

MEDICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

INTERVIEW

WITH

JUDITH MESSERLE, AHIP, FMLA

One in a series of Bethesda 11 interviews

Interview conducted by Diane McKenzie, FMLA

May 18, 2002

Edited by
Holly Shipp Buchanan, AHIP, FMLA
and
Carolyn E. Lipscomb, AHIP
Project Director
April 2013

Published 2014

Table of Contents

Consent Form	iii
Bethesda 11 Photograph	iv
Bethesda 11 Summary	vi
Early Career	1
Preparation for Bethesda 11 Meeting	2
Meeting in Hotel Room	4
Hospital Library Issues	5
Atmosphere in Boardroom	6
Librarian Recommendations	9
Impact of Bethesda 11 Meeting	10
Index	17

CONSENT FORM FOR ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

This confirms my understanding and agreement with the Medical Library Association (MLA) concerning my participation in an oral history interview as a part of MLA's Oral History Program.

1. I agree to be interviewed by Diane McKenzie on May 18, 2002. I understand that my interview will be recorded, and that a transcript and edited version of my interview will later be created. I understand that I will be given an opportunity to review and edit the edited transcript before its release.
2. I hereby grant and assign all right, title and interest to any and all recordings and transcripts of my interview including copyright [and all rights subsumed thereunder] to the MLA. I will be given a copy of the edited transcript for my personal use. I understand that the transfer of these rights to MLA confers no obligations on MLA to promote, market, or otherwise make publicly available copies of the interview.
3. One or more edited and/or condensed versions of the interview, approved by me, may be disseminated by MLA as it deems appropriate.
4. I understand that the original, unedited recording of my interview and the original unedited transcript will be maintained in the MLA Archives at the National Library of Medicine, or at such other place as MLA may reasonably designate, and may be made available to researchers who have demonstrated that they have appropriate qualifications. I further understand that the original unedited recording and/or the original unedited transcript will be made available with the following restrictions (Check one):

☒ No restrictions

☐ The following specified portions of the interview will not be made available to anyone until _____.

Judith Messerle
Name of Interviewee

Judith Messerle
Signature

Date 6.4.02

Accepted by: Carla Furd

Diane McKenzie
Name of MLA Interviewer(s)

Diane McKenzie
Signature

Date May 22, 2002

Date 12/21/04

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE



Caption for photograph on preceding page:

Bethesda 11
January 1978

Back row (left to right): Marilyn Gibbs, Melvin Day, Sara Hill, Peter Clepper, Jane Lambremont, Judith Topper
Front row (left to right): Faye Meyn, Jacqueline Bastille, Barbara Coe Johnson, Judith Messerle, Kay Kammerer, Alice Sheridan, Betsy Schreder

Bethesda 11

On January 30-31, 1978, hospital librarians from around the U.S. were invited to the National Library of Medicine for the Hospital Librarians Conference to discuss the needs of hospital libraries and the relationship between them and NLM. As representatives were included from hospital libraries in the then eleven regions of the Regional Medical Library Program, the meeting was later dubbed by participant Judith Topper the “Bethesda Eleven” [1] (or subsequently Bethesda 11). It resulted in ongoing dialogue between hospital librarians and NLM and modifications to NLM programs.

The hospital librarians who attended the meeting were the following. [Names with an asterisk indicate that an oral history is available or anticipated for the Medical Library Association Oral History Project.]

Region I: Jacqueline Bastille*, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA
Region II: Judith M. Topper, Lawrence Hospital, Bronxville, NY
Region III: Betsy Schreder, Veterans Hospital, Wilkes-Barre, PA
Region IV: Alice Sheridan*, Fairfax Hospital, Falls Church, VA
Region V: Barbara Coe Johnson, Harper Hospital, Detroit, MI
Region VI: Marilyn Gibbs [Barry]*, DeKalb General Hospital, Decatur, GA
Region VII: Judith Messerle*, St. Joseph Hospital, Alton, IL
Region VIII: Sarah Hill [Memcott]*, St. Luke’s Hospital, Kansas City, MO
Region IX: Jane A. Lambremont*, Earl K. Long Hospital, Baton Rouge, LA
Region X: M. Faye Meyn, MD, Sacred Heart General Hospital, Eugene, OR
Region XI: Kay Kammerer, Alta Bates Hospital, Berkeley, CA [2]

Melvin S. Day, NLM deputy director, later observed that “attendees were selected for their knowledge of the field and their articulateness and outspokenness” and that “these individuals were representatives from hospitals, not of or for hospitals” [3].

In addition, others were invited as guests to represent the Regional Medical Library Program (Michael J. Torrente*, Southeastern Regional Medical Library Program); American Hospital Association (Eloise Foster); Veterans Administration (James M. Hahn); and a hospital administrator (John Danielson, Capital Area Health Consortium, Newington, CT). A number of NLM staff participated, including Day, who chaired the meeting, and Peter A. Clepper, program officer, Extramural Programs, who served as executive secretary for the meeting [4].

In welcoming the librarians, Martin M. Cummings, MD, director, observed that they shared the goal of improvement of information services to users in health care settings. He hoped for a better understanding of NLM’s objectives and programs, and a better appreciation by NLM staff of the realities of day-to-day library operations in health care institutions. A series of papers prepared and distributed in advance of the meeting focused the discussions for the meeting. The librarians had been sent background materials prepared by NLM staff as a common starting point and assigned to write comparable papers from their perspective on the same topics. Subjects included extending online services to hospitals, improving the relevance of databases, locator tools, realities of hospital funding, federal support for interlibrary loans, the new copyright

legislation, training for librarians, grants for library consortia, and audiovisual needs [5]. (See the agenda at the end of this summary.)

