

*Maura Doyle:* This is Maura Doyle. It's the 21<sup>st</sup> of July, 2009. I'm here with Mr. John Baky. Do I have your permission to record you?

*John Baky:* Yes.

*Maura Doyle:* Could you state your name for me, again?

*John Baky:* I'm John S. Baky B-A-K-Y.

*Maura Doyle:* Were you born in this area, the Philadelphia area?

*John Baky:* I was born in Trenton, New Jersey in 1947.

*Maura Doyle:* Did you attend grade school in Trenton also or did you move?

*John Baky:* I went – grade school was in a demonstration school in the suburbs of Trenton.

*Maura Doyle:* When you say demonstration school what do you mean?

*John Baky:* They – at the time they had – there were schools attached to teachers colleges, and so all of your training was – all of your teaching was done by master teachers at the college, which at the time was Trenton State. That's now the College of New Jersey, I think. So that you ended up getting a level of teaching that you don't normally get today because you were, in a way, a guinea pig, but at the same time you were getting – all of your teaching was being done by students under the direct control of master teachers. So it was almost like a public private school.

*Maura Doyle:* That's neat.

*John Baky:* Yeah. It was good.

*Maura Doyle:* Now, from there did you go to high school in Trenton also?

*John Baky:* No. We moved farther out into the country, and I ended up going to a regional high school around Flemington, New Jersey, called Central High School.

*Maura Doyle:* Did you attend college?

*John Baky:* I did. I went – I started college in 1969, and that was at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania. And I graduated in 1969.

*Maura Doyle:* Did you sort of do any post-graduate work?

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*John Baky:* I did. When I got out of the Army I went to Columbia University for a master's degree. And then later on to Wesleyan University in Connecticut for another master's degree. And then I enrolled in Bryn Mawr College in their PhD program in English.

*Maura Doyle:* What were your master's degrees in?

*John Baky:* The one from Columbia University was my library degree, and the one from Wesleyan University in Connecticut was a master of arts in liberal studies, which was an art history major.

*Maura Doyle:* What was your dissertation in?

*John Baky:* What happened in the PhD program was a year into the program Bryn Mawr College decided after almost 80 years to end their program in English literature. So it just stopped dead in the water at that point. Everybody who was not a dissertation phase was let go, and those who were in the middle of their dissertation were grandfathered through until they finished.

*Maura Doyle:* Oh, okay.

*John Baky:* Yeah, they closed ten programs that year.

*Maura Doyle:* Wow.

*John Baky:* Yeah.

*Maura Doyle:* You said you were in the Army, and you served in Vietnam, correct?

*John Baky:* Mm-hmm. That's right.

*Maura Doyle:* What years did you serve?

*John Baky:* Well, I entered active duty in August of 1969, and I had a lot of my officer training in – from August through October of '69. And then I had my first duty assignment between October and April of '69, '70. I always have to refer to my DD-214, which is essentially your discharge certificate. And then I went to jungle school in Panama in May of '70. And I ended up in Vietnam – let me see. It's a little hard to read.

[00:04:50]

*Maura Doyle:* That's okay.

*John Baky:* Well, it's a little hard to read here. I got to Vietnam in June of 1970, and I left Vietnam in June of '71.

*Maura Doyle:* Is there anything that you would like to share about your experience in Vietnam?

*John Baky:* Well, it's a hard question. It's like someone asking you tell me about your life in a minute. It's almost an impossible question because of the size of the question.

*Maura Doyle:* How about if I ask you about something that I've read that you wrote, and you can tell me if you'd like to go from here.

*John Baky:* Yeah. That might work a little bit better.

*Maura Doyle:* What is – that you said you learned survival in a jungle operation school. What is a jungle operation school?

*John Baky:* I've always been kind of puzzled why I was sent to that school. Normally a school like that is offered to officers who are infantry officers or who are in other combat arms. I was a school-trained military police officer. So you wouldn't normally expect that you were going to operate in jungle very much.

And right before, when I got my orders to go to Vietnam, there was this set of temporary duty orders to report to the jungle school in Panama for this. It was like a three-week school, the longest three weeks of my life. And you don't really get to negotiate it. If you get orders for it you have to do it.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* So I got down there for that school and discovered that I was one of about ten officers who were not in a particular class of West Point. So there were about 80 guys who were newly graduated West Point officers, and ten of us who inexplicably were in this school. So not only did we go through this rigorous training in the jungle, but we were going through it with pretty much the best officers you could imagine.

So it was a double hit. The misery of the jungle was trumped only by competing with these guys who were making a career of the

military, who knew how to do everything, who had already qualified as airborne rangers. They were all infantry officers and knew how to do everything.

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And there were a couple of foreign officers. There were a couple of British officers who were observing this school as well. And in a school like that you essentially learn survival techniques. What kind of plants you can eat and can't eat; which ones are poisonous. You had to kill and eat all sorts of animals that you normally wouldn't think of doing either of those two things to.

A lot of first aid, a lot of night navigation courses in triple-canopy jungle. And in triple-canopy jungle, when it gets dark there is a total lack of illumination from anything. It's not like being in a dark room. It's – well, it's indescribable. When there is a total lack of light you literally cannot see your hand in front of your face, an inch in front of your face, and you don't get used to that level of darkness. It stays that dark.

If you're in a dark room after a minute or so your eyes adjust and you can sort of get – feel around. That doesn't happen in this kind of jungle. And other characteristics of triple-canopy jungle is it might start to rain, and you would hear the first rain on the first canopy about 100 feet off the ground. And it would be a good minute and a half, two minutes before that rain hitting the first canopy would make it to the ground. That's how thick the three canopies were.

And about half of the training was trying to navigate in that kind of darkness. Trying to do it in teams. And that would involve a lot of falling down. In one exercise you would try to hit – you would be given compass directions and a certain number of paces, and you had to find these stakes at various places. And the course was generally only about 1,500 meters total. And it would take a good three hours to go 1,500 yards.

*Maura Doyle:*

Wow.

*John Baky:*

Yeah. It was – you know that's such an unnatural environment that the lessons that you take away from something that unique is you kind of learn that you can do things you didn't think you could do or that seemed impossible. And all you have to do is continue to hack away at the thing, and you could probably survive it. But it

also gives you the sense of how utterly vulnerable you are in many – in hostile situations.

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*Maura Doyle:* Right. Yeah. So it's a unique experience.

*John Baky:* Yeah, it really is. I never did find out why they sent me to the school, but I don't regret having done it.

*Maura Doyle:* Right. Was it hard to bond since you were – I mean, you said only 1 of 10 that weren't from West Point.

*John Baky:* Yeah, and a little – in some sense it was because the military academy graduates are very insular themselves. Being an elite group they don't tend to accept other people, even other officers. And because they know how to do everything and excel at it they're not very tolerant of people who don't.

But as it turned out, again, pure luck, one of the other guys, non-West Pointers going through this school with me, turned out to be my best friend from officer basic school in Georgia. Again, pure chance. He was – he got his orders. He was coming from a base in New Mexico, and he got orders to go to this stupid jungle operation school. And we showed up there and couldn't – what are the chances of that?

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* So that made it a little easier.

*Maura Doyle:* I'm sure.

*John Baky:* Yeah. And it was about – I think it was about three weeks. And then right from there we went to Vietnam from there on a direct flight because we already had orders for it.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* One of the other interesting things about it was watching the West Point officers. It was kind of revelatory because on the one hand these guys were consummate soldiers in their skills and their stamina and all that sort of thing. But in social terms they were almost like high school kids. It was really remarkable. We used to talk – we used to marvel at how their competence in military

schools was equaled only by their incompetence in normal social skills.

