

Maureen and Mike

# Mansfield Library

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

## **Archives and Special Collections**

Mansfield Library, University of Montana

Missoula MT 59812-9936

Email: [library.archives@umontana.edu](mailto:library.archives@umontana.edu)

Telephone: (406) 243-2053

This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed interview. Please bear in mind that you are reading the spoken word rather than the written word.

**Oral History Number: 445-001**

**Interviewee: Dale Johnson**

**Interviewer: Hannah Soukup**

**Date of Interview: August 19, 2015**

Hannah Soukup: Okay. So today is August 19, 2015, and I'm Hannah Soukup, the interviewer for the University of Montana's oral history project. Today I'm talking with Dale Johnson, the former archivist for the Archives and Special Collection in the Mansfield Library.

Dale, let's just start with a little background information, so where and when were you born?

Dale Johnson: I was born in Idaho, St. Mary's, in 1935 [full date of birth restricted] and then moved around quite a bit various cities. My father was with the Forest Service, and he was transferred quite a bit during World War Two.

HS: How many siblings did you have?

DJ: I have one brother and one sister.

HS: Okay. When you guys were traveling around a lot, did you ever spend time with your grandparents or—

DJ: Not much. They lived in Idaho in St. Mary's, and we lived...I went to school from third grade on through graduation from high school in Billings.

HS: So you're mostly a Montana native.

DJ: Mostly.

HS: Yes, except for not being born here. So then during your childhood can you think of any significant events or moments that influenced you throughout your life?

DJ: Not really.

HS: No? Okay. You were born during the Great Depression.

DJ: Yes.

HS: Then you were a young boy and a teenager throughout World War Two.

DH: Right.

HS: What was that like?

DJ: Well, I don't remember an awful lot. I was not a teenager in World War Two. I was younger. I think I was ten when the war ended, and all I remember really is the rationing for canned goods, for meat, for shoes, for gasoline—that kind of thing. As kids, we played war a lot. If you were unlucky you got to be a German. (laughs)

HS: (laughs) All right. Let's talk a little bit about your education. You didn't go to college originally for history.

DJ: No, I went two years to Eastern Montana College in Billings because I could live at home and afford to go there. Then I transferred up to the University here [University of Montana-Missoula] in business administration, accounting, and I graduated in accounting in 1957. Then I went into the Army for two years as a draftee. While I was in the Army, I decided I didn't really want to be an accountant, so when I got out I took courses in education so I could be a teacher and courses in history because I wanted to qualify in social studies. Then I went to teach in Laurel, Montana, in 1963 to 1965. Came back to the University to finish my master's degree in history because I lacked a foreign language...hadn't passed a foreign language exam by that time. So I did that, and Ross Toole [K. Ross Toole] had just started teaching here in 1965. I took a Montana history course, and then got involved in archives because I had worked at the [Missoula] Mercantile as office manager 1960 to 1963 and knew that they had the records of the old Missoula Mercantile. He was interested in those. That's how I got into archives.

HS: Toole was interested in the Mercantile records?

DJ: If you read his stepdaughter Jael's [Jael Marchi Prezeau] dissertation on him, he was...one of the provisions of his being hired was to start an archives because they were just starting a doctoral program in history. I got involved in that, and then the first year I was T.A. in history in U.S. history. The second year I was working with Ross Toole. I still had teaching assistantship, but I didn't teach. I just...He was starting the archives, and that's how it got started.

HS: That was in 1960?

DJ: That was in 1966. '66, '67, yes.

HS: So prior to that the University did try to maintain their own records.

DJ: The University archives, yes. Each department maintained, may have maintained records. Many times they just threw them out.

HS: Which department?

DJ: Any department. There was no regulation. The Registrar's Office, of course, had to keep all the records for the students that had been here but other...The President's Office kept all of their things, but departments and schools and such didn't, weren't required to keep them. I've forgotten when this state passed the Historic Records Act. It was around about 1969, '70, and after that then records had to be maintained. But before that they could throw them out so many counties could...That included county records. Many counties did not maintain their records. Missoula County did, but several counties, as they changed administrations, ran out of room. They threw them out.

HS: Lucile Speer was working at the Library. Did she try to maintain records?

DJ: She maintained mostly published materials that were put out from the printing plant on campus here and then accumulated other things. As alumni or something came up with something, they'd give it to her, and she maintained...That's how they got some of the scrapbooks and such that they had.

HS: When did you work for Lee Metcalf? Did you work for—

DJ: 1971. '71. They school year of '71-72.

HS: What did you do for him?

