

Interview with Dr. Lewis C. Branscomb by Dr. Paul Underwood
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UNDERWOOD: I'm talking this morning to Lewis Branscomb, director emeritus of the Ohio State University libraries. Lewis, I know from looking at your vita that after you graduated from the University you were in the industrial hardware business for several years. I just assumed that this was a family business. Was I right, or how did you get into that?

BRANSCOMB: That's a logical assumption. Actually, after I finished Duke University in 1933, it was about the bottom of the depression if you recall, and I walked the streets of Birmingham, Alabama, which is my hometown, from June until December looking for a job. I finally got a job in an industrial hardware company. It wasn't part of the family business but it was a question of getting any kind of job somewhere.

UNDERWOOD: I graduated from high school in 1933 so I know what you mean.

BRANSCOMB: I was happy to have the job. It was initially \$50 a month. So it wasn't a family business and it turned out that I was not really cut out for the hardware business. This was heavy industrial hardware for companies, not just the hardware stores that we usually use for home repair and that sort of thing. It was a good business but it just wasn't for me.

UNDERWOOD: Were you then interested in library work, or did that interest come later?

BRANSCOMB: It came this way, and I remember it very distinctly. In 1937 and 1938, my brother Harvie, who was at Duke University, as director of libraries, although his Ph.D. from Columbia was in theological studies, was visiting us in Birmingham. He noticed that I was reading Edgar Lee Master's *Spoon River Anthology*. He thought this was kind of unusual for a young man working in a hardware store, so he talked with me about it and I said, "Harvie I'm not really very interested in the hardware business" and so forth. He said, "Well what do you think about going into library work?" He was in it himself and he thought I might be interested and I said, "Well, maybe so." Marjorie and I were married that year in January 1938, so in the fall I went to library school at Ann Arbor, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and subsequently got two library degrees from Michigan. So that's the way I got into library work and into higher education. And I've not regretted it. It's been a fun, fun trip for me.

UNDERWOOD: One thing I found a little confusing is that it listed you as working in Georgia the same time you were at Michigan getting a Master's degree. How did you maneuver that? There's a fair distance between the two.

BRANSCOMB: It's simple enough. What happened was that I got my ABLS, which is an AB in library science, in 1939, which followed my AB from Duke, but no job were available then, and so I stayed in Ann Arbor that summer and started on a Master's

program. Then I got a job at the University of Georgia in the fall of 1939, and then in subsequent summers, two more summers, which were 1939, 1940, and 1941, I was let off by an understanding boss to go to Ann Arbor and work on my Master's. But meanwhile I was working ¾ of the year at the University of Georgia at Athens.

UNDERWOOD: Well I imagined that something like that was the situation but I wasn't completely sure. After that, you went to Mercer University. I must confess that I don't know where that is.

BRANSCOMB: Mercer University is a small, Baptist related school. It has a law school and some other things. Ivan Rutledge has gone back there. He was gone for a while. It's in Macon, Georgia, south of Athens, maybe about 100 miles. I was there only one year. I don't like the idea of moving that soon when you're in some kind of administrative position, but when the offer came from the University of South Carolina at Columbia as head librarian, I went to the president at Mercer, whom I knew and respected, and told him the facts. I told him I wasn't keen about leaving after a year, but it was difficult to turn down this opportunity. He said, "I understand. We don't want to lose you, but I don't want to stand in your way." So I went to Columbia, South Carolina as the head librarian at the University of South Carolina in 1942.

UNDERWOOD: How long were you there?

BRANSCOMB: Two year, which isn't very long either, but on a train ride going to library meetings I talked with Robert Downs, who was then Director of Libraries at the University of Illinois, and who had been a very important and outstanding leader in research libraries. We became acquainted and to my surprise he asked me in the fall of 1944 to come up for an interview. He was interviewing for the job of Assistant Director of Public Services, and I did go up. He was also offering me faculty rank, which was something different. Not all libraries have that. So as a consequence, in December of 1944 I accepted his offer as Assistant Director of Public Services and Associate Professor of library sciences. That was an interesting experience, working with him. He's a good boss. He's the kind who doesn't tell you what to do, but he's the kind of boss where you work with him, not under him. I learned a good deal from this man. I have tried to do the same thing here, to have colleagues as in the classroom departments, where there is no, "I tell you what to do", but rather we are colleagues working together. I got that kind of treatment from him and that kind of help.

UNDERWOOD: Anything particularly noteworthy other than the fact that you had the job and you had good relationships and experiences at, well let's start off at Mercer and South Carolina.

BRANSCOMB: Well, I guess a couple of things, Paul. One is I learned about how a major university operates, something about its mission, and Illinois was and still is a member of the Big Ten and one of the great universities in the country. It was a very valuable experience, and an addition, Bob Downs, being a good boss, he also let me off in summers to go to Chicago to work on my Ph.D. The University of Chicago was the

only school in the country at the time that offered a doctorate in library science. So I went there the summers of 1945, 1946, and 1947, working on my doctorate, and doing the languages and things back home. You have to do those in residence. I'd come home maybe every two weeks and he didn't cut my salary. He kept me on full salary. Actually, I didn't get the degree, because I didn't have a chance to complete the dissertation, until 1954. I left Illinois in 1948 and worked on the dissertation here in Columbus. I tried working nights after working full time days, but it was too tiring, so I'd get up in the morning and work it. I got the degree in 1954.

UNDERWOOD: I'm just curious about what made you leave Illinois of Ohio State in 1948. Illinois had a higher ranking than OSU, didn't it? Judging from your title, there wasn't a great deal of difference between the jobs.

BRANSCOMB: For one thing, at Illinois the assistant director is only second or third in command of a big library. They tend to be stepping-stones. I didn't go there necessarily for stepping out, but bob Downs said, "Although I want to keep you here, I think you ought to keep your eyes open for your own job." That was reasonable and generous, so when you approached me at Ohio State to come and talk with them about the job of associate librarian and associate director, it was with the intent that I would come here a couple of years before Earl N. Manchester retired. He had been here since 1928, and so it was with the expectation that I would become his successor directly. Otherwise, as you were saying, it wouldn't make much sense.

UNDERWOOD: I kind of guessed that might have been the situation.

BRANSCOMB: One runs a risk in that situation because if you come with the idea that the administration will say, yes, we intend to appoint you director, maybe the administration changes its mind, so you run the risk that it won't go through. I was fortunate in that it did go through. Manchester stayed on not two more years, but since the law was changed, he stayed four more years until he was 70. He stepped out in 1952 and I became director of the libraries then.

UNDERWOOD: How big was the library then?

BRANSCOMB: Actually, I have the figure. I went through my annual reports. The collection was 958,000 volumes, and when I left it was 2,540,000, which is a 165% increase. This is not unique, but average university libraries (this used to be true I don't know if it still is) tend to double in size of the collection every sixteen years. In 19 years that I was director, it more than doubled.

UNDERWOOD: Where did Ohio State rank nationally when you came?

BRANSCOMB: It ranked, I don't know exactly but I know approximately, 14th or 15th among university libraries in the country, or about 5th in the Big Ten. Now interestingly enough, they tend to go up together because now it's still about 15th or 16th. It doesn't change much. This is with respect to collections.

UNDERWOOD: Again at the time you came, was the original part of the library as it now stands there, I mean without the added things at the back end of the building.

