

Peggy Mutter and Shelley Loneragan

Shelley Loneragan: Want me to start?

Peggy Mutter: Sure.

Shelley: Okay. I'm Shelley Loneragan, I've been here since 1970 so that's, as of February the first, it's been forty-four years. I started as an assistant typist to Mrs. Gross...

Peggy: Oh my God!

Shelley: ...the departmental secretary. And within a couple of...three years, I became—I don't know what it was then—Library, um...

Peggy: Assistant?

Shelley: Whatever, you know. And then in 1976 I became a supervisor in the Circulation department. So that's about...

Peggy: That's it? Okay my name is Peg Mutter, I started in '68. I started under Mr. Kennedy in the humanities department, downstairs on Level A. We had a humanities and a social studies on Level 2. And I then worked up to the...working in the reference department, which was over where interlibrary loan is right now, and then the reorg happened and we moved over to circulation so that's where I am now.

Carina: Thanks. Okay, so what were your first impressions of the Rock?

Shelley: That it was enormous. And really lovely, it was all wood, it was all new.

Peggy: Yeah, it was new, relatively, only a couple of years. Yeah, even walking around, it was tough to find your way back. [laughter]

Shelley: Yeah, I would only stay on the south side.

Peggy: And don't ask us to go to C.

Shelley: Right.

Carina: Peggy, did you have the same impressions?

Peggy: Yes, it was very nice, it was very clean, it was a very pleasant place to work.

Shelley: Spacious, you know. We had this, like Peggy said, humanities downstairs. And you had, like, reserve room, you had all of that—a reading room, you know, for both—the social sciences on the second floor and the humanities on Level A.

Carina: What was the latest and greatest technology at the library when you both started?

Peggy: Hmm, when we both started.

Shelley: I think the electric typewriter.

Peggy: Yeah, probably.

Carina: Was that the thing that made you go, "Wow, that's cool"?

Shelley: Yeah, because everything was done by hand.

Peggy: Yeah, *Everything* was done...I was thinking about those skewers, remember, when we used to do the overdues?

Shelley: It was called "needling."

Peggy: Needling—that's it!

Shelley: And, you know, they had a card, you know, with the call number, author, title, and the, um, the date due.

Peggy: The date due. Yeah.

Shelley: And you'd have all those holes around the card. So each hole, you know, was like a month or something like that. So everything that would be due at the end this month would have...

Peggy: a notch, and that would fall through.

Shelley: A notch. And so you stuck this...

Peggy: Needle.

Shelley: Needle. You had a...we called them tubs.

Peggy: Tubs. Mmm-hmm.

Shelley: And they had several different drawers. So you'd stick that needle in and then you'd lift it up and then you'd twirl it around, and all the books that were due—well, the cards...

Peggy: Would fall out [laughter]

Shelley: ...for the books that were due—would fall all over the place. And that was the best...

Peggy: And those were the overdues.

Shelley: That was the technology!

Peggy: Yes, that was it. But there was something pleasant about it, right? It wasn't, uh...

Carina: I still miss the cards that you stamped

Peggy: I miss the card catalogue.

Carina: Yeah. Okay, so let's talk about spaces in the Rock. So Shelley you talked...mentioned a bit about spaces. What has changed over time? What areas are being used differently now, and generally how has the building changed?

Peggy: Well, I think Circulation is the only place that's stayed the same, and maybe Acquisitions to some extent.

Shelley: But we consolidated—you know, the reference...the reserves, the circ, the reference people—and that's where we are, you know, across the way. Whereas we, you know, had all this area. Like upstairs, it's now a computer cluster instead of a reading room. The map room used to at one point be the reserve...course reserve location, briefly.

Peggy: When I came it was all laid out. The reference area was on the other side of this which is the Finn room now. The reference work area was where the interlibrary loan room is now. The periodical reading room was here with their office, reserves, social sciences were upstairs on Level 2, humanities were down on level A, circulation was *just* circulation. And then circulation and reserves combined. And the periodicals and reference more or less stayed—oh and government documents, let's not forget government documents, which is over there now. And the bindery was downstairs, on Level B. Shelving was...wasn't on one level, it was more or less on all levels, right, the shelving?

Shelley: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm, and at at one point, that shelving station was a copier...

Peggy: A copy area, where you'd go down and have...

Shelley: ...service. And then it was moved up, so...

Peggy: [Unintelligible] was started there too. And then it just started slowly...

Shelley: So we just have the digital lab, well, digital lab here but, you know, the digital resources, I mean, we've had different technologies come in and need areas to work in.

