Oral History Interview with Grace York

Interview Conducted by Tanya Finchum July 13, 2009

Government Information Living Indexes Oral History Project

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Interview History

Interviewer: Tanya Finchum Transcriber: Natalie Nielson Editor: Tanya Finchum

The recording and transcript of this interview were processed at the Oklahoma State University Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

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.

This project was approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on February 15, 2007.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Grace York is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on July 13, 2009.

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About Grace York...

Grace York, born in Detroit, Michigan, earned a Bachelor of Arts in History from Wayne State University in 1968 followed by a Master of Arts in Library Science from the University of Michigan in 1969. Grace spent her library career at the University of Michigan where she started as a serials cataloger in 1969, retiring as Coordinator of the Documents Center in 2009. Her creation of the Documents Center and its website set the standard for providing government information over the internet.

Grace accomplished much over the course of her career and those in the field of government information benefited from her relentless efforts in support of no-fee access to government information. In 1995 she created *Government Resources on the Web*, one of the largest indexes for government information on the internet, and served as webmaster through 2008. Also in 1995, she created the first internet version of Government Printing Office's *Administrative Notes* and in 1994 she created the first internet version of the American Library Association's Government Documents Roundtable's *Handout Exchange*.

Among her contributions in 1991 Grace began distributing Census data free via the internet, followed by Congressional directories and committee memberships in 1993, and followed by Congressional e-mail addresses in 1994. Over the course of her career she has also received several awards such as the University of Michigan Librarian Lifetime Achievement Award (2007), James Bennett Childs Award (2006), the ACRL Law and Political Science Section's Marta Lange Award (2000), the Documents to the People Award (1998) and the Paul W. Thurston Award (1995). She has been active in library associations and has contributed to the professional literature.

As of August 31, 2009 Grace will be retired from the University of Michigan but will forever be in the hearts of the GODORT community.

Government Information Living Indexes

Oral History Project

Grace York

Oral History Interview

Interviewed by Tanya Finchum July 13, 2009 Chicago, Illinois



Finchum Today is July 13, 2009. My name is Tanya Finchum. And I'm here in

Chicago at the American Library Association Conference. And we're interviewing Grace York, the creator and head of the University of

Michigan Document Center. Is that correct?

York Mm-hmm, that's right.

Finchum Thank you for coming today. And let's start by having you tell us a little

bit about where you were born and then we'll work our way forward.

York I was born in Detroit in Grace Hospital, but my mother said I was not

named after the hospital. And my dad was in the Harper Hospital at the time with a twisted leg, so apparently he walked over in crutches to see me. The first words I remember, they weren't the first words I said but the first words I remember, were "Look Daddy, funny yittle car," which probably referred to the VW bug. Then the next one was "Break his leg." That was actually at a wrestling match. I was three, and my dad took me to a wrestling match. I was rooting "break his leg," and everybody was laughing because there I was up in front. I haven't been

everybody was laughing because there I was up in front. I haven't been back to a wrestling match since then. I guess I don't behave very well.

Finchum *Did you have siblings?*

York I have a half-brother who's 18 years older than I am. So he's about 82

now.

Finchum So basically grew up as an only child?

York I grew up as an only child, yes.

Finchum Well what's your earliest memory of going into a library?

York

Finney School. It was a grade school, and I do remember the school librarian teaching us how to use the card catalog at the time. That stuck with me even though the rest of the library research didn't. That's about how to use a card catalog. Most of my research when I was in grade school was done at a public library, a Detroit Public Library branch.

Finchum

Then you had access to a big library? Not necessary the branch, but the main Detroit Library?

York

Yes, I never went to the main library in grade school. But I could walk to the branch which was about 10 blocks away.

Finchum

When did you decide to get a degree in Library Science?

York

Oh, now that's a tale.

Finchum

Okay. Let's hear it.