BRANSCOMB: Yes. It was the original building, but without the tower. That was in process. They had begun working on the first addition. This included the tower part and the 12 new stack decks. Before that, the Main Library, which was first occupied in 1913 had much less room, and had the old glass floors in the stacks, which were becoming very much out of date. Nobody did that anymore. We've since gotten rid of that. That addition was completed in 1951, 3 years after I got there. They were just in the process of finishing the plans when I came, so I had very little to say about that. One interesting thing about that, I did have a little bit to say about, for instance, the browsing room. I remember Howard Dwight Smith, who was the university architect, and a pretty tough nut to crack, didn't see the point of a browsing room. He didn't know how useful it could be to students and faculty as a relaxing place to sit and read. I finally talked him into it, and it turned out to be one of the most useful things we had in the addition. Students just came in and sat in the easy chair and relaxed. I think we even allowed them to smoke as I recall. We had coffee hours and brought in people like Archibald MacLeish, Jerry Lawrence and others who would speak at a coffee hour. It worked extremely well for 15 years until the second addition came along.

UNDERWOOD: Now reading through the history, it doesn't appear much happened with regard to the library between the time you came in 1952 when you became director of the library except for the planning of the addition and that sort of thing. Is that a fair assessment?

BRANSCOMB: That's pretty accurate, Paul. We both mentioned the addition. That happened during that period, and maybe we should hold this for a little later, but the faculty rank business began. Maybe we should tie that in. It's pretty important segment in my thinking, but that began when I came and continued. Generally you're right, there wasn't much. Except that Manchester was a great book man. He knew the collection as well as anyone would ever know them before or since, certainly since. But he wasn't much of an administrator and didn't like administration. So he turned all the administration over to me as associate director of libraries, even though he was the director of libraries. He was content to have me handle that and I was glad to do it. So when he left it was a very smooth, easy transition.

UNDERWOOD: I can well imagine that. Since that time there's been remarkable growth as you've indicated, not only in book holding but in service and in other respects of the work of the library. There are several things I'd like you to talk about specifically. First, additions to the collection. You gave the figures. What are some of the areas particularly that were emphasized in terms of collections. Were there any?

BRANSCOMB: There certainly were a little later, when the university began to get into East Asia and into Slavic. We had rather massive collections in programs in connection with those. Leon Twarog went to Russia in collaboration with the library administration

and we provided a lot of money for him to buy things. A good deal of this went on as the university got into new areas.

UNDERWOOD: Let's go back to the collections. I remember once hearing Leon Twarog talking about the fact that he was given \$10,000 in travelers checks and off to Russia he went and come back with books and books and books.

BRANSCOMB: That was one of the best ways to build up a collection like that rapidly, to meet the teaching and research needs of the new area. The university, I'm sure you're aware of this, began to add a doctoral program in a number of fields where it had only a masters, and this meant getting a good deal more of research type materials in to support it. For example, music, as I recall, was not offering a doctorate degree then, but it did later. We worked with the music people in order to strengthen that area not only for doctorate students but of course for the faculty in the graduate area. We began special collections. I'd like to put off until a little bit later, but we had special collections which I'll define a little later and talk about because they're quite important.

UNDERWOOD: The next subject I wanted you to address was the undergraduate library, which probably existed in some form before the Sullivant Hall operation began fairly recently, but I'm not very familiar with what form it took before.

BRANSCOMB: There was certainly a need for this. We talked about this, my library colleagues and I and some administrators. We needed to have a collection of about 100,000 volumes of well selected materials, largely at the undergraduate level, pulled together in one place so that the undergraduates could easily use them without going all over the main library and all over campus. But the problem was not so much segregated the books but finding space for them. Out of desperation we set up space on the second floor of the main library as an undergraduate area. It had been the old reference area, and began building the collection up to over 100,000 volumes. It was that sort of thing, and I guess this happens over and over at the university, where you have to work on a concept for years before you achieve what you are pretty sure you need. We really wanted a separate undergraduate library to be put in, like so many other major universities were getting and have long since gotten. We lagged behind the Big Ten. I think we were perhaps the only Big Ten, and still are I think, which doesn't have a separate undergraduate library. I'm not absolutely sure of that but I think this is likely. I know most of them do have that. Even in South Carolina, Columbia where I was for a while, they got a separate undergraduate library years and years ago. What we finally got was space as you've already indicated in what used to be the old Ohio Historical Society building, and we're still in that building. Later, we developed also across the river on the west campus the Learning Resources Center, which is also at the undergraduate level.

UNDERWOOD: It's a very nice place, too. What's going to happen to that? Do you know what they're planning to do with that?

BRANSCOMB: We, and when I say we I mean the libraries, will be pulling out of that as that area gives way to the research park and moves back on the central campus. So we

have been told that we the librarians by central administration, that we will have to move back on central campus.

UNDERWOOD: It's too bad you have to lose that space, which is very nice.

BRANSCOMB: The present library administration of which I'm not a member, I'm an emeritus, is talking with the administration about getting a new faculty and research library, which may cost \$50 million, and that's 10, 12 years off I might guess. If that materializes, then I think we might use the main library for an undergraduate library. But we have been short on space, seating space. Less of a problem has been the storage space for books, ever since I have been here.

UNDERWOOD: All right, let's skip over to another subject that I'm interested in out of a personal interest because of the one in the Journalism building, the department libraries and the area libraries concept.

BRANSCOMB: This is an area where faculty and administrators and librarians often don't agree. The problem is pretty simple. The librarians feel that in general we can give better service if we don't have so many little disparate libraries all over campus, because we have to duplicate materials, we have to duplicate expensive journals, we have to duplicate staff. We can do a better job with the money available, and it's always too little, if we have fewer and larger units so we can consolidate. But the faculty, and I can understand this, has a different view. They like their little library right outside of their door where they don't have to go very far, and the cost of that to operate naturally doesn't concern them very much. So we have this pull-and-tug back and forth. When I came we had the Main Library, which was of course the hub, and perhaps fifteen to eighteen so called department libraries, generally serving one department, but often combined and serving maybe two or three departments. What we worked for, and interesting enough they're getting back to it now, was the idea of consolidating those smaller units unto larger units which we called area libraries. For example, the biological sciences over here in one area library rather than three or four libraries. The engineering and maybe physical sciences, but at least engineering, and we have pulled those together to some extent. They don't call it area library, but that doesn't matter. They're talking about a library that would combine most of the engineering sciences and some of the physical sciences. They're all pretty much in one area. The area library concept is a good one. It's not easy to achieve for the reasons I've indicated.

UNDERWOOD: Certainly in the case of the journalism library it's been a remarkable change from what it was like when I first came. I was appalled literally when I came here because the journalism library consisted of probably 500 paperback books and not more than 50 normal reference type things like Who's Who in America. That was it. That was all there was to it. Now there's just beautiful library space in the new building, which of course we fought for when we were planning the building. It's a good collection, although there are still holes in it.

BRANSCOMB: Well I can comment on one phase of that. At one time, and I won't name the person, but the director of the School of Journalism said, "We don't really need the library here. We can use it in main library." So as I recall we actually pulled the library out, or most of it, because the director just didn't want it there. I think he wanted the space for something else, so it had to go back. I've forgotten the sequence or the timing exactly, but I remember it was pulled out and then put back.

UNDERWOOD: I can tell you up until the time that the new building was built; before the building opened we had the space there for it.

BRANSCOMB: Well, that was a different administration in journalism, and that often makes a difference.

UNDERWOOD: All right Lewis, there was one thing I discovered reading the history is that there was something called the Center for Textual Studies connected with the library. Can you tell me what it involved?

