buy one copy of a book for every two holds. For example, what's our policy now, three?
- Ann Cress Four.
- BK Four. So, it was that kind of automatic response, we will buy materials that go out the door. Certainly something a library has to do. Certainly has to be responsible to its community for the

things they want, and to have enough copies to satisfy often long waiting lists for people who want to read certain things. But some of that got a little crazy. You ended up building a collection that was primarily based in the circulating interest of your community, when in fact, in most communities, that isn't the only thing people want from their library. People do however, in this business these days, point to big circulation numbers as a measure of success. I think there's more to it than that. I think that a measure of success needs to include that. Your fiction and non-fiction collection for example, talking about books, has to reflect what people want to come to the library and check out but at the same time, there has to be the other side of that story that says, we need to develop collections in depth. We need to retain some things, particularly classic fiction and non-fiction often for many years. There has to be a kind of a balance, between letting somebody stay neck in neck with the New York Times list of best sellers. Not a bad thing to do, but at the same time, collection depth and collection interest across a diverse community has to be part of the decision. So for example in many libraries when a book no longer circulates much, or at all, the book is pulled from the shelf, and the book is discarded. In Jefferson County Public Library, we developed the idea of a Resource Collection, largely not my idea, largely the interests of the then head of Public Services, Margaret Owens, that we had to retain some sort of depth to the collection. And so the Resource Collection, originally housed in the basement of the Evergreen Library and now has spilled into the basement of the Arvada library, and elsewhere, where we are keeping at least, one copy of books that we think have some life left in them, so that if you want to go back and look for a fiction title that is five years old and at many suburban county libraries you won't find it but in this library, you probably would. The reason we know that that practice has value, in my judgment is in the requests placed on the book collection of this public library, by other libraries. The library belongs to a large network of academic and public libraries across the state of Colorado. It is one of the largest networks of its kind, and it is a patron-initiated computer-managed process of letting a person find out where a book is that they want if it isn't in say the Jefferson County library and they can request that the book be sent from any library in that network. And so it is possible for a nine year old who is writing a book report on puppies to have access to the veterinary medicine collection of Colorado State University. In a completely open-handed, if we own it, we'll loan it, which is new particularly to academic librarians. It has proven to be a hugely successful project. The initial discussions about this project, it includes virtually all the academic libraries in Colorado, and most of the big public libraries. The reason that we know it is successful is the flow of demand and supply. When we began to have discussions about forming this network, and it was very expensive to build, many of the academic libraries were in a swivet about having a big suburban County library, in the mix because our patrons are going to take all their stuff. Well, we did. We take a lot of their stuff but at the same time, we lend more than we borrow.

RA Yes.

BK Our library lends more books to the University of Colorado Boulder than we borrow from them. We are in a positive lending and borrowing relationship with University of Colorado Boulder, Auraria, Denver University, Colorado College, all of those places we lend them more books than we borrow from them. And we lend them at levels that are frankly astonishing. Public libraries, in my experience, not dissimilar from this one, think they've had a busy interlibrary loan year, when they've handled a thousand items. We're going to get pretty close to 200,000 items this year of lending and borrowing within this network. Thousands and thousands of titles moving around between these libraries and a lot of these titles we're going to loan about 90,000 books this year to other libraries, many of which, most of which are coming from the collection depth of this not from best sellers and current popular fiction and that sort of thing. So there is value to that, we can participate in these kinds of networks because we can lend, we can participate fairly because we can lend, that makes it a lot easier for big libraries that do have collection depth to want to lend to us.

RA But what about, when you talk about the collection, books are obviously what people see in libraries, maybe magazines, and newspapers, it's printed material. But in today's world, with the technology that's there, and the diversity, you talk diversity of population, the diversity of our collection, and the types of materials that people can get, how did all that progress because that happened a lot during your tenure here?