York

Okay. I wanted to be a journalist, and I worked for the University Relations department at Wayne State while taking journalism class. But I realized I might not be cut out for journalism because I remember our class talking about going down to Mississippi and helping people register to vote. I wasn't really interested in doing it and then, of course, that summer these three civil rights workers were killed, Schwerner and two others. So I realized that might be dangerous. Then another gal and I interviewed the Detroit Police Department Substation. They took us around in their squad car and we were sitting in the back. They played a joke on us and had the lights on so we looked like hookers that they were taking around. After that my mom said, "You know, I don't really think you're cut out for journalism." So how I got into librarianship was sad. It was not noble, at all. I was majoring in Spanish. What would I do with it? Well, there were lots of jobs for librarians and I thought, 'okay I like to read.' And I can get a job real easy and then not have to take it home with me at night. That's what I thought, okay, as a sophomore in college.

Finchum

Not quite what you expected?

York

No. So I majored in history, which I liked, and then worked at the Detroit Public Library as a student assistant in branch processing. At the time, we wrapped up catalog cards to send to the branches, which is how I learned to wrap presents for Christmas. I thought I'd never be a good librarian because a lot of the pages had to be split with this ebony thing. I didn't do a very good job. I messed it up. So they finally sent me to file in the depository catalog. That was before online catalogs. The Library of Congress would catalog books and your library would subscribe to

their cards, which you would then use to do cataloging and then photocopies. This was before OCLC. So I filed the cards in Russian even though I didn't know Russian and kind of had to learn the Russian alphabet to do it. Those are the things I did as a student assistant before I went to library school.

Finchum And then where did you go to library school?

York University of Michigan.

Finchum And first job as a librarian?

York At U of M (University of Michigan), serials cataloging. I had a

colleague who joined me in a serials staff position, and we just celebrated our 40th anniversary two weeks ago. We're both still there, just in different departments now. I had my option of doing descriptive cataloging of either foreign government documents in western European languages or university publications. I chose the foreign government documents. It was just descriptive cataloging. It wasn't Library of Congress classification. So I didn't really have to read and understand the contents, but I had to understand certain words in a lot of different

languages.

Finchum Did you join ALA [American Library Association] back at that point too,

or later?

York I think that was later. I think I joined SLA [Special Libraries

Association], maybe joined ALA in 1975.

Finchum A long time member then, for sure.

York Yes.

Finchum I was told to ask you to talk about the race riots, the lines that you had

to cross?

York Yes, yes, yes. That was the summer of '67. And I was working at the

Detroit Public Library over the summer. I wasn't taking classes at the time. And yes, that is a funny story. I had to drive downtown, and I had to talk the DPL [Detroit Public Library] into letting me park in the employee parking lot. I carried a squirt gun with me that I was hoping would look like a pistol. I would carry it in my left hand as I was driving. I didn't want anybody to mess with me when I was driving home. Then driving home, I couldn't go this one way, I had to go this other way that went right pass Chandler Park where the troops were stationed. And, of course, they were all young and handsome so that was

the highlight of it. The Detroit Public itself during riots wasn't that bad. But at night, we could sit out on the porch and hear the gun fire ten miles away. After that Detroit was never the same. They're really working hard on reviving it, but it's just never been the same after that.

Finchum That didn't scare you away?

York Yes, it did. My first job was in Ann Arbor and not in Detroit, so yes it

did. So that was a story about the riots.

Finchum So you've been in government documents how long?

York Well, I was cataloging government documents right away, you know,

international. But about 15 months later I decided I really wanted to be a reference librarian. I had been working with the reference department to catalog some of their foreign government documents, extensively, so they knew who I was. So when the position came open as Assistant

Documents Librarian I was hired pretty quickly.

Finchum Did you think that you would ever stick with it this long?

York Well my dad died when I was 9 and my parents were older to begin with

so I never really envisioned myself living as long as I have or even to the millennium. It was a big thing for me in 2000. I never could envision my

career that long. I never really thought about it.

Finchum *Just kind of happened.*

York It's just kind of happened, yes.

