

SC/MLA Oral Histories Project

Danny O'Neal

May 30, 2014

**Shimberg Health Sciences Library
Tampa, FL**

Interviewer: Mary Rickelman

Transcribed by Connie K. Machado

Mary Rickelman: We are here today to do an oral history. I'm Mary Rickelman, and I'm here to interview Danny O'Neal. Today is May 30, 2014, and I'm interviewing Mr. Danny O'Neal for the Southern Chapter MLA Oral History Project. Mr. O'Neal is a retired academic librarian from the Shimberg Health Sciences Library at the University of South Florida, in Tampa, FL. Mr. O'Neal was Assistant Director of Information and Outreach Services prior to retiring. He was a member of both MLA and Southern Chapter during his library tenure and served as chair for Southern Chapter during the 2009-2010 year. So I am going to start off with some questions, and we are going to have a good time. Let's begin with your background and some of your career. First question is: Please describe how you became interested in librarianship and give a brief overview of your professional career.

Danny O'Neal: There are a whole lot of paths to librarianship. When I talk to other librarians, some came right out of school and went straight into the profession. In my work life, I bounced around between a lot of different things but being a librarian is a good fit. I've had friends tell me that I probably should have always been a librarian. I am very much a generalist, and I've always been sort of a collector, organizer, interested in history, conservation – believe me I've got so much ephemera at home and interesting things I collected over the years. I get things and I try and restore them. I would have been great at being a conservator or going into conservation

of materials.

MR: But what was your undergraduate degree in?

DO: Oh, my undergraduate degree was - and I bounced around on that too, but I still graduated in four years, was English Lit. But I went through geology, astronomy, music, anyway, very many things. Once I graduated and began working I worked in sales, engineering, and even had my own business for a while. I got to a point where I had a small business doing carpentry work, painting, finish work, that sort of thing. One day I kind of hurt my back a little bit and thought as I get older I'm not going to be able to do this forever. I've always gone back to school throughout my life I've taken classes in various things so I thought I would go back and get my master's degree and teach English, which I still have a great love for. So, I came back to USF and started on my Master's, Eng. Ed. I was about 5 classes into the program, during the time the Library was transitioning into computer resources and thought, OK, I better take a library class and make sure I know how to use this stuff properly. I was still looking things up on microfiche, and reels and everything else. So I took the Intro to the Library class.

MR: Those were the days!

DO: Yes! Right! About my 4th class, it was a semester class, 1 credit hour, it was like a light bulb went off in my head, "I'm going to be a librarian", and I just totally changed my whole major. I enrolled in the library science program and it's been great from that point on. I always said I discovered it, but I think the profession found me. And I just never realized that's where I really wanted to go.

MR: So if you got your degree here, then what did you do.

DO: Well, fortunately, I had a wonderful advisor, Dr. John Knego. He placed me in field study programs, one at Johnson & Johnson Critikon, and the other at Tampa Electric Company

(TECO) business office. It was just a wonderful experience. With my background in business and engineering I was pretty sure I wanted to be in the sciences. I have always loved science. Dr. Knego taught the course on using scientific literature resources and arranged a field trip for us to visit the Shimberg – or it wasn't the Shimberg Library then, but the Health Sciences library, just to see the facility. To be honest with you, I didn't know about the Health Sciences Library. I knew about the College of Medicine but I didn't know that they actually had their own library. Which made sense, but it just hadn't occurred to me.

MR: You don't always think that.

DO: So we came over, and as I did in every library that I visited, any time I went to a library I asked to volunteer. I figured once I graduate I don't have any background or experience working in a library. So, after our field trip finished, ending in the computer lab, I asked their librarian if I could volunteer, do you have any openings. She said, "Actually, our lab assistant is leaving at the end of the week; if you are interested send me your resume." So I did and I even got paid! I figured it would be a free thing. I started working in early 1993 and never left.

MR: So this is your first position at USF in the library, and you worked in medical libraries the whole time?

DO: I worked at the main campus library as a graduate assistant, 30 hrs. a week. Once I graduated, I also had a job at Hillsborough Community College (Tampa, FL), 32 hrs. a week. I would work there in the mornings and come here for the evenings. So, I was working 2 jobs for about a year hoping one of them would offer me a fulltime position and they both did in the same week.

MR: Wow!

DO: And I took this one.

MR: And you took this one.

DO: I've been very lucky, fortunate. They say success is when opportunity meets preparation.

MR: Well, the right pieces fell into place. Okay... Is there anything else you want to say about your overview?

