



The Medical Library Association

Oral History Project Manual

7th Revised Edition

Medical Library Association Oral History Committee 2017

Prepared by Nancy Zinn, FMLA, 1978

revised ed., 1981

3rd revised ed., 1990

4th revised ed., 1997 by Victoria Pifalo

5th revised ed., 1999, 2000 by Diane McKenzie, FMLA

6th revised ed., 2005 by Victoria Pifalo

7th revised ed., 2017 by Carolyn Lipscomb, AHIP, FMLA

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Introduction

The purpose of the [Oral History Project of the Medical Library Association](#) is to record, in their own voices, those in the United States and Canada who have had an impact on the practice of health sciences librarianship and on the Medical Library Association (MLA). It is designed to provide one basis for the history of North American health sciences librarianship and MLA.

History of Project

In February 1977, acting on a suggestion from a member of the Board of Directors, Ann Kerker, MLA president, appointed an Ad hoc Committee on the Feasibility of an Oral History Program for MLA. The committee members were Estelle Brodman, AHIP, FMLA, chair, Alfred Brandon, FMLA, Erika Love, FMLA, and Nancy Zinn, FMLA. Priscilla Mayden, AHIP, FMLA, was the board liaison, and Peter Olch of the National Library of Medicine (NLM) was appointed as a consultant. The committee reported that “an Oral History Program for MLA is important, desirable, and feasible.”

The Oral History Committee was formed and received a grant from NLM. The funds were seed money to support the interviewing of a large group of past officers and board members. The original structure of the committee included a committee chair, project director, and principal investigator. In 1988, the board reassigned the supervision of the committee to the History of the Health Sciences Section. Funds for carrying out interviews were cut, and the NLM grant was no longer in effect. The position of project director and chair were merged. This arrangement lasted for a short period, and the committee moved to become a committee directly under Section Council. In 1997/98, the committee again began to report directly to the Board of Directors. In addition, the composition was changed to include a project director position, the term of the chair was increased, and an ad hoc member from the History of the Health Sciences Section was added.

Oral History Project Directors

The following information has been gleaned from MLA directories and annual reports by Mary Langman.

Estelle Brodman 1977/82
Nancy Zinn 1982/85
Suzanne Grefsheim 1985/89; chair and project director
Dorothy Whitcomb 1989/91; chair and project director
Billie Brodhaus 1991/92 chair*
Judith Robinson 1992/93 chair*
Julia Cobb Player 1993/94 chair*
Diane McKenzie 1994/95 chair*
Belva Jennings 1995/96 chair*
Victoria Pifalo 1996/97 chair*
Diane McKenzie 1997/2001
Victoria Pifalo 2001/05
Richard Nollan 2005/09
Carolyn Lipscomb 2009/17

*No project director recorded for the years 1991-1997, but it appears that Dorothy Whitcomb, Diane McKenzie, and Victoria Pifalo worked unofficially in this capacity as they actively helped publish several histories and in some years are listed as consultants to the committee.

Selecting the Interviewees

The original committee in 1977 recommended choosing to interview:

- (1) those who have made significant contributions to the profession and association,
- (2) those involved in major developments in the profession, and
- (3) a generation approach.

The current goal of the project is to interview persons important to the profession and the association after their retirement. The project balances interviewing as many MLA presidents and other association leaders as possible, while including a variety of backgrounds that may not be represented otherwise.

Possible candidates include:

- MLA presidents
- Noyes awardees
- directors of major health sciences libraries and Regional Medical Libraries (RMLs)
- hospital library directors
- educators
- MLA staff
- NLM staff
- MLA board members

The project attempts to interview persons in a timeframe soon after retirement, but will also selectively consider people who are important to include but may have been out of the profession for a period of time. The committee has found that the best time to interview an individual is shortly after retirement. Before retirement, a person is often very busy and, in addition, is apt to be less candid and may have a narrower view of his or her professional career and of librarianship. A person who has been retired for a long while may forget interesting details or lose interest in his or her former career.

Diversity in the selection of interviewees is important to provide a broad perspective on the profession and association. Efforts should be made to include representatives of minority groups as well as different areas of librarianship and geographic areas.