By all accounts, the eleven librarians were articulate and effective in communicating their concerns. They met informally the night before the conference at the suggestion of Messerle to discuss their approach [6], and they drafted and presented a position statement before the conclusion of the meeting. The NLM account of the meeting calls the discussions “frank, friendly, and informative” and says the “hospital librarians were not reticent about airing their problems,” making suggestions on how NLM might help [7].

The minutes include twenty recommendations of the conferees, although Day noted later that the meeting objective was an exchange of views, not an effort to reach consensus [8]. The recommendations addressed coverage and indexing terms in publications and databases (such as strengthening coverage of nursing journals, expanding hospital titles in *Abridged Index Medicus*, and adding subject headings and check tags for hospital administration, marketing, nursing and social aspects); interlibrary loan (assistance in developing subregional journal locator lists, publicity about proposed changes to delivery system, and consideration of graduated fee for national standard for charges); training (MEDLINE update review sessions by Regional Medical Libraries, simpler writing in the *Technical Bulletin*, expanded NLM and RML role in continuing education for hospital librarians, leadership and communication skills training, use of self-instructional media, and exchange of training materials by RMLs); communication with hospital administrators (publicity on NLM online services, information on contribution of hospital libraries, and inclusion of health information science in graduate curricula); and outreach (strategies for hospitals of under 200 beds, revision of Resource Improvement Grant Program to allow small hospitals to take advantage, reconsideration of funds for consortia, and more effective use of RML audiovisual consultants) [9].

The “Summary Statement of Hospital Librarians” presented at the conclusion of the conference pointed to two areas of concern for the future of hospital-NLM relations: the continuation of direct communication and financial and technical support for tools and mechanisms at the hospital library level. They noted the importance of awareness of and involvement in NLM planning to achieve broad-based constituent support and of input by hospital librarians in RML plans and programs [10].

Although the Bethesda 11 ceased to be a formal forum for communication with NLM [11], discussion of the conference recommendations continued. At the following Medical Library Association Annual Meeting in Chicago in June 1978, Arthur Broering, deputy associate director, Extramural Programs, NLM, spoke at the Hospital Library Section (now called Hospital Libraries Section) meeting on the role of NLM in relation to hospital libraries and the library’s response to the recommendations. Three of the Bethesda 11 (Lambremont, Topper, and Schreder) addressed issues discussed at the conference [12]. The MLA/NLM Liaison Committee meeting at the 1978 conference also covered items presented by Bethesda 11 members, including the scope of *Abridged Index Medicus*, the local and subregional union list, and NLM commitment to hospital library development [13].

At the 1980 MLA Annual Meeting in Washington, DC, the section program was a panel on “NLM and Hospital Libraries: An Update” which included Cummings. Ernest M. Allen, ScD, associate director, Extramural Programs, and Joseph Leiter, PhD, associate director, Library Operations, reported on NLM activities arising from the Bethesda 11 conference, and Messerle gave one of the hospital librarian replies [14]. She focused on improved and expanded communication as the primary concern of respondents to a section survey [15]: the need for basic unit (hospital library) input in decision making at the NLM and RML levels, more downward communication on issues affecting the basic unit, and sharing of resources across regional boundaries [16]. Cummings committed to promoting increased representation for hospital librarians in network decision making [17]. The president of the Hospital Library Section reported in 1981 her inclusion as an official observer at the RML Directors’ Meeting [18].

NLM prepared a status report on responses to the twenty recommendations for the 1978 Annual Meeting and updated it for the 1980 meeting. It reported that *Abridged Index Medicus* had increased the number of titles of primary interest to hospitals in 1979 after collecting data from various hospital sources. Outreach to hospitals of fewer than 200 beds had increased, including forty-four Resource Improvement grants. Policies were revised to allow single institutions and consortia to compete for grants on an equal basis and to provide higher personnel support for consortia. Responses to some of the other recommendations described existing mechanisms or the belief that responsibility lay with another organization [19]. The hospital librarians assessed their satisfaction with the responses and did their own identification of what belonged to NLM and what belonged to MLA as part of the MLA/NLM Liaison Committee, the Legislation Committee, or the Hospital Library Section [20].

The Bethesda 11 meeting is also credited for new program directions, including a decision to actively encourage hospital libraries to become MEDLINE search centers [21], and for changes in plans for online training, serial holdings data, grant programs, and NLM and RML advisory mechanisms [22]. The decision to approve the inclusion of hospital library holdings in SERHOLD—the database that would underpin automated routing of document delivery requests and union listing—was bolstered by the reception of the idea at the meeting [23].

The meeting was seminal in raising the awareness of both NLM and hospital librarians about each other’s perspective. As the librarians noted in their summary statement, “Since the environments in which we function and the places from which we come are so different, we feel that regular opportunities for direct communication are necessary if we are to achieve the genuine understanding of one another’s problems and concerns that is essential for progress” [24]. The focus on hospital libraries and their involvement in NLM and RML planning increased after 1978, and acknowledgment must be given to the impact of the conference.

