

**SC/MLA Oral Histories Project****Ada M. Seltzer****August 22, 2014****Greenwood-Leflore Public Library, Greenwood, MS****Interviewer: Richard Nollan***Transcribed by Kay Hogan Smith*

**Richard Nollan:** Today is August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014. My name is Richard Nollan, and I'm here with Ada Seltzer as part of the Southern Chapter Oral History Project to record her recollections of her time as a medical librarian in Mississippi. So, Ada let me turn this over to you and start by asking you the basic question of all, tell me a little bit about your upbringing and your life and what influences led you to become a librarian?

**Ada Seltzer:** I was born in Kistler Valley, rural Pennsylvania and I was delivered at home by a female physician. My parents were farmers so I grew up on a farm. Sharecroppers really. We had 40 milking cows 500 chickens and a generalized farm with grains, corn that were grown, that were farmed on the acreage that we had. I was assisting my parents in the summer when I was not in school or in college until I went to graduate school at Florida State in 1964. What influenced me to become a librarian was a combination of the high school guidance counselor and the school librarian. I was constantly encouraged my senior year to make up my mind whether I wanted to go to college or not. I was not at all convinced that that was a route for me. I really didn't have any career in mind, but it continued my senior year, the whole year – constantly being asked, “Well, you know you need to apply if you're going to go to college” and that sort of thing. My father was not in favor of my having a college degree. We had some rather strong arguments over the dinner table that really went on from the time I was sixteen, and I started to think about perhaps I want to do something else after I graduated from high school. So it was that contention there. And then one day the school librarian asked me, was I going to college - I mean I keep hearing this repeatedly! – and telling her that I'm not sure, I'm still thinking about it. But I explained to her that I really didn't know what career I would go into if I went to college. And she just sprightly says, “Why not be a librarian?” And I said, “You go to

college to be a librarian?” “Sure! You can do that up on the hill.” “Up on the hill” was the state teachers’ college, and they had a school librarianship program there, a very well-known one. So that gave me food for thought. And to help me along, she invited me to volunteer in the school library for a few hours a week, and I decided I liked that. So after having convinced my father that perhaps I should be able to go to college, he relented and said I could only go to the college where I could walk to, by the way, from my farm. It was that close. And so I chose to do library education and become a school librarian. And that’s how it happened. [Laughs.]

**RN:** I’m just curious, you mention the librarian was a woman – was your high school counselor a woman as well?

**AS:** Yes.

**RN:** So...what was your experience like as a student in library school?

**AS:** This wasn’t library school, this was my four-year, my bachelor’s education.

**RN:** So this was in preparation for [library school]?

**AS:** It was a library education program, a four year program. So that was my major, my second major was English literature. My first year was frankly not very good. I was going to quit at the end of my first year.

**RN:** Was it intellectually challenging or...what was the difficulty?

**AS:** Oh sort of lost, I was a commuter, and commuters were few at that time. It was hard. I could do it but there was also a lot of anxiety. But again the library education department chair kept saying “Mm, mm [no], this is just the freshman year and the freshman jitters, come back at least one semester.” So I agreed I would come back one more semester in my sophomore year. And then it was much better.

**RN:** It gelled for you.

**AS:** Yes.

**RN:** What year did you start college?

**AS:** 1960.

**RN:** That was probably the same year you graduated from high school? Okay...so, after that, once you got into your sophomore year everything sort of came together, and you began to feel a little more comfortable in your student days and so you graduated in 1963?

**AS:** 1964. Well, what happened then was the chairman of the department came and said, "You know if you don't want to work in school libraries, you could go and get your master's degree, and then you can work in universities or public libraries or special libraries." So, I would not have gone on for my masters had he not gently kept encouraging me and helping me to apply. And I received an assistantship from Florida State [University], which I had to have.

**RN:** Was that enough to cover your costs?

**AS:** I thought so. No. [Laughs]

**RN:** It usually isn't. So, how's your dad doing at this time, is he still supporting you or did he come around to the idea?

