

**Oral History Interview**  
**with**  
**Mary Redmond**

Interview Conducted by  
Cassandra Hartnett  
October 18, 2010

Government Information Living Indexes  
Oral History Project

# *Government Information Living Indexes*

## *Oral History Project*

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### **Interview History**

Interviewer: Cass Hartnett  
Transcribers: Cass Hartnett and Angelica Johnson  
Editor: Cass Hartnett and Mary Redmond

### **Project Detail**

The oral histories collected as a result of this project will preserve the voices and experiences of government information workers who have invested a good portion of their careers to providing and insuring access to government information.

### **Legal Status**

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Mary Redmond is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on April 25, 2011.

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#### **About Mary Redmond ...**

Mary Redmond was born in Staten Island, New York and spent much of her childhood in Bensenville, Illinois, where her parents contributed to the founding of that community's library. She earned an undergraduate degree in French from Rosary College, a Master of Music History from the University of Illinois, and a Master of Arts in Library Science from Rosary College (now Dominican University).

Her first professional library appointment was at the Illinois State Library in Springfield, where she served for twelve years. Her Illinois years included the ten months of the Illinois State Constitutional Convention, after which she compiled an index to the convention's proceedings. On December 31, 1981, she began a new job at the New York State Library. During her 25 years there, Ms. Redmond became active in local, state, and national associations. She worked with other New York State Library staff members to organize conferences in support of New York State and federal documents. She participated in the American Library Association's Coalition on Government Information, chaired the ALA Government Documents Round Table, and helped organize GODORT's 2009 Forum on the Future of Government Information. In 1991, she and her institution were awarded the CIS/GODORT/ALA Documents to the People award for their accomplishments in helping establish and reform a depository library system for New York State documents. Mary retired in 2007, after serving as Interim Director of the Research Library from 2001 to 2005 and ending her New York State Library career as Interim Director of Library Operations. Always an advocate for public access, Mary played a major role in the 2004 decision and implementation to extend New York State Library borrowing privileges to the general public, and led groups whose work contributed to the foundations for the 2010 decision to reinstate Saturday hours.

Mary has made a lifetime of contributions to government documents librarianship. She has earned a reputation as a capable and productive editor through her years at the helm of two American Library Association publications: *Interface*, the newsletter of the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies, and *DttP: Documents to the People*, the journal of the Government Documents Round Table (GODORT). She served on the Depository Library Council to the Public Printer, 1999-2002.

Mary Redmond is an example for other librarians in her active retirement. She is now a volunteer at the New York State Library and has served as a consultant to the State of Arizona.

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## **Mary Redmond**

Oral History Interview

Interviewed by Cass Hartnett  
October 18, 2010  
Arlington, Virginia



**Hartnett** *Hello, my name is Cass Hartnett and we're here in Arlington, Virginia at the Doubletree Hotel on October 18, 2010. I'm here with Mary Redmond to do an oral history as part of the American Library Association Government Documents Round Table's Oral History project. We're trying to target people that we call "living indexes," people who know a lot about the profession. Why don't we start out by my asking you a little bit about where you were born, your childhood?*

**Redmond** Okay. Well, I was born on Staten Island, New York. My father was stationed there in World War II. But my family was actually from Chicago, so after the war we moved back to the Chicago area. I grew up in Bensenville, Illinois, which is a little town outside of Chicago. They would not like to be called a suburb, because they were independent. They – it was an old railroad town. And it was a very much – I think of it as a "Leave it to Beaver" kind of childhood: you could walk to school, you could ride your bikes around, it was a very nice place to grow up! I thought it was boring, actually. I wanted to be Nancy Drew and solve crimes. I realized later on, it was a very nice childhood. I went to school in Bensenville, then I went to high school in Elmhurst, which is the next town over. That's sort of the early part of my life.

**Hartnett** *And what is your first memory in a library? Or what was an early library that you went to? In Bensenville, or ...*

**Redmond** Well, I do remember when the village of Bensenville decided it was going to *have* a library. We didn't have one. I was probably twelve or thirteen. And I remember -- I don't know if the village asked people to do this, or my parents just thought it was a good idea -- packing up a lot of our old books and bringing them to this place to donate them as a beginning collection. Of course, now I realize as a librarian, donations are a mixed blessing! (Laughs) I'm not sure that they necessarily welcomed everything that we were giving them. But I do remember

that. And then the library grew slowly. It was just one room in the local public high school for awhile. And over the years they had bond issues and it grew and now it's quite a nice facility but I do remember going there and primarily just taking everything and reading (checking it out of course!) going through the shelves and reading everything I could get my hands on, pretty much.

**Hartnett** *Now, did you ever travel downtown into Chicago and visit some of the large libraries there, or was that not part of the experience for you?*

**Redmond** Not in my childhood. Later on, when I went to college in River Forest, and library school also, I did go down and do some research at the main Chicago Public Library, which of course is quite large and very impressive, but I didn't do that as a young child.

**Hartnett** *If someone had told you then that you would end up being a librarian, what do you think your reaction might have been?*

**Redmond** Well, I'm embarrassed to say this, but I really didn't have any idea what a librarian really did. And between my junior and my senior year in high school, my parents sent me down to the Illinois Institute of Technology to take a whole battery of aptitude and interest tests. And then we had an appointment with the counselor, who told me all the things that I could do. And the thing they identified that I should do is to be a librarian. And I was appalled! All I knew [was the person at the desk in our local library]. And I'm sure this woman was a perfectly capable, wonderful person, but I only saw her in a role of sitting at the desk, charging books in and out. I'm sure that was only a tiny part of what she did, so I was ... I had no interest in that. And it took me years of stumbling around, to tell you the truth, to decide I wanted to be a librarian. In the meantime, I had completely forgotten about this aptitude test, and I found it in the piano bench! (Laughs) By accident! I found it about ten years after I had become a librarian, and I went to my father and said "You can't believe this!"

**Hartnett** *Oh, that's wonderful! Again, when did you – how old do you think you were when you took the assessment?*

**Redmond** I was probably about 17. It was between my junior and senior year.

**Hartnett** *Okay, it really was kind of a prep, looking forward.*

**Redmond** Yes. My parents had me go for the tests because they wanted to spare me all the years of indecision that they went through with their own career planning. After I found the test results in the piano bench, I kept saying about myself, "All these years of trying to be things that I wasn't

meant to be!”

**Hartnett** *Well, let’s talk about those experiences a little bit. Talk about college, your experiences in college, the good and the bad of college. What inspired you about college, and what was challenging?*

**Redmond** Well I really liked my college experience. I went to what was then Rosary College, which is now Dominican University. I majored in French – I really loved it. It was, at that time, it was all women, it now is coed. I was able to live there, I didn’t have to commute back and forth – although I love my family, but it was just less wear and tear on me. It was almost like a sheltered community in a way, and I can’t think of anything that I didn’t like about it. In fact, when it was time for me to graduate, I didn’t want to leave. (Laughs)

**Hartnett** *I can connect with that completely. I also went to a women’s college, and loved the experience, and didn’t want to graduate. But a French major? How did this Nancy Drew-loving young girl get into French?*

**Redmond** Well, I’d taken French in high school. And at that time, Rosary had a junior year program over in Switzerland. I liked – I was interested in that. As it turned out, I decided not to go over to Switzerland, but I was also extremely interested in music. At one point, I got even more interested in music than I was in French, and I wished I had majored in music at that point. That’s when I told my father, “Can I take another year to major in music?” and he said “No, sorry!” (Laughs) “You may not!” But I also enjoyed the music part of it too. Two great loves that I had, the French and the music.

**Hartnett** *Oh, that’s great. And then, so, in your questing, what happened right after college?*

**Redmond** Well, I was admitted to the University of Illinois, in the Music History department. And I got a Master’s degree there. I had great dreams of making my living, not as a performer, because I was not -- I knew that was never going to happen -- but as a music historian. Well, you know, very few people get hired to teach music history. And those that do, I’m sure, have doctorates. So I was actually rooming with a friend of mine from Rosary, we were both at the University of Illinois, and a friend of hers (who was enrolled in the PhD program at the University of Illinois in Library Science) was visiting my friend one time. And they graciously let me stay for their visit and this mutual friend was trying to convince my roommate that she should become a librarian. And I was sitting there, just kind of listening, and I thought, you know, that doesn’t sound too bad! (Laughs) Especially since I’m not going to ever get a job as a musicologist. So my friend ended up *not* becoming a librarian but I

decided that I wanted to become a librarian, largely on the basis of that pep talk.

**Hartnett** *Oh, that's a great memory. And you – also being in Champaign-Urbana, land of some incredible and famous libraries.*

**Redmond** Yes, definitely.

**Hartnett** *Did those make an impression on you?*

**Redmond** At the time, and maybe it still is, the University of Illinois was the third largest university library in the country, and it was a phenomenal collection. Absolutely. And I did use it quite a bit for my research and my music history study. But when it was time for me to become a librarian, I wanted to go back to the Chicago area, and as I said, Rosary had a library school. So actually, back in -- I'm getting a little ahead of myself -- as soon as I mentioned the possible interest in libraries, my father made an appointment at the American Library Association to have me talk to one of their career people.