Carina: Was 104 always staff office space?

Peggy: Yeah, that was mostly...that was Acquisitions, Cataloguing.

Carina: Were there any interesting staff spaces that don't exist anymore?

Peggy: Hmmm, staff space...No, more or less everything had a...like the reference office, it started off, I think it was one big one, and then...oh, interlibrary loan was in with us then too—Hurdis...Milton Hurdis and Dorothy Day were in the back part, and then Mrs. Schumann...

Shelley: Wow, that was a long time ago.

Peggy: ...Mrs Schumann...and I was in the front part. And then interlibrary loan went in there, and then they were kinda pushed in the back. There wasn't any...except for the staff lounge. Oh, and there was the staff room right next to it where you could...if you were sick...the sick room.

Shelley: Oh yeah, sick room.

Carina: Okay, the next question is kind of fun: Have expectations for professional appearance—dress, behavior, conduct—changed over time for staff?

Peggy: There was never a dress *code*.

Shelley: No, but I think we've gone from jeans to slacks and dresses and skirts. I mean when I first started, it was very relaxed, yeah.

Peggy: Well, yeah, I don't think there was ever a dress code.

Shelley: Well, miniskirts came in.

Peggy: Miniskirts, yeah we had those on.

Shelley: That's right, too.

Peggy: I always remember Rosemary Cullen. We were downstairs in the humanities room and there was a professor. I can't think of his name. But this was very funny, we laughed about this one. She had hot pants on this one day. And he came in and he said, "Well aren't you the hot little number." And Rosemary got all red. [laughter] So that was little one thing I can remember.

Shelley: Yeah, yeah. She was very shy.

Peggy: And that didn't help, having him say that. "Well aren't you the hot little number."

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Carina: Do you have any funny, strange, or interesting memories of the Rock? Maybe a story about a patron, or a co-worker, a student?

Karen: No names.

Shelley: No names?

Carina: No names, yeah. No identifying information.

Shelley: I had the most extraordinary person. He was an alumnus, and I think he graduated in the '60s. And he taught in Mexico and he came up one summer, and he had a German shepherd. And the German shepherd could negotiate the revolving doors. And I said to the person, I said, "We don't have any dogs allowed in here." And he said, "You tell *him* that."

Peggy: [laughter]

Shelley: This person also brought his family up and they wanted to camp out in Prospect Terrace. And they had like a little, like, wagon where the dog, you know, would....

Peggy: Sleep?

Shelley: No, no, no, they would pack up all their belongings and the dog would act as...

Peggy: Oh, and the dog carried it.

Shelley: And he was just very, very difficult. I think he wanted a carrel, and we said you know, only students and whatever, are able to use them. And then he wanted to see—it was when Peter Lipman was head of...

Peggy: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmmm. Head of the front office.

Shelley: Anyway, it got to the point where he was so difficult, thank goodness it was the security—police and security—could escort him out. Because he was just really being very vocal.

Peggy: I don't remember that one.

Shelley: Oh, he was, you know, the talk of the town. Especially with that dog. And the dog would go, you know, and just lie there right in the reference room.

Peggy: Actually the dog was the nice one, right?

Shelley: Yes!

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Peggy: Let's see, what can I think...I loved Mr. Kennedy. Mr. Kennedy was my supervisor at the time. And he was a funny little man. I think he was only this tall. Well, he used to tell me that he would go to the boys department to buy his clothes, that's how tiny he was.

Shelley: He looked like Jiminy Cricket.

Peggy: Yeah, yeah, he did, he did.

Shelley: He really did.

Peggy: But, he was a very sweet man.

Shelley: Talked to himself constantly.

Peggy: And now I'm doing it. [laughter] Constantly! But he...one day I came into the reserve room. And he was throwing all the books: "That doesn't belong on reserve, that doesn't belong on reserve." And then Rosemary and I had to go pick them all up and put them back. Because he said, "Oh well, I guess we better put them back." "We" meaning "you two," and then he went back. But, he was also—I think it was a Trick or Treat night.

Shelley: Yeah. He didn't live long after he retired.

Peggy: Someone broke in and hit him with the butt of their gun on his head, and he was never really right after that. But you know, as small as he was, he was a brazen little thing. He found someone stealing—I don't know if it was a recording machine, or what—but he said, "Follow me," and of course naturally the kid didn't follow him, right? I mean the kid went right out the door with the stuff. But, he was a brazen man and when this kid hit him I guess he tried to put up a fight. I said, "You should never have done that,." And that's when he got the butt of the gun.

Carina: Did that happen in the Rock?