**AS:** No. I received \$100 for my college graduation and a suitcase of clothes and that's how I started Florida State. That's how I started my adult life. And by January I ran out of money! [Laughs] And I had to borrow money from a bank in Tallahassee to complete my education.

**RN:** Was that a two-year program at Florida?

**AS:** Florida State was on the trimester system at that time, so it took four trimesters. I went from June of '64 to July of '65.

**RN:** So actually it went very quickly.

**AS:** Yes.

**RN:** So your student days are coming to an end, money's tight, what did you do? Did you work while you were in school, did you get a second job?

**AS:** Not a second job, no, I was full-time and then ten hours a week for my assistantship in the humanities department of the Florida State library.

**RN:** So at least you got some experience in the library while you were a student.

**AS:** Yes I did. Plus in my bachelor's degree, we did student teaching so I student taught for six weeks in an elementary library, in a junior high library and a senior high library.

**RN:** So, comes graduation day, what do you do?

**AS:** Actually the last two trimesters I started applying for jobs and interviewing. Librarians were coming to the library school and actually doing interviews so I had some interviews on site while we were still in school going through the program.

**RN:** So the market was strong, there was definitely a market for you.

**AS:** Yes, there was a market at that time, it was a good time to get a job as a newly graduated librarian. So by the time I graduated I did have a job to join the reference staff as a beginning librarian at the University of South Florida in Tampa. August 2<sup>nd</sup> I started my career in 1965!

**RN:** [Laughs] ...and a month later you got your first check.

**AS:** Yes! [Laughs]

**RN:** Well, what was it like, you're not a student anymore; you're a professional – beginning – what was it like?

**AS:** I liked it a lot. I really enjoyed the profession. I was one of four reference librarians on that staff. It was a new university, they had just graduated their first class in 1964. So it was five years old at the time when I joined that staff. I did basic reference work, worked at the reference desk, and helped students with their term papers, helped faculty verify bibliographic citations for their research, their articles they were publishing, and the grants they were writing. They just were getting involved in grant writing at that time. The science program was very strong. Biology, chemistry was very strong, and so we really did a lot of bibliographic verification and interlibrary loans for the sciences at that time in the 60's. It was the 60's you know!

**RN:** Well, that's true, and it was Florida. Was it a good work experience?

**AS:** Yes, very good, liked it a lot. But originally I said that I would do my two or three years there and then try to move elsewhere in the country. That was my goal. And I ended up staying 21 and a half years. [Laughs]

**RN:** It sometimes works that way. Now, at some point after starting your first job I see that you went to the University of South Florida two years later. Is that in Tampa?

**AS:** What do you mean?

**RN:** You started in 1965 at Florida State?

**AS:** No, no, the University of South Florida, I finished at Florida State, and then August 2<sup>nd</sup> I began my job at the University of South Florida in 1965.

**RN:** Okay, I understand now. So, you didn't just stay in reference while you were at South Florida?

**AS:** No, I had been a reference librarian about five years when the state legislature commissioned a medical school for the University of South Florida. And, as a fairly young librarian on the staff I actually became the chief bibliographer. I verified a lot of extensive bibliographies sometimes for education, sometimes for the botany section or what have you, marine biology, when these published bibliographies came to the reference department - it was a way of trying to build up both the book collection as well as the journal collection. So, since that was my main responsibility, I did that when I was not on desk duty. The director came - having spoken to my boss - to ask if I would be interested in doing that work for the new dean of medicine as he was beginning to develop the new medical school for the campus. Of course, that was a new area for me, I was not going to turn that down!