DO: I've been very fortunate here, the director at the time provided me with the opportunity to go to the Snowbird Leadership Institute, in Utah. It was a weeklong retreat for librarians new to the profession and was very revealing as far as learning management styles and that sort of thing. That and my involvement in Southern Chapter and MLA has been very important to get me beyond what you experience just within your own library.

MR: I know you were very active and we are going to talk about that in a little bit. And that's wonderful because you share your knowledge with others. I think that's important. Question number 2: where did you receive your library education and you mentioned that. You were here at University of South Florida.

DO: The School of Library and Information Science which I think is now the School of Information, they changed the name.

MR: How did you choose medical librarianship, you mentioned that a little bit and did you have any special training? Well, why don't I ask you this...? You said you did it here, but did you take specific classes?

DO: Yes, I did, not necessarily in medical librarianship. I mean I was taking...

MR: Sciences and health sciences.

DO: Right. Yes. Physiology, medical terminology, etc. and was taking them because I didn't think I wanted to be a media librarian. I don't really know why but it just didn't appeal to me. I was hoping to go into specialized libraries. And figured I would either be in business or

somewhere within the sciences, just from my own background and my interests. For all of my interest in the sciences, for whatever reason I had never pursued a career in that field. Again my advisor exposed to great field study programs at Johnson & Johnson, TECO, and related coursework.

MR: Science oriented for sure.

DO: And it just felt like that's where I wanted to go and when I got the opportunity here... I love it. It's very challenging, I learn so much by helping others learn. It's just rewarding.

MR: Nowadays I know in the library schools they have specific courses where you have to take a medical class if you think you're interested and that's why I was just curious. You know how things evolve and things change. Information literacy is the buzzword and do you have classes on that to get ready for training, to instruct a student.

DO: I pursued as many CE classes as I could through Southern Chapter and MLA. Medical terminology courses were being offered periodically. Any time I identified something that I was lacking in, I tried to pursue a course there.

MR: Definitely in this area you have to know specific words and terms so you have to—like you said—continue.

DO: I didn't study Latin in school but through my interest in language and literature, I have a fairly reasonable understanding of Latin root origin, and the language of medicine, law. I can generally look at a term, pretty much pronounce it correctly and have an idea of the root of what it is. Of course, look it up to verify, not just go on my own, "oh yeah, that's what that is."

MR: I have a question about how did you become a librarian at Shimberg. We've kind of gone over that a little bit. I don't think we need to describe that. Any other aspects of your career you want to say? Something that could be memorable? You enjoy, obviously falling into the library

career, you're glad it happened. You've learned a lot, and you've met a lot of people.

DO: I think one of the bigger things that struck me, going back to that library course where my light bulb went off was having worked in business and in engineering is it's an extremely competitive environment. I was a system administrator for Honeywell and working at that, realized communication wasn't what it should, or needed to be. There was not a lot of sharing or help among colleagues, very competitive. I found the whole librarian environment to be communicative, everyone is trying to help and even nurture your learning process so you can be better at your job. So whatever inside of me that touched, it was like, 'this is great.' It was a more collegial environment, or whatever you want to call it.

MR: Collaborative. Off camera we were talking sharing.

DO...extremely collaborative and unselfish. I think as a librarian, I can't speak for anybody but for myself and many people I know, we've never been driven by the money. Sure, we'd like to be paid better, and we never so much worried about the respect, I think our own self-respect and respect for colleagues was worth far more than what the public may erroneously think that we do.

MR: That's important. That's important...O.K., why don't we talk a little about your specific roles in Southern Chapter and MLA because I know you've done quite a few things with activities. I know because I've looked up some information about you and I know you from other classes I've taken. You were a Southern Chapter officer, and can you tell me a little bit about that. And what other committees did you served on or anything you want to say related to Southern Chapter and the activities.

DO: Okay. First thing I want to say is, and you are doing it yourself, and I'm very glad, is to volunteer. Joining the organization is number one, all the other things are there, you connect

with people, you meet people, and it's a great group. But you're going to learn and you want to volunteer and get into things that maybe you don't know anything about, whether it's a history project or whatever. My first conference, I was going to cover this later...

MR: That's o.k. I don't think we have to go in a specific order, feel free.