**Hartnett** *Oh my goodness. Because it was right there, in Chicago.*

**Redmond** It was right there. He was also the attorney for our village library, so he was very interested in libraries and librarianship. And I think being there, and of course having gone to Rosary as an undergraduate, made it just that much more attractive to go there for my degree.

**Hartnett** *Well, and I'm remembering back to what you were saying about your parents donating their books to help form the library, but then he actually went on to be the legal counsel for the library?*

**Redmond** Yes, yeah.

**Hartnett** *Did they continue to be involved in libraries?*

**Redmond** Well, he was virtually (I don't remember exactly, because as time went on, I wasn't right there), but he certainly was the library attorney for many, many years and was very much a supporter of libraries just in general.

**Hartnett** *So how did this ... did you actually just go to ALA?*

**Redmond** We went down there! My father went with me, he escorted me down there.

**Hartnett** *For some reason, because we all get mailings from ALA, they all say*

*something like 150 E. Huron St. or something. Do you suppose it was still ... that's where it was?*

**Redmond** Oh yes I'm sure it was.

**Hartnett** *So who did they sit you down with? What do you remember about that? That's a wonderful [memory].*

**Redmond** I wish I remembered the person's name. But, you know, this was in the late 60s ... well, around '68, and there still was money floating around for scholarships. (Laughs) It got tight pretty soon thereafter. But she was able to talk about the wonderful advantages of librarianship, and the financial help to get your library degree, which was also extremely good to know about. And all these wonderful opportunities, and you could transfer back and forth between academic and public, and back and forth and go anywhere. You know, places would fly you all over the country for interviews, it was really the golden age, at that point.

**Hartnett** *And they were looking for people in the profession! As my boss, my former boss Eleanor Chase, has told me about that time period. And, yes, she didn't even interview for the job – so, so ...*

**Redmond** (Laughs) Yes!

**Hartnett** *... because of the time period, because they were looking for [people]. So that must have been a persuasive conversation then, or at least, it was not a turn-off, it sounds like you ...*

**Redmond** Very much so. I was very fortunate, because Rosary gave me, I don't remember now, I didn't have to pay it back, I don't know if it was a fellowship, or just a no-pay-back scholarship. It took me a long time to realize what a wonderful thing that was. I mean, I knew [it] at the time, but when I see people now, some coming out now with terrible, crippling debts, to have my way paid to library school was just a great gift.

**Hartnett** *Oh yeah. It's heartening to think about those possibilities. Well, my goodness, what was it like being back at Rosary as a graduate student? Your life had changed quite a bit.*

**Redmond** It had.

**Hartnett** *From that time, you were ...*

**Redmond** Well, it was a different world. There were not too many residential [graduate students]. There was a very small number of library school



students who stayed on campus, maybe no more than a dozen. And, even though I was maybe 24, the undergraduates treated me as if I were about 90 (Laughs), and they called me “ma’am!” Deferred to me! So you don’t have quite the camaraderie. We had, I had very good friendships with my library school classmates, but it wasn’t the same thing as being an undergraduate and going through all four years. It basically was about a twelve month experience. But I did enjoy it, and I lived in the Fine Arts Building, where I had spent many hours practicing my piano when I was studying music there as an undergraduate, so in a way it was kind of going back.

**Hartnett** *Coming home to roost, but this time as a library science student! What did they call the program? They might not have called it Library Science at that point. Was it Library Studies, maybe?*

**Redmond** Well, it was, at that time it was the Graduate School of Library Science, I believe. I actually have a Master of Arts in Library Science, which I believe is quite unusual. We had to pass a written language facility test, which I think is kind of laughable, you know. You had to read *The Three Little Pigs* in some language! (Laughs) But it was an M.A.L.S. [degree], and I think at that time a lot of places were giving MLS’s, or getting close to giving MLS’s.

**Hartnett** *Did you take a government documents class? Was there such an animal?*

**Redmond** Well, I was interested to learn that Francis Buckley (later U.S. Superintendent of Documents), who was another one of these other government information living indexes interviewees, did not take a government documents class. I did not. No, to tell you the truth, I don’t remember. They must have offered it. I did take Legal Bibliography, which certainly had a lot of government information. And one of the advantages of course of being in the Chicago area is that you could go down to Chicago. And we actually took our legal bibliography class at the Cook County Law Library, which had a very, very good collection. So even though I didn’t per se take government documents, I think I had at least some sort of a toe hold in government information while I was studying.

**Hartnett** *Tell us about some of the other classes that you remember. Besides this Legal Bib class, what were some of the other ones?*

**Redmond** Well, I remember taking Cataloging from Sister Luella Powers. She was a legend in her own time. Now remember, this was before OCLC! This was long before OCLC! I guess she was really considered a national expert on cataloging. I liked cataloging so much, I even thought at one

time I'd become a cataloger. I took an Administration class, mostly because I was just trying to fill up my schedule with things. I never thought that I would ever be in administration. And for the same reason, I took an audio-visual course, which I never used, but I'm kind of glad I did, because even though it wasn't something I pursued, certainly it was good to have at least some knowledge of that background. And then of course I took the regular reference classes which you'd expect, you know. You had to take Beginning Reference and Beginning Cataloging, and that sort of thing.

**Hartnett** *Was that then a two-year program, Mary?*

**Redmond** No. Let me see, I started in the Fall, and I got my degree the next August, but I went all the way, so it was two semesters plus a summer.

**Hartnett** *Now, were you working in a library at the time, or did you have any kind of practicum work, or were you just having to steamroll through classes?*

**Redmond** I steamrolled through, and the more I think about it now, I say over and over I probably would never be hired today. Nowadays everybody enrolled in the SUNY Albany College of Computing & Information, Department of Information Studies (and I imagine in other library schools as well) has to do an internship, and many of them also work as student assistants. And here I went, for fifteen months, never ... What if I hadn't liked library work, after all that? It never occurred to me to worry about it! I didn't think about it. Now, I would certainly say to people, be sure – even if it's just working on the circulation desk for a couple of hours a week, just to get that experience.

**Hartnett** *Well, after graduation – after the program that you steamrolled through wrapped up, what was your first placement, and how did that happen?*

**Redmond** Well, I still loved music and I knew I wanted to become a music librarian, but again there aren't as many music jobs as there are other jobs, so I learned about a job at the Illinois State Library in Springfield. They were hiring people to start off with to provide service to the Illinois Constitutional Convention, which met in 1970. So my intention was to get some experience, keep an eye out for music library jobs, and then apply when something came up. And by the time something did come up, I was hooked on government information, so I never became a music librarian. But that was my start in libraries.

**Hartnett** *Explain what the Constitutional Convention of 1970 was about.*

**Redmond** OK. Well of course, every state has a constitution. And Illinois' at that

time had been written in 1870, so it was a hundred years out of date and it desperately needed updating. So there was a bipartisan, well it was nonpartisan, [convention] actually because they ran delegates, I think there were 116 members. And they met for, I guess it was as much as six months, in Springfield, to go through every single article of the old Constitution and make recommendations for a new one, which then was presented to the voters. And it was ratified by the voters, so it became effective in 1970.

**Hartnett** *What an experience. I mean, that's just a very unusual and direct experience, early on, serving government, for you. And to our luck, you got bitten by the government information bug. What was it like being in Springfield then? I mean, I'm like anybody else, who first associates Springfield with Abraham Lincoln and a lot of Illinois state history. What was that like, moving? So by now, you've twice gone to school in Chicago, you had the Champaign-Urbana years, and now Springfield, where I can see from your resume, you did end up staying there for eleven years.*

**Redmond** Yes, almost twelve!

**Hartnett** *Twelve years. What was that setting like?*

**Redmond** It was an adjustment. I still considered myself [as being from] Chicago ... not the city, the Chicago area. But I really appreciated the Illinois State Library. At the time I started, Alphonse Trezza, I don't know if you recognize his name, was the director and he later became a faculty member in the Florida State University School of Library and Information Studies, but he was a real mover and shaker. When I got to the State Library, they were going through major changes, I guess. And he wanted to make a lot of changes there, and he did. As I said, my first assignment was working for the Constitutional Convention, and that convention actually met in the old State Capitol, which is where Abraham Lincoln delivered his "House Divided" speech.

**Hartnett** *Oh my goodness. Yeah, the history.*

**Redmond** So the history there was just amazing. And there was a lot of Lincoln history, still is. Actually, I just happened – I hadn't been back in many years, but I went down to St. Louis, I came down from Chicago on the train a couple of months ago, and we drove – (we "drove"! -- the train *went*) – through Springfield, and it looks like it's immensely bigger than it was. And you know many more buildings, much more government action. But I have to say, it was kind of quiet during my years working there. For a single person, there wasn't an awful lot of social life. This was when the University of Illinois, it's now the University of Illinois at

Springfield, was just starting. It was called Sangamon State University then.

**Hartnett** *Sangamon State.*

**Redmond** They'd done a great job, but it was in the early years when I was there, so it wasn't quite as active as it later became. But I, you know, I got to meet people around my own age, a lot of whom, some of whom worked for the Library, some of whom worked for state government, especially the Legislature, because I did do a lot of work with the Legislature when I was there, and I met a lot of legislative staff. I got to hang around with them, which was fun.

