

INTERVIEWEE: CALVIN BOYER
University Librarian

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SM: This is an interview with Dr. Calvin Boyer, University Librarian, July 14, 1989, in HOB-360. And the first question, Cal, is what did you know about the UCI library before you were interviewed for that position?

CB: I was very fortunate as a candidate for this position, in that I was acquainted with Penny Abell who, at that time, was serving as University Librarian at San Diego. And Penny was kind enough to share some substantial detail about the workings of the University of California libraries, at that time, when I was under consideration, as one of many candidates. Therefore, my acquaintance with the Irvine campus, the Irvine library and the University of California was much greater than it would have been otherwise, had it not been for Penny Abell.

SM: Very good. Well, she was a wonderful person. I was very much her admirer and I was always sorry she went to Yale.

CB: I, too, am an admirer of Penny Abell's. I served on the search committee that looked for a replacement for Steve Salmon, and I much encouraged Penny to become a candidate for that post. But, at the time, she was under consideration by Yale and chose not to be a possible replacement for Steve Salmon. I think she would have done a marvelous job for us.

SM: Yes, yes. Rather ironically, I was Chair of our UCI Senate ^{committee} library and we constituted--we, that is, all the chairs of the nine campuses--served to help in the search for a replacement for Salmon. And I remember vividly going to UCLA and we turned thumbs-down on a fellow who was an Ohio State librarian. We also interviewed the person who got it but no longer is in it, the fellow from England who was the Dean of the Library Science School at Berkeley. And I know that one of the members of the committee, the chairman from Davis, his name is Bill Smith. He's an historian, intellectual American historian--very smart. And he'd had his problems, I think, with statewide and all the whole business of the two depositories and so he gave this fellow a bad time.

Now, second question, what were your impressions during your interview? I can vividly remember your coming out and what struck you when you came?

CB: The perspective that I remember from the interview is, like yours, a vivid one. At that time, I was also under consideration as Library Director at the University of Oregon and I had very recently also taken a serious look at the Universities of Georgia and Arizona State, as possible posts that I might serve as Library Director. So, I came here at the time that I had recently visited those campuses. And I was almost overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of the search committee, particular Professor Melden, who was chairing the

committee and was so confident that this campus, this university was going to take its place among the super stars of universities, not only in this region but the world.

SM: That's right.

CB: And almost anything and everything, during the interview, somehow it was an affirmation not only of the ambitions of this campus, but of the realism that its representatives spoke about those ambitions. Too often presidents and chancellors speak of being a great university, and what they're really saying is, "Our football team is a fine team."

SM: Yes.

CB: But here, when the chancellor . . .

SM: (inaudible)

CB: Or the search committee spoke of aspirations of joining the very best universities and having one of the best libraries, there was so much evidence that they spoke with knowledge about what that meant and were committed to making available resources to see that that happened, whether that be the new faculty post or new books for the library.

SM: Yes.

CB: So, I came away from my first interview at Irvine with a totally buoyant spirit.

SM: Very good. Well, I remember . . . My third question, I was totally interested . . . Of course, I was Chair of the Academic Senate. I had approved, or shall I say I had gone

over [names of] the search committee. The Chair of the Senate has the right to look over the committee and say what he thinks about it. And I had also . . . And then I participated in the final dinner. And you were flying on east, and I remember that dinner very well. We don't try to over-paint the picture of the future, I don't think. You came at the end of a rather lean period, when we were told we weren't going to have many more buildings, we weren't going to have this. And then, of course, the demography was proved to be wrong. And, particularly, did you know that--I hadn't realized it until I interviewed Jim Dunning, the Director of Admissions here, about two weeks ago. He said that what was wrong with the demography, or the figures that we would have as coming into our University of California, was that the inflation was such that the private universities, all those [students] who went to go to Stanford and Harvard and Yale and Princeton and all those and others, chose instead to come to the University of California. [inaudible] was a very good investment that we're going to get a first-rate education at about a quarter of the price. And this has held steady all along the line. Did you know that?

CB: Yes.

SM: And that figure pushed us so that all of a sudden things began to move again by about . . . You came in 1979, didn't you?

CB: I came for the interview in 1979.

SM: Then in 1980 you came.

CB: Right.

SM: Well, 1981 or 1982, things began to move. And then it's hard to realize it, but if you consider two years back and two years forward from this date, we're conducting \$400 million worth of construction, including your own new library which is coming on-line a year from now.

CB: Including the new science library, that's right.

SM: The science library, right. And, so, I mean, that's very exciting. And then Jim McGaugh becomes elected to the Academy of Sciences and so is the other person whom I like so much, [Ricardo Miledi] who came from London and, oh, it's tremendous.

