

OREGON HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY HISTORY PROGRAM

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW

WITH

*Joan Ash*

Interview conducted April 18, 2001

by

Charles T. Morrissey

## SUMMARY

Dr. Joan Ash joined the Oregon Health & Science University Libraries in 1976 as Associate Director. She talks about her decision to move to Oregon from her position at the University of Connecticut, and shares her first impressions of the university. She compares the campus cultures of OHSU, the University of Connecticut, and Yale University, and also discusses the differences in library services at the three institutions.

Dr. Ash recounts the story of how she first became interested in pursuing a career in library science, as a young volunteer at the Swansea Public Library in Massachusetts. She talks briefly about her introduction to computers while attending library school at Columbia University, and about sexism in the library profession. The discussion segues into a consideration of sexual discrimination in the OHSU community.

Major objectives and obstacles faced by Dr. Ash upon her arrival at OHSU are touched upon, and the issue of labor-management relations at the university is explored in some depth. The role of unions at OHSU and on university campuses generally is also discussed.

The origin and development of the BICC (Biomedical Information Communication Center) is a major topic. After a discussion of the Matheson Report on the future of medical libraries, Dr. Ash examines the role played by Senator Mark Hatfield in securing funding for the BICC, and the impact of the federal bill on the development of the IAIMS grant program at the National Library of Medicine.

Dr. Ash answers questions about relations between OHSU and other institutions, such as University of Washington and Portland State University, and touches on her decision to leave the library to pursue an MBA and a doctorate at PSU. She reflects on her long association with Jim Morgan and his leadership as Library Director, as well as on the relationship between the library and OHSU administration.

The development of the informatics program at OHSU is examined, and it is noted that the university has been at the forefront of medical informatics nationally. The success of the informatics program and the development of the BICC are seen as examples of a general openness to innovation at the university.

Dr. Ash touches on the relationship between the OHSU Library and the National Library of Medicine, and then expounds at some length upon the grant-writing process. While the question of the relationships between OHSU and other hospitals is deemed to be a book-length topic, Dr. Ash does talk briefly about outreach efforts by both the OHSU Library and the administration.

Lastly, Dr. Ash discusses time management, and the differences between librarians' and researchers' approaches to taking on new tasks and responsibilities. In closing, she reflects on the major rewards of her career at OHSU.

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Interview with Joan Ash  
Interviewed by Charles T. Morrissey  
April 18, 2001  
Site: History of Medicine Room, OHSU  
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

MORRISSEY: This is Charles T. Morrissey, on Wednesday, the eighteenth of April in the year 2001. As a native of Massachusetts, I am about now to interview Joan Stevenson Ash, also a native of Massachusetts. This interview is for the oral history.

Joan, upcoming in about ten weeks will be your twenty-fifth anniversary here at the Oregon Health Sciences University, although I think it was called the Oregon Health Science Center when you came here in 1976.

ASH: University of Oregon Health Sciences Center, UOHSC.

MORRISSEY: Thank you. What prompted you to leave Connecticut for Portland?

ASH: Well, let's see. First, let me clarify that it hasn't been twenty-five years. I don't even think they've given me a fifteen-year pin because I took five years off in the middle to go get my MBA, and then I was part-time here and there, and I haven't even kept track. I don't think the university has kept very good track at all, except my retirement policy people have kept track, (laughing) so that's good.

What made me leave Connecticut was—actually, I had a very wonderful job there, but my husband was finishing his two residencies at Yale, and we wanted to be someplace where we could each have good jobs, and there was a wonderful opening for me here, and there was a wonderful opening for him there. Both of us also had wonderful opportunities in Connecticut. So we looked at houses and we looked at the situation in Connecticut, and then we looked at houses and the situation here. And we had Britt by then, so she was still under a year old, and it seemed like this would be the place to raise children. And it was God's country, so, you know, how could you resist coming here? It was mainly the draw of Oregon more than it was anything wrong in Connecticut.

MORRISSEY: Anything else about the draw of Oregon?

ASH: Well, I knew that Jim Morgan was coming, and he would be a good person to work for. The position here was somewhat of a promotion for me, because I was an assistant director at the University of Connecticut and I would be the associate director here.

MORRISSEY: What were your first impressions of this institution?

ASH: Depression, poverty, rundown facility, but the happiest, greatest, most

interesting people I had ever met. People who didn't spend all their weekends and evenings in the lab at the medical school, like they did back East. People who were fit. And they had the ski bus out back every Friday after work. And people who could talk about mountain climbing and river rafting. They were well-balanced people, I think, and good people professionally, excellent people professionally, as well.

MORRISSEY: Could a reader of the transcribed response you just gave to that question assume these people were not as professionally active as those you knew at Yale and the University of Connecticut?

ASH: Some were and some weren't. And some of those who were well balanced were the most productive. Those who climbed mountains—and many of the people I've interviewed through the oral history project, the top people in the history of OHSU, are exactly the ones who are the big mountain climbers and skiers and river rafters. So, no, I don't think the productivity was a whole lot different, I think it was the mind-set that was.

MORRISSEY: How did the campus culture of OHSU, if we may use that designation, compare, contrast with what you were leaving behind in Connecticut?

ASH: Now, I was really leaving two places behind in Connecticut, because I had been at Yale for several years before I went to the University of Connecticut, and I wasn't at UConn all that long.

The culture at Yale, as you know, is incredibly strong, incredibly stressful. Those poor researchers who would come up to the reference desk in the library were under such stress to get published so that they could get their associate professorship and tenure so that they could stay there. It was palpable, you could tell. We could identify them, where they were in the tenure track, when they asked for help. And, yet, it was a lovely atmosphere in many ways. There was such a sense of pride and a sense of history and a sense of excitement. Those of us on the reference desk were sure that Dr. So and So would get the Nobel Prize some day, and it was exciting working with people like that; whereas UConn was fresh and youthful and energetic and beautiful and sunny. It had a very upbeat youth about it.

That's funny. I had never thought of it that way, but where Yale was the more ponderous, excellence and oldness, UConn was the sprightly youth. And this was somewhere in between. It looked old (laughs), but the people had the sprightliness and the youth.

MORRISSEY: Could you elaborate on your point that you could tell palpably who was where on a tenure track when researchers came to the reference desk at Yale?

ASH: Being on the reference desk you were definitely a member of a service profession, and you were there to help anyone who came up. And at Yale it was, and still is, really restrictive on who could walk in, so that now you have to show a name badge just to get into the building. And we were just to help people who were part of the Yale community,

and we said that over and over again, including on the telephone when people called in for help, or the people who walked up to the desk.

But when people walk up to the desk, you can certainly see if they're students working on their theses; they're somewhat stressed, but basically interested in what they're doing and happy. And they do have to write a thesis, still, at Yale, and it was a big pressure on the students. However, it was the only pressure on the students, since they had no grading system and they didn't take attendance, so the students were fairly mellow.

The faculty, though, could be extremely demanding, extremely demanding, and it was our job to give them the utmost service. So that if they were ready to publish an article or submit a paper, one of our jobs was to verify every single citation in their article by looking at the first source, if we possibly could, and, because we had the incredible collection we did, we spent lots of time running around the stacks looking at the source.

This has been verified in studies since I did it, but so many citations are wrong because they're cited over and over and over again as being wrong, and then when you go and take it off the shelf and look at it, it's different. So there was a very good reason for doing this, and I felt we were doing something incredibly important, because, after all, these were potential Nobel Prize winners who were doing the publishing. But anyway, so we gave the utmost in service, and they were happy to ask for the utmost in service, some of them in a grumpier way than others. And the grumpy ones were the ones who were under incredible pressure. And sometimes they would talk about it, and they'd say, I really need to get this paper published, et cetera. Or they'd come in and they'd say, you know, I want to see a list of all the journals in such and such an area, and start looking for the journal that they wanted to submit to and get advice from us on that kind of thing.

MORRISSEY: Did you have similar experiences at the reference desks at both Connecticut and here in Oregon?

