

Clara Ireland Interview Log

Time Code Content

00:00:01	Introduction. Interviewed September 15, 2017, at the Technology Center at The Ohio University, Columbus OH. Interviewed by Jeanne Drewes, librarian.
00:00:34	History. Clara Ireland was born in Huntington, West Virginia in 1932. Her great-grandfather and grandfather owned a bookstore in Portsmouth, Ohio, where she grew up. She loved books all her life. Ireland studied elementary education at The Ohio State University for two years before getting married and finishing her BA at George Washington University. Seventeen years later they divorced and Ireland was back in Columbus, OH. She got her Master's in Library Science, focusing in archives from Case Western University (Cleveland, Ohio). Ireland then worked at the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) as the person responsible for publications. George Cunha had just left so Howard Lowell was the director. Ireland was there for two years but didn't do much hands on work, though being aware of the work being done.
00:05:01	Preservation microfilming. Ireland wrote an article after United Technology had brought the original helicopter designs that Igor Sikorsky walked out of Russia with to be taken care of at NEDCC. Ireland also worked on microfilming when the program was established. They interviewed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where they learned about the MRD-2 microfilm camera. Ireland was in charge of renovating an old classroom into a darkroom with the MRD-2 mounted. She also interviewed libraries in the area to find out if they had materials they needed microfilmed. After NEDCC, she returned to Columbus.
00:06:53	Career changes. Ireland's next job was processing manuscripts for a couple of years at the Ohio Historical Society (Columbus, OH). She then worked at the Cooperson & Lybrand for the accounting firm for six years. When she got tired of that job a friend recommended the state jobs for librarians. Ireland was hired at the State Library of Ohio as a consultant. She learned along the way as she traveled the northeast corner of the state helping libraries manage their collections. There were approximately seven consultants, and they shared their expertise with each other. In 1992 there were layoffs and the last hired was the first fired so their preservation/conservation consultant had to leave. Because Ireland had NEDCC in her background she took over that job as well.
00:11:04	Professional associations--regional. Ireland was very active in the Ohio Preservation Council (OPC), which consisted of 12 academic libraries when she joined. By the time she left there were 120 members. The organization held workshops and made connections between libraries that didn't have a conservation focus. The archives for the OPC are held at the Ohioana Library Association (Columbus, Ohio). Members were usually conservators, heads of preservation for university libraries, and libraries that were big enough to have someone working in preservation. Ireland was the facilitator and helped to bring in speakers that were known in the field for workshops. The OPC would

	meet every month to plan what they were going to do and had workshops at least once a year.
00:16:15	Professional associations—regional. Ireland worked at the State Library of Ohio for 17 or 18 years, five as a consultant. When the Library eliminated the preservation/conservation position she was assigned to a job she hated with accessible books. The state library supported her work at the OPC. There were institutional fees based on how big member institutions were and an individual fee. They were trying to reach librarians who were trying to do the work of conservators. It functions a little like a listserv of members who help each other out with questions.
00:19:51	Career education. In school Ireland had a few archival courses but nothing preservation-centric. She had reading assignments, wrote papers for classes, and came down to The Ohio State University Library to interview the librarians at the medical library.
00:21:45	Professional associations--regional. Ireland did a presentation for the American Library Association in Nashville. She was also a member of the Ohio Library Association (OLA). She describes some visits to Oberlin College where she talked with the librarians there about their conservation techniques. OPC would have meetings in libraries across the state. In Cincinnati, there were leaks in the rare books basement; the State Library of Ohio had mold. Ireland also remembers training someone in the conservation lab.
00:27:04	Libraries--Special collections. Ireland was also in charge of the rare book room at the State Library, which was made up of the original accession book that was put together in 1816. The collection was formed for the Ohio legislature for representatives to learn how things were in other places. Not everything had been cataloged and Ireland was only allowed to send so much to cataloging. They had an original Aldus book. Ireland says it was a wonderful adventure to take care of the books and mend them.
00:31:14	Library material preservation supplies. Ireland used acid free paper. She would go to mending book repair workshops and prepare supplies. They used Gaylord and Archival Products catalogs at workshops and shared them to encourage libraries to invest in someone to handle conservation.
00:32:54	Regret. Working at the state library was the highlight of Ireland's career. She would still be there if she were allowed to stay in conservation, despite retiring at 72.
00:33:47	Library outreach programs. Ireland worked with the public on preserving their own materials. She showed them the catalogs and how to use acid free paper and how to make Hollinger boxes and folders. She taught how to keep materials away from the light and to shelve to the front of the shelf so that there's air behind the books.
00:35:36	Career patterns. Preservation has to continue to save intellectual heritage. Ireland believes that librarians are in charge of this. They need to be welcoming and get the word out about how to take care of their wonderful past.

00:36:34	Professional associations. Ireland met Drewes through the Aldus Society, which is for anyone who is interested in old rare books and how to take care of them. Many members are librarians and people who share their lives with books. She became a member early on. Ireland says that creativity is essential for conservation because conservators are taking something that's broken and fixing it.
00:38:56	Regret. Ireland regrets not staying with conservation any longer. She admires George Cunha for what he was able to do for the conservation effort. When she first got into conservation the field was still about the Florence Flood in 1966. Those preservationists were referred to as "mud angels," and Ireland says that they still need those angels in Florida and other places. Conservation oriented organizations provide those angels to rescue materials that are damaged or in danger of being destroyed.
00:40:22	End of Interview.