DO: My first meeting was in 1997, and I was sitting in, I think it was a presentation of papers, and I was a newbie. I'd never been to a library conference before and here I was in Savannah, and I'd never been to Savannah. Great environment, great people, it was wonderful. I'm sitting there talking to these two ladies behind me, Jan Orick and Rosalind Lett. We were just talking and kind of hit it off and joking around about something. One of them says, "Hey, do you want to be the parliamentarian for the Chapter." And I said I was Parliamentarian in high school. They told me the current Parliamentarian is going to go on and do something else, and retire eventually. I didn't know who it was at the time, but it was T. Mark Hodges, who is a towering figure in the history of the Chapter. I said, OK, sure I'll be the Parliamentarian. It was later I found out that Jan Orick who is the director of the Biomedical Library at St. Jude's Hospital, and Rosalind Lett, the director of the Medical Library at Crawford-Long Hospital, at Emory Healthcare, and a key figure in the chapter in the years to come. So here I was talking to them and I really would have been totally overwhelmed had I known who they were. I probably would have just been quiet. But again that's that friendly/nurturing nature of librarians. So, I started as parliamentarian and got to sit beside the chapter chair at all the meetings, referencing and referral for Robert's Rules. That was my start of getting involved with the Chapter.

MR: So parliamentarian, and then you probably did many other things. And we mentioned earlier that you were chair for the Southern Chapter for the year.

DO: I was on the nominating committee, the professional development committee, restructuring

taskforce (I had to look this up on my CV), and chapter council representative, which was my first involvement with MLA. Chapter Council reports to MLA what's going on within our Chapter, so I was that liaison point. That's another great position to be involved in, and that's an elected position.

MR: What position exactly was that?

DO: Chapter Council alternate, you serve for 3 years, and then you become the representative for 3 years, so it's a 6 year commitment. When I was asked if I was interested in being Chapter Council Alternate, Lynn Fortney who was Chair that year asked me, I said, 'sure, I'll do that.'

MR: You were open to doing new things.

DO: I was put on the ballot and I got elected. I knew about Chapter Council but didn't know it was a 6 year commitment. At first, I thought, "Oh..." But it was a wonderful experience, and in the meantime I was still on other committees. It was an introduction to MLA. Great opportunity.

MR: But this transitioned you to do more.

DO: Yes...When I was chair, which was great, it was the 60th anniversary of the Chapter. That was in October, and in December it was going to be my 60th birthday, too.

MR: That was a significant thing.

DO: It was a wonderful meeting. There are two things that happened while I was chair that I was really happy about, even though one of them wasn't directly a result of anything I did. When you serve as chapter chair you are in a position to try and get things done, but again everybody is a volunteer. These are members who sign on and are doing the best they can but they are still working their fulltime jobs, they still have their lives, families and everything else. It's amazing, it's absolutely amazing, how much does get done, how much is accomplished by

these volunteers, who are already possibly overwhelmed with their own job. But anyway...

MR: Because everybody works together. I think I hear you saying because they are willing to give their time.

DO: And they go above and beyond. One of the things that came into being from the previous chair was our fourth time winning the Majors/MLA Chapter Project of the Year award and this time it was for the oral history project.

MR: Oh, well that was very apropos. It leads to what we are doing right now.

DO: It was a wonderful thing, it was proposed and submitted to MLA and it won. Southern Chapter has won the Majors/MLA Chapter Project of the Year award I think maybe now even five times.

MR: That's amazing, that's to your credit.

DO: No, it was initiated prior. One of those things started earlier. It was a big deal, it was a very big deal. Not something I take credit for, but I feel honored that it happened while I was serving.

MR: But it happened during your time. Wonderful! Wonderful! O.K., I'm going to do another question here. We're on the part where the first Southern Chapter meeting you attended.

MR: This is number [part] 2 of the interview with Danny O'Neal, Oral History. We were talking about Southern Chapter and MLA, where you held different positions in Southern Chapter, and the experiences you had being in the chair itself, and all the different committees. We mentioned some committees. So now I wonder if you could tell me about, do you remember the first Southern Chapter meeting you attended and what details you can remember about—related to—that?

DO: Yes, I do. I sort of touched on that being when the Parliamentary position was suggested to me. I was new and didn't know what to expect, didn't know what librarians did at

conferences, or what would be there. I thought the program, the speakers, and the paper presentations were very impressive. Later on I got the nerve to do a paper, and also poster sessions, and that sort of thing, but the interaction with peers and everybody else there was just very inspiring. Typically you come back from these meetings, as I did, and most everybody I've talked to, and you are just full of ideas. "I want to do this and this and this..." and things take off and you have to stop and say "O.k., I'll focus on these two or three things I'm going to try and do." All these other things are in your head and it's all a learning process and you store up all this information. Savannah specifically, the most significant thing was I got my opportunity to get involved with Southern Chapter. That chance event has always stuck in my head. Savannah was great. We had a great time there.

