

MEDICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

INTERVIEW

WITH

**KENT A. SMITH, FMLA**

Interview conducted by Sheldon Kotzin, FMLA

September 1 and October 5, 2011

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Consent Form for Oral History Interview (2002 version)

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 Sheldon Kotzin  
on 9/1/11 & 10/5/11. 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 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 \_\_\_\_\_.

Kent A. Smith  
Name of Interviewee

[Signature]  
Signature

Date 10/5/11

Accepted by: [Signature]  
MLA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

12/8/11

Sheldon Kotzin  
Name of MLA Interviewer(s)

[Signature]  
Signature

Date Sept 1, 2011

Date Oct. 5, 2011



## Biographical Statement

Kent A. Smith, FMLA, grew up in Nashua, New Hampshire. He received his BA in mathematics and economics from Hobart and William Smith Colleges and an MA from the Johnson Graduate School of Management at Cornell University. His interest in pursuing a career in federal service was encouraged by advisors at Cornell whose connections led to a position in the Office of the Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1962.

Smith arrived at the National Institutes of Health in 1965 and became the youngest executive officer at NIH in the Division of Research Resources. He joined the staff of the National Library of Medicine in 1971 and served as NLM's deputy director from 1979 until his retirement in 2004. Since 2004, Smith has been a management consultant with the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI).

Although not a librarian by profession, Smith made sweeping contributions to the field of health sciences librarianship during a period of significant change in information technology. As principal operating officer of NLM, he had major responsibility for program development, policy formulation, direction, and coordination of all library activities. During his tenure, the National Network of Libraries of Medicine was expanded and strengthened. He led the transition of NLM computer systems from the mainframe ELHILL system to Entrez, and he oversaw the complex, multifaceted planning efforts for a third library building on the NIH campus.

His knowledge and instincts for the legislative process resulted in effective collaboration with House and Senate members to craft the legislation creating NCBI and to expand NLM's mission to include consumer health information. On the occasion of his retirement in 2004, Senator Tom Harkin inserted the following into the *Congressional Record*: "Mr. Smith provided invaluable support to members of the House and Senate, and their staff, in developing the legislation that created [NCBI]. He has also been closely associated with the amazingly successful entry of the National Library of Medicine into the world of web-based consumer health information relied on by millions of Americans. His skill at managing people and budgets has allowed the Library to move beyond its traditional emphasis on serving exclusively scientists and health professionals."

Smith's sense of humor and talent for public speaking were other gifts that enhanced his strong leadership of not only NLM, but organizations including CENDI, the National Federation of Abstracting and Indexing Services, and the International Council for Scientific and Technical Information—engagements that had great impact on the development of federal information policies.

Smith first made the acquaintance of medical librarians at the annual meeting of the Medical Library Association in Hawaii in 1979, the beginning of a long-standing and valued relationship. He received the MLA President's Award in 1997, was honored as an MLA Fellow in 2005, and was chosen to present the Joseph Leiter NLM/MLA Lecture in 2007. He sponsors the Carla J. Funk Governmental Relations Award, established in 2008.

## Medical Library Association Interview with Kent A. Smith

[*Digital audio file LS100036*]

Sheldon Kotzin: This is Sheldon Kotzin. I am in my office [in Bethesda, Maryland] on September 1, 2011, with Kent Smith to start the oral history project for the Medical Library Association. I am going to divide this oral history interview into four areas: Kent's background and education, his professional career, his involvement with the Medical Library Association, and then some general reflections and summaries. We will start with a little bit of information, Kent, about your early years growing up in New Hampshire, and also if you want to talk about things that influenced you or how you ended up choosing colleges to go to. Please start by talking a little bit about your life before you entered the professional workforce.

Kent Smith: Okay, well as you say, I grew up in a small town in Nashua, New Hampshire, a beautiful, bucolic type of place. A place where you get certain values, mainly hard work and honesty and respect for others. I think that's what I got out of growing up there. But it's a very unusual place in many respects. Over 50% of the people who live in Nashua, New Hampshire, are French-Canadian. So, I grew up in a city where if you wanted a job, for example, at a five-and-dime store, you had to be able to speak both English and French. Where the mayor, himself, only spoke French. And so it made for a very interesting sort of place. I would say, though, that those who affected my life the most, other than the general way that people deal with each other and the kinds of characteristics they have, were really my father and my mother. My father was the vice president of Ingersoll Rand in New Hampshire. One of the things I think that my father taught me that made a difference, at least tried to make a difference in my own life, was that he believed, regardless of where you were in the pecking order, so to speak, that you should be respectful to everybody, whether they were high level or low level. I tried to remember that as I had my own career. He was very well respected by the workers, the worker bees, if you will. Because I remember, even the day of his funeral, the people there came up to me and said, "Do you realize what your father did for us?" He created, at a time when they didn't have this, health benefits for people after they retire. And he got it through the company. So, I was always impressed with that kind of thing and I was impressed with the number of people that came to me at that time.

SK: This was something you didn't know about?

KS: No, I knew what kind of person he was, but I knew nothing about that. Neither my mother nor father was formally educated. Initially, my father was a bookkeeper but eventually ended up going to Babson College and then got a degree that way. So, his background was in accounting. My mother was not formally educated beyond high school, but I would say that she was the tough one. I can remember she helped get me through my first early years in school, because I am somewhat dyslexic. I was having trouble reading. So, she was determined I was going to learn to read. Not only that though, because of that I think I was sort of bullied a little bit. And she

said, “You have got to get tough.” So she went and bought me a pair of boxing gloves, and I pretty soon quickly learned that if somebody was going to try to stick it to me, I was going to hit ‘em. And that’s what she taught me to do and I did it.

SK: So were you actually diagnosed as dyslexic?

KS: Yes.

SK: Because in those days, you figured a lot of people went without being formally diagnosed.

KS: That’s right, but they were able to diagnose it. It was not very severe dyslexia, but it was enough, so for some reason they tried to help me, because it’s like crossing eyes in a way. Even though I was right-handed, they figured out I was actually a left-hander. So they made me learn to bowl with my left hand, throw with my left hand, and things like that that supposedly helped. But it always was a problem in a way, because I read slower than anybody else. And it showed up later on when I had to take SATs and so forth. But that’s a whole other story.

SK: Well, maybe when we talk about your work at NLM [National Library of Medicine], you might recall some examples of how it could have affected you. But anything more you want to say about the school years or growing up, because I would like to, of course, spend more time on your career itself, and also before we do that, talk a little bit about going to Smith College. What was it called?

KS: Hobart and William Smith [Colleges].

SK: Hobart and William Smith and then Cornell. So, would you like to talk a little bit about how you became interested in business as a career?

KS: I became interested in business because in my family, my father was a comptroller. And I was supposed to be an accountant just like him and his father. That’s the path I thought I was taking. And when I went to college, I had a math and economics major at Hobart, and then, as a result, I was interested in going to business school. And so the truth of the matter is that I applied at two business schools. One was Wharton and the other one was Cornell, and I was put on the waiting list at Wharton and I got into Cornell. And I can tell you the story about getting into Cornell, but anyway...

SK: I’m willing to bet that business schools didn’t cost \$80,000 a year in those days. But, Cornell, when I was growing up, was considered a liberal educational institution, and yet I would imagine growing up in rural New Hampshire, your family was more conservative than liberal in their politics.

KS: Absolutely they were. My father supported Taft over Eisenhower; you can’t get much more conservative than that. But Cornell has graduate schools, of course, and

it was the graduate school I was going to at Cornell. I actually got accepted at Wharton, but it was too late in the summer, and I had decided, "I'm going to Cornell anyway." Had I gone to Wharton, I might have ended up as an accountant, you never know. But when I went to Cornell, I figured I was in the business school, and what I quickly learned was that at Cornell they have the business school, the hospital administration school, and the government school all in one school at the Johnson [Graduate School of Management]. And though I was in basically the business portion of it, I really changed my mind at that point... Probably the person that was most influential was a guy by the name of Paul Van Riper, who was actually my advisor. And he advised at both the business and the government school. I actually also went to labor relations school at Cornell. So there was a whole different mix of different experiences, all very good actually. Paul introduced me to the deputy director of the [US] office of the Bureau of the Budget (it was called the Bureau of the Budget (BOB) then, not the Office of Management and Budget as it is today), who was coming to the campus for interviews. So, I interviewed with this guy. And he told me that he hoped that I would take this job [at the BOB]. And so you might say, "Well, why did I have an interest in government other than I had some courses?" Well, I have always had an interest in politics. When I was at Hobart, I was president of the Young Republicans.

SK: I knew you were going to say "Young Republicans."

KS: It wasn't Democrats, no, it was the Young Republicans, but remember, in the state of New York, the Republicans I used to know and cared about were moderate liberal Republicans. I ended up campaigning for Nelson Rockefeller against the Democrat, Averell Harriman, for governor of New York in the western New York area. So, as a result of that, I got a job working for the assistant secretary for labor in the state government during the summer.

SK: So was this around 1960 or earlier?

KS: It would have been around '61, something like that. Because I graduated in '60 from Hobart and I graduated in '62 from Cornell.

SK: So, while you were at Cornell, you were working for the state government of New York.

KS: During the summer.

SK: During the summer, okay.

KS: All the work experience I ever had before that was working in a summer camp where I was a baseball and swimming instructor. And I did work at Ingersoll Rand; my father got me a job. But he made sure that the job I got was cleaning out the boilers in the summer. They shut down the boilers, and they would put somebody down in the hole to clean it and paint it, and that was an experience in itself since I



am a little claustrophobic as it is. But after that, I ended up in my real first, I guess you would call “career-type experience,” working for the assistant secretary for labor in New York State.

SK: Was that in Albany?

KS: In Albany, yeah.

SK: So, was it your first time being away from New Hampshire, except to go to school? Was it your first time to be out on your own?

KS: Yeah, other than school, sure, that’s right. And I enjoyed it there that summer. You worked during the day and you could stay at the university, the state university dorms. So I played on the baseball team, you know, it was a good summer. But, I got interested in government partly because of that. When I went back the last year at Cornell, I was primed to think in those terms. And remember, this was also the time that John Kennedy became president. And I can honestly say that you could get more meaningful responsibility in a government job than you could in a business job, I think, for the most part. A lot of people, even graduating from Cornell in those days, if you worked for Mobil Oil, you went and pumped gas—that was part of the training. But if you were in the government, you got much better responsibility, at least I did. So, you want to know how I got into government?

SK: Well, yes, I do, but I remember hearing stories about how you and some friends from the Boston area came down to Washington and got introduced to government jobs. And what I recall was not a high-level government job to start.

KS: You are thinking of Ed McManus and Bob Cross. They came down and got jobs like that and then got into the regular federal service through an entrance exam. I didn’t know them until I got to Washington, actually until I got to NIH [National Institutes of Health].

SK: For the record, Bob Cross was at one time the NLM personnel officer, head of the office of personnel at the library, and Ed McManus worked here in the executive office and financial office and then went to become the deputy director of the National Eye Institute. Both are now retired.

KS: Correct. In fact I am going to see them tomorrow.

SK: Well good. Tell them I said, “Hello.” So you didn’t come down with the two of them. You came down...

KS: By myself.

SK: Because there was an attraction to working in Washington, the Kennedy aura, all of that.