**RN:** And when was that approximately what year?

**AS:** I think it was 1971. And, so that's what I did. So I was sort of the liaison person, just this one contact for this dean and his secretary and a business manager that did not have any office space or buildings to be in, they were all in temporary quarters. So, I was the one contact and then would refer that person to other areas of the library staff if those services were needed. One of the main responsibilities for that dean was also to get a Hill-Burton grant to help build the physical facility for the school of medicine. That first application was turned down, and at that point that dean resigned, and a new dean came in. Dr. Don Smith, an ophthalmologist from the University of Colorado, in Denver was the second dean. First dean was only there a year. And he too gets a main responsibility to get a Hill-Burton grant approved. I also got the responsibility to

be the library liaison for Dr. Smith. He was in the midst of writing a review article for the annual reviews or the yearbooks that were published in ophthalmology. So there was a lot of activity for me in verifying citations, getting medical articles that he needed to complete his review article. So...that was my first introduction to Index Medicus. We did have that, so...I was using that as the main tool to verify a lot of the citations and get the interlibrary loans for him.

**RN:** How did you access Index Medicus, was it just by paper still?

**AS:** Yes, still paper. MEDLARS was not developed yet at that time. He hired a librarian very, very early. He also got his Hill-Burton grant approved. [Laughter] The librarian was Fred Bryant who developed the library at Penn State University, another college in Pennsylvania. He really was a Floridian. He worked at the University of Florida in Gainesville in that medical library. He began that library and worked there for 20 or 25 years, and then was at Hershey, Pennsylvania, Penn State for 5 years, hired to begin his third medical library at the University of South Florida. He was hired almost 5 months before he was able to physically be at the University of South Florida full-time. So he would make monthly trips to meet with the dean and he began ordering, subscribing to journals, and ordering back files and the basic textbooks through the dean's office and the business manager at that time. I had not met him at that point. He was aware that I was a liaison for the dean and for faculty as they began to be hired, the department chairs began to be hired.

**RN:** I'm just curious, were you called a liaison to the dean at that time? Was that your title or what was your title?

**AS:** I was still a reference librarian, it was just a new responsibility. I was the library liaison to the dean of the school of medicine. And it was to be just a temporary assignment until the librarian who was hired was able to come on campus full-time. And then physically they're renting trailers, so the dean and his staff got a trailer. The library actually got a trailer, so by the time the librarian came there was a place for him to work. Then there was an agreement to use some of the planning money for the school of medicine to build a temporary science building that would be turned over to the science department after the first medical school building was built. We moved into that building in 1974.

**RN:** You say "we," did something change at that point?

**AS:** Well, when Fred Bryant came to campus full-time and started working as the librarian, he offered me a job to join the medical library. I turned him down because I really liked what I was doing in reference and I was progressing and my responsibilities were increasing, so I was very happy being an academic reference librarian. He offered the job to me two more times [laughter] before I finally said, “Yeah, I think I’ll give that a try,” and joined. I was the first librarian staff member that he hired, and joined him in April of ’71.

**RN:** Now, you were working for a university and a medical school in 1971. Was it a staff position, was it a faculty position?

**AS:** For the medical library? It was a staff position.

**RN:** So, academically you weren’t expected to publish or to come up through the ranks or anything like that?

**AS:** No, when I was in the university library, I’d only been hired about a year when the state of Florida actually passed a law that in order for beginning librarians to become associates, assistants, and work their way up the ladder, they had to have more than their basic master of library science degree. There I was, a year and a half out of library school and if I was going to stay how many years, I didn’t know, I needed to get another degree. Getting a Ph.D. was not an option and working full-time at that university. So, I chose to get a second master’s degree. The law was passed and a year later it was rescinded. But by then I was well on my way to getting my master’s degree, because I’d been going to school for a full year or so before it was rescinded. So I just kept going and got my second master’s degree in sociology. But we were still staff, we did not have faculty status.

**RN:** So, you’ve moved into a medical library, you’re full-time and doing something you never thought you’d be doing – what was it like?

