



**Jefferson County Public Library
Digital History Project
Interview with Bill Knott
Columbine Library, May 19 2008
Interviewer: Ruth Anna
Interview coordinated by Ann Cress
Interview recorded by Patrick Farrell**

Part 1

- Ruth Anna Hi, I'm Ruth Anna, Board of Trustees for the Jefferson County Public Libraries and I'm here today talking to our retired Executive Director, actually County Librarian, but he was the Executive Director, Bill Knott. Bill, my understanding is you started in April 1971 and, correct me, but April 15th, on tax day.
- Bill Knott Tax day, yeah. It was a big day. Walked in the door, first thing in the morning, nobody knew who I was and I didn't know where I was, I didn't even have a key, nobody was there.
- RA How many staff people in the building?
- BK I suppose there was a dozen who all looked at me funny. I had to walk around the building to find a door that was open. There was no introductory arrangement.
- RA No Board of Trustees that introduced you?
- BK No, no.
- RA No, oh? Kind of an interesting way to start. Today we have such orientation for staff that they probably have everything before they ever walk in the front door. Well when you walked in that front door and it was the Lakewood Library in its current location?
- BK No.
- RA Not in its current location.
- BK It was 20th and Youngfield in an old dime store. Building is still there but it is a paint store or something. But it's next to the old bowling alley at 20th and Youngfield. They had just moved in there when I got there. They had just moved in. I was there in January for the interview and they were finishing up the remodeling of the dime store into a library and then when I came permanently in April they had finished that. They had called me and said we are remodeling your office, how would you like your office remodeled and it was wood-plastic paneling and no windows and huge, enormous office.
- RA But, plastic panel. Oh that would be the seventies and the sixties.
- BK I walked through the building introducing myself and people sort of, not knowing quite what to do because nobody had prepared anything.
- RA What was your first impression of the first day looking at your building, looking at your staff, looking at the County cause you had just got here?
- BK It was really very positive, Ruth and the reason that it was is that in the late sixties, the County had finally decided they needed to build some libraries and so there were new buildings going on all over the place. The Villa Building had been finished in 1969, the old Villa Building, which was down on south Pierce. The Evergreen Library, the now old Evergreen Library was under construction. The Golden Library had opened in 1970. It was a nice new building. The Lakewood Library moved into the dime store, they sort of broomed it out and put up the plastic paneling and hung some light fixtures and it was kind of new and shiny, although it was an old building. The Golden building was nice. It was a very

positive place to walk into because there seemed to be a lot of energy and there was money being spent, things were growing and developing. It was kind of fun. And it stayed that way. It was for those first few years up into the mid-seventies, there was some real growth, there were some pretty exciting things going on. It was fun.

RA You realize some of the people viewing this will never know what a dime store is.

BK Dear heaven. Well actually it was a Kresge's dime store and it was the five and dime. Sort of a poor man's downscaled Target. They would resale things for a dime.

RA Kind of like the Dollar Stores.

BK Kind of like the Dollar Stores.

RA Actually the profits were pretty good back then, they weren't that bad.

BK Yeah, yeah. People wouldn't know what a dime store is?

RA But then you had your first day. When did you have your first encounter with County Government and the local governments?

BK Zona Rombaugh was the sort of business manager and sort of ran things. There had been an acting director who was still on staff when I got there but Zona seemed to be in charge: money, buildings, all those kind of things went through her office and she was a very strong willed woman, that there didn't seem to be anybody in charge so I might as well do it. So one of the first things she did is she said, you need to get up and meet the County Commissioners and to walk through the Courthouse and get to know people. So second or third day, we drove over to the Courthouse and she walked me through. She knew everybody. We sat around and chatted with the Commissioners a little bit. There was a County Manager at the time, met the County Manager, a fellow named Karl Williams. It was a good introduction, by that time, simply because somebody like Zona decided that it was a good idea that somebody should sort of tell me where the bathroom was, which in that building was no easy thing. So then I think we just sort of, after we went to the County we sort of stayed in the car and drove around the county a little bit. We went up to Evergreen, which was under construction and while we were there one of the Trustees was field marshaling that project, his name, Dan Rock, he was on the board.

RA The Trustees were monitoring the building project?

BK He was running it, yeah. Monitoring isn't quite the right word. And, we met, I met Dan. I had met Dan at the interview, of course. There was no library south of Conifer, I guess, cause Conifer wasn't in business. There was no library down here south of what, Alameda. So there wasn't anything down here, it was just open country. Wadsworth didn't go through, Kipling didn't go through.

RA I bet it has changed a lot.

BK It has changed a lot.

RA But you met the County Commissioners I assume at that time?

BK Second or third day. I think probably the second day, I met the County Commissioners. They seemed nice, Jack Trezise was one of them. Bill Huntsbarger was one of them. I can't think of the third one but they knew about the library, they were supportive of the library, they seemed to be happy to spend money on the library.

RA What about the cities, the mayors and that whole part?

BK That really came later, there was so much work to do in connecting with the County because the County at that time did our capital projects, had a hand in our building maintenance and some other things and so there was a while there at the beginning where most of my work was developing a relationship with

County government and County operations working through the County manager. Most of that later sort of drifted away when the County decided they didn't need a County manager. So there was really nobody to work with directly. The work with the cities started when we began to look at where we were going to locate new buildings beyond those that were being built and that wasn't until the eighties. So my relationship with the cities really was a function later, ten, twelve years later than the first years that I was here.

RA So it started out and I think it's always been a good relationship with the Counties but we have had some challenges at times. What would you say was your first challenge?

BK Some of the challenges were, the County Commissioners, some of them anyway, remember the County Commissioners were full time jobs, they get paid to do this. So some of them are of the opinion that their job is to run things including the library and they began to make decisions and over the years we had a number of decisions made by the County Commissioners that should have been made by the Trustees and that pattern was very difficult to break even when it was obvious that the County Commissioners were no longer paying any of our bills, like new buildings. There was still enthusiasm on the part of the Commissioners for decision-making and then call the Board Chairman or call me and say this is what we did. That was hard thing to get out of.

RA What do you think propelled it out of that?

BK I think what propelled a lot of it was, for one thing, here late seventies, early eighties the County insisted that we join the personnel system, the library had its own personnel system. The County insisted on that, the library board resisted, the County Commissioners appointed two new Trustees, went from five to seven members and the two new members came onboard with the agenda to get this done and once the personnel system was integrated into County government the connections really were complete. We really were doing business with the accounting office and human resources and everybody else in County government and by that time it was in the early eighties.

RA Was the mill levy always dedicated to the library or did that change during your tenure.

BK From all of the time I was there, yes, always dedicated to the library. That came about in the late sixties when the law was changed. Up until then the library had been funded from the General fund and there was always an internal struggle that I had not been part of, to get money from the General fund to make sure that this works and once the law changed the Commissioners then acted to create a separate mill levy, 1.5 mills. Then things were a little easier and I think that separate mill levy thing over the years had a lot of political weight to it. You've even heard the current Commissioners say, you know, you've got a mill levy, voters approved it, you get the mill levy, we don't argue with you, we don't even approve your budget kind of thing. There is a sense that that separate mill levy sets you aside as sort of a special case and we have always been like that because of that separate levy. A little bit outside the General fund, internal operations also, your friendly county librarian resisted the attempts to be officed over at the Courthouse at the board's insistence. They didn't want me over there either. So that, I think that sort of independence developed in that period, in the seventies when people began to get their arms around the idea that the library was its own thing and it sort of stood alone.

RA Now what about, now with your Trustees you had, the Board who hired you, and I assume your relationships were fairly cordial with them they did hire you. Were there times during the seventies where your relationship with the Board had other results?

BK By that you mean were there Trustees who were sometimes difficult?

RA Yes.

