

Sandra Nyberg Interview Log

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| 00:00:01 | Introduction. Interviewed June 22, 2018, at the American Library Association Conference in New Orleans, LA. Interviewed by Jeanne Drewes, librarian. |
| 00:01:02 | History. Sandra Nyberg grew up in Tomahawk, Wisconsin. She loved libraries but never expected to enter the field. She went to the University of Wisconsin extension campus for two years before transferring to Lawrence University. Throughout her undergrad degree she worked in the university library. She graduated from Lawrence University with a Bachelor's in History. Her adviser suggested library school because she had helped him with research and knew she liked libraries. Nyberg was struck by the powerful position that libraries hold in people's minds in America. She received the Susan Grey Akers fellowship and a scholarship from Lawrence to attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for library school. She had a graduate assistantship in rare book cataloging. Paul Koda, the curator of rare books there, first introduced Nyberg to preservation. Few schools at the time taught preservation, so everything she learned was through his guidance and connections. He introduced her to George Baer, a hand bookbinder, and arranged for her to take classes from him. She still has the first book he helped her bind. |
| 00:06:25 | Career education. Nyberg completed her MLS degree in 1984. She had loved working as a cataloger, and says that if she hadn't been introduced to preservation she would have been a cataloger. Her experience with cataloging was only in rare books, which sparked her love for the physical object itself. |
| 00:07:30 | Career education. After graduating, Nyberg received a one year Mellon internship at Stanford University. There she worked with Sally Buchanan and Walter Henry. Buchanan ran the preservation, binding, microfilming, and book repair units; Henry did conservation. After the internship she was hired to fill a temporary vacancy in preservation to supervise the book repair unit and coordinate between it and the binding unit. She says it was fascinating because she was exposed to the preservation field at its infancy. At the time there was a lot of advocacy to show people in other departments that they had a role in preservation as well. |
| 00:09:54 | Teaching. After Stanford, Nyberg got a job at the Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET) as a preservation field service officer. They had just received a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant to do preservation outreach and an education training program. Nyberg thought it would be interesting to do the training but felt unqualified because she was very aware of what she didn't know about preservation. She was hired by Frank Grisham and Lisa Fox, who ran the NEH project. While in California, Nyberg had taken bookbinding classes from Diane Blakely once a week. She had the hand skills that SOLINET wanted for a basic book repair workshop. Nyberg developed the curriculum and was able to teach others how to do the repairs. |

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| 00:16:16 | <p>Preservation microfilming. Nyberg considers herself an oddity in the professional world because she has spent most of her career at SOLINET, which is now LYRASIS. SOLINET put her in charge of coordinating their cooperative microfilming project. The Research Libraries Group (RLG) was doing their own but with well-funded universities. Many of the colleges and universities that were part of SOLINET were mid-size or smaller and didn't have preservation microfilming units. The RLG projects were run from a cooperative funding source and not a common production source. SOLINET switched that and developed a centralized model. Library curators would select materials for preservation, ship them to SOLINET, which did the processing, preparation, quality control, and cataloging, and then sent it to microfilm agencies. After filming, SOLINET did the quality control and returned books and print/use copies of film to the relevant library, retaining the camera masters in storage. The collections were then contributed to the National Brittle Books Preservation Program sponsored by NEH. The project ran for 16 years while Nyberg stayed with it for the first three years.</p> |
| 00:20:22 | <p>Preservation microfilming. To plan the first cooperative preservation microfilming project (CPMP) SOLINET received a planning grant. A group of volunteers came together from the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL). Connie McCarthy, Nancy Gwinn, Nancy Marshall, and Bob Hennenberger were all involved. They were trying to figure out what they could do from a centralized fashion when they didn't own the collection and how to make it cost-effective. Nyberg thought that the libraries would get rid of the materials after they were microfilmed but no one did, and she's not sure if that's a good thing. She's curious about how much use the materials get. When she surveyed the libraries a few years ago [at time of interview] most of them couldn't give her a sense of whether they were being used, and the vast majority of the microfilm hadn't been digitized.</p> |
| 00:25:21 | <p>Career patterns. Nyberg thinks that less emphasis on the object might be part of the evolution of the field. When she looks at libraries now she sees them as places for people more than books. She can see that shift in thinking in redesigns of library buildings. She thinks about if the materials they microfilmed were brittle, then by now they are even worse, and that if they have the film, wouldn't it be better to free up space for people? The microfilm is a preserved copy of the content that is relatively easily accessible while the book's pages can't turn.</p> |
| 00:27:35 | <p>Grants-in-aid. The SOLINET CPMP participating libraries changed often. Nyberg wrote all of the grants that funded the cooperative microfilming projects, and managed them for the first three years. In 1992 she became the manager of the entire preservation program, including microfilming and the education training and field service programs. She did that for a while but had to stop traveling. At that point you couldn't be a player in preservation unless you were at the conferences, speaking, and deeply engaged. Nyberg became SOLINET's grant officer in 1995 because she liked to write the grant proposals, lay the plan out, put the budget together, and evaluate project success. She has done grants in many fields but they all have some component related to collections preservation. She noticed that the advocacy of her mentors Sally Buchanan, Jan Merrill-</p> |