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Like, for example, many seemed not to know how to use things like checkbooks. They had a real difficulty taking care of personal business before they were shipping out to Vietnam. They seemed to have a level of immature, emotional immature about things that were not related to military operations. And that was an extraordinary thing to see. And we kept asking each other, "Are we crazy, or are we actually seeing this?"

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* And those who were not part of that West Point class were saying, no, these guys don't really know how to get a rental car and don't have checkbooks and things like that. I'll never forget that. I don't know whether it's that way today, but it was with that particular class.

*Maura Doyle:* You would think that would make their transition harder, lacking those skills.

*John Baky:* Yeah.

*Maura Doyle:* I do see that you have a somewhat of a little bit of family history in the military. I've read that your father served in World War II.

*John Baky:* Yeah. There was, I think – well, I didn't know my maternal grandmother, but my paternal grandfather served in the Austro-Hungarian Army in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*Maura Doyle:* Wow.

*John Baky:* And then my father served in the American Army in the Second World War and prior. He had entered the New Jersey National Guard probably in the early 1930s and was in the Guard when the Second World War broke out, so that when all the National Guard units were nationalized in 1941 he went with them, like everybody else did.

And he was eventually shipped to Europe and became a security officer for General Eisenhower at some point right before D-Day and traveled with Eisenhower into Europe after D-Day. And he stayed in the service till about 1946. I think he would have made a

career out of the service, but my mother was not excited of that prospect of having to travel.

[00:16:11]

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* He had become an officer while he was serving in the Second World War. They sent him back for officer training and then back to Europe again. And so he was finally discharged from the New Jersey National Guard many years later as a major.

And then my uncle, the man for whom I'm named, was also in that National Guard unit and was activated when the war started. But he was killed at Aachen during the Battle of the Bulge. And in the – about 1954 my family traveled back to Holland to visit his grave. My grandmother wanted to see – this was her only son, so we traveled back to Margraten Cemetery in Holland to visit that grave.

And it was very interesting because Dutch families that lived around Margraten Military Cemetery all agreed to take care of American graves. And so when you went to visit there there was a Dutch family that you would actually visit who took care of that – a person's grave into the future.

*Maura Doyle:* It must have made it comforting.

*John Baky:* It was. We actually stayed at their house for about two or three weeks. And now in early 21<sup>st</sup> century we still have contacts with that same Dutch family. So it's like the third generation that had nothing to do with the Second World War are still looking after that grave.

*Maura Doyle:* Wow.

*John Baky:* Yeah. It's remarkable. I don't know whether they – I don't think they do that at the French cemeteries at Normandy. This seems to be something that the Dutch did on their own. And the Margraten Cemetery is a very large cemetery, although most Americans don't know about it. But I think there may be – oh, there's got to be 10,000 or 15,000 allied troops buried there, mostly Americans.

*Maura Doyle:* That's great. That's amazing. I never, ever knew that.

*John Baky:* Yeah.

[00:18:30]

*Maura Doyle:* Thank you for sharing about your Vietnam experience, but can we – I would like to move now to your position at La Salle University.

*John Baky:* Well, I came to La Salle University in 1980, early 1980. And I was coming down here from New Haven, Connecticut. I already had my library degree, and I was trained as a rare book and manuscript librarian at Columbia. And that's all I ever really wanted to do. But when I first finished that degree – I didn't go to graduate school until after I came home from the war. And at the time I graduated from Columbia, which I think was about 1973.

The economy was almost as bad as it is right now. You couldn't get a job for love or money, especially not in what I wanted to do.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* So I took a job in a public library in Fairfield, Connecticut as an assistant director. Which was fine but it wasn't what I wanted to do. I wanted to be in the academic end of it. But I did that job for about two and a half years. So that would be – that took me into about 1976.

And then at that point I quit the job just cold – always an unwise thing to do – and finished a book that I had been working. And then decided that I would – well, my plan was to stop working in a public library, finish the book and then get a full-time academic librarian's job, preferably as a rare books person.

Well, the first part of that worked. The second part about finding a job didn't work, and I was out of work from when I quit the public library until getting a job in New Haven. I was almost out of work two years, which turned out to be extremely stressful because it wasn't that you didn't want to work. It's that you literally couldn't get anything.

And I think that's what a lot of college – a lot of recent graduates from college today are starting to run into. They're moving back home and all sorts of strategies like that. And everything's happening but job offers. People underestimate how stressful that is because it's not that you don't want to do it. It's that you can't do it.

So eventually I moved to New Haven, Connecticut where Yale is. I thought my chances would be better there. I knew a lot of people

at Yale. And I got a job as an editor first but not at the university. And I started – I became the principle editor of an early – well, actually it wasn't early English newspapers. It was 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century British newspapers. And I edited a microfilm collection of every British newspaper that existed during the 18<sup>th</sup> and early – first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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And it was very interesting. It didn't pay very well, but a lot of jobs in the humanities never do pay. You have to be prepared for that. You can't really complain about not being paid well in education and scholarship. But it was a good project, and it sold a lot of copies to universities around the world because it had never been done before. It was literally every run of newspapers printed in the British Isles for 150 years.

And part of my job was to find those all – to find copies of each, fill in the missing either pages, issues, sometimes whole years, get a hold of those, film those and then integrate those into the ones we already had. And as a result of that it caused me to have to travel to a lot of other museums and libraries to find the runs that we were missing. So in some ways it was a very interesting job.

*Maura Doyle:*

It sounds like it.

*John Baky:*

And it did keep me close to Yale because Yale had a lot of the fill-in papers that we needed. We were using them as the basis. Yale had very strong holdings in 18<sup>th</sup> century British newspapers in their collections, so we used theirs as the base. And then we'd go out to other universities to do the fill-in.

And I did that for about two and a half years, I think. And the whole time I was doing that I was looking for other jobs. I really wanted to stay there because I had become very close to Yale. I worked in the Beinecke Library doing this project. I met my wife there, and she's still at Yale 30 years later. Now she's an ex-wife.

And after about two and a half years I applied for a job at La Salle. They were looking for an acquisitions librarian. So I applied for it. Came down for an interview and it turns out that I was the second choice from that interview. And then they hired another guy, but he didn't stay. So they called me about a year later and said that your interview had gone very well. It was very tight. It was a judgment call. He let – the other guy left. Are you still interested?

And I said, yeah, I am. So I didn't even have to have the second interview. They hired me almost immediately.

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So that was early 1980. I moved down here from New Haven, and I thought I would be here maybe for another two years on the way to a real job. And 30 years later I'm still here, and I'm not the acquisitions librarian; I'm the direct of the library.

*Maura Doyle:* So that was your first title, acquisitions librarian?

*John Baky:* Yeah. It was collection, development and acquisitions. And what that meant was I was in charge of building all of the book and serial collections in the library. Anything that was used by a library patron was my responsibility to develop. You had to identify what was needed, decide where it fitted into the curriculum, whether it was appropriate to what was already here. And then also acquire it in the business sense.

*Maura Doyle:* Okay.

*John Baky:* A lot of liaison with faculty at some points. So I did that from 1980 until 1990. So that job lasted for about ten years. There were two directors in there during that period of time. And I think that during that period of time I bought for the university close to 150,000 titles, many of which are still here.

You really – like it or not, you really leave an indelible mark on the library's nature from that period of time. We bought about 8,000 and 10,000 volumes a year. So times ten, yeah, it was probably a good 100,000 to 150,000 books. And that was at a time when there were no databases or anything like that. Any resources you bought were print, either journal, serial, subscriptions. They weren't databases at all to speak of. No CD-ROMS, none of that stuff.

*John Baky:* Right.

*Maura Doyle:* And books. And in many ways that was much more fun. Yeah, I really enjoyed that. I'm glad I don't do that as much anymore.

*Maura Doyle:* Do you think that the world today is going to change libraries, everything being digital?