KS: Well, yeah. It's a bit of a strange way in which I ended up at HEW [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare], which was what [the Department of Health and Human Services] was called then. I came down because of the office of the Bureau of the Budget. It turned out that in those days you had to pass both the Federal Service Entrance Exam and what they called the "MI exam," management intern exam. It turned out also that at the Bureau of the Budget, you not only had to pass, you had to have a 95 or above on the MI, and I had a 92. I remember it very well, because here I had figured, start at the top, start at the office of the president. BOB tried to make an exception for me, but couldn't do it. So the deputy director of BOB who had recruited me to the government referred me to a number of other agencies, and recommended actually that HEW was one of the better ones. I had explored AID [Agency for International Development] and a whole bunch of other places. So I became an intern, to make a long story short, at HEW, and I had really a good experience because I worked for some very good people. I was involved with the assistant secretary for administration, a guy by the name of Rufus Miles. I worked on some projects for the undersecretary, Ivan Nestigan, who had been the former mayor of Madison, Wisconsin. And Wilbur Cohen, who became secretary, he was then the assistant secretary. But the actual office that I was located in was the Office of Management Analysis—they had to station you someplace [as an intern], even though you moved around to different offices. I worked with the comptroller, Jim Kelly, and others, but the fellow who headed that office was Jim Greenwood who had previously been the director of administration for the state of Pennsylvania. So I got great training there, even though I started out as a forms manager and analyst, if you can believe that. Jim Greenwood made sure I got involved in some of the projects with the most senior people, and he took me to Capitol Hill, because he was working with the government operations committee. So, I got exposure to the Hill right off the bat with him. I stayed there for three or four years; I got to be equivalent to what they called a GS-12 [General Schedule grade] at that time. I could have been promoted there, but I will never forget the day that Jim Greenwood called me in and he said, "Kent, I can promote you here, or you might want to think about actually working someplace that is operational, because you have been busy here creating procedures for how people should do things, and you have never done any of them. And so maybe you should explore that." So, I called Jim Isbister. Now Jim Isbister had worked for Rufus Miles, the deputy director of administration, and had been hired by Marty Cummings [Martin Cummings, director of the National Library of Medicine, 1964-1983] to be the executive officer of the National Library of Medicine. So I called Jim Isbister, he was a friend of mine, because we had worked together, and he said, "You know, there's a new division being formed at NIH called the Division of Research Facilities and Resources. And there is a fellow over there in the executive office, a guy by the name of John DeVerno, maybe you ought to go over and see him."

SK: And what year was this?

KS: This would have been about '65, something like that. And so I came out, and I talked with John, and he had the job open of administrative officer for the entire division. And so I thought, "Well, gee, should I take this?" I knew very little at all about administration in terms of budget and financial analysis. I had some management analysis but not personnel, none of that, you know, traditional services. But he said, "I think you can learn that and we have a very good office manager here. His name is Joe Morabito," if I remember right. So, I had a guy who really knew the real nuts and bolts-type stuff, and I was there to work like an assistant executive officer to John, which was great. So, that connection worked nicely for me. John eventually moved on to another job, I have forgotten exactly where, and I had the opportunity to become the executive officer of the Division of Research and Facilities Resources. That turned out to be an advantage for me as well. Tom Kennedy was the director there, but becoming executive officer was one of my goals and I got there quicker than I thought I ever would. So, I became, actually at that time, the youngest executive officer on the NIH campus. Why did that help me?

SK: Can I interrupt?

KS: Sure.

SK: ...just to make sure that you explain what an executive officer does briefly.

KS: Executive officer is what often people think of as the administrator. They are involved with policy issues, but they typically supervise personnel, contracting, grants management, financial management, budget work, and general services, upkeep of facilities, and that sort of thing. So, that's what the job normally is.

SK: So, you become the youngest, at least up until that time, and maybe still.

KS: I don't know anymore about that. But, what that did was get my name around the campus, because I didn't know that many people at the time. But, Dick Seggel, who was the director of administration...

SK: For all of NIH.

KS: For all of NIH. I got to know him and he asked me, he said, "Well, you are a young fellow. Would you like to work with me in the American Society for Public Administration out here in Montgomery County?" which he was head of. That got me in with Dick Seggel. But one of the other things that was great about Dick Seggel, which I can't say for any other of the executive officers I have seen since, is he really cared about a large number of the executive officers and on a very personal basis, not just, "come to my office about 'X.'" He would ask you, "Would you like to go to lunch this week and the next month we will go to lunch again," that sort of thing. So he really got to know you. He was a big influence, I would have to say, in my career here.

SK: Can I ask a question at this point? There weren't as many institutes at NIH then as there are now, but there were a number of institutes at least. From my knowledge of executive officers, in those days, an executive officer would be about as high as one could go at NIH unless you had an MD or a PhD.

KS: That's correct.

SK: And so, what did you have to look forward to in the future when you were the youngest executive officer on the NIH campus?

KS: Well, to become an executive officer at a bigger institute. The Division of Research and Facility Resources wasn't all that big, but it was an interesting place because it was basically a grants program, but it was also involved with health research facility construction, of which medical libraries were a part, incidentally, which probably was interesting and helpful when I actually interviewed here at NLM.

SK: You said you had a tie to Jim Isbister, who was NLM's executive officer.

KS: Correct.

SK: So, there was no position, at that point, to be executive officer at NLM, unless Jim left at some point.

KS: Well, actually what happened is Jim Isbister did leave to be, I think, director of administration of the [Alcohol, Drug Abuse and] Mental Health Administration, which was agency level. He was well respected by Cummings, incidentally. He was really well respected. And he was replaced by George Russell. And George was here for, I don't know, maybe three or four years. I'm not exactly sure. I knew George; he was a nice fellow too.

SK: Yes, George was our executive officer when I arrived at the library.

KS: So, anyway, George then went over, as I recall, you are asking me to remember things that are way back there, but I think he went over to be head of management policy or something like that at NIH. So, the job opened up.

SK: Cummings had come here, then a few years earlier. Did you know Marty Cummings at that point?

KS: I didn't know him.

SK: And the deputy director would have been Scott Adams, who was a librarian, as you recall.

KS: Well, he was deputy director at one point, but at the time that I applied, the deputy director was Bo Mider.

SK: Bo Mider, “Dr. No.”

KS: Yes, he was fondly called “Dr. No.” And Marty had brought him over from NIH because he had been deputy director for intramural programs, I believe it was, at NIH.

SK: He was like a deputy director for all of NIH. He was an older fellow at the time and I had assumed he wanted a less stressful job.

KS: I think that’s right.

SK: So, you had Bo and Marty and you knew both of them, neither of them?

KS: I knew neither of them. But Dick Seggel knew both of them. So, when the job opened up, Dick Seggel asked me, “Are you going to apply?” And I said, “Well, I guess.” You have to remember, there was an important thing that people forget at that time. At that time there were three bureaus at NIH, the National Heart Institute, the National Cancer Institute, and the National Library of Medicine. The reason NLM, of course, was a bureau [as opposed to an institute] was it had come from the Office of the Surgeon General. So, NLM had certain delegated responsibilities, even in administration, that were far greater than most of the institutes around here. Bureaus had their own supply procurement; they had certain delegations that others didn’t have.

SK: But, at the same time, we probably didn’t have anything like the extramural program or grants program that other institutes had. We didn’t have much of an international program that other institutes had, but on the whole we had a higher status than most of the other ones.

KS: Well, actually it was about the time we were getting the grants program, because the grants program, remember, came in ’65, with the Medical Library Assistance Act. And this was ’71, so they were up and running at that point... [Dr. Lee Langley was heading it in 1971. Early associate directors of Extramural Programs were Marjorie P. Wilson, David F. Kefauver, Leroy L. Langley, and Ernest M. Allen.]

SK: So we had this bureau status.

KS: We had bureau status that came as a result of being part of the Office of the Surgeon General really. But when Marty got involved, he created, as you know, SIS, Specialized Information Services, and the National Medical Audiovisual Center [became part of NLM]. There were a bunch of these services that had come in before I got here. So, he had begun to build. And he had a small research office, not the Lister Hill Center yet, but a small research office over here on the mezzanine. That’s what I believe was here when I came. But the interesting thing is that I was lucky to get this job, not only because Seggel helped me, but according to a story

that I am told is the truth, Marty had already preselected somebody before Dick Seggel got involved... Anyway, I got the job. So, that's it. That's how...

SK: So, can you recall some of the early issues that you got involved in at the library? Can you also talk about your relationship with Joe Leiter [associate director for library operations]? Joe came before you did, because he came in '66. So I would like to hear a little bit about the early years.

KS: Well, it's interesting because when I first got here, the first thing I was told, "There's a couple of people around here you had better be sure you deal well with," and Joe Leiter was one of them. Joe was a dynamic guy. He was a demanding guy, but he was really a very good associate director in my view. But you had to get on the good side of him. You had to prove to him that you could help him. My first experiences with him were difficult in some respects. And thank God for Chuck Herbert, who was the assistant executive officer here. He told me, "One of the first things you are going to do here is attend Marty Cummings' morning meetings" at 8:30, which he held with each different division heads on different days.

SK: Each associate director.

KS: Each associate director. So, I was supposed to be in there with him each morning.

SK: Just the two of you or did Bo Mider attend?

KS: No, Bo Mider was there, there were a couple of others—senior staff were there, and then the associate director would come in. And Marty would get in early, because I know. I was in early myself. And he would study the monthly report, which I don't think anybody even reads anymore. But at that time he read it.

*[Digital audio file LS100037]*

SK: We are picking up the recording. When I stopped it, we were talking about Kent's involvement with Marty Cummings' morning staff meetings. So Kent, you can pick it up.

KS: Okay, as I was saying, one of the first things that I recall was Joe Leiter coming in for one of those a.m. meetings. Maybe I remember him because it was always so fun. I mean Marty would ask him questions, and Joe would find a way to answer the question even if it wasn't the one that was asked of him, which was always great to hear. But, what I learned from Chuck Herbert, I was trying to say, is that he said, "When you go over there, you need to learn as much as you possibly can about what they are likely to be talking about, at least know the contracts that are going on and stuff, because they may ask you." I said, "You are kidding me!" But that's what happened. I got over there, and I remember Cummings asked Joe a question about, "How's the indexing going? What are the latest statistics?" or something or other, and, "How are we doing with the indexing contracts?" And Joe was having a little

trouble with the question. Marty said, “Well Joe, I can see you can’t get the answer to that. Kent, what’s the answer to that?” Well, you know, that was a tough question. I stumbled through something about contracts, but I learned very quickly that he expected me to know all the contracts, not the details of everything, but all the contracts in the library.

SK: Because the contracts office would have come under your responsibility, but not the programs.

KS: No, not the programs.

SK: The people that manage the contracts were in Joe’s area, for example. Actually, Joe pretty much managed the indexing contracts.

KS: Well, maybe that was why the indexing question came up. But I can remember this happening with all of the associate directors when they came in. Marty would often go back to the monthly report, ask them what the report meant, knowing they probably hadn’t read it, and that was part of his style, you know?

SK: So, this was 1971?

KS: This should have been ’71, yes.

SK: So, 1971 was also right after the completion of the RML, Regional Medical Library [Program], which took place in the late ‘60s. And you probably inherited some of this, there were conflicts between Extramural Programs, which funded the National Network [of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM)], or we called it the RML network in those days, and the Library Operations part of NLM, under which most of the programs sat, which in those days was mostly document delivery and the beginning of online searching. So, there was this tension between the two program areas, the one that had money and the one that supported the services.

KS: I’m not sure of this, but was it also true that the RML grants were moved to contracts about that time? [After 1970, the original RML grants were converted to contracts as they expired.]

SK: Yes, for a few years the RMLs were funded under grants.