**AS:** It was very rewarding, being a part of building a library from scratch. Of course, [I] had a veteran director or boss to learn from, so it was very, very interesting. It was a tremendous learning experience. It’s just one of those things, you just happened to be in the right place at the right time to get that experience. Looking back on it, it was invaluable in many, many ways personnel-wise because I had to develop the reference staff, hire assistants, working schedules for the reference and the reserve because...circulation and reserve as well as reference were my

responsibility at that time. The first student – there were 24 students in the charter class. I knew all twenty-four. The second class was 48, and I didn't know all the students in the second class. So the charter class is still very dear to my heart because I knew every student. They were in the library every day studying. When I would get there at 7:30 in the morning and open the doors, they would ask if they could come in even though the library didn't open until 8:00. So, they would be there studying for an hour, hour and a half, before their first class. So I knew all 24, and...that was very, very special. It was a very rewarding experience, and I discovered rather quickly that I really liked medical librarianship better than I really liked academic, and felt that this would probably be my career's path having made the switch. I really did enjoy the kind of research assistance and clinical assistance then as the program began to work its way into the clinical years. It was very rewarding. So I grew up with a school of medicine and with a school of nursing. My medical library career grew with the school, two schools, as they were developing and adding new students and adding new programs and different degrees.

**RN:** So now you're in a medical library, you understand that you like it. Was it about this time too that you began to take an interest in MLA or Southern Chapter, were they in your thinking at this time?

**AS:** Not the first few years. The director was very involved in the Chapter and MLA meetings and went every year to the two. Maxine Grimes from Mississippi by the way was hired as cataloger. I joined the staff in April of '71, and she was hired in August of '71. And then we later hired a serials person and an acquisitions person. So that was the staff, and we worked in part of this temporary science building until the library building and the main school of nursing and school of medicine building were ready to be occupied, which was the summer of 1974...Shortly after we moved into the main building in '74, I'm still head of reference at this time, my director came to me and indicated that I perhaps should study and take the exam to be a certified medical librarian. He was aware, having gone to the meetings and etc., that an exam was going to be given at a certain time. Well, I did not have a medical bibliography course, and I was very concerned that I would not be able to pass the exam. But he told me which books to get and to study for it and he was confident that I would pass. I was not, however. Very, very nervous, very anxious about taking that exam. But I did, and I passed. And that was really the critical point in my medical library experience to that date when, as the budget was building also, he had funds to

begin to allow the staff members to travel to meetings. And I went to an MLA meeting before I attended a chapter meeting.

**RN:** When was that?

**AS:** 1973 in Kansas City.

**RN:** And you said that the funds were growing, was it still just you and the director staffing the library or were there other people?

**AS:** No, by the time we moved into the building in '74 the acquisitions staff had some technical assistants, cataloging had a technical assistant, serials did. Serials had two of them I think. There were two more reference librarians, and there were three in circulation I think. So the staff was growing as the school was now full-size, nursing was and medicine, so the library staff had grown.

**RN:** So, your first MLA was in Kansas City. What was that like for you?

**AS:** [Laughter] Never having attended a professional meeting, I was very overwhelmed. The exhibit area was the one that just...I could not get over how huge it was.

**RN:** Do you remember how many vendors were at the exhibit area?

**AS:** I don't remember!

**RN:** I'm sure it's recorded somewhere...

**AS:** When I came back and talked to my colleagues on campus about this huge exhibit area at this national meeting I was told, well, you should go to ALA, American Library Association. [Laughter] But for me, not having attended a professional meeting, this being my first and it's a national meeting, I was overwhelmed. I did not take any CE courses that time, I was just introduced to the format of the program and fully participated in the program and the exhibits and meeting a lot of the vendors. I was familiar with two or three, particularly the backfile vendor, some of the book vendors that visited us in the library, so I was familiar with a few of them. But there were so many more there! I guess I was introduced to NLM for the first time at that meeting. I'm not sure I had any contact with them until that meeting.

**RN:** Well, except for Index Medicus you would probably not have any idea...they didn't have that kind of presence then that they have today. So, did you start attending MLA meetings after that, regularly I mean?

**AS:** Maybe every other year, every two years. My next meeting was my first Chapter meeting, which was in Shreveport, and that was in 1976. So you see there was a three-year gap there between meetings. I was certified by then, so I did take CE courses at the Chapter meeting.