DJ: Arranged his records which went to the [Montana] Historical Society. That's where he wanted them. So I did that so the year of '71-72. Then I went back several summers, and when he died in 1978. I went back and finished everything of his, and then it was all sent to the Historical Society.

HS: So there's a story floating around about how you were on the street with Metcalf one day—

DJ: Going across the Capitol grounds. We were going to a demonstration of tape recorders and such, and it was during the Vietnam protests. They were having a protest on the Capitol grounds, and the Capitol Police were there and the D.C. police. I was with him, and he, rather than go the subway, he decided to walk across the Capitol grounds because a senator or representative cannot be arrested on the Capitol grounds but anybody else can. So I stayed behind the police line, and he went barging right on through. The police went running up, and one of the Capitol police, of course, knew who he was so they had come to his rescue. Then they let me in too, and we went back over across Capitol grounds.

HS: I heard that he punched a cop.

DJ: Well, I don't think he really punched him. Pushed, pushed him.

HS: Okay. I see, so in an attempt to get through he pushed his way through. I see. Okay. All right.

Why did you become interested in studying history? I mean you went from accounting to—

DJ: I was always interested in history. My folks were interested in history, and that's how, I guess. We went various places that had historic sites and such around Billings like the museum in Cody and battlefield at Little Bighorn.

HS: What was it like to study with K. Ross Toole? What kind of a teacher was he?

DJ: He was a very good lecturer. His brother, John, told me one time, he said, "Ross sure can write. He doesn't always tell the truth, but he sure can write," and that was true. He often exaggerated some things in his lectures.

HS: But that probably made for a really engaging—

DJ: Oh yes. He was a very...I don't know if you'd call it entertaining, but a very good lecturer that held everybody's attention. The year I took Montana history—his first year here—we were in a classroom. By the time he died in 1981, I think, his lectures, his classes were in the University Theatre which is now the Dennison Theatre.

HS: Because so many people wanted to take the class.

DJ: Yes. It was full.

HS: Okay. Wow! Then when you started in the master's program and then eventually got your doctorate your intention was to work in an archives as opposed to—

DJ: No, I was originally going to teach. That's why I got started on the master's, and then came back to finish the masters and started on a doctorate because Ross was here and several other professors that I had known working on a master's degree. So I just kind of fell into it. Plus, about that time, the GI Bill became available to me so.

HS: K. Ross Toole started the archives. That was a part of his contract, and when it first started, it was located in the old University library.

DJ: When it first started, it was located in his office, and then graduated to what is now the seminar room over in the History Department, and then went downstairs in the liberal arts room. There were other places on campus...They had gotten the James Murray papers in 1960, and those were housed in the basement of what was then the Women's Center. It's now called

McGill Hall, and they had some Mercantile ledgers over there also and then various other small things were located in Special Collections within the Library. When the telephone services moved out of the basement of the Library, why, the archives moved into their space in the basement of the old library.

HS: Which was which building on campus now?

DJ: It's now called Social Sciences.

HS: Social Sciences, okay. Then in...What was it? 1970s? They built the Mansfield Library.

DJ: Yes, and the Library moved in here in 1974, and the archive...Only the two lower floors and the main floor were finished. The two upper floors were not. In 1975, they moved the archives out of the old library into the unfinished fifth floor of the Mansfield Library. We were up here on fifth floor with some things from the old museum that were in storage. They had other things in storage up on the fifth floor as well, but they built us a little primitive area for the archives. It was in 1975, I believe, maybe '76 that the Mansfields visited the library and Mrs. Mansfield did not think the archives were very attractive—their space. She and the senator then got money to finish the top two floors of the Mansfield Library. It was finished with federal money.

HS: That's why it bears their name, because prior to 19...when did they dedicate it?

DJ: I think it was—

HS: 1979.

DJ: Yes.

HS: It was just called the library.

DJ: University Library.

HS: Then they formally dedicated it to Maureen and Mike Mansfield.

DJ: Right, and he insisted that her name be first. They wanted to name it first the Mansfield Library, and he said, "No." He said, "Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library." So that's the way it went.

HS: Why was that?

DJ: He had a great deal of devotion to his wife, and she had pushed him from before he even entered the School of Mines in Butte. He was a laborer in the mines and she pushed him to get into school, get his bachelor's, and then he transferred up here for his bachelor's. Then she pushed him to get his master's, which he did here in the History Department. Then he applied for teaching jobs in Montana, but this was in the '30s and the Ku Klux Klan was active in Montana—anti-Catholic—and he could not get a job in public school in Montana. So he started...yes, I think in a doctoral program down in California. He did not stay there very long. Came back and taught in the History Department here at the University.