**Hartnett** *Do you remember what some of the government issues of the day were, that you might have helped research?*

**Redmond** Well, besides the Constitutional Convention, if you're talking about the state level, a lot of the things were pretty much the same. Illinois had just adopted an income tax around that time, and so we were asked to get information about precedents. There was no Internet. You know, you really had to focus on written resources. I was lucky that we were right across from the Supreme Court Library, because they had an excellent Law collection, and so I was able to go over there. I can remember occasionally being, not that this was a major issue by any means, but I was asked to find out what the fifty state legislation was about coin-operated amusement devices, and taxes on those. And we didn't have – the Illinois State Library did not have the fifty state statutes in our collection, and I remember going over to the Supreme Court Library and laboriously taking all the volumes – well, not all the volumes but all the state statutes, and of course they didn't all use the same terminology. Some of them said "pinball machines" – or they didn't have these internet [games] – that kind of machine.

Those were some of the things that came up. And then of course the same old things – I shouldn't just say that, these are very important things! You know, issues like the death penalty. These are major things. Criminal justice, abortion, right to life. And a huge issue throughout the seventies was the Equal Rights Amendment, the proposed 27<sup>th</sup> amendment to the U.S. Constitution which would have provided that equality of rights under the law were not to be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of gender. Illinois never did ratify the Equal Rights Amendment and the proposed amendment did not become part of the U.S. Constitution because only 35 of the necessary 38 states had ratified it by the 1982 deadline. As you know, many things have changed since then. The ERA did not make it through the Illinois General Assembly. So that was quite lively.

Phyllis Schlafly, whose name might ring a bell --

**Hartnett**

*Oh yes!*

**Redmond**

She lived in St. Louis, but she was also extremely active in Illinois and throughout the nation, and she would bring these mobs of people up to lobby against it, and some of it got really pretty heated. I also remember every year, the motorcyclists would descend en masse, because Illinois at that time did not have a mandatory helmet law. And they were very much against having to wear helmets, so they would roar into Springfield on their motorcycles and create quite a stir.

**Hartnett**

*Oh my goodness. Those are some of the great stories that make work in a state capital – it sounded like state capitals sometimes earn their reputation of being somewhat sleepy towns. But these are the kinds of stories that really bring that experience to life. Oh, it just sounds like these were incredibly formative years for you.*

**Redmond**

Very much so.

**Hartnett**

*The different kinds of libraries -- that image of going over to the Supreme Court Library and looking through all the state statutes! (Laughs) Were you, at that point, active in any sort of regional ... what kind of regional or national associations were you starting to get involved with?*

**Remond**

Well it took me a while to start getting active. I looked around. In the middle of the 1970s, I started to be active in the Illinois Library Association (ILA) and their government documents roundtable. At some point, I don't remember when, I served as chair of ILA-GODORT. I didn't actually join ALA at all until 1977. That was seven years after I started to work. And I just -- it's so embarrassing to admit this -- but I just felt that I would be overwhelmed by a big national organization. With all these members! And all these people!

**Hartnett**

*I need to remind you that this very institution took you by the hand! When you were considering librarianship! But of course you probably had an idea of how it is a very large and overwhelming association -- you're absolutely right. (Laughs)*

**Redmond**

Yes. I have to say, in ALA at the time, and there's always going to be some kind of turmoil, if you only read minutes of meetings and you weren't there, you might get the feeling that everyone's rioting and storming the podium. There were some meetings where there was a little bit of crankiness, that's probably all it was. But I just didn't feel that I could quite handle it at that point. But once I started to get

[involved], once I joined, it took me a little longer after joining to actually get active, but once I got into it, I've never looked back. I'm now a thirty year plus member of ALA.

**Hartnett** ... of ALA.

**Redmond** By the way, if you stick around for thirty years, they give you ... the rest of your membership is free.

**Hartnett** *That's what I understand.*

**Redmond** I didn't even know that 'til I got to that thirty year mark. I thought, "Wow, that's pretty good!" I still have to pay for GODORT and other divisions and round tables, but you get the basic association membership free.

**Hartnett** *Continuous membership, that's quite a savings. As dues increase!*

**Redmond** Yes, yes it is.

**Hartnett** *Who were some of your early influences within the Illinois Library Association, if you remember? Were there people from other libraries that taught you things, or ...?*

**Redmond** I'm sure that they did. I do remember particularly Barbara Ford, who later became President of ALA, she was one of my colleagues in those days. And I do think also,-- some of the people in ILA might not be national, might not be that well known in government documents circles. However, Tony Miele was the Vice-Chair of GODORT very early on, I think. He and Lois Mills, who I actually didn't know until after I left Illinois. Lois Mills was really active, wherever she went, she was extremely active.

**Hartnett** *Deserving of the title **maverick**.*

**Redmond** Yes.

**Hartnett** *Or **maven**.*

**Redmond** Yes, absolutely. All the good things you can think to say about Lois are true.

**Hartnett** *Were there times when you felt overwhelmed by the amount of information you had to learn, to do this kind of work you were doing at the State Library?*

**Redmond** Well, I do remember when I first came, they gave me an orientation and they showed me [around]. They were a regional federal depository library and they also administered an Illinois depository program. So they had very good collections of both. And coming in without the documents background, I can still remember the person showing me around the federal documents. She said “I lobbied for them to adopt the SuDocs system!” And I had no idea what SuDocs was, and I sagely nodded as if I knew. Later on, I found out. But the first day I was on the reference desk by myself, the phone rang. And before I answered, I thought “Please don’t let that be a government documents question. PLEASE!”

**Hartnett** *That was the telltale moment!*

**Redmond** Of course it was a government documents question. But I still remember, I didn’t have any idea where this stuff was. I felt fairly safe in saying, which I did, “Oh yes, we have that information. May I take your number and call you back?” And then I went and asked the person, and we had it. So I did feel very overwhelmed at first, but I learned, you chip away at this. Nobody, even if you had 30 years of experience, is going to be able to walk into any library and be able to answer everything off the top of your head, so bit by bit, it kind of fell into place.

**Hartnett** *One of the things we tell our graduate students at the University of Washington when they work for us is: “You really can’t expect to have any feeling of mastery in federal documents after a year of working.” And it sounds like you would agree with that.*

**Redmond** Yes, absolutely. One of my bosses said, it can take anywhere from two-to five years to become a really good reference librarian, just a reference librarian in general which would include I imagine government information. Yeah, I was very overwhelmed at first, but you know after a while, you kind of figure out what you’re doing.

**Hartnett** *Well, I like the tactic that you took of “I’m pretty sure that we’d have that, I’m taking down your information and call you back later.” That’s a very professional thing to do! Do you remember how you went about learning things? In other words, were there continuing education courses? Or did you read the professional literature? Or was it more a matter of familiarizing yourself, just through the daily work?*

**Redmond** I think it was a combination of all of those things. One of the things that I did was to try to examine as much of the collection as possible and familiarize myself with the contents, especially for Illinois documents,. They had a separately shelved collection of Illinois documents, so you

could get an idea of everything in that collection. And they used Dewey with a capital I in front of the call number to denote an Illinois state document. So I went from 000 to 999. I took every single thing off the shelf. I did this after hours. Because there wasn't time during the day. And I took notes.

**Hartnett** *Oh my goodness.*

**Redmond** So I really feel that I got pretty familiar with that collection by doing that.

**Hartnett** *It sounds like an exhausting prospect – but a very dedicated individual.*

**Redmond** Redmond: But I really felt like it paid off, in the long run. Because then I really *could* say, when someone called and asked “Do you have this?” yes or no. And then to supplement that, the State Library published a checklist of Illinois documents every month. So once I did the initial research, then I just looked at the checklist every month, and I knew what they were adding. I also did have continuing education opportunities. And the other thing that I did was I -- there was a man, I think his last name was Schmeckebeier.

**Hartnett** *Oh yes. Laurence Schmeckebeier!*

**Redmond** Yes. You remember his first name, too! That was almost my bible, for the federal stuff. And there were other – if I may, later on, I just want to say more about Joe Morehead, but Joe's book also was another one that I looked at. And so I tried to read these things, and since we were a regional federal depository library, then I could actually go and look at the documents they were talking about, so that was very helpful.

**Hartnett** *Well, why don't we talk about Dr. Morehead now? We can segue: you can tell us the connection and go from there.*

**Redmond** Well, I actually didn't meet him until I left Illinois. You know, he's on the faculty at SUNY-Albany's library school. And I'd gotten my library degree before I went to Albany, so I never had him as a teacher. But he was the first recipient of the CIS/GODORT/ALA (now ProQuest/GODORT/ALA Documents to the People award. In addition to his classic text (*Introduction to United States Government Information Sources*), which went through many editions, he also wrote a column, “Quorum of One,” for *Documents to the People*.

**Hartnett** *A great title!*

**Redmond** And he did that for a number of years, and he *was* a phenomenal writer.



I guess he had a literature background, and his writing was just amazing. And I was actually looking at the history of GODORT, I was reminding myself, and they had information about some of his colleagues. And they talked about the column that he wrote, and he was reviewing a publication by this group that was looking at the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, and they were going through changing titles to remove gender bias, to make it more gender neutral, and the agency that issued the publication was the Manpower Administration! (Laughs)

**Hartnett** *Look at the very name of the agency for some inclusive language! Oh boy.*

**Redmond** But he also donated the award that he'd gotten, the money he'd gotten from the award, to start a local documents interest group in the Albany (in the Capital District area), which is still active, so his legacy has gone on for many years.

