

Oral History Interview
with
Judy Russell

Interview Conducted by
Jennifer Paustenbaugh
February 16, 2007

Government Information Living Indexes
Oral History Project

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Interview History

Interviewer: Jennifer Paustenbaugh
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The recording and transcript of this interview were processed at the Oklahoma State University Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Project Detail

The oral histories collected as a result of this project will preserve the voices and experiences of government information workers who have invested a good portion of their careers to providing and insuring access to government information.

This project was approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on February 15, 2007.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Judy Russell is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on February 16, 2007.

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About Judy Russell...

Judith C. Russell currently serves as Dean of Libraries at the University of Florida, a position she has held since May 2007. Having served as the 22nd Superintendent of Documents at the U.S. Government Printing Office from 2003-2007, she is the first woman to have held this position. Russell served as the Deputy Director of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science from 1998-2003. Here she advised the President of the United States and Congress on Americans' information needs. Having helped establish *GPO Access*

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Paustenbaugh *It's Friday, February 16th, and we're here at the Oklahoma State University Library. This is Jennifer Paustenbaugh, and I am with Judy Russell, who is the Superintendent of Documents. She is here visiting our campus to help us celebrate the 100th anniversary of our Federal Depository Library as well as the 50th anniversary of our Patent and Trademark Library. We're really glad to have you in Stillwater, Judy, and thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview.*

As we discussed before we started the interview, this is the first interview in a project that is entitled "Government Information Living Indexes," that's being conducted by Tanya Finchum and eventually others in an effort to talk to government documents librarians who have had extensive careers in documents to find out how they educated themselves; became really knowledgeable about their collections; and what advice they have for others that would be either starting out on that career path or just are interested in finding out more about these people that they've always heard about but they've never actually gotten to meet. We're going to start out by talking a little bit just in general about your background and if you don't mind sharing a little bit about where you grew up, your immediate family, about the town and the time itself.

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in high school. Each summer when I was in college, I worked in a different special library because I had gotten very interested in special libraries. Again, I'm not sure quite how—it just sort of happened, but I worked in one that was a special operations research office, which was at American University. It was a defense contract and organization, and then I worked at the American Council on Education and the Aerospace Industry Association, and then ultimately at the American Psychiatric Association.

I worked in very different disciplines, and I guess I was very inquisitive and so it was really interesting to just sort of get exposed to different subject areas and that kind of thing. In each of those institutions, I guess less so probably in education, but certainly at the aerospace industry and even at the Psychiatric Association, there were some government documents that were part of the collection. And, in fact, when I was at the Psychiatric Association the NLM (National Library of Medicine) was just developing the classification for medicine when they broke away from the LC (Library of Congress) classification system and did the DMWs. We actually had the opportunity to send recommendations for them to do finer gradations within the area of psychiatry, which was kind of interesting and fun. So I ended up working then at the Psychiatric Association all through my senior year of college and all through the time I was in graduate school.

When I got out of graduate school, my first professional job was at the Communications Satellite Corporation. That was in the very height of sairy height of

that was, again, in the very early days when it was being set up. Technology assessment was still not even a clearly-defined field and they were doing a lot of research studies. The whole point of the office was, before Congress passed legislation dealing with issues related to technology, to try to determine what the social and economic impacts of it might be. We were supporting, in effect, in our small library, research projects on various topics that were coming up for action by Congress. We used a whole variety of resources to support those particular projects.

Then I left there and went into the private sector. That was when I first left libraries and went into the private sector. The company that I went to was a company that had a whole bunch of products built on government information. I was working in product development for a company called Information Handling Services, now better known as IHS, in the Denver, Colorado area. They had already decided that they wanted to do an index to the *Code Federal Regulations* (CFR) and they were doing a complete set of microfiche of the historical collection of the *CFR*, and so that's probably when I really first got very, very heavily involved with government documents. I visited many libraries to look at their collections, to try to see what we could borrow to be sure that we had a complete set. I did a lot of research to try to determine the volumes we were missing, whether they had ever been published so we could document the completeness of the set. Then we designed a controlled vocabulary index to the *CFR*. So, I think from that time on my career never left having a heavy focus on government information.

Paustenbaugh *That seems like that would really make a difference in the way that you approached the material and approached people wanting to use the material if you had been a user of it yourself rather than just satisfying other people's requests for information. Do you think that that's true?*

Russell I think that's very true and, in fact, I suppose we'll get to that in more detail on another point, but I was at the Government Printing Office (GPO) at the time the law passed that created *GPO Access*. We demanded that they put the *Federal Register* and *Congressional Record* online and were allowed to put other materials up. I was very much involved in the design of those databases and all the original help files, and of course having been a heavy user of those materials in various aspects of my career, I really knew what the common searches were, how people approached it. All the original help files, all the original sample searches were searches that I developed...