BK Yes there were Trustees that were sometimes difficult. Some of this was, again going back to this sort of natural outgrowth of people coming into organizations who have, for better or for worse, leadership skills or leadership intentions or ideas. I'm on the board and therefore I'm in charge. And so library Trustees who took off on their own or in some cases library Trustees who formed little caucuses inside

- of the Board, particularly when there were seven board members. Those problems were difficult to deal with because some Trustees felt very independent of the Board generally and we always worked, and I know you understand that, that you work with seven people and they really only make decisions when they are sitting and voting and debating and deliberating and you're not out there telling staff what to do and you're not making decisions and calling vendors and buying things and doing this kind of stuff, which were problems that we had with some individual Trustees who didn't get the Board idea, they didn't get it that they're part of a board and they really only can do things when they're acting as a board.
- RA Now how would you handle that, cause you had to build, your first partnership had to be with the Trustees?
- BK Yes.
- RA You had to build trust in them and you had to believe that they weren't all crazy too at the same time?
- BK They weren't all crazy.
- RA So how did you develop that relationship? How did you make it grow well?
- BK I was the shameless, developer of the chairmanship idea and as long as I had the Chair connected to these ideas that we are talking about, about the way a board functions, as long as the Chair exhibited good leadership and as long as the Chair understood that if you don't do it this way it's a mess, things were fine and over the years it has been primarily the strength of people like you, who served on the Board as a Chairman and took a very strong position, strongly supported by my office. That the Chairman kind of keeps these people in line and when somebody steps out of line it is easier for me to pick up the phone and call the Board Chairman than it is for me to deal with it myself. And I think with a few exceptions that succession of Board Chairs has made a great deal of difference in building the idea that the library is governed by a governing body, it is not seven individuals doing what they want to do. And once we got into policy governance that even got more articulated and put in place.
- RA But that took several decades.
- BK That took several, well several decades, it took a while.
- RA You developed your relationship with the Trustees. What would be your next major developed relationship? Would that have been with the County government?
- BK County government always needing tending, always needed attention.
- RA Feed and care.
- BK Sometimes more than others, sometimes more difficult ways than others but it was always something you just did everyday almost. It was a relational thing with County government. County government wasn't always sure what to do with us since our payroll checks have to be signed by the library Board Chairman, not the Chairman of the Board of the County Commissioners. There was an exception for payroll, there was an exception for HR, you know, the library was always kind of a special case and you had to engineer that a little bit so it didn't make people angry. People would say, the library is a nuisance. Well the library wasn't a nuisance but we all tried to be nice about it. It was just a fact of life, the way we had to do business.
- RA So how much time do you think you devoted to government relations?
- BK Well in that period, probably thirty percent of my time. Later in the eighties, when we began talking seriously with the cities, 50 or 60 percent.
- RA And what about community partnerships? What about relationships there?

- BK Community partnerships came slowly and mostly came to us. We didn't have a public information office, we didn't have all of these kinds of things that sort of helped keep these organizations connected to the library. So we always sort of bumped into an organization that they felt they ought to be part of the library. For example, the school district. We didn't really know how to deal with the school district. The school district was this great big thing and in some cases it was difficult to deal with but over time we began to realize that there was a level of partnership between the public library and R-1 that could be an open, positive, productive thing and that was primarily a relationship between me and either the head of library services, Christa Coon, in the early days--Christa is still around, she married, I can't think of who she married, he was on the State Board of Education and Jefferson County Board of Education [Lou Stieghorst. BK provided name after this interview]--or the superintendent and always had good first name relationships with superintendents so that working with the school district and then other organizations like it. It seemed to be a pretty natural thing for the leadership of those organizations to sort of work together in areas where they had a shared mission. The Senior Resources Center is a good example of things we did with Seniors' Resource Center. Jefferson County Mental Health. There are kind of a lot of things. The school district was the biggest one because we've always kind of been in bed with them, in the Columbine library we were down here for, what mid-seventies to late eighties, fifteen years of working with them at the Columbine High School. And then there was a lapse after we moved in here and then we opened the Conifer project.
- RA But now you started with your job, surely a bit of a greenhorn, with an area this size.
- BK I'm still amazed that they hired me frankly.
- RA And why were you amazed they hired you?
- BK I was only out of library school a couple of years. I worked in Ottumwa, Iowa for a year. I worked in Hutchinson, Kansas for a year and half or so when I took this job.
- RA I think Ottumwa, Iowa, is that where Radar was from?
- BK Yes, Radar. Walter O'Rielly. Ottumwa, Iowa.
- RA So that one you knew. But as you came in as a greenhorn, what do you see were the weaknesses and strengths that you had and we'll go a little bit from there.
- BK I talk about pushing and shoving in County government, I didn't have that skill. For a very long time I really felt at their mercy. I mean I would try to argue with them and I would try to get things done and I was a thorn in their side and not a very effective spokesperson for the library. That was a tough relationship and that really was best built over time by my just working, whenever possible, to work with the head of administrative services, to work with the County manager, to work with the Chair of the County Commissioners and I developed my own skills in doing that. There's no place you can learn that, you simply have to learn what value these people have and what kind of a relationship you need to have and then you go after those relationships. And slowly over the years I got better and better at it to where I think the County Librarian's position, not just Bill Knott, the County Librarian's position occupies a certain kind of policy level position in County government that is well known and respected and understood and is useful to everybody. The library is always at the table as it should be but it wasn't initially. Also the County wasn't organized the way the County is organized now. The County is an enormous operation and in those days you could know everybody by their first name because they all worked in one building and that's no longer true. But I think we tried to build, and the County saw it was important, to keep a good relationship with us. That was a skill that I didn't have. That was a skill that I had to develop and I am kind of proud of that, I think it was an important thing to have.
- RA But what about your relationship with Trustees through the years because that had to be another one where, I bet there were times you wanted to walk out of a meeting. Most of us have considered that at times on our own but I mean, there had to be times that were great and others that weren't.

- BK There were times, and it had mostly to do with the leadership, not just the Chair. There was always kind of a little core of people inside the Board of Trustees, particularly in the years when there were only five. There was a core that kind of kept everybody in line. We got into some very difficult discussions about things like joining the County personnel system, about charging for library cards, about other things and I think the idea came about that it was supposed to be my job to teach Trustees how to be Trustees. And that seems to work, that seems to be fine. It often happens when people come on the Board with an agenda, with steam coming out of their ears about something and after six months on the Board they have shown themselves to be great supporters, they care about the library, they sort of disagree about the means not the library's policy making itself.
- RA Can you think that perhaps at the beginning a humorous situation that might have occurred or one that was absolutely you screwed up?
- BK When I screwed up?
- RA Well, it could have happened, maybe not.
- BK Humor is tough. I laugh at things that other people don't think are very funny.
- RA It's probably healthier.
- BK I would say, looking back, if I didn't do something right, it was I didn't push the idea of a main library for the County strongly enough. I inherited a policy position on the part of the Board that said this was going to be a decentralized public library and the model for that was the school district because the school district had formed itself into R-1 just a few years before. Remember it was like eighteen school districts and were formed into a Countywide district. There is a great, and this is humorous, there is a great video of this episode with the school district about forming a Countywide district and it was an Edward R. Murrow, *See It Now*, live television broadcast from Bear Creek High School. It must have been 1968 and the program was, Murrow's program was "Ballots for Bear Creek" and they were testing, Eisenhower was president and they were testing the idea of building these big kind of school districts in Jefferson County and the program interviewed people from Jefferson County, many of whom, names you'd probably recognize. It's a film, we have it, it's a kinescope, actually we have a video copy. Actually stolen from the Murrow archives because there's still a copyright issue with the Murrow archives at CBS. But the people being interviewed in Jefferson County about what Jefferson County is like in [1952], are pretty confusing and the interesting ideas that people in the mountains had about school districts and that kind of thing. It's a very interesting story and it is the story that translated itself into building the County library because almost everybody on that initial Board had been active in R-1's attempt to merge itself into one school district and so everybody liked the idea of a Countywide decentralized organization like the school district and that was the model for the public library. I think to a certain extent we have shortchanged the Jefferson County community by not having a main library. There is a certain kind of critical mass in building a big public library serving a half million people and we have no place to accumulate that mass. We have nice buildings, thirty-five thousand square foot buildings, that do a good job but there is a kind of a core information resource that this County doesn't have and we have always been able to rely on the Denver public library. Bless their hearts. We didn't need to do a main library, there's one just down the road and they were sometimes happy to do that and sometimes weren't happy to do that. These days they're happier than they used to be. But I think we should have tested that idea in those early days. When we got those initial branches, Evergreen, Golden, Villa, Arvada was in pretty good shape. Those initial developments I should have insisted on testing the idea of a main library somewhere. Even Lakewood when it opened, people thought of it, cause it was big, it was our biggest building, when it opened people thought of that as the main library and maybe we should have thought more carefully about that building and the role that it played because it played a role as the main library without having the resources or the staff.
- RA The size really, you don't have the size.
- BK The size isn't big enough, no.