- BK Yeah, we really had to be pretty nimble, and still do. And that is you've got to stay pretty close to the development of technology, particularly different kinds of media for library use and at the same time you have to not be overly bashful about moving from one technology to the next. A good example is that, for many, many years there was out there books on tape. And almost all the books on tape for many years were abridged books on tape. Nobody believed that anybody in their right mind would check out a bunch of tapes to listen to an unabridged six hundred-page novel. War and Peace, whatever. So we didn't buy them. We didn't buy the abridged ones, because we thought it was dumb, it's like buying a Readers Digest condensed books. And then all of the sudden it began to soak in, this was vendor driven not the library, began to soak in that people really would listen to unabridged books on tape. And once that business got rolling, it became an enormous part of virtually every public library's business. Unabridged books on tape became an extremely popular service, and we kind of resisted it, mostly on the basis of, because for a long time all that was available was abridged but all of a sudden, people are using books on tape, as they commute, as they take trips, as they drive around in their cars, you had books on tape, cassettes. Well, wonderful. Then sort of all of a sudden the books on tape business began to diminish because new technology and more efficient technology was taking its place and that was books on CD, and now forms a very sizable part of our business. I don't know what happened to all those books on tape, but they are gone, for the most part. Actually, they went away after the manufacturers quit putting tape players in cars and have CD players. So an improved technology, in many ways not as good, in many ways as good, technology that is quickly embraced by the public and as quickly been embraced by the library. Virtually the same thing happened with VHS tapes. We didn't buy videotapes, then we bought a lot of videotapes, now nobody has a video tape player anymore and so, our film collections, movies and things like how-to materials, and historic materials, and television programs, are all on CD.
- RA On DVD.
- BK On DVDs, yes. Rapidly changing, but libraries have become very successful at listening to these kinds of changes and not being afraid to make the adjustment. Our adjustment was to go through the collection and take out 10,000 videocassettes. 10,000?
- AC 30,000.
- BK 30,000 videocassettes and they are being disposed of, actually going to be at the book sale. If you want to build your VHS tape collection, Ruth.
- RA I still have two VCR's that work.
- BK Okay. Sure. Come to the book sale because they're not even going to get all 30,000 of them put out, I don't think they'll have room but they're going to be sold by the foundation at book sale. These are some examples, there will be more.
- RA Well, I think a huge change with the computers. Now granted the first terminals with computers were kind of funny, and hard to operate if you were a mother with little kids, I remember well. But now you look at them and one of the shocks that I don't think I realized until I was on the Board, is the tremendous amount of information I could get from my home and especially databases and going to wireless, so maybe go into how that technology and how we check out our books now. I mean it's been a huge change in the past ten years.
- BK Well, part of what we argue in the libraries is that while we understand you can use the big search engines like Google, to connect yourself with certain kinds of information, there's a lot of information that Google is never going to let you get to because it has value and is therefore being sold, and if somebody's not paying the bill, you can't use it. So what libraries are doing are providing computer terminals that let you use search engines like Google, but at the same time connect you with sophisticated, updated, important valuable information that you can get in no other way, than through your public library. And because of the technology, and because of the

way it works, we began to understand that you don't need to be in the library to get access to that. We can give you the same quality of access from your home, or from your office, or from your school that you can get in the building. Saves everybody a lot of traffic by your not having to come to the library unless it's to physically pick something up or drop something off. You also can come here and use probably better equipment at the library than you probably can afford at home. We can, because we can spread the cost out over many thousands of users in our buildings, we can stay very up to date, we can develop very high-speed, very efficient, very accurate tools for you to use in the library but you have the same access from your home if you want. So, libraries have gone to that kind of technology and very rapidly. We've also gone to technology that lets us, lets patrons do self-checkout for example. Unheard of ten years ago, that you would allow the public to check out their own books but now it is routine and libraries typically are getting into the 80-90% books checked out, go out through patron check out procedures, rather than going through a staff member. This is going to have big implications on staffing patterns in libraries and who's going to be there. Who we're going to hire in order to do the work and what kind of people we need. That will continue to change, that will continue to be a dramatically growing and developing area of interest. One of the areas that I know is now coming up on the table that we're going to have to talk about is the public catalog. This place where you go to find out what books and what data and what information is available to you, is driven by what we call public access catalog. There is one view that says, public access catalogs should be bigger, more sophisticated, more efficient, more effective in getting access and there's another one that says, all that stuff is going to be taken over by private vendors and by open-ended vendors and by places for which there are no charges and all you're going to have is a small finding list to sort of help you get started in your search and then you switch over to other systems. And so, some public catalogs are becoming finding lists, author title finding lists, and some public catalogs, the Encore System that we're implementing now, is a dramatically different way or an additional way for your search strategies to be managed by computer. I think it's exciting. I think it's valuable, I'm not sure we can teach people to use it. Have you used it? Do you know Encore and how it works?

AC Yeah.

BK It's terrific. But then somebody who doesn't really have the sort of technical understanding as say the library staff has, will look at that thing and say, what is that? How does that work?

RA That'll be me.