HS: So he credited her with his success. I didn't realize the Ku Klux Klan was so active and that they controlled local politics to that extent.

DJ: To a great extent. The papers for the Montana Klan are over at the Eastern Washington Historical Society in Spokane, and someone has written a thesis on that but I'd forgotten that whole thing. But there is a thesis, and I think there is a copy in the university library here.

HS: Let's talk something about the acquisition of the Mansfield papers and artifacts. Did Toole get that acquisition, or was that something you got?

DJ: That was the Friends of the Library. Friend of the University Library were very involved in that, including Lud Browman who was very active in the Friends of the Library and Tom Haines who was a legislator and very...He was a Republican, but he was very active in the Friends the Library. Others—Sumner Gerrard, who was also a Republican living in Montana at that time. Somehow or other, they got Mansfield interested in depositing his papers here. The credit really belongs with the Friends of the Library.

HS: When did we first...when did the Library first acquire?

DJ: They started shipping...he had his staff start shipping them out. They were already...his assistant Peggy DeMichele had gone over to the Library of Congress, and they had helped her set up the program. So some of his interns at within his office then arranged the papers, and they started shipping them to the University about 1973.

HS: So before you officially became the archivist?

DJ: No, I was archivist at that time.

HS: What date did you start?

DJ: As officially as archivist in 196...the fall of 1968. The Friends of the library had...Ross Toole had convinced them to send me to University of Washington archives to learn there from their archives program—on-the-job training. No schools taught archives at that point. So I spent the

summer of 1967 at University of Washington, and then the next year he and Robert Peterson, who was also a history professor, arranged for me to go to the Wisconsin Historical Society for the summer—again for on-the-job training type of a program. So summer of '68 I was in Madison, Wisconsin. Came back and went on the staff through of library, then, in the fall of 1968.

HS: Then you were here for almost—

DJ: Until 1996 when I quit.

HS: When Mansfield became ambassador, and someone who would give him...We have a lot of artifacts right in the collection. So when he was in China and someone would give him—

DJ: He was in Japan.

HS: In Japan, and someone would give him an artifact, would he just automatically ship it over or did those things come much later?

DJ: They came while he was ambassador, but he accumulated them and he had to get permission from the Smithsonian in order to deposit them here. Because they were federal government property given to him as ambassador, and so he had to get release, I suppose, from the State Department too as well as from the Smithsonian. Then they shipped them here—two or three different shipments while he was ambassador. Then the last of it came when he retired from ambassador.

HS: Then when the library was officially dedicated as the Mansfield Library in 1979, did you attend the ceremony?

DJ: Yes. He did not. Neither he nor his wife. His administrative assistant, Peggy DeMichele, did. She was here for the dedication.

HS: Did you ever meet that the Mansfields?

DJ: Yes. I don't know that I met him when I was back there for the year with Lee Metcalf. I met his staff and...some occasion I met him but I don't remember when.

HS: What was he like in person?

DJ: Very interesting and interested and very brief, as journalists know. Circulated quite a bit at various gatherings that he attended.

HS: I read in a book that wasn't about Mansfield that said that the press corps knew to prepare twice as many questions for Mansfield because he would often just answer with a yes or no.

DJ: That's right. That's right. If you asked him a question, his answer was often a yes or a no.

HS: Did you ever meet Maureen?

DJ: I don't remember. Probably when she was here because they returned to Missoula on occasion from time to time, but I don't remember. Well, I met her when they toured the archives when it was up on the fifth floor—that she didn't approve of the surroundings.

HS: Because at that time of her husband's papers were being stored.

DJ: Yes, they were being sent at that time.

HS: What about other interesting or important acquisitions that you managed to receive?

DJ: The Friends of the Library...since Sumner Gerrard was one of the early members of the Friends, lived in Montana at that time, donated his uncle's papers to the archives. That was James Gerard who was ambassador to Germany during World War One before and during World War One in the Wilson administration. So the year that I was on the staff of Lee Metcalf, I was invited up to New York City where the papers were. He was not there, but his two brothers took me to the warehouse where the papers were stored and they arranged to have them shipped to Missoula which they were. That's how the Gerard papers got to be here.

When Lee Metcalf died in 1978, January I think it was, Paul Hatfield was appointed as his replacement until the next election so I was back there getting Lee Metcalf's...the remainder of his papers in order to send to the Historical Society, and I worked in the Hatfield office. I was not on his payroll, but I worked in the office there. I talked with him about donating his papers which he did so his papers are here at the archives. Talked with Max Baucus on various occasions encouraging him to deposit his papers, and they ended up too.