- RA So those were, some of the difficulties in your first years cause you were still new?
- BK Right. I was new, I was a child...
- RA Well child, might be pushing...
- BK Callow...
- RA I noticed though that it talked in some of the timelines about vacation issues and pay parity for employees and were those issues that the board dealt with or did you have to lead the Board through that? How did that happen?
- BK Yeah. We really worked together on those things. The vacation issue had to do with our joining the County personnel system. The County's personnel system offered less vacation time than the library's vacation time. So when the decision was made to become part of the County personnel system, library employees lost vacation time and that was very difficult, the principal resolution of that, however, was that the library had a two-tier vacation system like a lot of public libraries have and that is the professional staff walk in the door, like my daughter going to work for Monroe County library in Indiana, walked in the door with 22 days vacation time on her first day and we had that rule and then non-professionals had 14 days of vacation. Well I think the idea of professional staff having more vacation than non-professional staff is a bad idea. I didn't know that I thought so at the time, because I had 22 days vacation but that was a difficult decision for the Board and a decision that by my saying that professional staff is willing to give up that vacation, made it a lot easier for the Board because they really didn't want to make a decision and say we are going to cut your vacation time.
- RA Well it had to be a financial impact?
- BK Yes. It was a financial impact. The other thing was salary parity with County government. The library staff association played a significant role in doing the calculations and the evaluations of what library staff ought to be paid in comparison with County government and when the County hired a compensation study company to come in and study compensation, the library staff association's recommendations were delivered to that consultant and the consultant thought that they were good. So in those days that was a major change in salary in order to get library employees at parity with County employees. And the library trustees swallowed hard because it was a lot of money.
- RA So we were way below the standard?
- BK Oh yeah, yeah it was awful.
- RA What about benefits?
- BK Benefits were the same. But library clerks were paid two-thirds of what County clerks were paid and so the only way to do that was, we finally decided, was to just pull up our socks and do it and it was a huge hit on the budget. But, two-thirds of the library staff members got significant salary increases to a level that was more consistent with what they ought to be paid. Again, the Board saw that as the kind of issues that they should have seen it as and that is we need to care about the people that work here, we have to treat them fairly, we have to compensate them fairly and so they made the decision less on the cost. They made the decision more on the value of fair and reasonable compensation for the employees and then turned to me and said, figure out how to pay for it. Well, but that's the way it ought to work. I told the Board what it was going to cost and as I said, they swallowed hard but when they did, they made the decision based on value for employees not cost, which is good policy making as far as I'm concerned.
- RA Now with the Board, has there ever been a time when you had to ask a Board member to resign or a time when you wished they would resign or any of those type of contentious issues that come up between a governing body and the director?

- BK One library Trustee was asked to resign by the Board Chairman.
- RA That's pretty good for all those years.
- BK There were a number of cases where, as you said, I wished somebody would resign. I think in a couple of those cases, however, as the County librarian, library director or whatever, I'm supposed to become the big boy and in cases where there was a Board member who was just awful and there had been several of those. It dawned on me somewhere in there that that's really my fault and my problem and if I'm not getting along with this Trustee, this Trustee and I ought to go out over a bottle of whatever, and we ought to hammer it out because we can't have this kind of relationship inside the organization. And every case without exception, it didn't solve the problem, but it made it easier to deal with, that we sort of understood each other and where we were coming from, and it wasn't really personal and the idea of sort of sitting in my office and bemoaning the fact that I have a Trustee who is sort of sideways with everything we are doing. The sensible thing is to go to that person and say, you really make me angry and you're really irritating and they'd say, good I'm glad I'm irritating, I'm trying to be irritating. One of them said that.
- RA Oh, how nice.
- BK One of them, one of those Trustees, she was hell on wheels. Got it ironed out. I think by the time she died, she was very profoundly ill, we were very good friends and couldn't work together, even after she left the Board, we stayed in touch and she had some really important editing, paperwork editing skills and she did some, some very nice work for the library as a volunteer and she finally had to move to California to Palm Springs, I think. Somebody that I just misunderstood for a long time.
- RA Well if you had to define the seventies and your tenure during the seventies, what would you say was your major accomplishment or major regret during the first ten years?
- BK I would say the major accomplishment was building, developing an adequate building in the center part of the County and that was Lakewood. That was the last building built with County funds, County general, capital development money. From then on the Commissioners made it clear that we were going to have to pay our own bills for buildings, but they paid for that one. It was a building that came more nearly to the idea of what we needed in the way of space to carry out a comprehensive program of public library services. The Golden library was a nice building, sixty-six hundred square feet. The new Evergreen library, not the current new Evergreen library, but the then new Evergreen library was eighty-two hundred square feet. The Villa building, which was the flagship of the fleet was twelve-thousand square feet.
- RA It's hard to believe that building was that..
- BK Yeah, so.
- RA It always seemed so small to me.
- BK We finally had a chance and this, I have to tell you, that this was the library Trustees and the County Commissioners, finally had a chance to have enough money to build a building that would house the support services and the back room work and a pretty good size public service program in front. That was a significant achievement in getting people convinced that buildings had to be this big, not this big, that sixty-six hundred square feet is not adequate.
- RA Was there anything that you wished you had accomplished in that first ten years? Or regret?
- BK In the eighties, it has been my belief during that period that we were trying to build and run a program of library services for a community that wanted library services and services that we could not afford. We simply did not have enough money in the seventies to grow the way this library needed to grow and we paid for that years later by having to pour money into book collections and build additional space and kind of turn around some of the capital mistakes, buildings that were too small. We were overreaching

in the seventies, I was, certainly, trying to build this thing faster than we really had the money to do so. And so a lot of compromises, a lot of corners were cut and a lot of pieces that didn't quite fit mostly because I guess I wasn't willing to say we ought not to try to do these things. That we ought to sort of hunker down and keep our mouths shut about the funding. Funding, the library, you know what our mill levy is now, 3.5 mills. Library funding in those days was 1.5 mills and was that until 1987 and the seeds of the problems we had in the early eighties were sown in the seventies of trying to do too much and to try to grow too fast and to spread the resources too thin. And then what happened to us is that we couldn't afford to operate the library in a sensible way in the early eighties with that mill-and-a-half levy and so what happened to us is we were down to four and a half days a week of library services.

RA Oh, wow.

BK We had closed libraries. We closed Morrison and Kittredge and Conifer and we should have anyway. But these were the early eighties into the mid-eighties and were the most difficult time but again mostly because we grew and we developed and we tried to demonstrate the kind of library we were without really having the money to pay for it.

RA So the mill levy was the highlight of the eighties?

BK Yes.

RA ..The real challenge and that you absolutely did have to accomplish and did.

BK Right, did.

RA So, and with your regret in the eighties might be because of the mistakes of the seventies or the, I hate to say mistakes. I think, wanting to do right by the County and the residents, but unable to do it under that mill levy.