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*John Baky:*

Yeah. It's so different now that – it's so utterly different now that if the library world were anything like it is today in 1980 when I was looking, I wouldn't be a librarian. It would be totally uninteresting to me.

*Maura Doyle:*

Right. What did make it so interesting for you? I mean, you had a – it seems like a strong desire. You knew what you wanted to be. Do you – could you pinpoint something?

*John Baky:*

Well, it had a lot to do with that notion of rare book librarianship, which is quite different from general librarianship.

*Maura Doyle:*

Right.

*John Baky:*

I was very interested in the nature, the physical nature of how knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation. And so I – a lot of my training and interest had to do with the nature of the book and how the book evolved over the centuries. How printing evolved. Where written language came from and how that was made into formats that could be used in various ways.

And the development of the codex book, which is what we normally think of as a book today, is known as a codex book. That refers to this kind of bound pages.

*Maura Doyle:*

Okay.

*John Baky:*

That's a codex book, as opposed to papyrus or scrolls that you roll or Honea form that's written on stone. Those are all non-codex books. But as we know a book, it's only been around with movable type since about 1450. It's not that old.

*Maura Doyle:*

Right.

*John Baky:*

And it's that form of the transmission of knowledge that I was very interested in. And the only way you can do that, work with that as a living is to either be a rare book dealer commercially or to work with rare book collections in libraries, museums and libraries. There really isn't anything in between.

But, of course, that's an area of endeavor that isn't big. So trying to get a job to make a living doing that it gets very tricky if you don't go to the right schools and don't have the right contacts. It's hard to break into it.

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And the original job that I took here at La Salle was not doing that. But I had hoped that I'd be able to start a rare book and manuscript collection here as the collection development librarian sometime in the future. There was no rare book operation at all at La Salle at the time.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* And that's exactly what ended up happening. When I – I did start one. When we got this new library, the Connelly Library was built in – 1988 was when we actually moved in. They started to build it in '86.

We programmed into the design of the library a rare book operation, which included a reading room and a couple of offices and a workroom and a vault area that was designed to hold about 20,000 to 25,000 volumes. And so all of that was programmed into this building. And it was at that point that I took that over as the curator of rare books and manuscripts. But also at that time we didn't have any.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* We had great space that was worth – with good security systems and fire control systems. And all of that was worth way more than what we had to protect. And then a lot of my work during the '90s was to try and decide what the university ought to collect in order to build some of these collections.

*Maura Doyle:* And that's what you still do now?

*John Baky:* And I do still do that now. It takes up about – well, depending on what's going on, I spend about 50 percent of my time doing the rare books and manuscripts and the other 50 percent running the library system.

*Maura Doyle:* Right. The design, so you had part of the design of the new building, input?

*John Baky:* Yeah. They – La Salle was very good with that. Often what happens with library development is that universities, for some reason, establish a building committee. And for some reason they don't appoint professional libraries to that committee, which sort

of doesn't make any sense. Why don't you ask the people who actually know how to use the building?

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But La Salle was very good that way. And there were four librarians, professional libraries on the building committee from beginning to end.

*Maura Doyle:* Okay.

*John Baky:* And that was one of the reasons that we were able to get – we engaged an architect from Boston who's national reputation was partly on their experience with academic libraries. So a company called Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson & Abbott, and they've done academic libraries at every major university in the country, it seems. They've done scores of academic libraries at the – in the Ivy League, in the little Ivy League and the public Ivies like University of Virginia and Michigan and Berkeley.

*Maura Doyle:* Okay.

*John Baky:* So we were able to really press to have the university hire a – hire them to design this building. And because the intention in the beginning was to hire a local or regional architect. It's not uncommon for local universities to try and keep business relationships local. So and there were a number of decent Philadelphia firms, but we really wanted this particular outfit that understood the social nature of library space, and they were hired.

And then for the next – there was about a year of design meetings that went on between the architects and the building committee. And we did surveys with students and faculty. And we visited a bunch of other libraries that were either being built or had recently been built to try and incorporate to avoid their mistakes and incorporate the good stuff.

*Maura Doyle:* Okay.

*John Baky:* And it worked out pretty well. Everybody who has used this building since about 1988 has always said that the space has worked very well.

*Maura Doyle:* Where did you get the idea for the special collections room?

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*John Baky:* Well, that was based on precedent. It looks like a lot of other similar operations. It's not a very extensive operation. If you go to some of the bigger universities or even moderate-size universities their rare book operations are maybe twice that size. But it works for this.

There were money restrictions. The Connelly Foundation, under John Connelly, who was still alive at the time, paid for this library. They paid for the entire library. Almost no money had to be raised by the university. I believe the initial grant from the Connelly Foundation was – I think it was \$15 million, and the building came in at about – I think about \$13 million. And then there was money – money is always held back for contingency and change orders and things like that.

But – and that's also why it's named the Connelly Library because generally when some foundation or alum or some donor, benefactor, pays for most or all of a building it's traditionally named after that family or the person. And that happened in this case.

So a lot of – we're not bigger in some areas simply because of the constraint and budgetary constraints.

*Maura Doyle:* Right. So when you had the room, the collections room, did you have anything to put in it at first?

*John Baky:* There really wasn't at all. There – the university did have already an art museum, the beginnings of the art museum that's I think probably \$15 million or \$20 million collection today in Olney Hall. But that was strictly visual artwork in terms of paintings, art on paper, some sculpture, things like that.

But there was not a book dimension to that until the founder of that, Brother Daniel Burke also started to collect illustrated Bibles. And he had an endowment fund to do that from the Dunleavy Family. And so he started to collect those Bibles, but they were kept in the art museum. They didn't have anything to do with the library. In fact, many people didn't – many people in the library didn't even know they existed.

And just two years ago it was decided to make the art museum more concentrated strictly as a museum for visual art. And as part of that plan, the Dunleavy Bible collection came over to us

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*Maura Doyle:* Two years ago?

*John Baky:* About two years ago, yeah.

*Maura Doyle:* Okay.

*John Baky:* And I had it appraised at that time, and it was priced professionally at almost \$2.2 million worth of those Bibles, which you saw them. You looked at those initially, and we're now digitizing. That did take up a lot of space that I didn't think I'd ever have to use. But they are more appropriately here in the library than in the art museum.

*Maura Doyle:* Do you know the oldest Bible that's there?

*John Baky:* Well, the oldest item that we have there, the oldest documented item is an illuminated, bound manuscript that dates from about 1450 or so.

*Maura Doyle:* Wow.

*John Baky:* So that's actually known as incunabula, meaning that it's a cradle book or before the time of movable printing. So it is – there are some old items there, but they're not – age is not necessarily the greatest determiner of value.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* It can be. When things get that old it often is a factor.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* But what really determines the value of a lot of that material, the Bible collection material is the condition of the material, the association of it, who might have owned it or where it fits in the history of Biblical literature. And the reason that this group of items are so monetarily valuable and valuable for scholarly purposes is that Brother Daniel Burke was very astute in what he bought, and he carefully bought items in almost every case that were of high quality.

He would spend \$20,000.00 on an item, on a single item because of its quality and where it fit in the history of this collection rather

than spend that same \$20,000.00 on buying 20 items that were not of such good quality. And he did that consistently. He really did a brilliant job because that – I think when we had the appraisal done, the initial Bible collection that came over here to the library had cost let's say about – no more than about \$500,000.00. And by the time we had it appraised it was \$2.2 million. So you can see the kind of appreciation that occurred and how astute his purchases were.