AGENDA OF HOSPITAL LIBRARIANS CONFERENCE
January 30-31, 1978

Hospitals and NLM On-Line Services: Sara Hill and Grace T. McCarn, head, MEDLARS Management Section

Expansion of Data Bases for Subject Areas Relevant to Hospitals: Alice Sheridan and Clifford A. Bachrach, MD, head, Medical Subject Headings Section

Locator Tools, SERLINE and Others: Jacqueline Bastille and Betsy Humphreys, assistant head, Serials Records

Health Library Programs and Hospital Funding Realities: Kay Kammerer and John Danielson

Hospital Library – NLM Relationships and Communications: Judith Messerle, Jane Lambremont, John Danielson, and Carol Spencer, deputy chief, Reference Services Division

Stabilization of Federal Support for Interlibrary Loans and User “Right of Access”: Marilyn Gibbs and Arthur Broering, deputy associate director, Extramural Programs

Copyright Legislation: Faye Meyn and Albert Berkowitz, chief, Reference Services Division

Assistance and Training for Health Librarians: Betsy Schreder and Richard West, chief, Office of Program Planning and Evaluation

Grants for Hospital Library Consortia: Judith Topper and Doris Doran, program officer, Division of Biomedical Information Support

Audiovisual Needs and Services in Hospitals: Barbara Coe Johnson and Harold M. Schoolman, MD, deputy director for research and education

REFERENCES

1. Messerle J. Letter to M. Cummings. 15 Feb 1978.
2. Hospital medical librarians and NLM. NLM News 1977 Dec;32(12):2.
3. MLA/NLM Liaison Committee reports. MLA News 1978 Apr;101:5-6.
4. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. National Institutes of Health. National Library of Medicine. Hospital Librarians Conference. January 30-31, 1978. Minutes.
5. Hospital librarians, NLM staff discuss mutual interests. NLM News 1978 Feb;33(2):4.
6. Topper J. Letter to J. Messerle. 18 Jan 1978.
7. Hospital librarians, op. cit.
8. MLA/NLM Liaison Committee reports, op. cit.
9. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, op. cit.
10. Summary statement of hospital librarians. January 31, 1978. NLM News 1978 Feb;33(2):5.
11. Messerle J. Letter to Bethesda Eleven. 3 Oct 1978.
12. Jarvis MJ. Medical Library Association: Hospital Libraries Section: the first fifty years. Jan 1999. [Web document]. <http://mlanet.org/archive/history/unit-history/hospital.html>
13. Agenda, MLA/NLM Liaison Committee meeting, June 10, 1978.
14. Johnson D. Letter to J. Messerle. 19 Dec 1979.
15. Clevesy S. Letter to J. Messerle. 2 May 1980.
16. [Messerle J] Draft of presentation for June 18, 1980, Hospital Library Section meeting. Undated manuscript.
17. Clevesy S. President's message. Hospital Library Section Newsletter 1980 5(1):1.
18. Clevesy S. President's message. Hospital Library Section Newsletter 1981 5(3):1.
19. NLM responses to recommendations of hospital librarians. (NLM-EP 6/80.)
20. Messerle, Letter to Bethesda Eleven, op. cit.
21. Bunting A. The nation's health information network: history of the Regional Medical Library Program, 1965-1985. Bull Med Libr Assoc 1987 Jul;75(Suppl 3):1-62.
22. Humphreys BL. Adjusting to progress: interactions between the National Library of Medicine and health sciences librarians, 1961-2001. J Med Libr Assoc 2002 Jan;90(1):4-20.
23. Humphreys BL. Personal correspondence. 21 Nov 2011.
24. Summary statement, op. cit.

Medical Library Association Interview with Judith Messerle

Diane McKenzie: It's May 18, 2002. We are in Dallas, Texas, in the MLA suite [at the Medical Library Association 2002 Annual Meeting], and I'm interviewing Judith Messerle about Bethesda 11. The interviewer is Diane McKenzie. So, let's start. I feel like it's echoing a bit, but that will be okay.

Judith Messerle: Probably the room.

DM: It's such a lovely room.

You were one of the original Bethesda 11, and just for the record I'll mention that this is a group of hospital librarians who were invited to NLM [National Library of Medicine] in January 1978 to talk about their concerns, and I believe you were dubbed the...I don't know when, but you were dubbed the Bethesda 11 because this was about the same time as the Chicago Seven and some of the other groups, and I should mention, too, that Judy brought her file with lots and lots of documentation, and this is going to be wonderful and very useful to have while we're researching the Bethesda 11 topic. When you went to this conference, where were you in your career?

JM: Well, let's see. I graduated from the University of Illinois in '67, and I went to St. Joseph Hospital in '67. So, this would have been eleven years later. And in '73, I started a hospital library consortium and won a little bit of attention from NLM at that point. I got a consortium grant in [1974], so I was pretty isolated before then, and I had started to bring a little group of librarians together in the southern part of Illinois.

DM: Where was this in Illinois?

JM: I was in Alton and we called ourselves the Southwestern Illinois Hospital Library Consortium [Areawide Hospital Library Consortium of Southwestern Illinois].

DM: Was this your first position?

JM: My very first position was as a librarian in a school of nursing also at St. Joseph Hospital. They closed the school of nursing, and I talked the hospital into creating a hospital library.

DM: And you had gone to library school in Illinois?

JM: I did. Midwest, Midwest, Midwest. I actually stayed there for eighteen years, and I can't believe...

DM: At St. Joseph's?

JM: The same place. When I left there, I left as an assistant administrator of the hospital. So, I...

DM: You were no longer doing library work then?