The project director maintains a list of recommended interviewee priorities to guide the selection, in consultation with the committee. The list is revised as persons retire or priorities change. The project director also keeps a record of persons who have been nominated or suggested for interview with information on their MLA role and unique background. Input from MLA members should be encouraged.

The goal of the project is to conduct approximately three new interviews a year in order to maintain a sustainable workflow.

Selecting the Interviewers

The best interviewers are often those who have knowledge of the same area of librarianship as the interviewee or of the time period covered by the interviewee's career, or those who are personally acquainted with the person to be interviewed. It may be helpful to find people who live in the same part of the country as the interviewee. MLA Fellows can be excellent interviewers because of their knowledge of the association and the issues of librarianship.

The Oral History Committee prefers interviewers who have prior experience, when possible, through experience as an interviewer or editor for the MLA Oral History Project, observation of an interview, experience with another oral history project, or coursework. The project director will consult with new and other interviewers to offer guidance prior to conducting the interview.

Interviewing is an art, and some people are more talented than others. Expertise develops with practice, by working with experienced interviewers, and by reading oral history interviews and about oral history interviewing. Reviewing selected published MLA oral histories may provide a helpful starting point for preparing to be an interviewer; the project director can recommend appropriate histories.

Interviewing, and the background preparation for it, is eligible for points in the Academy of Health Information Professionals (AHIP).

Interviewer Steps

See subsequent chapters for fuller explanation.

1. Invite interviewee in consultation with project director. (See “Setting Up the Interview.”)
2. Agree on time and place for interview. (See “Setting Up the Interview.”)
3. Research career, publications, and time period of interviewee. (See suggestions in “Preparing for the Interview.”)
Obtain CV of interviewee.
4. Draft interview questions. (See “Preparing for the Interview” and Appendix B.)
Share questions with interviewee in advance for suggestions and to allow him/her to prepare (at least 3 weeks in advance suggested).
5. Prepare brief biographical statement to share with interviewee. (Optional: If the interviewer does not do this, it will be done as part of the publication process.)
6. Obtain digital recorder and be familiar with and practice its use.
7. Obtain signatures on consent form at time of interview.
8. Conduct interview. (See “Conducting the Interview.”)
9. Take a photo of the interviewee if the project director has not already obtained one or discuss preference for existing one. (If the interviewer does not do this, it will be done as part of the publication process.)
10. Send audio file, consent form, and supplementary materials (e.g., CV, biographical statement, photo, interview questions) to project director.
Send request for reimbursement of expenses to project director.

Setting Up the Interview

Throughout the preparations, keep the project director apprised of what is happening and copy him or her on correspondence.

Requesting the interview:

- The project director will send a formal letter of invitation to be interviewed in the MLA Oral History Project, providing the interviewer's name, projected timeframe for the interview, and project background. (See Appendix A.) This letter may serve to confirm initial informal contact made by the interviewer or project director.
- The project director will send the interviewer a copy of the consent form to be signed at the interview.

Establishing a time line for the interview:

All preparations are conducted by the interviewer unless other arrangements are made.

- It will take some time to properly prepare unless you know the interviewee well. Allow at least six weeks to prepare. (See "Preparing for the Interview.")
- Contact the interviewee and select a specific date and place for the interview. Confirm this in writing. Most interviews take at least four hours. Some may take longer. Discuss this with the interviewee.
- Discuss the setting where the interview will take place. It is best to have a quiet place without telephone or personal interruptions. It is important to choose a place where the interviewee is comfortable.
- Request interviewee's CV. (Assure them that it does not have to be up-to-date to be useful.)
- Prepare questions and send them to the interviewee at least three weeks before interview, longer if interviewee does not use email. Review questions with the project director and interviewee and send an updated draft.
- Make necessary travel and accommodations arrangements. Be conscious of MLA limits for reimbursement for travel. (See "Reimbursement for Oral History Interviews.") Check with the project director if you have questions.
- It may be useful to have dinner with the interviewee the night before the interview. This can help the interviewer and interviewee get to know each other and establish a good basis for the interview.
- At least three weeks before interview, set the exact time and exact place for interview. Reiterate the appointment about a week before the interview.