BK Get that thing out of my face. Or, I'll go talk to a librarian. So, we'll have these discussions about these tools. What will the community use? What do they need in order to feel successful in using the public library?

RA Now, also during your tenure here we created, a foundation was created for the libraries, which is the nonprofit arm, I mean we're government non-profit, but this is one that can go out and do things that the library can't do, and from that, the history of the foundation where it is today. When did the foundation start?

BK The foundation was created in about 1968 and it was called the Jefferson County Public Library Trust and Endowment Association.

RA Oh that's a title.

BK Known as T and E, actually. And what is was, was since the library can't spend money, even if it finds a dime on the floor, can't spend money unless it is appropriated to them by the Board of County Commissioners. It was a place to park non-tax revenue, like gifts, contributions, finding a dime on the floor, selling used books. And for many years the money just sort of accumulated in a fund. The County librarian was the director of the foundation and the library trustees were the foundation board. We had a couple of trustees come along in the '80's, who took a look at this and said you know the foundation really could be a major engine of library development in Jefferson County, but we're not using the capacity and capability of the foundation. And so there was a

consultant study done, there was a lot of discussion, new bi-laws were written, new procedures were put in place and the foundation took on a life of it's own, as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit, and hired an executive director who directed the affairs of the foundation. Some additional staff added and it has grown now to an organization that through puts about five or six hundred-thousand dollars a year, that helps us buy additional levels of library service, or develops in areas where we weren't doing a very good job, because we didn't have the money. Library foundation is now the fundraising arm for the library. Its only mission is to develop resources in support of the mission of the public library and as such has proven to be enormously successful at that work. They support at about 100% of the cost the Traveling Children's Library, which is a program providing a certain level of library service, at least library contact, in the Head Start programs in Jefferson County. It's a very good program, it's very effective. Knott's Kids.

RA Now we have to say Knott's Kids, you've got to give the background for that because the name is not N-O-T it's K-N-O. Named after Bill Knott, which I think is important.

BK It has to do with the idea that there was the interest on the part of the trustees to name a library building after me and my deep reluctance to have anything named after me.

RA But also his reluctance was tempered with the fact we weren't going to let nothing be named after you.

BK It had to do at the time with I think my 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary as the County Librarian. Thirty-five years of showing up began to interest people and the idea that they ought to recognize that. And so the recognition for Knott's Kids came from the creation of a program called Knott's Kids, funded by the foundation, that is an attempt to develop additional levels of library contact, and service to early school age kids, in Jefferson County with special programs based in our buildings around the county or in some cases done outside our buildings. It's a program that has generated a lot of interest. It has done a lot of very interesting things and the foundation pays the bills. Something over \$100,000 a year, I think to support Knott's kids, about \$150,000 for the traveling children's library, and then lots of other support mechanisms. Foundation gets its money by direct fundraising, they do book sales, they do a whole variety of things to develop revenue resources for the library and then the foundation and the library, the trustees, and the foundation board of directors, can work together on fundraising, and then the things that the foundation would do, when it develops funding. So, it is I think, the foundation board of directors has a very highly developed sense of growing the foundation, increase it's effectiveness, raising more money than it is raising now, and kind of going to the next level of being a major player in Jefferson County, in terms of fundraising and then what they do with the money they raise. It has become an important part of the library.

RA I think it's important to note though in there that, whenever they take on a program or start one, we do look at the picture down the road, where's it going to be in five, ten, fifteen years, so we make sure it's still funded no matter what happens with the foundation, or that it's a viable program that will be self-sustaining. So I think that's important to note. It's not just creating programs that we don't need, or that the library dumps, it's programs that we both agree on and the library supports, and would continue to support.

BK And I think that's the important thing that the foundation and the board of trustees have to keep in mind. That if these things are successful, we really ought to look toward getting incorporated into library funding as a permanent program and then the foundation goes on with the next innovative idea, the next exploration, the next sort of cutting edge interest that they have.

RA In the time that you've been the director, is there a service that was perhaps popular when you started and no longer used now that we've dropped? I would be kind of curious about that as we've changed through the technology, and obviously changed our collection ideas, but are there services that we had going that we've sort of dropped due to whatever?

BK One of the things we implemented here in the early '70's was a books-by-mail program, which was a program that we copied from, that I had run in Kansas when I was there. Sending a book

catalogue to rural box holders in Jefferson County with the idea that we could mail books back and forth to them rather than having to get to a library. This was of more value at a time when we didn't have much in the way of library service and people don't seem to have been as mobile as they are now. So a large part of the population served by that, let's say was in the Marshdale area, south of Evergreen, but when we built the Evergreen library in the early '90's, opened it that way, people were getting away from the idea of using mail as a way of getting library service and simply visiting what had become more adequate libraries than we had at the time. So we sort of outgrew the need for a books by mail program.