JM: The library reported to me, but I wasn't the librarian per se.

DM: Had you gotten a degree in hospital administration or...

JM: No, which is why I had to get out of there. I figured that there were too many people getting hospital administration degrees, so I wasn't qualified to do what I was doing, but I had fun.

DM: Okay. So, you had been...you were at Alton and St. Joseph's, and you said you got your notoriety because of the consortium that you...

JM: I think so. The RML [Regional Medical Library], each state in the Midwest region had a representative for the state, and in Illinois there was a fellow by the name of John Coyne. John was the first person that ever visited me in the hospital library. He was very taken by this consortium idea and really promoted me, convinced me to go to my first MLA meeting, got me a slot as a speaker to talk about this consortium. So, he sort of brought me out of the closet, so to speak. It was a wonderful thing.

DM: And he was the...?

JM: He was the Illinois representative for the regional library, the Midwest region.

DM: And where was the Midwest region at that time? Was it in Chicago at Crerar?

JM: It was, actually.

[Editor's note: The Midwest Regional Medical Library was based at the John Crerar Library in Chicago from 1968 to 1979. The region name was changed to Midwest Medical Library Network in 1973 and Midwest Health Science Library Network in 1974.]

DM: So, was he also responsible, do you think, for you being invited?

JM: Well, I'm not sure. This sort of launched a whole lot of things, and I ended up being on the regional advisory group. I actually don't know the mystery of how I was selected. Totally transparent to me.

DM: Do you remember being sent a letter, or called?

JM: Oh, I do. I was floored to get this letter, and if my recollection serves me, it was from Dr. [Martin] Cummings [director of the National Library of Medicine] himself.

DM: Okay.

JM: And interestingly...I was immediately on the phone, and it was pretty clear that our job was to represent our self, not a group. I was real discouraged at that. I thought I should represent more. So, I contacted a whole lot of people and got the region to fund a little quick meeting. I got a number of folks together to talk about what we should say at NLM.

DM: How much lead time did you have?

JM: Not very much.

DM: It didn't sound like, no.

JM: Not very much. Then we were sent a whole package of reports that NLM had done.

DM: Is this what is...

JM: Which is in the pile... We were asked to write, and I think we had like ten days to write...sort of a position paper, and we were assigned topics. I was starting to get a little uptight about what was this thing we were being asked to do. I thought we might be walking into something that we weren't quite prepared for.

DM: Yeah, I do have a list of the agenda, and it says that you were to talk on hospital library-NLM relationships and communication, along with Jane Lambremont.

JM: Yes.

DM: So, you...then you had like ten days to prepare?

JM: Well, that's what I recall. It was very short period of time, and I chose...because I had the list of all the other people from big hospitals...I chose small libraries. The title of my paper was "Two Hundred Beds and Under," and I talked about where those libraries were in the scheme of things. A lot different than Mass General.

DM: Most of the other hospitals...people came from hospitals that were larger.

JM: That's right. That's right.

DM: Although some...Jane's at the end was fairly small, bigger than yours.

JM: But still bigger than mine, yes.

DM: But it's still quite small. Okay. So, you arrived in January in NLM.

JM: There were a couple things that I remember that I'm prompted by my notes, which aren't very helpful... Because I was a little disconcerted...you know, my first thought was that we were being invited to come and talk. Then the packet arrived and it was clear that this

wasn't just a conversation. Then we were asked to write and to submit our things for review and distribution to the NLM staff. So, the scene was tightening, tightening, tightening. I thought, I don't know one of these people. I wrote a letter to everybody and said, "let's plan to get together the first night we're there, so we could at least know each other when we're in the room." I called Peter Clepper [NLM staff member serving as executive secretary for the meeting], and I said, "Peter," ...very guts, big guts here... I said, "I want to do this and if it's okay with you, I'm going to proceed. If you want to come, you could. You know, this is not a secret thing. You're welcome to come, but I think that we would all do a lot better if we knew each other before we walked in there." He was supportive. He actually even brought drinks and I think some fruit to the meeting. But there we all were... I think everybody came, but Jackie [Bastille] might have been late.

DM: And none of you knew each other?

JM: No, we didn't know each other at all. And the room was not very big, and we were stacked every which way, on the beds mostly. It was sort of like a slumber party, I guess. You couldn't sit in a big place like this. You just had to sprawl somewhere, and we got into what was it that we really wanted to get out of this. I don't really remember this, but I think Peter left, and we stayed up really late talking about what our issues were and kind of how we wanted to proceed. We decided that it was going to be up to us to keep this alive, that it was just one more conference for NLM, but it was a really big deal for us. So, we went in there armed in a different way than we would have been if we'd all just been at the Ramada and walked in separately. We arrived as a group, a force. It was a sort of a sea change, I think, and not something that NLM really anticipated. I think they'd done conferences like this before, and I don't think that people had congealed around the issues like we had. We were pretty strong. The people who were chosen from the regions were all very forthright people. Nobody was a shrinking violet, and they may have gotten more than they anticipated, I think. I'm sure they did. I'm sure they did.

DM: So, you think they had taken other issues and had conferences of what other people...

JM: Well, I suspected that, because this seemed like a fairly typical process for them. I don't know about other groups per se, but if you were going to talk about what serials should be in *Index Medicus*, I could imagine a similar sort of...here's some physician statements. You reflect on them and you send your position in, and then we'll talk about. So, it seemed like a pro forma kind of thing... I may be wrong and it could have been a first for them. It felt pretty comfortable from their standpoint, I think.