**Hartnett** *That's fantastic. That's fantastic. Well, since you brought up Dr. Morehead and he is in New York State, maybe we should talk about how you got from Springfield to Albany, New York.*

**Redmond** OK. Well, I kind of -- in my blood, I always felt that I was a Northerner. As I said, I was born in New York City, though we never really lived there. But I always aspired to go to the Northeast, and so I kept an eye out. Actually, if Connecticut or Massachusetts or New Jersey or whatever had hired me, I probably would have gone there, but the New York State Library was looking for a Head of Reference. And I applied, and New York -- well you know, you're from New York --

**Hartnett** *Yes.*

**Redmond** They move in an extremely slow manner! It was a year later! (Laughs) Peter Paulson, who was another one of my idols and the Director of the New York State Library, called me to tell me that they selected someone else for the job, but they were going to have another job at the same level, which was Legislative and Governmental Services, and would I be interested in that job? And of course I practically jumped through the telephone, telling him I was! So another year, it wasn't quite a year but quite a long time, passed, and I did go to Albany. I got the job and I went to Albany. Had a great time. I was there twenty five years.

**Hartnett** *State capital hopping, really!*

**Redmond** (Laughs) Exactly, yes!

**Hartnett** *Tell me about the building that you worked in, in Albany. Tell me what*

*that building felt like, how the books smelled. What was the setting there?*

**Redmond**

Well, it's known as the Cultural Education Center, which houses not only the State Library but the State Museum, the State Archives, and Public Broadcasting. And one of my great projects in my life is to get people is to stop referring to the building as the State Museum. I love the State Museum, I go to the State Museum on a regular basis, but it just drives me crazy when they call the entire building the State Museum. But the Museum is on the ground floor, and they probably do get more people coming in, so I can understand why people make that mistake, but anyway, I'm very stubborn about that. The Library had moved from the old State Education Building to the Cultural Education Center a couple of years earlier, before I started to work there, so it was quite new at the time. And I was trying to think, I saw that question about how it smelled. I'm trying to think. I don't think it smelled particularly different than any other library, but it was certainly more spacious! Although they lost, six months after they were supposed to open, they were told that they weren't going to have as much space as they thought.

**Hartnett**

*Jeez.*

**Redmond**

... so but still, they had more space, although they did have to leave some of the older stuff over in the other building, some of which is still there. Some of it I think maybe partly for security reasons, they wanted to have some of the stuff that wasn't just too easily available. I mean they'll page things, and it is a closed stacks system, but there no stack access on the Reference floors.

**Hartnett**

*I see.*

**Redmond**

So I enjoyed working there. Much of the time that I've been there, my office looked out and I could see the Hudson River, which I love. I think it's a beautiful, beautiful facility. I mean the facility, not the river. (Laughs). [The river] is a beautiful geographic feature!

**Hartnett**

*And a river full of history, as well! So you went from an area where you were walking in Lincoln's footsteps to looking out over the Hudson, and the whole history of New York State, almost, being built around that river.*

**Redmond**

Yes.

**Hartnett**

*I want to remember what year it was that you went to Albany. I think you might have just said it, in fact.*

- Redmond** Actually, my first day there was December 31, 1981.
- Hartnett** *1981.*
- Redmond** And that was a Thursday, because you had to start on a Thursday, and the next day was New Year's, and then there was a weekend. And so I worked one day, then I was all by myself in Albany for three days in a hotel, because I didn't have my furniture and other personal effects which were being shipped from Illinois. And I began to think, "I'm so lonesome! Am I really going to like this?" But then of course I did, once I got settled in.
- Hartnett** *Well it's a difficult transition for anyone to be in a new town. I think that's always a very challenging [situation]. It sort of tests your mettle, and you get to sort of recreate yourself. But it sounds to me like you were already really establishing yourself in the profession, because you're being brought in now as a department head. How many people did you supervise, and what was the set up of that reference department?*
- Redmond** Well, this was actually called Legislative and Governmental Services. It was a small unit, about nine people, and we were separate from Reference. We were supposed to provide, and did provide, what they called specialized or enhanced services, for legislative and governmental clients. So we produced publications, we had seminars, we did have a special service point, which was for the legislators and state government: we had a service point over in the Legislative Office Building. We had, also, a service point out on the State Office campus, to serve the state agencies out there. So it was a nice mix of people. And things to do – to be responsible for doing.
- Hartnett** *Were you in each location about an equal amount of time? In other words how much time did you spend in the Legislative Office Building?*
- Redmond** I personally didn't spend an awful lot of time there. When I first went there, that service point was open four hours a day during the legislative session, and two hours a day during non-session times. Occasionally I would be there, but most of the time I was back in the Main Library, as one of the staff said, being a bureaucrat.
- Hartnett** *Did you find that you liked leading a team of people?*
- Redmond** I did, I did. And it was because I had worked so much in Illinois. So many of my patrons, or customers, or whatever you want to call them, were governmental. Patrons or customers. It was nice to be in a unit that was particularly geared to working with that clientele, and now as

time went on, I don't want to anticipate your question, but I did take on more of the government documents responsibilities. In addition I volunteered, when the Regional Coordinator decided he wanted to do something else, I volunteered for that. I'd already been working quite a bit with government documents. And my offer was accepted. I was one of the people, one of the staff liaisons for the task force which developed the New York State Plan for Federal Depository Library Services. That was early in my tenure, within the first couple of years. And I began to be quite active in the New York Library Association, at that time Government Documents Roundtable, now Government Information Roundtable. So it was all kind of intertwined.

**Hartnett**

*Well that's a very interesting twist in your story thought, that this regional librarian left and that you volunteered for the job. Were you a glutton for punishment? Did you know what you were getting into? As a regional?*

**Redmond**

Well, I had been at a regional, and I will say, because of the way the administration of the New York State Library was structured, I never really was in Technical Services. I take that back – years later, I did do a stint as Acting Head of Technical Services, but my documents responsibility at that time was not technical services. All of the processing was done in Technical Services, and all of the reference was done in Public Services. So the kinds of things that the Regional Librarian did were things like helping, accompanying the GPO inspectors when they visited, supervising – I didn't even supervise so much [as] facilitating the discard lists, because that was part of Technical Services. I was more like a liaison. I did get a chance to go ... that was when I started to go to Depository Library Council meetings on a regular basis, and also because I was active in both ALA and NYLA, as we call the New York Library Association. I was able to share what I was learning with the selective depositories. At that time, I think there were 93 federal selective depositories in New York State.

**Hartnett**

*Oh, I was going to ask if you remembered how many selectives you had. You were one of those regionals that almost had so many people that you couldn't really get around to all the sites. What are some of the library sites that you remember visiting, around the state of New York?*

**Redmond**

Well, at one point, I optimistically thought that I would be able to visit all of the federal depositories. I was not able to do so. But I enjoyed going to as many as I could, and I accompanied the inspectors. I liked The New York Public Library, of course. There are two selective depositories in the research library, the Astor Branch and the Lenox Branch. I think they still have both. I also enjoyed going out to Buffalo, SUNY-Buffalo. Two of the people out there that were just wonderful

were Karen Smith, who was head of the depository program, the documents, and Ed Herman, both of whom – well, Ed is still there. Karen has retired. Well actually, she was originally from Seattle, I think. She was going back out to Seattle.

**Hartnett** *Oh, okay.*

**Redmond** But I also enjoyed going to some of the small public libraries, like the Troy Public Library, which do heroic work. They do such wonderful things there under very challenging circumstances. The Utica Public Library, which had to give up their designation, at one point was a selective depository. But it was just so wonderful to see, from the very largest academic research libraries to very small public libraries, this great work being done. It was fantastic.

**Hartnett** *In some ways, it might be said that that was the height of the program, as well, in terms of – it certainly was the information boom in the '80s, and also the widescale adoption of microfiche as a distribution format. So it wouldn't surprise me that there were so many depositories, at that time. Do you remember some of the kinds of publications that were the most valued and consulted, back in our print-on-paper days?*

**Redmond** Well, of course the Congressional publications. The hearings, the committee prints, the *Congressional Record*. People like the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance*, for obvious reasons. The *Plum Book* was very popular every time it came out (Laughs). I guess the official title is *United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions*, a list of presidentially appointed positions in the federal government which is published after each presidential election alternatively by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and by the House Committee on Government Reform. But I personally got a great deal of joy and just serendipity of just walking through the stacks. Originally, when I started there, the New York State Library did not use the SuDocs classification, that came later. So they didn't have as large a segregated documents collection, they were kind of moving into it, although they had a huge collection that had been integrated into the main collection. But there's no subject that you can't find a government document about, whether it's a recipe for making soup for 50 people, because they have the military cookbooks, to art, to music, to history, as well as what people think of conventionally as government documents, the workings of agencies and Congress. Treasures!