BK That's right. Yeah. And it was always you would get up in the morning and say how are we going to afford this? What decision do we have to make? That something has to be done. What are we going to do? Well we always got it done but it was, automation was a problem for us. We would have moved into automated services much more quickly than we did. I still think we had the earliest, no one has ever given me a better date, I think we had the earliest online public catalog in the country. We would have done that a lot sooner and not a lot sooner, some sooner, and lot better if we had had the resources. Remember that we didn't have a card catalog when I came here. We had, when I got here, we had a book catalog, printed book catalog, there's still copies of that around someplace. Ann's probably got one.

RA No card catalog?

BK No. And people would say you threw away the card catalog, we didn't have a card catalog, we didn't throw anything away. We had a shelf list, that was down in tech services but then we went to a microfiche catalog. The advantage to the microfiche catalog, it was awful to maintain but the advantage to it was that we could make multiple copies and we put copies of our microfiche catalog in every secondary school in Jefferson County for example.

RA How often did you update it?

BK Quarterly. So we had a lot of stuff on the shelf that was not in the inventory or wasn't reflected in the inventory.

Part 2

Ruth Anna We were talking about your highs and lows in the 70s and 80s in your decisions, but when you go back through all that, you mentioned Staff Association when you talked about pay parity and getting the salaries so that they were equal with the County. Staff Associations may not be something everyone's

familiar with, plus I think some people fear Staff Associations. They may think it's a union or something and it's not. Could you explain its history?

Bill Knott The Staff Association came about, as I remember, because of a group of employees who were beginning to take, and this was an important development, beginning to take a kind of global view of working for the Jefferson County Public Library. Prior to let's say Lakewood, and maybe some of the other new buildings, it was a miscellaneous collection of staff who didn't talk to each other, who didn't have any connection with each other. They went to work, they ran their library, the books turned up at the back door, you know, it was not a knitted together organization. And as it began to grow, particularly when we made the big addition to staff when we did Lakewood, a lot of staff members began to get the idea that this was a coordinated, consolidated group of people working together and they ought to work together more closely. This came from staff. Administration was not that clever about that sort of thing, and sort of a deputation of these people came to me and said, we need to figure out some way that we can interrelate and work together on--we didn't have county-wide training, we didn't have a lot of things then--Isn't there some way we can stay connected to each other and work together? So we talked about it, and the idea was, I think there was some kind of social function, and it might have been a picnic or it might have been some event like that that staff planned as a social event, mostly to connect names with faces because they didn't see each other. They didn't know who they were. And from that sort of discussion about, this could be a social organization, some of the people in the association, and again we spent time talking about it, they began to explore ideas in which they could really contribute to the work of staff and the organization. They could make it a better place to work. They could make the communications among staff better, they could do a lot of things, and there was an early group of leadership in the late 70s. Lakewood opened in '76, and a lot of those people were from that group who began to think that there was sort of more to this working together as a staff than having picnics and potlucks and cookie exchanges, that there was important work that they could do and they wanted to know, from me, did I mind them doing that work. And it was at that point where we came to an agreement with the association still in place that says, you can do this on staff time. We will pay you your salary to go to committee meetings of the Staff Association and hammer out these issues, and that's still true.

RA Was that in the '70s or the '80s that evolved?

BK It was the late '70s, when that group really began, the leadership began to emerge and people that emerged from that, people like Maryanne Brush, for example, who was with this library when I got here, was with this library for many years, was one of the leaders in that who said, there are important issues and working conditions that a coordinated staff group can solve. And what we came up with was the idea that we have a contractual agreement with them about using staff time for this work. We came to an understanding about the charter that the library Trustees adopt every year, that say the Library Staff Association is the association that is a voice of staff and is an important thing to have in the organization. So the natural thing that they sort of began to coalesce around, as they discussed what to do, was salary. Librarians have always whined and complained that they're not paid as, say schoolteachers. Well, they're not. Can't we do something about salary, and it was that thinking that said the idea at least ought to be that library employees make the same, have staff parity, with County government, and it was a Staff Association report that I mentioned earlier that determined what parity would look like for library employees so that when those consultants did their work, they agreed and the staff sort of got to celebrate a great victory because they had had a positive influence on policy making. And they still do. They have not had another one of those big projects. Mostly the success of the association is working through my office and working through staff council and their relationship with the Board, and some of these things that you've seen regularly.

RA Well, they attend the meetings regularly which I appreciate.

BK Yes, they do.

RA But when you talked about Staff Associations in the beginning, I have to honestly say when I first used Jefferson County Libraries back in the '70s, it would have been mostly women that I would see. It was rare to see a man, and I assumed that administration wasn't the same size as it is now, or has it expanded? Were they part of staff association? I don't believe they are. They're a special

membership, I think, but what was the configuration of men to women and what about ethnic configuration of our staff from the time you started to where we are today?

BK I would say the ratio of men to women is about the same now as it was then. The staff's bigger. There are more men around, but I think a very high percentage of the staff is women and the ratio probably hasn't changed much. When I got into, started library school in the '60s, however, it was more female dominated across the country and in library schools. In the late '60s and early '70s, many more men began to go to library school because it was shown to be an area where they could get pretty good jobs, they could make pretty good money, it was a better looking career to a lot of men. Here I'm really talking about people wanting to become library directors because they're the only ones who would get enough money to live on, everybody else work second jobs or something, considering what we pay them. Diversity on staff has been more highly developed and we paid more attention to in recent years. I don't think we did much in terms of trying to encourage it.

RA Well, the County was so Caucasian back then.

BK Yeah, and still is, frankly, but I think probably starting much later, probably in the late '80s before we began to see Hispanics and others even being interested in working in Jefferson County, simply because it was so White Anglo-Saxon that I think a lot of people were uncomfortable.

RA But you talked about men getting into the field. What made you get into it? Why did you take Library Science, which I have to say, to most of us out there at that era, it was boring? The thought of a librarian was a boring profession. What got you into it? Because you've certainly not been boring.

BK Well, there are a couple reasons. I grew up in the printing and publishing business, so books were like leaves around our house, you know, in a family of readers and book collectors. So it seemed like kind of a natural thing to stay engaged in that, but actually my interests were to go into the printing and publishing business. Not at the level of my family's business was, a small town company, but at a much more professional level. But I think when I started school in Iowa City, I had done some work with some books and that kind of thing and I just figured, what the hell, I'll see if I can get a job at the university library and it turned out that I got a job at the university library, that I was in a great location and began to be sort of mentored by other people in that organization. A fellow named Frank Hanlin, when I started working at the university library, Frank was the head of acquisitions. He later became the deputy director and he was there when I got out of the Army and went back to Iowa City. He had a lot to do with my going into the library business. He clearly was good at what he did. Part of his job was the university bibliographer and I had a job that I really had my eye on even before library school, I thought being the university bibliographer would be just a wonderful job. Also, and I was trying to think of this guy's first name, and I can't think of it. His name's [Arnold Gingrich] and he was the publisher of *Esquire Magazine*, and in my era, young men keeping up with literary trends and other things, read *Esquire Magazine*.

RA I thought it was Playboy, but we'll go with it.

BK No, no, no, it wasn't Playboy. The fact that Candice Bergen was sometimes the centerfold was no insignificant thing. Well, it had something to do with it, but it was a literary magazine and it was a magazine that talked about books and reading and that sort of thing, and he wrote an editorial called "Young Man, Be A Librarian", and I've talked to twenty-five guys my age in the library business, and every one of them had read that editorial and said, yeah, it was a long discussion saying there're really good jobs at the library, and they're looking for men, and they have leadership ideas and all kinds of things, and it had an effect on me, like a lot of other things.

RA Well, it would have been a perception, then too, that men had leadership ideas and women didn't.

BK Well.

RA It was still a time when women were struggling for that.