KS: I know I should be asking you the questions here, because, Sheldon, fortunately for me, you worked with me on the RML Program, because for what reasons I will never know, I ended up dealing with that, but that was after I was deputy. I’m jumping ahead. You asked me about the executive office, what kinds of things I remember. The one thing I remember, right off the bat, was about the second day I walked in, and Marty said, “Well, you know there is going to be an EEO [Equal Employment Opportunity] conference at Harpers Ferry [West Virginia], and the staff’s all going to go there.” I have to say, NLM was the first organization that I had ever been in that

was as diverse as this one was, and I had never really run into what I would call the diversity kinds of questions. But I quickly learned that there was a good deal of tension at that time, both by women who felt they weren't getting treated as well as men, and certainly among African-Americans... But I didn't know much about it, and so I tried for a week or so to gather what was happening, and I did the best I could. And then we went to the conference, and it was tough for some people because they hadn't really ever interacted with others from different backgrounds. And they kind of forced you to do that. You know, you were living, you would often be rooming with an African-American and you were white and all that sort of thing. So, you were integrated quickly and ate together and had working groups together and as a result of that, things came out pretty well, as you might guess with a conference. Afterwards we created a more formal EEO committee and the first EEO coordinator was appointed. But the thing I want to say on this that probably was the most important to me was that if you can't find a way to know what's really going on as opposed to what people are saying is going on, you can't really deal with that issue very well at all. And there was, at that time, as I recall, sort of an informal EEO group that a fellow by the name of Al Barnes [NLM reference librarian] was chairing. Now, most of the librarians know, of course, that he was in a very technical position and rose to the professional position. He did it the hard way, starting as a library technician and becoming a professional by taking a test. I knew that this guy had the pulse on what was going on. And so I made sure that every week or two, he came to my office and told me what's really going on. He and I got to have a good rapport. So I said, "Al, you know, if there's a problem, tell me what it is, so I can actually deal with it." Because stuff that comes out of a committee, you know, it's kind of general, sometimes it isn't really where the action is. And so, I have to say that I think he carried as much influence on what we did with EEO policies and the fairness to employees as anyone. I considered that a very big activity when I first came on, and we had to do something about it and we established some in-house training things and so forth. And I think things got somewhat better.

The other thing that came up and dominated my life, not only as executive officer, but later on as deputy, is cost recovery. It just was there all the time, because we were charging for services.

SK: Online services, you are talking about?

KS: Well, we were charging for tapes...

SK: Yeah, but we are not talking about reading room public services.

KS: No, I am talking about bibliographic services. And so, I got exposed to this Elsevier battle right off the bat. This isn't something that I had seen before, but Marty Cummings said to me, "Well, you know, we have to really watch out for Elsevier because there's this guy over there." I think his name was Pierre Vinken or something like that. He was chairman of Elsevier, who came over, according to



Marty, and I don't know this, but according to Marty, offered to divide up the world [for bibliographic services]. Elsevier would handle Excerpta Medica to service Europe and whatever, and we would be allowed to handle North America, or South America maybe, I don't know, with MEDLARS. And Marty—let me say this in nice words—Marty told them that wasn't going to happen. And so I knew there was a battle going on already. But Elsevier doesn't give up very easily, and they actually organized a bunch of lawyers to essentially try to sue us on a number of things, whether it be tape pricing or whatever it was. That sort of morphed into, I think at least their suggestion, a number of studies. I am not going to go into details, but there was an OTA (Office of Technology Assessment) study, there was one for the General Accounting Office, and there was even one from within the department [HEW]. And they were all looking at the question of recovering marginal costs versus full costs. You have to remember that at about that time the administration was calling for recovery of full cost, so we weren't unfairly competing with the private sector, was their argument. And our argument, of course, was that the US taxpayers had already paid for their government services and therefore should get it essentially at the cost of access. There were two things that helped our position that most other agencies didn't really have. One was the NLM Act itself, which allowed NLM to charge or not to charge for services, exchange or whatever, words to that effect anyway. And that allowed the [NLM] Board of Regents to advise the secretary [of HEW] about pricing things and make suggestions and get them either approved or disapproved by the secretary. The big one, of course, was that there should be equal access and equal price for online services wherever you were. So the guy in Montana pays the same as the guy in Bethesda. And that has been a costing principle that has lasted up until services changed to be for free—that prices should recover only the cost of access, not the full cost.

SK: And by full cost, people meant the cost of acquiring the journal, the cost of cataloging it, shelving it...

KS: Yes, basically.

SK: ...things that were considered basic NLM services that we would do whether we had databases or not.

KS: Yes, basically all those things that go into the creation of a database, which is what you just succinctly mentioned. And those were the things that they wanted our pricing to cover. So, that story goes on and on.

SK: Let me ask a related question. Was this one of the ways you got to know people on the congressional staff, in dealing with the cost recovery issues? Because you mentioned there was a lot of congressional interest and department interest, and one of your great successes, in my opinion, was your ability to work effectively with staff and the two houses of Congress.

KS: Well, that's true. I worked with both the appropriations staff and with authorization committee staff, who were being hammered by Elsevier in terms of what NLM was doing. I will just tell you one little story here, maybe this is a good time to tell it. I was called to the Hill to meet supposedly with a congressman about this whole business of cost recovery, I thought. But that really wasn't the subject when I got down there. I walked into the room to see what I thought was the congressman, but I didn't see the congressman. I was put in a room. Fortunately, I had the legislative guy from the department with me; normally, I went myself. But this time I brought him, which was a good thing. It was a room full of eight or ten lawyers, two of whom were committee people, the other seven or eight were Elsevier lawyers. And they started in peppering me with questions. Of course, this was a committee that we at NLM wanted to be relatively friendly with. I didn't really want to answer their questions, but I felt I had to do something that wouldn't irritate everybody. This went on for some time, and finally I said, "Look, I came down here to meet with a congressman, and I am meeting with lobbyists from Elsevier, and I think this is inappropriate at this point." And I turned to the legislative guy, and he said, "Yes." And so the committee staff guy said, "Well, we have one more question." I said, "Okay, one question and that's it." I really said that to him. And he said, "Okay, we want to know whether you went to the Justice Department and got Elsevier registered as an international..."

SK: Lobbyist?

KS: Yes, lobbyist essentially. They call it something else [foreign agents registration], but that's essentially what it was. I said, "No, I never had anything to do with contacting the Justice Department." And I said, "I'm outta here." And we got up and left, because I didn't want the follow-up question, "Did you have anything to do with it?"... [Actually a senior member of the NLM staff was the one who did make the contact with Justice, but not me.]

SK: Can I ask, were you, at that point, already the deputy or were you still the executive officer?

KS: I was the executive officer.

SK: That's a big responsibility for the executive officer to have.

KS: I believe I was, it was close to that period. So, let me finish the answer to the executive officer thing, because the other thing that I consider my biggest activity, and the one I really enjoyed the most was the construction of the Lister Hill building. That was Marty's dream, he wanted that building and he finally got it, even after he almost retired because he thought he wasn't going to get it. And then things turned around the last minute, which was a great thing, because God knows he worked harder than any person I can ever think of trying to get that building. He proved to me then that you have to go day in and day out, and I bet it was at least three or four days a week that he was either contacting somebody by phone or on the Hill trying to

tell them advantages of the Lister Hill building. Now he was smart enough when the bill passed, the joint resolution [that designated the Lister Hill National Center for Biomedical Communications in 1968], to have had a special event out here with, I think it was John Sparkman [senator from Alabama], and then he had the [Alabama] delegation and all the rest of these people that he really knew how to schmooze. And he got them directly involved in the Lister Hill Center. Of course, he knew personally Senator Lister Hill [of Alabama] who had retired by this time.

SK: Now, my recollection is the initial idea for the building could have started perhaps in the late '60s or early '70s and it took at least ten years before the building was actually constructed.

KS: Yes, when I came here there had been three feasibility studies for a building. Some included moving NMAC (National Medical Audiovisual Center) up from Atlanta, some didn't, some were square buildings, and some were more rectangular buildings. It was O'Connor & Kilham, I believe was the name of the company, who did all of these initial feasibility studies, because they had done the main library. But they didn't get the contract, in part, because of some political influence from the senator from Pennsylvania. It was J. Roy Carroll from Philadelphia who got to actually do the design of the building. My role was construction manager from the inside. And Cummings made me that. He said, "You are responsible, from the programmatic side, to deal with the GSA [General Services Administration] on-site manager." At that time also, NIH had its own engineering department directed by Ross Holliday, who happened to also be a friend of Marty's, because they used to live near each other on the campus here. Marty lived on the campus for a while. And so we had Ross Holliday's people, Mary Craig and others over there, from the architectural side, and we had a very good... I don't remember his name, but a very good GSA contractor. I mean he was a manager, he was really good. He tried to teach me what kind of things he had to look at, so I could understand when he called, what things were about. The one instance I remember the most, and there were a lot of them, one morning he called me. At that point they had just dug the foundation, about to pour the concrete for the caissons or main pilasters, they called them. F. O. Day had the contract to bring in the cement, and eight trucks arrived that morning. The GSA guy went out and tested the concrete, and it didn't meet specs. So he called me up and said, "Come out, I gotta tell you about what we got out here. We got eight trucks out there, pissed off, wanting to get out to the site, and I'm holding them up until you and I have talked about this." And he says, "It's not off that much, but it's off enough that we could just end up with cracks at some point." I said, "That's enough for me, turn the buggers around and send them home." Well, F. O. Day Company was furious, and we got calls and everything else. I suspect they just took that concrete and dumped it someplace else, but I don't know. But it didn't get dumped here, that was the point. So I really learned then how important the specs were, particularly to the engineer. I mean, I never got down to that kind of detail, but they did and that was really important that they did. So, that was part of it.

But the other part, as you mentioned, was securing approval for the building, and Cummings was doing a lot of this, but I was doing a lot of it with him. I would go to see the staff; he tended to go to the principals. Fran Humphrey helped us to get in to see a lot of people. Frances Humphrey Howard [who worked at NLM as special assistant to the associate director for extramural programs], you know, was the sister of Hubert Humphrey. We had to get to the appropriations people. I made most of the contacts to Norris Cotton, who was a senator in New Hampshire and the ranking Republican on the Senate Appropriations Committee. My father knew him vaguely, but it was enough to get me in to talk with him. And he was very helpful to us. And so, I did a lot of that kind of stuff. I got into a lot of the politics of it, which I liked, as an exec officer. Managing this thing was really fun. I went from the beginning to the end, up and down those ladders and everything else, trying to see what was happening. And even after all that I still got the doors wrong.

SK: The front doors?

KS: The back doors, the famous, as they always refer to them, the “Smith doors.” They never worked going from the garage. They always said those are “Smith doors.” It was kind of a joke, but it was true.

SK: I don’t want to jump ahead, but are there lessons to be learned, since we have been struggling to get a new building, a third building now here at NLM for, it must be going on ten years, and can’t seem to get approvals. Now, obviously, you mentioned Cummings going almost daily or several times a week. I don’t know that we are doing that, maybe the times have changed in Congress and that’s not the way you do business anymore, but are there other lessons learned?