HS: And we're working on them right now.

DJ: That's right.

HS: Then you had the opportunity to go clean out part of the Conrad Mansion up in Kalispell.

DJ: Right. The Conrad Mansion—Alicia Conrad, the daughter, it belonged to her, and her husband, last name of Campbell, Her daughter and son-in-law lived here in Missoula. At some point, she was elderly and could no longer, I guess, take care of herself. She lived in a trailer on the mansion grounds. Her husband lived in the house, and I don't know what the problem was

but she lived in a trailer on the grounds. Her daughter brought her to Missoula, and they decided to donate their mansion...First, I think they wanted donate it to the University and the papers as well. That did not work out, and so they ended up donating it to either the city of Kalispell or Flathead County—I'm not sure which it is. Her grandson lived in Kalispell, last name of Vick, and the other grandson, Chris Vick, was charged with cleaning everything that belonged to the family out of the house—go through everything. Well, the old man Campbell, he had...it was in terrible shape inside. There are photographs here at the archives of what it looked like—parts of it look like before it was cleaned out. But Chris Vick's job that year was to clean the house out. You had to go through everything because the old man Campbell would wrap money in little scraps of paper. He'd also wrap used matchsticks and little scraps of paper as well as groceries that were probably 20 years old. It was just a mess in there. You could hardly get around. So Chris Vick invited me up for a couple of occasions. I spent a week there one time going through stuff, helping him.

The papers of Stanford, Harry Stanford, and the Conrad family...Harry Stanford was a sister of Mrs. Conrad...a brother of Mrs. Conrad, and those papers came to the University then, as we found them and packed them up and brought them down here.

HS: That sounds like a job.

DJ: It was. Ross had...being a very good speaker, he was invited to speak a lot of small historical societies and such in small towns. He was always lobbying for archival collections, and so many of the collections here—small ones—most of them are a tribute to, can be attributed to his getting them. Then he would send me out to pick them up, usually in my own car because there was no money for otherwise. The library, the dean of the library, was opposed to having the archives within the library so he was not about to fund going out and picking up collections.

HS: That was Earle Thompson?

DJ: Yes.

HS: So he didn't care much for the archives?

DJ: No, he was opposed to it, and the History Department lobbied with—pretty effectively—with the president of the University at that time, Robert Pantzer, to get them placed in the library because the history department didn't want to be responsible for the archives.

HS: They wanted one. They just didn't that's right to take care of it. I see.

Then did the Frank Linderman papers and artifacts come when you were here?

DJ: Yes, those were...I don't know that I can remember the story very well, but they had negotiated with the Historical Society in Helena and somehow or other they were offended by the way they were received. So they visited the University archives, and Claire Rhein, apparently, was on a good status with the Linderman's after they visited the archives and so they decided to transfer them to the University archives. That's how they came here, and then later the artifacts...We went and picked up the artifacts out of Billings. The artifacts had been consigned to Sotheby's, and for some reason or other, either they didn't sell or the family called them back and they ended up in Billings—I'm not sure why. So we went over to Billings—one of the student employees of the library, of the archives—and I drove to Billings and brought those things back to the archives. That's how the Linderman artifacts ended up in the archives.

HS: Sotheby's was an auction house?

DJ: Yes, a very well-known auction house.

HS: Then the Morton Elrod papers.

DJ: Those were—

HS: And photographs.

DJ: Yes, many of the photographs come out of the Yellow Bay, University think in Yellow Bay [Montana State University Biological Station at Yellow Bay, now Flathead Lake Biological Station].

HS: Research station.

DJ: Yes, and Elrod had started the research station, and so they were there. Mary Elrod, his daughter Mary Elrod Ferguson, was living in Missoula, and many of the photographs, particularly photographs relative to the university, were already here when the archives began. They were already in the library—the glass plates for them—and then Mary...We brought a bunch of Elrod photos back, and maybe even plates I can't remember now, back from Yellow Bay. When she died, we may have gotten some of the stuff. His papers were already here.

HS: So you met Mary Elrod Ferguson?

DJ: I knew who she was, yes, yes.

HS: I was just wondering what she was like.

DJ: She was very controversial. Morton Elrod had a stroke about 1934 and could no longer teach. The stroke, apparently, was quite serious, severe. He died, I think, around 1951 or '52,

and she had to take care of him. Well, it was sort of, as I understand, a thing where the University maintained her on staff as head of the...under Paul Phillips, History Department chairman, as caretaker, curator, whatever of the University Museum, which was in the top floor of the old journalism building and then later in what was the old Student Union Building—in the ballroom of the old Student Union Building. It was there for a while.