ASH: Well, at Connecticut I was the assistant director for technical services, so I had made a switch over. In those days, the libraries were divided between public services and technical services. And prior to being health sciences librarian at Yale, I had been a science and technology bibliographer in California, so that was quite a bit on the technical services end. So even though I was reference and public services at Yale, I was hired at UConn as head of technical services. So, that's a long way of saying I didn't work on the reference desk at UConn. I think that just my sense of what went on, because it was a small enough place that I knew everything that was going on in the library, there was not that same kind of tension.

And, in fact, here there were so many people who are not on tenure track--for example, my division is part of the medical school, but we do not have a tenure track. If we bring in the money, and we measure up, then we get our contracts renewed, and we're just on annual contracts. And most of the clinical faculty just think that's fine, because then you don't

have to go through all of this silliness about promotion and tenure. I'm going after promotion this year. That's primarily because, you know, personally, so that my salary can be competitive with the others in the division. I personally don't need it professionally because I'm on enough boards and I don't want to be on any more boards, and I did it as an assistant professor. But the salary differential is significant, so that's what I want to do it for.

However, the tenure thing, we don't have to worry about it. When they worry about it, they lose their jobs and they have to look around. And to leave a place like Yale, to be forced to leave a place like Yale, is quite traumatic, I think, for people. However, if they ended up leaving, I'm sure they'd be very happy elsewhere, because I'm sure that they'd shine elsewhere. They just didn't know what they were missing.

MORRISSEY: What is it about your life that explains why you chose to become a library professional?

ASH: You really want to know?

MORRISSEY: I really want to know.

ASH: I was a Brownie. You know, the girls, before Girl Scouts, they're Brownies. This is in the lower grades. I was a very active Brownie, and you have to do a service as a Brownie. I lived in Swansea, Massachusetts, and I decided that my service--my mother and father were very big readers, and we loved the library, and it is a national historic site, the little library in the center of this charming little town--and so every Tuesday afternoon, or whatever, my mother would take me after school, and I would volunteer my time in the library, and that was just a completely amazing experience.

I think I was probably in about the fourth grade when my friend who was doing it with me and I discovered some archives. We were helping them organize the books in the attic, and we found these archives. And we had just learned about the Salem witch trials, and we looked through these records--they were just Massachusetts records from that period, and we knew what the period was, and so we started looking through the books on death--they were death records--and we found witches. I mean, they didn't say it that way, but we knew that they had died this way, and we just thought, That's so incredible. You know, we are looking at a book that old. It was like history was alive, just what we were learning about in school.

So Christie and I got pretty excited about it, and I decided then that I thought it would be a perfect opportunity to--well, for one thing, librarianship was one of the few professions one could go into, and it was definitely of great interest to me. I always thought I might do teaching or librarianship, but at that time I decided I wanted the librarian route, and all through college that's what I said, and I never wanted anything else. So then when I applied--the problem was, I met my husband in college, and so I had to find a graduate school where he was, but I managed.

MORRISSEY: Were these handwritten records?

ASH: No, they were printed in some way, as I recall. I just remember big books, heavy books.

MORRISSEY: And were they about Salem witches or witches in your part of southeastern...?

ASH: It was the records for Salem.

MORRISSEY: I wonder how they got into this library?

ASH: I think they were actually records, possibly, for all of Massachusetts. I don't remember that well. But what's interesting is that my friend Christie, she didn't become a librarian, but she's an author now, and she volunteers her time at the Boston Athenaeum, and she's been on the board of that Swansea Public Library at different times.

MORRISSEY: Christie's last name is?

ASH: It was Baker then, and now it's Root. And she writes books for English as a second language. Big sellers.

MORRISSEY: I don't think I've ever met a person who, as a fourth grader, had an archival experience.

ASH: (laughs) Well, there are two of us, and here she is, working at the Boston Athenaeum in her volunteer--she lives on Beacon Hill now, and she just walks over there. And when I visited her last year, she was so proud, but she could only show it to me from the outside because they were renovating it.

MORRISSEY: Was there a librarian at the Swansea Public Library who deserves to be mentioned here as a person who evidently turned your life in a very specific direction?

ASH: You know, the interesting thing is, I don't think she had anything to do with it (laughs). In fact, if anything stifled my interest, it might have been the librarian.

No, they gave us free rein. The staff gave us little jobs to do, but when we were up there giggling in the attic, they didn't come and yell at us or anything. But I don't remember the person at all, so I don't think that it had much influence, except that librarians later on over the years certainly did.

MORRISSEY: Did you, early on in your library career, think you might go in a historically oriented direction, such as archival administration?

ASH: I don't think I thought about it a lot until I met Paul and instantly decided I should go into medical librarianship (laughs). I probably thought that I wanted to be a public librarian, and I always liked dealing with people. So I probably would have been a public librarian in a small, interesting public library had I not gone the route into medical librarianship.

MORRISSEY: When in your career did you become mindful that librarianship is going to be moving in the direction of new technology?

ASH: (laughs) I remember in library school at Columbia--those copy machines were absolutely the pits. Well, first of all, to copy something was a privilege. There weren't very many copy machines around, and they weren't very good, and mostly everybody took notes on journal articles. And I had a little job on the side, working for one of the faculty at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and I would search the libraries in the New York area for certain things for him. He was a member of the New York Academy of Medicine. So I went to the Columbia Medical Library and the New York Academy of Medicine Library and Albert Einstein Library, and there would be one copy machine, and it would be really slow.

I was charged with copying things for Dr. Rayport, finding them and copying them. So it was ultra-professional in the finding part and ultra-not-professional in the copying part. And yet I thought: well, these copy machines, if only they could be better, just think of what we could do with them. We wouldn't have to take notes on everything any more. Now I'm a little sorry that we waste so many trees making copies of so many different things.

Also, though, in library school I took a programming course. You know, that was pretty amazing in 1968, but we had a faculty member who thought that library school students should at least have the opportunity to learn programming. And so I took it as an elective course because I thought: databases, this is a natural thing for the future of librarianship. And we did the punch cards, you know. I went over to Columbia--it was, I think, in the basement of Low Library, or someplace--they had the computer center, and we'd type out on these machines the punch cards and then we'd hand them in. The next day, if we were lucky, we'd get our printout back. So in '68 I discovered copy machines and computers.

MORRISSEY: Computers by happenstance?

ASH: Well, the computers were not very hands-on and accessible. It was the huge room, kind of, where you handed in the cards. But you could peek in and watch the machine. But we had a whole course in programming, not necessarily the computers, the hardware part of it.

MORRISSEY: During your library career have you encountered sexism?

ASH: Well, the sexism in the beginning was, librarianship was one of the few things

you could go in to as a woman. And then all along the line, whenever I was going up for promotion, men who were less qualified, had fewer years under their belts in librarianship, were usually my competition, and often they won. But, you know, if I had gotten that job in California that I wanted so badly that a male with less experience and younger got, I probably would have been really unhappy. I was much better off leaving and going to medical librarianship. I've seen it over and over again, though, both with myself in even salaries, even when I was doing exactly the same job as someone else--again, someone without the years' experience, they would be making quite a bit more money. And I have had supervisors actually tell me, "Well, of course, he's got a family that he has to support, and you don't." But in the old days, people could do that.

MORRISSEY: When did the old days end?

ASH: You know, I felt it more when I came here. Maybe things were more deliberately equal here, more democratic. And, you know, come to think of it, maybe that's a trend at OHSU, because it's interesting that there have been women in powerful positions. Not deanships, except for nursing, but in powerful faculty positions all along. And, in fact, there was no discrimination, or at least I understand there was very little discrimination, against women throughout the years. Linda can tell you better than I can, the first woman graduated from here in the twenties [questioningly] from medical school. Anyway, I felt it when I came here much less than I did back there. And it might have been the times. By then, it was '76. It might have been the times. Efforts were starting to be made, and in fact, not long after I started here there was an organization on campus that someone was paying good money for called Women in Higher Education Administration. And they would send us to training and meetings and such in downtown Portland. So it was probably a consciousness-raising all around.