Paustenbaugh *Because you had actually done those.* (Laughs)

Russell ...and the people who were building the database were part of the

internal production staff at GPO. They were building out of a database that was used to produce the print, and they certainly understood the structure of the information. They knew every typesetting code that was in there and how you might use that typesetting code to establish a field of information, but they had no concept at all of how someone would use the information. So it was a really nice blending of my knowledge both as someone who had assisted other people in using it and a user myself, with their knowledge of exactly all the intricacies of the structure of the data in order to end up with a well designed database.

Paustenbaugh

It sounds like all of the disparate experiences that you had had culminated in being able to take leadership for that project. How well did you feel that libr

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time people come into the library and are looking for information and they don't always know that the government information could answer that question...

Paustenbaugh *Right.*

Russell ...and so part of the role of library staff is to alert them to the fact that there's this wealth of information there. That's exactly what Benton Harbor has done because they have so little resources for buying other kinds of materials, they have trained the reference staff to say, "Is it possible to answer this question with government information?" And they're finding something like seventy-five percent of their reference questions can actually be answered out of their government documents collection.

It's kind of amazing, but I think people assume the government will do things dealing with regulatory information. I used to joke and say, "Well, the only time they come in knowing they want government information is for tax forms," and then someone said to me, "No, no. They think H&R Block produces the tax forms." (Laughter) And I thought, "Oh, this is probably right, what a terrifying thought." But the reality is, I think, that when you take people to government information and when they start looking at the huge array of subject areas in which the government produces information, they're just amazed...

Paustenbaugh *Right.*

Russell ...because it isn't what they think—and I think that's one of the interesting things about the materials that end up in the GPO sales program. We've had coffee table art books, we've had cookbooks. We have posters. We have all kinds of health information and, obviously, educational materials. They had a wonderful display up at Alva, Oklahoma yesterday, they were also celebrating the 100th anniversary in Yukon, of some of the children's books that government agencies have specifically prepared. Literature designed for children in order to educate them on various issues and to communicate information to them in a way that they're comfortable with and yet, I don't know that people would think of coming to the government for coloring books, or coming to the government for children's books.

There is a beautifully-illustrated children's book that was designed for teaching Native American children about diabetes. When you look at it on the shelf, it just looks like any other beautiful children's book and it's done in a lovely, lovely way, but for a specific purpose. So there's just a huge, huge amount of information that comes from the government and it's kind of fun always to bring people into that and then the "wow"

factor is just, “Oh, I had no idea. I knew the government did this or this or this, but I”—you know, just opening them up to that whole range of information.

Paustenbaugh

Thinking about the way at least most academic libraries are set up—those libraries that are either regional or selected depositories tend to be a separate entity so that in order for someone to actually get to government information, they have to deliberately go into that section of the library that, unfortunately, for whatever reason, most of our reference staff are not thinking about, “Oh, there might be government information that will answer this,” unless, you know, they’ve worked in documents before or they’re just particularly astute. Do you see that as a problem from your perspective, and do you have any ideas about ways that academic libraries could do better outreach in that regard?

Russell

More than half of our documents libraries now have what we call blended reference where they don’t maintain a separate reference staff for government documents, and that has both its positives and its negatives obviously. You get very, very deep expertise when you have a dedicated staff and they have an intuitive knowledge of the range of material and the interrelationship between things or what agency might have done work in a certain area that might not be obvious to someone who doesn’t work closely with the documents. Most of those people spend a lot of time training other people on the reference staff, even if it’s not a blended reference, so that they do have enough awareness to know when to refer somebody to government documents.

I think it’s always a challenge when you have these large and very separate collections. How do you make them more integrated into the library as a whole? How do you make them more visible? And, again, to—not having tried to count—but certainly dozens and maybe more than hundreds of depositories in the four years that I’ve been Superintendent of Documents, and it’s fascinating to see how individual each library is and the way they treat their materials. But we’ve seen some very interesting things. There’s a public library in Arizona that set up a Spanish language reading room because they have a fairly large Hispanic population. They went through their government documents and took out every document that was in Spanish regardless of the subject matter, catalogued them, put them in the Spanish language reading room, and documents that nobody had ever touched are circulating like mad because they’re in a situation that makes them visible to a population for whom they’re relevant.

The state library of Michigan has taken parts of their government documents collection and moved them over into the genealogy section because as a state library, they have a huge interest in genealogy. They

looked at their collection and specifically extracted things they felt would get better use and higher visibility in their genealogy collection. So you see individual libraries making decisions based on what's the emphasis on this campus or the city or the area they might be serving, and then trying to highlight the parts of the collection that are of value. I think that's really the important approach, each institution to really make that judgment about how do we best integrate this information? How do we best present this information to our users? How do we draw them in, if it's a separate collection? How do we cross-train staff so that they are sensitive enough to understand when they should be referring people to government information? By and large, I think it's a very effective program and I think each of these institutions is finding its own equilibrium in terms of what works in the specific culture of that institution.