RA Well, in reverse has there been a service that has astounded you in how it grew? That maybe you thought was marginal to decide to do it, but it's been a tremendous success?

BK Well, I think books on tape. I mean I still don't listen to books on tape and don't care to.

RA His wife and I do.

BK Yeah, I know.

RA This is important to know. Audio books, rather than book on tape would be much better.

BK Well, my wife, yes, my wife's a librarian, has a long commute, has an MP3 player, she now has a new car that has an MP3 plug, so she can plug her MP3 player into her car's audio system. And she's a big user. But yeah, she does downloads to her MP3 player. I think all of that still astonishes me. I really don't want somebody yakking in my ear while I'm fishing or gardening or driving or anything else.

RA You don't listen to the radio?

BK I listen to the radio, sure.

RA That would be yakking in your ear.

BK I was listening to, yes, coming to work this morning listening to Turandot the Puccini opera. Which is sort of made for driving in a car because you can sing loud but I don't want to try and follow a story line. The only time I ever did it was, I like P.G. Wodehouse and, I had one of the Jeeves books on tape, driving across the country and it was okay, but I got a little embarrassed, I'd be passing a car and pounding on the steering wheel, tears running down my face, and people looking at me like some kind of nut, I'd say no, I'm just listening to a very funny book. But I have no, that doesn't interest me very much.

RA That does happen. Especially funny ones with Bill Cosby's tapes. I can be laughing and crying at the same time, because the tears are from laughter. But in your career, perhaps the things that people would be most interested in besides, obviously the history, but your personal assessment of your career in, yes, I had successes, yes I messed up here and there, but what were some, maybe two or three of the best things that you did. Well let's start with the failures, so we can end on a high-note. What were, maybe two or three things, maybe there were dozens, but I don't believe it.

BK Oh there are dozens, yeah.

RA That were really boondoggles. Really mistakes or failures, or just hey, it sounded like a good idea at the time, but...

BK I think we tried some point in time to rotate books through the library so that we would shift materials in sizeable quantities from one building to another building. Somebody had that bright idea, it was probably me and everybody hated it. And it really never really worked. So then, I thought, well if that was a bad idea, maybe it would be a good idea to rotate staff. So you worked in the Golden library for a year, and then you were transferred to the Villa library. I think if I had been

seen in a dark alley by some staff members, you'd have found me face down in a ditch some place. That business about what I saw as a opportunity for growth seemed to most people as more of a serious pain in the neck and not worthy of serious pursuit. We just did a little bit of it and then sort of un-did it.

RA Any others?

BK Oh, dear heavens. There were a variety of planning things that were implemented, and this is the plan, and this is where we're going forward, toward which we're going and after sort of more sober reflection realized we really better not go that way, because that would be a grievous mistake. That had to do with, some of it had to do with the idea that rather than build big buildings, this is quite a while ago, I'm talking about the '70's, we were going to distribute library service through a pattern of about thirty or thirty-five small community libraries, neighborhood based libraries. There was so little support of that idea, that I just couldn't get anybody to do anything. People would just look at me funny and ask me to please stop that as well. We had begun to develop the idea that bigger buildings were a better way to do it, particularly because of the Lakewood building. But at the same time, were pushing the idea of trying to do widely distributed libraries in buildings that would have been too small, when they weren't supported by a main library. I'm going to guess that a failure in a sense, and I have used this example before, is the area of a main library for serving Jefferson County. There was a time when that idea could have been more carefully examined than it was. I think it would have been possible looking forward carefully enough, it would have been possible to develop at least one central location for the sort of one-time pieces of service and collections, in one location, and then treating all the rest of the libraries around the County as sort of branches. At one point, we called them branches. At one point, we called them regional branches. But I think there is a case to be made, and other county libraries like this one have done it, a case to be made for kind of a mix of library services where there is a main library and then relatively full service branches, but maybe not quite the right size. I'm going to guess for the majority of library users, the present system is the one they like. That people don't want to go to the highest level of library service, they have to go to central Lakewood for example for somebody that lives in southern Jefferson County, so that the Columbine library was not at the same quality that it is now, is something that the community did not want. But I still think looking across what I know and what I understand about public library service in communities the size of this one, that we simply still don't have a central enough, highly developed enough, central location for levels of service that we should only do in one building. Other failures were the attempt to do subject specialties in libraries, so the Villa library had one specialty and the Evergreen library had another one.