Consent Form

Each interview must have a signed consent form. The steps in the process are noted below. Any questions about the consent process should be referred to the project director.

- The consent form will be sent to the interviewer by the project director prior to the interview.
- The interviewer brings a copy of the consent form to the interview. The consent form is signed by both interviewee and interviewer.
- The signed consent form will be sent by the interviewer to the project director.
- The project director will send the consent form to MLA headquarters for signature by the executive director.
- MLA headquarters will return the consent form to the project director.
- The original consent form is scanned for inclusion in the published edited history.
- The original consent form is returned to MLA for retention in the files.

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 _____ on _____. 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 _____ .

Name of Interviewee

Name of MLA Interviewer(s)

Signature

Signature

Date _____

Date _____

Accepted by: _____
MLA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Date _____

Preparing for the Interview

The interview is expected to be a record of both personal events and opinions and the perception of an important observer of and participant in events in the profession.

Both interviewer and interviewee need to prepare for the interview and have clearly in mind what will be discussed. The interviewer should prepare a list of questions and topics that are to be addressed during the interview. The questions should be sent to the interviewee well in advance of the scheduled interview so he or she can review them and make suggestions, corrections, and additions. Receiving the questions in advance also allows the interviewee to prepare and refresh her or his memory.

Suggestions for preparation:

- Request a CV from the interviewee; reading the CV will help to formulate specific questions for the interviewee.
- Read or review publications by the interviewee.
- Search MLANET.org and the *Journal of the Medical Library Association [JMLA]* (formerly *BMLA*) to retrieve pertinent materials such as Fellow biography, award presentations, presidential introduction and statements, annual meeting proceedings, etc.
- Consider the historical time period in which the interviewee worked to give a framework to the interview. This review may also suggest suitable questions.
- If appropriate, contact friends or colleagues for insight into the interviewee's career, awards, and interests. Be careful to maintain confidentiality and be tactful if using this approach.

Questions:

- A set of general questions and areas to cover is provided as a starting point (see Appendix B). The project director can also share questions from other interviews.
- The specific questions for the interview form an outline and general guide for topics and order, but this outline should not be considered rigid. Be sure to follow interesting conversations or change the outline during the interview as necessary.
- Questions should address specific details of the person's career, special interests, and professional activities. Often the interviewee will make suggestions of what she or he would like to discuss. There are also a few general questions that the Oral History Committee recommends asking at the end of the interview.
- Use open-ended questions rather than yes or no questions.
- Use single-point questions. Questions with multiple parts lead to confusion and the likelihood of not being fully answered. It is better to ask a series of short clear questions and follow up with additional questions.
- Group questions in sections (for example, background, library school or education, early career, major career, MLA activities, other professional activities). At the end of each section, ask an open question. Examples: Is there anything I have forgotten to ask? Would you like to talk about something we have not covered?

Equipment and Digital Files

Interviews must be recorded digitally. The interviewer and project director can discuss procuring a recorder. If the interviewer does not own a recorder, one can often be borrowed from an institution at the site of the interview. Software (e.g., Easy Voice Recorder) is also available for computers and devices. The Oral History Committee owns two digital recorders which can also be lent.

The most critical element of an oral interview is successfully recording it. Any recording system should be tested for sound quality and ease of operation, and the interviewer should practice using it. The microphone should be located so that it picks up both voices well. It is desirable to have a backup plan in case of any difficulty. During the interview, the interviewer should do a test before beginning the interview and play back periodically to check that recording is actually taking place.

The audio files may be in the format of WAV or mp3. WAV is the preferable format for a final archive.

The project director should transfer the audio files to a computer file and copy them to CDs for archival storage and to distribute as necessary. It is possible presently to upload audio files to the transcriptionist.