MR: Had you been to Savannah before?

DO: No.

MR: So your first Southern Chapter meeting was in Savannah and you'd never been there before, and you really enjoyed it.

DO: And the book "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil" had just come out, or recently, maybe the previous year. Southern Chapter put on such great after hours events. One of them was that we went to the Mercer House and the lady in the book, "the lady of a thousand songs", was actually there, playing piano and singing as we had dinner. It was amazing. I bought a copy of the book and she signed it. It was a great time, a very memorable time.

MR: Now I'm going to go off a little. I said what was your first Southern Chapter meeting you attended? We mentioned already that you were chair. Do you recall where it was when you were chair?

DO: It was in St. Petersburg.

MR: Do you remember by any chance anything about that one when you were chair? You were head of it and having to organize things. Tell me a little bit of that one.

DO: Oh, yes. I mentioned the oral history project thing and we had won that, but one of the major points I was trying to get done was to redesign the chapter website. We initiated that process but, I hate to say, it was about 2 other chairs before it was actually finally done. We initiated the process and I'm very happy about that. We had run into numerous obstacles...I think the software changed 2 or 3 times, I can't remember the names of the software we were using, but things transitioned and it finally got it going. We initiated it. That was kind of a major thing we did. We were very happy about the money that came in from Memphis, the prior meeting, and trying to decide what to do with allocating the funds. As a non-profit we are not really in the business to make money. There is a significant cost involved with putting on these meetings, obviously. We had quite a windfall from Memphis, when Pat Higginbottom was the chair. Tom Singarella was in charge of local arrangements with Richard Nollan, and David King. There was a significant profit from that meeting and the money was divided up among the various scholarships, roundtables, and we sponsored students to come to the meeting without having to pay the registration fee. I think \$20,000 or better of that went to the Martha Watkins Scholarship Fund and we were very close to fully endowing that. These were some really good things, but again that was from a prior administration. We allocated the funds with guidance from the board and approval of the membership.

MR: So initiating the website, expanding scholarship resources and endowing...I'm a little...

DO: It was at the Vinoy Hotel, which is just a world class hotel. Again the local arrangements committee, Pat Clark was the head of that. Setting things up, the after-hours things, going out to dinner, etc. As much as everyone is serious about learning, the academics, the CE's and the speakers and everything else, at the end of the day we are a very social group and we always have a great time.

MR: Please recount any funny or interesting stories you might recall at any Southern Chapter meeting you attended. I'm sure that could be at a meeting or a conference, something related to Southern Chapter.

DO: There are two we'll talk about. Every chapter meeting has interesting things that happen. At the Memphis meeting the Chair, Pat Higginbottom, was the honorary master of the ducks at the Peabody. They bring the ducks in and march them through the lobby. They gave her a hat and a cane and she marched as the Master of the Ducks. I actually have a FLIP video of that. That was just great.

In 1998, in Lexington, KY, John Orriola and I, gave a presentation. At the time, new web design software was just coming out, and we had been working on trying to learn HTML to make websites. It was a bit convoluted, but it was doable. I can't remember the name of the software but they had a template allowing you to plug in what you wanted to have happen, move some things around, and create a website pretty quickly. We created a presentation that we were doing, "The 60 minute website," and because we only had 15 minutes to present, it was called "The 60 minute website in 15 minutes." We were billing it as 'you could do this on your lunch hour.'

MR: That is something you find interesting that you are remembering this.

DO: Well, it was one of those great snafu things. I have a note here, “Mr. Snafu Murphy” steps in. Well, we got everything set up and we had arranged everything with the AV people in Lexington, and told them we are bringing ‘our show’ on a 3.5 in floppy, or 4 1/4 in. or whatever size it was. It wasn’t the big floppy, it was a little one. We had our whole presentation, a slideshow and a spreadsheet, it wasn’t PowerPoint, maybe LOTUS. We had it all set up, we had our talk down, and we had an easel with drawings and our talking points on it. I was to do the presentation and John was going to do the finish of it with a live demo. To get to the point, the place was packed it seemed like there were 300 people in there, all waiting for our talk. This was a hot topic at the time. Wow! This is pretty scary, because there are other papers going on simultaneously, and there are 10 minutes between papers, a tight schedule. We gave our disk to the AV guys and they plugged it in. Ack! We had a newer version than what their hardware could play. They played with it and played with it, and we are sitting there, so we started telling about the product and threw in a few jokes. The AV never got it to work and in the end we had 5 minutes left, because obviously, someone had to present after us.