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| | Oldham, Carolyn Morrow, Pamela Darling, Margaret Child, and others, has succeeded because preservation is now interwoven into cultural institutions. |
| 00:32:01 | Mentors. Margaret Child was a voice of reason for Nyberg. Pamela Darling taught her practicality. Preservation has many lofty goals that people don't try to meet because they look unattainable, while Darling made sure to emphasize that preservation was what they could do now. Tia Gozzi was an administrative supporter of preservation at Stanford who taught Nyberg about management style. Her boss at SOLINET, Chuck Wright, taught her about planning and evaluating. Janice Marler at SOLINET taught her about finances and how to manage money in an institution. Julie Arnott was always good at planning for practical outcomes and at motivating and supervising people. |
| 00:36:05 | Acquisitions and mergers. SOLINET was one of several regional-based library networks that were established as a means to share technology between libraries. Early on technology focused mostly on cooperative cataloging and interlibrary loan for the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) and on infrastructure that underlies technology that allowed for early online access to websites and collections. Since then those lines of revenue that supported SOLINET changed. In the mid-2000s there was a lot of upheaval in the consortium world because the old reasons for collaborating weren't there anymore. The Board of Trustees for SOLINET and PALINET and Union Library Catalogue of Pennsylvania decided to merge to form LYRASILS. It became a stronger organization but it was the worst two-three years in terms of tension at work. The impact of the merger took about five or six years to settle. After the merger NELINET was acquired by LYRASILS. The newest issue is that all of the areas are very different in working styles. LYRASILS is about the same size as SOLINET was but there is a more focused membership now with the resources to develop new programs. |
| 00:44:03 | Acquisitions and mergers. During the merger, it was decided that one business entity had to survive legally, and the nonprofit laws in Pennsylvania were friendlier, so SOLINET assets were transferred to PALINET. There was a lot of paperwork, formal requests, and presentations involved to transfer the assets. Nyberg had to transfer all the grant agreements and coordinate with the funding agencies. |
| 00:47:32 | Grants-in-aid. Nyberg's resume has lists of grants by awardees rather than in a timeline because she has so many. She considers herself very lucky. She says that she had a good education and has always liked to write, do research, and tell a story. All of her grants have to do with the importance of cultural institutions and how the project will make them stronger. Every project is different so she learns a lot about different aspects of librarianship that she never would have learned on the traditional preservation path. |
| 00:50:02 | Grants-in-aid. In some cases, Nyberg would find grants for projects, but more often they were built on a relationship. Nyberg says that grants are all about relationships, especially those from private foundations. Some grantors came to SOLINET or LYRASILS to ask them to take on a project. In other cases it's a project LYRASILS developed and would look for sources that would give them the money at an adequate size to do the large projects typical of LYRASILS. |

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| 00:52:35 | <p>Fund raising. Nyberg considers herself successful in the narrow field that she's in. She doesn't think she'd be a good fundraiser in a public library setting because those are built on the relationships with the community. 95% of funding is local. The people doing that fundraising have opportunities to raise money that LYRASIS never will. In her branch she's been successful but sees the limitations of it. LYRASIS doesn't depend on her grants to operate, so she has been fortunate. Through her grant writing she can move the mission of preservation into other projects.</p> |
| 00:55:24 | <p>Publications. Nyberg has also done publications related to her work. A past boss, Kate Nevins, would bring Nyberg to meetings because she could listen to many perspectives around a common theme and then write out a plan that most people agreed with. Many publications came out of grants and meetings because she's in charge of putting the information together. While working as a field services officer, Lisa Fox said that they needed a leaflet on mold, which she wrote and then called the Invasion of the Giant Spore, which was a big hit.</p> |
| 01:00:00 | <p>Professional associations—ALA. She is not active in as many organizations as she used to be but because of her grant work she is in tune with developments and trends in the field. She has been a consistent member of the American Library Association (ALA) because it's so central, as well as The Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS) within ALA because of the Preservation and Reformatting Section (PARS). She was a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals for a bit, but it was geared towards community-based funding, so she let it lapse.</p> |
| 01:02:03 | <p>Vocational guidance. Nyberg would advise new professionals to experiment and explore. Sometimes she regrets staying at one company for so long. Realize the passion that brought you to the field can be expressed in many different ways. Build networks and relationships with diverse people who work in different fields, some who share your mission and some who don't. Connections make your work life successful.</p> |
| 01:04:42 | <p>Library outreach programs. Nyberg thinks that the public is more informed about preservation now than they ever have been, but they don't think about it in the context of community institutions. However, because they can relate to the concept of preservation and the inherent value of saving memories and history, they can understand why cultural institutions put resources into it.</p> |
| 01:07:10 | <p>Professional associations—ALA—George Cunha and Susan Swartzburg Award. She thanks everyone who helped her get to this point and all of the people in the future who will help her. This work is a team effort, so she is part of a bigger effort. This is part of the reason why the George Cunha and Susan Swartzburg Award that Nyberg is receiving was created, to acknowledge the ability to work with others to create change.</p> |
| 01:09:39 | <p>End of Interview.</p> |