Conducting the Interview

- Arrive on time and set up the equipment. Test the recorder to be sure that volume and tone are good. Recheck the recording periodically during the interview.
- Before beginning the interview, spend a few minutes discussing the purpose and philosophy of the MLA Oral History Project and how the interview will be conducted. Review the consent form and obtain signatures (interviewee and yours). Explain that a copy will be signed by MLA's executive director and included in the final history.
- Assure the interviewee at the beginning and during the interview that if she or he cannot remember specific dates or names that the editor will have an opportunity to verify them later on.
- Begin the interview by saying the equivalent of:
"This is an MLA Oral History Interview with xxx. Today is xxx (day of week), xxx (month, day, year). We are in xxx (city, state). The interviewer is xxx."
- After breaks, identify the interview by saying:
"This is an interview with xxx on date and place."
- Begin the interview with some remarks of gratitude and interest in the interview and remarks about the value that the interview will provide. The tenor of the interview should be gracious.
- It is often helpful for the interviewer to respond with encouraging phrases such as "I see" or "Thank you."
- Follow-up questions are important. Be aware of interesting diversions from the question outline and go with them.
- It may be useful to elaborate on some names of persons or events by asking follow-up questions. Examples: "xxx was from the Library Congress, wasn't she?" "Where did xxx work at that time?" Later users of the interview may not be familiar with facts and people mentioned.
- Rephrase questions that are not understood or go on to a related question.
- It is sometimes useful to say "Could you elaborate on that?" Ask for comments on events.
- If the interviewee seems tired, suggest a break. A break is needed every hour to hour-and-a-half or sooner depending on the needs of the interviewee.
- This is an opportunity to record how a person thought and acted. Do *not* comment on or censor any statements or opinions.
- *Remember that the interviewee should do most of the talking.*
- Ask the interviewee to sign the consent form, if this was not done before the interview began. Remember the interviewer must also sign the form.
- Discuss obtaining a photo of the interviewee, if this was not already done by the project director during the preparation phase.
- Thank the interviewee.

After the Interview

The interviewer should write a personal thank you note to the interviewee. The project director will write also write a thank you with a summary of the next steps.

The interviewer should send to the project director:

- Digital audio files of the interview. As the files are large, they should be copied to a thumb drive or CD and sent by postal mail; a file hosting service such as Dropbox can also be utilized. Always retain a copy of the files until the project director confirms receipt.
- Signed consent form by postal mail.
- By email, reimbursement request for interview expenses. (See “Reimbursement for the Interview.”)
- By email, any supplementary materials not already sent, such as CV, interview questions, biographical statement, and photo.

Reimbursement for the Interview

Interviewers can request reimbursement for travel and other expenses involved with conducting the interview. The MLA Travel Expense Report should be completed and sent with receipts to the project director, who will approve and forward it to MLA headquarters for payment. The following items will be reimbursed:

- Transportation
- Lodging
- Meals; in addition to the interviewer's meals, reimbursement of the interviewee's meal(s) is covered
- Any miscellaneous expenses such as mailing

Review travel plans with the project director in advance and ask about any special circumstances.

Publication Process

(Overseen by project director)

See subsequent chapters for fuller explanation.

- The audio of the interview is transcribed by a professional transcriptionist.
- An MLA member volunteer edits the transcript for accuracy and readability. The interviewee is asked to respond to questions and approve the edited transcript.
- The oral history is published. The published history usually includes: title page, table of contents, consent form, photograph, biographical statement, edited transcript, index, and CV.
- The published history is posted on MLANET.
- A summary of the interview with selected quotations and a photograph are also included on MLANET.
- Publication is announced in the appropriate MLA publication.
- A limited number of print copies are produced primarily for archival purposes; copies are distributed to MLA headquarters and archives, the National Library of Medicine, the interviewee, and the project director.
- The original audio and transcript are maintained in the MLA archives and available to researchers with permission of MLA.

Instructions for Transcriptionist

The Oral History Committee uses a professional transcriptionist. Contact information for the transcriptionist is available from MLA headquarters or the project director.

The Oral History Project director provides:

- a copy of the audio interview
- CV for the interviewee
- the MLA Style Manual is available on the MLA website

The Oral History editor will edit the transcript to verify the spelling of names and to conform with MLA style and for clarity.