MR: So you didn’t really get to present? Right?

DO: No. We bring the easel over and we have the talking points, we had some drawings, I don’t even remember what it all was... We hold it up and we are talking. We did our 5 minutes. We had a handout which did show the slideshow, we had the web addresses, phone numbers, etc. We said ‘call us we will send this whole slide show to you’, we’ll talk, we’ll answer questions, etc. In the end, we got a great round of applause, everybody laughed. Again, it was that great supportive nature of librarians.

MR: You figured it out. And technology as we all know has issues and sometimes glitches occur and you have to kind of go with the flow.

DO: Yes. And we had told the AV techs what we were bringing and it was all fine, but somehow it was the rev level or something they didn't think about. It all turned out fine, we got lots of positive feedback. It was memorable. Next, in Memphis in 2009... carried over from "the resolution" in Birmingham the year before, Steve Wilson reprised his role of Vulcan and used it in a skit with me, as Elvis. Steve came out...long hair, looking like a Roman god with the big beard and the toga on and he had the big Thor hammer. His Vulcan character was symbolically welcoming everybody leaving Birmingham and would next year be in Memphis. So I got together with Steve and we worked on a skit for the resolution for the coming meeting in St. Petersburg. This was for the year I was to be the chair.

MR: Alabama was the one conference where he put all this garb on, and it was going to go to Tennessee. Do you remember the year?

DO: That was 2008 in Memphis. So what it came down to is when the resolution came up "we resolve to..." and they introduce where it is going to be the next meeting. There is a report and all and usually something is done, skit wise, to make it official. Steve reprised his role of Vulcan and he comes out and said "What's going on here...yah, yah..." People that had seen him before laughed and it was really funny. Then I came out dressed as Elvis, in a jumpsuit, sequins, I had on this partial mask thing with the glasses and hair.

MR: Someone might have pictures of all this.

DO: Yes, there are photos, and I have 2 FLIP videos of this which I have yet to edit but will send to the Committee. They may want to put it in the cloud or do something with it. It was

pretty funny. He and I worked out some dialogue, back and forth, something about he was the meeting past and we don't need him here. I was responding using lines from various Elvis songs. I had a little ukulele and I was handing out leis to people.

MR: So people who came said it was very memorable. You're describing it to me, and anybody that was there I know they would remember and say "I remember that."

DO: It was really funny and I had a great time doing it. Steve was very good with his character. Had I not had the Elvis partial mask I don't know if I would have done it. The Elvis mask made it work. I'd done things like that before, but with the mask I could really sort of retreat into my character. That was good fun. Those are probably my two most memorable.

MR: Those are good ones. Can you talk about your observations on how Southern Chapter has evolved through the years?

DO: The Chapter has been a touchstone for me as far as exposing me to what's evolving and developing within the profession outside of here, USF. I've belonged to state committees and local committees and that sort of thing but it's a small pool of knowledge we operate in. Once I got involved with Southern Chapter I discovered a bigger influence. There are different libraries, different management styles and ways of doing things, meeting needs of clientele. And then when you get to MLA you can talk to everybody in an even bigger world.

MR: One way I see of evolving, you've already mentioned. I'm more of those bullet point persons. We didn't have the technology part of the website then that later evolved. It's a minor thing but it's still something, now people can go online and get more information about Southern Chapter because of the way technology has gone and the internet and all that. And that's an evolving thing.

DO: Yes. Sandra Bandy, who's going to be the chair I think this year, if she isn't already, and I talked, maybe 5 years ago, about trying to create a membership photo registry. It would require a login, members only, and would be a list of the all members but also their photo by their name. The photo would be voluntary. We thought it would be helpful for when we attended meetings to refresh or memories of a face with a name. When you see people only once a year, it would help to remember their name.

MR: And because Southern Chapter is multiple states if you don't work with someone it's understandable that we wouldn't necessarily know what they look like.

DO: That's something that maybe they'll get done one day because we just thought that would be really helpful. Because you see a name and you think "who are they?." As far as that information, communication, colleagues vs. committees, newsletters and discussion groups and now they have blogs and social media, so maybe it's now needed.

MR: Do you think the membership of Southern Chapter has grown from when you started to when you finished?