DM: You obviously had given some thought to these issues before you were contacted even.

JM: Yes.

DM: And can you tell me what you thought were some of the issues and the problems before you attended the conference? What were the things you wanted to talk about? You were given a topic, but you obviously had other ideas that might have been important.

JM: Well, there were a number of things that were happening at the time. I think NLM hadn't done a very good job at all of being public about what they were trying to do. So, a lot of things were surprising, things that would happen that our jaws would drop out in the field, you know, we got things in weird ways. Usually at the annual meeting you'd hear all those coming. And they had proposed a change in interlibrary loan charging, and that was sort of very in our face. They had...

DM: Was this when it went from being free to being a charge?

JM: Yes, that's correct. There was the sentiment among the hospital libraries that the academic institutions were getting all the gravy again, and they were sort of being left out to dry. There was also a strong feeling that there wasn't enough training for hospital librarians with MEDLINE. There was a sense that the publications that were coming out were not geared to us at all, that we were at the end of the receiving line so to speak, and that people really didn't care that much. In the Midwest, it was slightly different because the way they had structured themselves was to have that liaison in each state. So, there was at least a human being that was making rounds, had a sense of what was happening. But in other regions, there wasn't that person, and a lot of the energy, really, and information got sucked up to the big academic centers, and we were feeling left out.

DM: Now when you said people just didn't care that much, you meant from NLM?

JM: That's right.

DM: They didn't care about...the front line hospital library.

JM: Exactly. So, we felt like we had information to be shared.

DM: And the Hospital Library Section already existed, correct, in MLA?

JM: Yes, that's right.

DM: And so you had done some work together there? Or was that not such a strong section as it has become?

JM: It had just gotten really beefed up. The old model for the section, before sections came into being, was that it was an interest group, and that really was very, very weak. Lois Ann Colaianne was elected the first president of the Hospital Library Section as we came into the new order of things with new bylaws at MLA. And I followed her as the chair of that group.

DM: ...were you chair what year?

JM: I was trying to remember that. I might have been chair the year before this.

DM: Okay. I know the chapters and the sections, the Chapter Council, all that I think was about 1979 or '80. So, I'm guessing the section must have been around the same time... or a little earlier.

JM: I have to really go dig in my files to figure out exactly when that was, but there was a lot of work being done then with just organizational structural issues and not a lot of big agenda items. So, we hadn't done a lot of talk about NLM, we really hadn't.

[Editor's note: The Hospital Library Section (formerly the Hospital Libraries Group, established in 1948) was established in 1977 according to section records. Colaianni was president in 1976/77 and Messerle in 1977/78. Nomenclature in Medical Library Association publications varies, but MLA directories support the transition to section, listing the Hospital Library Section under Special Interest Groups beginning in 1978/79. The Section and Chapter Councils first met in 1981 as part of the implementation of the new MLA group structure. In 1987, Hospital Library Section members voted to change the name to Hospital Libraries Section.]

DM: Now you already mentioned your, I guess, famous get-together the night before the conference, and I've talked with Judith Topper and read Jane's comments. They had quite a bit to say about the tone of the conference as you came into the room. Was that something you noticed? Did you feel...

JM: Oh, yes.

DM: Okay.

JM: The NLM boardroom is an austere room no matter how you slice it. I've been there when I was on the BLRC and...so I got a little more...

DM: Biomedical...

JM: Biomedical Library Review Committee. The group that looks at grant proposals. And so I've gotten a little more comfortable with it, but it's an intimidating room in and of itself even when it's empty. But there is a very big boardroom table, and the way people had positioned themselves was very hierarchical. It was just...and they were all there, actually, maybe not. Maybe not, maybe we met with them outside. But as we were sitting down, all the senior staff positioned themselves around the outside of the room, and then people who'd written papers alternated themselves with the hospital librarians. I don't know if that was to make us feel more integrated or what, but coming from the Midwest and a little bitty hospital, I was kind of...my heart was pounding... Oh, what are we in for. And then they had these infamous microphones, so we were being recorded, I thought. So, you were really like on, you know.

DM: Were you recorded?

JM: I don't know. You know, I don't know. I know the microphones were there.

DM: I wish it were, and I wish it were in the archives somewhere, but I certainly have never heard of them being recorded.

JM: You know who might know that is Sheldon Kotzin.

DM: Okay. Betsy [Humphreys] has not mentioned it.

JM: Or Peter Clepper.

DM: Okay.

JM: Wouldn't that be interesting, but it's hard to know. And, you know, clearly the staff had the upper hand. They had the AV, the audiovisuals. They had...they owned the agenda, and there we were divided up. It was just amazing. Just amazing. So, thank God we knew each other at this point.

DM: Right. And it was early. It started at 8:30.

JM: Well, I don't remember.

DM: Well, I just have this agenda that said it started at 8:30. Oh, well.

JM: It was a full day, and, as I recall it, we went through the issues of each paper that had been sent to us and then sort of the response, and one-by-one we went through these things. And Dr. Cummings...I think Jane said he didn't really want to hear anything that was negative. And, you know, I'm sympathetic with Dr. Cummings, because we have a way, we medical librarians, of going on the attack, and that can be pretty unpleasant, especially when you're trying to get money from Congress. So, I think we have embarrassed NLM on a number of occasions, not the hospital librarians in general, but there have been embarrassing moments. But you could tell that he was not always happy with the way things were going, and he didn't actually say too much. He was sitting at the head of the table kind of pondering on his fist that was propping up his head, and he felt large. I don't know how to...just the way he was positioned, he felt like the big man.