Before transcribing, become familiar with the interviewee through the CV. Also listen to a portion of the audio to become familiar with speech patterns.

Page set-up:

- 1.5” left margin
- 1” right margin
- 1” top and bottom margins
- double spacing for body of transcript
- additional double spacing between speakers and paragraphs
- do not indent
- do not use boldface
- name of interviewee in capital letters on top left of every page
- page number at top right of every page (no page number at bottom of page)
- font should be Times New Roman 12

Identify interviewer(s) and interviewee(s) with full names the first time they speak. After that, use last initial in capitals, colon, and two spaces before each dialogue:

For example, K: How were...?

If two people have the same last initial, use first and last initials, or as many as necessary to differentiate between them.

General transcribing guidelines:

- Enter comments verbatim; the Oral History editor will edit.
- Do not transcribe “um,” “hm,” or other sounds meant to be encouragement from the interviewer.
- Do not transcribe insignificant false starts or stammering.
- Do not attempt to indicate dropped word endings and normal word mispronunciations unless it is clearly intended for emphasis.

For example, use “going” not “goin” and “yes” not “yeah”

- Replay a word or phrase three times in attempting to understand it. If it is still not clear, use [inaudible] to indicate the hiatus.
- Indicate laughter and other actions in brackets. For example, [laughter].

Use the CV to assist with names of organizations, places, etc. The MLA Style Manual may be consulted for style questions. The transcript will undergo a final editing before publication by the Oral History editor.

Contact the project director with any questions.

Editing the Interview

The purpose of editing the oral history interview is to provide an accurate and readable interview for publication. The original audio and transcript will be preserved in the MLA archives for researchers with permission to access from MLA.

The responsibilities of the editor include:

1. Compare the audiofile to the transcript and make corrections to the transcript.
Transcription is generally done professionally and conscientiously, but you will find some changes, especially with your knowledge of terminology and the environment. This will give you an accurate transcript with which to work.
2. Verify all names.
Check for correct spelling and complete form of all personal names. Google or another search engine is a quick, efficient way to find an authoritative source. Even if you are familiar with the name in question, please double check it to confirm your memory. The formal version of names can be used in the index (e.g. full name and initial or other formal form of name). Make sure you spell names consistently throughout the interview.

Check for accurate and complete form of all corporate names, such as institutions, organizations, departments, committees, publications, and places. Names should reflect the form at the time under discussion in the interview.

It will not be possible to verify every name, but the interviewee will have a chance to review them.

3. Edit and verify for accuracy and understanding.
Supply missing information or corrections if needed to enhance the interview. The transcript is a record of the interviewee's perspective and memories, but sometimes additions will make it clearer to readers who may be unfamiliar with the person or time period. Examples are a last name for a person when it may not be obvious; a date or name that the interviewee and interviewer could not recall at the moment; or a correction to a date or other fact. These will usually be added in brackets, but it will depend on the context.
4. Edit for readability.
The interview is a record of an oral conversation and should not be a formal written document. Although it should reflect the speaking style of the interviewee, you can edit the transcript to make it easier to read. The amount of editing that is appropriate will vary by person.

Examples of types of edits might include: eliminating unnecessary introductory words, repetition within sentences, or false starts before a thought is expressed; dropped words may need to be added. This does not mean that all of these should be changed, as it

depends on such factors as the clarity of the information presented, the tone of the interview, and the amount of overall editing. Try to find a balance between editing to prevent distraction and maintaining the distinctive style of the interviewee. If you have a question about the level of editing that is appropriate, consult with the project director.

These edits will usually be incorporated in the transcript, or occasionally indicated by brackets or ellipses.

Retain or include notations for tape numbers and sides or for digital audiofiles, as these would be helpful for researchers consulting the original audio.

5. Edit for MLA style.

Although you cannot follow all MLA guidelines for publications in an oral interview, the rules, especially for capitalization, numbers and dates, and MLA items, in the *MLA Style Manual* (<http://www.mlanet.org/p/do/sd/topic=575&sid=496>) are helpful.