- BK Yes, it certainly was. And I'm a little bit embarrassed to say that I took advantage of that. But, what the hell. I was offered the job as director of a small public library in Iowa while I was still in graduate school. I was about the only guy in the class. But they didn't offer it to any of the women who were looking for the job. When I graduated, I was offered a job in a public library. Everybody that goes to library school wants to stay on campus, and so my idea of being the university bibliographer, wouldn't that be cool, and then I realized, you make so much more money working in a public library than you do - and it's a whole lot more fun. And so I went to Ottumwa mostly because the guy that ran the Ottumwa public library, who later worked here, the guy that ran the Ottumwa library wanted a man and convinced his Trustees and some other people that what they needed was a guy to be the City Librarian of Ottumwa, which was my first job. If you had that sort of intellectual bent, about books and reading, and that sort of thing, and had some notions about public service, I think it was a good time to go into the library field. I had a half-dozen job offers when I was still in graduate school.
- RA Well, you were a rarity.
- BK I was. The one I should have taken was City College of Washington, D.C. That would have been a good job, at that time. Ottumwa wasn't.
- RA Wasn't your first choice, so you were very happy to accept the job in Jefferson County.
- BK Yeah, well.
- RA But why in the world did you come here and not go back east?
- BK Well, my wife and I have asked ourselves that question. Why, as a young married couple, did we go to a little, smug, dusty little town in central Kansas when I was offered jobs in New York City and Washington, D.C. I don't know. She was offered a job in Hutchinson, too, so, maybe that had something to do with it, but being a young couple, we would have had a lot more fun in New York City or D.C. than we had in Hutchinson, Kansas, where you had to go to Kansas City to get a mixed drink.
- RA But then what made you come here? What was your motivation to leave Kansas? I can think of some, but that's a personal..
- BK Yeah. My wife had a sister who lived here, up on Rainbow_Hill, in Jefferson County, and when the job became vacant, she read about it in the paper and she called and said, you ought to apply, and I said, I've only been in Hutchinson a year and a half, I can't do that. That was in the fall of 1970. The position stayed vacant. They interviewed some people without any luck and then I was doing some consulting work with the Federal Library Program officer in Denver, Hank Fontaine, who was my predecessor here. He'd gone to work with the Feds. It's a complicated story, I'm not sure it's very interesting. But I began to connect with people in Colorado, Evie Brewster particularly, at the State library, and she called me a couple times. Did you know that the job in Jefferson County is still vacant? They haven't found anyone. So finally along toward the end of the year, I sent the application and the reason I was interested is, by that time, Mary and I were driving back and forth most weekends from Hutchinson and staying with her sister here, and getting involved in Colorado.
- RA That's a long drive.
- BK Well, but it's actually not a lot longer than to Kansas City. And we were, you know, jump in the car when you get off work on Friday night...
- RA Young...
- BK Twenty-eight years old, what the hell. So, I began to connect. We stayed in Jefferson County, I met Evie Brewster for a little meeting. The new Golden Library had just opened. It just began to look more and more attractive, and Hutchinson, Kansas, lovely little town, wasn't attractive. It was, as I said, smug and kind of boring and windy and hot and, Kansas.

RA And flat.

BK And flat. And Colorado was, they were building Interstate 70 up into the hills and we would come here to the mountains all the time and, I mean, why'd you come here? It's Colorado. So when finally they offered me the job, and that was a complicated process, it didn't take me very long, let's just say.

RA So you got here and we talked about all of the staff association, we've talked about your relationship with the school district, your relationship with the Trustees, but what about your relationship with the community as a whole? The service organizations, the political parties, because this County has been traditionally Republican through the years. It's kind of gone Democrat on occasion and now I think it's about a 50:50 split, but all of those types of relationships, how did you develop them?

BK They for the most part spun off very naturally from the work I was doing and the connections we had to make in order to get things done. You talked about Republicans. It is important for people to remember that virtually all of the leadership from the Board of this public library has been from the Republican party and much of the strength of this library has to do with the fact that it was governed by the people who belong to the majority party. It's the way politics work and that's the way it ought to work. So, it has never been a partisan issue, and I've had no Trustee ever raise the point of the fact that I'm not a Republican, with one exception. But I think to a very large extent it has been a good relationship between the library's leadership at the Governor's level, and the politics of the community in general. We were in the boat together. I think it's part of the way of looking at that.

RA And it might be important to note that Trustees are appointed by the County Commissioners, so they tend to be Republican which is why...

BK Right. And in a period there when there were two Democratic County Commissioners, we got some Democrats on the Trustees. Pearl Alperstein, good Trustee. Good, hard working, community committed woman. I think a lot of what happened, Ruth, in developing those relationships came from people who were on the Board and who themselves had organizational connections that thought it was important for the library to engage. So, for example, we had people on the Board who were active in the League of Women Voters, and who sort of carried the library messages into the work of the League, so that when we needed political support or when we needed the kinds of things that the League does, the connection was already there because somebody on the Board was active, had been active. Carol Coppock for example, active in the League of Women Voters. There were just so many organizations that you just kind of kept bumping into because it was inevitable that you would connect with them, and when they found out that the library could use their community resources, that they had some, whether it was a service club, or the school district or the League of Women Voters, or the Republican party, or whoever, the nice thing about being in a public library, that everybody sort of understands its value, or most everybody--at least people in community leadership--and were eager to have the library connect with them as part of their work. For example, service clubs. I did a lot of speaking before service clubs. Lots and lots of them, and invariably these were contacts that were supportive of the library, in the Rotary, in the Kiwanis, in the Optimists, all these people wanted to know about the library and how it was doing and what its work was and how they could help, that sort of thing. I remember during the '86 election campaign, when we were running for a tax increase, one of my first service club speeches, and I was a little nervous about speaking to service clubs. I didn't really know what they were, I don't belong to service clubs, and how they work, and I had a long schedule. I spoke to 50 service clubs in five months. I think almost the first one was down here, well down here somewhere, maybe an Optimist Club, and we had a nice breakfast and I gave my little talk about why the library needed money and why it was such a good thing, and when I was done, I said, are there any questions and there was just this stony silence. Nobody, Dear God it was awful, and finally some guy in the back said, is there anybody in this room that doesn't think that the library is absolutely vital and that we ought to support what they're talking about? And no, no, hell, library's a good thing, yeah, yeah. And I thought, God, okay. I began to get it, that service organizations care about community development like the library does and like the cities do, and so all these organizations, and there are lots and lots of them, think that the library has a role to play in the community that they care about, and what they're trying to find out from me, or from somebody else talking to them, do you care about it in the same way or are you just another

bureaucrat? And if you can convince them of your own concerns about a quality organization being part of the life of their county, once they get that idea from you, they're on your side.

RA We did good on that mill levy?

BK Yeah.

RA But then we went for another mill levy. What was that year?

BK 2000.

RA 2000, and obviously it went down. What did you see as the difference in how we attacked the issues?

BK I don't think the campaign was differently organized very much. People said it was, but it really wasn't. The problem was, at the time, it was pretty clear to everybody that the public library needed this funding approved in '86. Again, we were open 4-1/2 days a week.

RA Oh, they were still at 4-1/2 days.

BK We were struggling. We were closing buildings. We could stand up and say, if we don't get more money, this is gonna get worse. And the community said, the case is a good one. They need the money, they're not in good shape. We can help. This is not a lot of money from a tax standpoint that we're talking about, and so it was an easier sell in the sense of this is something that needs to be done. In 2000, our presentation was, wouldn't it be nice to have more money and build more buildings and do all this kind of stuff? Meanwhile we're opening Belmar.

RA So they didn't see the urgency?

BK Well, we opened a \$6 million building or whatever it was in the middle of this election campaign, and the case just wasn't as compelling. They said, you know, they're not doing too bad, and when people would ask us, say how're you doing, well, we're not doing too bad. We're not on the precipice of falling into God knows what if we hadn't passed in '86. So, the difference was that we really were pretty desperate and I think the point was pretty clear to people. And I think the other point that was good is that we did cut hours and we closed buildings and it was done with a lot of care and a lot of attention to ameliorate the problem for people so that we were not making it too difficult for them to get library services. We were not throwing rocks at them and we were not cutting back in kind of a mean-spirited way. I think people understood we were being very careful, we were being good stewards of the money we had. We just didn't have enough of it.