RA Oh, I remember that. That was awful.

BK That was awful. And what caused that to be less, that idea to sort of go away, was the floating collection, I believe to be a success. Library staff came up with the idea. We implemented it over the, in some cases, extremely noisy opposition inside the staff and the ideas about circulating collections and having their base in a particular library, circulating collection here and one here and one here...kind of went away because of the floating collection which causes a book to be sourced into the library where it is dropped off. A book that came from Evergreen could be dropped off at Arvada and it became Arvada's book until it went someplace else. We couldn't have done this until we had a sufficiently manageable automated system, but we were doing this before we implemented "Triple I," Innovative Interfaces, which was in 1996, so I'm guessing it came on board in the '80's.

RA Well, I think that would be one of your tremendous successes.

BK That has been a success without it having to have any kind of tub-thumping, drum-rolling carrying on about it. It just is in place and it operates seamlessly. Nobody thinks much about it, it just seems to be a perfectly normal way to do business anymore and that may be the true success, that you don't have to keep pumping it up, it just runs and runs efficiently and effectively.

RA And I think it's been tried to be modeled around the country.

- BK Yes. At the same time, colleagues of mine, who have gazed upon this, who have pronounced it to be the dumbest thing they ever saw, and they would rather rot in hell, than be in a library that, I'm serious about this. And libraries where they got a new director, and they had a rotating collection, like Adams county, got rid of it, because they thought it was dumb.
- RA Oh my gosh.
- BK Yeah.
- RA I think it's a tremendous success and I never hear a complaint from a patron. I mean that is phenomenal.
- BK Every once in a while, somebody will have dropped a book off at the Lakewood library because they got it there and later have gone back to the Lakewood library to get it and it's not there anymore. And they find out it's in Arvada and they are just, they call me and they're baffled. What kind of crazy place are you running there? I say well, but at the same time you want to say, you really have an expectation that every book you used to read or read before is going to be sitting on the shelf the next time in that same place? It's a foolish notion because it's going to be checked out to somebody in any case.
- RA That would be delusional to think that.
- BK Delusional.
- RA Okay, well you've talked about some of the things that you kind of would like to have rethought at the time, but probably couldn't because you had to try them to see if it would work. Give me two or three that you think were the things that you would like on your retirement tombstone.
- BK My retirement tombstone.
- RA That he was a jolly old man, no.
- BK Well, policy governance certainly would be one of those. I have always, one of the things I've enjoyed about the job, is I like working for a Board. I've worked for boards since...
- RA Well that may be one of his failings.
- BK I've worked for Boards for forty years, and find that that is, in my view, an efficient and effective way to do the community's business, as far as a library goes. And policy governance, implemented a much more careful thoughtful way of having that kind of work go forward, in a way that didn't drive people crazy. It did a little bit, but.
- RA When I first suggested it.
- BK Yeah, without it being sort of a hostile environment, where the library trustees feel they have to take back the policy control or library administration resisting this sort of transfer of authority and power. It is done in an important way, in a perfectly amicable, trustworthy relationship. And I think that those mechanics of trust, I had a lot to do with, but not everything. And that's important, and I think that, put that on my tombstone, if in fact policy governance does indeed survive me. I can see some poor character, coming here from some other place where this sort of thing is not the case and entering into a personal understanding of I'm going to spade this underground as fast as I can get rid of it.
- RA That person may be spaded underground, before...