6. Check the formatting of the transcript.

The transcriptionist will usually follow all guidelines for formatting except for line spacing. Margins, headers, indentations, font, and identification of speakers should be final, but you should check that they are consistent throughout and follow Oral History Project guidelines. The only change you should need to make is to single-space lines within each speaker and double-space between speakers and paragraphs. (See “Instructions for Transcriptionists” for information on page set-up.)

7. Get the interviewee to review and approve the transcript.

Consult with the interviewee during and/or after the editing to resolve questions and to obtain approval of the final edited version. Send as an email attachment or a print copy, according to his or her need or preference. In some cases, the interviewer can also be a source of help.

Confer with the project director if you have questions about who to include in the review or how to handle requested changes.

8. Create an index to the transcript.

Index at a detailed enough level that future readers can find topics of interest, including across different interviews. Index all persons, even if they are just mentioned in the interview. Index most institutions and organizations. Include concepts important to the interview. Use subheadings to include detail in key areas, such as under Medical Library Association and institutions that are key in the person’s career. Use cross-references as needed.

The project director can provide a sample index to help you. The *Chicago Manual of Style* chapter on “Indexes” is consulted for principles of indexing.

9. Create or edit other components of the history.

The published history will normally include, in this order:

title page, table of contents, consent form, photograph, biographical statement, interview, index, and CV.

Some histories may include other preliminary or appendix material.

You should produce the title page. (See format in Appendix C; include: interviewee, interviewer, date of interview, editor, month editing completed, project director, year of publication.) Also create a table of contents. You may have an existing brief biographical statement that you can edit, but please create a one-page statement if needed. Confer with the project director about the consent form, photograph, and CV, and if your help is needed in acquiring them. MLA headquarters maintains a file of photographs and is a good source, especially for those of presidents and Noyes awardees; the project director will coordinate obtaining these photos.

MLA designations of AHIP and FMLA are used as appropriate for all persons on the title page and the first mention of the interviewee's name in the body of the biographical statement, as well as in the heading of the interview summary on MLANET.

Designations at the time of publication can be verified in the member listings of MLANET.

Personal contact information is removed from the CV now that histories are posted on MLANET. The existing margins of the CV may be maintained to avoid altering the format.

Roman numerals are used for the preliminary material, beginning with the title page. Page numbering begins with p. 1 for the transcript and continues through the index. Include page numbers in the table of contents, even for items without actual numbers on them. Allow for numbering the title page, table of contents, consent form, photograph, and CV, but do not put page numbers on them.

10. Send the history to the project director.

Send as separate electronic files:

--title page and table of contents
--biographical statement
--interview and index
--CV

Return the audiofile to the project director.

The project director will add the other items and review and prepare the history for publication.

Assembling the Interview

The project director reviews the edited copy to assure accuracy and to assure consistency with other interviews. The project director discusses any significant additions or changes with the editor and/or interviewee and acquires any missing components of the history.

The project director handles the final assembly of the history for digital publication and makes arrangements for duplication and distribution of print copies.

The oral histories are assembled in this order:

- title page (use format in Appendix C)
- table of contents
- consent form
- photograph
- biographical statement
- transcript
- index
- CV

Save the following files as individual PDF files and then combine them into one PDF file. (SmallPDF.com provides a free service for combining PDFs and converting photo files to PDF.)

- title page and table of contents
- scanned consent form
- photograph
- biographical statement
- transcript and index
- CV

Digital Publication and MLANET

The following is emailed to MLA headquarters for posting on the oral history page:

- summary of history
 - use the biographical statement augmented by selected quotations;
 - the summary heading includes interviewee, interviewer, editor, project director, and number of pages (include transcript and index pages only);
 - see MLANET for examples
- photograph
- PDF file of history
 - a link from the interviewee's listing on the oral history page will go to the published history
- a brief announcement highlighting the impact of the interviewee is sent to *MLA Focus* or *MLA News* to announce publication
- if the interviewee is a Fellow, a link will be added from the Fellows page
- the "Interviews Conducted and In Progress" listing on the oral history page should be updated

The oral history pages on MLANET include background information on the Oral History Project and listings for each interview.