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*Maura Doyle:* Do you ever get students up there using them or looking at them? It seems a shame that we have them and –

*John Baky:* Yeah. Well, we try to do that. It's a little difficult when the concentration of the university is undergraduate because it's hard to work in this kind of material into undergraduate courses.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* So what happens is that depending on which faculty know about the collections, or better yet, depending on which faculty would find this material appropriate to the courses they teach, we can sometimes get individual students interested in doing some one-to-one work on it. Because of the physical nature of this material and the monetary value we can't just turn people loose with it. It's too easy to damage things. And if people are unfocused in what they want to do it it doesn't really lead to anywhere.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* And so we do occasionally have somebody in the honors program in a particular course come to do a project, and we encourage that, but it's harder to do. We've done some internships. And now that there are – now that there's a graduate history program at La Salle, which didn't exist even – I think that program is only about six years old now.

But since that's developed some of the courses like handling history and some of – and to some extent even this oral history may eventually bleed over into that. But there are courses now, public history. I think some of these collections are going to get a lot more exposure because it's appropriate. And part of the training in these courses would actually be how to handle this kind of material. Not – it's not necessarily – you don't necessarily have

to use this material for its content. You can use it just to learn how to use historical and archival artifacts.

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So I think it will be used more and more, and we have a diversity of collections. The Bible collection is sort of a classical, rare book focus, where you're looking at the physical book and the content. But we have – by intention, we always wanted our rare book and manuscript operation to be – it was always intended to be supportive of undergraduate education.

So we collect a lot of contemporary subject areas that other old-line, rare book libraries are not interested in. So as a result of that we have a significant collection of material buy-in about Bob Dylan.

*Maura Doyle:* Right. And what kinds of things or items do you have in the Bob Dylan collection?

*John Baky:* Well, the Bob Dylan collection, which gets – now gets between 20 – I'd say 20 and 100 formal inquiries or interlibrary loan requests or requests for visits a year from other universities. We have – that collection is constituted of original vinyl, the old 33 1/3 record albums from the very early '60s onward until the medium changed into other formats.

We have about 100 of those early vinyl record albums that many people have never, ever seen. And 45 RPM disks with the big hole, we've got maybe 20 or 30 of those that most people have never seen. Most people never knew that Dylan cut records on old 45 records.

And we have hundreds and hundreds of bootlegged versions of his concerts. And we have maybe a collection of I think it must be about 200 book titles, print books that deal with – that are either written by him or about him. There are more than a dozen PhD dissertations and master's essays and movies. There may be 25 documentaries or movies that he either made or had made about him.

*Maura Doyle:* And why Bob Dylan? Why is this such a collection to have?

*John Baky:* Yeah. Well, the idea behind Bob Dylan was – and it's the reason that a lot of other university rare book operations hesitate to collect contemporary subjects, is they don't want – there's a great fear that

time, effort and money will be put into something that turns out to be only a fad for a short period of time.

[00:46:28]

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* So the trick is, with contemporary collecting, is to focus on either people or events that are not going to be, in the end, faddish. That they're going to have staying power as historical or socially relevant significance within the culture. And it's a guessing game which are going to last and which aren't.

So Dylan seemed to hit an awful lot of these benchmarks. He's not going away. You can't pick another – because he's turned into such an important cultural icon across at least two generations already, going into the third generation, you can't compare his footprint left on popular culture to other footprints and come to any other conclusion that he's not going to go away in the culture.

You don't have – try and find a dozen PhD dissertations on Madonna or – well, I shouldn't say that because actually Madonna is going to be significant. But let's say see if you can find this level of secondary research that exists for Dylan from almost any old rock group. You're not going to find it on the Rolling Stones. It's not even there yet for the Beatles. He's surpassed other cultural icons in the music and entertainment business in a way that no one else has done.

And so that's kind of gratifying that it isn't going away. There are all sorts of journal – there have been years and years, consecutive years of journal titles that deal with nothing, for instance, but deal with the year's concerts that he gives.

*Maura Doyle:* Okay.

*John Baky:* And they come out with 12 issues a year, about 100 pages each, and all they concentrate on is where he's playing and when and what's played and the playlists. You just don't get that level of attention 40 years after the guy started in other groups.

*Maura Doyle:* I want to know why. What –

*John Baky:* Yeah. Well, it's hard to know.

[00:48:53]

*Maura Doyle:* Is it what he speaks about that hits a note with people, or do you think it's –

*John Baky:* Well, it is that. And the only thing you can know for sure is that if he weren't hitting a variety of deep cultural interests, it wouldn't work. You can't fake that. And a lot of what's written about him – he's written about not primarily or only as a musician. He's written about as a poet. He's written about as an amateur philosopher. Certainly as an entertainer and a singer.

He's central to an entire study of how music, popular music operated in American culture through almost 50 years now of existence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, encompassing things like the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement. And he's still actively writing about what still goes on today.

Many of the dissertations have to do with his versatility as a focus that translates what goes on in the larger culture.

*Maura Doyle:* All right.

*John Baky:* And so many other at least entertainers don't do that. They don't achieve that kind of depth and breadth of influence on the culture.

*Maura Doyle:* Do you get mostly graduate students, I guess, in the collection, the Bob Dylan collection, or would you say that it's fans that take stuff out? Do you know?

*John Baky:* Most of the interlibrary loan requests that we get for it seem to be undergraduates from other schools who are doing some paper about him for any of these reasons, or graduate students who are either using him as part of a dissertation thesis or are looking at a larger interest – cultural interest of American mass culture, let's say. Let's say how music operated during the Civil Rights Movement, something like that. Well, if that's what you're interested in you've got to have a chapter on Dylan.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* And so they end up finding that we own some obscure things from those periods, and they either – if we won't send the items to them they'll come to use it here.

[00:51:49]

*Maura Doyle:* How about the Vietnam collection? I read that you – it's called the Imaginative Representations of the Vietnam War. Am I correct? Is that still the term you use for it?

*John Baky:* Yeah. That's still the title.

*Maura Doyle:* And why?

*John Baky:* It's significant because it's kind of a long title. People read that and sort of it doesn't make sense immediately because they think, well, the Vietnam War was a historical event, so why is the word imaginative connected to that.

Well, to explain that it also – it sort of encapsulates the entire doctrine behind our rare book and manuscript operation here, including the Dylan stuff and to some extent the Bibles, which was fortuitous since that was later and we didn't make that decision. But in order to build these rare book and manuscript collections, early on we had decided that anything we collected needed to meet four main criteria in order for it to qualify for what we wanted to pursue.

And one of the things was that the subject area needed to be usable within the university curriculum, one way or the other, either for undergraduates or graduates or faculty. So whatever we collected couldn't be this very rarified set of things that didn't fit in many of the course – well, in general in the humanities curriculum, so things had to fit that.

Another important criterion was in order to build a particular subject area was that it couldn't be material that was hopelessly expensive. It needed to be a collecting area that we could afford, and we didn't have endowments to do this. It had to come out of regular library funding and occasionally some donor. So that was the second thing. It had to be a subject area that was doable.

The third important criterion was that we needed – whatever we collected we needed to have a reasonable expectation that La Salle could become the best collection in the country for that particular thing. Now, you never know whether that's going to happen. It depends on how successful you are and whether the subject area remains vital. But it was important that whatever we started to collect had to – had that expectation.

[00:54:58]

And almost everything that we've collected, as it turns out, has fit all of those criteria. And in a couple of cases we have a national – we have an international reputation in one of them, which is the Vietnam War collection. So in only 20 years we've been able to meet these benchmarks. It is possible to do.

*Maura Doyle:* Right. Is it the largest collection of its kind, the Vietnam collection?

*John Baky:* Yeah. The Imaginative Representation of the Vietnam War collection is the largest of its kind in the world right now at about 18,000 items. And we've had – since about 1990 we've had more than 100 visiting scholars from all over the world come. We've had several senior Fulbright fellowships whose proposals and grants were written only for this collection.

*Maura Doyle:* Okay.