**Hartnett** *Absolutely. You're preaching to the choir here.*

**Redmond** I know!

**Hartnett** *Describe how technology has impacted your work over the years. I love asking people about their technology memories. I mean, do you remember early computer systems you worked on?*

**Redmond** Yes.

**Hartnett** *Or do you remember the first feelings of when you thought, “You know, this application is really useful. Finally, technology is **doing** something!” (Laughs)*

**Redmond** Yes, I go way back, when I was still in Illinois. They were starting to get these online reference systems, which at that point basically were only citations. It was a long time before we got fulltext. But I remember Lockheed and SDC. At that time too, they were so expensive, that only the high priestesses of reference searching could be trusted to search them. It was like \$100 per hour. And in those days, the idea was that they would do their search strategy offline, and then run over, and they’d do it as quickly as they possibly could ...

**Hartnett** *Oh yes.*

**Redmond** ... and then they’d get off, so they wouldn’t be wasting a lot of time and spending a lot of money. And I do remember, by the time I got to New York, some of our patrons really wanted to be able to search themselves.

**Hartnett** *A radical idea.*

**Redmond** Yes, and we said, “We’re really sorry, but we just don’t have the budget.” It would have cost a fortune for us to be able to let people search. Even though it was nowhere near as sophisticated, I think at that time, I began to realize that there was a future. I also remember, in the early days, when *The New York Times* had their own database, it was not – you had to have your own dedicated terminal, it was not compatible with anything else. And over the years, of course, there’s so much more standardization and cooperation. I think – in those early days, I think a lot of the vendors hoped that they would be exclusive and that they would therefore have a kind of corner on the market. And I think the customers really kind of demanded more and more of this interoperability, because otherwise you’d be spending a fortune to subscribe to all of this stuff. So I think definitely now, although I never was a cataloger, despite the fact that I thought I wanted to be a cataloger, certainly OCLC has had a huge technological impact. I mean, how can you not be absolutely overwhelmed by what OCLC – well, not overwhelmed, but super *impressed* with what OCLC has done? And I remember when the first *Monthly Catalog* came out that was done with OCLC.

- Hartnett** *I was going to ask, because of course you were in the height, already, of your career by then, that was in '76.*
- Redmond** Yes, it was. I can't remember, it was Stewart somebody or other who was from GPO. He came and he talked at some meeting. And of course it was a beginning product, there were lots of glitches, and unfortunately some people were kind of lying in wait for this poor guy, to point out all the problems.
- Hartnett** (Laughs)
- Redmond** But it was such a revolution. Absolutely. And then of course the Internet. I mean, gosh. That is just, it's mind-boggling, it truly is. So I feel so lucky to have been around for all these changes. I've been in government documents at the best possible time, because I remember the "old days," which probably were – there were some changes, but I think probably for many years things were fairly similar – and then all of a sudden, this *huge* change, over a relatively small amount of time, compared to the program as a whole.
- Hartnett** *And the change sometimes just seems to accelerate, doesn't it?*
- Redmond** Yes. And I marvel at people now, coming along, because not only do they learn this stuff in library school (I keep saying library school, my old terminology), but they've grown up with technology, they use it. You know, they know how to do all kinds of stuff. I have to learn how to do ... how to work a cell phone and all that. (Laughs) And these people are coming in, and it's just second nature to them now.
- Hartnett** *Do you remember when e-mail communication came into the picture, and what were the early examples of organizing and connecting with library colleagues, that you did through e-mail?*
- Redmond** Well, I remember having a subscription to BITNET.
- Hartnett** *Ah yes, yes.*
- Redmond** Remember BITNET? And actually for a while, we were subscribing through Rennselear Polytechnic Institute, for some reason. I don't know why, but the New York State Library didn't have it, at the beginning.
- Hartnett** *Yeah, it just might have been the fact that it was sort of an academic backbone of that early Internet.*
- Redmond** And actually for a while I was editor of *Documents to the People*. And I

remember getting copy from people, sending it to me through BITNET, that was the first experience, besides just the day to day stuff that I had.

**Hartnett** *So you would take the article or column that had been submitted through e-mail, and then you would put it into a word processing program? I don't know if it was Microsoft Word at that time or not.*

**Redmond** It was WordPerfect in those days.

**Hartnett** *WordPerfect, oh yeah.*

**Redmond** Yeah, and we – actually, I know, after my term as editor had ended, I think the production of *Documents to the People* is now handled by ALA headquarters, but at that time I was actually doing it from Albany. And you know, we had camera-ready copy for the printer, and we did all the mailing and that sort of thing. I estimated that it took me 75-80 hours per issue, which was mostly, of course, on non-work time. But it was fun, I really enjoyed it! In fact, I used to say that my fantasy was to be editor of *Documents to the People* and my fantasy came true!  
(Laughs)

**Hartnett** *Well and you talked about early on how you admired the writing of Joe Morehead, and I would imagine that would have been a fun role to get contributed copy. Do you remember having to approach people to woo them to write for that publication, or were they lined up wanting to write for DttP?*

**Redmond** Well, actually, it was a bit of each. I have to say that, because so many depository libraries are academic libraries, and so many academic librarians have to get tenure, that I never really was short for copy. Now it was not a juried publication, but some people were thrilled to have the opportunity to have something on their resume when they were going for tenure. So it was a very different situation from my previous editing experience when I had edited *Interface*, which was the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies newsletter for ALA. It was harder to get submissions then. Because these were people from State Libraries, institutional libraries, they were wonderful people, hard at work, very productive, but writing articles for a newsletter was not something that was high on anybody's agenda. So it was such a refreshing change to work with *Documents to the People*. And in those days, also, we included the minutes of all the business meetings, which I guess has gone by the board now. In those days, though you had an awful lot of readymade copy coming in.

**Hartnett** *Yeah, now those sort of sit online for people to review online. But I remember the value of all those depository newsletters, not just DttP but*



*all the other kind, state documents ... in Michigan, we had **Red Tape**.*

**Redmond** I do remember *Red Tape*! Yes, it was a great newsletter, a wonderful newsletter.

**Hartnett** *I suppose these were sort of early blogs, in a sense, they just were in print on paper format. They was always opinion, but a lot of factual content and so on, as well. Now I'm thinking of some of the U.S. presidential administrations your career has spanned, and some of the differences in government policy. Certainly the difference in the Paperwork Reduction Act of the Carter years, an entirely different sort of approach to politics and government in the Reagan years, different economic approaches in the Reagan years, that really affected libraries. Every economic approach affects libraries.*

**Redmond** Yes.

**Hartnett** *Do you have any comments on those kinds of changes that you've seen. Although you're probably, as a state employee, very trained not to comment on the actual (as am I), the actual political changes, but ...*

**Redmond** Well I think everybody, regardless of party, everybody who comes into office always wants to save money. And many times what they identify as wasteful publications – it doesn't matter whether it's Nixon, or Reagan, or I'm sure Carter, you know I just don't remember the specifics, but you know, of course loving these wonderful publications and certainly not thinking of them as wasteful, that was a more or less constant undercurrent in a lot of this stuff. But then of course with the emphasis, and it wasn't just Presidential, there was a Congressional direction for online only depository – and of course it's still not completely online, but it more and more is that way. Which has got its good points and its bad points, as I'm sure you would agree. (Laughs) I shouldn't say "as I'm sure you would agree!" -- as you *might* agree.

**Hartnett** *You're right, I might!*

**Redmond** But I will say, the Freedom of Information Act, which I think came about in the aftermath of Watergate, yes, certainly, although it wasn't directed specifically to the Federal Depository Library Program, but it did make people more aware of the importance of the Freedom to Know and the right to know, and I think that was a very important document.

**Hartnett** *Your career also spans the government in the sunshine era. I mean, that's another, that's right hand in glove with FOIA of course, but open meetings, and wanting to –*

**Redmond** Yes.

**Hartnett** *What we would now call government transparency, by any other name. Do you remember a time when certain kinds of government records were much more difficult to get, as compared to what they are now?*

**Redmond** Oh yes, yes. Although but the time I really got active in government documents, that was starting to become a little bit less of a problem. But I do remember, some agencies in particular, back in Illinois. There was an Illinois Ethics Commission, which had been created by the Legislature. I had a friend who worked there. People would come in, and they could look at the filings – these were filings, I guess, of conflict of interest – not conflict of interest, but –

*-- the kinds of things that would come up in ethics investigations, yeah.*

I can't remember if it only covered the legislators or covered state government, but anyway, people could look at the stuff, but they could not take notes.

**Hartnett** *Oh, how interesting!*

**Redmond** And the staff would watch them, to make sure that they were not taking notes, let alone getting photocopies of anything. Now that was very early in the game, probably in the mid-'70s, but, you know when I heard that, I couldn't believe it. I thought, "Thank goodness I don't work for that [agency]!" I couldn't work in a place like that. It would just be awful.