In order to enhance access to oral histories and their use as a resource, links to the full final edited history are included on MLANET beginning in 2016. The committee plans to add digital access to earlier histories in stages. Prior to 2016, print copies of histories were distributed to the Regional Medical Libraries (at the time of publication) and to persons involved in the interview and home libraries of the interviewee, in addition to MLA and NLM. Complete runs of the oral histories are available at MLA headquarters and NLM. Copies of print histories may be borrowed from MLA headquarters or an RML.

Some history listings on MLANET include links to their indexes. A retrospective indexing project coordinated by Dee Jones was completed in 2013 for 37 histories published before 2009 lacking indexes or adequate indexes.

Print Copies and Distribution

Print copies are provided to:

- MLA headquarters (2 bound, 1 unbound)
- NLM (2; for MLA archives and NLM collection)
- interviewee (plus any additional copies requested; if necessary the copy can be sent to a survivor)
- project director

Binding:

- The history is copied on white, acid-free, archival quality paper, available from Gaylord: Permalife 20 lb. Bond Paper Letter 8 ½ x 11 (PB811). It is possible to take advantage of periodic promotions and free shipping from Gaylord, especially if larger quantities are ordered.
- The histories are bound with a black coil binding, a navy blue leatherette-type backing, and clear plastic cover, available at the stores below.
- Duplication and binding can be handled by The UPS Store or FedEx Office, using paper supplied by the project director. Provide a PDF file to the store. It is advisable to check a proof before all copies are made.
- The title page is printed on card stock as the first page and is visible through the plastic cover. The photograph should be printed in color (even if a black-and-white photo) on glossy paper (paper for color printing).

Paper, duplication and binding, supply, and mailing expenses incurred by the project director are reimbursed by MLA.

Archives and Files

Archival material is shipped periodically to the archivist at the National Library of Medicine to be retained in the MLA archives. This includes 2 bound histories, 1 print copy of the unedited transcript, 1 CD of the audio, and the audio in its original format.

MLA headquarters receives 2 bound and 1 unbound copies of each history, CDs (all remaining copies and at least 1), original consent forms, and correspondence files.

Oral Histories by MLA Chapters and Sections

Some MLA chapters and sections also have oral history programs. They focus on their members and interests and are able to interview persons who might not be interviewed as part of the national Oral History Project. The MLANET oral history page provides links to chapter and section websites, and their websites often reference MLA histories of their members. The Oral History Committee encourages communication with chapters, sections, and other MLA units interested in doing oral history, to avoid duplication of effort, share expertise, and expand the number of interviews. The project director should inform the Southern Chapter when a chapter member will be included in the Oral History Project and may do so for other MLA units as well.

In some cases, the Oral History Committee and MLA units may wish to conduct joint interviews. Agreement on responsibilities, training and assistance, and expenses should be reached. The interview questions, format, publication process, and distribution should follow MLA Oral History Project guidelines.

Sealed Interviews

In exceptional cases, the sealing of an interview or portion of an interview until a date in the future may be requested by an interviewee. The desire to do this should be weighed against the goal of making the content of oral history interviews accessible and the uncertainty of carrying out the process of unsealing the interview at some upcoming time when different personnel are involved. For small portions of an interview, editing a passage in the published version may suffice, as the unedited transcript is available only with permission.

If, on balance, it is preferable to seal portions to preserve important content, the edited transcript should be clearly marked where the portions are omitted. The consent form should reflect this, and records should be annotated with reminders to publish the unsealed portions at the appropriate time. The history with omitted portions will be published as usual. If an interview is sealed in its entirety, one labeled digital and print copy of the transcript and the audio file should be deposited in the MLA archives, with records and calendars noted for the date to unseal and publish. The NLM archivist should be consulted about their policies and procedures for sealed material.