Peggy: No, it happened in his house but he came in the next day.

Shelley: He lived on Bowen, you know in a...

Peggy: One of those nice apartments.

Shelley: Yeah. But, I mean, he, you know, shared a bathroom.

Peggy: Did he? I didn't know that.

Shelley: Yeah, very small.

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Peggy: But he came from an affluent family.

Shelley: You're right.

Carina: Is there anything else? That's all we have for you. If there's anything else you'd like to share about, you know, working here in the building over time, being an employee here, anything you'd like to share.

Peggy: You know, it's funny, it's like when they ask you to...uh, play a song for you, "what would you like?" your mind is completely blank. But sometimes when other people are together you're, "Oh remember this and remember that?" But right now...

Carina: How's it been working here?

Peggy: There's good and bad.

Shelley: And I think that it just goes to show you that it's a nice place to work.

Peggy: I think a lot of the people have been great and I think that's what kept us. Is the co-workers. Not all, but a lot of them.

Shelley: And we've seen a lot of them.

Peggy: And we've seen a lot of them, yeah. You know we've seen good people come and go. Now, see, I think I've been here forty-seven years.

Shelley: Yeah, yeah.

Karen: Do you remember any other stories about them? Without names if they're dangerous stories.

Carina: I know, I think we'll end up cutting out the Mr. Kennedy name, but we'll talk about your supervisor, but if there's anyone else...

Peggy: Yeah, yeah. Well, they were an odd...not an odd group, but they were very...they knew so much. 'Cause when they all retired, so much went with them, in their minds. They were very smart people, and you know, ones that you could go to for help with just about anything and they would plow through all kinds of stuff. Even days after, they could come back and say, "Oh, were you the one looking for this?" and "I found that." So they were very...but they were odd, but, then again I suppose they think we're odd now, too. [Laughter]

Shelley: Yeah, yeah.

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Peggy: It was a beautiful building. It really was. And the card catalogue was beautiful. I know that's dating yourself, but...

Shelley: It was nice, just everything—the red carpet was everywhere.

Peggy: Yep.

Carina: How do you feel about the changes now?

Peggy: Not all good, not all of them. Some of them are good but not all are good.

Shelley: Go with the flow.

Peggy: But you can't change it, so...

Shelley: No.

Peggy: And I think, too, since the...I remember when we used to have the disks, just the disks with the social science and humanities and stuff on them. That was the beginning, and then it just seemed to change faster and faster and faster so that we're...even now, things are changing all the time. Daily. Look at this.

Shelley: Yeah.

Carina: And in our last staff meeting we heard about more changes.

Peggy: Yeah! And they're happening faster and faster. And I don't know that they're all good.

Carina: So no more...no more needling?

Peggy: No more needling. Except each other. [laughter]

Shelley: Well, now it's automatic, you know all these notices are just emailed to the patron.

Peggy: But you know even with all this stuff, people still aren't...things *still* aren't happening fast enough for them.

Shelley: And we have one faculty member, Professor Dietrich, that never wanted to, you know, get on to email, or have his courses be available online.

Peggy: OCRA and all that.

Shelley: Excerpts or articles and stuff like that. He just refused. He wanted paper.

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Carina: How is...how is—I'm just thinking about this and your workload. How has technology changed the way you do your work now?

Peggy: Very much. Well, just...the needling and now you get notices, you can do them all at once. It gives you more control over what you have, too, because you can prove that you took this book out on this date, and you didn't return it until such and such a date, when people say, "Oh no, I returned that on time."

Shelley: And of course, we started out just having our own student...Brown ID holders borrow, and now we have people from everywhere. And it's just like that, you know the Ivy League schools, the BD—Borrow Direct, you know—we can get them in two days for patrons, and you know, we just don't...

Peggy: And for some that's still not fast enough. So you can't win them all.

Shelley: Well if you wait long enough, you know, what can you expect? But everything's so fast. You know, it's just...and this is what our patrons want. You know. Having a book returned in two weeks is kind of out of the question right now.

Peggy: Yeah.

Shelley: So we're offering an awful lot right to our patrons. New avenues...

Peggy: Since we started, sure.

Shelley: To get material that they need, and a lot of times we can have it scanned by another library.

Carina: Even when I did...between the time I did my undergraduate when I was at RIC in the early '90s, the things that are available for students are exponential. It really is.

Peggy: I know.

Carina: I can't imagine being a researcher when I was a student and having access to all this information.

Shelley: I know.

Peggy: It's just like overflow. Just too much. But yeah, things have changed a lot.