KS: Well, the problems are similar in this sense. If you got NIH behind a building, it’s relatively easy to get it. I mean, like the Porter Building, over there on Old Georgetown Road. But, if you are not on the top of the list, you are in trouble. We were about ninth or tenth on the list for the Lister Hill building. And that’s why, when we finally got it, and finally built it, Marty viewed it as his building... That was the feeling, because we felt so bad about the way they had tried to block it, even in the last stages. And so what does that tell you? Well, it tells you that you have to continually work at it and hope for a break. I mean, I have to tell you, this doesn’t happen by just working hard, you have to have a break. I don’t know what’s happened since the design [for the NLM third building]. I know what happened during the design, because I worked on it. And I worked with, and Lindberg [Donald A. B. Lindberg, appointed NLM director in 1984] worked with, the congressional committees. At that point, Sue Quantius, who used to be the budget officer at NIH, was the new clerk, like the head person, of the House Appropriations subcommittee. And every time we went to people on that committee, it would end up with her, she would call NIH, and NIH would say, “No, we don’t want that building.” So, we had to find a way around that. And so our friend turned out to be Congressman Young [Republican from Florida] who was the head of appropriations, one level above the subcommittees, Bill Young. And I have to tell you, one of the

things that helped was the Medical Library Association and Carla Funk [appointed MLA executive director in 1992] in particular. Because MLA had an award for government policy work, and they had just made the award, and we were at a point where we needed some help, and she created a special award for Young. He was pulled off of the House floor and was presented the award by her when we were there... There were a lot of things in play here. The fact of the matter is, he was convinced that this was an important building to have. Tom Harkin [Democratic senator from Iowa] was always on the Senate side, so we worked with a staff person over there...because we had to get support on both sides. So, it turned out he said, "I can get the Senate to go along if you can get the House to go along." So, [Young] put the language [into a government-wide supplemental appropriations bill] along with, I think it was \$10 million, and said, "You guys design this building." And that's how we got [the funding for design]. But it's the same kind of thing with construction. The only difference is it's a heck of a different number. Because at that time we were talking, I think it was about \$130 million, to construct the building. And that has just ballooned. It's well over \$200 million now. It's very difficult to get those kinds of funds, particularly in these times. I think the best opportunity probably was when the stimulus funding came out [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009]. I just don't know what happened or whether that was even considered, because a lot of that funding was for grants. You have to kind of look for openings, you know? And I thought that was one. I also thought, and I discussed this with Don, that since we had a great architect, we really did have a good architect up there in Boston on this [Perry Dean Rogers], that maybe there was a way we could adjust the size of the building, put off some of the stack kinds of things that needed to be done, maybe do that later or whatever. The stacks, you remember, went underneath the new building. There was always the option they could go out in front of the NLM building [and that possibly could have been accomplished at a later time].

SK: Toward Rockville Pike.

KS: Yeah, and so I was thinking maybe we should go back—that was an older plan, go back to a plan like that, which might have saved some money and maybe that might have made it more appealing, but the architect's design was beautiful... I think Lindberg felt that was the best design and he ought to go for it. And we tried a number of times. We saw the Republican senator from Mississippi, Thad Cochran, a couple of times. And he was trying to be helpful, but the budgets have been tougher, as you know, and it's just harder to do it.

SK: We have a few more minutes for this session, and maybe we can talk about how you made the transition to deputy director, and then the next time we get together, I suggest we pick up with some of the issues as deputy director and then get into the MLA involvement. So, let me lead with this question: deputy directors at NIH institutes, almost without exception, have a research background or a medical career. We did have Scott Adams, of course, who was a deputy director here, without a PhD or MD. And we had Mel Day, and we have one now, Betsy Humphreys. And Scott

Adams and Betsy Humphreys were also librarians. So, Bo Mider retired and there was an opening.

KS: Mel Day became the deputy.

SK: Mel Day took over. Then Mel Day left to become head of the National Technical Information Service, another government agency, and there was an opening. Were you encouraged to apply? Did everybody just assume you were going to get it?

KS: I think everybody assumed I wasn't going to get it. For the very reason, well, for at least the reasons you mentioned. I wasn't an MD, which is normally what they wanted in there, or maybe a medical librarian, but MD had been fairly recent with Bo and all that. Some of what I was doing as executive officer really, as you pointed out before, were deputy kinds of things that many would turn to a deputy to do. And Marty, I have to say, Marty gave me the biggest break. He felt, I guess, that I could do it. And at that time, there wasn't any formal competitive process for that job. He picked me. And the reason he could do that is I received the last 208(g) appointment on the NIH campus.

SK: And you had better explain what 208(g) is.

KS: 208(g) [part of the Public Health Service Act] is a special authority for direct appointments without having to go through the normal SES process.

SK: SES is Senior Executive Service.

KS: Now they have Title 42 appointments, which is essentially the same. But Title 42s are mostly for scientists, although I had one of those for a short period of time... But anyway, Marty called me in one day and he knew that, number one, I had just been out looking at a job as the executive officer of the National Heart Institute. Lowell Weicker [Senator from Connecticut who became head of Research!America] was thinking about hiring me down at Research!America, or at least I was in competition down there. And Marty felt that the deputy director job ought to have been SES, I think. And he figured this was the way to get me an SES and thought I could do the job. Now, I think a lot of people thought I couldn't, and some people told me they didn't think I'd make it. And I have to tell you, I remember those people. But at any rate, I was a little afraid; I mean this was a big job for me. I didn't know if I could do this or not. And I knew there were a couple of things I had to do to satisfy him. I had to somehow make inroads into the biggest constituency of the library, which was the medical librarians, which I also wasn't, and for which I give you a lot of credit, Sheldon, and I will be happy to do that as we talk tomorrow. But it's true. You introduced me to a lot of medical librarians around this country, and you helped me a lot with that Regional Medical Library Program, which I got right off the bat, as you recall. And Marty also believed in immersion. I wasn't in the job two weeks, and he went off to Australia for two or three months. So, I was not only deputy, I was acting director. And if you don't make the swim through the water with that, you are

done. And I have to say the person who helped me the most was Hack [Harold] Schoolman, and I give him a lot of credit because I'm sure Hack had some desires to be the deputy or might have thought about being it. But he never held that against me, he helped me instead. We had a lot of big computer procurements at that time that were going on, and I don't remember all the details, but it was IBM versus UNIVAC, and he was most helpful.

SK: So, to get to Hack for a minute. I think Hack was a special assistant to the director at that time...

KS: He was deputy director for research and education.

SK: Okay, deputy director.

KS: And we worked together, had been working together when I was executive officer, but when I was deputy, obviously I was working with him more.

SK: And, of course, he was an MD.

KS: And he was an MD. I gave him a lot of credit, and there was a time when I got a chance to pay it back. And that was when Marty [retired], and I was asked to be the acting director.

SK: Were you, I didn't know that.

KS: Yes, I got a call from the NIH director, and I said, "You'd be better served on this kind of a job with a medical doctor," and I said, "And Harold Schoolman would be good." So, they put him on as acting director, and they put me on the search committee. That's what happened.

SK: ...This was around 1979 to 1980 that you became the deputy.

KS: It had to be 1980.

SK: Okay, I became the RML coordinator in 1979 and I was reporting initially to you. Eventually, I got reassigned to another area, to Extramural Programs.

KS: So, maybe it was 1979 or 1980. It was around late '79. [Smith was appointed deputy director in 1979.]

SK: So, could you talk for a few minutes about your introduction to medical librarianship, because you said you didn't have much knowledge of the constituency we were serving in the medical library community.

KS: Yeah, right.

SK: So, you felt there was this need, and I just happened to be assigned to your office and, of course, was a medical librarian.

KS: Well, yes, I felt there was a need, because I knew right off the bat that there would be great doubts about me, and it's realistic. I mean what the heck, he's not even a medical librarian, and he's a freaking administrator that they put in this job. What are they thinking? And NIH didn't want to put me in the job. Cummings said, "I don't care what you want, he's in the job." I mean, that's why I owe a lot to Marty Cummings. He's a tough guy and he would tell them and, right or wrong, that's what he told them. So I have to, particularly on this day, when he died today, I can't help but be thinking more about what the man really did for me. [Cummings died earlier on the day of this interview, September 1, 2011.] So, in terms of medical librarianship, at least as I recall it, the first thing I did...are we doing this? Do you want to do this now?

SK: Yes, we will take ten minutes or so, and then we will close for today.

KS: That's fine. The first exposure to the medical library world was at the Medical Library Association [annual] meeting, it was almost virtually within weeks, as I remember. And so, it was in Hawaii [1979].

SK: Not a bad...

KS: Not a bad deal. So, I said, "Well, what the heck. I'm going to get to go to Hawaii. What the heck, tough assignment. I'm going to be able to just bask on the beach." It didn't work that way. I spent more time with the MLA Board of Directors, the legislative committees, the RML directors, and all that. And I think I may have met the RML directors just before that, I'm not even sure. And so I spent all my time being introduced at all these groups and trying to say something to each one of them. All I could talk about was the things I knew something about, which wasn't a whole lot, about medical libraries and trying to really go out of my way to try and say hello to people and get to know them.

SK: Who was the executive director, do you recall, for MLA?

KS: Yes, it was Ray Palmer. [Shirley Echelman was executive director, 1979-1981, and Raymond Palmer, 1982-1991.]

SK: Ray Palmer, right.

KS: And so he was fine. I had introduced Ray, early on, to Bradie Metheny down at the Monocle Restaurant on the Hill. Bradie was a pretty active lobbyist at that time. Because I felt that one thing that MLA could do was what they had done in the past, in some ways, if you looked at the early '56/'65 legislation [1956 National Library of Medicine Act; 1965 Medical Library Assistance Act], they had the Janet Does of the world, and Mary Louise Marshall, and names like that, that were out there testifying



on the Hill. There hadn't been much of that going on for a long time, hadn't been a presence up there. MLA was, in my view, underestimating what they could possibly do. So, I thought, well, if I could get to the MLA executive director, maybe he would buy into this, and he did. Bradie ended up doing a lot of training of librarians as to how you might deal with the Hill and what kinds of props you ought to take to the Hill, what kinds of things you ought to do. And I would say it to anybody, and I made a few people mad at this, but in the final analysis, the Medical Library Association people, particularly those on the Governmental Relations Committee, and some in the [RML] network, did more up on the Hill with the right people than AMIA [American Medical Informatics Association]. AMIA has their lobbyists finally now, and they do fine things with policy and electronic records, but they never talked, in my view, to the right people. The right people go with the money, it's that simple. Now, it's harder these days, because nobody knows who is actually determining who deals out the money. It's the budget committees that are as important as the appropriation committees. But anyway, back in those days, that was a big issue, and so that was one of my ways to get in with the MLA Board of Directors and others and talk about what I thought they could do. And they kind of liked that idea. And, as you know, I met with the Regional Medical Library directors in that NLM boardroom over there, and I had no idea whether they were going to eat me alive. You had prepared me well to go in there and fortunately were there to answer the questions that I probably didn't know the answer to. But I think that meeting helped me, because they were leaders around the country, not just RML directors, they were directors of major libraries. And the Bob Braudes and people like that, I think they decided to give me a chance, I don't know.

SK: Yes, it would have been people like Louise Darling, Gerry Oppenheimer...

KS: ...I did see [Louise] at the MLA meeting, and she was very nice to me, and I had a chance to talk with her, and she gave me some good advice about things that I ought to think about from NLM's perspective, NLM's relationship to MLA, and to make sure that that communication stayed open. So, I really thought that that was important. And we had that MLA/NLM Liaison Committee... But we got it going, because it had been sort of going into dormancy, as I remember. We got that going, and that was helpful, because then people had a chance to come and say what their problems were. And that was also at a tough time, because, as I remember, this was when we were just beginning in this transition to help medical professionals directly do their searching. And, you know, there are a lot of librarians who had been trained here and around the country in command searching, and they felt somewhat threatened by this. I can remember a little bit later, they actually wrote to us and said, you know, "You have PubMed and all this, and they are okay, but you are not answering some of our questions." And then I think we had something called the Bethesda 11 [1978 meeting of hospital librarians and National Library of Medicine staff] or something like that, who came, and man they were ready, and they told us exactly what the problems were, and I think we made some adjustments as a result of that meeting.

SK: Right, we are going to pick up with more about your involvement with MLA and the [RML] network the next time we get together. But I am going to end today's session.

[*Digital audio file LS100038*]

SK: This is Sheldon Kotzin continuing the oral history interview with Kent Smith. Today is October 5, 2011. This is the second part. The first part of the interview was September 1, 2011... We are going to continue the discussion where we left off, when Kent had been appointed the deputy director of the National Library of Medicine. So Kent, my first question today is to ask you to talk a little bit about the major issues that you faced during your role as deputy.