She was hired by the University, I think, in order to...because Morton Elrod, they didn't have social security when he had his stroke, so she had to support him as well as herself. I think that was a benevolent think of the University's.

HS: Why was she controversial?

DJ: She, apparently, was very, not very efficient. I understand Paul Phillips did not appreciate her at all as head of the museum, but he had no choice but maintain her as the curator and such.

HS: So what was your personal philosophy or your focus when it came to deciding what kinds of collections to acquire or what collections to refuse?

DJ: When we first started, we refused none. Ross Toole accepted everything. He was, in essence, not only teaching Montana history 1965 to '68, but he also was the collector of the collections that eventually made up the archives. I don't think he had any philosophy other than that it be Montana history. We did not develop a plan for the development of archives until later. I'm not sure whether it flourished or not but we tried to make it so the University of Montana would take care of Western Montana, Bozeman would take care of Eastern Montana and the Historical Society would take care of Central Montana. Plus, the fact that people who wanted to donate things, like there are people who have attachments to the University and they want their stuff at the University, so you have to cope with that in developing a program.

HS: Did you have any difficulties with any particular donors?

DJ: No, not that I can think of. I can't think of a problem that we had at all. I don't know that we ever turned down any collections during my tenure. I can't think of any of them we turned down, but then most of them that were offered were from people somehow connected with the University or from this part of Montana. Like the History Department had a student writing a thesis on beer and breweries. So this was in the early '70s. It may have been the year I was gone, or it may have been just before I left to go to D.C. Anyway, he went around Montana gathering material on breweries, and in doing so he got the papers of the Great Falls Brewery, the Billings Brewery, and the Missoula Brewery, and then later the Anaconda Brewery. He contacted them and they held on to them, but later they came here too. So that's how the University ended up with brewery papers from these places. He was doing a dissertation which he finished...or thesis which he finished on Montana breweries and in collecting that material,

why, these people apparently he convinced them that they should preserve their papers. So they sent them to the University. The papers from the Anaconda Brewery came with bottles of beer that were here. I understand that since that time the beer has been poured out, but came with that kind of artifact.

HS: Well, somebody somewhere might want to do a study on the different kinds of labels or the different shapes of the bottles.

DJ: Yes, yes.

HS: You never know. But eventually after Toole passed away, you started acquiring things...I mean, it sounds like at the beginning he was doing most of it, but then you started doing a lot of it.

DJ: Particularly after I came back from D.C., got involved in collecting papers. There was a librarian, Richard Gerkin (?) here who was interested in Montana authors, and that to a certain extent that's how we got into Montana authors' collections. I had known Dorothy Johnson for quite a while. She was on the faculty in the Journalism School, and one of the history professors, Bob Turner, was a very good friend of hers. They used to play poker and penny-ante poker, and I was invited a couple of times to participate in that. Got to know Dorothy Johnson quite well so that when she died her papers came to the University. Richard Gerkin is responsible for some of the collections. There's a Western writer out of Great Falls, those papers ended up here at the University—I don't remember his name now—because Richard Gerkin, who left here to become librarian of the Great Falls Public Library, negotiated that.

Barbara Corcoran's papers are here because he negotiated that as well. He was very interested in Montana authors, and that's how the authors' papers got here.

HS: So it sounds like you had a lot of help from people yes giving you names and referrals about who would be a good person to have.

DJ: Yes.

HS: Was Dorothy Johnson a good poker player.

DJ: She was, yes.

HS: She sounds like a very interesting woman.

DJ: She was. She and Bob Turner, the history professor, during his later years and short...In fact, it was published after he died, called a *Beside Book of Bastards*, and she and he'd co-authored

that and it is villains of history is what it is. Interesting in the people they chose for that endeavor and the stories they came up with.

HS: Do you think that any of the historical events that you experienced—the Depression, World War Two, the Korean War, Vietnam War—did that in any way shape or influence your acquisition policy?

DJ: Well, we tried right after the Vietnam War, or maybe it was when it was still going, to get papers of veterans of the Vietnam thing. That was not successful. People were too close to the war—the veterans were—and they didn't want to get rid of their papers. So there are one or two collections, reminiscences of Vietnam War veterans. World War Two was by that time true far in the past, and those people had already either disposed of or given their papers. The Historical Society, which was the only repository up until the mid-'60s anyway probably, was the place where people put things and the Historical Society did not go out and solicit collections. They solicited collections around Helen, and if people came in and offered things, but they were not active in collecting. That only came after the University here in Missoula and Montana State in Bozeman became interested in having an archives.