*John Baky:* And we had two of these senior fellows come from India, and each of them stayed for eight months and did nothing but work in that collection. That's the stature of this collection now. And it's – it encompasses what we – the imaginative part of this encompasses what we want to do with the other collections.

In the case of the Vietnam War we knew that the Vietnam War would be a subject area that isn't gonna go away. People are going to be interested in it one way or the other forever. It's never going to go away. It was an important event. But how to collect it because a lot of that war was collected to death. People collect military history. They collect the geopolitics. They collect the strategy and tactics of the war. There are all sorts of perspectives that have been collected all over the country, and we didn't want to duplicate that.

So the idea was to collect – to try and collect the war, a historical event in terms of the reported and recorded experience of the war. And there aren't a lot of ways to do that. You can do it through oral history. You can do it strictly through memoir, written memoirs, things like that. It doesn't work very well to do it – there are real drawbacks trying to do that with so-called straight historical versions. Because although people think that they are reporting "fact", it turns out over time that what people think is objective reporting of historical events is wildly divergent, often completely wrong.

[00:58:04]

And over time, historically observation gets revised. Not for – not necessarily for any sinister reason but historical revision is a necessity. People learn more about what happened later, and you can't – once you learn something's wrong or some interpretation is ineffective it's – as a professional historian you're obligated to come back and say – to revise that and say we believe this for 100 years, but we now know because of these reasons that it couldn't have been that way, blah, blah, blah.

Well, using the imaginative side of the war, we were able to address that reality. And so that's the reason we collect not the factual side but the experiential side in the guise of novels, short stories, poetry, music, graphic art, ephemera and film. And what you quickly see by those six or seven categories is that it's also often fictional material. But fictional material is extraordinarily important, it turns out, in offering a very real perspective on historical events. It's often thinly veiled autobiography, for one thing.

So, in fact, you really are getting versions of a historical event that often are as close – even though they're in fictional format they're as close to reality as you can get. Often that's not the case, but when it's not the case that's useful, too, because a culture very often gains its knowledge of a historical event, no matter what it is, whether it's a war or something else. They gain their knowledge of that event, not through a careful study of history and not through the use of textbooks and not through the use of one-on-one oral history and memoir. The general public gets their sense of a historical event from the popular culture. It's what they see in movies.

*Maura Doyle:* Right. So we're learning about the war through what is put out by our culture.

*John Baky:* Right.

*Maura Doyle:* It's going to change.

*John Baky:* It's not only going to change, but it gives the person – it gives the researcher an opportunity to understand where misunderstandings about the war came from originally. Why did people believe that veterans were universally spit on, let's say? This is something that that's a phenomenon that may have happened in an absolutely

minute number of cases, almost by chance. But if you look at the popular culture presentation of that in films and novels and poetry and art, you would think that this happened constantly to people.

[01:01:41]

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* Well, it's important to know where this myth started. And the only way you can find that is to track back in the popular culture to see where it first – what years this first started to come up. Because if you look for historical documents you won't find anything because it didn't happen. You would think that if people were being spat on regularly at airports there'd be horrible fights. You can imagine what you would do if somebody spit on you. It wouldn't matter if you had done something wrong or not. You're not going to stand there and take that.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* Let alone returning combat veterans. Do you think these guys who survived that are going to stand there and let somebody spit on them? It's not going to happen. And if it did happen there – that would be required. It would be in newspaper reports. It would be in radio tapes. It would be in police reports.

Well, as it turns out, there isn't any of that. There is no evidence of it. There are a lot of anecdotal reports of this that folklorists refer to as friend-of-a-friend reports. "Oh, I knew somebody whose brother got spit on in an airport," blah, blah, blah. It's very common and it's a standard way of reporting and folklore. And what you find out is that this particular myth is reported exactly that way.

*Maura Doyle:* Okay.

*John Baky:* Well, if you're going to make headway in focusing on this event and whether it did or didn't happen and to what extent, the only way you can do it is to try and isolate where it first started to show up. And lo and behold it first starts to show up in grade B movies in the early – late '70s, early '80s, and in the novels. And typically what happens with this – with the trajectory of a legend like this is that it shows up in popular culture, and then it's taken up as truth by the next group of writers and filmmakers and poets and pumped up and made more extensive and embellished.

[01:03:55]

*Maura Doyle:* Do you think that the idea of the Vietnam War being shown by the media as it was going on? Why the Vietnam War? Why is there all the myths surrounding that? You don't see it in World War II. Do you think the fact that it was televised as it was going on had anything to do with it?

*John Baky:* What's ironic about that is that it's often – the Vietnam War is often characterized I think variously as the first TV war or the first living room war. And it's true. There was a lot of media exposure about the war. There was certainly a lot of reporting about the war. And there was a lot of TV footage taken. But what's ironic about that is the footage that was actually shown to the American public over about a ten-year period was severely and constantly sanitized.

So that you hear people say, "Well, there was war footage on every night when we sat down to eat dinner and watch the news, and Walter Cronkite was on." It was on every night of the year, which it was. But the footage that you saw was very particular, sanitized footage. It'd be showing – for example, you never saw dead Americans ever. Never did you see dead American bodies in TV news. You didn't even see dead enemy, generally. All of that was sanitized out.

If you – it gets more realistic and more raw in coverage by things like *LIFE* magazine that every – most households – many households in the United States got the weekly *LIFE* magazine that had tremendous photographic coverage of the war, wonderful coverage. And that was a lot more raw. But you never saw that on the TV.

And yet people have it in their heads today that, oh, the people saw this every night as they ate dinner. No, they didn't. That's something that people think happened and didn't happen.

*Maura Doyle:* Do you think that comes from a movie though that we may have watched?

*John Baky:* Well, that's what I think is happening. It's very complicated because memory and imagination intersect. And so you – it's often the case where you swear that you saw something, and from after you do some careful research you realize that you actually didn't see the event that you're remembering.

[01:06:53]

What you're remembering is a combination of something that you might have seen that's being mixed with your imagination and your own misgivings about things and your own memory about other events and your own – your emotional reaction to certain things. That all gets mixed together over time. And you – your mind literally convinces you that you were an eyewitness at something that didn't happen.

And this is used all the time in the courtroom. Eyewitness testimony, which any trial lawyer will tell you, is almost worthless as a good form of evidence. People virtually cannot report accurately what they saw. It doesn't happen. It's not humanly possible. Now, it's hard to believe that but it's absolutely true.

So with a war that went on for ten years and is experienced by a couple of million people, imagine how distorted their recollection of that is going to be. And then run that through the additional filter of fictional movies, fictional novels, comic books, board games, cartoons, and you get this hopeless mass of what people think they know about the original event. And this collection allows you to go back and see where each of these stages occur.

*Maura Doyle:* Came from.

*John Baky:* It's really – we do that in two other areas. We do that with the Holocaust. We – that collection is also called Imaginative Representations of the Holocaust. And the Holocaust itself relies very heavily on eyewitness testimony of survivors and camp liberators and things like that. And it's not that the eyewitness testimony is wrong; I mean, clearly bad things happened. But what happens is eyewitness testimony gets appropriated for other purposes.

*Maura Doyle:* Do you think it's dangerous, people getting their – I mean, people getting their history from things like this? I mean, it's okay if we come in and we see where it came from, but do you think it –

*John Baky:* Well, it is dangerous to some extent because if you translated it into your own life or in – let's say your own family, and if you get all of your information from one – let's say there was a very bad divorce somewhere in your family, if you're in a big family. And over the years as a kid growing up you hear the story of this very disruptive family event. You only ever hear that from one other person in your family.

[01:06:53]

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And if you go back and look objectively at all of that you think how can something like that happen. The single most documented historical event in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and people are claiming it didn't happen. And one way to do this, again, is to have a collection like this where you can systematically go back year by year, person by person, and see where they first start to twist –

[01:13:17]

*Maura Doyle:*

Twist it around.