KS: There were a number of them, but I think probably the two that are worth mentioning is the large effort which took a considerable amount of time—the reinvention of information systems here at the library and how that was tied in with the reinvention lab. And I say “reinvention lab” just so you understand during the Clinton administration, they created under Al Gore, the vice president, something called the National Performance Review. [The National Performance Review was initiated in 1993; it was renamed the National Partnership for Reinventing Government in 1998.] Each agency, including NIH, was asked what they could do to be part of this, because they wanted all of the organizations to be part of it. In NIH's great tradition, they said, “Oh, we do research; we don't want to be bothered with any of that administrative stuff.” But they did ask each of the institutes to see if anybody would be willing to do it. And I thought, actually, that we might be able to take advantage of it. And so we talked with the PHS [Public Health Service] executive officer, and we made a proposal, because we were at the stage where we were about to reinvent our information systems, and so, we thought, well maybe we can get some special delegation, some special activities that might help us, and be able to make a little bit of lemonade out of these lemons. It turned out that we actually got some specific delegations in contracts administration, which would speed up a number of things. We also got special language in the NLM Act that says that you can provide personal service contracts, and more importantly, that you can carry over from one budget year to the next, up to three or four million or something like that, for improvement of information systems. That was particularly put in there, because we knew we were building information systems, you never knew where the decision point was. If the decision point looks like it's just into the next fiscal year, you don't want to make a decision prior to that. This gave you that flexibility. And so that's the reason we put those things together. Now, as to the reinvention [lab] itself, it really consisted of the internal support systems, the retrieval and user access systems. I won't spend much time on the internal support, except to say that Betsy Humphreys handled most of that for the committee that was formed to look at it, along with Joe Hutchins and Dianne McCutcheon. And, of course, the whole deal was to replace the ELHILL system, which was on this big mainframe. And so...

SK: The ELHILL system being the retrieval system.

KS: The retrieval system, yes. And the idea was to get off this big mainframe into more distributed systems. We didn't know exactly how to do that, so we began to look around the country, go on trips actually. I remember going on one to the University of Massachusetts, and there were others, to look at what was going on in research and the universities. And after much searching, quite frankly, I had a discussion with David Lipman [director of the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI)] and asked him his views on this, and he basically said, "Hey look, we have got a thing called Entrez retrieval system right here and maybe you could actually use that." And it turns out that we did. And through that, then PubMed eventually became the access system. So, I think, that was a major thing that was very helpful, and the only thing we had to figure out is sort of how to sell it. And you recall, I'm sure you recall, Sheldon, that there were a number of database producers that weren't exactly happy. So, we found a way to deal with that by actually getting some support on the Hill. We had this big event on the Hill with Vice President Gore and Senators [Arlen] Specter [Republican at the time from Pennsylvania] and Harkin. So we got both parties and the vice president involved with this new, free, open access system. But this all really came out initially of the reinvention lab.

SK: Yeah, it's interesting to hear the tie-in between the reinvention and moving to the Internet, because I have never, myself, thought how those came together. It didn't just happen overnight. There was a transition period because there was another product, if you remember, called Internet Grateful Med.

KS: In fact, they ran in parallel, Internet Grateful Med and PubMed ran in parallel here for a while. The big thing, though, as you point out, the World Wide Web made a difference, because it significantly reduced our cost. We no longer had the issue of having to pay for these value-added networks, which was the major portion for reasons of pricing to begin with. So, by the time we eliminated that, and the collection of fees, which was done through the National Technical Information Service, we were down to a pretty small amount of money. We had to, of course, convince OMB [Office of Management and Budget] that it was the right way to go, but it clearly was. I think the only drawback at that time, as I remember, was that Dr. Lindberg felt that he was losing one thing—mainly he couldn't really identify the actual users, which was an invaluable thing to have. So, he could only approximate. But, when you consider the value of going to this free system and the great increase in the usage of the system, for more people in the community and the public, it was certainly worth the deal.

SK: Now, you didn't know anything about Entrez and you probably hardly ever even heard the word before you approached Lipman. So, how did you and others have the confidence that it could replace the ELHILL system, which had been running since the 1960s?

KS: Well, first of all, there was a demonstration project already in practice and being actually used a little bit over there in NCBI, because they had moved from distributing disks to researchers and had begun now with the Entrez system to actually try online services. And so, number one, there was a product that you could at least look at, although it wasn't as robust at that time, maybe. And, second, quite frankly, sometimes you have to rely on your gut and go with who you think is going to work closely with you and within the organization, and there was no question that that was a group that had some very bright people and was probably capable of doing it. So, it was a little bit of a gamble.

SK: Is there a story behind the name PubMed?

KS: It's just publications and medicine. Grateful Med was another tricky name. As I recall, we had a little contest to figure that one out, and I think the Grateful Dead or whatever had something to do with that.

SK: Yes, the story I heard was that a list was prepared for Dr. Lindberg to choose from, and there were a number of names on it and somebody allegedly added Grateful Dead near the end of the list, Grateful Med I should say, at the end of the list on nothing more than a whim, and he thought it was going to be catchy enough...

KS: That's right, I think that's correct.

SK: So, one of the significant issues was reinvention and the transition to the Entrez system and the PubMed database. Were there other significant major issues you want to mention?

KS: Well, yes, actually I think the biggest thing, one of the great things that Don Lindberg brought to the institution was, and still is, really a very sophisticated and robust planning system. Not that there hadn't been plans before, but this was taken on as a real night and day kind of operation around here when he first came on board. We ended up trying to figure out exactly how to divide up the institution to look at various parts of it. It turned out we had sort of five pieces as we looked at the plan [1986 *NLM Long Range Plan*, published 1987], and there were some hundred or more leaders who came in to do the planning. But one of the planning panels that will always stick out in his mind and in mine, and the one that we thought would probably be the least visible, turned out to be the factual databases panel. That was panel three [obtaining factual information from data bases]. And on panel three was a fellow by the name of Dr. Allan Maxam. After hearing a lot about the toxicology database and so forth, right after one of the coffee breaks, I remember well, he went to the blackboard in the room and started telling people about biotechnology and genes and chromosomes and all these kinds of things and explaining to them that that was really where the new revolution in science was going. And after all, that was data and information that would be important to science, and that perhaps we ought to think about taking advantage of that.

SK: And who was Maxam, besides being a member of this committee?

KS: Well, he was from Harvard—a Harvard geneticist in the medical school, well known, and he just basically explained the genetic revolution to people and it was something that was new at that time. Biotechnology was new at that time. Congress didn't understand what biotechnology was.

SK: So, was this in the early '90s?

KS: No, this would have been around '85-'86, because it was just before the 1986 planning panel study. So, the board, I think, looked upon this as an opportunity.

SK: The Board of Regents.

KS: The Board of Regents. One of these opportunities that doesn't come along very often. So they seized upon it and said maybe we ought to have a center to do this. My involvement was really basically twofold. One was involved with Lindberg in formulating how the planning process should work. We talked to the National Eye Institute, which had a very good planning process. We talked to some others, before we laid out the planning. So, I was involved a lot with that. And then, later on, I was involved with obtaining congressional support for the biotech center [National Center for Biotechnology Information]. And I think it's important to recognize the important decision that Don Lindberg made at this juncture after he had this report, because there were a lot of other good planning and panel reports. And you must remember, Don Lindberg came from a medical informatics community, and there were some very intelligent folks on some of the other panels who were saying, "What you really need are centers of excellence in medical informatics." That was their goal. That was what they hoped to take away from this. And Don was supportive of that, but he and I had a long discussion about this, and I said to him, "You know, my feeling is that although these are both worthy endeavors, if you want to sell it on the Hill, you had better pick one." And I felt that, and he did as well, that biotechnology was a far better sell than centers of excellence, which sounded like yet another group of centers or something. So we went with that and the rest is sort of history.

We went to Congress, and we saw Claude Pepper [Democratic congressman, as well as earlier senator, from Florida], who was a great, great help in setting up the center, and very supportive all the way by asking us to help organize a hearing. The Friends of the National Library of Medicine were very instrumental in bringing some patients in who had benefited from biotechnology to get things rolling. Pepper then asked that we develop a statement, so that he could, as he said, explain biotechnology to congressmen at a fifth grade level, so that they could actually understand it. Dan Masys [director of the Lister Hill National Center for Biomedical Communications] and myself, and a writer by the name of Natalie Spingarn, created something that was called "Talking One Genetic Language." Turned out he liked it and actually used the whole text in a speech at Florida State University, and the only

reason I know that is he called for Lindberg one morning to come down and tell him about how we were doing. Lindberg wasn't there, and so he told me to come on down. As he said, "Dr. Smith, come on down and tell me about this." And I thought, "Oh my God, is he really going to ask me a medicine question? I'm in trouble." But he didn't. I went into his office and he said, "I received the document. I really think it was good. This has got the makings of a great piece of legislation. Now we need to put it into a bill." He pressed a button and in about fifteen or twenty people came into the room, and he assigned everyone in the room a responsibility to do things, including people on our staff today.

SK: Part of the NLM staff.

KS: Yes, and Kathy Cravedi and Melanie Modlin. They worked very well on this and they put together a bill, and it's a long story about how it got through, but eventually it did make it as part of the NIH reauthorization, and then NCBI was formed [in 1988] and it's been a great success. It started with eight people and \$4 million, and it's 350 people and over \$100 million now, so...

SK: So, talk in a little bit more detail about NCBI and a sense that when you started talking to Claude Pepper and his staff, did you have the notion of a separate program area, a center, another component of NLM? Was there any talk that it would be part of the Lister Hill Center, because Dan Masys, who you mentioned, was the director of the Lister Hill Center?

KS: No, right from the beginning, he was proposing from the first hearing that we establish a center for biotechnology information. Now, early on, there was some discussion about maybe his name would be connected to this.

SK: His, meaning Pepper.

KS: Pepper. And I don't think that made a difference to him necessarily, because actually NIH named Building 31 after him just before this legislation finally passed, so it didn't seem appropriate to do it anyway. But, he was for an actual center. In preparation for this, there was none in the library, so it fell to the Lister Hill Center as a logical place to try and help develop it. Dan Masys was very good at this, and Dennis Benson and other people were already doing some small systems in this area. So there was a biotech program within Lister Hill Center, it wasn't large, but it was beginning there. And then after we got the legislation, then of course we created this separate division and then shortly thereafter hired David Lipman.

SK: Was there any story of interest involved with the recruitment and hiring of David Lipman?

KS: Well, I don't recall the whole thing, but there were a number of candidates that were proposed. In fact, one person who had been doing lectures in biotechnology here over in the Lister Hill Center building, I don't remember the names. But I do

remember that one of the names was David Lipman, who was in the [National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases], anyway, he was in an intramural research branch over there.

SK: He was already at NIH.

KS: He was already at NIH, and he had already been involved with genetic research and development of what eventually became the BLAST system for comparing sequences and things like that. He had had some early work in that, so he clearly was the person probably on the campus who knew most about it. And one of the great things you have to say about a guy like Dan Masys, he said, "You know, I really have been happy to have been involved with the biotech creation and center," but he said, "You know, you really need a good molecular biologist, and that's not me, to really do it right." And so David's name came up. Initially there was talk about [considering him for] two branches or three branches [within NCBI] and that David was a young guy at that time and maybe he should be considered for one of the branch chiefs as well as the division chief [of NCBI], and you know, quite frankly, I think David was interested in making a move if it was big enough. So, Lindberg thought it through and decided he would be a good choice, and there is no question that he was and is. I mean it would never have gotten to the level that it is today without his leadership. There's no question in my mind. There are a lot of bright people over there, there are a lot of good technical people over there, there are good policy people over there, but there's only one leader over there.

SK: When you say "over there"...

KS: At NCBI.