BRANSCOMB: It was a program primarily designed to publish a definitive edition of all of Hawthorne's works. A man named Pierce in English was the guiding light on that. He and others got funds for starting this. I think maybe one or two areas were involved. The most important thing was the careful editing of Hawthorne's works, published by the OSU press. So I think it's fair to say that we have the definitive edition of Hawthorne's works, published by this press. It has been phased out only in the last year or two.

UNDERWOOD: Was this mainly a study of Hawthorne's works, or does it go beyond that?

BRANSCOMB: I don't know what English has done with it, the department of English. I'm not sure there's much activity now. Certainly the big thing as I understood it was in the library because we would buy the editions as suggested by the people in there and to have them in one place was very useful to the project. It was on the third floor of the main library. It was a very desirable thing. They gave me personally two or three volumes of it and they're extremely well done, but it's primarily Hawthorne.

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UNDERWOOD: The most important thing to my mind that has happened to the libraries since I've been here is the whole operation of computerizing the libraries and all its ramifications. When did that get started?

BRANSCOMB: It really got started in 1962-1963, when I brought in an automation librarian half time. I had to get special funds for it, but my library colleagues and I could anticipate at that time, and I was on a committee, which eventually developed into OCLC. We were convinced that libraries would have to go to automation to serve the student enrollment, the faculty and graduate program we had even then. Of course now

it's considerably larger, but we began looking towards this fairly early. As a consequence, I think it's fair to say that we eventually emerged as one of the pioneers. We extended that halftime automation librarian, whose name was Howard Dillon, into full-time. We had a committee of the director of libraries on that to study and watch automation and to advise him as to how he should proceed. The big step really came when I brought in Hugh Atkinson. You remember Hugh? That could be verified but it was about 1965 or 1966, something like that. Hugh knew more about automation and computerization than any of us here. But that's not the only reason, that was one of the reasons we brought him in. He was brought in as associate director for public services and worked a great deal in this area, and he really pushed us ahead so that by approximately 1970 we were able to computerize circulation so that we could tell where any book was, whether it was out or not and so forth on that date. We used IBM computers. We of course had to have special grants from the administration, but the administration was more responsive to this than it was in any other area. They saw the need for this and they were easily convinced that this is the way that we must go. Actually, looking back it was the only way to go. It was only a question of whether we were ahead of most libraries or did it sooner or lagged behind. We were ahead and at the time we began the circulation I think it may be fair to say that we were foremost in the country of the large libraries that had gotten this much computerization going. Now the OCLC fits in here.

UNDERWOOD: I was going to ask you where does it work in? You might mention what OCLC stands for.

BRANSCOMB: OCLC began my meaning Ohio College Library Center, and then later, for reasons you'll see in a moment, it became Online Computer Library Center. We had to drop Ohio because it went beyond that. We have to go back in the late 1950's, when a group of us in academic libraries of Ohio, college and university libraries, got together and said, "In what ways can we cooperate more fully so as to share our resources and so in effect extend our collections more broadly than we're doing now. How can we cooperate in order to make them more accessible to cooperate in cataloguing and that sort of thing?" This committee met several times a year and I was on that committee as Director of Libraries, as I should have been because OSU as the biggest academic library in this state is at this university. We met off and on for years with that, and we finally got through the Ohio College Association a committee of presidents and librarians working on the possibility of establishing a bibliographic center, which might actually contain a record of all of our holdings and so forth. The reason we went into the presidency is because we came to the conclusion, which I'm sure was right, that we could not handle this just through the librarians. You had to have some clout from the presidents who had a lot to do with the money. So this became a committee of the Ohio College Association, and we had Wyman Parker come in from Connecticut to make a study and he proceeded. But we didn't know in those early years, say 1961-1962, that it would be computerized. There were a couple of us that were on the committee that knew enough about computers (I was one and there was one other) to say, "Well we shouldn't go to microfilm with some of the things we use so much. They were good things but they didn't look to the future. We must go to computers. We finally convinced the committee of this, and so

made recommendations to the OCA that we begin the Ohio College Library Center, which would be computerized. That thing stayed on their desk for a couple years. The president of one of the institutions just sat on it. Nothing happened, but then since they rotate the presidency of OCA, it became Fawcett's turn to serve as president, and I talked with him about it as far as getting things decided one way or another, and I hoped that he would go for it. "Let's go for it," I said, "This is important and can be very useful." And my golly he did. He got the executive committee together in the fall of 1966, and they made a decision that OCA respond to that. They made the decision to establish this through OCA, and as I said before, the reason for this is we felt we had to have the backing of the presidents and the vice presidents for finance and so forth because that's where the money lay, and we had to have a fair amount of money to get this going. A subcommittee of which I was a member met several times and brought in, and this was critically important, Fred G. Kilgour, who was a librarian at Yale in the medical library. He knew a great deal about computerization of libraries. We brought him in a director of the office in 1967. I got faculty rank for him, a full professorship at OSU. We gave him an office on the 3rd floor of the main library. They put in a plaque up about that now because OCLC is so pervasive and so tremendously important. Fred Kilgour has worked this thing up from no members. We had to start with getting a few colleges and university libraries in Ohio. It was called Ohio to begin with, but we anticipated that if it was successful it would go to neighboring states. But we didn't have the vision as to what it would go to eventually, but we had some vision. Perhaps not enough. Fred Kilgour has been a genius in this thing. AS you may know, there was a building on Kinnear Road for a while which he occupied after he got the thing going and moved outside, and then most recently they built this tremendous building in Dublin, a beautiful thing. Initially too it was for academic libraries only, but we, the committee of which I was a member, did have the foresight to say, "Well, let's start it with academic libraries because we're dealing with Ohio College Association responses, and if we initially take in public libraries and other non-academic libraries, this might not look right to OCA. It might not help the committee to get the thing going well." But we looked beyond that and this is what happened. It's worked well. We worked our way up to about 57 of the academic libraries in the state as members. There were only 65, so this is a pretty good percentage, and then within a year or two as it developed, and as people could see what its potential was, we added big libraries like the Cleveland Public, Cincinnati and Columbus county libraries, and then extended them to Indiana and Illinois, and then all over this country. It's in Canada now. I think they're opening something in Japan, already in Britain, one or two of the Scandinavian countries, perhaps France, Switzerland. It's an enormous thing. What it does is to computerize the holdings of libraries who wish to join. Before each library would have to catalog it, and put it on cards, which is slow and cumbersome. But now when we get a book, for example, if any member gets a book, it simply checks electronically with OCLC to see if the book has not already been purchased and catalogued by one other library with the information put in the computer system. Usually it is there. All you have to do is punch a button, and that means the card would automatically be sent and mailed to you. You don't have to catalog the book. That's an enormous savings of time and effort, equally in each library alone. That's still very important. A library can call and find out who is the closest library that has that book. By calling I mean just using the terminal. There is an acquisitions program that

can be done through this. The reason I wanted to mention our automation here is because we were careful to make our system as compatible as possible with OCLC, so we could take optimum advantage of OCLC's existence, which we have. So it has been a tremendous development, and one of the things I think I'm proudest of. I think it's fair to say that before we got it started if the Ohio State University, which was and still is a flagship of the universities in Ohio (certainly the state supported ones) had not been involved in this, I don't think we would have an OCLC today. So I think we can take some credit for that, and I'm happy to, for the university.

UNDERWOOD: Now there's another acronym connected with this whole thing, something call LCB. What is that?

BRANSCOMB: I'm sorry; I should have made that clear. All that means is my role, Lewis C. Branscomb, in OCLC to get it started.