DM: He was the big man.

JM: And at one point, Judy Topper, bless her heart, she had pulled together some really good data from the New York region that was illustrating that hospital libraries actually did more interlibrary loan than the National Library of Medicine, and he totally disagreed with that. He was challenging rather strongly, very strongly actually, her numbers to the point that you felt like he was calling her a liar and, you know, it was just that strong. "This can't be right, Judy." You know, "how could this be?" And we were all horrified

for Judy because she's a strong woman, but there she was being kind of taken on. I think that's the moment that Jane hit her coup de grâce. And she...

DM: We should mention this, just in case someone is listening that doesn't know, that at this point Jane said she leaned forward to see what was happening, and the chair slid out and she slid under the table.

JM: And Jane...the chairs all had wheels on them. So, it was easy to slide backwards, and there she was...I was actually across the table from Jane, and her two hands were on the table and her head was barely above the table. So, there she was, totally on the floor. It broke the tension, if nothing else, and took Judy off the hot seat. And everybody was hysterical, because, as only Jane could do, she made some crack about not having her morning cocktail, and there she was. So, out of that came the logo, and we named ourselves actually the Bethesda 11.

DM: Okay. You have a logo?

JM: Yes, and our logo is, if you can imagine this, a straight line with two little bumps and big bump in the middle: Jane's hands and her head, and below the straight line is a little 11, and that's the Bethesda 11 logo of Jane under the table.

DM: So, you did your own naming?

JM: We did. We named ourselves. We named ourselves.

DM: And was that...I assumed it was because of the Chicago Seven and some of these other groups?

JM: I don't remember why we came up with that name except that we...some of us took a lot of heat for being the selectees. There were other people who thought they should have been there, and we needed to report out. I think that we had bonded pretty closely, and by describing ourselves in some way... I don't really remember where the Bethesda 11 came from except it could have been from Judy Topper. She may have...she's a writer and she's very creative. So, it might have come out of her brain.

DM: So, a little bit of humor kind of appeased the people who felt that they were overlooked?

JM: Actually, I think what it did was to bond us all very tightly together in a real way. Because an outsider would never know that those were the two hands and a head... And it just was our own inside joke to ourselves and...

DM: And now the world.

JM: Yeah.

DM: Because Betsy did mention this...

JM: That's right.

DM: ...in the Janet Doe Lecture.

JM: Well, we were in demand, all of us, as speakers of various groups.

DM: Oh, really.

JM: And that's what we called ourselves, so I think that pushed the legend out.

DM: Now, see, that I wasn't aware of, that you then went on these speaking tours.

JM: Indeed. Indeed.

DM: So, within your region is where you talked?

JM: Within the region. You'll see in the papers Marty Cummings came to the Medical Library Association [at the 1980 Annual Meeting]. There was a report given to MLA, a panel in which we talked about our recommendations. I don't know if you know this piece of the story, but, after the first day, we rendezvoused again.

DM: Okay.

JM: And back in the room, back on the bed, and we didn't have any NLM staffers with us, we decided that if this was going to be anything more than a two-day conference that we had to solidify what it was we wanted. So, Judy Topper agreed to be the big editor, and we all worked on specific recommendations. When we went back the next day, we had a manifesto that was two or three pages long with what we wanted.

DM: Did you call it a manifesto or a white paper?

JM: No, we didn't. We didn't. It was...I think we called it recommendations that really bubbled out of this. I think that stunned everybody that we would be so assertive as to take the lead, as opposed to wait until NLM thought about what it was they wanted to report out. So, there was a document that we polished until the wee hours of the morning. I don't remember how we produced it. I think we got Peter Clepper to type it up.

DM: I was going to say it was not going to be on your laptop.

JM: No, no. It absolutely wasn't.

DM: Now when did this get presented?

JM: The next day.

DM: Under general discussion...? Okay.

JM: We tried...I think we slipped it to Peter. I think Peter really did arrange to get it typed, and we told him that other people could see it. It wasn't that it was going to come in at the last minute, but it was going to come in. So, in fairness to them, we didn't want it to be a total shocker at the end of the meeting, but we wanted them to know that we had built our own consensus whether they...because it was very clear. It was a divide and conquer kind of thing. Here's the subject, debate, debate, debate, no conclusion. Here's the subject, debate, no conclusion. Cummings being upset about interlibrary loan meant that it was likely that that was going to get tabled and nothing would happen. So, we just knew we had to do something to sort of gel these things. We'd been beat up ahead of time about being chosen, and we did not want to come back to the library community and say we don't know what the result is. We wanted to say, "this is what we recommended. We don't know what NLM's going to do, but this is what we said we wanted."

DM: So, what types of places did you go to report?

JM: Afterwards?

DM: Um hmm. Well, you said Marty came to...I should say Dr. Cummings, I don't think Marty maybe is the way you thought of him.

JM: Yeah, at the end.

DM: Good. Good.

JM: As he was retiring...actually, we ended up with a pretty good relationship. You'll see that...well, I wasn't about to let this go, is the bottom line here. So, when I got home I wrote him a letter thanking him for having us and pushing again on the recommendations. He then wrote and solicited more input from all of us. So, we started to really develop...

DM: A little more equality.