Paustenbaugh *I'm sure it has been really interesting to see the variety of areas...*

Russell A pretty amazing part of this job is the opportunity to go to so many different libraries and see how they're working with this material and the enormous pride that they take. It's very humbling, really, to see the commitment that they have to public access and the various things that they've done to try to ensure that this information is available to people in their communities.

Paustenbaugh *When you first got into the field of librarianship, what did you feel like some of the major issues were facing the profession and how do you think those have evolved? And it can even be within a narrow context if you would like it to be.*

Russell I think the thing that has transformed the profession is really, first automation—but going beyond automation, Internet access. I worked at LexisNexis for a period of time and there was a period where you had to buy a specific terminal that connected to Lexis and that was the only way you could access it. We all make jokes now, about those wonderful—I think they were red—wonderful old terminals, but...

Paustenbaugh *Kind of like OCLC?*

Russell Yes. It was hard-wired, too. Well, a lot of the early things that in order to really manage the access, you really had to get them into your mainframe and the way to do that was with these dedicated terminals. So, when we think back on it now, it seems so bizarre because obviously we're all used to using the web and things, but it really caused us to change.

And I'll tell you an interesting story. When I first started to work at

Comm Sat [Communications Satellite Corporation], they gave me the opportunity to travel around the United States and visit other engineering libraries. They wanted to have a superb engineering library, and they wanted me to go to major engineering libraries and visit them and then come back with ideas because it was a new company and they were starting a new library so we had this opportunity. One of the places that I went was an R&D lab of a Fortune 500 company in the telecommunications field, and their librarian had come there shortly after the end of the Second World War. She had an incredible reputation nationally as being the best engineering librarian at the best library—and she was very gracious. She spent lots of time with me and took me all through the library and was very, very helpful. Then we got to some questions about automation, she just said, “I don’t do that. I have people on my staff. If you want to talk to them, but...” I mean, essentially, “I’m not learning this. I’m close to retirement.” You know, “This is off—you

Russell American Psychiatric Association.

Paustenbaugh *...and helping with the part of controlled vocabulary dealing with psychiatry, would you consider that your first experience in what would later become database development?*

Russell I guess in a sense because we, as the Psychiatric Association, our collection was almost exclusively in psychiatry...

Paustenbaugh *Sure.*

Russell ...and we'd have—my recollection is over 10,000 volumes just in that one field—and so, of course, to NLM who was looking at the whole of medicine. My recollection we had, may be false but WM100 was psychiatry. Well, we couldn't classify our entire library WM100 so obviously we needed to begin to break out sub-disciplines and that kind of thing. The ability to do that analysis of, you know, having a large body of information in one field and a specialty in that field with our own members and things to be able to then come back to them and make recommendations about terminology and refinements of the classification system. It was like just a—well, you know, for somebody who was first in college and then just in graduate school, to be tinkering with that was kind of neat. It was like, "Wow," you just sort of—it's kind of fun to think that here you can be so junior in your profession...

Paustenbaugh *Right.*

Russell ...and yet because you are working with a collection that has a specialty, you have something to offer and an ability to gauge and make recommendations. So it was kind of an interesting puzzle to solve.

Paustenbaugh *Well, your whole comment about wondering if you would ever get at the point of your career that you wouldn't want to learn things anymore, and being an administrator now, we have that conversation a lot and some of us are still in our mid-forties and think we have 20, maybe more, years in the profession and things are just evolving so quickly. Do you have advice for people that are going to be in this for the next 20 or 30 years and how to manage all of this?*

Russell I was having a conversation a week or so ago with a colleague who is also trying to manage change in her organization, and we got to talking. The analogy that we were using was that we're going through a period of whitewater and just this incredible rapidity of change and the amount of turbulence, and that part of what's hard to convey to people is this isn't a brief passage of whitewater that we're passing through, but that for the foreseeable future we're going to...

Paustenbaugh *It's all whitewater.*

Russell ...be in whitewater, yes, and so trying to prepare people for the idea that it isn't enough just to sort of cling to the raft and close your eyes and wait to get through it, but that you really do have to try to pay attention and steer the canoe, if you will, and the raft and try to take as much control as you can even when there's this incredible amount of turbulence around you.

I know that's a real challenge for some people because some people are just not as comfortable with change, particularly with change that comes with that kind of speed, and so I think as administrators, it puts a lot more on us in terms of how we communicate about the changes that are coming and how we help our staff work through. I don't think you want to protect or buffer them from it, but nevertheless to at least make them feel that there's some semblance of control or some sort of plan, you know, of action so that they don't feel like they're just being constantly buffeted by its happening.