*John Baky:*

Photographic evidence, change, editorialize and delete parts of memoirs, so that it fits the denial model rather than the real model.

*Maura Doyle:*

Okay.

*John Baky:*

And it's fascinating stuff, but it can get very dangerous.

*Maura Doyle:*

Right. The Vietnam collection you said has 18,000 items. Do you know offhand how many the Holocaust collection has?

*John Baky:*

The Holocaust is not nearly as large because without an endowment we can't systematically collect it as avidly as we did the Vietnam material. But there's – we've probably got now – and again, remember, we're collecting fictive representations of the Holocaust, and film and music.

*Maura Doyle:*

Okay.

*John Baky:*

But it's got to be about 2,000 items anyway, I think, close. I'd like to be able to do a lot more with that.

*Maura Doyle:*

And how do you do it? Do you search – does the internet help looking for items that fit your collection?

*John Baky:*

Yeah. All of those collections now have been complicated by the internet because it's so much easier to search. It's easier to search, but it's also endless. And it's usually a – any rare book operation is a combination of collecting strategies, and it usually involves dealers. When dealers find out what it is you're collecting they act as scouts. And every time they find something that they remember you might be collecting they'll call you or send you a catalog, and that's very useful.

*Maura Doyle:*

Okay.

[01:15:04]

*John Baky:* But if they know you're collecting something they also know you're willing to pay for it, so you end up in this negotiation about price. And it's simply because they know you want it. They normally wouldn't – to them they might sell it for \$5.00, but they know you really want it.

*Maura Doyle:* Right. Okay.

*John Baky:* That's one set. Another important way that collecting tips happen is that you have to represent these collections at conferences, at scholarly conferences. And so you'll have a roomful of people hearing about the collection. And they remember it and they'll e-mail you with references to things, or they end up coming to use the material. And they'll tell you about items that they've used elsewhere that you might be able to get a hold of. Friends and acquaintances find out that you're collecting it, and they just want to be helpful, so they're always giving you stuff.

*Maura Doyle:* All right.

*John Baky:* And it's surprising how many valuable things you can get that way. And then the last way that it happens is the founders of these collections become obsessed with it. And like I've spent years of time going to flea markets and book tables and people are throwing books out when they move and like invariably want to go look through all the stuff that they're throwing out. Remainder tables at bookstores. Just countless hours spent doing that.

And over time it produces maybe 10 or 15 percent of these collections that I've gotten either for free or for \$0.10 or for \$0.20. Well, it's turned into a \$1.3 million collection built off of a lot of \$0.10 or free items. And unless you have – that's – unless you have this obsessive collecting mentality, it's something that's common to all rare book dealers and many librarians. It's something that you have almost from birth. You're a collector. And it doesn't matter what it is. It doesn't matter what the subject is.

And it happens in other areas. Like let's say people who collect glassware or something like that. You have to have some mentality for this, or it would be boring. You just wouldn't do it. And it's – in spades it's in rare book librarians. They – I mean, you're literally obsessed with this stuff.

[01:17:45]

*Maura Doyle:* Do you collect anything for yourself, or anything that you collect do you bring to the school?

*John Baky:* Well, I started – the Vietnam collection started as a personal collection. If I had kept it I could have retired by now. And the Dylan stuff started out as a personal collection. But if you're really interested in the material it makes it easier to donate it to an institution because all of the sudden you've now got the – more of the weight of the institution behind it, so you can purchase things that you normally wouldn't purchase. And you can get people to use it that you wouldn't be able to if it were in your house.

Although, it's interesting that in the case of the Bob Dylan material, absolutely by far the most important collections in the world are all held by private collectors. They're not institutional. Something that – the material that we have here would be laughable to a serious collector of Dylan. There are probably 1,000 dealers or collectors around the country who have 1,000 times what we have here.

*Maura Doyle:* Right

*John Baky:* And that's just a trick of collecting. That's not the case with the Vietnam material and not with the Holocaust. And with the Bible it's maybe half and half. The trouble with the Bible's is that it's become so expensive that you're likely not to have private dealers. With Dylan material or Vietnam material it's still relatively cheap. You can get a lot of things under \$100.00, so you can do it. But eventually that won't be the case.

*Maura Doyle:* What would you say the biggest challenge of your job is?

*John Baky:* The biggest challenge of this job is having the time to do it and to do it with no dedicated money. It's – you walk a fine line between the responsibility of ensuring that the operating funds for the library go to material that the entire community might use off and on, and how much of it to dedicate to these much more specific intellectual pursuits.

Well, in a liberal arts institution, in fact, you do have a commitment to developing resources for their own sake. It's much more idealistic. You couldn't do that as much in an engineering school or a medical school or something like that. But since we have a commitment to developing collections that address a lot of

intellectual areas you can do – you can be more comfortable doing this. I mean, you always get people that disagree with the proportion of things, but no one's ever complained – this library has a very good and persistent reputation among the faculty. And libraries, academic libraries belong to the faculty in many ways.

[01:21:10]

And it's a – if the faculty itself consistently is happy with how the resources and the general collection serve either their needs and their curricular needs, then you must be doing something right because you can't – it's either going to work for them or not, and they're going to complain if it doesn't.

So over the years the faculty has been very praiseful of everything that's here, which then gives you confidence that you can continue to develop these narrow collections and not worry about getting attacked because you're squandering communitywide funds on something that nobody cares about. That has never happened here.

*Maura Doyle:*

Does your budget get affected by the economy?

*John Baky:*

Yeah. It's been very difficult over the past two years here. And since this will be in university archives eventually, I would say that – I've been here since 1980, so that's 29 consecutive years. The past two years, hands-down, have been the most difficult budgetary years that the library has ever had.

The library is actually in danger of becoming a significantly less effective university wide resource for the first time in 30 years, that I know of. We've lost in buying power and operational expenses very close to \$400,000.00 worth of purchasing power in the past two fiscal years. That's never happened before. It may have never happened in the history of the school even because it didn't – I'm thinking back during the '70s, although I wasn't here, I saw a lot of the annual reports and knew how the library was operating by colleagues who had been here.

And there isn't anything similar as far as the library's concerned. This has been a devastating two years for the library. In some ways worse than other areas of the university.

*Maura Doyle:*

I wonder why.

*John Baky:*

Well, it's hard to know because it's going to be a combination of things. I think the way this recession has hit and where it has hit

has been particularly hard on nonprofits. And schools that depend on endowments and don't have large endowments like La Salle see the paper value of their investments just wither away very quickly. It's hit universities very hard.

[01:24:08]

*Maura Doyle:* Okay.

*John Baky:* And so in order to compensate for that, economies are installed right away, like not hiring – not replacing people who leave the job market. Not firing people necessarily, but those who retire or go to another job, their jobs are not rehired. And over two or three years that really starts to take a toll on service. And we depend on whatever money we're given each year in our budget.

And when you hack out – we used to buy – even two years ago we used to average buying for the general collections between let's say 6,000 and 8,000 volumes a year regularly. And if we buy 2,000 volumes this year it's going to be a good year.

And I suspect that that's – that this is now going to become normative. One of the big changes in libraries is that electronic databases, online, full-text databases that you're used to have pretty much displaced print material in importance. So if we're going to continue with our support of our online full-text databases that everybody wants, you're going to buy, even without the economy, fewer and fewer books, for sure.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* We spent – let's see. Last year we spent very close to \$1 million on databases. Well, 15 years ago we probably didn't spend \$25,000.00. It's that dramatic. Well, that's a little too dramatic. You know, 15 years ago let's say we spent maybe \$100,000.00 on all electronic resources. And 10 years later, 12 years later, we're up at \$1 million, and that's not going to go away. That's just going to get – but what's happened with this recession is not only are we spending less on the print material, but we're having to cut those databases as well. All of that affects whether you get accreditation quickly for various programs.