MORRISSEY: Does anyone on this campus deserve credit for causing this to happen?

ASH: I'm trying to think of some of the people who really pushed for it, and Jim Morgan might remember better than me. We did all these studies all the time, like every year we had to do a report, salary reports, and we were supposed to compare the male and female salaries. And for many years we never even had a male, except the Director, so it was a little hard to compare salaries. But when did we start doing that? I don't remember it under Dr. Bluemle but under Dr. Laster, and it probably was a federal mandate of some kind.

MORRISSEY: Since historians are always interested in paper trails that get created, did any women at OHSU ever file any legal cases against the university?

ASH: For discrimination, yes. I have this vague recollection that some people have mentioned it in some of their oral history interviews, but they weren't made very public, I don't think. I don't remember. But, yes, I know the answer is yes.

MORRISSEY: If they got to the stage of litigation, there are paper trails.

ASH: Right, so there's something around, maybe. Our paper trails are not very clear.

MORRISSEY: When you first came here, what were your major objectives, what were your major obstacles?

ASH: Major obstacles were physical plant and some staff issues. Jim, when he made his arrangement to come here, negotiated some funds for upgrading the library facility a tad. There wasn't a lot of money to give, and I know they gave him as much as they could, and it didn't go very far. But our objectives were to, first of all, make the decisions, with the help of the staff, on where that money should be spent and how to reorganize the library physically.

Jim is much more interested in that sort of thing, the building piece, and I'm more interested in the people piece. So my objectives were to assess the situation with the staff--not just the abilities of the staff, but the rules and regulations. The Teamsters had just come in. There had been a fairly weak union before, and the Teamsters, just before I came here, had been voted in, which was a huge change for an academic institution, and they were flexing their muscles. The Teamsters had to prove themselves to the classified staff that they were worthy of being here, and so the classified staff--I must have had six grievances filed against me the first year, because I was the one dealing with the staff, I was really supervising. Jim had the grievances filed against him too, but I was the one they really blamed.

So there were a lot of staff issues that were both changes that I wanted to have made and resistances on the part of the staff.

MORRISSEY: Could you specify some of those changes you wanted to make?

ASH: At the time, there was something called "management by objectives" that--starting in the sixties, actually--started to be popular. At UConn we had used management by objectives procedure and process, but it was mandated by the state, and just wonderfully effective. And it made life easy because everyone knew when and how they'd be evaluated on what all the time. Everyone knew everything, and everyone agreed on their objectives, both personally and for the organization.

So I read up on and took courses in management by objectives, and it eventually was something that the staff absolutely loved, and I was sorry to see it go by the wayside after I left. But when we did it for the years that we did it, that was my goal was to institute it hand in hand with the staff, because it can be done in many different ways. And so we tailored it to the way we wanted it done and then implemented it.

But that was also helping to assess the staff. I mean, it was a way of fairly assessing the staff, because, although I thought when I came that there were some staff who were not producing, it didn't become either clear or documentable--documentable, if that's a word--

until we had gone through the process of having very carefully devised goals and objectives for each person.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1/Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

MORRISSEY: The environment you just described here at OHSU sounds like a very informal work environment.

ASH: It was, and people had been hired because they were nice people, or for other reasons. And, you know, that probably goes back to Bertha Hallam and the way she did things--and it was an intimate, kind of clubby atmosphere. And the stories about her, "Bertha's boys", and how she actually secretly funded some of their medical school tuition, we've heard through the oral histories. I have a greater understanding of what this place--why this place was the way it was when I came. I would do some things differently now. One of the first things we did was, this wonderful archival and history collection--here, I came from Yale, you know, and I should have had more sensitivity to the importance of what was here, but you get this New England mind-set like, There's no history out here. You know, actually, this medical school did go back pretty far, but I didn't give much value to it. I guess I was just so overwhelmed with making change that one of the terrible things we did was take money and people away from the history effort that had been a big effort, probably too much of an effort up to that point, and we just kind of went cold turkey and said, No, we have to put the effort into the new and leave the old behind. And we shouldn't have done that. We should have at least continued some of the processes that the library had been doing earlier.

MORRISSEY: Other regrets retrospectively?

ASH: I don't think so. I certainly never regretted coming here for a minute. I'm just glad that I was young enough to put the energy in then, because it was a major effort to make change here. But I was ready for it.

MORRISSEY: How did you deal with the grievances and other forms of resistance you encountered during your first years here?

ASH: It was hard dealing with that because it got very emotional, and the union didn't help one bit. It was terribly antagonistic. Fortunately, the library professionals could not be part of the union. The classified staff were union members. And, again, there were courses that we could take on how to deal with this kind of thing, but it was hard to step back and be really objective.

In the end, though, I could see things changing for the better because of the union, and when they were able to negotiate salary and benefit improvements for the staff, which I always thought had been pitiful and exploitive [sic], when they were able to change that--and they could only do it with these very, I think, almost militaristic tactics that they used--I started actually to think that this was the right thing at that time to have happened, because

the gentle union prior to that wouldn't have gotten this done. And guess what? We all benefited from it, because somehow all through the years whenever the classified staff got better benefits and salaries, the faculty did too.

So I've come to appreciate--and since I teach organizational behavior, I try to always teach about unions in a really balanced way; and I often have the ex-vice president of our union come and talk about labor management negotiation and union involvement. We've had strikes over the years, it gets bad, it gets good again, but by and large the staff has really benefited from it.

And I don't think that faculty unions are a terrible thing. It hasn't been a movement on this campus, but it has been down at Portland State, where it should be.

MORRISSEY: You need to educate me on where is the division line between those who are eligible to join a union and those who are not.

ASH: There are sort of three categories of people. There are the more professional staff that are exempt and they cannot join the union. There are the classified staff--and I don't know where that word came from, except they are classified in kind of grades: administrative assistant 1, 2, and 3, clerical assistant 1, 2, and 3, and things like that, so maybe that's where it comes from. They are the folks who can be in the union, and, in fact, have to be affiliated with the union in some way; and then there are management people who are betwixt and between. And often, of course, they've come up from the classified ranks, they've been promoted into more of a management position, and they don't maybe have the library degree in the library, for example, to be a professional, but they can't be part of the union, either. And I've always had a great sensitivity to those people because they have ties to the union in that they used to be part of the union, they have great understanding of the union, but now they're supervising those union people.

And, yet, this has changed. A wonderful change that's happened over the years is that there used to be a big division between professional and nonprofessional librarians. It was like that master's degree was the end of the world. And, yet, there were always people in certain positions in the library who were actually doing very professional things who did not have master's degrees and therefore didn't get the salary and often weren't part of the little clique. They just weren't part of the group because they weren't professionals. And with the technology coming in, the library has had to hire people without library degrees who have incredible expertise. I remember people saying to me, Wow, that person really knows a lot about education, or training or whatever, and they have a master's degree. They don't have a library degree; they're just as professional as we are. And that's become just much more now accepted, that there are lots of different kinds of professionals in the library world who don't have that master's in library science.

MORRISSEY: Another question that reflects my ignorance of OHSU is, how active are the Teamsters elsewhere on this campus? How active are other unions elsewhere on this

campus?

ASH: The Teamsters got voted out after they did their good thing, once they accomplished what they needed to accomplish. And, of course, they wanted to stay, and I can't remember what union got voted in instead. But, again, it was a gentler union, but times were right for that.

There are different unions, and I don't think we have Teamsters--I'm not sure. I can't really answer if we have Teamsters or not. But, of course, there's a union for the nurses, there is a union for the janitorial-type staff, and I don't know what else, but there are these different unions. And if a strike comes, they have to all decide if they're going to support the nurses' strike, or whatever.