**RN:** And what were the chapter meetings like? They were certainly a little smaller but...

**AS:** It was smaller. [I] still felt like a stranger because I didn't know a lot of people. So it was just learning, meeting new people, and I guess the very beginning of networking with Southern Chapter people was at that meeting.

**RN:** And you were going every other year to MLA, did you start going annually to the Southern Chapter meetings?

**AS:** No. It was like every other year. I didn't go every year until I became director at University of Mississippi. So, it was every other year...as the funds were available.

**RN:** Tell me again how long you stayed there?

**AS:** It was 21 and a half years.

**RN:** How did it change over time?

**AS:** Growth, tremendous growth. Growth in the collection. I was able to work my way up the ladder so I was head of public services by the time I left, and had been in that position for 10 years I believe, before I became director in Mississippi. But just tremendous growth in the collection, the services. By then we were online. We had Medline...and TWX if you remember, that was the first interlibrary loan.

**RN:** Oh! No we had something different, maybe that was a local ILL?

**AS:** You may have. One of those punch machines, you punch paper tapes to send your interlibrary loans...

**RN:** How did you access NLM in those days?

**AS:** Well, we did it that way as well because we could send, I think our interlibrary loans, that way through the MEDLARS program, remember MEDLARS?

**RN:** So you would send them your request, they would process it...

**AS:** Well, when MEDLARS came out, we searched it, we had those acoustic couplers on modems. So, we were doing that in our new building when that became available. So online services started. I was a TRP, I was a trainer for the Southeast region.

**RN:** So, apart from MEDLARS and the ILL system, what else was [available] electronically? There were no computers in those days.

**AS:** Yes, we were doing Medline by computer. We weren't searching catalogs at that point but we were doing Medline.

**RN:** Were you cataloging by OCLC that way too?

**AS:** Yes, we were.

**RN:** I remember that. So what changed in your professional career that led you to move away from Florida to your next position? Or did anything change?

**AS:** Yes, there was a change in the director. And I had been at the associate director level for 10 years, and I was ready for different responsibilities and a different pathway in my career. Also in my personal life things had changed so I was very career-focused at that time. I decided I would look for jobs elsewhere.

**RN:** Okay, and that led you to Mississippi?

**AS:** That led me to Mississippi, when that directorship became available.

**RN:** And at that point you started to become more active in the Chapter and at MLA.

**AS:** [Yes.] I had been active in the Chapter before though, because I was Chair of the Chapter and I had been Secretary, Treasurer, and I really have served in all the offices the Chapter had. I was also Chapter Council representative, I was an alternate first then representative and the TRP trainer which was the initial online work. To do that of course, at that time to search Medline you had to go through a 3-week training course at NLM.

**RN:** Three weeks!

**AS:** Yes, 3 weeks. Thelma Charen was the trainer, wonderful, wonderful!

**RN:** What year was that? Let's see when I had MEDLARS training around 1987, '88, it was a weeklong course.

**AS:** This was in early '70's I would say. Three weeks.

**RN:** What an expensive proposition and so much time too.

**AS:** Oh, and was that tough! I thought I knew how to search and navigate my way around Index Medicus, and in those 3 weeks I found out how little I knew! [Laughs.]

**RN:** It was a good experience!

**AS:** Boy, did I learn a lot! We all said when we finished how much we learned.

**RN:** Now, when you were in your MEDLARS training, who else was in your class? Do you remember anyone?

**AS:** I can't recall any names.

**RN:** Sometimes you remember people who become directors or prominent in some other way in another part of the profession and you remember, but okay. Mary King Givens, was she in your class?

**AS:** She was the first TRP, and when she didn't do it then I took over so I remember her. We were colleagues since that was our role for the Southeast region in those early online and computer days.

**RN:** She was at Tennessee for a number of years.

**AS:** Yes.

**RN:** So you moved from Florida to Mississippi, to Jackson and became director of the medical library there. That was an established library that was not one you had to build?