When I look back at my career and the amount of change in the past ten years is just probably as much or more as in the entire rest of my career. When I came to GPO in the 1990s, I originally was working with GPO Access in the depository program. We were looking at a program that was 95% paper, and the five percent that was electronic was mostly stripping out floppy disks and CD-ROMs. Now we're in a program where 92% of the new material we identify is online, even if you also have it in tangible form. So in ten years we've gone from a paper-based program to an electronic-based program and that's just—had we gone, what, a 180 years before that with a paper-based program?

Paustenbaugh *Well, it's kind of like you jumped from the 19th century into the 21st century in a ten year period.*

Russell Right. We had microfiche in the 1980s, but that really wasn't that dramatic a change. People had been using microfiche and microfilm for decades and in lots of other areas. This is just a complete change and has really caused us to have to rethink so many of the things that we do. So, you're right. You sit there and you try to think, well, what will we be dealing with? What's the technology we're gonna be dealing with in 10 years or 20 years? It's almost impossible to imagine what that might be, and so the ability to really prepare for it is much different.

When I got out of graduate school, in the very early days we began to have online databases and things, so you could sort of see that that was coming and it would be more and more of an asset, but not that it was going to just turn everything topsy-turvy.

Paustenbaugh *Right. Well, the whitewater analogy is a really good one, and one thing that I think about whitewater is that there's a lot of noise associated with it.*

Russell Yeah. (Laughs)

Paustenbaugh *I think that's really a challenge. There's so much noise in figuring out what the things are that are really going to be the critical things that you have to do and other stuff you...*

Russell Not be distracted by those.

Paustenbaugh *Right. So have you found any sure-fire way that's worked more often for you than not?*

Russell I can't say that I have a secret weapon there. It would be nice to have one. I think it's more—again, maybe it goes back to sort of listening carefully. I think the advantage of touching base with so many different

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Russell I think that very much, too. I think this was very clear going out again and visiting. We were at Alva yesterday with John Phillips and Vicki and others. You have this incredible motivation to service. I think that's another characteristic that you really find in people in this profession is that they really not only have the desire to know for their interest and their own sake, but they're just delighted with the idea that they're helping somebody else get some information that then allows them to pursue a personal interest or a business need or, you know...

Paustenbaugh *Sure.*

Russell And there's just such a sense of reward in the fact that you've been able to help somebody overcome a problem or search out a path.

Paustenbaugh *Do you think that that is a characteristic in particular of documents librarians or really of all librarians? I've been at this institution for 16 years and so, you know, where I've really seen this is in our documents department, but I don't know if that's just this institution or if that is, you know, a characteristic...*

Russell I think the thing that blends with the general characteristics of librarians and documents people as an added thing is this enormous commitment to public access, and so I think you generally find people who are very concerned and engaged in global processing. I don't mean kind of campaigning for people or things, but who really are concerned about kind of the citizen's role in government and having the response of government and a responsible government, and who really place an enormously high value on the fact th

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at GPO, coming from the outside and were trying to begin to understand the depository program and some of the other things, we

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information, and I think as we finish some of our retrospective cataloging that more of these materials are more visible and as we begin the digitization of the retrospective materials so that more of it can be retrieved electronically and blend in with other kinds of resources, that it will become more valuable, and more heavily used. But I think the real issue there is the expertise.

When we look at future systems and goals, we're always building a future system at GPO. We're also kind of trying to look as far ahead as we can in terms of what's going to happen. When you think about the idea that people may just be finding government information through Google or just on the Internet, it's really a little frightening sometimes. I can give you so many examples, but let's take the *Code of Federal Regulations*. There are very specific regulations and they are presented in a hierarchical way. You might do a search and you might come up with a very specific regulation that told you something about, let's say, how to ship a specific radioisotope

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- Russell** ...that we're ever going to get to a point where the randomness of finding a single document or a single fact or piece of information is going to be sufficient to assist people to really understand how it fits into the bigger puzzle. How many people really understand that at the end of every Congress, every bill expires? And so if you see something in the newspaper that says, "Senate Bill 1234" and you search for it and you turn up the one from the past Congress, do you really realize that that's not the right one? You know, it's those kind of things so there's that teaching that goes on to help that user really understand the contents and that's just invaluable and can avoid enormous errors or misinterpretations. You use statistical data and you don't really understand how it was compiled. You can draw false conclusions from it. That...
- Paustenbaugh** *You can do that when you do understand.* (Laughter)
- Russell** Well, that too. So I really feel that that human resource is really what adds value to a collection.
- Paustenbaugh** *I know that in the patent community that was certainly a big concern because it's great when people find something that's like their inventions. When they say they've found nothing and they've done their search on the Internet and you think well what exactly was it that you were looking at?*
- Russell** Right. Did you look carefully enough?
- Paustenbaugh** *Right—and did you ever find the right classification for your invention, so regardless of what the inventor called it, it was in this one area and, you know, it would be like one in a thousand people that would say, "Yes, I looked in such and such," and, you know, and then you could think, "Well, then you should have a fair degree of confidence" but...*
- Russell** Another example I often use, when I was at Lexis, they completed the building of a database of the 50 state statutes. They were really proud of the fact that you could go on Lexis and you could put in a search and could determine all the state laws on a single topic, and they had given us in customer service, a number