RA When did we start different services, and this may be covered in another interview. I'm just curious at this point with, like our Bookmobile services and concentrating on kids and we sort of, and elderly, and those have sort of evolved and I'm sure the Trustees had something to do with all that.

BK Trustees had a lot to do with it. I had Trustees in the period of the '70s, who began to look at our reaching out beyond the doors of the library. For example, we had a Books by Mail program. This was in the '70s. Run out of the old building, one of the first things, because we had this program in Kansas, and the Books by Mail program is we sent a printed catalogue of books, paperbacks, to every rural box holder in Jefferson County.

RA That was a lot back then.

BK And you got the catalogue and there was an order form and you sent in the order form, and we would mail you the books along with a return postage label, so when you're done, you put them back in the bag and stuck a label on it. We had board members that volunteered to help with that program, the packaging and the distribution and printing of these things, the catalogue. It was a little closer to the idea that the library really ought to do more than just work out of its buildings and there were some Trustees who were supportive of that idea. Home-bound delivery, that sort of thing, came along kind of

naturally to that, people saying, you know, can I get the book catalogue even though I live in Edgewater, and we said, sure and we gave them a catalogue. So it kind of grew up around that Books by Mail thing.

RA And when did the Bookmobile evolve?

BK When I got here, the Bookmobile was in place. I was in Kansas and I think I was in discussion with the Trustees there about this job, and one of my Trustees, we're talking about Kansas flatlanders, said, we were just in Colorado, and they knew I was talking to them, and he said, we were driving up in the hills and we were back on the backside of nowhere in this impenetrable wilderness in the mountains and down the mountain came a Bookmobile, coming from up there, and it was our Bookmobile. Well, he wasn't very high up if he was in Jefferson County, but his view was, dear heavens, they run a Bookmobile up in the hills. The Bookmobile, Old Blue, actually, it was known as, operated a series of Bookmobile stops, some of which became legends. Some of these were wonderful stops, they'd been there for years, stops are all now gone. We don't use the Bookmobile that way, but I remember one Bookmobile stop was up in Coal Creek in the little village up there. It has a name, but I can't think what it is, and there's kind of a crossroads and there's maybe what used to be a general store and there was a bar, and the Bookmobile pulled in next to the general store and bar and stayed open for a couple hours, and that was when people who lived in that neighborhood got library service. And actually, the library thing sort of operated out of the little room, and there was a sign up that says, "No beer served during library hours." One of the signs I wish we had kept, profoundly so. Probably could have it replicated somehow, who knows. Bookmobile service had really always been around and was sort of an important way of reaching those parts of the County and you know what this County's like. I mean, you can put a library in Evergreen, but then you realize that people are living all over the hills. About the only way we could reach some of the more rural areas was with the Bookmobile. Always, it's an expensive service in terms of the volume of business it does, but I know an awful lot of people who have a lot of memories about using the Jefferson County Public Library Bookmobile that came to their neighborhood every two weeks, or whatever it was. It was a good messenger of library services to a community that didn't have many libraries, frankly.

RA And what about the service, because we've always concentrated, I think, on children and being for literacy purposes.

BK Sure.

RA But also we're finally concentrating a little more heavily on seniors, which is another area that I think is wonderful.

BK Which is what the Bookmobile is doing now. It only goes to Senior locations and it no longer has neighborhood stops, no longer stops anywhere but those nursing homes, and that's not the right word, what do we call them? Care Centers?

RA Senior residences.

BK Senior residences and the rest of it. I think that is now a very good use of the Bookmobile service because a lot of people have ambulatory problems and can't get to the library.

RA Well, the population's aging.

BK Yes, so.

RA And what about the children's services?

BK Children's services, libraries have always been very, very big on children's services. Libraries have always concentrated an awful lot of their work on kids and a lot that is the understanding that if you want to teach a kid to read, you read to them. The understanding that if you want to have a child kind of grow up to be reasonably literate, he has to be in some kind of an environment that makes that easy for them

- to come to that understanding. Children's librarians are a special breed. These are people who have, in our case certainly, have these sort of remarkable skills in dealing with kids and have that kind of personal--I mean, this is one of the few places a nine-year-old can get face to face service from a professional, treated exactly the same as an adult, part of the reason why they're so successful here.
- RA But I'm thinking of the evolving, with your small libraries, to where we are now, because I grew up at a time when there was no such thing as a children's library, or a children's section in small communities, and traveling to other states where we lived for years, they didn't have a section set aside for children. And then I came here to Villa and they had a section set aside, nothing like what we have today. I mean, today the children's libraries are unbelievably fascinating, so it was something you did. I grew up in a rural community. The Bookmobile was really our biggie, but we didn't have that aspect of it. What was it like when you arrived here?
- BK Well, let's see. The Villa Library was open when I got here and it had a children's room. But Hutchinson Public Library, a third of the Hutchinson Public Library, was a children's room.
- RA See, what a difference.
- BK Golden had a little children's room. Arvada didn't have a children's room when I got here. It had a little children's section.
- RA So it did evolve more.
- BK Yeah, I guess it did. I guess I hadn't thought about in quite that way, but I think that's probably true. I think if looking at output numbers, how many and how much and how much service goes out the door, how many people are you serving, what are we doing with those people, you get big numbers with kids. I'm not trying to be cynical about that, I'm just saying that, in terms of output measures, you get really good numbers if you do a big children's service program, because kids check out a lot of books. I would guess that the relationship between children's services to the library as a whole is a growing development. There's more of it now than there was five years ago, and I think we spend more, mostly because - well, maybe not mostly because, part of that may be that we could still behave, we can develop library services in that traditional way with kids and adults are kind of growing away from our traditional service patterns.
- RA What would you consider a traditional service pattern? I notice our library Board of Trustees has been exposed now to the different forms of library services being offered in other communities. What do you see from the traditional, in the 1960s and '70s when you started in the profession to where we are today, which also brings in the technology that's being used, the storefront type libraries that are up, the way people are accessing our services? Obviously our Internet library services are growing astronomically.
- BK Technology does not play a huge role in the delivery of children's services. We have kids that access the Internet in our children's room, but I don't think it drives a lot of the information resources that have developed. I don't think it drives book selection, collection development like it has in the adult sector because I still think that kids are coming out of kids' rooms learning how to read and understanding books and reading because they're around books and reading, and the adults don't seem to need that. So I think it used to be our traditional pattern of service was all basically the same, books and magazines and librarians and library users.
- RA You came to the library.
- BK Yeah and now I think it is less that for adults and at least as much of that for kids. They're still into books and still into reading. They're still into technology, I mean kids are, but I think the library role is less.
- RA Well, how has technology impacted library services?

BK How has it impacted?

RA While you've been here. Because you talked about that you didn't even have card file, which was a surprise to me.

BK There were a lot of reasons for that.

RA I know, it's just a surprise.

BK I explained that. That was a long story. Technology has changed libraries in important ways, without, hopefully, our losing the traditional understandings of library services. Technology is not taking the place of something. It's not a zero sum game. We don't have to get rid of this aspect of service in order to implement this kind of service, or we shouldn't at any rate. The story I always tell about my butcher at King Soopers, who was a big library user, and when I gave him an invitation to the Arvada open house dedication, he was thrilled and he came back, and I saw him in the store, and he said, God, I love that library. Don't ever get out of the book business. I hope you never get out of the book business. I said, no it isn't up to us, it's up to you. Do you want us to continue to have books? And I think that's part of the job we have to have, but we have a very large number of library users come in and out of our doors for whom a book is of no value to them. They don't read books the way I read books. They are here because we can support their personal interests with a very high level of technology and that's the biggest change to me that we are using an utterly different kind of tool that produces a very different kind of result for library users.

RA Maybe give an example?

BK How many computer terminals do we have in Belmar?