I think, the last strike was not that long ago, and it was a very sad one from my point of view because I had helped write a grant. When I was between writing grants for myself, I helped write a grant for the university to apply for federal funds for labor-management committee. We had the committee, and the grant was to provide funding for continuing education and training, and I can't remember what else. But I helped the labor-management coordinating committee--that was the name of it--write this grant. We didn't get the grant, the committee sort of fell apart, and we ended up--not because of that--but to me it was sad that we had made great strides working together, and feelings were very good on both sides, and contracts came up for renegotiation, and the classified staff struck. I can't remember how many days it was, but we have a large percent of staff on this campus who were classified and went out on strike.

MORRISSEY: When threats of strikes would arise, how would you deal with that? Secondly, when strikes occurred, how would you deal with the actual strikes?

ASH: When I was working in the library, we never actually had a strike. It wasn't until I was working in the BICC that we had a strike, and there were several people in our division--we don't have very many classified staff, and two of them had just recently come and had--they didn't go out on strike. They were strikebreakers, I guess, although it was a very gentle strike. When I was in the library, when there would be a threat of a strike, boy, we would mobilize. We would start getting organized so that the professional staff would be taking over. So we would get ready. And, fortunately, it never happened, and everybody was happy, I think, that it didn't happen.

MORRISSEY: I should stick to questions and not editorialize, but I hope the work you're doing to document the history of this university does get adequate documentation of labor-management relations, because I imagine among the 126 medical schools in America they must vary from heavily unionized in union towns like San Francisco or New York and totally un-unionized in Sunbelt places like Houston, Texas. So the comparative basis, I think, would be very helpful for the future, to know how the schools do vary and how they've dealt with this very essential aspect of management.

ASH: And when you interview Lesley Hallick, she will be the perfect person to talk to about the more recent labor-management. She headed up, I believe, that labor-management negotiation committee, and she was very much in charge during the strike, so she'd be a good person to talk to about that.

MORRISSEY: But who before Lesley?

ASH: Good question. There is a lady named Mary Ann Lockwood, and I never did finish interviewing her. I should. I think we spent the two hours together, and I need another two hours with her. But she was with Dr. Laster and then stayed on for several other presidents, until fairly recently, as a, like, special assistant, and did many different things and had her finger on the pulse of everything.

Also, though, we had hoped to interview several people who have been part of the personnel and human resources picture here on the campus for many years, and from my old library days I know some of them; Jim certainly knows some of them. On our wish list we definitely need to talk to them.

MORRISSEY: You mentioned BICC a moment ago, and for the record I want to say the acronym stands for Biomedical Information Communication Center.

ASH: Right.

MORRISSEY: In terms of your own experiences and your own memories, what is the origin and development of BICC?

ASH: Oh, it's really interesting, one of my favorite stories. Dr. Laster, who was absolutely a brilliant man and a futurist, in his wisdom--it probably began with the Matheson Report.

I can go back even further, because I played a teensy little role in all of this. When I was on the board of the Medical Library Association, a woman named Nina Matheson was doing a Delphi study to try to predict the future of medical librarianship, and she had funding from the National Library of Medicine and the AAMC, which is the Association of Academic Medical Centers, to do this. She had been a friend, and she had been a library director for many years. A very wise woman.

This Delphi study had, I don't know, a hundred librarians who took part in it, and I was one of them because I was on the board. She kept sending us surveys, and then she'd feed back information, and we'd keep answering questions about what we thought the future would be. And she pulled it all together and wrote this report. So a little tiny bit of me was in that Matheson Report, which was published by the AAMC, and was a revolutionary document in the history of medical librarianship in the world because it outlined what the

library of the twenty-first century might look like.

And we responded to that. Dr. Laster just loved it, and he, because he had been talking to Senator Hatfield and others, in his great wisdom thought that if we could only get some money, we could become one of these libraries of the twenty-first century, as outlined in the Matheson Report, and renew ourselves and actually renew the whole campus, because his vision was that this new thing would be the center of the campus. Literally, working with the architects, that's where he wanted it, and figuratively as an information bridge among all these disparate parts.

And the history of the place is that there were the three schools, and they were three separate islands, and a president, the first president, came in the seventies. And we were then a university, but not really, and so in this sort of constant hope that we could truly act like a university, this new library of the twenty-first century would be one of the things that would tie us together. And so he worked with Senator Hatfield, and I don't know who else--he had friends back at NIH and elsewhere--and they got a rider put on a bill, and I helped to write it. Well, actually, Jim and I were asked to, you know, put together some text, and Dr. Laster completely rewrote it, but some of our words are in there. And then he worked with Senator Hatfield to get the bill through. And so the rider said that there should be funding for, I'm not sure it said the National Library of Medicine. It probably didn't. It said there should be NIH funding for developing integrated information systems in organizations, and there should be some prototypes funded, and they should be done nationally, but there should be one in the Northwest. I can't remember what else it said, but that's what it said, and what that meant was we would get the one in the Northwest. And, actually, the money was there for us to become the first, along with something like fourteen million dollars--I think it was maybe five or six million to do this integration thing and 14 million to build a building.

When that passed, somebody called us--we knew it was in the works, and we had read it, and all--but the day it was voted on, Jim got a phone call, and he said, It passed. And we said, Hey, let's have a celebration. So, I remember this so vividly: we wanted the whole staff to get excited about this, a new building, and I called the Beaverton Bakery, or whatever the bakery was, and I said, Can you get a cake ready for us, like for one o'clock? And they said, Oh, sure. And I said, Well, can you put "Happy Birthday Library", or something like that, on it? And they said, Sure. And I said, Oh, and can you put a building on it? They said, Oh, we'll do something. So, I go pick up the cake that we're going to have after lunch for the whole library staff down in the staff room down here, and it's this cake with the Washington Monument on it (laughs). It was so funny. So we had a good time celebrating.

And, of course, nobody knew what this meant, and no one had done one before, and we had all this money. And Dr. Laster said, We really need to plan this with the help of an advisory committee. And he pulled together a committee on the campus and an advisory committee of future-looking people off campus, and we had meeting after meeting trying to decide what to do.

And the interesting thing is that that was a contract--the six million we had was a contract--and since it was a rider, the people in the Fed back there didn't know what to do with it, at NIH. And so they said, Well, we're going to run the building money through--well, we can't do it through NLM, National Library of Medicine, because they're not a building kind of place, so we'll do that through Health and Human Services, or something, but we'll do the other through NLM.

And I've since interviewed the people at NLM about this, and suddenly they were told that they were dealing with this contract, and they said, Well, you know, we really need a grant. I mean, we need a proposal to give them the money for. The money's sitting there, it's for Oregon, but we need a grant. And so they asked us to write a grant for the money that was already sitting there. And they said, Well, you know, this whole idea of integration and putting the Matheson Report into action is a really good idea. And they started a grant program, probably a year after we got the money, and there must have been money in the rider for this, too. They started an IAIMS program. Back then it was called the Integrated Academic Information Management Systems.

So that goes back to our money and our rider and our pork barrel, and for anybody who complains about pork barrel, my answer is, Look what the pork barrel did for the country. Because if we hadn't been given that funding, IAIMS may not have existed. It probably would have, but it may not have, and it may not have been that fast, because actually we got the money for the IAIMS program to start with.

MORRISSEY: Could you speak about the impact Sen. Mark Hatfield has had on this institution?

ASH: As you know, I've interviewed him. I interviewed Dr. Laster, and I've interviewed a number of the administrators--like Jack Vernon, the speech and hearing person--and he actually knew people up here long before he was a senator. He had neighbors who had affiliations here; he was always aware of the medical school. And because of his personal health and the health of his family--actually, most Oregonians probably have some dealing at some time with the Hill. It was just that he had a special feeling about it, and then he happened to be in a position where he could do something about it. But, also, during his interview he told me about his youth and his interest in the health and well being of people in general.

So I think that his interest goes way, way back. But he particularly, at a time when Dr. Laster was here--I think they had a lot in common--Dr. Laster and he were able to put together these ideas and a vision of the future that was pretty amazing. I think it must be exciting for Senator Hatfield and for Dr. Laster, when they come back here, to see what's happened. And it's not finished yet. Some of those plans still haven't been rolled out.