If I'm searching in something that's less bounded, there's always that tendency to think that because I got something, I got everything, or because I got something, I got the right thing. Like your example of the patents, you may have not gotten what you needed because the way you framed your search and it might have given you a fragment of what you needed and not all of it. And again that's where having, you know, somebody else who kind of can help you navigate through it or validate the technique that you've used just becomes invaluable, particularly when it's something that's really critical, either economically or health or scientifically. You really want to know that you're not just taking a random chance on the fact that you won't find it recently enough or that, you know, that particular document's been digitized when others have not or...

Paustenbaugh *That were even better than what you found.*

Russell ...than what you found—exactly.

Paustenbaugh *It's kind of a paradox in a way that there's all this information out there and yet it seems like in a lot of ways people's general knowledge has decreased. So your example of finding the bill that expired but, oh it just happened to have the same bill number, as one that did pass a couple of years ago and you're not looking at the same thing at all and people just not even having enough of a knowledge of how their government works to realize that, "I found this, but I didn't find the right thing."*

Russell Right thing.

Paustenbaugh *Yes. "I found this number, but not the right thing at all." I know that one of the things that we're interested in with this project is looking at the service to the government documents community. How did you become involved in the documents community as opposed to just working with documents in a library?*

Russell It was very interesting and goes back again to this whole issue of the transition into the electronic information. The Depository Library Council was an advisory group to the Public Printer and to the Superintendent of Documents. Back in the 1980s when it was just the beginning of the CD-ROM publishing and the online databases and things were becoming more prominent. I don't think any of us really had enough vision to see what was really going to hit us.

My name was recommended for service on the Depository Library Council because I had a lot of expertise in electronic publishing and it was felt that this was a change that was going to begin coming to the depository program and it would help them to have technical expertise.

So although I wasn't somebody who was a working documents librarian, I was somebody who had worked with government documents and who had been working in a number of different publishing companies that were doing electronic products based on government information. At that point I had been at IHS. I'd also been at Disclosure (Information Group) which was done on the SEC filings and some other databases and then at LexisNexis, so I was nominated to be on the Depository Library Council.

Then the Public Printer, Bob Houck, appointed me to the—no, actually I guess I was appointed by Ralph Kennickell and then Bob Houck came in while I was still on Council so I became a non-depository person on the Depository Council. At that point I began to meet a lot with working documents librarians and of course the Council was looking at a whole range of issues relating to things that were going on with the depository program, but increasingly beginning to talk about what might be coming in the way of electronic information and how to integrate it into the depository program. Because of being on the Council, I met Bob Houck when he was appointed Public Printer, and he and I had some conversations about electronic information and the changes that were coming, and he invited me to come and work at GPO.

Initially, you know, in a policy position and reported to him, to look at electronic information and then I actually was tasked to run the depository program. And then we set up an office of electronic information dissemination services. When the GPO Access bill passed, I had been working with the head of the library program and also the head of the electronic information program, and I was told I had to pick. It's like choosing between your children. It's like, "Wait ... wait. I can't do this. This is somebody's choice." But I chose the electronic information because I thought that was where I could be most valuable, and so that was why I got involved then in setting up *GPO Access*.

It was kind of an interesting evolution, I guess, of coming from having been on the private sector side developing products based on government information. Of course, in that context I had visited a lot of libraries to see about materials that we could use from their collections or to show them the products that we were developing and get their feedback. I had those kinds of contacts, but that was really the way that I began actually working more directly and more from within the documents community, if you will.

Paustenbaugh *Are there other Superintendents of Documents who have been on the Depository Library Council?*

Russell I think Fran Buckley, who was my immediate predecessor. He had also

been on the Depository Library Council and had been a documents librarian. He and I are the only two who have ever been librarians who have been superintendents. And again, if you think of what the whole system was, essentially we were a book dealer. We weren't really running a library. We were running a book dealer, so we would get publications in from the printers or printed in-house and turn around and package them up and ship them out to the libraries. Most of the prior superintendents were people who were much more oriented toward warehouse management supply, you know, that type of business function. I think the need to have somebody with more of a library background has become stronger and stronger as we've moved into the electronic environment and as we're beginning to restructure the program to be more of service to the libraries in this kind of environment.

Paustenbaugh *Sure. And this might not really be a fair question, and you don't have to answer it, but do you expect that your successor will be somebody that is also a librarian?*

Russell I don't know. I mean, it certainly isn't in that sense a specific requirement of the job...