**AS:** No.

**RN:** What was it like for you to make that move and to become, no longer an associate director but the director?

**AS:** I feel I was well-prepared professionally for the job. There are some personal things that you learn. It's a very lonely job being at the top. [Laughs.] That was something I had to learn. But otherwise it was an easier transition that I had anticipated, it really was. I had a good staff. It was another library that the dean at the time was very eager to build the collection, and the state also was giving extra money to public libraries and university libraries for collection building too. They got a special supplement, and we also got a supplement that first year to build the collection. So I was basically hired to again develop the collection, develop services. There was 1 computer there when I arrived, so we began to buy computers for the staff and train the staff to do Medline searches. So we started to send them to NLM.

**RN:** And did the library serve the College of Medicine, were there any other health professional colleges or programs there?

**AS:** Yes. School of Dentistry. School of Health Related Professions. Nursing School. And there was also a psychology fellowship program that was rather sizable, 20 or 22 a year that trained there. So in developing the collections and services we had to keep that group in mind because they would spend maybe 4 or 5 years there.

**RN:** So it seems like an unusual program...

**AS:** Let me see if I could describe it. It's sort of like a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, I think that's what the program was, and these were Ph.D. psychology graduates who needed the clinical experience and had to have the clinical training.

**RN:** So they were just Ph.D.'s or Ph.D.'s and M.D.'s?

**AS:** No, just Ph.D.'s.

**RN:** Well, now that you're director, did everything go smoothly? Were there any important events that occurred after you started at Mississippi?

**AS:** Oh my. [Laughs.] Well, these were the years when technology really...when libraries were embracing a lot of technology in many, many ways and the growth was phenomenal. You didn't have the budget to keep up with the equipment, staff training and the numerous resources

available, which required more training and then training the users. End user training came in and you're still developing collections but now you're getting into online collections. We also had a grant to do a statewide network, an NLM grant, and that took 6 years to develop that. One of the reasons it took that long to do the Mississippi Health Information Network was we started out with modems and online searching and the Medline or MedlinePlus database on a disk, when out came the Web. So a year and a half into the grant, suddenly the technology you had built for a 4-year period was already gone, wasn't viable any more. And NLM likewise didn't want their dollars spent on old technology. So one and a half years into the project everything became Web-based, Web searching and so we had to go back and retrain all the members of the Network all over the state. Then keeping up with all that technology, that training, and the Web many of the practitioners and the physicians in the state had heard of it perhaps on the news. Certainly it was very, very foreign. In many instances that grant introduced the Web to state agencies in Mississippi – the nursing association, [it] started their Web page and their Web services, the Mississippi State Medical Association also [got started] as a result [of the grant].

**RN:** That started with your medical library? Wow! Let's switch gears a little bit and talk more about what was going on in Southern Chapter. One of the things we like to hear about – because this is a Southern Chapter interview [laughs] – is how you participated, who were the people you remember and what they did, and in general how did Southern Chapter change over the years while you were a member?

**AS:** It was the Southern Regional Group when I first joined, and it wasn't long after that MLA established the chapter structure. The Chapter was a way for me to gain experience and knowledge, particularly through the CE courses in my field and as this technology and as services from NLM began to proliferate it was courses and networking with sister organizations, libraries in the Southeast and southern states that became very meaningful and very instrumental. As the Chapter developed and as the Southeastern Regional Medical Library program of NLM began to develop and sort of establish collaborations for the medical libraries, establish interlibrary loan protocols and that type of thing, the Chapter became very, very important in terms of maintaining a certain standard among all of us that were collaborating in these programs, particularly from the federal viewpoint. It was my primary source of CE and

mentoring from some of the great people I've known in the Chapter. I was aware of the Chapter's "party" reputation.

**RN:** Well, it really started as a social organization rather than a professional one, so I'm not surprised, but yeah...

**AS:** But the really wonderful thing for me in my career was to watch the professional growth of the Chapter as an organization for health professional information people. That's been very rewarding. I was very eager to participate in that. As those things grew and developed I was there.