MORRISSEY: With respect to obtaining federal funding for academic medical centers in the Pacific Northwest, have you ever felt yourself in competition with the University of

Washington?

ASH: That's really interesting, because they've always been the Regional Medical Library for the Pacific Northwest, which is sort of a fun one because it covers Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Washington, and Oregon. And I was on the regional advisory committee for that when I was in the library, and we'd meet in those different states. And their health--you know, the Alaska Health Sciences Library is a little different from other health sciences libraries.

Anyway, they had always been the Regional Medical Library, and when Jim and I first came we thought, well, maybe we should think about competing with them. There were only two academic medical libraries in the entire region, and why shouldn't we give them a run for their money? Gerry Oppenheimer was the director up there at the time, a person I greatly, greatly admired. And the more we learned and the more we talked and the more I went to these advisory committee meetings, the more I realized what a silly thing it would be to try to compete with the University of Washington. They were in the perfect position to do it, and we benefited from it. It's not something that you get a lot out of monetarily. You get enough to cover your expenses, and it's a great honor, but we came to the conclusion that we didn't need that honor, and we've never competed for the RML officially with them. And, really, it was only a little inkling of a thought at the time, and I think we were very smart not to pursue it.

In other respects, though--for example, in informatics we're quite proud that they just got an informatics division, and they just started a master's degree this fall. And it's fun for us. We were the first, so they were putting their efforts into other things, and we were doing it first here. We were an IAIMS first. But now I think there's a lot of give and take. I've been invited to speak up there, and several of our faculty always go up there to speak, and when they happen to be in Portland, we'll have them come and speak to our classes. So that's from the informatics point of view.

From the library point of view, I can't really speak to it, since I've left, but, as I said, Gerry Oppenheimer was one of my favorite people, and then he was replaced by one of my very favorite people, Sherri Fuller. And so I've always had nothing but kind of brotherly and sisterly feelings.

MORRISSEY: Have you felt any competition from the south, namely University of California San Francisco, Stanford, or UC Davis?

ASH: Over the years, I've been asked to apply for directorships at--I don't think Davis. But those places had great problems, and I had dealt with that before. And even though I knew I could do it again, I wouldn't have wanted to. So as far as those libraries go, their collections may be greater; it's almost like the Yale-University of Connecticut difference. One had the great collection and the other had the great processes for getting things done. When I was here, I felt that most of the time we had the great processes for getting things done, and they could have had them there, at those other places. Maybe it's just that size makes it more

difficult. Change is harder. No, I never felt any competition.

MORRISSEY: Back to BICC, do I understand correctly there was a period in the 1980s between the initial funding, really of the concept, and then the actual appropriation for the physical building?

ASH: Oh, it was so strange, because the money was there, it was, like, sitting in the bank in Washington, and the feds were dying to get rid of it and give it to us. And we fussed around for a couple of years with these committees, trying to decide what to do with the money, and since it was hard to predict what would happen with libraries of the future, decisions didn't get made. And I said, To heck with this. It was just far too frustrating, and I was either ready to move on to a different library position elsewhere or just do something else. And the level of inactivity was not something...

[End of Tape 1, Side 2/Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

MORRISSEY: You were just saying the level of inactivity is not something you could bear.

ASH: Yes. So I applied for jobs. I decided, well, I'd kind of let fate take its course, and I applied for jobs, and I also took my GMAT, the Graduate Management Admission Test, to go back to graduate school. And I got offered the library directorship at Yale and accepted it. And Harvey Cushing's granddaughter donated \$14 million to expand the building--she's a Whitney--and I was supposed to go back there and accept the check from her. And so for a brief time I was the director of the medical library at Yale.

I had been given three months to make the move, and my husband was looking at positions there, and we had our house on the market, and I was going back; I went back two or three times to get things ready and act as a consultant at the same time. And I decided--to tell you truth, when we got an offer on our house, I said, I can't do this, I just can't do this. I can't do this to my family. I can't leave my beautiful house on the lake and move into a little, tiny ranch house in Stamford, Connecticut. We had lived there before, in "Yalesville", and I knew what it was like. And, again, it was this great, incredible challenge to go back to Yale and make change, and I decided I just wasn't up to it. So it was a terrible thing, but I backed out of it, but I had never really gone.

And a great thing happened. The person that I was supposed to report to at the university library there, the associate director of the university library, named Bella Berson--one of the reasons I wanted to go was I would be reporting to her, and she was a wonderful person--instead of going out and getting another person like me, they put her in charge of the medical library through the period of the building and expansion. So I ended up feeling good about that, and staying here and, oh, it was just great fun, great fun, to go back to school like that and get an MBA, which I wished that I had had earlier, and go to Portland State and then sort of have a whole career open to me. What was I going to do at the end of it, with this

degree that at that time was a very important thing to have?

So, anyway, that was when Bob Beck was recruiting for staff, because finally--I never would have predicted--finally, in 1989, they started the BICC. The reason for that was this Dave Witter had become acting president after Dr. Laster left, and he set as his, I think, number one goal to get the BICC done before another president came, because he had been really instrumental in getting the whole thing planned. And he just did it. He said, The feds want a proposal from us; they're getting it. And they did, it seemed like almost over night. And so the money was secured, he hired a director, and we were off and running.

MORRISSEY: With respect to your brief dalliance with Yale, did you almost burn your bridges behind you at OHSU?

ASH: Oh, no.

MORRISSEY: You were able to retreat back across the bridge.

ASH: You mean my relationship with OHSU?

MORRISSEY: Yeah. The opportunity to return was still available to you, whereas other people--and we could probably name colleagues who fit this profile--have made those decisions, tried to back up, and found the bridge had been burned. That's the metaphor.

ASH: I don't know what would have happened, because by the time all this got done and I actually decided not to go back to Yale, they had hired Millard Johnson to replace me here and, I was delighted about that. I thought that he was just what the library needed at the time. And I didn't really want to come back because they were still fussing around. It wouldn't have been any better. I would have come back, and it would have just been more of these meetings, hoping for the future, and nothing came of it. So I was perfectly fine with it the way it happened. I would have been less fine, I guess, if at the end of my getting my MBA I couldn't get a really good job, but I did.

MORRISSEY: Did you ever hear from Yale about your reversal of decision?

ASH: Well, of course, I go back sometimes, because they did become an IAIMS. And the first time I had gone back since this sort of wrenching experience of turning them down--I had talked to people, but I hadn't actually seen the place--there was an IAIMS consortium meeting there that I went to. And it was just great fun to see what they had done with the new building and the changes that had been made there and the growth of informatics there. And I feel, since I had marched into the dean's office and I had said, I will report to the university library--which is not something a medical library, I think, usually should do, it should always report to the medical school, but because Bella Berson was there, I felt comfortable doing that--and I said, I will report to her as long as I can have certain things as a relationship with the medical school. And I waved the IAIMS report in front of them, the Matheson Report, in

front of the dean. I actually gave him a copy, and I said, We are going to do this here, and I want to be on the dean's council, and da da ta da. He had never heard of the Matheson Report at that point.

So I think that in that brief little three months maybe I did a little good. And he was quite an outstanding dean, and I can't remember his name now. But one of the fun things about going there would have been to work with him too.

MORRISSEY: Was Paul, your husband, willing to uproot?

ASH: He was willing, and, of course, he had done his two residencies back there, and he had found a place. It would be in the Stamford area, which, as you know, is a bit of a commute from New Haven, but a nice place. But he was really happy here. He would have done it, but he was really happy here. And it would have been starting all over again, whereas here he had an established practice.

MORRISSEY: And how did your youngsters feel about this?

ASH: They were great about it. Britt was nine years old, and we were ready to buy her a horse, and they had a wonderful place for her to ride in the Stamford-Westport area. That's sort of a, you know, riding capital, one of them, of the Northeast. So we had gone there and talked to the people there, and they were ready to help her buy a pony, help us spend our money. But she was fine here, staying where we are, riding where she rode. She was fine either way. She hated New Haven, because I had taken her back for one of my interviews, and she hated the feel of New Haven; but as far as her friends, and such, she was pretty adventurous.