Ann Cress 70, 75.

BK That's a big difference. There was no such thing as a tool that you could put your hands on other than a card catalogue, or in our case a microfiche catalogue, or a book catalogue. There is no tool that could take you directly to the information that we have now other than this book, or this book, or this book. Here it isn't where you have to find out where it is then you have to go get it. The computer has sort of short-circuited that process and it can give it all to you at once. I'm not altogether certain that everybody uses the library, or even a sizeable number, use it for information gathering or information understanding they're going to do their email and they do their banking and do a bunch of other things, and I think that's another change. I think that in the case of technology, the application technology is more in personal service support than it was formerly the case. You couldn't do your own banking in the Jefferson County Public Library ten years ago.

RA I guess you could write checks, but.

BK You could come in and write checks.

RA But what about, you talked about the full service library and that you got them to realize the need for the size of the full service library and we now have basements in two of the libraries, we've got a second floor for the first time in a library. So those types of configurations are changing. But we've also considered a storefront library because of technology. That's the only way that they work.

BK You can't do a very good job in a storefront library unless you have a high level of technology support. Or you could do a moderate job. We've had storefront libraries or what amounted to storefront libraries and they were like Daniels library where the book collection regardless of whether it was good, bad, or indifferent, the book collection was locked up five or six days a week, you can't get at it. Storefront libraries can do a good job because of the implementation of good technological support. For them to get, Interlibrary Loan, or Inter-branch loan, resources from other buildings or other libraries where they can come in and do their own kind of library business in a way and a place that is convenient for them. Little storefront libraries you're entirely limited by what's inside that little building like the old Wheat

Ridge building or Kittredge or Conifer or Daniels depending on how you use the public library there's almost no difference in your library experience at a technologically sophisticated storefront or going to a main library. You can get just virtually everything you need, most people can, at a very small location other than reading and study space and big fiction collections to browse and that sort of thing.

RA What about audio books, which is obviously one of my passions?

BK Not one of mine. Drives me crazy. Actually sometimes when we travel my wife and I, she brings along, she's an audio book person, MP3. She just bought a car and it's got an MP3 jack on it so she can plug her MP3 player directly into the car system.

Audio books, for years, they were kind of a poor second cousin. They were on tape, and they were abridged, you couldn't buy anything but abridged books and librarians bought abridged books or didn't get into the business. This would be the Margaret Owens syndrome, you didn't buy abridged anything. It's like buying a Reader's Digest Condensed Book. But once publishers began to figure out that people really would listen to sixteen tapes or four DVDs or whatever and found it to be, it was really publisher driven I think as much as anything. The publishers began to hire people who had good voices and who could tell a good story and could read somebody else's book and make it sound good or in some cases the author. I think publishers really invented this thing and it's a good thing, I think it is fine. It drives me crazy. The first time I heard it was Joanne Greenberg, who lives in Evergreen, her husband is a psychiatrist and works down in Denver. Do you know Joanne?

RA I know the name.

BK She's a wonderful author and she has a wonderful voice. And she would read stories into a tape recorder for her husband, for his commute. It was the first time I had heard of anybody doing this and every day he would come home from work and he would get another. She would have spent about as much time as his commute, which was perhaps an hour reading another chapter or whatever and sometimes putting things like stop for a loaf of bread and a quart of milk or whatever into these but to me she kind of invented the concept, but she didn't, but it was an early excursion into recorded books of somebody reading a book for somebody else. The other place it came from really was in the Library of Congress program where you could get books for the blind, physically handicapped and those were originally on records and then they were on tapes and now they're on CDs and now they are downloadable but a lot of the drive behind audio books came from the Library of Congress program that most libraries participated in and now it seems to be completely superfluous. I didn't think it is around anymore.

RA But you haven't lived until you drive cross country listening to *Angels and Demons* and then listening to *The DaVinci Code* on the way back. It really does make you want to get in the car and read or listen. You're in a hurry. But, one of the other things now, this is my sincere passion, and you know that, is the first amendment and the protection of our patron's privacy. Now how have you seen that grow during your tenure in the Jeffco Library system? How have you seen the changes in that because there have been, not just September 11th, there's been a lot of things through the years where people wanted to stop that privacy or people want to invade it, whichever way you want to look at but, protecting that privacy and yet protecting the access of our patrons. The freedom of their access to the information they want because I know there's a lot of criticism right now with the technology on how they access things on the Internet and whether that's anti-American, whether it's pornography, whether it's, it's everybody's interpretation in some cases and some cases obviously not. So how has that evolved?

BK I think an important thing most communities have learned about their public libraries, and when you talk to groups in the community, they do seem to understand this, that they recognize that the library is the champion of this idea and they're glad that the library does it. If you scratch the surface of some of these observations, and say well, in all cases, well I don't know not in all cases, I don't think people ought to see this, I don't think kids ought to have that, but I think the library is seen as the place where your rights to privacy in regard to these things and your access to, and your understanding of free speech, is highly recognized. I think people are absolutely persuaded this is a good thing understanding that most people would draw the line in different places as to what was free speech and what was just

difficult. So, we don't get many complaints about books. We get complaints like, I don't think this book ought to be in the children's room. I'm trying to think of some others. There have been some good ones. I think what has happened is that the community says, well you know, I'm not going to complain because the library is not going to listen to me anyway because they have this fairly highly developed sense of free speech and first amendment principles and right to privacy and so they are going to retreat behind that and there is nothing I can do about it. Well, and maybe that's the way we always ought to be. We ought to be just intolerant of intolerance with regard to what people's free speech and access issues are. A celebrated case was the Madonna book, the book was called *Sex*. The book was, did you ever see the book?

RA Yeah, it was just such a dumb book.

BK Oh, boy, was it ever. It was bound in aluminum covers on a spiral binding and it was mostly Madonna's nattering on about sex..

RA I wonder if her daughter has read it?

BK Yeah. And pictures of her in a variety of poses and a variety of an amount of clothing. We got a couple of copies of it and when the balloon began to go up, we sent a copy over to the County Attorney's office and there is an attorney over there who has, Ellen Wakeman, who has something of a specialty of first amendment things and it routed all the way through the County Attorney's office. We got it back and the note on it was, this book has been written, carefully edited specifically to avoid obscenity charges leveled against it. This book is protected speech. On that basis we started circulating the book. We had 250 people waiting to read it and we only had two copies. The then head of the Colorado Association of Libraries Intellectual Freedom Committee, went down to the Tattered Cover, looked at the book, pronounced it pornographic and told the press that no public library ought to have the book. I have never let him forget that and I never will. But it was not pornographic and it was not obscene but it was the only time there was an appeal to the Library Trustees to overturn the decision of the library to have a book on the shelf. Yeah, it never got to the shelf but to have a book like that. And I think that is an important thing to understand that it really has only happened once where the noise about it was so intense that a group of people came to the Trustees and asked that the Board vote to exclude this from the collection.

RA And what happened?

BK The vote was 6 to 1 to keep the book. We circulated that book for ten years. We had Karen Jones our conservator every once in a while use fishing twine or something to hold the thing together and finally it just disintegrated, both copies, and we still had a waiting list five years later, people wanted to read it. It is important that it only happened once, that this is not a community that feels that there ought to be some scrutiny other than the library selection policies over what goes to the shelf. That it is not a matter of the public business, although it is public money, there is a very high standard of first amendment principles at stake here and I think people respect that and know that the library has such a high regard for that position.

RA Well I think we have always felt it may be offensive but that doesn't mean it's wrong. That people should have the right to the access of it even if it is offensive to some or most.

BK Right. JCPL has got plenty of offensive stuff depending on your point of view and what you think is offensive but I think this sort of hard edged insistence that we're simply not going take stuff out of the collection because you don't like it pretty much keeps people out of our hair about that.

RA Well now what about, I know we protect children more heavily than we do adults, because we should not be protecting adults but also how we do that and how the Patriot Act has impacted the libraries?