What were the main problems, however, when you came on-line--arrived--in 1980? What were the main problems you faced?

CB: I think I would characterize the circumstance as not one of problems, but one of possibilities, for the university had chosen to hold open a number of positions which had become vacant in the library. One could view those vacancies as a problem because, obviously, there was work not being done because people were not in those positions. But I saw that circumstance as a possibility or as potential of being able to recruit very quickly some very, very talented librarians who held the same dream that the faculty and administration

that I talked with when I came for an interview, of making this library in which I now work one of the very best.

So, I look back . . . It was a heady time because we were recruiting for a substantial number of vacant positions. We were enjoying increases in book funds. We had looming ahead of us some unanswered questions. What might the regional depository do when built? And, certainly, some of the staff were more than simply unsettled by that prospect. So, there was an opportunity to work together, to come to a common understanding in the library about how we would serve faculty and students, that our emphasis would in large part be building stronger ties with faculty. So, problems . . .

I look back at 1980 and I think what a wonderful year I spent. At the same time, every year for me at Irvine has been better than the last, so the year 1989 . . .

SM: I hope that keeps up until the science library is built!

CB: Well, that and others. So, 1980 was for the campus one of those uncertain years because the enrollment projections, which later proved to be incorrect, added a cast to campus conversations: What can we do when enrollment will be stable? But, yet, there were those faculty and those university administrators who were already planning how to improve even under what could have been difficult circumstances.

SM: Now, have you changed the organizational table? I, for instance, served on a search committee which ultimately

selected Shirley Leung and then Jay. Now, was that your proposal that they set up these two assistant librarians? It was really replacing Beverly Toy as one person.

CB: Yes. A bit of background, in answer to your question. When I came to Irvine, the administrative structure of the library included the University Librarian and a position titled Associate University Librarian. Beverly Toy, at that time, had been Acting University Librarian and then was my immediate associate. And what the two of us discovered was that, if we as a library were to achieve our ambitious goals, we needed more individuals working in senior posts. When Beverly retired, there was the opportunity, with Carl Hartman's support, of increasing the number of assistants and, so, as you have said, I constituted a committee which searched for not one associate, but two. And those two associates are now in place. They have been joined by a third. So, we now have three senior members.

SM: Who is the third?

CB: The third is Michael Homan. Michael Homan, who is looking forward toward that science library, he comes as Assistant University Librarian for the Sciences.

SM: Oh, I met him, yes.

CB: So, he currently is helping plan for the science library. He currently administers the present branch libraries, the Biological Science, Physical Science, Bio-medical, and our

hospital library in Orange. So, what Beverly and I were trying to do in 1980, there are now four of us working in those same responsibilities and it's simply quite observable that four of us are able to accomplish more in a given workday than two of us. So, I think it was essential as the university grew so did the table of the library. And the table of the library changed from one senior associate to our circumstance in 1989 of three senior associates for the University Librarian.

SM: Very good. Well, that makes sense. Now, to our next question, is the regional storage up on Gayley Avenue, and the question, have you lost many books to the regional storage? I say this because that little memo in there started a big row with Salmon and others, because I really think it was a mistake. How is it working out?

CB: I think it has its up side and it has its down side. Our campus library accommodations, given that we have not increased the number or size of our present library facilities on this campus since the early seventies, we would have been overflowing with materials had we not had some recourse to a storage facility. That's the up side.

The down side is, when I came for an interview and almost a decade later I continue to be saddened by the university's decision to build these regional depositories, for we are sending materials to the depository that other university

libraries consider bread and butter out of their collections. We do so in part because the university established a plan, including quotas, and the quota for Irvine requires that we send a certain number of books and bound journals in order to meet that quota.

While we have tried, with faculty assistance, to identify the least used materials, nevertheless, by definition a university library is a place where one expects to find not only the common but the uncommon. And merely because a book hasn't been used in five years or ten years does not mean that its existence and its immediate use by someone may not trigger a discovery or lead to a better understanding.

And although the southern regional facility has performed as promised, that is, they are able to return materials from that warehouse to us the following workday, what we lose in having materials stored there is direct access to those materials on the shelf. One cannot browse through those materials. And although a day's delay may not seem like much, for those individuals who do not have direct browsing access, those same individuals may not choose a book, may not, in fact, profit from a book that they would had it been on the shelf in front of their hand.

SM: Yes, yes.