HS: Do you think there's a difference in the way archival collections are managed here in the West and the Pacific Northwest as opposed to the East Coast or the Midwest?

DJ: I think to some extent. I can't speak for other places in the West than here, and maybe University of Washington. They're oriented more towards assisting users and less, perhaps a little less, protective of archival materials. When I was working on my dissertation, I needed to use the papers of Sam Hauser, who was a territorial governor of Montana and corresponded a lot with Andrew Hammond. First time I went to Helena to use those papers, I got one letter at a time, and they've since liberalized so they bring you a box. Now, but they were not user-oriented unless you were somebody famous—somebody that was well-known. Then they were very cooperative, but otherwise for students, no.

Ross Toole ended up one or two years renting a motel room up there for students to go and we do research at the Historical Society. I think...I don't know what Eastern archives are like. When I visited them, I visited them as an archivist and so they were very open and such. But if you were a student researcher, I don't know how cooperative they were, but it's very important if you're going to want people to donate things and people to use things that you be accommodating for them. Historical Society was not at that time. It's since changed a bit, but it's still a little protective of everything up there. Last analysis, if somebody runs off with something, so what. The course of the country isn't going to change because of that.

HS: Maybe Western archives are a little more protective because they have fewer or they've been collecting longer time...or less amount of time.

Do you think there's a way in which the study of the American West influences the way archivists here in this area, in the West, see archiving and the saving of certain pieces of History?

DJ: Well, unfortunately many places in the West—the exception, major exception being California—got started late, and so many, particularly in the area of business or families, they just threw things away. This is what happened to Paris Gibson's papers. He was the founder of Great Falls and was very prominent in politics, as were some other Montanans. Particularly living in the 19th and early 20th century, when they died, the family just wanted to get rid of stuff so they just tossed it. I think maybe in the East, they were a little more aggressive and much earlier than they were in the West with the exception of California particularly.

HS: Maybe when you think about the way people got here having to throw things away and dump things out of, you know, wagons or buggies or what-have-you just so that they could make the trip maybe that made keeping things less important because they understood that survival—

DJ: That could be.

HS: —survival is the most important thing, and physical objects are, maybe, less important.

DJ: I guess another thing about the collections. You have a lot of business records, and that's because Robert Peterson in History was hired as a business historian. The doctoral program with him as a major professor needed business records to work with so that's how, kind of how, we got into the business records business. That may have influenced, like the breweries, the Mercantile's—there's the Mercantile here, the one in in Ronan, the one in Browning [Montana]. That's why those things were collected.

HS: Are there any materials that you think have a great value here in the West that people living in the west place a great value on?

DJ: Most people are interested in the early history of things, not more recent, because it's difficult to write on more recent things. Like Vietnam War, for example. That's not far enough in the past to do a good research and analysis of. That's true of a lot of things in modern, present-day politics, for example. The Mansfield papers and the Baucus papers and the other congressional papers you have are not used as much as they should be for several reasons, one being the History Department has nobody doing Western history or directing theses or dissertations in Western history as Ross Toole did and, to a certain extent, Bob Peterson in the business history. So that's it, I guess.

HS: Then over the years as an archivist, you had the opportunity to work with a variety of staff and student assistants and volunteers. Were there any who stand out in your mind?

DJ: Well, the students were very interested. Of course, the major volunteer was Claire Rhein, and there were a few other volunteers that...They tended to be older, looking for volunteer work. So we had some that transcribed oral histories. Claire Rhein, in essence, started the oral history program. We had gone to a meeting in Billings, I can't remember what the occasion was, oral history, anyway, was a part of it. Then she went off to the meeting of the Oral History Association in Michigan, I believe, and learned quite a bit or got quite a bit enthused about it. Came back and got involved in oral history—teaching how to do it, encouraging students and others to get involved in it. She was a volunteer for roughly 20, 20-some years. Most of her work was with oral history, doing transcriptions, doing indexing, doing things, paperwork—involved with oral histories.

HS: Yes, the bulk of the oral history collection is the result of her efforts.

DJ: Yes.

HS: A lot of the interviews were done by her, and I'm sure transcribed by her.

DJ: Yes, and we did have some other volunteers that did transcriptions, and we had students that did transcriptions. We always had good students, and they weren't all involved or studying history. We had one that forester. We had a geologist. People that were interested in different disciplines that worked in the archives, and they were all very good.