- BK Well, I don't want to say that, in that way, I'm saying that the person may have a better idea. Or simply operates differently or doesn't have the same kind of relationship that I have had with the trustees.
- RA Because the trustees are pretty firm that that, the way you've implemented it and the way it's understood, policy governance is here to stay.
- BK Well, I would hope so, but it's entirely possible that there is another...
- RA It'll evolve, as things evolve. But, no it's too important.
- BK To me it's different. Remember the Board sent me to a bunch of management training programs, with the American Management Association and these were important sessions for me. It was an idea on the part of the Board at the time when I started doing this, and I did some of these in DC, and some in Chicago.
- RA When was this now?
- BK This would have been the early '90's. Late '80's early '90's. I learned a tremendous amount about management principles and practices, but one of the most important things I learned was do your own thing, to coin a phrase. That meant you can look at this management practice and you can look at that management practice, and here's this book, and here's this new idea. Read all those things, and understand them, and then figure out what pieces of all of those things will work the most effectively for you and the way you do business. Don't just buy the book, and do the thing. Sit down, thoughtfully, and figure out how you're going to apply management principles and practices that work the best for you. And the Board's support of that before policy governance sort of appeared on the scene, the Board's support of that was very, very important to me. Not just to my being a more effective manager, but having that kind of relationship with the trustees to say, we think you're pretty good, but there's more stuff we'd like you to do and so we're going to send you and they wouldn't send me to things that were library based. They had a lot of distain for stuff from the American Library Association, for good reason. And they really felt I needed to connect with business management principles rather than library stuff. Examples of that include, one of the sessions I went to was a week long, done by Bill Zerdt, who is still a management consultant. This was done some years ago. And, when the class started, we were at clusters of tables, with like four of us at a table, and we worked together as a team for a week. And as he's introducing the group he said, I've been doing this for twenty years and this is the first time I've had a librarian in here. And he said, what is even stranger is there are two librarians here. And I'm looking around. The other librarian was the head of East Asian Languages Cataloging at the Library of Congress. At the end of the session, people wrote down on a piece of paper which job they thought was the toughest in the room. And you got to know what people were doing. At my table, was the guy who was the head of Duke Power and he was running a Nuclear Power Station in South Carolina. Also at my table was a woman who was the senior project engineer for a proposed project by the Corps of Engineers, to dig the Mississippi three feet deeper.
- RA Oh, you're kidding?
- BK No. Another guy was the financial vice-president of Ford Motor Company, at my table. I learned a lot from those people. But at the end of the session, when it was determined who had the hardest job, the guy leading the class said, guess what? The person whose votes led all the rest was one of the librarians. Wasn't me, for God sake. And these people marveled at a job, this woman running a program of maybe 60 catalogers, all of whom spoke different East Asian languages, and some of whom their communities have hated each other for 2000 years, the idea of a book coming into this cataloging process, and somebody making the decision about where to plug that book into the world of knowledge. People just were astonished at how complex that was. Those were good sessions. Another one was somebody from RJR, who said in his case, in fact there were a couple people from Reynolds Tobacco and, every time there's a new book published on a new way of conducting business in an organization, RJR would adopt it. And so these constant management

style changes, that just kept rolling along, rolling along, and you'd read the book, and you'd do it and you'd read the next book, and you'd do it. And the guy said, this not completely apocryphal, it got so confusing that one day, he was walking down the hall to go get a sandwich and he noticed on the door of a colleague's office a sign that said out to lunch, if the boss calls, get his name. Which was the kid of thing that I think Zerdt was telling us, don't do. Pick your own style, and work inside an organization, and that's one of the successes I think, that I have figured out that style, and I have worked with people who have been supportive of it. I think one of the other things I'm proud of, I keep saying this, is that we came from, and you guys were on the tour last week and saw these little dinky public libraries that we were in. We came from a sort of a poor, poorly organized, badly distributed, under-funded public library, to what it is now. It is not 100% success. There's a lot of things this library needs and there's a lot of things that the library could get better at, but it is now, I believe an integrated, cooperative, internally trustworthy, and internally supportive organization for the people who work here, and for the people who govern it, and for the people who use the services. It is I believe understood what this county library is and why it is effective. And why it will continue I think to stay effective. And I think that's what I put in place.

RA I think it's one of the best systems in the country.

BK Well, in a lot of ways it is, Ruth. In other ways it has it's failings.

RA Well, everybody does.

BK But it's pretty good. I think part of what we finally figured out was, that we would do standardization without doing cookie cutter things. That we would encourage ideas, and we would encourage processes, and we'd make sure people understood that they had an important role to play. We treated people fairly. We didn't treat people like cans of peas. I think that's the kind of thing that people, I hope would remember about this. It's been a good place to work, and it's been a good place to get your library service within the limitations of the money and the resources.

RA Well, as you know, we're obviously in the search for a new County Librarian, which leads me to a question I was going to ask earlier. How in the world did they pick the name County Librarian?

BK They didn't, I did.

RA And why in the world did you?

BK For reasons of parity. I got the idea in there some place that the library was kind of a poor second cousin to a lot of what was going on at the County. A lot of that had to do with salary. The County made decisions about salary levels and we figured out a way of fixing that but we still had organizational difficulties, in terms of the parity between Library employees and County employees. In that process, I figured out that there is a group of employees that are called appointed officials and I was going to be one of those. And I wasn't. But after a fair amount of internal politicking, and some other things, I became part of what the group called appointed officials.