UNDERWOOD: Okay, then we've already done that. I'm going to skip down to another question which I had lower down on the list I gave you, but which fits right here. I noticed a clipping in the file shortly after you came predicting that students would be able to take out books by telephone in the near future. It intrigued me because I was wondering how perceptive you were about the new developments coming on. Obviously from what you said you were aware of the advantages of computerization and that sort of thing.

BRANSCOMB: Well let's see. I'm trying to be as accurate as I can about this, trying to remember. It was obvious I think to the academic librarians and others who thought at all that there would be developments beyond what we were doing then, and I was one of these. I wasn't any genius about it, but I did foresee some of this coming, not in the detail or in the efficiency that we have it now in computerization form. I did foresee some of that. And then secondly, and perhaps more importantly, I had no reluctance to go ahead. There were and are some librarians who don't like to change. They worry about whether the book is going to disappear. It's not going to disappear. They are a little bit hesitant and reluctant to go into automation, for they think this is getting away from librarianship, getting away from the book and this sort of thing. I didn't feel that way. I had no hesitation. In fact, I thought we had to embrace these new things if we were going to keep abreast to our job. So I guess that's about it, Paul. There were other librarians who looked ahead as much or more than I did, and perhaps they weren't in the situation to do anything about it as I was because of this group of librarians who got together and said, "Let's see what we can do." A lot of this was luck, you know. Certainly bringing in Fred Kilgour, although we made a careful search. Part of that had to be luck. If we hadn't brought in a man like Kilgour, I could almost certainly predict that we would not have the kind of OCLC that we have today. He was a genius at it.

UNDERWOOD: I'm reminded of the remark President Enarson made once about his feelings that academic search was as much a matter of happenstance as it was of logic.

BRANSCOMB: So a lot of this is happenstance, not all of it but some of it.

UNDERWOOD: What about funding? You indicated a tremendous growth in the library. How did the library fare as far as funding was concerned in your time? I know there've been a lot of economy drives which must have hit the library hard at times.

BRANSCOMB: Even beyond that, Paul, not very well considering that we have here on one campus as you well know, almost every department and discipline and professional school. Unlike Illinois, for example, it has medicine and nursing and one or two others in Chicago, being a big city. We have all those things, including agriculture. We have almost everything on one campus, so our needs for adequate library services and library collections have been tremendous, but we haven't able to convince the administration over the decades that we needed the things that we should have, although we've tried. It's not easy. I don't blame the administrators too much because the deans are grappling everything they can, and the director of libraries here does not have the status of dean. He's maybe somewhere maybe between department head and dean, something like that. That makes a difference too. So over the decades, while I was in administration, we have not had the kind of funds that Illinois has had for the decades, 40, 50, 60 years, year after year after year, enough to build these tremendous collections, so that Illinois is now the largest, and has been for decades, the largest state-assisted university library in the nation. It is third. You've got Harvard, Yale and Illinois, and they stay in the ranking year after year after year. So that we have not done very well. We're doing better now. Let me give you just a couple figures to show that we're doing better. When I came we got approximately \$200,000 for library materials. That means for serials, books, magazines, whatever. When I retired we were getting \$1,410,000 and that's an awful lot better. It wasn't enough but it's been better. So our funding for library materials has not been nearly as good as it should have been, although let me repeat what I said a moment ago. As I observe the situation, I think you know I keep in fairly close touch with the campus; the libraries are doing better now. There's a greater awareness, and perhaps this is my fault, of the need to push the libraries faster than we had been with respect to library materials. Not so much buildings. We're still in a pretty bad way there, and not so much in staffing, but in library materials we're doing better.

UNDERWOOD: Would some of that maybe be the result of faculty awareness that the library needed more materials too, and therefore there was a greater push on the part of the faculty.

BRANSCOMB: I think so. Now some faculty have done all they could, but perhaps not enough. The faculty is always important, and when we get money for a special area, we always and we must get faculty involved to select material because they know a lot more about the teaching program than we do. They know better in particular areas what to acquire, so we get a lot of help from the faculty. I think maybe they could have pushed, maybe the library council, although it has tried, could have been a little more effective, but so could I. I'm not going to try to escape blame for not having sold the need better than I did. I should add that we now run about, well we celebrated the one-millionth volume when I was director and the two-millionth volume and then we had 3 million volumes not too long after I stepped down, but I think it's becoming kind of routine. So we are now somewhere around 3,600,000 volumes. So we're doing better.

UNDERWOOD: It's a very logical move from there to a question about your perception of Fawcett as an administrator. First let's talk about his attitude or what seemed to be his attitude toward the library. I gather that he was effective in the process of forming OCLC.

BRANSCOMB: Oh yes, and I'm grateful to him for that, and I've told him on several occasions about that, because if he had sat on that as much as the president did in Cincinnati, there's a good chance there wouldn't be any OCLC today. So he certainly did that. In general though, he was not very library minded. This is not to say that he tried to cut the library down. He didn't do very much to push us ahead, and I think perhaps it's because he never properly understood the proper role of the libraries in the teaching and research programs at the university. Beyond that, I think he never fully understood the nature of a university. Now some would agree with that and some wouldn't. That's always the case.

UNDERWOOD: How did you feel he fell short in this? The university has a certain role and a certain function in society. This one has a specific one because it's a state supported school and a land grant college. In what ways do you think Fawcett didn't fully understand it?

BRANSCOMB: Do you remember the very dramatic situation we had in Mershon Auditorium, where all the faculty were advised to meet and talk about the speaker's rule, and where 509 of us voted against him, and about 1,200 voted for him. That's an area I don't think he understood the role of the university in allowing, encouraging all kinds of ideas and all kinds of speakers. In other words, as I see a university, it should be a ferment of ideas or it's not much of a university. It's a different thing from anything else I can think of in society. I think it's a place where young minds are brought to learn, and experts are brought to do research, and it should be a ferment of ideas and discussion, pushing back the areas of knowledge, no matter where they lead, and it has to have from society. Now I don't know if Fawcett fully understood that. I'm not suggesting that he intentionally didn't always do the best job. I just don't think he understood. I think he came from the superintendency of public schools with the kind of public school idea, and that doesn't work very effectively in a university.

UNDERWOOD: Now the speaker's rule of course was imposed by the Board of Trustees, and I've always assumed that Fawcett felt he had to enforce it until somebody could convince the Board of Trustees to change it.

BRANSCOMB: My impression, and maybe you were closer to it than I normally am, but my impression is that he could have done a little bit more if he believed along with some of the rest of us that this was an important issue and that he should educate the board. I think the president has a responsibility to do something to educate the Board. He certainly isn't going to mandate because a good Board isn't going to be told what to do. But it can be educated. It can be brought to see the light.

UNDERWOOD: I just finished a book on the Enarson years. Just one other sort of amusing note I got from Enarson involved how you can educate a Board of Trustees. I couldn't help but think of that.

BRANSCOMB: This is from another interviewee?

UNDERWOOD: This is from Dr. Enarson. He wrote me a note about relations with the Board of Trustees talking about the difficulties he had trying to explain the university to the Board of Trustees.

BRANSCOMB: It's something like explaining it to the public. It's impossible to explain it fully, but we have a responsibility to do what we're doing to make ourselves understood. I still think it occupies, if it's doing its job, a unique role in our society.

UNDERWOOD: What about problems of maintaining quality while coping with growth, which is one major problem, it seemed to me, in the Fawcett period. It was a period of such enormous growth. How do you feel the university handled this particular problem?

BRANSCOMB: Let me rephrase that. Are you talking about the quality of library service or the quality of education?

UNDERWOOD: I'm thinking of both actually, the quality of the instruction during this period of enormous growth, and also the quality of library service because you said that you did quite well in that respect.