HS: During your time as archivist, there were a couple of library deans who weren't particularly fond of the archives.

DJ: Yes, the major one being Earle Thompson was not very fond of the archives. The one that was, most during my tenure, that was most interested in archives was Ruth Patrick who was dean from about 1982 to 1990. She had a hard time with the rest of the library faculty, but she was very interested in the archives and promoting the archives.

HS: She was here when the archives was formally dedicated to K. Ross Toole.

DJ: Yes, that's right.

HS: Because it was dedicated in 1983, shortly after he died.

DJ: Right, yes.

HS: Did the lack of support from Thompson or any of the other deans make it difficult to get collections?

DJ: Earle Thompson, while he was dean, Ross was still living, and Ross was the Hammond Professor, which means he had access to the Hammond endowment which paid part of his salary. There was additional money in there for various things, and so he...if I had to travel and get collections or if I went to meetings of the Society of American Archivists, that money was provided by Ross out of the Hammond fund. Now, that changed under Ruth Patrick. If I went off to something, why, the library began paying for things.

I was retired by the time Frank D'Andraia came, but he was very interested in archives apparently, because that's why the archives is now on the fourth floor instead of in the basement. But you'd have to interview somebody else about that.

HS: (laughs) The archives originally was on the fifth floor here in the Mansfield Library building—

DJ: Unfinished, yes.

HS: Then it eventually moved to the basement, and then after you retired it was moved to the fourth floor where it is now.

DJ: Yes, I think it moved up here 2003 or something like that.

HS: Wow! It hasn't been up here very long.

DJ: No.

HS: What was the political environment like working in the library?

DJ: I tended not to be well-accepted because I did not have a library degree. I only had a PhD in history, and librarians are very jealous of their MLS degrees. That may be part of the problem I had with Earle Thompson too, was that I did not...He wanted me to get a library degree, and I did not want a library degree so I did not do that and that may have been part of the difficulty with him. I don't know. Librarians, I found, did not know anything about archives and didn't want to. There were a few exceptions, but not very many.

HS: What are the differences between the archives today, in 2015, and the archives when you are managing it?

DJ: You have many more collections and the many more staff people. I had students and Claire, and that was it. Now, you have however many staff people there are now. There's yourself and Kellyn [Younggren] and Mark [Fritch] and Carlie [Magill] and—

HS: Natalie [Bond] is our adjunct archivist for the Baucus papers.

DJ: Yes, and then you still have students.

HS: Yes, and you had a coffee pot and a refrigerator.

DJ: That's right. The refrigerator belonged to Hampton, and so when they moved the...or when I retired, he took it back. It was his personal apartment refrigerator. Coffee pot, I have no idea what happened to that. I think the last coffee maker we had Claire had bought, and she also bought a microwave which we had downstairs in the basement.

HS: It was a little more of a communal space because you had a couch, and Hampton would come visit and Leo [Rhein] would come visit.

DJ: Yes, and other people. Researchers and such, yes.

HS: We still have that, but they stay out in the front room.

DJ: Yes. You don't have easy chairs out there for them.

HS: Where do you see the future of archives and archival studies heading?

DJ: That's difficult to say. Historians are going to have a difficult time in the computer age because a lot of things are done on computer—financial records, correspondence—and those things are not kept in many cases. Families, they email back and forth, and that just disappears over a period of time. It's not like when people used to maintain diaries or correspondence or you had a hard copy, and people tended to hang on to those kinds of things. But they don't anymore, so I don't know what the future of history is going to be with regards to the computer age.

HS: Do you think...Well, there's a push to digitize collections especially those that are fragile or that have great value. What do you think of this trend and its impact on historical research?

DJ: I think it's a good idea. I think it'll have a...It'll make more collections available to people across the country, across the world, and that is beneficial to the people who want to use them. So I think it's very good development in archives because archives used to be very jealous of their collections, as the Historical Society still is and probably many other places—that they want you to come there and you cannot, you know, you have to use their collections there. Now, Wisconsin had, when I was studying there a very, a interesting program. They would loan archival collections to the various campuses around the state. If some student at some campus wanted to use a collection, they would physically transfer that collection for a duration, given period of time, while that student was using it.

That was very...With the computer age it makes it much easier you don't have to necessarily transfer the collection. If it's digitized, why, they have open access to it.

HS: That was very forward-thinking of them.

DJ: Yes, that's the only place I know of where that was done, but then it may have been done other institutions. I don't know. I tried to get Montana interested in doing that. Didn't fly.