**Hartnett** *Your bringing up not being able to take notes ... I've made a mental leap over to archives and libraries. And because you've worked in the Cultural Education Center building with the State Museum – one of the things I see now are that libraries, archives and museums are being forced into much closer collaboration because of the digital era. Do you feel like you sort of saw that coming, or do you feel like – how do feel that the relationships between those different institutions have played out over the years? I mean broadly – libraries and archives and museums?*

**Redmond** Well I do. As you said, I think recently there's been a particularly lot of activity. Now in New York, where I've been for quite a number of years, at one time the State Archives were part of the State Library, but now there is a separate Archives. Has been, since just before I got there. And there is a distinction, it's not always exactly a clear, 100[%] line demarcation, but essentially the Archives is responsible for records, government records, unpublished records. Whereas the Library has, by

extension, more of the published government information, as well many other [resources]. But as I said, it isn't always entirely one hundred per cent clear. And we actually share a joint reading room; the State Library's Manuscripts and Special Collections Reading Room is shared with the State Archives. And of course patrons coming in, they don't know whether you work for the Library or the Archives, they're looking for information, they're going to want the information. And that has really ... the term "forced" has negative connotations ... has given us many opportunities for really good joint work. And the same is true with the State Museum also, because we all share the same building and many of their exhibits use materials that are part of the State Archives or the State Library's collections. And we're doing more joint projects. Just recently there was a 1609 exhibit, the four hundredth anniversary of Henry Hudson's "discovery" (Laughs) of the Hudson River. And it was a Museum exhibit, and they relied to a great extent on materials from their collections, as well [as materials] from the State Library and the State Archives. And it was a wonderful success, truly one of the best exhibits I think that they've had in years.

**Hartnett** *Well, that's great to hear about, that kind of collaboration, and the possibilities of working together.*

**Redmond** Yes, yes. And the Archives work with the Library too, because they collect [official materials]. Official papers must be deposited with the State Archives. And there is also a lot of work trying to capture websites, you know – taking pictures of historic websites. Especially now, you know – there's going to be a change in administration again in the Governor's office in New York. Governor David Paterson is not running again, and there will be a new governor, in January, so the Archives are doing that, but they're also working with the Library, to make sure that it's a cooperative venture, to get all that stuff in perpetuity. As much as you can. (Laughs) As you know, the first day of whoever's the new Governor, the first thing they're going to do is to change the website, which is understandable.

**Hartnett** *Oh yes.*

**Redmond** So it's necessary to act fast to preserve that older information.

**Hartnett** *It's vulnerable, that's right. I want to talk a little bit more about ALA-GODORT and Depository Library Council. I assume that those represent at least two of the national level involvements that you've had. Tell me about Depository Library Council. What do you remember about that institution, and how did you come to be a Councilor?*

**Redmond** Well, again, it was a while before I even knew there was such a thing as

a Depository Library Council. The first person I ever knew who was on it was named Nancy Johnson, and she was a law librarian at the University of Illinois. I think I attended my first Council meeting when she was a member. And I went to a few, over the years. The first one that I really remember much about was just as I was about ready to leave Illinois, it was 1980 or 81, it was in San Antonio. It was the first time I met Fran Buckley, who was then at the Detroit Public Library. And also, here's another person that I really want to give a lot of credit to, Barbara Smith, who was at Skidmore College for many years. She was the Chair of Council at the time.

**Hartnett**

*Oh, I see.*

**Redmond**

I had not met her before, but later got to know her quite well. And Lois Mills was on Council then. And I was really impressed. I thought these people knew wonderful things, and were very knowledgeable and were very helpful to the Government Printing Office, you know -- with their insights and their advice. As I got more and more involved, when I became Regional Depository Librarian, I went to more and more of the Council meetings. At one point, I kind of thought it would be nice to be on Council. ALA actually nominates people to be on Council, and once they did nominate me, and I wasn't chosen. And then I kind of forgot about it, I thought "Oh, it'll never happen." I was sitting in my office one day, minding my own business. (Laughs). I got a call from Fran Buckley who then was the acting Superintendent of Documents, asking me if I wanted to be on Council. And I was thrilled. I had long since given up any thought that I would ever be on Council. So it was a great experience, I was on it for three years, I was Secretary for one of the years that I was on, and I just thought it was one of the best experiences that I had in my documents career.

**Hartnett**

*What were some of the things that you remember as hot issues during those three years? Maybe it's wiped from memory because you were too focused on taking the actual minutes! (Laughs) It's hard to remember content when you're busy typing up.*

**Redmond**

And of course, I've been in this so long that things kind of get mushed together, but obviously, one thing was the electronic future -- the electronic program. In general, the future of the Depository Library Program. And you know, we're still grappling -- and probably will be for many years -- about these issues of the preservation of information, and the whole paper can-we-sustain-the-paper-system as we know it. In the meantime, of course, GPO is really doing a lot of very good work, and they've continued to do tremendous work in making the system much better -- much more automated, much more efficient. I see a lot better communication *within* GPO and *to* GPO, to the outside world.

Again, I think Francis Buckley was a wonderful Superintendent of Documents. And I have to give credit also to Mike DiMario, the Public Printer. He is not a librarian but when he gave his first talk after being appointed Public Printer, I said to myself, "He sounds like a government documents librarian. Why are we not all standing up and giving him a standing ovation, you know -- cheering, and jumping up and down on the tables?" He had such a passion for government information, it was wonderful! And so I think those were fabulous people. And I think GPO has continued to be wonderfully aware and to make great strides in this new environment. But I think those are the people I remember, really coming on and just blossoming. Or helping the program blossom more than it had.

**Hartnett** *And in those early days, the early days of GPO Access, which is the time period you're describing, we didn't know if this type of service would be fee-based or free. I mean we knew that there were costs involved with putting it online. So the earliest iterations of GPO Access were [that] they would make it free to depositories and then charge for everybody else!*

**Redmond** Yes. I also wanted to give Judy Russell a great deal of credit. She's another one of the people who's been interviewed for this Government Information Living Indexes project. She has been, and she still is (now she's Dean of University Libraries at the University of Florida), but still is passionately involved with government information and had a lot of good ideas, and was able to get a lot done in her years at GPO.

**Hartnett** *And had served in so many different roles, too.*

**Redmond** Yeah.

**Hartnett** *So I think she speaks from that perspective of lots of different hats that she's worn over the years. When you began working in the government information profession, did you imagine that you would stay so long in this specialization of librarianship?*

**Redmond** No, because in the beginning, I was still thinking I was going to be a music librarian. But it didn't take long, I would say maybe within a year, until I was hooked. Probably even before that, but I knew that's what I wanted to do. Although I wasn't thinking strictly government documents, I was thinking of information \*for\* government, much of which involved government documents. But I knew I wanted to serve government.

**Hartnett** *Would you have just worked for government, and left librarianship, if the right opportunity had come available, do you suppose?*

- Redmond** That's an interesting thought. You know, who knows, if the right opportunity – you never know!
- Hartnett** *I could see you as a Congressional staffer, you know, a high level –*
- Redmond** I have to say at the state level, I tend to be somewhat timid. And in jobs like the kind you mentioned, there's no civil service protection. And I really did not feel confident enough that I wanted to take a chance. I mean, you can meet people who are long time staffers. I do remember Bernadine Abbott Hoduski saying that when she worked for Congress, every time there was a change in administrations, they had to submit their resignations. Now of course they hired her back and they hired many people back, but you could not count on that. So I admire people who've got that kind of courage but I wasn't one of them. Although I do think it would probably have been very interesting. Who knows?
- Hartnett** *Speaking of Washington DC, which is the area that we're at right now, what are your memories of coming to this city over the course of your career and continuing to come here to visit family? What memories do you have of Washington DC – some memorable moments, or things you've done here? What the city was like then and now?*
- Redmond** Well, I have to admit, the first couple of years, in the late '60s, early '70s, there were some concerns about public safety. I remember when I told my father I was going to a meeting down in Washington one time, he was really worried. And thankfully I think a lot of that has definitely improved. But in addition to the meetings that I attended, just walking down the Mall, and going to those wonderful museums that are free! You know, it just doesn't matter whether it's the art museum – I can't remember the name of it.
- Hartnett** *The National Gallery of Art, and the Smithsonian.*
- Redmond** ... and all of them! They've added to them: the Hirschorn Sculpture Gallery and I think there's a – I've been to it! -- the African Art Museum. I love the National Zoo -- every time I'm in Washington, I try to take an opportunity to go. This is not a government facility, but the Newseum. For a while, part of my responsibilities involved the New York State Newspaper Project, and I love newspapers, almost as much as I love government documents! (Laughs) So I visited the Newseum when it was in Rosslyn, and now of course it's down in Washington, and it's a wonderful facility. So, just walking down the street, even if you're not going into anything, just to be in Washington is so exciting! And the Library of Congress of course is a wonderful place to visit also.