BRANSCOMB: We certainly tried. With respect to service, and this ties in, I'll just mention kind of peripherally, it ties into the question of faculty rank and title, I think we did a good job...

----End of Side 2----

BRANSCOMB: Talking about library service first, I think over the years not only I but my successors have done a good job of recruiting good professional librarians. We're not talking about civil service; we're talking about professional librarians with the Master's degree or more. This of course has everything to do with the kind of library service that's provided, and we have somehow imbued the library faculty and staff with the idea that we are there to serve. We got lots of compliments on the service aspect of our work and the fact that librarians and staff were eager to be as helpful as possible. That is tied partly to the question of faculty rank and title because you can attract better people if you can tell them, "If you come here, you will come with the rank of assistant professor," On the question of the collections themselves, we have used the classroom faculty a good deal to acquire materials. We have set up and still maintain automatic acquisition programs. That's not the right word, but what it means is the university press books. We were getting such a high percentage of books published by the Association of American University presses, whatever the title is, that we decided we would just get blanket orders for all of them. So we got them all, and we got them in a number of different

areas, where we were already getting a fairly high percentage. Now we're getting everything published in that area. That has certainly helped quality. We've been doing that particularly in the areas of medicine, and in other fields as well. We have had librarians who have subject backgrounds, a music background, for example. Our Music Librarian has a Ph.D. in music and a Master's in Library Science, so he's in a particularly good position to select materials that will support well the teaching and research programs in music. So these are some of the ways in which we have maintained pretty good quality selection of library materials. Is this getting at that question?

UNDERWOOD: Yeah. You had kind of a special view of the university as a whole. How well do you feel the university was able to maintain quality during this period of growth, or do you feel that it didn't?

BRANSCOMB: Well, of course it varied with the different areas and departments. I think it has done a pretty good job. This is kind of a distant view of the whole, but I think it has done a pretty good job. As you say we have grown pretty fast and we are enormous now. You could say the university has done a fairly good job in many areas. There are other areas, and I couldn't name them, where I'm sure the quality has lagged. We've lost good faculty and haven't replaced them with equally good ones. You know how that goes. I'm sure that's happened. I think we've done a fairly good job here campus-wide in maintaining the quality of our departments and schools and colleges.

UNDERWOOD: Yeah, the recent rule that you really can't rehire anybody above the assistant professor level without official dispensation almost from on high certainly does not make for problems in that business.

BRANSCOMB: Because of the tenure situation you mean?

UNDERWOOD: When you have to replace a senior professor with long years of experience and reputation with an assistant professor who is probably just a couple of years out of his Ph.D. does make for problems.

BRANSCOMB: That has come up in AAUP discussions, the local chapter of the executive committee of which I'm a member, and the FCBC. We've discussed this, and the question arises in connection with retirement. We have seasoned professors with long experience who are good who will retire kind of early and bring in young assistant professors at a lower salary who maybe don't know as much.

UNDERWOOD: And don't have anything like that kind of experience. Why don't we move to this question since you referred to it a couple of times already, that is, your effort to gain faculty status for the library staff.

BRANSCOMB: That has been very close to my heart from the time I first came because the library professional staff didn't have faculty rank and title in the three institutions to which I was connected before I got to Illinois. There it did have, and I could see the difference. So when I was approached about coming to Ohio State, one of the things that

I wanted to get settled was the question about faculty rank and title. Now the reason I say faculty rank and title is because my experience indicates that it's important to have not only rank (i.e. he has the rank of professor) but the title, so he may be properly called Professor so and so. I saw how well it worked Illinois, so when I came here one of the stipulations that I said, and we both know how this works. They said, "You can pretty much count on being made director of libraries once Manchester retired," and I said, "This is interesting because I have the rank now of associate professor of library science and the title, and I'm scheduled to go next year to full professor, which is not bad at my age, and could we not begin that here?" Manchester had the title of librarian, and he had no faculty rank. I also said, "I'd like to have the titles changed to director and associate director of libraries" which was pretty much and the accepted title in the major universities. It was in Illinois at that time and then it became "dean". And now it became director, and they agreed to both, so in effect I got also the title of professor. So that was the background, and then as we had annual budgets I gradually recommended rank and title for some of my strongest people, with good experience and so forth. So since we had already begun and had broken the ice you might say for the rank and title of the professional library staff to begin with, I gradually added a few more as time went on, maybe one or two a year. Not pushing it because I thought if I pushed it too hard, they might take the whole thing back. I want to get the dates here because they're rather important. By the year 1962, 16 of us had faculty rank and title. Usually either instructor or assistant professor, except for Manchester and me and one or two others. This has happened periodically. The university established a committee to study the question of faculty status university-wide, and it came up with faculty recommendations that groups such as the library and the Ag extension people and some people in computer services perhaps should not have faculty rank and title. They so recommended to the administration and the Faculty Council, but the administration overruled them and recommended to the Faculty Council that this not be approved. Heimberger, thank god, he was the one to whom I was responsible then, but he supported us on it, so that we got the rank and title then for all the librarians. All of them were eligible. That got through in 1962, but it had to go through the Board of Trustees to be effective, and so by July of 1963 I brought in all the remaining librarians who qualified, which was nearly all of them except 2 or 3, with the status of faculty rank and title. There was a university committee, which met in 1971. They do this about every 12 years, trying to decide. It may be a question of jealousy on the part of the faculty, I don't know. It's just who has the union card and who deserves it. This was brought up again in 1969 or 1970, and we fought this and the same groups were brought in again under suspicion about it. What finally happened if I remember correctly, and I think this is right, is that the committee, headed up by the mathematician, just never reported to the old Faculty Council. It just sort of fizzled out. There's one more postscript to this and that is that Dean Haenicke as of this year has talked to the head librarian and the extension people about the desirability of going to another track with equal opportunities, equal privileges, and so forth. To be fair, he has not said, "You've got to do it" but he's saying, "I would like the library faculty to take a vote on whether they wish to remain with the classroom faculty this way or whether they would like to take another track, which in some ways might make it a little easier for them with respect to research and publication. He has said that the Ag Extension people have agreed to this. With the library I hope to God they don't. It's not

just a question of whether it's better for the library. It definitely is. There is nothing, as the Supreme Court say, this business of "separate but equal" is a myth. It's true in this area as well as in the education of our young. So the librarians are certainly better off. I think too that the faculty and the students are better off because I think we can do a better job if we qualify and take our rightful place along with the classroom faculty. I think we can do a better job of serving the university if we can recruit top-level people who are interested in this. The library schools tell them, "Try to go to a place that has faculty rank and title because this is a better situation." So we're able to recruit better people, and we're able to serve more fully on campus committees if people don't have to say, "Well now, I don't know." For example, they couldn't serve on FCBC if they weren't faculty. This is one of our luxuries. Well, I get carried away on this because it has been one of the things I worked for and one of things that I'm proudest of.

UNDERWOOD: You might want to explain that FCBC is the Faculty Compensation and Benefits Committee.

BRANSCOMB: Right. I'm the only emeritus member of that, which is rather interesting. We had one librarian on it, but she did not have faculty rank and title and had to drop out. This is true on Senate and other things. It just kind of permeates the situation in one way or another.

UNDERWOOD: That brings up another point that I'm interested in: relations with administrators other than Fawcett. You indicated in a conversation that we had earlier that you got along pretty well with Jack Corbally, and I'm wondering about other administrators that you had some relationship to.

BRANSCOMB: I've been responsible to these and I can run them off very quickly: President Bevis, President Fawcett, and then Fawcett shifted it from responsibility to the president to the vice president, which is a pretty common procedure.

