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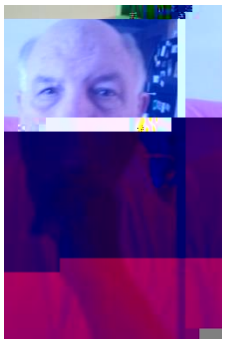
Oral History Interview

with

Bill Olbrich

Interview Conducted by
Linda Johnson
February 15, 2012

William Olbrich



Oral History Interview

Interviewed by Linda Johnson
February 15, 2012
Durham, New Hampshire & St. Louis, Missouri

Johnson *Tell me about your childhood, where you grew up, brothers or sisters, a little about the town, etc.*

Olbrich In and around Houston, TX. My boyhood home stood in the shadows of the San Jacinto Monument and the high school football stadium. So I loved history and football from my earliest

Country.

Johnson *Tell me about the library you visited as a child*

Olbrich A very small Carnegie about 8 blocks from home. I rode my bike there in the summers, and, by

history textbooks and science fiction there.

Johnson *Tell me about any librarians from those days that might stand out in your memory now.*

Olbrich The very small Carnegie was an extremely nice elderly lady who was more a care-taker than anything else. Other librarians notably Jr High, High School, a bigger public library, and my UG college were not friendly at all. At UT-Austin Jim Thornburg was a career Air Force officer who was using his GI Bill to get his MLS. He liked me and appreciated my experiences so he hired me at the UT-Austin government documents Dept.

Johnson *If someone had told you in high school that you would one day work with government documents what would you have thought?*

Olbrich Am I really that big a Nerd?

Johnson *How long have you been in government documents?*

Olbrich My work-study job in the Government Documents Dept of UT-Austin always clashed with the time government documents was taught, so I never took the class. However, I found everybody taking the class had to reply on me to help them do the homework. Other than that, I found

Johnson *How did you learn your collection? What were some of your strategies?*

Olbrich

were processed. Sometimes I did the processing. The documents processor is the best finding aid in any library. Professors made paper-writing assignments. If I could catch one student with

the professor making the

hand-out for the class. At Baylor I did a new BI every two weeks, year-round. 0 0 1 485.26 602.5 Tm0 g

Johnson

Olbrich Relied almost entirely on the textbooks and user materials in the actual government documents. Made many telephone calls to various agencies.

Johnson *Over your career, what has proven to be the most difficult part of working in government documents?*

Olbrich Having lots of library administrators/heads/chairs/supervisors, but almost no library leaders.

Johnson *What has been the greatest professional joy you have experienced during your career?*

Olbrich Working with the students in academia.

Johnson *What do you think has had the greatest impact on libraries and government information?*

Olbrich -

since.

Johnson *What do you feel has been your greatest contribution?*

Olbrich Demonstrating the necessity of good BI. The need for agency liaisons. I personally wrote the

Johnson *What has been the greatest change you have seen in the profession?*

Olbrich The slow disappearance of our specialization. I am probably the last full time government documents librarian at the St. Louis Public. I was the last full time government documents librarian at Washington University.

Johnson *Is there anything that you would like to tell me that I have not asked you a question about?*

Olbrich

dead now.

Johnson *When history is written about you, what would you like for it to say?*

Olbrich He really tried to be helpful. Sometimes he tried too hard.

------ End of interview -------