- Hartnett** *Well, I share your love of coming here, for sure. I want to pick up on the newspaper sideline. How do you feel about the migration of newspapers now to a primarily online format, and that big transition that we're undergoing in our society right now?*
- Redmond** Well, I have various feelings about it. On the one hand, I love the tradition of the newspapers, and of course what we did with the Project is that we microfilmed newspapers. What now is possible with this new technology is that you can actually take some of those microfilmed newspapers and convert them to scanned images, which is very nice. However – and of course you can also scan – or I shouldn't say scan, because some of these just go directly [to digital format], you're not working with a ...
- Hartnett** *Microfilm?*
- Redmond** Microfilm or even paper. I guess I'm just a little ... in some respects, I think it's very good, because you can update things so fast. You don't have to wait until the afternoon edition. But on the other hand, I do worry about the preservation and the history. And if something happened and changed, are you going to be able to see that earlier version, or are you just going to have the most recent version? And I'm hoping that there are people around that will keep them in mind. I do – I'm a little concerned about some of these newspapers, and I can understand, because they have to make money. Right now, for example, you can see some things, but you can't see everything, unless you pay, or you have a subscription.
- Hartnett** *Yes.*
- Redmond** And I don't even know how long you can get at that stuff. That makes me a little concerned. I have to say, we have a lot – I keep saying *we* even though I'm retired from the State Library, I keep saying *we* – we do have online newspaper subscriptions. But, you know, how long can libraries count on that? What if they run out of money, and can't continue to subscribe to them? What kind of access are we going to have? We continue to get paper copies of most New York State newspapers, but we don't do it for every paper. And I do worry about that.
- Hartnett** *We're glad that there are colleagues out there worried about it, and agitating about that, because it is ...*
- Redmond** Yes. Yes.
- Hartnett** *Well, because you brought up newspapers as another area of*

*tremendous interest for you, I'm wondering if there are other areas that you'd like to talk about that have come up over the course of your career that are of major interest to you, or special projects that you worked on that you remember being involved with that might have been particularly meaningful.*

**Redmond**

Well, I don't really have anything to do with it except being part of the same institution where it is headquartered, but the New Netherland Project, which is headquartered in the State Library, translates seventeenth century Dutch colonial manuscripts from the Dutch period, and it's a phenomenal resource, and so many people don't realize the Dutch heritage in New York State. And the Project has done a wonderful job in finding, and translating, and publishing the translations of these documents, and really creating (supported by the New Netherland Institute) much more awareness and appreciation for that part of our culture. I would say that one special project; one of the questions on here [the oral history question sheet] was "What has been the greatest professional joy you've experienced in your career?" -- and if I had to pick one thing, I would say that during President Carter's presidency, he made a visit to—I was still in Springfield—he made a visit and he made addressed a joint session of the legislature and the legislative offices called and wanted to know about any precedents for presidential visit. And using government information and probably newspapers too we discovered that William Howard Taft had addressed a joint session of the legislature, so we did the...we found out all the protocol, what happened, who went in, what the order of service was and it was a wonderful ceremony and I was privileged to be able to sit in the gallery of the House when President Carter addressed the joint session. That has got to be one of the highlights of my career from a personal and professional viewpoint to have had that experience.

**Hartnett**

*That's wonderful to hear about. He has remained as an individual of course in public service in one way or another in his retirement. Have you followed, have you seen Jimmy Carter since that fateful day?*

**Redmond**

Well I didn't meet him personally then and our paths have not crossed since, but I'm certainly very much aware of what he has done. He just written another book I think and yes you're right, I did go to see, I visited his presidential library in Atlanta. It might have been one of the times that the Depository Library Council or ALA was down there and one of the ... again, a real thrill was seeing because of course at that time, well I still think they do, it used to be a *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* compiled of the presidential papers, but his speech to the Illinois General Assembly was printed of course in his presidential papers and so seeing that, and knowing I was there was just again was such a wonderful thing, but yes I ... he's in his 80's now and



he's still going strong. His family had a really bad health situation, several of his siblings died fairly young. It's quite amazing he has lived as long as he has and been so active.

**Hartnett** *Well and speaking of active people, so many of your colleagues are at the age where they're considering retirement. How did you come to decide to retire and what kind of projects are you involved with in retirement?*

**Redmond** Well I had been Interim Director of the State Library for four years and at the end of the time a choice was made to select a permanent director who I think is wonderful and is doing a great job. That of course meant an adjustment in my work responsibilities and I could have gone back to being head of public services which I had been doing. But I just wasn't ready to do that so I was asked to handle the Head of the Library Administration which was budget and personnel, and all kinds of paper work, and all kinds of things that I discovered that I didn't really like doing. And so I had worked long enough where I could retire, but I thought I would just like to do the things I like to do. So I did retire, but I volunteered and my offer was accepted to stay on as a volunteer, I even have a title as Special Liaison for the New York State Library. I have an office, an email address, a telephone and so I am able to do things, including working very closely with the Friends of the New York State Library which had been created a while ago. and I'd been active with the Friends, but now I am on the board. I also work with the editor of the newsletter "The New York State Library News." I remain active primarily with NYLA, the government information roundtable. In fact, I was just finishing my "Albany Scene" column for their newsletter. And I am also doing some volunteer work for the Friends of the New York State Newspaper Project. So I definitely go to the office everyday, I go as often as when I was employed there. In fact, I don't know if you saw this posting. There's a -- ALA is going to be publishing a book for librarians who are retired or are considering retiring. They were trying to get people to volunteer to write chapters. So I volunteered to write a chapter about post-retirement volunteering at the library where you used to work, and my working title is "I Thought You Had Gone: Post-Retirement Volunteering at Your Library." (Laughs)

**Hartnett** *That's a wonderfully catchy title.*

**Redmond** I think people recognize now that I am still there, but for a while they kept saying "What are you doing here? Why are you ... didn't you retire?" I haven't actually submitted the article, but they have accepted the proposal so I will see if it actually gets published. But volunteering is very meaningful. What better job can there be, to be able to go, set your own hours, you do what you want to do, you come and go as you please

(obviously, making sure that your contributions are useful to the library)? You do have the facilities you do need. It's a perfect job and you know you are not getting paid a salary, but you've got your pension [laughing]. In a way it's better than a paid job for me.

**Hartnett** *(Laughs) That's really good for people to hear about, I think, because it's hard for people to... I'm seeing with my own colleagues, the kinds of complicated decision making that comes at the time of retirement. However, I want to now go a little bit backwards in time because you mentioned being Interim Director of the State Library. I'm sorry did you say Interim Assistant State Librarian?*

**Redmond** I was Interim Director of the New York State Library, of the research library.

**Hartnett** *What are your ideas about the role of state libraries today where the kinds of change since you've been in a couple of state libraries and have been very in touch with that group of colleagues, what do you see as some of the roles and challenges, or is that something you care to comment on?*

**Redmond** Oh, of course. Well I think one of the major things that has happened all throughout the states—explanatory for the tape, I dropped my glasses; we both had to fumble for my glasses—is the role for the statewide contracts for online databases for libraries. It would be impossible for many of the smaller libraries particularly to afford some of these online databases and so that's a major role that state libraries have undertaken. And of course ...

**Hartnett** ... *Strength in numbers.*

**Redmond** Yes, absolutely and of course, more affordable contracts too. And I'm sure you know this, but just in case other people hearing this don't realize this is that in some states, state libraries are primarily library development units, which work with libraries all over the state. New York of course also has a research library; in fact, New York is the only state library member of the Association of Research Libraries. There are other large, very good state libraries that have very large collections, but we are the only ARL member. So we are also providing a lot of services that other kinds of libraries provide and just recently I am happy to report that as of last Saturday, Oct. 16<sup>th</sup> [2010], the New York State Library after a hiatus of forty years is once again open for Saturday hours.

**Hartnett** *That's fantastic!*

- Redmond** It is!
- Hartnett** *Even librarians can't understand why a library should be closed on the weekends; it's when people can come for heaven's sakes.*
- Redmond** Yes! Every time we did a customer survey, we'd always ask what could we do to serve you better and almost inevitably the answer was please be open on, at least be more, if not Saturdays, at least more often and we've gotten very good press, I mean this is at a time particularly when government is cutting back, somebody actually picked up the press release and posted it on a genealogy blog and they said how refreshing at this time of cut backs to see an organization expanding its service. So as I said, I don't work there anymore but I was there Saturday, I was there to use the public internet station and to look at the catalog; and I'm sure I will be back on many occasions. So I think that those and of course I said library development does so much. State libraries, we are a regional and of course state libraries that are regionals follow the same kinds of, have the same responsibilities that other regionals do and so they've continued to work with their selectives. We also, the New York State Library also administers a New York State document depository program and a lot, quite a number of state libraries do this. Again, those depository libraries have had the same kinds of changes as the federal in terms of more and more online content, but it's still a very important role for state libraries I think.
- Hartnett** *What are some of the significant differences you see between what states are able to publish and what the federal government is able to publish?*
- Redmond** Well of course it's *scale*. The government is so much larger, but one of the things I think that, not that the Government Printing Office was ever able to print every single federal document, but at least there was a central printing office. Of course in the states, all of the agencies pretty much do their own thing. And particularly before things became available online so much, it was really a challenge to get these publications, especially in the quantity that we were suppose to get them and to try to talk to agencies and convince them that they should send this stuff and that other people really wanted to see their stuff and that it should be public. It was really quite a struggle. Not always -- I think once people understood the program, they began to appreciate it a little bit more. We used to have periodic depository library conferences in New York, which we haven't been able to do in the last few years. But when we had the conferences for state documents, we would invite the contact persons for the agencies to come. And we'd take them on tours of the warehouse, have them talk to the depository librarians. I think they came away with a greater appreciation for how much *their* work was appreciated. A lot of that has stuck with the people who are still

around, but I think a lot of them turn over. I think there were a couple of states, I believe, I don't want to misspeak, but I think Maine had a provision in their public documents law that no document could be printed unless the state library signed off on it and got copies.