UNDERWOOD: When he made Moulton Executive Vice President?

BRANSCOMB: Vice-President Heimberger was my next boss, and after that John Weaver for a year or two, and then Corbally, and then Bonner.

UNDERWOOD: So when did you move from being responsible to the academic vice president to being responsible to the vice president for student services?

BRANSCOMB: That came much later. Oh, we were moved from the academic vice-presidency to educational services in 1968-1969.

UNDERWOOD: What was the logic in that?

BRANSCOMB: I don't know. I wasn't asked about it. It was just done. I assume it was because it was felt, not by Corbally I don't think because his and my relationship was always good, at that point extremely good. Maybe the president felt at that time, and that

would have been Fawcett, that it ought to be at a lower level. I don't really know. It didn't work very well. I think in general as you lower the level to whom you're responsible you get perhaps a little less careful attention to your problems, so that this was not a good move for us on two counts. One, the lower level, and two, because Bonner was not a very good administrator of Educational Services, particularly for the libraries.

UNDERWOOD: Why not? What was his problem?

BRANSCOMB: He was a military man. He wasn't a university man. He was a little like Meiling who maintained a strong interest in military affairs even though he was in education. He too didn't fully understand I think, the nature of a university, and he and I didn't get along very well. I guess it was partly my fault but certainly partly his too. But it just didn't work very well.

UNDERWOOD: I remember the time, this was Enarson, when the governor put through a succession of 3% cuts in the already agreed upon share the university got out of the state funds. Enarson said, "5% cuts in the academic departments and 8% cuts in other departments" and the library got an 8% cut, which even I thought was a ridiculous thing. It seemed to me that the library was as much a prior academic department as any other regular department on campus.

BRANSCOMB: Well, this is not the sort of thing that Bonner would have understood or supported us on.

UNDERWOOD: What I said at the time was after all, you can get an education if you have a library, but not a university. But you can't get an education at a university that doesn't have a library.

BRANSCOMB: Happily, Bonner is now gone, and the director of libraries, Bill Studer, is responsible to Diether Huenicke, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, which is a much better place. As I said earlier, at large institution of this size, it's not unreasonable to have the dean of library administration or the director of libraries responsible to the number one academic vice president. That's not unreasonable at all.

UNDERWOOD: That seems like a very logical place. I'm thinking of the importance of the library.

BRANSCOMB: To put it lower denigrates the library somewhat and makes it more difficult to compete with the deans for funds.

UNDERWOOD: So generally speaking, as long as you were under the academic vice presidents you got a fairly sympathetic hearing even though you didn't always get...

BRANSCOMB: Yes. Heimberger was good, and Corbally was certainly good. John Weaver was good, so under the academic vice president, what you said was correct. We

got pretty good hearings and pretty good support. But still not enough. I guess everybody says “not enough”.

UNDERWOOD: Were there any other changes in the university government structure during your time that had a particular impact on the library?

BRANSCOMB: I don't think of any offhand.

UNDERWOOD: Well, I'd like to slip off into some other questions that I'm interested in. One, I was wondering about this campus disturbance business which we talked about at various times in the past, how they affected the library, specifically in 1970, but there were other periods of disturbances. What were the libraries problems, other than the sort of normal ones that would come about because of the need to protect the library?

BRANSCOMB: Of course, the big one as you've indicated was in 1970. Before that, the disturbances didn't effect the libraries too much. There were broken windows but the library never seemed to be a place that the students had it in for. I think our relationship with the students was pretty good, and it was only kind of peripheral that we had damage done, or that they seemed to have it in for us. For example (and this may illustrate why this was true) when we had sit-ins in the library because we had the military here recruiting and they would have a desk set up in the library, I remember that Bonner wanted to exclude the students from coming in and sitting on the floor. I said, “No. They have a right to demonstrate in this fashion.” They weren't allowed to block the desk where the recruiters were, but they were allowed to sit all around and protest, which was only proper. I was sympathetic. Mr. Bonner didn't like that at all, but we got a surprising amount of acclaim from the liberal faculty and students on that. So maybe this is the sort of thing, which we did on occasion, which kept us from being the target of much. So I can't say very much about anything happening. I presume it did effect our circulation somewhat, but not enough to be dramatic. I can tell you more about the spring of 1970.

UNDERWOOD: Well, then let's move on to 1970.

BRANSCOMB: I question in the Spring of 1970, when we had the rioting, whether the students were upset primarily by the opposition to the Vietnamese War, or whether it was students wanted to get more student rights on campus. The blacks, for example, wanted more black faculty, they wanted more black students to sit on committees and things of that sort. So I think as best I can judge, and I'm not the ideal person for this, but it seemed to be a combination of these two things primarily that upset the students. I can well remember that spring of 1970, it got so bad with rioting and with the campus police, the highway patrolmen, the National Guard all coming on campus to try and control things, and Governor Rhodes getting into the act. All these things, and the students seemed to need a confrontation, and I can well remember, and I'm sure it's written up in The Lantern and other places, that as the students got tear gassed, we in the libraries put buckets of water there right inside the Main Library, and paper to wipe their eyes. It even got to the point where some were saying, “You are treating the students, and you aren't

doctors.” So we checked with the medical people to be sure that just putting pails of clean water out there with paper towels could not be construed as medical treatment. But this again, I think, maybe gave brownie points for us from the students. It got so bad that the governor recommended that the university shut down, and it was shut down on May 6 and remained shut down as far as classes were concerned until May 19th. These are precise dates. In each building in the library for example from May 6th to May 12th, the only people allowed in Main Library or any other libraries, was the director, and I was the director, and my secretary. We had incoming mail piling up and telephone calls for about a week you see. And this was true of the other areas. Only deans and their secretaries were allowed on campus, a few administrators and nobody else. So it’s the kind of situation you run into once in a lifetime. It was weird to see that big campus shut down this way. They put people on top of the Main Library with talkies (I’m not sure they had rifles) to watch the campus to see that nobody got in. The security was very tight, and after the 12th of May people, faculty were allowed back and administrators and so forth, but classes didn’t resume until the 19th of May. Now on the 6th itself, when things got so bad they had to shut down, just before the shut down we had some windows broken in the Main Library, and there were 4 fires I remember set in the washrooms, but they obviously were just protests because they weren’t in the book section or the stacks or anything like that. They were in the washrooms in the wastebasket. We quickly put those out. But that was just a spin-off from all of this. The students were blowing off steam this way.

UNDERWOOD: Do you think any outsiders had anything to do with that?

BRANSCOMB: I would guess so. There usually are people from outside who take advantage of, they steal and do all kinds of things, and it’s often blamed on students, and students are very often not to blame, so I’m sure you’re right about that.

UNDERWOOD: Certainly a lot of the charges of the time, but much of the damage was done by people who are not students at all.

BRANSCOMB: Usually young people, but not the students. I think that’s quite right, but it was a really weird time.

UNDERWOOD: I smelled the tear gas on the campus and I took off for Eastern Europe actually. I didn’t stick around.

BRANSCOMB: Good idea. And this was time too when we had the tragic shootings of the four people at Kent State.

UNDERWOOD: Well listen, let’s move on. You’ve been very active personally in AAUP. What has been its role at Ohio State and what do you foresee for it too?