CB: So, on one hand, the relief to our crowded shelves has been essential. And, at the same time, the growing frustration of

seeing some of our materials chosen for faculty who are still in residence, still active professors in their instruction research, to see materials chosen for them being placed in a depository on the Westwood campus is a difficult circumstance. I think there's considerable professional pain. And some years hence, it may be determined that the university chose a course of action which works but may not be in its long-run best interest.

SM: Well, that's a very fine and thoughtful answer. Thank you, Calvin. I saw this problem and I said it doesn't make sense for the southern California campuses, Riverside, Irvine, San Diego, and Santa Barbara, not to just build modular buildings, which are quite cheap, right on the campus--there's room--and the book could be fetched in a couple hours. And I offered to donate a golf cart. I said the golf cart will rip up, get the books, and come back and the person could have it. It didn't make sense for them to leave these . . . Well, these campuses have so much room and a modular building is very, very inexpensive. And it's not going anywhere you browse, so you can stack them differently. Well, that's a painful subject passed now.

The question, how about our accession rate? Has that improved? How are things going?

CB: The answer is it has not improved. In fact, our accession rate has diminished. During three out of the past four fiscal

years, the legislature did not appropriate funds to help the library keep pace with inflation. So, our book budget has been eroded by the effects of inflation. Some of those effects have been quite serious, especially in recent months in which the strength of the dollar in Europe and Asia has weakened, and we have seen our accession rate drop by almost 10,000 volumes per year over the past four years--a substantial drop for a campus with such ambitions. We have seen that accession rate drop from about 55,000 volumes four years ago to some 46,000 volumes this past fiscal year. And that's a substantial drop. That's about a 20 percent decrease in our purchasing power.

And, unfortunately, that drop is a cumulative, long-lasting affect. It is akin to capital investment. That capital investment, once missed, almost never do universities have the opportunity to go back in subsequent years. Among other things, the costs of the books continue to escalate. That is, the price of the book may change during its shelf-life in a book store. As new printings come out, the new issue is more expensive than the previous. Or, unfortunately for us research libraries, one of the recent tax law changes affected very adversely publishers. Because in the tax law, their inventories were taxed differently and there was an impetus for book publishers not to carry over small inventories from year to year. And for us, that then means

a book not purchased, a scholarly book not purchased when it is newly published, often becomes unavailable at any price as it goes out of print.

So, not only has our accession rate dropped, the likelihood of ever finding some of those materials in our collection, even when the state, the university, augments our budget in subsequent years, we have missed some things on a permanent basis.

SM: That's well-stated, Cal. And, incidentally, in 1978, I think it was 40,000 was our accession rate. It's in there.

CB: We have increased over that level, but we have decreased from those days in which the strength of the dollar was particular great.

SM: Does Melvyl make a great difference? I say this simply because as an old-fashioned user of the library, I was sad to come back from Australia and see all the card catalogues against the wall and not centrally located.

CB: The Melvyl system, which is an electronic form of our catalogue, our card catalogue, has, again, strengths and weaknesses. One of its strengths is not only does it include our collection, but it includes materials from the other eight University of California campuses. And as an electronic catalogue, it may be viewed from one's home, one's laboratory, one's office. In that, anyone with a personal computer may

dial our catalogue, so that it is no longer essential that one comes to the library to inquire into our book holdings.

So, for those of us who enjoyed browsing in the physical card catalogue and who found the cards easier to manipulate than electronic keyboards, Melvyl is somewhat of a nuisance. Because it, as a machine, does require certain knowledge on the part of the user to instruct it in commands. Once our users become better acquainted with Melvyl, then the opportunity to use it from home, from office, or from around the world, indeed, does make our book collection far more accessible to many. So, it's an exciting advance and, at the same time--although as you note our catalogue was moved back to a less prominent place in the lobby--the card catalogue continues to be an efficient, effective tool for researchers and other users.

SM: I'm going on, Cal. Of course, I'm much impressed with our library and I work in it all the time. But I'm working now in Special Collections--in the room--and the documents are brought to me by Sharon Pugsley, our Archivist. And I work with the correspondence of the Chancellor and, whatever it is, I'm working away at it. But I have the impression--I'm allowed in to talk with her and so on--she has a little corner there, and I feel the Archivist should have a larger space. I've always worked with archivists. I remember at Rutgers he had a nice office off the library. Sinclair was his name.

At Michigan the Archivist had more space. Now, she's . . . Incidentally, you might want to look at the interview I had with John Smith back in 1974. All those are open now to anyone who wants to see them, although I'm asking her to keep them pretty well down until I've written the history of UCI, the book. And then all that stuff is available. There's none restricted. One was restricted for fifteen years, but that now has lapsed because I started this business in 1967, to tape record. Like Clark Kerr, I had a fine interview with him and he restricted his for ten years. Well, 1967 to 1977. So, maybe you'd like to go look at that. But I think that your Archivist needs a little more room.