SK: Yes, but it is part of NLM, it's not over there, like on another part of the campus, it's...

KS: It's part of NLM. I say "over there," because occasionally I consult there and I guess I got it in my mind that way. But, no, absolutely, and I think it's had a major benefit to NLM to have had that, and I give Don Lindberg a lot of credit, because I think he essentially realized the aspirations that he had for the center that it would somehow pull together the various fragmented efforts, if you will, in the field and create this unique resource. That was his vision and that has come true.

SK: Those are two major issues, the reinvention and the transition to the Entrez system for searching, and the planning, which led, in one sense, to the formation of NCBI. You talked a little bit about Claude Pepper and his staff. Were there any other people, the name Frances Humphrey Howard comes to mind. Was she involved with that center at all?

KS: Well, she certainly was. She, of course, knew a lot of people in town and knew Claude Pepper personally. And so she, along with a delegation of the Friends of the

Library, which was headed by Tom Bryant at the time, were involved with the actual request to come see him. And so, yes, she did have an influence in making that contact, and Pepper took it from there essentially. You have to get in the door, is what she pointed out, and that's true, and she helped do that. So, I give her a lot of credit, and of course, the day that he had a hearing on the bill itself, not when he brought in the patients, but when he actually had a meeting on the bill, which had all the big agencies, HHS, OMB, the NIH, and everybody else in that room, he came in the room and came by, took Fran Howard's hand, and put her up there next to him. I can remember it well, because Jim Wyngaarden, who was the NIH director at the time, tapped me on the shoulder and he said, "Doesn't she work for you?" I said, "She does, but she has a special status in this town."

SK: So, you are talking about being up on where the Congress was...

KS: Yes, and he asked her for an opening statement, and she did one. So, it was a unique relationship and I'm glad you brought that up, Sheldon, because I would have been remiss not to have mentioned her contribution, which was very large.

SK: Now, she was the sister, of course, of Hubert Humphrey. Did Hubert have any interactions with the library in any way?

KS: He didn't have a lot, but he had a lot of interest in information systems, and when I was involved with the National Federation of Abstracting and Indexing Services, we had major conferences, and he was more than willing, and once again in part because of Fran's contact, to come and speak. And, of course, he was a very eloquent speaker. Fran also arranged at one time for me to have Al Gore down there on a panel for NFAIS, you may remember. And so those kinds of contacts make a difference, because it's sometimes hard to get people, particularly out of town.

SK: Before we go to any other major issues, the meeting you described of going down to this conference room on the Hill and having Gore there, who was then vice president, and having Specter and what's his name from Iowa...

KS: Harkin.

SK: Harkin. ...Is in my mind quite memorable, and I'm sure yours. We still seem to use videos from that meeting even today at different presentations. What's involved in arranging a meeting with a vice president and all that goes into that? Did you have any role in that? Who takes the responsibility?

KS: Well, just a small role. You deal not with him, of course. You deal with his major assistant press secretary, whatever you want to call it. We were able to do that through contacts and get to her and she—actually, it was a woman, I know that—and she wanted an explanation of the value of what we were doing, and so we explained that this [free online access] would provide medical information to not only researchers and practitioners, but the general public and that this would be a major



thing that the vice president would want to be involved in. And since the vice president headed up the National Performance Review, the reinvention labs, this fit perfectly into that. So, it was through that kind of connection that we got to him. We have always had some pretty good relations with both Senators Specter and Harkin and their staff people, and I knew most of them. And so they, of course, were happy to have a vice president come up there [to the Hill], and they were enthusiastic as well. So, once we got them together, it was a great ceremony, and we had some patients there, and we also had a demonstration by David Lipman with Gore, which was quite amusing and it was a great event. And, as I said before, it virtually eliminated the kinds of protests that you might have gotten from database producers. When you have got the [vice] president and the heads of both appropriations committees, you pretty much have got it locked up.

SK: Okay, unless you want to add anything to that, I would like to see if there are any other major issues that come to your mind when you were the deputy?

KS: There is one other one, but I will just briefly touch on it, and that is near the end of my term as deputy. We got involved, and the library has been greatly involved, in consumer health. And as you know, Sheldon, when we went around the country to regional libraries and resource libraries, we found plenty of people who were doing consumer health. The library community was way ahead of us on this, but to do national kinds of programs in consumer health takes some resources. Although Paul Rogers, a good friend of the library, for years would come out here during...

SK: And who was Paul Rogers?

KS: Paul Rogers was known as "Mr. Health," but he was the [Democratic] congressman from Florida who was involved with the health committees on the Hill. He was a good friend, as I say, of the library, and he would often come out actually when we had the pre-planning meeting, the last time I remember, the pre-planning meetings for the long-range plan. He said, well, I don't see consumer health on here. And he said, "You know, that's really what the people need to know, what's the best thing to do, and they need to have it in a way they can understand it." And we said, "We would like to do a lot of that," but it was a resource question and what can you reasonably do without a national system for delivery. Of course, the World Wide Web came along, and that provided an opportunity. But even before that, chairman of the Board of Regents [1980/81], Nick Davies, fine guy, who felt there was a need to do something about it, actually made a rather impassioned speech at the Board of Regents meeting on their [consumers'] behalf. But once the WWW came out, the opportunity was there. And so I said to Lindberg, "I think this may be a good topic for a retreat." We used to have staff retreats every once in a while to sort of see where we were and how we were doing. And he bought into the topic, and I have to say it got a lot of support, and it got support from the Friends of the Library. We worked with both the Public Library Association and the Medical Library Association, who were actually somewhat experts in this, having dealt with it, and they were involved with conferences and so forth. The real activity in creating

MedlinePlus and all that really fell to Library Operations. Betsy Humphreys spearheaded that effort with the Public Services Division, as I recall. So, I don't take any credit for that, only to say that I was pleased to be involved in creating the agenda for it, that's all.

SK: Let me ask about another activity that started after Dr. Lindberg came, but you would have been deputy, and actually continues through today, and that was UMLS, the Unified Medical Language System, and, of course, many other vocabularies since then, like SNOMED and ICD-9 and all these other things. I'm curious, I don't think you had much of a role in this, but did you have any role in the UMLS and his notion, did you even understand what he was talking about when he first came?

KS: When he first came and mentioned a Unified Medical Language System, I hadn't the foggiest idea what he was talking about. I remember him pushing it. In a very general way, I knew he was trying to come up with some special language that would help communication, but that was about the best that I could understand it. I remember he went on a campaign to try to get people on board with this. He had a meeting with [former NLM director] Brad Rogers, and Rogers essentially told him, "I don't know what you are wasting your time with this for." And he didn't get off to a roaring start with it, but he was persistent, because he knew that there were some advantages in it. And Harold Schoolman was very helpful initially in this and later Betsy Humphreys. So, there were a number of people who got involved in trying to do something, but when you went to the Hill, and we had to explain to Silvio Conte, what in the world a Unified Medical Language System was...

SK: And who was Silvio Conte?

KS: Silvio Conte [Republican from Massachusetts] was the ranking minority member on the House Appropriations subcommittee, and a very powerful one, who had a lot of interests in cost recovery and other things. But the Unified Medical Language System was one of the things we tried to explain to him, and we had all of these circles and so forth, and I could just see that the guy was quickly blurring over as we were talking about this. But we needed to show some progress, because up to that point, it was sort of trying to figure exactly how it should be laid out. We [Don and I] had actually traveled to AMA [American Medical Association] because some folks out in Chicago were dealing with SNOMED at the time. In fact, I think they would have given it to us for free at that time, we should have taken it probably. It sure cost a ton of money later. That's another story. But, the fact of the matter is, we had to show the committee something. So, we concocted that Grateful Med was one of the products of UMLS. And that one, they could understand. So that is how we got the money support, quite frankly. And then we go back to work and actually try to make it what Don really had envisioned. It's been a very big success, although I don't personally use it. I know that it's being integrated into some of the functions at NCBI, some of the databases at NCBI, and I guess around the country in a number of experiments, so I have to say that it came out quite well. Although, I confess, I didn't know what it was.

SK: I'd like to move on to talk about your interactions with the Medical Library Association if that's okay with you. We can talk a little bit about your management style maybe at the very end, if there's more to add. But, your early involvement with the Medical Library Association came shortly after you were named the deputy director, is that correct?... At some point, obviously you came back from Hawaii [the annual MLA meeting]; you must have sensed the need to know more about the Medical Library Association, at least the National Network of Libraries [of Medicine].

KS: Well, both. Yes, that's for sure. One of the things, of course, that I did know a good deal about was pricing of NLM's products and services and the whole public/private sector battle, and that was a great interest, of course, to MLA as well, because they certainly would be affected by it. So, I thought that was one of the early things that I should be involved with in speaking with them and trying to get them as a, if you want to call it, almost a pressure group to be involved with these kinds of issues. MLA, you know, if you look back at the history, as I did when I was involved with writing my Leiter lecture [2007], it was clear to me how involved medical librarians had been... But I hadn't really seen, recently, at that time, as much involvement as I thought, perhaps, MLA would like to be involved. So actually, I approached the executive director at that time, it was Ray Palmer, and asked whether he was interested in MLA being more involved in some legislative activities that could benefit, certainly, MLA. And he said he was, and so I actually had a meeting at the Monocle Restaurant at the foot of Capitol Hill with Bradie Metheny, who was a lobbyist on the Hill who helped NLM and other institutes on the campus. I introduced him to Ray Palmer, and I said, "I can't sit here with MLA and tell you how to help your cause, education, lobbying, whatever you want to call it," but I said, "Here's somebody who can." And so they actually hired Bradie as a legislative person to help show them how to go about doing this. Bradie had a long history of showing many organizations how to work with the Hill. And so, he did that, and I think that energized MLA and this certainly has intensified even stronger since then. Carla Funk is certainly dedicated to it and dedicated enough such that they actually not only hired a lobbyist after Bradie left but also have installed an office under Mary Langman to deal with these things. So, I always thought that was a very positive thing.

The other thing that I recall initially that we dealt with or that we discussed a number of times, and I think was pretty much a concern at MLA, although I could stand corrected on this, that there was a certain, it was collegial, but there was a certain tension, I would say, between academic libraries and the hospital libraries as to who was most influential in MLA and what kind of support they got. I thought the election of Lois Ann Colaanni [associate director for library operations at NLM, 1984-1998], as the president of MLA made a big difference in that. And granted, she had come from a large hospital [Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles], but she understood what hospital librarianship was about, and she had a real, I think, knack of relating to people. I think she has always been welcome with librarians,

because she has a certain management style that I think was admired. So, I think that was a positive thing.

And then I think, Sheldon, I got to know firsthand the problems, somewhat, that were going on in the hospital environment when you and I were working with the RML, and you were also interested in introducing me to some of the hospital librarians, particularly in New England. We took a couple of trips up there and met some of the principal librarians. Nancy Fazzone was one, Chris Bell, of course was in Newton, Sandra Clevesy in Framingham, were sort of the three, and others, and some librarians in Concord, and others. Because, what it did was, it really showed you the difficult time, as much as they loved the support of NLM and MLA, I mean they were running their own battles all by themselves. They were small libraries in fairly good-sized hospitals, but often not getting the kind of support that they needed. And I have to say, for these kinds of folks, they were the outstanding ones, and maybe that's why I got introduced to them, ones who were able to really sort of overcome that. Whether they had a clinical librarian program or not, it was close to it. They found ways to deal and work with the health professionals in the hospitals. They came out of the library. They weren't just saying, "Well, here's my little library, come if you need some help, we are great at doing command searching." At that time, that was big. And they clearly could make the best kinds of searches. But what was really needed was to find a way to integrate their skills into the actual medical practice. And I think that these folks learned how to do it. And Nancy Fazzone had the most difficult challenge, because I can remember her telling me that basically the library was the little boardroom where the doctors met in the morning, had their coffee, and they had their journals around there and it was a little private club, and she was able to show them what could be done if they really used the medical librarian who could help them solve their—or help them at least analyze—their medical problems. And as a result, she got a lot of space, over time, for her library in those hospitals. So, I thought that was pretty admirable. I guess the only other thing I remember about those hospital battles from time to time was the issues of—and I didn't understand them fully, but the hospital standards that are necessary, that the hospital association [Joint Commission, formerly the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)] had these standards for evaluation of hospitals, and one of them was to have a good hospital library and librarian. And that was always debated. And as things got tougher with money, those things could become harder. I guess they are now.