HS: Well, well because one of the biggest concerns with archives is how to increase use and accessibility. Do you think, though, that with digitization is there something lost when people experience a digital version or a copy versus the actual original?

DJ: Well, it's like people using a library, and there's a certain...if you're interested in a certain thing, if you go to that area of books in a library there are books number of books on that subject that are right together so you have sort of a serendipity, I guess, of gathering additional material, and I'm not sure how that fits in with...if everything were digitized, all collections were digitized, why, that probably would not be a problem. But, for example, example using the Mansfield collection, Mansfield was a congressman when James Murray was a senator so if you are doing something that's in the Mansfield collection you might want also to use the Murray collection or some of the others that the collections that are existent that were accumulated during the Mansfield years.

HS: So digitizing might potentially skew or remove some of the context that we get when we see the physical item?

DJ: Yes.

HS: That's interesting. Do you think there are any changes in archival practices in the last 40 to 30 years?

DJ: It's all pretty much all the computer thing. That's pretty much where the big change is, and they are, for the most part, good changes, except as I say you can lose a lot of material.

HS: Yes. So after you retired—

DJ: Yes.

HS: And you talk a lot about that's the best day of...one of the best days of your life. You spent a good deal of time volunteering at the fort, Fort Missoula.

DJ: Yes, at the Museum at Fort Missoula.

HS: And here at the archives too.

DJ: And later in the archives. I think it...It's very difficult to volunteer at a place where you were in charge of unless you've been away for quite a few years, and I was away from '96...I probably didn't come back until whenever it was Donna McCrea became activist, and that's probably ten years or thereabouts. By then, you lose your connection with the place, and so it's easy to come back. Things have changed, and you expect that. A lot of things have changed?

HS: Why did you come back to volunteer?

DJ: Now, Teresa was here at the time—Teresa Hamann—and I became fairly well acquainted with her. I just don't know. I can't remember why I decided to volunteer. I think maybe one of the first things I volunteered to do was process the Melcher collection. He was senator from...Well, he was a congressman before he was senator from the early '70s until 1988. So I processed that collection, and then I just kept going after that.

HS: You've reprocessed or gone through other series in the Mansfield collection.

DJ: Yes, there were a couple of series that were not described or arranged, and I did a series or two of that.

HS: And that's the biggest collection we have, so that's a lot of work.

DJ: Yes. Peggy DeMichele did a good job of that, and she did most of it but there were parts of it that probably were at the end of his career or just didn't fit in with the other series. I'm not sure.

HS: Why did you start out at the Fort?

DJ: Well, when you retire, you have to keep busy and so I have volunteered at the Fort. I volunteered for radio reading service which was a program here, no longer extant, Programming Missoula where they read newspapers for...It went all over Western Montana, connected in a way with KUFM, broadcast by radio. You read the current newspapers. I did that once a week.

HS: That was a service for the blind?

DJ: For those, yes, for those...not necessarily for the blind, but elderly people who can't...have macular degeneration or something like that. Then I volunteered with other retired faculty who, I think they still do, pick up garbage along the highway up the Blackfoot. Food Bank—I still volunteer at the Food Bank once a month.

HS: All right. Well, are there any other stories or people you haven't mentioned? Anything else you'd like to discuss?

DJ: Not really. I think that's pretty much covers my career with the archives. Yes, I think that's pretty much it.

HS: Now, you retired early, right? Or you took an early retirement?

DJ: I was 61, yes.

HS: Why did you take an early retirement?

DJ: I guess the stress of working within the library. There was a dean at that time that didn't care for archives, and it had no understanding of archives. It made it very difficult so I decided it was time to go. Get somebody new.

HS: And that was Karen Hatcher?

DJ: Yes. So Jodi Allison-Bunnell came on as archivist, oh, within the year after I retired. Then she left to have a child and did not come back. She tended not to be consumer-oriented, which was a shame on her part?

HS: You mean she didn't actively solicit collections?

DJ: I don't know whether she did that or not, but she was not...when people would come to do research she was not very cooperative with them.

HS: I see, so she didn't make the archives a user-friendly environment.

DJ: No, not at all. That was unfortunate, but that's the way it was. Then she left and...Teresa was in charge of archives for a while as a staff person—for a year or two before Donna came. I'm not sure about that. I think, now, Donna is very user oriented, which is what an archivist should be. If you're going to maintain an archives, you don't want to discourage and make the patrons angry and they leave in a huff and decide they want nothing to do with whatever it is.

HS: All right. Well, thanks, Dale, for doing this and for sharing your experience in the history of the archives.

DJ: You're welcome.

[End of Interview]