DO: Oh, significantly. Even historically, it's funny... I can't remember all the dates, but 1949 was when the first sort of general meeting happened and it wasn't until the '60's that they talked about having dues. There were 54 members and now it's well over 300. I think it was 332, when I was chair. I don't really know the exact number now.

MR: That's an evolving thing.

DO: Right. Well, within our profession as we discussed earlier, there's less people.

MR: I think the profession is going through a phase, let's just say, doing things more wisely and efficiently. You can do more, more efficiently with maybe fewer people, but it's more involved.

DO: But there also more colleges and universities. Florida had 9 forever, and now there are 12 and more planned.

MR: So that would expand, and more medical schools...in Florida.

DO: It's going to continue to grow. As far as the Chapter, I think their stature within MLA has grown because of the quality of the work that we do. We have had a lot of our members go on to be on the MLA board. I was lucky enough to get the opportunity to be on committees with MLA, especially as chapter council rep, and then on other committees, too. The chapter has always moved quickly and boldly to take advantage of technology as it's evolved. Really, the strength of the Chapters are the members.

MR: What about, in your opinion, what sets the Southern Chapter apart from other professional library associations?

DO: My statement is 'That's a loaded question.' I'll read what I have here and everybody in the chapter that looks at this will go 'yeah, yeah.' At least I hope you will...From day one I've always heard the phrase, 'Well, they love to party', but we just love to socialize. As serious as the chapter is about the profession, when the day ends everyone gets together and it's a great time. I wrote down here. 'We have never lagged or followed behind other MLA Chapters.' We've won the MLS Chapter Project of the Year Award many times and our representation at the national level is very evident. Our members are serious about our profession.

But you can't ignore the feedback from our members, other chapters and organizations, and vendors who tell us we know how to have fun. Our meetings are focused on relevant

professional content, CE's, presentations, speakers, but location, accommodations, and 'after hours' social events receive much attention, too. We have some very socially creative members. And though we are a non-profit organization, our meetings have been so successful that we have been able to fund 6 different grants, awards, or scholarships, sponsor Round Table attendees, and offer free student and honorary memberships. Our planning committees work extremely hard to be successful at this. We are very proud of this.

MR: So, what I hear you saying is they work really hard, they work together, we are all volunteering, they get things done because we also know how to have a good time and enjoy each other. That's what I hear you saying.

DO: It's the old work hard, play hard. And I've never seen anybody going too far or anything like that.

MR: How has the Southern Chapter impacted your professional development throughout your career? We've kind of touched on this throughout this talk. Just to recap if there is anything more to say.

DO: What I've written down here is just 5 words: mentors, education, motivation, support and encouragement. Mentors: you find somebody, you click with them, and sometimes, in my experience, you have no idea who any of these people are, but it is somebody you connect with and they take you under their wing. They guide you. I've had people who've helped me that I never got to know very well. But they show up at some other instrumental point and guide me along, or suggest something. And then many of them I got to know later and realize that they were a mentor.

MR: So the right people seemed to, fortunately for you, come in at the right time. Related to people in Southern Chapter and they helped you grow and learn new things. That's wonderful.

DO: Yeah. Well, I hope I've done that with others. It's a natural thing for librarians. We learn, we teach, and we learn by teaching.

MR: This is part 3 of the interview with Danny O'Neal related to oral history for Southern Chapter/MLA. We've gone over different aspects of Southern Chapter and your career, and how you became a librarian. So now this section we want to focus a little bit about MLA. So, what do you recall about some of your MLA meetings you attended? Did you attend a few? One or two?

DO: I think I've probably gone to about 9 or 10 somewhere in that area. They were all, it's hard to say, a level beyond Southern Chapter in a way, but they provided access to a larger pool of speakers. It was more integrated with all the Chapters being involved in it. Locations dictated certain regional things as far as what would be offered. I went to some great cities between Atlanta, Vancouver, Minneapolis, Chicago, Washington D.C., San Diego. They were beautiful, integrated, huge, by contrast. I remember going to the first couple of them and sort of feeling lost until you see that familiar face in the crowd. Everybody felt the same way. But of course you meet people through people. We all know a whole, different circle and group of people. You quickly get integrated into it and involved, and you meet new friends that you may not see again until a year or two later. Then it's over, and you go back. But still it recharges you. It gave me a lot of new ideas and things to think about. And it motivated me even more to do what I am doing whether it's good, bad or otherwise; especially if you do a paper, presentation or poster or something along that line.