RA For the County.

BK For the County. And a couple of reasons for that. Raised my salary. I never had anything to do with my salary, trustees did my salary but the trustees began, as I explained to them, that I should be considered as an employee of the library at the same level as the rest of the appointed officials. And they were the head of the health department, the County Head of the Health Department, the County Administrator, the County Attorney, County Librarian and the Under-Sheriff, for some reason. The effect of that, of my ceasing then to be library director and becoming County librarian in that group of people, raised me and in the process brought the entire organization up, so that the senior managers are directors, which is different than being a library director. There are other directors in the County, and it raised the level of those people and then eventually raised the entire system to the level of County government, which I thought it needed. That was not an easy process.

RA When was this done?

BK Oh, it was done in the '80's. And there were people who helped me with this. I simply sought certain kinds of allies in County government to help us build the organization more reflective of a County organization at large, so that we had directors at the same level of the other directors: Director of Open Space, Director of Accounting, Director of these things, so that our senior managers were at that same level. And the only way we could do that was for me to get out of level and go to the appointed officials. When I got established as an appointed official, then they created the personnel board, and I became ex-officio member of the personnel board, which was an important place for the County librarian to sort of do the practice. Now, becoming County librarian was then an internal political move, and that's all it was. And I have accused other people of changing the title, and I've said, oh it's the bureaucracy of the County, and so on and so forth. That's a lie. It was a bald-faced way of seeking parity for the librarian, within County government.

RA Well now the truth is out and on tape.

BK Well, that's okay, it's the truth. Now you can't do anything to me about it. Beyond the reach of policy retribution.

RA Well, if you were talking to the new County Librarian, whoever he or she may be, and you had a vision where you would like that person and sequential people to take the library, what might that be?

BK Keep your stuff open to the organization. Communicate like crazy and have others do the communication. It is, I believe important that the County Librarian is an enabler. Tell this story, get this message out, form these teams in the organization, keep the knitting close and carefully understood across the organization, and don't try to impose mechanisms that isolate senior management or management from the staff generally. Keep everybody in the boat at the same time. Talk to people, listen to people, but work through the people who are there. This is not about you. This is not about your running the library. I never did run the library. This is about seeing to it that the people who are running the library have to tools they need, so that they can get their stuff done. You really do have to either be, it's important to have an ego in this, that drives a lot of sort of quality thinking and application, but keep your personal mechanisms out of the business life of the library, except working through the people who are going to have to carry out the tasks. The reason that's important is that you then empower people like Paddy Correia, for example, with independent authority to do fiscal reporting directly to the Board, with an independent understanding that she is the keeper of the keys of certain parts of this, and that you rely on her to be trustworthy and accurate and fair and all the other things you need from people, and where you don't have to make her do it, where she simply understands, that's what she has to do in order to be successful. And her success is determined by the success of the library, not her relationship with the Executive Director. The other thing I would tell people is spend 30 or 40% of your time outside the door, join organizations, participate in organizations, get to the table where decisions are being made that are important to the library. For a long time, we were at the table with the Jefferson Economic Council, but it slowly began to understand that very little of what they're doing has any relationship to the library. There didn't seem to be any need to be at that table but there are other tables you need to be at. You need to be closely connected and have a first name basis with the other people doing basically what you're doing in the community, so that you can call on them, or they should feel free to call on you for cooperative idea development and issues and programs and that sort of thing.

RA And support.

BK And support. So, get to know who John Zabawa is, at the Seniors' Resource Center. There's a lot of reasons why what John does and what the library does, at Seniors, our paths cross in a lot of important ways and more so because the foundation is, in it's next round of program development, wants to do work with seniors. So you have to know who those people are, and you have to be on a good working relationship with them.