MORRISSEY: You've mentioned going downtown to Portland for training sessions, and you have two degrees from Portland State University. Could you comment on the relationship, if indeed there is one, between OHSU and Portland State University?

ASH: Well, this is something you should probably ask Lesley Hallick about from an official point of view, but we have always been able to take courses down at Portland State, practically for free. And because it's five minutes on the bus to get down there, there is a lot of activity going back and forth just from the student point of view. The libraries have always had a close relationship because the library directors know one another and have worked with one another for many, many years.

And we have a good bit of discipline overlap, in that now we have a master's in public health that has different tracks, and some of the courses are down there and some of the courses are up here. There's a lot of overlap in taking courses at the graduate level, so that when I was getting my MBA and my doctorate, I could take courses up here. So there's a lot of give and take, and I think really good feelings between here and there.

Lesley, though, can tell you more, and the reason I mentioned her name was, when we became a semiprivate, privatized public corporation, Portland State, naturally, hesitated then to give us this--

MORRISSEY: I was wondering if that element of competition was in there.

ASH: Well, compensation (laughs).

MORRISSEY: Complication?

ASH: Compensation rather than competition, I think.

MORRISSEY: Confrontation.

ASH: Oh, confrontation? She negotiated--and this was scary for some of us, because I was still working on my doctorate, working up here, getting my doctorate down there, for forty-five dollars a course--and she negotiated so that we could continue this tuition. I think we pay them something. So we're not officially part of the Oregon State System of Higher Education anymore, but we've worked something out with them because we felt that it was important. And it's great, now that I'm a faculty member, to be able to send students down there for certain courses and work with them. You know, a couple of times, because of my ties in the business school, I've been able to get advice.

MORRISSEY: You've worked for more than twenty-five years with Jim Morgan. Could you comment about the chemistry of that relationship?

ASH: Well, I was really amazed when he hired me, back in the old days, super-pregnant, and gave me this big promotion from being a reference librarian at Yale to being an assistant director. I thought that was incredibly remarkable. And I did take a week off when I had Britt.

But he had a reputation then, even though he hadn't been there all that long, of running a good organization. He had good people, surrounded himself with good people, and was a good manager and a good librarian, and he had a lot of respect in the library community. So I jumped at the chance to go work up there--a beautiful facility, great staff, and to work with him. And, at the time, I had never managed anything. I had not even been a department head. And so he was just an excellent person to learn management from, and I think he taught me the focus on the people, rather than other things, that I still have. And that's what I ended up teaching, because he got things done through the people on his staff.

So I immediately felt like I could learn a lot working with him, and there was a lot of trust. He always could trust that I would get something done when I said that I would do it. And it got to the point where we had been working together for so many years here, I felt like I could read his mind. And he could pretty much read my mind. So when he had to be away,

he could feel, I think, complete confidence in me. Because if something happened, I could say, I know exactly what Jim would do, and I would do it, and it would be exactly what Jim would do. So it was pretty remarkable, but it was probably because we had the same mind-set that it was our people who were important; they were important. You had to be tough when you had to be tough, but you got things done through people. And when I came back after not working here, I knew what had been done here because he and I would have lunch every once in a while, and he'd keep me up to date. I think it was a chance for him to talk to someone who was not part of the organization here at all, like an interested observer. So we'd have lunch, and he'd talk about what was going on here as things progressed with the BICC. And, then, when it was time for me to come back--or, when there was the opportunity to come back, I'm sure he was part of the discussion--I hope he was part of the discussion--to hire me back.

Since then, I don't see him as much as I did. When I got this grant, starting about July last year, I stopped working in the library. Up to that point, I had tried really hard to go to a number of the library meetings and to work at least an hour or two a week on the information desk. I was a regular staff member. And I did some teaching for them. I taught the project management course for them last year. But then when I got the grant and my teaching load--and Bill said, You really are going to teach this distance learning course in the fall. I said, Oh, I guess I really have to give up this library thing. So now I don't see them as much. But every once in a while he'll come to talk.

MORRISSEY: You've mentioned several senior administrators here, such as Lesley Hallick and Dr. Laster. Could you talk about relationships with superiors that have been positive and perhaps some, if they exist, that have not been positive?

ASH: Well, most of the time, you see, I had Jim there in between me and those superiors. But in a way that made it so that I could get closer--not closer--but Dr. Laster and I always got along really well. And part of it was because my husband was, you know, Harvard and a doctor--it had nothing to do with me, I'm sure--but partly because he didn't actually supervise me or anything, so I never felt that I couldn't say things to him. And he was the kind of person where you could say things to him and it didn't antagonize him. So I always felt I could be really frank with him, and with others. So there's an advantage and a disadvantage to being this kind of middleman person. I didn't know Dr. Bluemle very well, but I admired him a great, great deal, and I was just thrilled when I got to interview him back at Thomas Jefferson.

MORRISSEY: Why did you admire him?

ASH: He pulled the place together, and I thought he did it the right way. He focused on the finances, and you could tell, walking in to the place, that we were suffering. And coming into the library when I was trying to look at the budget, I realized that there was not a good handle on finances across the campus. People didn't know how much money was being spent for what. The tracking was not good because--

MORRISSEY: Really?

ASH: Oh, this was pre-computer, but things had been kind of lax, kind of lax. Not that the money was being blown. Boy, that was obvious. The money was actually so tight--but it wasn't that long before that that we never charged for hospital activities, so it was like a new thing to have to deal with these different kinds of finances. It was a revolution in the finances of the medical school that had happened, and it shook things up.

Then Dr. Bluemle came in, and he was able to get a good handle on it, surrounded himself with good people, got a good vice president, a couple of vice presidents, who could help pull things together. And I really admired that. So I admire him even though I didn't really have much to do with him.

More so some of the deans, though, and Dean Terkla. Jim had different reporting relationships over the years; he reported to the dean of nursing for a while, and the dean of dentistry. Although, he didn't really report to them, he reported through them to the president. Sometimes he reported, I think, to the president. I can't remember.

But when Dr. Laster came in, he closer control of everything, including the library. There was some, a little maybe too much--I don't know if you'd even call it control. And I didn't, you know, frankly, think that he treated Jim really well. But he could rub a lot of people the wrong way, and I hated seeing that. I hated seeing the way he dealt with people whom I had admired for so many years. He didn't treat them with the same degree of admiration that I would have, and respect.

Personally, I could kind of giggle if he treated me well, because I knew he wasn't treating me well because he had great professional admiration for me, he was treating me well for different reasons. So anyway, I never felt that he treated me badly.

And he actually had some good vice presidents working for him. And Jim McGill we all thought was fabulous. I know Jim Morgan--I don't know how he could have gotten through that period without a Jim McGill there. It was a thrill to interview him at Hopkins. He left here and is doing great things at Johns Hopkins. He's vice president of the entire university at Johns Hopkins, and there's not a better person to do that anywhere.

So Laster did have good people work with him, and if only he had let them loose.

Let's see. After that--I wasn't here when Jim and Dave Witter worked together. I know Jim respected Dave a great deal, and I think it was mutual. But I didn't see any of that, but they got this BICC thing done together. And then Jim was delighted--I'm sure he was delighted--when he started reporting to Lesley Hallick, because he had known her. She had come about a year after he came, and he had known her as a faculty member--he's been on Faculty Senate, and it may have been through there. But anyway, he had known her before

she became vice president, and so that was a long-standing and mutually respectful relationship.

MORRISSEY: In order for an academic library to be successful fulfilling its mission, is it crucial for the professional librarians to persuade senior academic administrators about the importance of library services?

ASH: Absolutely. That's probably the number one thing.

MORRISSEY: How do you achieve that?

ASH: Well, that's what I was trying to do when I handed the original IAIMS report to the dean of the Yale Medical School. And if I hadn't had the opportunity at that time--I can't remember if I did that when I was an applicant or if I did it after I had been hired--but if you don't have the opportunity to do it during the honeymoon period, say as a new director, there are other ways of doing it. I mean, there are strategies, like calling in a consultant whom you know this dean will adore and having both of you go and talk to the dean about certain things. I just think communication is the most important way of doing it.