CB: Sharon, who is professionally active presenting papers at national archivists' conferences, is a miracle worker. But she, along with some of us when it comes to creating more space, her miracles . . .

SM: (laughter)

CB: . . . haven't been sufficient. I'm looking ahead toward the day in which our science library opens and space is vacated in the main library, which then will essentially be a humanities, social science, fine arts library collection service point, that we will have more room for Special Collections and our University Archivist. It is simply a given that the longer the university is in business, the greater its archives. And, so, Sharon is facing a most

difficult circumstance today, as you note, having too little space to work in. So, I'm hopeful in 1992, when we move a number of collections and people out of the main building, that Sharon will have a better day in terms of work space then. I quite agree with you, as I visit other universities, I'm somehow struck by some quarters. And, certainly, the role of the University Archivist touches so many. I'm just pleased that Sharon is a buoyant spirit and works under some very difficult circumstances these days.

SM: Yes, and a very intelligent, very intelligent and delightful person. Are there any events that come to your mind since you have been here since 1980 that have not been recorded in the library? In other words, there's always something you people have to tell me that just isn't in the records. And, of course, then you can restrict this interview for several years, if you want to. Well, you don't have to say anything. It's just that Jack Peltason put me on to this. Jack says to me, "Why don't you find out at least one thing." (laughter)

CB: I'm confident there are a number of incidents and happenings that haven't been recorded, not that they're not noteworthy or that they're embarrassing. Quite the contrary, sometimes some of our best services and projects go unrecorded, in terms of some kind of formal public statement.

After nearly a decade with this university, this library, I'm more excited about being University Librarian today than

I was during my first year. And that excitement grows out of the community of the staff, that is, librarians and staff who work in the library, who by and large have a boundless reserve of energy to get on with better services and new products. If I ever could imagine a group of people more dedicated, I would be hard-pressed to think of a library that is any more committed to being at the heart of the university than is the Irvine library community, that is, the people who work in the library. So, I think probably what has gone unrecorded of great consequence is the talent and the dedication of now nearly 200 full-time employees of the library.

SM: That's wonderful. And I'm glad you're more excited than you were in 1980.

CB: Yes.

SM: That's very good.

CB: Well, I was truly excited when I came--that first day, that first week, that first month--but I have said repeatedly to interviewees who come seeking positions with our library that for me every year has been more exciting, more challenging, and more rewarding than the previous year. And I wonder how long that can happen. But the future, as best I see it, is even more exciting, as we look ahead toward a new science library, the renovation of our main library, the possibilities of building an undergraduate library. I think a University

Librarian here at Irvine is one of the most fortunate professionals in librarianship anywhere in the world.

SM: Wonderful, wonderful. I might say that when you're talking about this question of inflation and your acquisitions, when I was in Australia the last two years and was a visiting professor up at Melbourne University, the libraries in Australia really feel that inflation. Their own inflation is simply roughly in the range of 7 to 9 percent and they are so hard-pressed to get their journals from overseas and all that.

CB: Yes, it's very difficult for them.

SM: It's very heartbreaking to them.

CB: Yes.

SM: Now, I'd like to know a little about how you got this architect for the science library, this Englishman whose name is Sterling, is it?

CB: James Sterling.

SM: Oh, how did that come about?

CB: We were very fortunate in that, following the university standard procedures to identify and select a design architect, we had some forty to fifty firms that sent in letters of interest. From among those, we selected six firms to make a presentation to us. Among the firms that we winnowed out, we were so blessed by talent that firms like I. M. Pei did not make our short list.

SM: Oh, my god!

CB: Our short list, indeed, included a firm that is designing the new main public library for the city of Chicago. Another firm represented in our list of interested architects included the firm that is doing the renovation for the Los Angeles Public Library. But our short list included the firm of James Sterling, whose reputation is such that, if Nobel prizes for architecture were offered, he would certainly be among the recipients for his stature internationally.

SM: What's he done? What's an example?

CB: The most recent example of work that comes to mind that I find fascinating is the extension to the Tate Gallery in London.

SM: Oh, the Tate. That's where all the Turner paintings are.

CB: Right.

SM: Yes.

CB: He has worked at Harvard. His most recent building in this country is the new Performing Arts Center at Cornell University.

SM: Oh.

CB: He has a number of projects on the continent, especially in Germany. One of the architects that we did not choose who was on the short list was the architect responsible for the new Federal Building in Australia, their new . . .

SM: Oh, yes. That's a very handsome building.