- RA And the business community.
- BK And the business community. The business community can be as much as anything effectively done through, the chambers of commerce and through the trustees, and through the Foundation board of directors. The Foundation Board, the people like the president of the Lakewood First Bank, and people like that, who are at our table contributing their time and effort and energy and initiative. These are important places for the County librarian to be. You simply have to know who they are, and what they do, and how you can work together with them, and you have a good cordial relationship.
- RA Well, if you came back fifteen, twenty years from now, what would you like to see the Jefferson County Libraries looking like?
- BK I still think we need Belmar style buildings for the foreseeable future. There seems to be a kind of a life, excuse me, a circumstance that the library buildings themselves build in a community that you can do in no other way. There is no other institution that has this kind of open, public, you can come in here and use this place in any way that's convenient for you. So I would like to see a major new building at Fehringer Ranch. I think there needs to be another in west, northwest Arvada. I think some of the current buildings need to be upgraded from the size they're at, particularly Golden. So, I think our brick and mortar models are successful models and I'd like to see more of them, because I think they're demonstrably successful when they're done. We're not talking about 300,000 square foot buildings. We're talking about buildings 30, 40, 50, thousand square feet, that can be managed on a couple million dollars a year, about what they cost to run and we need some more. Because I think there are large parts of this population who would be library users if we were reasonable convenient to them but we're not. Our buildings aren't big enough or well enough located. I'd still like to see and I'd like to walk into a building and kind of get that musty whiff of books and paper and ink and whatnot. I still think I'd like to see a significant concentration off in the future. My example that I have used before is about the butcher at my grocery store who I know and he knows what I do and we talk and I recommend books to him and I gave him an invitation to one of the open houses at the Arvada Library when we opened. He came back to me and we talked and he says I hope you never get rid of the books and I said you know it isn't going to be up to us, if we're good at all at our jobs, if you still want books, we'll have them. But we ought not to do it because you've got an old book guy like me, you ought to have them because they are still useful in their way. At the same time I'd like to see the latest effective technology that people want and need available through their public library, free of charge as part of the basic mission. And the other thing that I want to see, is that it's always free of charge, additional charge. Libraries aren't free, libraries are expensive but they ought to be free to the user, or at no additional cost.
- RA Is there any philosophy in library service such as patron privacy, First Amendment rights, all of that, that you would like to see continue or anything you would like changed or enhanced?
- BK Well I think libraries have done a good job of positioning themselves with regard to First Amendment principles and freedoms and I think that's always got to be there. There's got to be at least one place in the community where people can have that kind of trustworthy relationship and going along exactly with that are the privacy and confidentiality rules that not only are the principals in place but the fact that you can use them with a guarantee that your confidentiality and privacy will be respected. I listened one time, it was a television thing I think and a guy was talking, he was a pastor from a church in Jefferson County and it was on some sort of talk show. He was complaining about the fact that there's a dramatic, and he was being a little pushy about this, that we're pushing religion out of our lives and the idea that you can't spend money on religion in public agencies he thought was wrong. I disagree with him, but he said, you know people can't get their hands on the Bible anyplace and I called him the next day. I said, you know go to your public library, we buy Bibles and we buy everything else and they're all pretty much in the same place in the collection and you should be proud of the fact that public money can be spent on Bibles when, for example, they're in an agency that has as its understanding that the Bible is not the only religious text that we're going to have. We're going to have them all. And he sort of stuttered and stammered and later called me back. He said, thank you for that. He said I went to the Lakewood

library and they've got a lot of Bibles. I'm glad that we can do that. I said, we can only do it when we understand that we also have to have the other stuff. There are places, libraries that I have been in, that have only the Bible on the shelf, we have them all. And as long as we can behave in that way that says we're going to protect the interests of this entire community, then I think we can behave in that way and say we can spend money on religious books, we can spend money on controversial materials, we can spend money on books like Madonna's book "Sex". That was back in the eighties.

RA That's been a while.

BK Been a while. And we can have those things because we have this job of having everything. We have to represent all interests across the community.

RA A-political.

BK Yeah, it has to all be there and as long as that's true, there's going to be stuff in there you are not going to like, but hopefully there will be stuff that you will. We have a rule that says, we have an ironclad guarantee, if you check a book out and you don't like it, you can always bring it back, no questions asked.

RA And if I gave you the statement, what would be the word that you would put at the end? Jefferson County Public Library? It starts with a "D". District?

BK Oh district. Jefferson County Public Library District. Well it should be a district. It will do a better job as a public library in this community if it functions as a district as long as the other principles are maintained at the same time and I think they would. I think even more so. I have gotten calls from County Commissioners challenging book selection decisions that we have made that I don't think as a district we would get those calls.

RA Oh, I don't mind the calls, it's just keep calling but you are going to have to convince me that there is a really good reason that book shouldn't be on the shelf and it's got to be something outrageous that none of us...

BK It's got to be pretty outrageous, well, or illegal.

RA Well yeah, illegal.

BK There is law about some of this stuff and we have to be observant.

RA But that's what libraries are for, to cause debate.