**Hartnett** *I see. Okay.*

**Redmond** And to me, that sounded like heaven. But the library said very seldom did they have to crack the whip to agencies. They didn't want to have bad feelings about it. And they relied on persuasion and cooperation, rather than actually being able to force people. But New York never had that provision in the law. The law said we were supposed to get it, but there was no enforcement. (Laughs)

**Hartnett** *But it sounds to me as though the key was building relationships. I mean, you're involved in Friends work now, and our Friends people at the University of Washington say this is not about fundraising it's about creating relationships and meaningful connections to the organization. But I can see from what you said that it was years of work liaising as we would say now with the agencies.*

**Redmond** Yes, and that's still being done, I mean I'm not doing that, but it's still being done in the documents. I think the title now is Documents and—oh I can't remember now. Digital Documents and Depositories, something like that, but it's all, more all-encompassing than it used to be, but definitely Bob Dowd, who is the head of the New York State documents unit, still liaises very much. (Laughs) He's on the phone all the time with agencies so it's great. He's really keeping our collection up to date, which is so important. Speaking of that too it kind of it's a little bit different focus, but in my work with NYLA government information roundtable, two of the things that I've been involved with over the years are awards, one is the Notable Documents Award, which is presented annually to New York State documents. Originally it was to encourage agencies to deposit their documents with us. More and more now it's getting hard to find paper documents. So more and more are coming out online, we might have to rethink are we going to require paper copies anymore just to be nominated? Because not a lot of them are coming out [in paper]. The other NYLA/GIRT award is the Mildred Lowe Award, which is for outstanding government document service by a librarian. Mildred Lowe was – she was a wonderful documents librarian and she was also the Chair of the Department of Library Studies at St. John's University and she was the co-chair of the federal taskforce to devise the federal documents plan for New York State. And this award was named in her honor and we think it's so important to be able to recognize outstanding achievements within the documents librarian community and within the agencies; people know what you're doing,

people appreciate what you are doing.

**Hartnett** *And there is the inspiration factor there as well that you hope that we're inspiring each other to try new things and to be bold and take risks and risk failure (Laughs)*

**Redmond** And especially now, you're not seeing government document librarians full-time, which has got its pluses and minuses. I think it's great that more people are learning about documents, but then the depth of knowledge probably in some cases is not what it used to be. But I'm just thrilled that we are able to continue to recognize this and probably the people that are getting these awards are now doing a lot of things in addition to their government document work, which makes it even more heroic! (Laughs)

**Hartnett** *Are there some of the questions on the list that you'd like to address that we haven't gotten to?*

**Redmond** Let's see. I mentioned a couple of the mentors, and as I said, some – I don't know if I would necessarily *say* mentors, because some of these people I didn't even know. But just in terms of working with them. I suppose you get to a certain point where you get too old to have a mentor. (Laughs) Probably not! I said Lois – I didn't work with Lois. I mean, by the time I worked with Lois Mills, I had a lot of experience under my belt, but just her passion and her enthusiasm were so contagious. Bernadine Abbott Hoduski. I don't know if she's here, but she might very well be at Council. She keeps coming to Council and to ALA. Margaret Lane. What a phenomenal person, and a government documents [librarian]. She was a lawyer as well as a librarian. She had her law degree, and very few women were lawyers.

**Hartnett** *I did not know that.*

**Redmond** Yes.

**Hartnett** *And just a bright star in the area of state documents librarianship.*

**Redmond** Yes, oh yes, absolutely. And I will add that, during her lifetime, and she might not have wanted this necessarily publicized, but there was a regional conference for administrators of state depository libraries in the Northeast, from state libraries, in Hartford, Connecticut in 2000. Margaret funded that, in large part, from her own money. I think there was some additional funding, but she actually footed the bill for a lot of that conference. Talk about dedication to your field; that was just amazing! And I mentioned Barbara Smith at Skidmore and Dorothy Butch – she worked at the New York State Library. Dorothy was not

nationally known, but she was a phenomenal librarian. She created the New York State document classification system, which is used not only at the New York State Library but at other libraries in the system. Peter Paulson, director of the State Library, was also on Depository Library Council at one time; he was the Chair for a while. So these are all mentors. And then there's another question that talked about role models, which is a little bit different. But one of my great role models was Adelaide Hasse. I could *not* let this opportunity pass without talking about Adelaide Hasse, she was just – I was an Adelaide Hasse wannabe for many years of my life! (Laughs) Her work, not just with GPO – and I guess there's a room named in her honor at GPO headquarters – but the stuff that she did with state documents. She called them "Guides to Economic Materials," but it was really statistical materials, generally. And on a much more modest level, I tried to do things like that for Illinois when I was there. I tried to put together guides to statistics in the Illinois state documents, she was just magnificent.

**Hartnett** *She really seemed to embrace the idea of customized reference work, and in depth reference.*

**Redmond** Yeah.

**Hartnett** *But it sounds like you were an Adelaide Hasse fan even before Clare Beck wrote **The New Woman as Librarian**.*

**Redmond** Yes!

**Hartnett** *Have you read the book, or parts of it?*

**Redmond** I have. In fact, we invited Clare to speak at one of our state conferences, and people loved it! Peter Paulson, I mentioned he was one of my heroes, when he died a couple of years ago, there was a collection to buy some books to deposit in his memory, and that was one of the books that we did, because we thought that it was appropriate, since he had been so active in government documents, to honor him. Donating that book to the collection in his honor. But yeah, [Adelaide Hasse] was quite a character. You know, you don't have to have me tell you. You know quite well that she was a very special person. So have I missed anybody? I mean there were so many. I was saying to somebody, "I'm in such great company, all these other people that have been interviewed for this project, I feel the least of them, when you see the contributions that they have made." They are just really amazing.

**Hartnett** *Mary, what would you suggest to new people coming into the field who are starting to get bitten by that government information bug? What*

*kind of encouragement would you give them? Or do you have any thoughts about the challenges of new people coming in and trying to learn the new and the old?*

**Redmond** Yes, well it is definitely challenging. I wish I had become professionally active sooner than I had. If you don't want to tackle ALA right away, there should be a regional or local or state [group] because that is where you can meet a lot of aficionados of documents and really get your toes in the ground or into the water. I would certainly say keep reading the "old literature" -- Schmeckebier, Morehead -- it's still valid.

**Hartnett** *Boyd and Rips!*

**Redmond** Yes, Yes, Yes and there are others that I'm sure if I could stop to think about, I'd probably remember. They're classics, they really are. I would say try to get to the Depository Library Council. Even if you only go every couple of years, I find it a tremendously valuable opportunity to find out what's going on. It's wonderful to have all this online communication, but until I actually started to go to meetings and meet people, I would volunteer to do things and no one would ever accept my volunteering because why would they when they had people that were right there that they could turn to and they *knew* and they were active? And I think, I keep saying volunteer, I think people should volunteer where they're in their institution. If they're in a depository library, they're still people who are afraid of documents. Anybody who is in a depository library or even not a depository, anybody who's working with documents, if you say you're interested and you want to help and learn, I bet your offer will be accepted (Laughs). I think that's a fair statement to say.

**Hartnett** *Ever since Adelaide's time, if you were willing to do the work with documents, you'd be marketable (Laughs).*

**Redmond** Yes, yes, absolutely and I do think that, we kind of touched on it a little bit but I do remember if you look at some of the GODORT programs over the last couple of years, one of my all time favorites, it was called "Shotgun Weddings and Amicable Divorces" and it was the integration of reference within government documents and then there was something similar a couple of years ago. It's a fact of life whether we like it or not, administrators are going to say we cannot afford in many cases to have these special collections, special service desks, special this, special that. It's got to be a part of whole the system. And to think of it as an opportunity because you if you already learning this, you already have it, you can make yourself so valuable to your organization as well as to the patrons who come in looking for the information. Don't let that opportunity slip away from you (Laughs).

- Hartnett** *Well Mary, thank you so much for spending this time with me. It's been absolutely delightful. Is there anything else that we have not touched on that you would like to talk about for example the very last question on the sample questions sheet is when history is written about Mary Redmond, what would you like for that history to say?*
- Redmond** Well I kind of doubt if too many people would be writing history about me, but I would like to say that while I kind of stumbled into this in a way, I think I tried to see the opportunities that arose and tried to take advantage of them for my own pleasure, but also I hope that some of the things that I was able to do were valuable to the profession and to the patrons who used them in general. That would make me happy. (Laughs)
- Hartnett** *I can tell you that they were.*
- Redmond** Well thank you, it was such a pleasure to talk to you. One of the questions I see here, I don't think we got to, you asked about the current leadership and I want to say that I think you as GODORT Chair were really wonderful. I really admire people like Amy West who I think just finished her Chair, I can't remember if Kirsten Clark was actually chair of GODORT.
- Hartnett** *She's Chair-Elect as we speak. (Laughs)*
- Redmond** I think Bill Sleeman is this year, I don't work as closely with some people, but I am just in awe of the background that these people are coming in with, in addition to having the traditional knowledge, they're so smart with the technology. I just think GODORT, I just think, the library profession, the government information profession is so fortunate to have people like you carrying the banner into the future.
- Hartnett** That's a wonderful compliment to me. I really appreciate it, but what a wonderful note to end on; an optimistic note heading into the future. So thank you again.
- Redmond** Thank you, it was my pleasure. It was worth all those long train rides I took today. (Laughs)

----- *End of interview* -----