MR: I'm not trying to put you on the spot but do you recall an MLA where you did a poster or a presentation?

DO: Yes I know I did, I never did a paper, I did posters a couple of different times, I couldn't tell you which ones. It's in my CV.

MR: That's o.k. And that helped you; you know you meet people doing that too, we all know that.

DO: It's a great way. You stand in one place and everybody comes in a procession and goes right by you. It's like watching a parade. But as far as some of the more memorable things, I jotted down quickly. In Orlando was the first time I really became involved in anything MLA on any kind of a larger scale. I was in charge of the newsletter of the event. Every afternoon you'd be given the events of the next day, and key things that were going to go on. You had to put them together, using WORD or whatever we were using. Print them all out, then get them all distributed by the next day. I remember it was called "The Squeak" since we were in Orlando. I remember standing in the hallway saying, "Get your Squeak!" I was trying to make it kind of funny, I guess I had no shame.

In Vancouver I got to hear and meet David Suzuki, from the Nature of Things show that CBS put on. I was sort of star struck a little bit. He was an excellent speaker, of course, and I remember him distinctly. San Diego during Cinco de Mayo, being that close to the border, that was a lot of fun. The after events, things they put on. Also, San Antonio, down near the Texas border too. That was fun.

MR: How has the medical association impacted your professional development throughout the

years? We talked about medical library, Southern Chapter, is there anything specific about MLA that might have impacted?

DO: I think just the fact that they offered AHIP certification is a real motivator, because you have a checklist. These are things I need to do. And AHIP is very important, I think it's a great credential to have within our profession. Not only shows what you've done but it motivates you to do more. And I've always found that the more you do, it's easier to do even a little more. Now you take on the workload, you fit it into your schedule. Something else comes up, you have to assess it of course, and evaluate 'can I do this or not and do it well?'

MR: How has the medical library profession changed during your career? Which developments in the field of librarianship had the greatest impact on your professional life?

DO: Most obviously, technology, the digital access, the Internet, online resources and that whole transition. I retired in 2012, and my last 10 years when Google first started coming up in prominence, we had "Ask Jeeves," we had Yahoo, I'm trying to think what some of the others were...when Google first came out. We first noticed that people were going to the Internet to find information when we were doing our outreach talks, showing how to do research, where to go, using resources, etc. We were preaching don't go to the Internet, you can't verify your source. We were pushing PubMed and our own resources, because we could speak for their validity and reliability.

MR: Well you mention PubMed. Because, I myself didn't use it till later because I wasn't involved with medical until fairly recently. Do you recall for PubMed it used to not be free, and then it wasn't until the Internet, it became free. You probably obviously remember the transition for that.

DO: Yeah, we bought it through, not SilverPlatter, and there was another big provider of all the databases.

MR: So it was on disk or whatever.

DO: We did it online, but the interesting thing about it was that if you did it after 5 o'clock in the evening it was about 80% cheaper.

MR: Did you pay by the minute? So in the beginning PubMed you would sign on then pay by the minute?

DO: Yes, we paid by the minute. What we would do was create our search strategy offline. We would go online, login and immediately start typing in your search strategy. We would get it all typed in, and then you would send it off, then log off.

MR: That's how it worked? That's before I did that. I'm only familiar with PubMed online on the Internet, free in a sense.

DO: It would only take 2-3 minutes. We had a couple of doctors who owned chemical patents and various other patents. So we would go into database mentioned, I can't remember the names of the databases anymore. We would go on and have to type in these chemical formula names, make sure they were spelled correctly. So many times we would end up having to call the helpline and say here's what we are trying to do, and he would help us get our search string all set up. We did some emailing. And then you had to wait for it to come back and sometimes it would take 24 hours.

MR: So it wasn't as easy, obviously.

DO: Sometimes we would get it back and we would have a typo. So the results were all messed up. Or you would get it back, get it to the professor or doctor, and he would come back the next day after he'd gone through it and say this isn't what I want, or this isn't my stuff, this is somebody else's.

MR: How about Index Medicus? I might be talking out of place, they were book, book volumes? Maybe I'm mixing it up with CINAHL index or something. Index Medicus I never used in print. I just remember that's the way to find things.

DO: Maybe Science Citation Index where there were 3 volumes, and the Permuterm Indexes?

MR: Maybe. I'm really only familiar with just Internet, online. But we are making the point here that technology has changed.