**RN:** So, you mentioned there were mentors and tutors that helped along the way. Who are the memorable people that you recall that were some of the movers and shakers in Southern Chapter who helped you or who did things that were notable for the Chapter?

**AS:** When I first became active there were Mildred Libby and Jess Martin, Mildred Langnor...let me see if I can think of a few more. Sarah Brown from Birmingham. These were the people that were very active and had established really great reputations and built libraries. All of those were library builders from way back. So I did get to meet those people before they retired. And then in my generation, Mark Hodges, Jocelyn Rankin and Susie Burrows. There are just so many that I've developed really close personal relationships and professional relationships – and you're one of those! [Laughs.]

**RN:** Oh, thank you!

**AS:** ...Tom Basler.

**RN:** He's still around, still going strong.

**AS:** Yes. Tom Lang who started South Alabama...

**RN:** Yes, that's where Judy Burnham is.

**AS:** ...visited the University of South Florida Medical Library and he spent about 2 days with us to find out what Fred Bryant did at South Florida in terms of developing the library, what were the procedures for that first year, and what staff did you hire and what materials did you

purchase. How did you go about that, how did you make those decisions and why? That's how I met Tom Lang.

**RN:** Were you also active in MLA at this time?

**AS:** Yes, in fact I became a CE instructor in oncology, and I did that while I was still at South Florida before I came to Mississippi. I taught that course for 13 years. It was primarily cancer biology for 4 hours and then how you search the cancer databases at NLM. So I did that. I didn't write the initial syllabus but I revised it twice and updated it so it would be current. Then, through Chapter I was Chapter Council representative, I became Chapter Council Chair and served on MLA Board.

**RN:** So you not only attended meetings but you also held offices and were active in MLA as well?

**AS:** Yes. And I took a lot of CE courses at MLA too. Took CE courses until I retired. I mean basically ... MLA does a very good job of keeping the courses relevant from year to year.

**RN:** I have to ask you, what year did you retire?

**AS:** 2008.

**RN:** So you were director of the Mississippi library until that time? How long was that?

**AS:** Twenty-one and a half years!

**RN:** Another twenty-one and a half years? [Laughs.]

**AS:** A 43 year career in 2 places.

**RN:** And that's not counting your education ... wow! Well, that's great. What major events can you think of that have happened? You've already talked about the explosion of information technology, changes to the profession, the professionalization of librarians and Southern Chapter in particular...

**AS:** The joint chapter meetings. I don't know if they had been held before but in my career there were several. That was a wonderful way of making connections outside your chapter, and also being introduced to other traditions because each chapter has its own personality and their own traditions. I really respected that. So I thought that was very interesting and very beneficial

professionally too for our chapter members. I think the tremendous growth and influence of NLM really happened during my career. Very, very beneficial, their responsibility for training, tremendous foresight really in coming up with new products and redesigning products, that type of thing. And they're still doing it. They really blossomed.

**RN:** When I think about your 43 years in the profession, you started at a time when libraries were popping up like mushrooms, there were people like Bryant who started several libraries and they were growing around the country quite a bit. So, that was part of the economic boom and when the economic boom ended and libraries gradually started going away and now we're seeing them go away really in fairly large numbers and what's emerged from that decline in the number of libraries has been NLM, they've become much stronger as a result.

**AS:** Yes, the sad thing that has happened during my career is the gradual disappearance of hospital libraries. I also saw them grow during my career. Wonderful growth, wonderful things, and then watching them the last seven, six years of my career slowly disappear.

**RN:** And some of that is economic, some of it is also related to information technology, the possibility that you don't have to have it locally, you can be anywhere but you can still have access.

**AS:** Yes, and I guess what I saw happen in the last few years of my career that sort of frightens me now as a senior member of this society is I'm being treated "by abstract," by information in abstract on electronic medical records systems. That's scary! They don't read the whole article!

**RN:** Given all of that, the way libraries have grown and morphed and maybe declined some in the last 25 or 30 years, what advice would you give to librarians who are starting out now in terms of the path they probably ought to consider taking going into the future?