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BRANSCOMB: Before we changed the tape, I was just getting started on AAUP, telling you what the role was. We need some background. I've been a member of AAUP since 1943, when I was a member of the faculty of the University of South Carolina at Columbia, and I've been active in it ever since. I served on the National Council and was president here of the local chapter. At the present time I'm on the local chapter executive committee as the only emeritus member, which is interesting. The role the chapter has played here is essentially what it plays in other places too as far as I have been able to see, and that is primarily to ride herd on fairness in the freedom to teach and the procedures governing such things as promotion in rank and so forth. I think there are the primary things. Academic freedom, of course, is the name of the game for the AAUP. I guess it sometimes gets a little beyond that, but I think basically this is the role of the AAUP, and that's a role, which it is primarily playing here. Now this has a lot of things involved in it; academic freedom such as promotion, tenure. Let me give you an example of what AAUP has done here on this campus. When the question came up of writing rules for financial exigency where faculty may be terminated...

UNDERWOOD: This is back in the late years of the Enarson period.

BRANSCOMB: Yes. This was a pretty important issue on campus, and I was on the Executive Committee at that time so I know some of the things that were going on, and AAUP took a pretty firm stand with respect to what constituted financial exigency, and encouraged the administration and the faculty to write rules. They had a good deal of effect on writing the rules so that financial exigency would not be used as an excuse to get rid of faculty whom administrators didn't like. It's always a danger, and I think it did a pretty good job in writing those rules, and I'm sure they would have written them somewhat differently had not AAUP worked pretty hard on it and had not influenced the writing and final acceptance of these rules. This is just an illustration. Now I realize that not all faculty and certainly administrators think that AAUP is a good thing, but by and large I feel that the American Association of University Professors has been a very desirable thing in American higher education. If we had not had it, and had nothing comparable to it, I think the governance at universities would be quite different, academic freedom would be quite different from what it is today. Now about the future, I don't know. For example, take collective bargaining. There's a mixed feeling here in our executive committee. I rather favor it but some others do not, on Executive Committee. Cincinnati had it and I think Kent has it, and there isn't so much pressure of it as long as you have an administrator like Jennings, because he understands the faculty point of view. I think he's fair, and he's doing all he can with the legislature to get adequate support. So the collective bargaining just doesn't seem to be necessary. Now it might be with some other administrators. Now the AAUP locally has made the decision that if the university should go to collective bargaining, we would want AAUP to be the bargaining agent, but the Executive Committee of the association here has not said that we should go to collective bargaining. That's still an open question.

UNDERWOOD: You've also been active in something called the Center for Research Libraries. You've had a number of different positions in that and I confess that I don't know that it is. What is its function?

BRANSCOMB: There's no particular reason why you should know, Paul. It was originally called the Midwest Inter-Library Center, and was begun, I believe, in 1949. The purpose of it was to collect in one place relatively easily accessible, little used, research materials, for example, foreign documents, old textbooks, all kinds of things that once in a while a professor doing research might need, and he needs to have access to them somewhere in the country, and the Midwest seemed to be a good place, at least serving the Midwest institutions. Now Ohio State didn't get in until 1953 and you may wonder why. I came in 1948. Why didn't I get us into it? Well, Manchester and I and some other library colleagues felt that we didn't want to do anything to jeopardize getting that addition, and if we talked to the administration about joining the MILC, Midwest Inter-Library Center, and put in a lot of our little used materials there, because that was one of the purposes of it, they would say, "Well, you don't need this addition, you don't need these stacks, you can just put those things there." That really wouldn't answer the question but we didn't want to face that, so we waited until after the addition, the tower, was finished and then we joined MILC. It later reorganized because, like OCLC, it outgrew the Midwest. Harvard wanted to come in, and Yale and some other institutions, but we had a reorganizational meeting sometime in 1964, and renamed it the Center for Research Libraries because it was no longer the Midwest, it was not longer ever American. Toronto, Montreal and other places were in the business. So it has served primarily as a depository for little used research material, and it is not used tremendously, but when it is needed it is very useful.

UNDERWOOD: Where is it?

BRANSCOMB: It's in Chicago.

UNDERWOOD: I guessed that because once I wanted to refer to back files of a Romanian newspaper and they told me they could get it for me out of Chicago.

BRANSCOMB: One other thing about. In addition to our deposits, the membership which, but it's a pretty large membership all over the country and Canada. In addition to depositing our little used materials there, there has been for years and years an ongoing acquisition program of getting, let's say, German dissertations. Now no library is by itself going to go into that, but if we all go in together we can bring a lot of the foreign material here in one place, and we know where it is because their records would show us where it is. So this is another way we have of acquiring materials that we pool together for research purposes.

UNDERWOOD: All right, now then, we get to this Thurber business.

BRANSCOMB: May I mention one other association? I'll try to make this brief. It's the Association of Research Libraries, which is an organization which when I became director had only 30 to 40 members made up of the largest research libraries in the country. Most of them were university libraries, but the Boston Public Library, which has a tremendous collection, the New York Public, and the Library of Congress were members. The reason I mention this association is that there are problems in common,

opportunities in common, that these great research libraries have that are a little different from any library around anywhere. We have banded together to talk about problems, to engage in cooperative ventures. It didn't start the Midwest Inter-Library Center but it could have. It's that sort of cooperation that the Association of Research Libraries has stood for, and we've been a member of this a great many years. It's been a very useful association.

UNDERWOOD: Okay, now let's go back to this Thurber business. When did you become interested in Thurber?

BRANCOMB: Well, I guess really when we go to the point where we made it a special collection. We had been acquiring his works, but not necessarily first editions, for decades even before I came of course. But then in 1962 we made the decision that we would make his a special collection, and to a librarian this means that we would go all out to get everything we could about the subject, in this case an author. That is to acquire first editions of anything he's published, his letters, photographs, drawings in this case, everything we could lay our hands on because it was important enough for graduate students and research faculty and others who worked in the area to have access to almost everything about the guy's life. We made the decision in 1962 and so we began to build it pretty rapidly from that point on, and getting tremendous help from Helen Thurber, who was his second wife. She's still living. He died in 1961, and we have long since had the best and the fullest collection anywhere in the world, including Helen Thurber's. We'll probably get more when Helen dies. But we have a tremendous collection of authentic materials. We had such a collection, and it looked as though it had the potential, so that in 1970 we began talking about establishing a professorship of Thurber studies. I had been director of libraries for 19 years, and this perhaps is long enough, give somebody else a change, so I talked to Bonner and the man who was academic vice president then, who later went to Minnesota. I've forgotten his name.

UNDERWOOD: I know who you mean. Robinson, James Robinson.

BRANSCOMB: Yes. About my stepping out of the directorship of the libraries and becoming the director of Thurber studies, retaining an office at the Main Library. Well, we got together on this and I stepped into his position and stayed in it from July 1971 to September of 1981, little over a ten year period, building the collection, doing some writing about Thurber, lecturing, things of this sort. This is one of the areas of excellence in our libraries, the Thurber collection, which it should be since he was from Columbus and Ohio State. So this is how it came about.

UNDERWOOD: Well I remember one time you were talking about this incredible trip to collect Thurber drawings through a snowstorm. Can you remember the details?