...but the advantages—I think there's real advantages to it in terms of the ability to communicate with the community and to understand the issues that they're facing. I think that's probably certainly a factor that will be considered for whoever is my successor as what's their ability to work with the community. It may be possible to do that without a library degree but certainly a library degree is an advantage.

Paustenbaugh *What's it been like to be the first woman superintendent?*

Russell You know, I guess it's certainly a fair question, but it's a hard one for me to answer simply because I don't know what it was like not to be, so that's part of it. But also because it's something that...I think that I'm there because of my qualifications, not because I'm a woman...

Paustenbaugh *Sure.*

Russell ...and so I guess to me it's kind of a, it's nice but it's sort of a side issue.

Paustenbaugh *Right. You're the superintendent who also happens to be a woman.*

Russell

I'd been at GPO before and had been involved with the depository program and *GPO Access* and worked right down to the National Commission on Policy relating to library information science—I mean, there was just this whole number of factors that just seemed to qualify me for the job. It was nice that in addition I happened to have a library degree and in addition I happened to be a woman, but neither was really the single determining factor. So I guthere(res niccertainly3(eolenk e nan0.355 - T16.0I

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Well, and living there, too. I practically live on the Capitol. When I mentioned that I had worked at OTA, I was actually working in Congress. I was a Senate employee and I was there during the Watergate years. It was just a time of a different kind of whitewater—turbulence, yes. But when I left there I went out to Denver to work at IHS and, when I first left, it was just enormous relief. It was like, you know, just been so intense. It was such an emotional time, I think, for the country, but to be right in the midst of it.

I think I was walking down the street to go the Library of Congress to do some research one day when they had just come out of the Supreme Court and were announcing the Nixon papers decision. It was just that kind of sense of getting caught up in history that you get in Washington. Local news is national news and so it's all kind of there. At first it was like this kind of big sigh of relief, to be away from it, and then after a few months I began to think, "You know, if it wasn't for Walter Cronkite I wouldn't even know what was happening." (Laughs) This was, you know, before CNN and C-Span and stuff. I began to get this sort of withdrawal symptoms, like "Wait, wait—don't these people know what's going on? Don't they care?" For if it wasn't Watergate, it just didn't make the local press and I was like, "There are people back there who are doing all these things that affect these people and nobody's telling them about it."

I think you become addicted. You really do get to the point where it's just part of the air you breathe and the water you drink, and you don't know how to step back from it. But it's wonderful to be in Washington because you do have this sense of closeness to the government and the sense of awareness of things that are happening. I had a colleague when I was at Lexis who did some of their government relations work and who had been in Washington for a meeting about a bill that was pending, and she came back and she where who "Ybefore CN?in W out f tha For if i I bu

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knew those things and somebody must have told me at some point or I was part of a conversation of somebody who'd been in one of these pre-drafting things or something. But she was a lawyer. I was so startled—like, “Well, how can I know that and she didn't know that?” So, there's some things.

Paustenbaugh *All that stuff they don't teach you in your civics classes.*

Russell Exactly. It's a magical place and there's times when it can be a frustrating place, of course, but it's endlessly fascinating being there and just observing what's going on. My children will tell you that they sort of liked the idea that we were living in D.C. and so they're disenfranchised. My son would say, “Well, they can't hold me accountable for that because I didn't vote for any of those people.” (Laughs) It's a sort of a funny environment because we were so much of Emerald City and yet as citizens of that city we don't have our own senators or our own members of Congress.

Paustenbaugh *I think I like the license plates that say, “Taxation...”*

Russell Taxation without Representation.

Paustenbaugh *Yes.*

Russell Exactly, yes.

Paustenbaugh *Yes, I remember the first time one of my children saw that and they...*

Russell “What does that mean?”

Paustenbaugh *Well, no, but she would have been, you know, learning about the Revolutionary War and she said, “Why is that on there?” And I said, “Because there's still a place where—in our country.”*

Russell ...where it happens.

Paustenbaugh *She was just, you know...*

Russell ...which is why they put it there, hoping that people would notice that and say, “Oh, maybe we should let those people vote.”

Paustenbaugh *Yes. Do you have any favorite memories involving government information work?*

Russell Oh, well—probably thousands, but favorite ones, huh? Well, I'll tell you one. GPO, of course, was originally founded to do congressional

information and only in 1895 began to do printing for the entire government. As I mentioned to you when I went to Colorado I was doing this controlled vocabulary index with *CFR*, so there were several years of my life where I was just deeply embedded in the *CFR*. I got to know a lot of people in the offices of the Federal Register—a lot of things like that—and so when I came to work at GPO for the first time, they had a number of the presses. The *Record* and the *Register* are

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or even when I worked at GPO in the 1990s—never occurred to me that I would ever be Superintendent of Documents. I mean, I'm not even sure if it was ever, like, an aspiration. I just never thought about it but it was a matter of just, as they say, a confluence of events. Kind of being in the

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Paustenbaugh *Sure.*

Russell She's also a librarian and an archivist and so we talk family, but we also talk business. We've had these kind of career conversations, and she's always operated on a five-year plan. I have never in my whole life had a five-year plan and (Laughs) I just have, I guess, always taken it for granted that an opportunity would arise and I would follow it. But it's never been, "What are you going to do when you grow up?"