BK How the Patriot what?

RA Patriot Act has impacted libraries?

- BK Oh, Patriot Act. I don't think the Patriot Act has affected JCPL but I think it has fallen on a couple of other libraries in the Northeast and I don't recall where they were. Were they in Connecticut? They couldn't even talk about it until it was adjudicated in court and then once it went to court, because the Patriot Act prohibits you from talking about it. Then they could talk about it and there were a half a dozen librarians who took the position that they would not be responsive to a Patriot Act-looking directive and I think most of us agreed with their position. There have been some other libraries that have had some things, people have come in and taken computer terminals and this kind of stuff but they have been isolated cases. I don't think that it has been a widespread application.
- RA But I think it is also because you and the Trustees have put into place a policy that sets the guidelines so it goes directly to you. It's not a staff decision all the way down to the bottom. It basically falls in your lap.
- BK It's also not a Board decision. Our policy differs from most public libraries in that after the Madonna issue, the sex issue, and the Board voted on that, I went back to the Board and said I think this is wrong, I don't think the Board ought to be voting on this stuff anymore than the Board ought to be voting on employing a librarian. I don't think that's the Board's business. The Board doesn't like the decisions that I make as the County Librarian they can do something about that and they know what they can do. I serve at the will of the Board but there is not a policy that says that if the public doesn't like it they can get the Board to vote on it. Now anybody can come to the library Trustees and make any kind of complaint or observation they wish to make but our policy used to be, and that's what we got changed, that if you didn't like my decision you could have the Board of Trustees vote to overturn it. That is no longer a matter of policy here.
- RA Well I think the policy was on the Patriot Act so that it would go directly to you in the first place to protect our employees.
- BK Yes, that was our interpretation given to us by the County Attorney's office that said that you could designate a custodian of the records, a custodian of the process and requests had to come to that office. Also what that tries to do is to clarify what happens at a reference desk here where somebody comes in, law enforcement or investigations or whatever with a Patriot Act sort of request, made on the Columbine library and we can demonstrate and do, that the Columbine library doesn't exist as a thing. It is an administrative subdivision of the Jefferson County Public Library and handing it to somebody at Columbine isn't taking it to the right place. It has got to go to the director of the library and nowhere else because that is the only person, from a policy standpoint, that should have to deal with it. So, we've tried to clarify that, maybe not completely successfully but we tried to clarify it in terms of not just a Patriot Act issue but the sort of sons of Patriot Act where everybody in law enforcement or investigations thinks that the data, the information and whatnot that the library has are there for our viewing in any casual way they choose to do it and we just keep refusing. For example, the damn video taping that we do, its not taping, digital recording from surveillance cameras and is almost a daily occurrence that somebody's bicycle has been stolen or somebody bumped into somebody's car in the parking lot and they want to view the recordings to see if they can come to some conclusion like who gets arrested. And we don't let them. Law enforcement gets very annoyed with us that we say you can't under certain conditions view it on your initiative. You have to apply and we'll decide.
- RA And it's to protect patron privacy.
- BK Protect them.
- RA Their access to the library.
- BK Yes.
- RA And that's the part I think we always have to stress. But what do we do to protect children? Like on the Internet, we have a different setup, but other things?

- BK Yeah, it's state law. It's a filtering law and it says that access to anybody under whatever age it is 17, it has to be filtered permanently. It's kind of a meaningless law in the sense that there is no definition of what filtering is or isn't, does or doesn't do but we do it and we don't have any complaints about it so it seems to be okay.
- RA What did we do before Internet? Was there protection for young people who were checking out books for kids? I mean is there anything that we did? I know we kept certain books in the kid's library thing.
- BK Yeah. Protection in terms of?
- RA What they could check out?
- BK Well I don't think so. I don't think we have ever said that a kid can't go into the adult section and check out a book on anything and they do now?
- RA Can their parents put any restrictions on it?
- BK Not that we'll enforce, no. We really don't think we ought to be in the middle of a relationship between a parent and a child. People say, I want to know what my kid is reading and I'd say all right, get their library card and look it up because you can do that. They say well my son won't let me have his library card. Why is that my problem? If you want to know what your kid is reading, talk to your kid. Why do you want to turn to an agency that has an imperfect understanding of your relationship or even whether or not you have any right to this information and expect us to produce information for you when we don't know who you are or what you want. So, I think to a very large extent people understand that they're responsible for their child's use of the library and the library cannot be in a role of sort of policing that relationship and being an intermediary in a relationship between you and your child, work it out with your kid. Prior to that, right now you can do it electronically, prior to our having online systems as we do now there was no recourse, the law did not make any distinction in the Privacy Act, between adults and children.
- RA But even as we've gone to technology we've also protected our patron's privacy of what they've checked out and what they've read. I mean that's something else I think we need to historically document.
- BK Well, the only thing that protects that is state law, which can pretty easily be challenged and there is other law that may override the library privacy although it has never been tested in court. Part of what happens with privacy issues for let's say the materials that you check out, is that there are records that you leave behind and as long as, we maintain those records because we need them administratively, or there is a function in the catalogue that let's you keep track of your own stuff and what you are reading, that can be subpoenaed. It is not always an argument that says, we dispose of the information on a very regular basis, like when you bring a book back, but we don't always if you owe us money or something like that. So people should understand that the records that they do leave in our hands, depending on what they are and the scope of what they are, can be scrutinized by law enforcement on the issuance of subpoena, court order or warrant, which seldom happens but has. The best way to not worry about the information is not keep it but to a certain extent we have to keep something. We can tell for example, by looking at a book who was the last person that checked this out and that's a fairly permanently retained record.
- RA Well I think that easily flows into one of the biggest issues that we've had in policy and that is fines. And I just think a brief description of the history of that.
- BK Of what? Fines?
- RA Fines and getting them paid and holding them on our books and that's been a headache I think since you've come here?

- BK Yeah. Well we have never been very good about coming to good business decisions about the accumulation of fines and the regulation of patrons with regard to the money they owe us. We've always tried to be kind of nice about this but at the same time keeping records of people that go back decades in some cases because you checked out a book once and didn't bring it back, you checked out a book and accumulate fines above the level. I think some recent policy discussions on the part of the Board have caused us to come to a somewhat different conclusion about this and take people sort of off the books even though there is some possibility then that they can come back in and get a new library card again because we wiped out their fines because we were doing that administratively.
- RA But we are more aggressively collecting them?
- BK Yeah, I'm not sure and I think a lot of librarians would not be very strong in their support of collecting fines from people. It is a traditional thing to do but when you stop and think about it, it's pretty silly.
- RA I think it is more to protect the collection, isn't it?
- BK That's part of it. It's also \$400,000 a year in our case in revenue.
- RA True.
- BK It's a tidy sum of money. It also, this used to be the case maybe not so much anymore, but people didn't like the idea of there not being fines because they thought it made the other guy bring his stuff back sooner. People thought we ought to charge fines. People think we ought to charge children's fines because it teaches them a lesson. I'm not sure what the lesson is but I'm not sure it is our job to teach a lesson. A lot of libraries have taken away fines for kids or have posted a nominal, what is our maximum, two bucks?
- AC Yes.
- BK I think that's like even fifty cents or something would be appropriate but again we have parents say, I want my kid fined if they don't bring their book back. Well, you do something about that. But fines are a problem. Fines are expensive to collect. Fines cause people to be very angry. Sometimes we get constant complaints I think about you have miscalculated or I don't really owe the fine or the book didn't have all of its pages when I checked it out.
- RA What did you see fines like when you first started here? Computers make it easier to know where they are, but..
- BK Fines were two cents a day.
- RA Two cents?
- BK Two cents I think and sort of collected in a tin can. There was a fine jar or something like that.
- RA Did you call people to get the book back?
- BK I don't think we ever called people. There are libraries that do. These days if we could get more and more people to give us their e-mail address so we can keep in touch with them a little better, I think some of the unpleasantness about fines could be eased.