SK: You have also had, over the years, a lot of interaction with the legislative task force or whatever it was officially called, the MLA legislative group [MLA Governmental Relations Committee (formerly Legislation Committee) and the Joint MLA/AAHSL (Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries) Legislative Task Force]. Were there any particular battles that you remember? Not fighting against them, but where we had their support and they were influential?

KS: They were influential. Whether it was the Governmental Relations Committee or whether it was the Joint Legislative Task Force, the way it worked is they would

usually ask me to come and brief them on what was going on in the budget and legislative issues within NLM, so that they would be fully briefed, because they usually scheduled their meetings just before they had visits to the Hill. So, what I tried to do to be helpful, and you may remember some of this, was to develop charts of where our grants were, for example, around the country, what districts they were in and that sort of thing, so that they were armed with some data when they went to the Hill. And I tried to tell them that it might be nice to meet a congressman or a senator, but it's even more important to meet their staff people, because they are the ones that can actually make a difference. I think they did a pretty good job over the years of going forward and have been going up there and advocating, not only for NLM, but advocating the role of medical libraries in the country. And those committees, I think, were smart enough to also bring in some of the [advocacy groups] around town to speak with them, like AAMC [Association of American Medical Colleges] and FASEB [Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology] and other groups like that, at those kinds of sessions. And from that they would develop a plan of who they were going to go see, and sometimes that was also in coordination with their lobbyists from MLA. I thought those sessions were very helpful, and they clearly made a difference when you needed action on a piece of legislation or an opinion on a piece of legislation. That's the group you would go to, and you might give them some ideas, but they really put it together and then distributed it throughout their network to get things done.

Let me mention Mary Horres right here, because this is the appropriate place for it, because she was one of the first people [chair of Legislation Committee in 1979-1981] at MLA that I dealt with on legislative matters, and she was deeply involved with it, very interested in it, had a number of people around the country who she knew that you could contact to get things done. And when you asked Mary Horres to get something done, she got it done. If you needed a congressman to know about an issue that would be helpful to NLM or to the library community in general, she organized it and made sure that the phone calls were made, that the contacts were made, and it often wasn't over the Internet, it was good, old-fashioned letters. When you wrote a letter, sometimes that made more of a difference than just sending in a call or a telegram or whatever. And she was really excellent at that, and she garnered what the issues were and did a great job of really setting up that network. Now granted, the Regional [Medical Library] network serves as a nice map, if you will, of how you can set up that legislative network, and she did it that way. For example, if you wanted to get to Silvio Conte, as I recall, I think her name was Ursula Poland, lived right over just in Albany, or just over the line, knew all the librarians in that western [Massachusetts] area. And a couple of times she was called upon, through Mary, to get some complaints in about certain things that were going on. And they did it. So, it was very helpful.

SK: This may be a good time to talk about your relationship over the years with Carla Funk, because certainly you must have dealt with her on legislative issues.

KS: Carla, as I say, not only set up a good operation within her own office for legislative matters, but what Carla was also willing to do is step to the edge, when necessary, to make something happen. And it was that that I particularly admired about her. I can remember one time we needed to do something with Bill Young, we were getting support for the design of the new building [NLM third building].

SK: Bill Young was?

KS: He was [chairman of the House Committee on] Appropriations, excuse me. One of the things that MLA does is give awards to legislators [MLA Award for Distinguished Public Service]. And I said [to Carla], "You know, it would really be nice if we could somehow get into his office, and one way to do it would be to have an award of some sort."... And she said, "Maybe I can ask the board for some special kind of recognition." And she did. And that got us in that office. He was pulled off the floor that day and came in, she spoke to him, to the [congressman], and we had an opportunity to talk to him about the issue of the design [of the NLM third building]. And that really helped...that was just that added something that made a difference. I think Carla was just plain dedicated to the legislative arena and realized that it was an important part of what MLA needed to do, that presence in Washington. As a result of that, as you know, I felt that that was one area I could be supportive. I used to go to these [MLA] awards ceremonies, and I would listen to an award for this and an award for that, there were some great awards, but there was never anything in the legislative arena. And so I felt that I could personally put a little something aside and support this, and I thought, well, how best to name it? And since Carla is not only a good executive director, but a good person in supporting legislative matters, it just seemed to me a logical choice. So, I suggested that they name the award after her [Carla J. Funk Governmental Relations Award], but that it not just be for Washington exposure, but in local legislative groups as well, because, you know, you want your support throughout the country at all levels. A lot of the chapters of MLA now have good people assigned to help with legislative issues, and so I felt that they should be also part of the recognition.

SK: Very generous of you and well-deserved for the people that have received it so far.

KS: Yes, and you know, one of the things you have to say about MLA, they understood. Maybe it was because of the discussions that they had with their lobbyists, they know where the pressure points are, they go after the dang money, for God's sake. Where I have to say, as much as AMIA has lobbyists, and they do a nice job, I guess, with some of the policy issues, they have done very little when it comes to supporting the budgets, at least in my time. Maybe they do more now. But it's the appropriations and sometimes the authorization committees that are more important than the investigative [and oversight] committees.

SK: Any other MLA-related anecdotes, stories you want to share?

KS: Well, just one that I always found interesting, and you may remember it. NLM always was engaged in different mechanisms to keep—one of the things I espouse certainly—communication channels open to MLA. When there was a problem, you know, we wanted to know about the problems. We can't always deal with every one of them, as you know when you have run many of those early-morning sessions at MLA, you get plenty of advice about what people would like you to do. But, I can remember the famous meeting [meeting of hospital librarians at NLM in January 1978], I think it was called "The Bethesda 11," although I'm not positive that I got the number right.

SK: Yes, it was eleven for the eleven regions.

KS: They came in to really tell us the problems they were having with [MEDLINE]. And you know, this was at a time when there was a great reluctance with switching from the command kind of search systems to systems that were less controlled by medical librarians. And so I think there were those tensions that got into that meeting. But, I have to say, that as much as everybody was anticipating this with a little bit of trepidation, it turned out to be an extremely good meeting. But it was important to hear from people...out there in the community; they were not happy with parts of the retrieval system and parts of announcements of new things, and so forth. [The recommendations of the hospital librarians addressed coverage and indexing terms, interlibrary loan, training, communication with hospital administrators, and outreach.] So, I think it helped, and those are the kinds of things that they should continue to do.

SK: I'm aware that there is an attempt to create an oral history with the people who participated, the ones who are still alive who attended that meeting. I also want to ask you, unless we want to come back to MLA, let's move away from that in the remaining few minutes we have. I know you mentioned the National Federation of Abstracting and Indexing Services, which is now called [National Federation of Advanced Information Services]. Do you want to talk about your involvement in any other national or international organizations?

KS: Well, I will do it briefly. I was really involved in three organizations as either president or chairman. One was NFAIS, that you just mentioned. Another was the International Council for Scientific and Technical Information [ICSTI]. Then locally, a group called CENDI. And they all, in one way or another, are dealing with information management issues. In fact, I think you got me interested in NFAIS actually, as I recall. NFAIS was, at least at that time, primarily an organization of database producers, BIOSIS, CASSI [Chemical Abstracts Service], ISI [Institute for Scientific Information] and all that. NLM was one of the original members of NFAIS. They had different views on pricing and products and services and the role of the public and private sector, and there were conferences in which I found myself in the midst of battles over that. But generally, I think it was a good, collegial group that over time recognized what the government's role was and what the private sector's role was. And so when pronouncements were made or resolutions were

made, they were, I thought, fair, and I think that, in the long run, it makes sense to have the public and the private sector collaborating and at least understanding each other. So I felt that was an important organization.

ICSTI, the council I mentioned, is sort of the international counterpart, in a way, of NFAIS. It has been traditionally, of course, concerned with abstracting and indexing, because it used to be called ICSUAB, the International Council of Scientific Unions Abstracting Board, when it was a current member of the International Council of Scientific Unions. But over time, it became ICSTI, and broadened its membership, and it has publishers in there and actually some software developers nowadays. And they have broadened their scope to outreach to underdeveloped countries and what could they do for transborder data flow issues and a whole worldwide access to scientific information. And now they, not under my term there, but they now have a thing called “global science information services” or something. The one thing I used to always try to do with ICSTI is say that it’s great to be talking about theory here, and they did a lot of that. But it’s also important to try to do something in the way of projects. And so they did do some of that, so I like that.

The other organization is CENDI, and it’s really federal government information managers. It really came about almost by accident. When Marty Cummings was here, he was very active in a group called COSATI, which is the Committee on Scientific and Technical Information, which ran out of the [Federal Council for] Science and Technology downtown. It had representatives not only from government, but chemical experts like Dale Baker [Chemical Abstracts Service] and people like that, working on abstracting, indexing, information, general issues. But over time, OSTP, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, simply didn’t do a very good job of supporting it. So a group of information managers, (NLM was not in the initial group), from [four charter agencies], Commerce, Energy, NASA, and Defense [Information Managers Group]...got together. Then NLM was added, and it became the equivalent of COSATI, but not, I have to say, but not with the same power by any means, but at least a place where information managers across the government could go and meet and discuss common problems. For example, the Paperwork Reduction Act and things of that nature, it was important for information agencies, particularly where they were charging for services, as we were, that charges be made on the cost of access and not full cost recovery. And the Paperwork Reduction Act, which was run out of the Office of Management and Budget, was constantly trying to reflect the latest administration, which might not be good for dissemination of information. So, this was a group that could bring together policy positions that they could then go and present to OSTP. So, that’s what they were, basically.

SK: Now that you are retired, and I know that you work part-time at least as a consultant, what is it that you miss the most from your days as an NLM employee?



KS: What do I miss the most? Well, I mean there is a certain power and ability to influence policies, particularly legislative, which was always interesting to me, when you are in that job. And also, you know, you miss the interaction, as anybody would, when you are retired, the interaction with very important and key people that you have in an organization. I don't miss the personnel problems or some of those matters that come along, of which there are many, but the policy issues and the camaraderie with folks, you miss some of that. But there's a time, you know, there's always a time when you need to move aside and give other people an opportunity to move ahead. I really, seriously believe that that's important, and I had been in that job quite a long time as well, maybe even past my time. But it was the right time for me to step aside and let others do the job.

SK: We talked in the first session about your formative years when you were in school and the influence of your parents. Did you ever have any idea that you might end up working in a library of any kind?

KS: No.

SK: Did you have a love for libraries?

KS: Yes. When I grew up, it was common practice to go to the local library, particularly on Saturday mornings, and you would go there and check out books and bring back the books that you had been reading, as a youngster. And so, I was exposed to libraries early on. There was one big central library in Nashua, New Hampshire. It's not a big place. But they had a pretty good public library, and you would check out four or five good books and make sure you got them back on time before you had to pay your dues. And when I got to college, I used the library, of course, at Hobart a lot more, and that was one of those places, I have to say, where you not only went to study, but you are checking out who is in the library. Where are you going to go after the library closed, and which bar are you heading to with which women. So, it was a social place as well. And when I got to Cornell, it was a whole different deal. Cornell has a great library, first of all. But remember, that was not in the days of the World Wide Web. And the way you went into the library and used the library in business school, you used the card catalog and you perused the stacks. I found that although the card catalog got you maybe to the right pew, the real places were in the group of materials where you found what you needed. They allowed you there to have little study desks that you could sit at and work. And in business school you had to do a lot of papers. I did one on India and the caste system and I was interested in it, because there were a number of Indian students, actually, at the institution, at the Johnson school of business, and I spent a lot of time in that library doing that kind of thing. So, I found libraries to be very helpful, and I found the librarians to be very helpful in getting information. And that's still the role, in my view, of librarians. There is all this talk about you can get it all on Google and all that, and you can get a lot, but you need librarians to really organize what the resources really are that are available. And I think they still do that pretty well.