BRANSCOMB: I sure can, and so can my wife, Marjorie. Bill Windom, who is the movie and T.V. actor, became interested in doing "A Night with Thurber," just as Whitmore has done Twain. This is the same thing. He stopped by on one occasion and talked with me about the Thurber collection. We had him out to dinner and we showed

him slides of drawings. We had made slides because I was using them and giving lectures on Thurber. He liked them so much he asked us to make some for him, which we did, at his expense of course, and he used those and it added to his two shows on Thurber that he does around the country. Well, the reason I mention this is because on one of these talks – and he's had the best responses on college campuses, he's done other places too but the students are the ones he really likes because they respond to him – he was doing this in Connecticut and the show was over and a couple named Coster, Allan Coster who lived in Sandy Hook, came backstage and said how much they enjoyed it and said, "You know, we think we've got some Thurber drawings on the walls in our attic room. Would you come look at them?" Bill Windom said sure and he went to see them and he said, "My God, these have got to be real." He knew about Thurber drawings and he said, "These have to be Thurber drawings." When he came back on the way from California, he lives in California, he stopped off and said, "Lewis, there are these drawings on the walls in this house in Sandy Hook. You ought to get in touch with these people." Well the reason they were there is because Thurber and his first wife Althea had lived there since 1931 to 1935 when they got divorced, and Thurber, who was writing avidly would go up in the attic to get away from Rosemary, their daughter and Althea and all the noise going on downstairs so he could write in privacy. He was a very careful writer, not a drawer, when he drew it was all in just a very few seconds, but he wrote and rewrote and polished. So he would get tired of writing one of his stories and get up and walk around the room. At that time it had just the bare plaster walls. He was a great doodler. He drew as most of us doodle. When he moved out of there, they were divorced and she was so sore at him that she had all the walls covered with wallpaper, and then two coats of paint eventually got on there. Now if it had been vice versa the drawings would have been gone forever. They would have been painted over. But they weren't. The wallpaper that was put on protected them. What happened was that Allan Coster one Sunday morning being up there happened to notice that a piece of wallpaper had peeled off showing the beginning of one drawing. They were sophisticated people. They knew that his had been the house that Thurber lived in, knew and admired Thurber's work, and figured this was a Thurber drawing. So I got in touch with them. It took a year or two, (they said they'd be willing to give them to us) to find someone, a conservator I guess you'd call it, who knew how to get those off the walls was not easy. I finally got a girl with a master's degree that had experience in Florence, in Italy, so we got her in on this. We talked to her about the procedure. What she did was to get some kind of chemical and put it on the walls, which fixed the stuff, and then she carefully cut out the plaster and mounted the drawings on aluminum frames. She had sealed it up first. They were just pencil drawings, still fairly faint. We went up there. We had insurance on it because we were afraid something would happen. It was getting to be a pretty big deal after all that, and I thought, "My God, what would happen if the house burned down or something after all the money we've put into this." So the insurance was running out and we kept delaying and couldn't figure out how to get them here. We were afraid to trust them to a truck. So Marjorie and I, in January of 1977, we had a nice snowstorm but we couldn't wait any longer, so she and I got into this little Duster car, and went up there and got those things and put them into the car and brought them back here. They're mounted now in the Thurber reading room. We couldn't make it back in one day, it was just too damn far, and I was worried about leaving them in the back seat, and I was

worried about the possibility that somebody might come into the motel at 2:00, 3:00 in the morning and see them and think maybe they were something important and break in and cause trouble, and I didn't know what to do about that. But nature took care of it. We had this awful snowstorm coming back, so much so that the snow was all over the car, and you couldn't begin to see in there, so they were safe.

UNDERWOOD: That didn't make the driving any more comfortable though.

BRANSCOMB: No, but it made the things safe. We called that the ice and snow safari of 1977.

UNDERWOOD: Let me skip again. Briefly, you went to India as a consultant.

BRANSCOMB: I can do that quickly. This was in 1967, and as you know the university has had AID, Agency for International Development, and other programs in India and Brazil and elsewhere. Well, this was India and it was part of the university's cooperation, with the government helping out. I went with the Ford Foundation to serve as a consultant to the Punjab Agriculture University in Ludhiana, in the state of Punjab. Marjorie and I spent August and part of September, about 6 or 7 weeks there, while I make a study of the library situation on the three campuses which they controlled, making recommendations for changes and improvements and so forth. This was just part of what other faculty were doing in other areas. It was an interesting experience.

UNDERWOOD: Now I wanted to ask you the three things you're proudest of in your work. You've already mentioned OCLC and the computerization thing, which I gather would be one of those.

BRANSCOMB: It certainly is. Not because it was just Ohio State, but because Ohio State was involved and certainly still is, and Ohio State and I certainly made a contribution. I think it's fair to say that we wouldn't have the OCLC today if Ohio State and I had not been in there on the original committee pushing this thing, with Fawcett's help. So that's one of them. Another is the achievement of faculty rank and title. It may be a little difficult to understand this, but in an area where one has not quite achieved the same status as the classroom faculty, to achieve it on a campus is gratifying, and I think it's helped our people do a better job. I think the library faculty has done a better job than they would have done otherwise, so that's the second one. The third one I guess, and this is a little bit iffy, but maybe the third one is the building of some of these special collections. Thurber would be number one, Dylan Thomas, Nelson Algren, the Charvat Collection of early American fiction – that is tremendous. We're about third in the country in early American fiction, which is Sholfields job. We've had grants that have helped us on that, and that is still going on. And in other areas they've been special collections, and remember what I said about special collections. You get everything you can about the individual. So I think these are probably the three areas that I feel best about.

UNDERWOOD: Okay, now, three things you regret the most.

BRANSCOMB: One is some appointments, not those I made but didn't make. Of course you make mistakes in appointments, but looking back on them are a couple, and I won't name them, but I missed the boat on them. I didn't promote these people as I should have. One of them left and finally ended tragically, although I don't take responsibility for his death, but I should have promoted that person. There's another one that stayed here whom I should have promoted faster, but I just missed the boat on both of them. I feel badly about it. I know that an administrator as long as I was one makes mistakes, but I feel badly about that. Another area is my relations with the administration, with the administrators. I'm sure part of this was my fault. One aspect of it is maybe I did too much badmouthing. By that I mean, instead of talking always optimistically, I may have talked too much pessimistically because of our great needs that were going unmet. But my relations with at least some of the top administrators were not very good. I'm sure it's partly my fault. It's nearly always two ways, two sides to the story, not just one, although as I said before, with some of them my relations were quite good, with Heimberger and Corbally. But some of the others were not as good, and I regret that. Finally, a library school. Let me talk very briefly about that because it's not unimportant. The first library school in this state was at Western Reserve, now Case Western Reserve University. The second was not here. It was established right before I came, at Kent State. There wasn't much point in having two right there together. The other one should have been here because we had all the resources. That was before I came. But then after I came there was constant demand for a library school in central Ohio. We tried several times to get this thing going. We almost made it. In the 60's, Irene Braden had a doctorate from Michigan. She was our librarian for research and development. Anyway, we got her to serve as chairman of the committee to work on establishing a school of library and information science, even antiquating a doctorate, but certainly the master's degree. She did a beautiful job. She worked up the program checking with all bases and she and I and one or two others go it through the Graduate Council, the Faculty Council, the library administration, the Board of Trustees, the Board of Regents, so you can say well, then, why didn't it get going? The Board of Regents approved it, and they asked for the funds to start. But you have to have additional money to start something like this, so they asked for it from the legislature in 1971. Right at that time the legislature began apparently to feel poor and we were having one of our economic recessions or whatever you might call it. So the money was not forthcoming and the thing went down the drain, and once you lose it you can't get money for two or three years. You've got to start from scratch all over again. Look how things have changed. So we now have one at Kent, and it is fair to say it's not as strong as a place as it should be. They started on a shoestring, and the one at Case is now folding, so the only one in the state is at Kent. We need one badly. We tried, but we didn't try hard enough maybe.

UNDERWOOD: I don't know what you can do about the legislature when they decide they're poor. Now we're almost through on this tape too and I thank you very much.