JM: ...the dialogue, and I think there was a different kind of respect than there was before the meeting. Sometimes you have to push back to get attention... So, after that there was quite a bit of discussion at MLA.

DM: At the next meeting?

JM: At the next meeting.

DM: It would have been in May [June 1978].

JM: And I think the one after that.

[Editor's note: The "Bethesda 11 Summary" bound at the front of this transcript includes information on presentations at MLA annual meetings. Sessions at the 1978 and 1980 meetings discussed NLM's response to the recommendations.]

DM: Was this in your Hospital Library Section or did you actually have a...

JM: It was actually national...for everyone...as I recall.

DM: Now, there used to be like an NLM update. Did you think...was it that or was it at the NLM/MLA [MLA/NLM] Liaison Committee?

JM: This was a special panel.

DM: Okay.

JM: I'd really have to dig, but I...

DM: Well, that can be looked because we have the other program.

JM: Yep. Yep.

DM: So...and then after that did you go to your region and talk?

DM: Okay, tape A, side two, of an interview with Judith Messerle on May 18, 2002, at MLA in the MLA suite in Dallas, Texas, and we're talking specifically about the Bethesda 11. Okay, we were...

JM: So, after this as I believe that the Hospital Library Section got enthused about being able to talk to NLM, and there was more of an attempt to pull together issues and concerns and to really up the dialogue. So, there...you'll see in this huge file, I have a whole stack of responses to a call that we made for...

DM: Okay.

JM: "...what do you think the issues are today. How do you think we ought to proceed." So, we didn't want to let the opening die. And I think we pushed the liaison committee to be more active with the hospital libraries. It was just the whole shift, really, I think set about this notion that hospital librarians had opinions and that we mattered. And I do think it made a difference to the way the National Library of Medicine thought about the hospital libraries and librarians. A key point.

DM: I found a report in *MLA News* from the NLM/MLA Liaison Committee. I guess it's MLA/NLM Liaison Committee, but it's not signed. So, I'm not sure who wrote that. Do you remember who was the representative? I've looked through the list of attendees and I can't tell.

JM: No, I can't.

DM: Apparently someone attended this from that committee, but that I...

JM: There is in my documentation a letter from Sheldon Kotzin...that has a report, and he's sending it out to us as an advance saying this has gone to here, here, and here.

DM: Okay.

JM: So, you'd need to look and see...if that may be the...one and the same.

DM: I should mention this, this packet is probably, what, two inches, maybe a little bit more...of documentation.

JM: And it's really...I think I must have just placed everything that came in about the Bethesda 11 in that file, and I've drug it around with me for all these years.

DM: And I'm glad you did. I had asked if you had any sense of the impact, and you talked about that quite a bit of the impact of this conference on hospital libraries and that, yes, it was significant. And I'm glad we're doing this because maybe we need to re-remember the significance. What about its significance on your own library and on yourself, and originally that was who it was aimed at was just your own opinion, and you guys wanted it to be broader than that, but how did it affect your own career or your own thinking and did it affect your library and how things worked?

JM: Well, if you can imagine this, here I was a hospital librarian in the Midwest. Knowing Dr. Cummings, having correspondence with Dr. Cummings, was astounding. I mean it really...the reality...yeah, you would pinch yourself. Shortly thereafter, I was asked to serve on a site team with Peter Clepper for one of the extramural grants, which would never have happened had I not been able to be at the National Library of Medicine. So, you know, I think it made a very big difference for me. I really think it was significant, and I cared a lot about this. And as I look at the file today, I wonder how I could have ever spent as much time as I did writing letters. I just don't know how I did it.

DM: We didn't have email.

JM: We didn't. We really didn't, and word processing was not there. You know, I had a clerk that worked with me in the library. So, I'm amazed that I was able to do all that.

DM: We did have Selectric typewriters, I believe, so you could correct.

JM: That's true. That's true, and that may be exactly what you're seeing there. But it took a lot of effort, and I felt at the time that it was very, very important, but I had no idea what the long-term impact would be for me... I think it increased my own credibility.

DM: I know that we don't want to get heavily into this in this particular interview, but you were at St. Joseph's eighteen years.

JM: Yes.

DM: And then you knew you were interested in management obviously. It was something that you liked, and then what did you do after that?

JM: I moved to St. Louis University Medical School Library as the director.

DM: Okay. So, you went directly from a little hospital, but with all this management experience, to St. Louis, and then from St. Louis did you go to Harvard?

JM: I did.

DM: Okay.

JM: I did. It's quite an amazing saga...

DM: Alton, Illinois. Several people have said to me that this was a major moment in their career, so it seems that most people had that same feeling. Now, did you get together later? Did this group meet?

JM: As much as we could. We loved each other after this. It was an incredible bonding experience, and we did try annually to get together for lunch, and some of us kept other friendships. It was an amazing group.

DM: Well, I hope that after talking with everyone that we'll be able to sponsor getting people together.

JM: That would be great.

DM: It is a great hope of mine.

JM: That would be fabulous.

DM: Even if we can pay people, you know...pay people's way to come to MLA. Many people are now retired and don't have an easy way...to fly around the country.

JM: Well, I think it would be the cat's meow.

DM: Well, let's have that as a goal in the not too distant future and really want to record you guys getting together.

JM: Well, we'd have to have the logo out there...

DM: Yes.

JM: ...in spades and, you know, if any one of them were to walk in the room right now, it would be right back at it.

DM: Right.

JM: It was a trial by fire.

DM: Um hmm. That's why I so much wanted it to be a group interview, but...