Appendix A: Sample Invitation Letter



65 East Wacker Place • Suite 1900
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PHONE 312.419.9094
FAX 312.419.8950
EMAIL info@mlahq.org
WEBSITE www.mlanet.org

[PROJECT DIRECTOR ADDRESS]

July 30, 2014

Carol G. Jenkins
[ADDRESS]

Dear Carol:

The Medical Library Association would like to invite you to participate in its Oral History Project. We feel that your experiences as a leader in libraries and professional associations will bring an important perspective to this project. We are particularly interested in your views and experiences in your roles in the University of North Carolina and in earlier positions, involvement with the AHEC and RML programs and with NLM, contributions to MLA and AAHSL including your presidencies, and accomplishments in areas such as career development. We propose that Joan Zenan conduct the interview.

The MLA Oral History Project was established in 1977 to study the history of health sciences librarianship and of MLA by recording in their own voices the memories, reminiscences, and experiences of medical librarians and others who have contributed to the profession and MLA. You will join colleagues who have been interviewed in the recent past such as Rachael Anderson, Alison Bunting, Lois Ann Colaianni, Judith Messerle, and Wayne Peay.

This invitation is meant to confirm the conversations you and Joan have had and our own discussion. Joan has suggested that spring 2015 may be a good time for the interview, and she will consult with you to schedule a convenient date for both of you. You can expect that she will work with you to prepare for the interview. I look forward to hearing from you that you accept this invitation.

Sincerely,

Carolyn E. Lipscomb
MLA Oral History Project Director

cc: Joan Zenan

Appendix B: Sample Interview Questions

Background and education

- What influenced you to go into librarianship?
- How did you choose medical librarianship?
- Where did you receive your library education?
- Describe your library education. How was it different from today's education?
- Did you have any special training in medical librarianship?
- What are the memorable courses?
- Who were your memorable mentors or teachers?

Career

- Describe your early library career.
- How did you become a librarian at____?
- Why did you decide to move to____?
- What do you feel you learned in your first position (s)? How did this influence your career?
- Describe your career at____.
- Describe some of the major issues (such as new buildings, disasters, preservation, computerization, growth of collections, etc.) that you dealt with in your career.
- What do you consider your most important contributions?
- Do you want to talk about other aspects of your career?

MLA

- How did you become involved with professional organizations?
- When did you become involved with MLA?
- Describe your first meetings.
- Talk about your first committee assignments.
- What issues, challenges, successes or failures did you see in your role(s) in MLA as (board member, president, chair of section, etc.)?
- What do you think were the major issues for MLA when you were active and how were these resolved? (Select issues that are appropriate for the interviewee)
For example: Talk about some of the issues that were confronting MLA while you were on the board.
For example: You were president in____. What were the major issues and what do you consider your major contributions as president?
- Would you like to make other comments about your MLA involvement or MLA's role in librarianship?

Other organizations and activities

- You were also active in (SLA, chapter, international librarianship, etc.)
- Talk about your activities in these organizations.
- How did they relate to MLA?
- What was most important about these activities?
- You were active in (publishing, research, copyright issues, etc.). Tell me about these activities.

General reflections

I would like to end oral history interviews with some reflections from you on a few topics.

- Who are the people that you feel most influenced your life and career?
- Who are the people that you feel you most influenced?
- Overall, how would you like to be remembered by the library community?
- What do you consider your most important contributions?
- Where do you see librarianship and medical librarianship headed in the future? What are the issues we have to address?
- What can we learn from past issues? What should be remembered from the past?
- What advice would you give to people in the field today, both new librarians or those who are well along in their careers?
- *Do you want to talk about anything else that we have not covered already?*

Appendix C: Title Page Format

18 pt font

MEDICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

INTERVIEW

12 pt font

WITH

26 pt font boldface

CAROL G. JENKINS, AHIP, FMLA

18 pt font

Interview conducted by Joan S. Zenan, AHIP, FMLA

April 13, 2015

16 pt font

Edited by

Carolyn E. Lipscomb, AHIP, FMLA

Project Director

July 2016

Published 2016

Appendix D: Oral History Bibliography

*recommended by committee member

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Addendum

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION. CENTER FOR ORAL HISTORY.

<https://www.chemheritage.org/center-for-oral-history>

INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES. Oral history in the digital age.

<http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/>

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