And no matter who the administrator is, if you just keep feeding them information-- The other thing that's really effective is if you are an important person as a librarian on the national scene. The deans and the presidents have their networks, and the librarians have their networks. And they may be running in different circles, but if you're at the top of the librarian network, they're going to hear about it over in the president network. And the president, therefore, is going to think, I'm lucky to have this person, this esteemed person, running my library, and I'd better listen and give them what they want.

I think there are lots of different strategies, time-consuming strategies, which is why it's important for a library director to have an associate director who can run things so that the director can have the time to politic.

MORRISSEY: I hear you emphasizing the importance of professional participation nationally. Have you been free to do that here?

ASH: I've always been free to do it here, although it's even more fun, frankly, as a faculty member, where you really, really get rewards. The rewards are completely direct. The number of publications you have and the editorial boards you're on and the national boards that you're on, it's clear, especially now that I'm a faculty member in the medical school, they count these things, whereas in the library it was almost optional. You could do it if you wanted to. It was usually in addition to your regular job, so it came out of your hide, and the rewards weren't nearly as clear. In fact, I got promoted to associate professor when Dean Terkla was here through pretty much similar ranks to the faculty because that's the way they knew how to do things. But this library hasn't had a regular promotion track where the rewards were that clear.

So I guess I don't know why I did it, except that I really liked being with my friends in MLA, and I felt it was a professional obligation to publish. You know what it was, I guess, partly is a professor in library school got me published for the first time, a paper I had handed in for a seminar. He happened to be the editor of the archival journal in the area and submitted my paper without my knowing it.

MORRISSEY: Is this your article, "The exchange of academic dissertations", published in *College and research libraries* in 1969"?

ASH: Yes. And that's a very prestigious journal to be published in as, you know, a child, practically. But he loved the paper, submitted it to the reviewers, and got it published and then let me know that it was being published. It was pretty cool.

MORRISSEY: You didn't know this until it had happened?

ASH: No. I bumped into him walking around the campus at Columbia, and he said, Oh, by the way, you know that paper you wrote? I submitted it to *College and research libraries* on your behalf. Oh, and by the way, I'm the editor in chief (laughs), which I didn't know. But anyway, that felt pretty good, so I kept on doing that.

MORRISSEY: You've chosen to publish. Has there been any pressure on you to publish?

ASH: Not in the library field, except just hanging out with the people I hung out with at MLA. You know, my other friends would say, Oh, I just submitted this paper to such and such. So I was in the circles where people did that, and so they encouraged me. Or, Oh, that presentation was so good, you should write it up and publish it. That's the way it got done. Or, because I was on editorial boards, I knew they needed material. But since I became part of the informatics division, it's just really clear. It's more than an expectation. It is definitely an expectation, but also there's a lot of support for it, other support--you know, Oh, I'd be happy to help you with it, review it for you; we've got a staff, so if you need anything, they'll help you. Things like that. You're not quite so out there, doing it on your own. And I do many more papers now where it's jointly authored papers.

MORRISSEY: Is it fair to say, in an objective, dispassionate fashion, that OHSU is very much in the forefront of the development of informatics nationally in the medical library field?

ASH: Oh, definitely. We were offered the opportunity to start these library informatics fellowships because of a couple of things. First of all, we were the first IAIMS, and we've let everybody know that, I think. We publicize that. We've had a fellowship program for a long time, ever since Bob Beck started it, so we have a going fellowship program.

[End of tape 2, Side 1/Begin Tape 2, Side 2]

MORRISSEY: You were saying?

ASH: We are one of two places in the whole country that has a building modeled on the IAIMS process, which has both informatics and the library in the same building. Vanderbilt is the other one. And so it was natural that when this offer came from the National Library of Medicine to increase our fellowship program by adding these library fellows we would be offered the opportunity. And they called me because I was the informatics faculty member who had a library background. And so we decided that this would be a really good idea. And Jim was very much in favor of it also, and he's always helped library school students, and NLM associates, and other types of people come and do internships here.

MORRISSEY: Was there any opposition to seizing the opportunity?

ASH: I don't think so, not at all. We knew it wouldn't be free people to work for us. That was really clear. It would be an opportunity for really good people to work with us. And it has been really successful and a fun thing for us.

For a while, I was grouchy about the amount of time it took me, because we don't receive any compensation from NLM for anything administrative having to do with that. And I was trying to get grants, do grants, teach, do everything else professionally, and this was one more thing to add to my Saturday and Sunday work that I had to get done. But I've just had so much fun with it lately. And my fellows this year have offered to do the recruiting for me, because a lot of the time it took was recruiting the new fellows every single year. With the other fellowships you only recruit every two to three years. This is every single year, there's the burden of recruitment and helping to place the outgoing fellows, and that kind of thing. Well, I just came up with this pretty clever thing where, why not get help doing it from the people who know best? So the fellows are going to do the recruiting this year.

MORRISSEY: My big-picture question here is: why do certain innovations occur on certain campuses? And I guess my specific question is, have you sensed over the years an openness to innovation on this campus?

ASH: In many respects, yes. There are certain corners of the medical school we'd still like to infiltrate with technology, and I think I can say that really openly and honestly. And one of the reasons why our department, the informatics department, decided to become a piece of the medical school was as insiders we felt we could make more of an impact on the curriculum than we could as outsiders who kind of sat on the library end of things. And I'm not sure we're making a lot of headway there, but certainly the School of Nursing is moving right along, and the medical school is moving along curriculum-wise. I think they'll get there.

But anyway, in other respects, the BICC is certainly incredibly innovative and has gained the respect of, I think, the world. You know, we have groups of people from other

countries; we had a group of Russians. I gave a talk in the BICC theater not that long ago, and I wasn't really sure who I was talking to, and it was people from the Slavic countries. And for us to be able to get groups like that who want to come and learn something from us is pretty incredible. It takes money; it takes the seed money, and then beyond that, it comes. It's critical mass, idea and-- Oh, that is so true.

MORRISSEY: Over the years, how would you characterize the relationship between OHSU and the National Library of Medicine?

ASH: Let me think, let me think. I don't know what it was before Jim and I came. I don't think we had any grants or much to do with the National Library of Medicine. After Jim and I came there was a stronger relationship with the Regional Medical Library, and as part of that process, being on the advisory committee and being very much a part of it, I think maybe it raised the consciousness of us and of NLM.

Not long after we came, we started submitting grants and got them funded, and now that I know NLM really well, I'm sure they were absolutely delighted to get grant proposals from us. When you're on the other end, when you're on the proposing end, you don't realize that they want proposals. They're not looking to cut you out, they're looking to have you join. And I think they were pleased that the proposals they got were good proposals. And I know they were delighted to come for site visits, to finally get to Oregon for site visits. So we had some very pleasant site visits for those grants.

And, then, Jim and I actually were dealing with some of the same people at NLM that we had dealt with when we were at Connecticut, because we had applied for grants back in Connecticut.

MORRISSEY: What constitutes successful grantsmanship in terms of your experience over the years of writing probably more grant proposals than I could count? What have you learned from the process that suggests success?

ASH: I think it's important for the author, the person who's sitting down and writing, to know their weaknesses. And, as you noticed, I was an English major, and that did me more good than anyone or I could ever have predicted. It used to be when you went into medical librarianship you were supposed to come into it with a German background or a science background of some type. And so I felt, in the beginning, that I was not qualified, being an English major. And that is the number one most important thing about a grant, how well it's written. And the science behind the grant has to be there, but if you have good science and a badly written grant, the reviewers aren't going to take the time. They're too busy reading too many grants. They get really frustrated, and they're not going to take the time to look for the science.

So I know what Dave Witter did when this IAIMS grant that secured the funding for us--it needed to be done quickly, and I don't know the person who actually wrote it, but there

was a professional writer who kind of pulled it together. And the people had been working on the activities long enough, and here was someone who knew how to write well who could tap them and put together what was actually a brilliant proposal. I don't know how much he knew about the content, but I revisit that proposal every once in a while, and it was brilliant.