Paustenbaugh *Right.*

Russell So, in fact, we've had these conversations. Here I am 62 years old and

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community of helpful people and that if you ask, someone will answer. So, where have you turned for help with difficult questions?

Russell You mean sort of research questions or...

Paustenbaugh *Well, or just like in being the Superintendent of Documents.*

Russell Well, I think one of the things that I have really loved about this position has been that it's very collaborative, both in terms of the people inside GPO but even more so with the depository community. I've had the opportunity to do the ladder of what-ifs. "Well, what if we did this or what if we did that?"—or pick up the rock and say, "Gee, what's

first question I got at the end of the speech was, “Well, what’s the answer?” I was like, “You know, if there was an answer, (Laughs) we wouldn’t still be asking the question.” But in reality, that’s been a part of

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separate the four things. If you're going to provide access over a long period of time, you've got to have preservation. Too often, I think, we focus on getting the access today and not think about the consequences. We're suffering with the CD-ROMs that we sent out in the 1990s where they were all proprietary formats.

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say, “Well, this was the first and this was the second and this was the third.” But in the electronic world, this constant tinkering—“Well, I just found an error and I’ll just fix it,” or “There’s a typo here and I’ll just fix it,” or “I forgot to attach that appendix and I’ll just fix it,” you know. At what point have you changed it enough that you really should acknowledge that it’s a new edition and separately catalog it, separately preserve it?

We see things happening with the national map, for example, where it’s in many ways a quarto. There’s parts of it that are on the GPS servers but a lot of it is on the servers of each state government or even some county governments and city governments that are then making it accessible to be pulled in. At the point where you ask for a map of the Stillwater area, some elements of that may be coming from the State of Oklahoma or even from the City of Stillwater or whatever county you’re in. Then others may be coming from the USGS (United States Geological Survey). But as a result, each of those entities is constantly changing and updating their data and there’s no way to roll it back. There’s no way to say, “Well, this is today’s data but was that boundary there three months ago or three years ago or thirty years ago? It’s just a continuously changing database so the issues that we’re going to have to deal with in terms of permanent public access, how do we identify when there’s been enough change for it to be a new version and what do we call version triggers? What’s the trigger that says this change is sufficient for this kind of document? And it may be different for that kind of document or another kind, and then the technological challenges of the whole platform upon which the national map has been built does not lend itself to taking snapshots. We still haven’t solved that challenge for that particular type of database. There are other kinds that we have methods for doing it.

I think starting down that path, I think starting the depository program down the path, starting GPO down the path, as a government agency to work with all of the customer agencies to help educate them about the importance of these decisions that they’re making, in terms of not just the immediacy of, “I have this information, but I need to communicate today for my primary mission,” but the consequences of that decision for future access in terms of people’s ability to rely on the information and our ability to preserve it.

Paustenbaugh *It’s a huge undertaking.*

Russell It is, and fascinating. It is something that will have to be revisited continuously. But, I think just getting the focus on those things and the acknowledgment of the task that needs to be done and taking these early steps to doing it is huge in terms of starting down a path. We’ll have to

adapt to all the changes that come, but at least acknowledges what those responsibilities are. If you don't accept it, if you don't even know that you're responsible for doing it, then it isn't going to get done so...

Paustenbaugh *No one else is going to do that.*

Russell ...so getting in focus and set the guiding principles by which we now are going to be making these decisions as we go forward, I think, is real critical.

Paustenbaugh *Besides the advent of the Internet, what do you think has had the greatest impact on libraries and government information?*

Russell I'm not sure that it's separable from the Internet, but I think it goes back to what we were just talking about. It's the changes in publishing practice. Even before the Internet was there as a means for dissemination, the changes that were beginning to happen in the production and they lead to some really interesting challenges.

One of the very first electronic documents that we published at GPO was the Gore report called *Red Tape to Results* where they were beginning to look at dismantling an overabundance of regulations, simplifying. We had asked the White House for permission to publish it electronically. We were given the print obviously, and within a day or two of the time the publication was released, they sent us over—I don't remember now whether it was Quark Express or Pagemaker—whatever desktop publishing we were using to set it up. They sent us over all these files and said, "Yes" that we could release them electronically but they no longer knew which files related to the final copy because they had been editing chapter one and then they backed up and started editing another version of it.