SK: Yes, I know you are familiar with our NLM Associate Fellows[hip] Program. And for those that don't know it, that's our tie to recent library graduates who are going into medical librarianship.

KS: And good ones.

SK: Yes, and I'm sure when you see those people, you are like me, you feel like the future is in pretty good hands.

KS: Well, yes. And, as you know, it's filled many of the positions here, including yours, as I remember.

SK: Yes, and many out in the community as well.

KS: Yeah, and it's great recruitment, and it's the best and brightest that get into that program, it's a very good program.

SK: We are about to conclude. Do you want to mention anything that you wish I would have asked you about?

KS: Well, I would like to do two things. I think you had asked me earlier that we might want to cover my management philosophy. I think that it's an important thing, because I have some pretty strong beliefs about it that are important, I think. You know, there are a lot of people who feel that they go get a master's in business administration or they go take a bunch of business courses, that they become managers, and that that can constitute a manager. I am a serious believer, and I remember Shirley Echelman, who used to be [executive director of the Medical Library Association], she had the same view that management is really innate, you either have it inside you or you don't. That doesn't mean you can't learn skills that help, but you can't learn skills that are necessary to being a manager. So, I have a few tenets, if you will, that I think a good manager should have, and I will just go through them very briefly. First of all, and I think this is one I think a lot of people have, you need to make yourself accessible, within limits, to not only peers, and people you deal with daily, but the employees in general. I think everyone has something to offer and it's important to have respect for that. Secondly, I have a real pet peeve that you don't rely on so-called experts. Everybody says, well, we have got a problem, let's bring a consultant in. And I'm not degrading consultants, because I am one, but don't neglect the details. A consultant can have valuable input, but judgment is what is important in looking at these issues. Another thing is don't be afraid to get your hands dirty. Don't neglect the details. Good managers delegate and empower others to do the job for them, but you have to be careful that bad decisions aren't made. And the only way you know that is sometimes you have to know enough about what it is that somebody is giving you advice about. I mentioned Carla earlier; she meets this tenet that I have, you shouldn't be afraid to try things, even if they may be on the edge. In other words, don't spend your time waiting for official blessings with somebody, because if you ask enough people, "Is

this okay?" someone will surely say no. I think there is also a tendency for managers to over-organize and to over-plan. That's important to do, but hire the best people you can, including those who are smarter than you, and I think that's how you come out the best on these things. And as I said earlier, it's a good thing to go with your gut, after you have enough information. You can't get all of the information, get as much as you can, 85%-90% is well above what you will most likely ever get. And then you go ahead and act, because if you don't, if you keep looking for 100%, unfortunately, you have acted too late in most cases. In motivating staff, a key, I think, is to not treat everyone quite the same. Don't try to be a nice guy to everybody, because when you become a nice guy to everybody, you actually are offending those who are doing the better job. You have to distinguish between who is doing the best and who isn't. That doesn't mean you shouldn't be respectful and decent to everybody, but I think there is a tendency in some managers to say, "Okay, well, we all did a great job." Well, some did a better job than others, and they need to be recognized for that. And lastly, lastly, something I always told the library associates when I had an opportunity to talk to them. My closing line used to be, "Be kind and considerate to those you meet on your way up your career ladder, for surely you will meet them later on, on your way down." And I think that's really true, having gone up and down.

SK: It's too bad you didn't share those with me about thirty-five years ago. But, I will try to put some of those to practice.

KS: You are pretty good at those, Sheldon, you are pretty good at those.

SK: I think, knowing you, I can say you followed those tenets pretty closely throughout the years.

KS: Well, thank you.

SK: I do want to close this session and the interview by thanking you very much for putting up with this for about two-and-a-half to three hours all together.

KS: The only other thing you asked me to talk about...

SK: We are not done yet?

KS: Well, there were two things. One is interesting experiences in Congress, but also you wanted to know a little bit about some of the people who were most significant. I don't know if you want to hear that or not, it's up to you.

SK: Well, sure, why not, we will continue taping for a few more minutes. I'm here, I have plenty of time, and I don't want to hold you up. It's late in the afternoon here.

KS: Well I just want to mention a couple of people that were key in my—not only my career, but people here. Joe Leiter, for example.

SK: When you name these people, for the benefit of those who don't know them, you should identify them.

KS: Joe Leiter, former associate director for library operations here. I characterize him as a demanding manager. He was somewhat tough-skinned, but he was a brilliant guy, and he had very strong humanistic qualities if you really got to know him. I think he did much to advance women and minorities in librarianship, and I said in my Leiter lecture, he stamped quality and integrity on all his pursuits, and I really believe he did that. I always used to enjoy the back and forth with him, but I highly respected him. And of course, David Lipman is easily one of the brightest people I have ever been around. He is really one of those multitaskers, par excellence. He is highly driven, yet most appreciative of his staff, and there is no question, as I said earlier, that the progress in that center is in great part due to him. Hack Schoolman, as you know, was a dear friend as well as a valued colleague. I sometimes used to say to him, "Hack, you should have been a lawyer." He was the deputy director for research and education here, but he was also an amazing doctor. He could diagnose a medical problem in minutes. And of course, one of his great achievements really was helping out Marty Cummings in the copyright issue that affected the library in terms of reproduction of articles. Lucretia McClure, another person that—they really don't make them any better than her, as far as I am concerned, is a great, devoted medical librarian, and she loves MLA, she loves NLM, she loves the work and has been a great person to know. Bob Braude certainly comes to mind as one of the best and most innovative medical library directors in the country. He was a wonderful RML director, and if it hadn't been for his willingness to deal openly and fairly with me, I wouldn't have survived, I think. Fortunately, I had you, Sheldon, who protected me as I went into the library world and the RML world, and your advice and your counsel made a big difference in me being able to traverse that area as best I could. Another person I should mention is Bill Cooper, who was one of Marty's early picks. He was a pleasant guy, a likeable guy, who was willing to take on almost any role in the library and did. He came as a planning officer, but he was Extramural Programs director, he was acting director of the National Medical Audiovisual Center, a little bit in the Lister Hill Center, but clearly a talented administrative person, and he also had an excellent university perspective, I think, which made a difference. Well, those are some of people that come to mind. There are many others who, I have to say, supported me over the years, and certainly Marty Cummings, himself, who I think I should close with, who gave me the biggest break of my life when he hired me as an executive officer and then took the real gamble in making me the deputy, because there never had been a deputy who wasn't either a doctor or a medical librarian or an information specialist. He just thought, I guess somehow, that the skills that I had learned working with him as an executive officer would make me able to do the job. And he gave me the full test, because as soon as he appointed me, he went off to Australia for two months, and I was left high and dry to swim or sink. But I greatly admire him and Don Lindberg, of course, who was kind enough to keep me on as deputy, and I offered, quite frankly, for him to pick his own deputy and I would be happy to step aside, but he offered that he wished I

would stay on as part of the team, and I certainly appreciated it. So I have had two really excellent bosses here at NLM with Marty Cummings and Don Lindberg. Amen.

SK: Okay, I think we will probably close, and again, thank you, and I will stop taping now.

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## KENT A. SMITH

### Education

- 1956-1960      **HOBART COLLEGE**, Geneva, NY  
Bachelor Degree, Mathematics-Economics
- 1960-1962      **CORNELL UNIVERSITY**, Ithaca, NY  
Masters Degree, Johnson School of Management
- AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**, Washington, DC  
Course work in Computer and Information Science

### Recent Experience

2004-2012    Information Management Consultant---National Center for Biotechnology Information

Works in the general arena of organizational restructuring, workflow analysis, resource development and program planning. Performed cost analysis and workflow design for a public access system and assisted in the formulation of policy statements and plans. Worked on Policy/Congressional Issues re PubChem a key database for the NIH Molecular Libraries Roadmap Initiative and the NIH Public Access Policy. Analyzed the NCBI's administrative structure and assisted in reorganizing functions to improve its support for program objectives. Conducted a space management survey, prepared a report and space justification document for management to use in garnering needed space for expanding programs. Examined the committee structure with the aim of improving its input into long range planning and resource needs. Worked on the creation of the NIH/NCBI Resource Committee, its activities and reports, and the NIH/NCBI Needs Assessment Panel reports. Involved in a variety of PMC issues and preparation of Congressional testimony. Participated in the strategy for international collaborations for NCBI's new and expanding services, including PMCI.

1980-2004      Deputy Director, National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health

The NLM is the largest research library in a single scientific field and is a leader in biomedical communications and information technology.

- Had major responsibility for program development, program evaluation, policy formulation, direction, and coordination of all Library activities.
- As principal operating officer, was responsible for program implementation, budget formulation, organizational matters, resource allocation and legislative liaison.
- Represented and was a major spokesman for NLM at NIH, the Department of Health and Human Services, other governmental organizations, information industry, international bodies, Congressional offices, professional societies, and before the NLM Board of Regents.

### Significant Activities

- Directed the planning and design for NLM's Library of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, a 350,000 square foot facility—a major programmatic workflow and space allocation process.
- Directed the NLM Systems Reinvention activities to improve internal library systems and provide more effective biomedical bibliographic and data retrieval systems
- Instituted a program planning structure for development of new initiatives.

- Planned, negotiated, and helped create the National Center for Biotechnology Information.
- Working with the private sector, created a not-for-profit organization—Friends of the NLM.
- Established an effective legislative agenda for the NLM.
- Instrumental in creating and managing the major health component of the National Information Infrastructure.
- Served on numerous international committees in bioinformatics including the International Scientific Union's International Committee on Scientific and Technical Information which was involved in facilitating the acquisition, organization, preservation and dissemination of scientific information.

### **Other Experience**

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 1971 - 1979 | Assistant Director for Administration, NLM<br>Directed and managed the full spectrum of administrative support activities—finance and budget formulation, human resources, administrative services, construction management, space management and legislative relations.       |
| 1968-1971   | Executive Officer, Division of Research Resources, NIH<br>Chief business manager responsible for fiscal and personnel management, management analysis, space allocation, administrative services, and grants and contract management.  |
| 1965-1968   | Administrative Officer, Division of Research Facilities and Resources, NIH<br>Prepared budgets for legislative hearings, performed management studies and directed administrative services, including travel, procurement, space utilization, property management etc.         |
| 1962-1965   | Management Intern/Analyst, Office of the Secretary, Department of Health, Education and Welfare<br>Worked in financial management, legislative affairs and management analysis. Assisted the Undersecretary and Assistant Secretary for Administration in special assignments. |

### **Recognition**

- Numerous Senior Executive Service Achievement Awards
- Assistant Secretary for Health Exceptional Achievement Award
- NLM Director's Award
- DHHS Superior Service Medal
- President, National Federation of Abstracting and Information Services —Honorary Member
- Vice President, UNESCO General Information Program
- President, International Committee on Scientific and Technical Information---Honorary Member
- Chairman, CENDI—Federal Government Information Managers Organization
- Medical Library Association President's Award
- Honorary Fellow of the Medical Library Association
- NISO Blue Ribbon Panel
- Who's Who in Science and Engineering
- Who's Who in America
- Member of Cosmos Club