So that's just to hammer home the point that they need to be well written, and if you're a scientist and you recognize that you're not the world's best writer, get some help. So writing for success is probably the number one key.

MORRISSEY: The brilliance you speak of can be distilled into clarity of communication?

ASH: Yes. They make you make it succinct. You're limited to twenty-five pages of text, but that has to include history, background, significance. So your actual discussion about what you want to do with the money--then you have to put the evaluation section in, which is usually too short--most people make it too short, it should be longer. It doesn't leave you a whole lot of text to describe what you want to do in three years. So it has to be succinct and to the point.

MORRISSEY: It--

ASH: But readable, because a lot of people--I'm sorry for interrupting you, but one of my pet peeves is people write text without enough white space and without a format that makes it easy to read. They try to cram too much in. I have one on my desk now that's 8-point type, which is just deadly, and actually illegal.

MORRISSEY: Could you speak about relationships between various hospitals and either the main OHSU library or the BICC? How have those relationships been like?

ASH: That's a topic that could be a book. That is actually a huge topic. When I first came here, the library was happy to serve any health professional in Oregon, and, boy, did we. Our statistics show that we did more for them than we did for the people here. Phone call reference--every health professional in Oregon, and especially the physicians, could feel free to use us as their library. Consequently, hospital libraries had not been built up at places where they should have been built up. So one of the grant proposals that we submitted--the Oregon Health Information Network, OHIN--we went around generating momentum for hospital libraries to be started around the state. We were going to help with this grant and then help tie them together, because we weren't close enough to home for these hospitals. They should have their own hospital libraries. They were getting away with murder, basically, and we needed to pay attention to--our budget wasn't big enough. We needed to pay attention to our own people.

Even though we did get some funding from the state license--this is amazing. We got steady funding from the state licensing people, like ten dollars of every medical license every

year was given to this library to help support this outreach activity. That was very nice, but it wasn't a lot of money. And we also felt in our hearts that these people should have libraries close to home and still access us if they didn't get what they needed close to home.

So, anyway, we did this, we went around and tried to drum up interest in hospital libraries all around the state, and I think we did, we got the interest developed. And then we were able to hire Steve Teich as the coordinator to do training and go around and teach them how to apply for their own grants.

And then when the BICC happened, I think there was a bit of a feeling that the--so we had let go. I mean, in a way we had pushed things out there and the responsibility back to them, and when the BICC first started, there were some feelings among the hospitals that we were going to try to centralize it again and we were undermining them, and all of this. And people got--and because I haven't been part of the library, I don't know if those feathers have gotten unruffled or not. A lot of it was at a professional level, where we had a really active group of Portland area hospital librarians and the Oregon Health Sciences Libraries Association, and we always tried to have our staff really active in those so that everybody knew them and felt that they were like colleagues. I don't know if that's the case now or not.

MORRISSEY: This is a biomedical institution that stresses the training of family practitioners and outreach to remote, rural locations through distance education, and so forth. Has that impacted on your work here as a librarian?

ASH: Well, again, the real outreach push, when we started the AHECs, the Area Health Education Centers, around the state, didn't come until after I was in the BICC, so I wasn't really a librarian. So I can't answer that from a librarian's point of view.

MORRISSEY: Okay. The big-picture version of that question is: This university, it seems to me, out of my ignorance, contrasts greatly with Yale, which has an entirely different vision of its purpose as a biomedical institution than OHSU does. So I'm just wondering to what extent the orientation of the university affects the professional life of the librarian?

ASH: Well, for a time when I was at Yale, the last year I was there, I was the outreach librarian. There was this program called the RMPs, Regional Medical Programs. It was a national initiative, and it had nothing to do with libraries, it was a national initiative of some kind. But there was money in there for libraries, and they had money for an outreach librarian that had been given to the Yale Medical Library. Now, Yale would not have done this on their own, but they got this money dumped on them.

So, I was a reference librarian; I thought it would be fun to go out and consult with the hospital libraries for part of my time, and it was fun. It was a fun job, driving around Connecticut and meeting with the hospital librarians, who were a great group. And so they did have this outreach for a brief time, when there was money for it, and there was a nice connection with Yale. I think when the RMP monies dried up, that had to stop, because I

can't imagine who would pay for it.

UConn, on the other hand, as a state library, basically, has always had the goal and mission of outreach, so they've continued with that. And we, being a state institution also, that was just part of what we were supposed to do.

MORRISSEY: I know you have taught time management, but how do you manage your time?

ASH: Not well enough. I did it so much better when I was a librarian, and maybe it was because everybody around me was managing their time. And the first thing you would do when you were a librarian, when someone asked you to do something, you would start analyzing it. How much time is it going to take me, when, and what are the resources that will be given for me to do this.

When you're a faculty member, someone asks you to do something, and you say, Oh, it's an honor. This will be so good for my CV. You say yes, and then you do this little mapping business, and you realize there's no time to do this. So it comes out of nights and weekends and other things that you wish it didn't have to come out of. But I'm finding this year more than any other year, because I'm busier than I've ever been, that I'm surrounded by fabulous people. And I never would have thought, two years ago, to have the fellows help me with the fellowship program or have students help me with my research, to guide them into doing projects that will also help me. Most faculty do this, but I had always been so totally selfless as a librarian that I wouldn't try to steer students towards what I wanted them to do. Now I will.

You know, once you get enough grant funding so that you can have support, if you can get fabulous support people--like I have Lara, who's a project manager; I taught her project management, and now she's my project manager for my grant. She manages all of our time. So in many respects, it's people help you do this, and you have to learn to use them and not try to do it all yourself.

MORRISSEY: You mentioned that Dr. Laster was a futurist. Did you ever get into futurism yourself anywhere professionally?

ASH: No. The one foray was that Delphi study where we were forced to start thinking about the future. I don't think I'm really very good at it, to tell you the truth. I learned about chaos theory when I was getting my doctorate in systems science, and I've read about chaos theory as it relates to organizations--Wheatley's work, Margaret Wheatley's work. But what I get out of chaos theory is that you can't predict too well, so I let other people do that who can do it better.

MORRISSEY: A summarizing question. What have been the major rewards of your work here?

ASH: Seeing the change that's happened, all for the good, to this university. It's completely amazing. The first day I set foot on this campus, I thought it was a dump, and I would try to make it better, but it may be hopeless. And to be able to make a little impact on it, and then, because of other things, to see it flourish, to be here at the right time to see it flourish. And when I go back to NIH and--I mean, now it's not just the National Library of Medicine, I'm on this other special emphasis panel next week, and you say you're from Oregon Health Sciences University, and it's no longer, you know, Where's that? It's, Oh, you're from OHSU. You're doing such good things. Tell me about your distance learning program. Tell me about Bill Hersh's research and information retrieval. Tell me about your information needs research. Oh, everyone knows Dr. Kohler. He's one of those people in those circles, and so it's amazing how people say, Oh, say hello to Peter. And I kind of wish I saw Peter to say hello to him.

But the consciousness has been raised, and we're a contender for everything now. So it's really, really been a fun ride.

MORRISSEY: From the back of the pack to the front of the pack.

ASH: Exactly, yes. We're leading the pack in many ways.

MORRISSEY: Is there any question you want to raise in this interview that I have failed to ask you?

ASH: You have covered it so well, and you don't even have a cheat sheet in front of you like I have to have when I do interviews.

MORRISSEY: I hope the future historian using this interview so notes your very complimentary remark.

ASH: (laughs) No, it's been fun. Now I can tell people truly, when I go to interview them, that it's a pleasant process.

MORRISSEY: Any subject you'd like to return to and say more about?

ASH: No, I don't think so.

MORRISSEY: Well, in that case, I think we've come to the end of this session of the interview, and I thank you very much.

ASH: Thank you.

MORRISSEY: I hope you've enjoyed it.

[End of Interview]

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