This gets back to the whole version control issue. Because it was so critical and because it was such early days and we actually printed these things out and proofread them in order to determine which was the correct copy so we didn't put out an electronic version that didn't correspond to the print. Obviously that's not economically viable moving forward, but the very fact that these documents were beginning to be produced in that way and that they were flowing in an electronic way, began to give us an ability to change our production. A bill is typeset now. That bill is read into the record and comes out in a different format and record when it, more central public law, you know, it gets edited and then reformatted in that way.

So much of the content is being re-used rather than being re-typeset and that ability, even before we talk about the dissemination, just to be much

more efficient with the flow of information. All the challenges that rise up, the version control—knowing that this is the same version that went to press—is enormous. I think if that's the foundation on which all this

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the program that makes it necessary to approach it that way and logical to approach it that way.

Paustenbaugh *It seems like there is a constant need to educate our legislators since they make the appropriations decisions about the value of this, and I know even with the Library of Congress and the recent decision that they made on series cataloging. Many libraries view that as a highly cost-effective way to have that done. What has your responsibility been as far as being an educator of the legislators?*

Russell Well, and I think that is one of the roles that we do play is. Ultimately when we put together a budget and we go to Congress or when we go to our oversight committee, we are trying to convey to them that this is what we believe needs to be done for the program. It does have this collaboration, too, to be able to say, "...and here's the consultation that we've done to show that this is supported by the community or what the community also wants."

Obviously, any time you're asking for money on the Hill, you're competing with hurricanes and wars and whatever everybody else's priorities are. Part of our responsibility is to be an advocate for the program and to do what we can to demonstrate the need and to do that, and I must say you could not want a better partner than the library community. The real advantage to us of having 1,260 libraries is that there's almost no congressional district where we don't have somebody who's a part of the program who could communicate with their member of Congress that this is actually helping his or her constituents because it's bringing content to them, training to them and cataloging records to them and whatever the other services might be. So that really is an enormous benefit that we have in the program. If we've done our homework properly, we're correctly advocating, correctly representing the needs of the community and then the community is in a position to help us find their own communication with their senators and congressmen about the fact that, "Yes, this is a valid..." And that's been another part of the partnership that I think is very strong.

Paustenbaugh *So you have a sense that the libraries are really doing their job...*

Russell Yes...yes.

Paustenbaugh *...in that regard? They are?*

Russell In fact, when Bruce came to GPO as public printer, there had been a conflict going on between OMB, the Office of Management and Budget, in the executive branch and GPO. Title 44 does say that all executive printing was to go through GPO and he was trying to re-write

regulations to, in effect, say that it was an option for agencies, but that they were not required to go through GPO. And the library community started writing letters to Mitch Daniels, who was then the director of OMB, telling him that he would undermine public access, and it created a climate in which Bruce could come in as the new public printer and craft a compromise. But it was really interesting. It wasn't the printing industries who potentially could lose the printing contracts for GPO. It wasn't the agencies themselves who often aren't free to speak anyway against policy that OMB is putting forward. You know, it was the library community coming in and raising the visibility of the relationship between printing and the public access that enabled the policy to be turned around, and that wasn't something that GPO asked them to do. It wasn't something that we could have appropriately asked them to do, but it was something that they just immediately saw that connection and began educating the channels about what the impact of this decision would be.

Paustenbaugh *Right, which I think it's really easy to just sort of lose track of how one decision you're going to make impacts—yes, exactly. Is there anything that you want to tell me about that I haven't asked you, that you wish that I had asked you or...*

Russell No, it seems like we've ranged pretty widely here, but I can't think of anything at the moment except that it really has been a great honor to be the Superintendent of Documents. I feel so fortunate to have had this opportunity. It's been really an amazing experience, not something I want to ever forget nor that I could. It's hard to imagine in that sense to know what the next job could be that could compete with that so, whatever I do from here, it'll be something very different. This will always remain, I think in some ways, the most special part of my career.

I think we get sort of an idea about government and bureaucracy and things, yet I think there's really an enormous number of people that work in government who really see it as public service. I think that's very much what I have seen is just the incredible opportunity to work with the program that I personally value enormously. I hope that I have helped it along the way and improved it along the way and set a path for others to follow because it's something very well worth supporting. And we've gotten it this far through history and I'd hate to think that the change to electronics would upset the apple cart. It's going to need to change, continue to change because the environment will change. I think the fundamental principle of having a system that brings public access to government information to the people in the local community, I just don't think you can substitute. Well, you can do an Internet search and walk away and say, "Victory," and then think it's—so I hope that we never lose that—that we continue to value having that personal contact,

that reference librarian, that collection and that commitment to the local community that you're never going to get at the national level with just an Internet search.

Paustenbaugh *Right. Well, thank you so much for your willingness to participate.*

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