CB: It's a very handsome building. So, we were choosing from among architects whose present projects and existing buildings

were among some of the most interesting, the best designed in the world. At the time, and I think it probably is still correct, at the time our Assistant Vice Chancellor David Neuman said that the list of interested firms to help design the library was the most impressive list of architectural firms that this campus had had express an interest on any project to date.

SM: I can imagine, yes.

CB: One of the reasons for that is libraries are focal points for campus--not only those faculty and students who work on campus, but visitors to campus. And libraries also remain libraries, throughout generally the campus future.

SM: Yes.

CB: Unlike some buildings which may be converted to other uses, libraries, if designed well, are lasting testaments to the quality of the ingenuity of the design architect. And, so, there's a very keen competition. Since this is one of the largest science libraries in the world, the competition simply allowed us the good fortune of choosing James Sterling, Michael Wilfred, the London firm working with an American joint venture firm, IBI in Newport Beach. And in 1992, visitors from the campus are going to see one of the most interesting library designs that is shaped, as well as one of the most functional buildings that you can find anywhere. So, our good fortune of finding an internationally recognized

architect has been followed on by one of the most exciting library designs that I am aware of.

SM: Yes, I've seen it and it's so exciting. Tell me, this is question twelve, do you have any, will you see any budgetary problems? Do you think they're going to knock you back a bit?

CB: Fortunately for us, the library, our budget increases as our enrollment increases. Our book budget will increase in the near future as new programs are added, so, when the science library comes on-line in 1992, our staff will be considerably larger, will be able to not only provide a full staff for the present main library but this new science library which will be as large as the main library, will have it's full staff. So, I'm very optimistic about the resources for library affairs.

Quite recently, the senate committee has taken some special interest in library budgeting and I think, through their assistance, the university may see opportunities. We are also currently recruiting for the first development officer for the library--an individual whose full-time responsibility it will be to go out and raise private funds to assist the library in buying materials that it otherwise couldn't or providing furnishings.

SM: The Friends of the Library help you there.

CB: Yes. Oh, the Friends of the Library have been a godsend . .

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SM: I've been elected to the executive committee and they're very active.

CB: That they are. They're going to have assistance through the development officer and we can expect simply great things ahead. So, you can see why I say the future looks even brighter than the past.

SM: Great. I agree.

CB: And relatively speaking, the University of California campuses are so rich in their resources, in the quality of faculty, students, in their libraries, that one cannot help but be excited about being a part of the University of California.

SM: I'm glad to hear you say that. The last question really doesn't pertain to you. You're obviously going to be adjusting your administrative structure as the students move to the 27,500 figure, which will come in the year 2005, apparently. But there's one question that I didn't put down and it surprised me. I was reading . . . I always felt that your staff, from an ethnic mix, is a very diverse group, your staff, very, very many of them. Now, what was this thing I read in the paper about two months ago that some of them were complaining that they . . . I've forgotten. You formed a committee to . . .

CB: Right.

SM: What was it all about?

CB: In 1980, when I joined the library, if I recall, our student body ethnic composition then was quite different than our student body composition today.

SM: Yes, right.

CB: And there are those, including many of us in the library, who hope, who work toward having our library staff population ethnic mixture reflect in some measure that of our student body and that of our faculty. And what we have found in the library is the incoming freshman classes have changed more rapidly than has our composition of staff.

SM: Yes, I see.

CB: In part, every fall there's a new freshman class. And so, its student ethnic mix, logically, will change more quickly. So, we in the library are paying particular attention as each vacancy now occurs. We strive very diligently to alert various ethnic organizations of librarians that we have vacancies and encourage them to encourage their members to make application.

I was looking back at our appointments this year of librarians. We have, to date in 1989, appointed seven librarians. All seven have been women. Three of the seven have been ethnic minority group representatives, including one black librarian, one Asian librarian, and one Latino librarian. So, our rainbow of library workers, I hope, will continue to be more diverse. We continue to hold a primary

requirement for joining this library, and that is you are the best librarian out there. Now, we've been fortunate, I repeat, to find the best librarian out there who also was an Asian librarian, who also was a Latina librarian, and those appointments, I'm confident, will be followed by other quality appointments, some of whom no doubt will be minority librarians. And as our rainbow changes to reflect more nearly the campus, I think we will all be excited about the possibilities, because every new librarian appointed brings ideas and enthusiasm. And as we add diversity of cultures and ethnic backgrounds to our library, we're a richer library and I hope our services improve.

SM: Well, thank you very much, Cal.

CB: You're welcome.

SM: That's a very fine interview and I appreciate it.

END OF INTERVIEW