One of the things that accreditors look at is whether the university is providing the underlying resources for certain programs to be successful. And so they'll look at what the library is buying and in

subject areas and so on. And if you fall below certain benchmarks that the accreditor has you've got problems with that.

[01:27:01]

*Maura Doyle:* Right. Okay.

*John Baky:* And this is the first time in 30 years where we're approaching some of that weakness in certain areas.

*Maura Doyle:* Okay. Do you find now though that students don't know how to use something unless it's digital? Do you find that some students don't know where to find the journal articles?

*John Baky:* Well, it's actually worse than that. I mean, that's – it is the case that students absolutely – and that's graduate students, undergraduate students, and to some extent faculty, younger faculty, their preference for electronic, online resources is so strong that they'll forego the use of a good print resource that does exactly what they need in favor of an electronic version or parallel electronic version that's actually not as good.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* But they prefer that electronic medium. They're more comfortable with it, and they prefer it. And so they'll use an inferior product because it's in that format to the point where – I mean, it's a funny story. Most librarians have a version of this. But a few years ago there was a line of students downstairs, like five students waiting to use this one terminal because it was busy. And they had a class assignment. And I asked what the assignment was, and they said, well, we have to look – we have to do these citations in *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature*, which is like a 100-volume reference. And they were all there, like 10 feet away. And they're very easy to use.

And what they were looking for, they could have looked in the print version and been in and out of the assignment in like 20 minutes each. And yet they're waiting to use the electronic version of this. They were spending an hour waiting in line to use something that they would have been done with in 20 minutes. But as one said, "We don't do print, man."

*Maura Doyle:* Oh, wow. I guess he summed it up. (*Laughter*)

[01:29:26]

*John Baky:* Yeah. So let's waste 40 minutes of your time rather than use the print version. There are similar – people won't use newspapers today as a good example of that. But in fact paper newspapers and back copy of newspapers are much quicker to use than trying to figure out how to go back and forth on the electronic versions of newspapers.

Now, that's offset by the fact that electronic resources are much more searchable across time by keyword and things like that. It's invaluable and we never want to now lose this. It's – you don't want to trade one for the other. They're too – that kind of searching is too important. But for other – to make the assumption that electronic resources are, across the board, better in every way is counterproductive, and it gets in the way.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* And it's the biggest change that's occurred in libraries. As I say, it's so different that it's not recognizable as library work to some of us. We wouldn't do it again if it looked like this.

*Maura Doyle:* Right. You did mention before that you did have some part of the new library being built in the '80s. Do you see now that any mistakes were made or anything you could change?

*John Baky:* It wasn't – we see very acutely what it ought to be now. But it's not so much -- it wasn't that it – there really weren't mistakes. What happened was that the way that libraries are used and what they have to provide has evolved so quickly and in directions that nobody understood at the time, that that's the real problem.

Like this particular building that for 15 years anyway everybody praised as a model library is now almost obsolete in many ways. We had a plan to start a major renovation in this building until the economy tanked. So that's now off the table. But, for example, we now know that the way that library space today needs to be used in very collaborative ways among students. Students come in and work in study groups, or they work – in almost every course they're made to work in project-oriented assignments.

And so what that means for a library building is that people don't want to come in and sit by themselves in a study carrel. What they want to do is come in in small groups and work together. And they want to work at several different things at once using several

different kinds of media all at once. And if you're going to accommodate that you have to have self-configurable furniture because a bunch of students will come in, and the first thing they want to do is be together in a small group.

[01:32:46]

*Maura Doyle:* Okay.

*John Baky:* And the way that the building is laid out and the way that furniture is made without wheels and things like that, you can't – it's hard to move a small group together to have a discussion. And that's what their assignments are. These kinds of tables for a long time worked fine, but now you need to be able to move these tables at the drop of a hat. That group leaves after an hour. Another group comes in and wants to do a different kind of projects, so they need the chairs moved differently.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* And partitions. You want a little privacy but you don't want it to be permanent, so partitions need to be gotten that are self-configurable. You don't need study rooms as much as you once did.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* The way that people study and have come to expect certain amenities, like coffee.

*Maura Doyle:* Right. *(Laughs)*

*John Baky:* People don't go to the cafeteria like they once did. They want to eat and drink right where they are. They don't want to take the time to go across campus. Well, whether or not that's a good idea or right or wrong, it's not going to go away.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* And if you want to have an efficient space you need to bring those services into this building. And one of the main – well, when this – when libraries were built, when we designed this, one of the great prohibitions that existed for the previous 300 years is you never, under any circumstances ever, had food and liquid in a library. It was like you – people would go *[sharp intake of breath]* if they'd see anybody even with a brown bag coming in the place.

[01:34:37]

*Maura Doyle:* It's different now.

*John Baky:* In the past ten years now you can't get people to come into the library if they can't bring food or coffee or whatever. It's something that librarians had a very hard time with, but it was either change or die. So now nobody has any trouble with that. And one of the major parts of the renovation that we were planning was to turn the first floor – it was essentially going to be an entire kind of Starbucks setting.

*Maura Doyle:* Oh, all right.

*John Baky:* And where the coffee and food and stuff like that would be in the back corner. Then the rest of the floor would be configured with café tables and docking systems for laptop computers. So people would get their coffee and so on and then spread out over the rest of the floor and be able to plug in their laptops, move the chairs around if they were in a small group. Some few people still need periods of time where they want the silence and to be by themselves. Well, that would be on the third floor. You wouldn't have to change that.

And then we would bring other services into the library. Like the center for new media or let's say – which is now in Olney Hall, that would now come over here. They'd get their own space so that there could be this collaboration.

If you had a project where you were experimenting with putting your course presentation onto a set of DVDs that had – that wanted to integrate some music and some oral history and some other things all in one presentation, you would be able to do that in that area of the library. But it would also allow you to go, if you need certain book material or journal material you could just go get it and bring it down there and photograph it and digitize it.

You could do that all here. You wouldn't have to go to—well, we now know that that's how we have to make this and several other examples like that. If you go to libraries that were completed in the past two or three years and you go in they kind of look very chaotic when you first get in there, but there's this method to the madness. And what it is is that everything is integrated

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

[01:37:02]

*John Baky:* And it will work. We now know that but we didn't know that. Nobody used libraries that way 15 years ago. Now it feels horrible. It feels obsolete.

*Maura Doyle:* Right. I think it's just a –

*John Baky:* And I don't know when the renovations are going to – they're going to have to be so extensive now that we really need to get the architects back because if you do something this extensive you really need to do it properly. If you try to do it slapdash, put a café in but don't make any of the other changes, or change some furniture or not others, not move partitions, it'll look exactly like that's what you did. It'll be junky, and it won't work.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* But it'll be about \$4 million, too. We ran the numbers on it. We got that far before the economy fell apart. Maybe not \$4 million, but it's going to be more than \$1.5 million.

*Maura Doyle:* Right. So the plans are on hold for now, right?

*John Baky:* Yeah, absolutely, which is a shame because part of this renovated concept was with the west campus now this building is literally in the geographical center of the campus. So if we offer certain services here, it makes a big difference for late-night people who are here, for residents who are here and want something to do after 11:00 at night or – because the dorms are not a good place to study and get together. But they also want to be able to eat. This would be the perfect place.

*Maura Doyle:* This would be it. Right.

*John Baky:* Who wants to walk over there? If you're living over there, nobody wants to walk all the way to there when they can come here.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* And it would work very well. We'd be – we'd have some spaces where there could be small concerts and things like that. We just know it would work because it works in other places. When you come back in ten years you'll be like why couldn't this have been here.