DO: I don't know if we still have it here, but I used to have it here and I used to pull it out for my students and say this is the old manual way, this is what we used to do.

MR: And it took so much longer.

DO: Yes, but it's all that was there. And then when Science Citation Index...oh gosh what did it become? We had it on discs. We had a doctor that would come, Dr. Ness, and he would say I need to see what my citations are. And he is heavily, heavily published and cited. So we would put him in on the disc and everything and he would come back in a couple of days and say 'not everything is here,' it cuts off.

MR: ISI Web of Knowledge? See I don't have that but I know bigger universities have that.

DO: Yes, that's it, thanks! So we called them and finally got them to admit that it cuts off after 500 citations. Why don't we get the rest? Well it costs x amount of dollars to get the rest. Well

in about a year it transitioned to online and you were able to get all of them. Eugene Garfield who developed that in the '50's (I don't know if he's still alive or not) but I actually met him and emailed a conversation. I saved the email because he was such a hero of mine. For somebody who could create that kind of convoluted indexing it changed sciences, not just medicine.

MR: But thinking like you were saying, medical doctors and nurses who need the information so quickly now. We were talking about print indexes, then databases, disc platforms where you logged in and had to upgrade periodically. And now we are on the Internet. So you've seen it all.

DO: We got one of them was, I think it came in weekly. Was it Ovid early on? Ovid SilverPlatter? It was partial updates so every month you would have four.

MR: It's a dramatic change. What advice would you give to new medical librarians? Or even I should say medical librarians just starting in a position here in the USF health sciences library? Or someone undergrad going into library school who says, "Yes, I know I want to be a medical librarian." Both. What kind of advice would you give?

DO: Seek out mentors. Sometimes they'll find you. Don't be afraid to ask questions. That's how you find someone and that's how you connect with someone. Sometimes you're so intimidated you don't ask questions. Then other times you say they can think I'm an idiot, I don't care, but I want to know this. Sometimes be more bold and direct about it. Listen, be able to change, new ideas. No matter how much you know there is still more you don't know, obviously. Get involved in organizations and get in at multiple levels. Even if you are just a member, a fly on the wall, that you're going to meetings and just observe. You are going to learn from people. Get to know people, it's a networking thing. Otherwise you are cutting yourself

off. Getting involved in the organizations, remain inquisitive, continue to learn your discipline, pursue it by taking medical terminology classes, or whatever else. And even more so now:

Keeping up with emerging technologies.

I remember when social media was first coming into here, way before tweeting and before Facebook, and people were starting to do that. Are they really going to use this? And how can we apply this? It took us about a year reading the literature, going to meetings and conferences. OK this is a mode of communication and that's what we need to do, we need to be in contact with them. No matter what you learn, teach.

MR: So, share and teach.

DO: You only learn what you know, and the limits of what you know. You can organize and everything but by teaching, you learn.

MR: That's wonderful. That's what people coming into the library profession want to know. What can I do to grow and change and expand my career? So those are good things.

DO: When I first started teaching Web of Knowledge, I love the database. But by going through and organizing, developing the presentation and everything. I realized there were so many things about it I didn't really know it could do this. Then when someone came in and asked a question about something, well let me see if I can find it. No, no, it's here I can get it for you. Its great rapport with your client, student, doctor, whomever. That's what we do.

MR: My final question, do you have any final comments you'd like to say related to anything? Southern Chapter, MLA, medical librarian, anything?

DO: I don't have any regrets. If that's a thing to even say.

MR: You're very glad you fell in to this and it moved you on ahead.

DO: The people I've met, it's just been an amazing experience and I can't imagine in all the many other things I've done in my life, that it would have been this rewarding, at all. I just can't imagine...Being in an academic setting and to feel you are part of what is going on. I said for years that once I got into librarianship that it validated much of my life in that everything I've ever seen, heard, read, learned, experienced somehow comes into play. It gives me relevance. I don't feel like I've lived a life that didn't have any purpose. It's given me the opportunity for lifelong learning and teaching to work honorably within a discipline, the field of medicine, with the satisfaction that I'm contributing to something worthwhile and possibly noble that will make the world a better place because I played my small part. Maybe I'm overstepping, but that's how I see librarians.

MR: That's wonderful. That's wonderful. It's been great chatting with you, and talking and learning... I want to thank you for your time and coming and presenting this oral history for us, because learning about people who have made an impact with Southern Chapter is very, very important. And I'm glad to have an opportunity to put it in an archival way so that other people can learn. So thank you very much!

DO: Thank you!