**AS:** Hmm. I would have said when I retired, definitely go the Chapter route. It's affordable and that networking, it's not giving up, once that was established through Southeast region it's still alive and going strong and interlibrary loan and all those kinds of things that's still critical. Network with your counterparts within your region where you are employed and where you're developing your career and then of course graduate into the national. I'm not so sure now with medical libraries, particularly academic medical libraries declining. I'm really very uncertain

about what to do. I feel confident about what I feel we are capable of doing and what I feel new roles we should be filling. But we're not.

**RN:** What roles are those?

**AS:** I think we have roles working very closely with both researchers and clinicians, not training but actually almost like what clinical librarians did – shadowing but instead of pulling articles, you're working within that main system, computer system, that they are using, the electronic medical record, actually doing the linking. Being the button pusher and making those links for them. You can serve a whole department or several departments. I think those are things we could be doing. I think we need a greater role with students. I really worry about graduates of the health professions, about how much they understand about where the information is coming from that really drives their profession. I think there are new roles we could have there and should have. I don't see that the faculty want those roles, so I think there's a niche for us.

**RN:** I see some of that same thing and what I think the bridge is between what faculty are doing and what librarians can do is advertising. I think we have the skills. A lot of times it's not creating new skills so much as it's repackaging old ones. It's advertising and putting it out there to the people that we serve and saying, "This is what we can do." And then not just saying it but doing it. It also means participating in that research whether it means clinical or basic.

**AS:** I think another role that, particularly as a patient, is patient education, consumer health education. I hear from my own health care providers, be they nurses or physicians, about how they are cramped for time, and the time they spend with the patient gets shorter and shorter. I look at some of these big specialty clinics, and I say to myself, "You really need 2 librarians in here to work with your patients." When you're through with your 5 minutes, because as a librarian I ask for some patient education at the doctor's office and it's, "Well, you can go and Google it." [Laughs.]

**RN:** Yes, there's that problem again, do they actually know where that information is coming from you're supposed to be getting on Google?

**AS:** I could Google it. [I had] 1 physician who actually told me that just recently. I had asked do you have a brochure to explain this procedure to me, and he said, "You're a librarian, you can Google it." So I see some really good roles we could have, and I think it fits with the electronic

medical record too. You can show the links. On the other hand, I just had my cataracts removed. I got a nice brochure showing me what the cataract surgery was going to be about. I wasn't told to Google it.

**RN:** So they actually had something for you. So...it worked.

**AS:** My career was really in the transition phase from the paper society to the computerized society. I am well aware that young librarians now just beginning, just getting their training will share very little in common with me. My generation was the transition, and we had to be able to navigate that line. I don't know that we were really good in the part we began and how good we are in the technology role. But we had to get ourselves and our institutions, our resources through that line. That really comes from sociology. [Alvin Toffler's] Future Shock.

**RN:** And we are still in that state of transition. We are into the Information Age but we're still trying to figure out how we can use this to do what we want to do.

**AS:** And it's moving so fast. Not being in the profession any longer, it's leaving me behind.

**RN:** Do you use any social media like Twitter or Facebook? None of those?

**AS:** I don't want to. [Laughs.]

**RN:** Okay. Is there anything that you would like to add, anything that I may have overlooked?

**AS:** I don't think so other than I really think we, meaning Southern Chapter members, have reason to be proud of our chapter and the progress we have made and are continuing to do. We have a wonderful personality as Southern Chapter's people! We maintain our cohesiveness and we are still able to grow individually and then come back and share it. I'm very proud of that.

**RN:** The only chapter I've ever known is Southern Chapter so I don't know how to compare it with any other groups [but] I agree with you, it's been that for me as well. It's been a great experience. It's one of those things I wish I had known early in my career how important it could be and taken advantage of it right away, but it took me a while to sort of grow into it.

**AS:** As you see, it took me a while too.

**RN:** It probably does for all of us. Well Ada, thank you very much.

**AS:** Thank you, I enjoyed it.

*February 2016*