[01:39:07]

*Maura Doyle:* Right. Definitely work. Sounds good. I wanted to move on to something that I saw that you did in the late '80s here. You were on the editorial board for *Four Quarters*?

*John Baky:* Yeah. Boy, that was – that must have been –

*Maura Doyle:* What was *Four Quarters*? Was it a magazine?

*John Baky:* Yeah, it was. There was something called – you still see references to such things but in the intellectual world and the academic world there is a kind of publication that was – has always been known as a little magazine.

*Maura Doyle:* Okay.

*John Baky:* And they're essentially literally magazines, meaning private produced journals issued quarter. We concentrated on publishing unknown authors or very well-known authors or very well-known authors who don't get everything taken by commercial sources. It could be subject areas that are esoteric. And they were sold by subscription. Press runs were very small. If a little magazine sold 500 issues every quarter that'd be huge. They often didn't do that.

*Maura Doyle:* All right.

*John Baky:* And so they were handled – they had to be heavily subsidized for the printing and the editorial work. But at the same time these were also the publications that drew an incredible concentration of high-quality work or experimental work in writing. Sometimes it takes a new genre of writing decades to be accepted by the larger community, where little magazines were the place that all the pioneering work went on for certain new forms.

And *Four Quarters* was one of those little magazines. And it was – *Four Quarters* was an internationally known literary journal. And it focused on poems, short stories – it wasn't big enough to do – I mean normally it wouldn't do novels. But it was short stories, poetry and some graphic art and some memoir work, essay sometimes. Mostly nothing would be more than four or five pages long if it were in prose.

And the stable of writers who submitted and had published their work in *Four Quarters* was like a who's who in important 20<sup>th</sup>

century writers, mostly through the '50s and '60s. I'm not quite sure when it started, but it's heyday was in the '60s and early '70s. And the people who wrote for it was astonishing.

[01:42:10]

And at the same time that those famous people wrote it would also take newcomers, unknown poets, unknown writers, whose reputation would be burnished to be published in a little magazine like that alongside these big names. And for many years it was – the university subsidized it. I think they would give about \$10,000.00 a year. You still sold subscriptions to it, but subscriptions never pay for anything.

And not all magazines pay their contributors. The more prestigious they are the more often they'll pay a writer. So some of that subsidy went for that. And it was four issues a year. I think the longest standing editor of it was John Keenan, who was chairman of the English department for at least eight years, but he was also the editor of *Four Quarters* for the longest period, I think. I'm not absolutely sure about that.

And some other professors usually in the English department became the editors-in-chief. Another well-known writer who is no longer here, Claude Koch K-O-C-H, taught at La Salle I think for 40 years. He was a prominent editor of *Four Quarters* for a period of time. He knew a lot of writers around the country.

*Maura Doyle:* Okay.

*John Baky:* And eventually the – every major university in the country had subscriptions to the *Four Quarters*. It was one of maybe 100 important little magazines around the country.

And then in the mid '80s when economic issues started to become more and more critical, the decision was made that the \$10,000.00 a year funding to underwrite *Four Quarters* couldn't be offered anymore. And it caused some hard feelings because this was, after all, a prestigious journal. And if the university had pretensions of a reputation –

*Maura Doyle:* That would have helped.

*John Baky:* – that – you would want to have something like that. It's a cache that people talk about it. And you don't make money from it. It's going to cost you money, but it adds to your reputation. And for

that reason it's worth the money. And people who had worked on it for most of their professional career saw this as a short-sided decision, being pennywise, pound foolish. They would see that 25 years of their careful editorship all of the sudden was going to be gone.

[01:45:22]

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* And so there was hard feelings when the decision was made, but it was a monetary decision and you usually don't reverse those. That's what we're worried about now with decisions about how much we can spend in the library for resources. We're worried that once the monetary decision is made you don't ever get it back. Well, that certainly happened with *Four Quarters*.

*Maura Doyle:* You don't think there's a chance it will ever resurface?

*John Baky:* I doubt it. It might – it could resurface if somebody set up an endowment for it, but I have a feeling that's the only way this will ever come back. And if – it'd be a wonderful thing for somebody to do. They could probably – if somebody gave as little as \$100,000.00 and then had it invested, that would probably be enough to run *Four Quarters* again. It's not all – \$100,000.00 is certainly a lot of money if you're giving it, but in the world of advancement, \$100,000.00 isn't that much for something.

When you figure that an endowed chair costs I think at the basic minimum a donation of \$1 million, you can see that this is a pittance. But it's – it was one of those – it's a shame because it was one of those things that got the – at the time it was mostly La Salle College. And it was indexed everywhere and had a lot of famous writers contributing. So it was in every major university in the country. And you lose that.

*Maura Doyle:* Right. Do you think you could tell me the biggest reward of your job?

*John Baky:* Well, I think for me it may be different now than it was originally, but maybe not.

*Maura Doyle:* What was it originally?

*John Baky:* Well, maybe it's not different. You know what it is, it's when you build collections, whether it's the general collection or these

specialty collections, in a very real sense they're like creating children that live on after you're gone. And they're going to be used by people – if they're done right they're going to be used by people for generations in ways that you don't even know. And they're here because of what you did, either mostly because of what you did right or what you decided was going to work, and as it turns out if they're still here in 100 years you did make the right decision.

[01:48:11]

And it's hard to find something more rewarding than creating something that outlives you. I think that that's got to be it because if it isn't then I don't know what it is. It's really horrible because if it's not that then that means that I wasted like 40 years of my life. But I think that's what it is, that it's an opportunity to create a resource or create something that is meaningful and utilitarian to people that you'll never know.

Even if these things – like the special collections, even if they were to be sold at some point into another bigger library or into a museum or something, the good thing about that is you haven't – you've lost your presence here, but it moves across the country somewhere. It really is like a – it's a legacy. It's like a child.

I personally – I don't have any children, and so I tend to think of it that way more intensely than someone who does this in other ways. But it is that. I think that is – you might say, well, it's rewarding to run an operation. This library is a fairly complex operation. People underestimate how complex library organizations are. They think, well, how hard is it? But they never stop to think how things end up on a shelf.

But in a library like this there are 12 professional librarians and a staff of 50 people. Well, most people don't realize that because they come in here and they don't – how does stuff get bought? There are five different departments. We're open 96 hours a week. Only Post Offices and emergency rooms and police stations are open longer than we are.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* We spend \$2.5 million of university funds.

*Maura Doyle:* Okay.

[01:50:31]

*John Baky:* And you have to do so many different things. And it seems – libraries are often a victim of their own success because if they're doing things properly people sort of don't realize how it gets done. They just assume that things, the right things end up on the shelf. Well, no, they don't.

And where do the databases come from? How do people find out better databases? And once you decide that you want new databases how do you get them to interface with the rest of the network's architecture? All of that has to be negotiated somehow and figured out.

So that could be – if you ask a lot of librarians what they found most rewarding they might say coordinating all of that. But I wouldn't say that. That isn't the most satisfying thing to me. For one thing, that kind of administration, the other half of my job is that administration, and I don't find that rewarding. I find it oppressive like a lot of people do because you're trying to get people to do what they don't want to do.

*Maura Doyle:* Right.

*John Baky:* It's a lot of business-related strategy, and that doesn't – that's not my idea of fun. And personnel problems are always a headache. And trying to get anything done in a large bureaucracy, and universities are complex bureaucracies, is very tricky. You either get at the politics or you fail. But none of that's any fun.

*Maura Doyle:* Well, I wanted to thank you for taking the time to talk to me today. Is there anything else you would like to say?

*John Baky:* No. But I'm glad that these areas of the university are going to have at least mentions in the archives because people don't realize that they have their own history and that they're complex.

*Maura Doyle:* Right. Okay. Thank you.

*John Baky:* Okay.