JM: How fun.

DM: It's just not going...because I knew it would be a different interaction than talking to people individually. I believe Sara Hill will be here at the conference.

JM: Oh, really? Good.

DM: Yes, because she is in Oklahoma at the VA [Veterans Affairs] now, and I got a message from her saying that she was going to be coming to the conference.

JM: Wonderful.

DM: So, we'll try to at least...

JM: Wonderful.

DM: ...get two of you together.

JM: Very good.

DM: So, that's one step. And everyone is sort of remembering and saying, "oh, that's right," but in the next year, I think we'll have a chance to get people together more.

[Editor's note: Bethesda 11 participants Jacqueline Bastille, Alice Sheridan, Marilyn Gibbs [Barry], Judith Messerle, Sarah Hill [Memmott], Jane Lambremont, and Michael J. Torrente were interviewed for the MLA Oral History Program.]

JM: Well, that would be fabulous. That would be fabulous. I suspect if you brought Marty Cummings, his view would be a little bit different.

DM: Betsy Humphreys very much wants us to interview the NLM people as well, and it may not have been that important in their lives as it was in the hospital librarians' lives. I don't know.

JM: I have a feeling not. You know, I really don't think this was the major deal for them at all. I think that it was one more thing on the list, although we rubbed it in so hard, this little Bethesda 11. Getting your own logo makes a difference.

DM: So, what did you use your logo for, just to talk to each other?

JM: On correspondence we would...

DM: Yeah. I was looking at some of the other people who were supposedly were at this meeting...according to my list, Eloise Foster from AHA [American Hospital Association]. Do you remember her being there?

JM: No, she was probably...well, she would have been representing the hospital association, but I don't specifically remember.

DM: Okay. Now, John Danielson who was from Connecticut supposedly also talked with you and Jane about the relationship. I'm not familiar with him, and a person from the VA, James Hahn, and Michael Torrente, who was from Southeast[ern] Regional Medical Library Program.

JM: Well, I remember Michael, but I don't remember him being in the room on the bed.

DM: Well, he probably didn't get that far. He probably only was at the meeting the next day. I just wondered if...and I also show that Betsy was...Betsy Humphreys was there. So, it was...I was surprised, and Gwen Cruzat.

JM: It was a full house.

DM: And [James] Barry...these were people from Extramural Programs, like Dorothy Stroup, I think her name...

JM: Yes, Dorothy.

DM: Doris Doran. I'm not familiar with all the names, but we'll try to talk with some of them about their memory of it. I feel like you've summarized things well and, you know, talked about the follow up. Is there anything else you wanted to mention?

JM: I think that probably does it.

DM: A great group.

JM: A great group, and I have this memory of afternoon light coming into that room and the pillars of light coming in. I don't why I remember that, bringing sunshine to us.

DM: I'm surprised there were windows. I had it pictured as a room in the center without any...just dark oak and deep red carpets, but that probably is not even true.

JM: I think it was a very high window. Well, that's a total aside.

DM: Well, I don't know. We can make that into some sort of metaphor. The light was beginning to filter in. Well, thank you very much.

JM: Well, thank you. It was kind of fun to do this.

DM: Yes.

Index

A

Areawide Hospital Library Consortium of
Southwestern Illinois, 1

B

Barry, James W., 15
Bastille, Jacqueline D., 4
Bethesda 11 meeting
 Agenda, 3,7
 Atmosphere, 6-8
 Collegiality, 8,13-14
 Follow up, 10-12
 Impact, 10-12
 Informal meetings, 4,9
 Issues, 3,5
 Logo, 8,15
 Midwest RML meeting, 3
 Name, 8
 NLM perspective, 4-5,7,9-10
 Participants, 15
 Preparation, 3-4
 Recommendations, 9-10
 Selection, 2-3,8
Biomedical Library Review Committee.
 See under National Library of
 Medicine

C

Clepper, Peter A., 4,7,9-10,12
Colaianne, Lois Ann, 5-6
Countway Library of Medicine, 13
Coyne, John, 2
Cruzat, Gwendolyn S., 15
Cummings, Martin M., 2,7,9,10,12,14

D

Danielson, John, 15
Doran, Doris, 15

F

Foster, Eloise C., 15

H

Hahn, James M., 15
Harvard Medical School. *See* Countway
 Library of Medicine
Hill [Blackwell Memmott], Sara I., 14
Humphreys, Betsy L., 7,8-9,14,15

I

Interlibrary loan, 5,7,10

J

John Crerar Library, Chicago, IL, 2

K

Kotzin, Sheldon, 7,12

L

Lambremont, Jane A., 3,6,8,15

M

Medical Library Association (MLA)
 Hospital Library Section, 5-6,11
 Janet Doe Lecture, 9
 MLA/NLM Liaison Committee, 11-12
Medical Library Association annual
 meetings
 Chicago, 1978, 10-11
 Washington, DC, 1980, 9,11
MEDLINE, 5
Midwest Regional Medical Library, 2,5

N

National Library of Medicine (NLM)
 Biomedical Library Review
 Committee, 6
 Boardroom, 6,15-16
 Relationship with hospital librarians,
 5,7,9-11

S

St. Joseph Hospital, Alton, IL, 1-2,13
St. Louis University Medical Center
 Library, 13
Stroup, Dorothy, 15

T

Topper, Judith M., 6,7-8,9
Torrente, Michael J., 15

U

University of Illinois, 1