Finchum Talk a little bit about when you decided to create the Documents Center

and the website?

York Well the Documents Center is an actual unit which has moved around

since 1975. I think it was '76 when the OCLC first came out and they were starting to use it for cataloging. I think I was first public service librarian to actually see it and think 'Ah-ha. That could be used to answer reference questions.' So that was 1976. But the interface was just incredibly clunky. In 1985 or '86 the Commerce Department came out with its *Economic Bulletin Board*, and I think we were using the Dialog at the time. I thought 'Ah-ha people always want the *Consumer Price Index*,' because they heard about it the day before. For them to get the *Consumer Price Index* figures from me, you're going to have to wait

until September when the paper comes.

So John Wilkin and Jean Loup and I met and decided to get a

subscription to the *Economic Bulletin Board*. John figured out a way to download the data into our email account. Then when he left temporarily he said, "Well, you're in charge of it." I'm thinking, 'I don't know how to do this.' So we had a lot of other people, and I was in charge of it. And then in '91 when the census data came out we had a project where another gal and I downloaded a lot of the data from Michigan and put it, again, in their email account. John built the gopher in early '92 based on the *Economic Bulletin Board* and then we included the census data.

In '94 I learned how to use the Unix protocol so I could do things myself, which was really important. This is starting to get a little bit boring, but by the summer of '94 when I knew basic Unix, that's when Larry Romans and I talked about the GODORT Handout Exchange. So that's when that came in. Then I think in September, I started doing a congressional email list, because some congressmen had email addresses but they were not putting them on their gopher site. Then we started enhancing it. So we had a pretty robust gopher site in '94 before we started the web in '95. And it was April of '95.

Finchum

So you were great pioneers in this effort.

York

Well, if I remember correctly, we had some access to the web in '94. That and the gopher were built both in '92 or '91. But the connection was incredibly slow, and we were using Mosaic which is an incredibly slow program. There was no Internet Explorer. Now I think Mosaic might have been a forerunner of Netscape. Netscape was really the program, if I remember correctly, that made the web practical for people to use.

Finchum

I've had more than one person tell me they would like to pick your brain, with all that you know and have on the website.

York

Well it's really funny, I'll talk about the website later and what's happening to it. They are trying to analyze the taxonomy of it right now using incredible programs. I've been joking that they're trying to analyze my brain. Everything will be logical and then there'll be something that goes 'whoop,' off the screen. But it was really Netscape that made it possible. And so in terms of internet history, it was the bulletin boards that came up first. We had our gopher before the feds did. Texas A & M was doing something and Minnesota was doing something and I think Carlton College was doing something but there wasn't much out there. But we did it before the feds did it.

And you haven't asked about StatUSA but I think I might as well talk about that one. We were buying this data from the *Economic Bulletin Board* and answering email questions from around the world about

economic data which none of us really understood much. We were doing [lots of] email reference in 1992 as a result of the *Economic Bulletin Board*. Then somebody asked the Commerce Department a question, and they said, "Where did you find that information?" "Well, we found it on the University of Michigan gopher." That was when Economic Bulletin Board realized that actually we were doing something. The whole point of this was that we thought government information should be free and we wanted to prove to the Commerce Department that there would be a market for free data because they weren't into that then. This was before that big web thing in 1996.

So Ken Rogers was not real pleased that we were buying it and giving it away. I was at a conference, maybe in Lansing, in '96. This was before they [STAT-USA] put up their website. They called my supervisor at the time and said, "Well, we can't sue you for violation of copyright, but we can sue you for violation of trademark, for calling it the *Economic Bulletin Board*." So my supervisor talked with the University lawyers and they just renamed the gopher. It was the *Department of Commerce Economic Data* instead of the *Economic Bulletin Board* so we wouldn't violate the trademark. They wanted us to quit and I wanted this information to be free, at least free to depository libraries plus a reasonable price for IP access beyond depository libraries. When we quit downloading the data, they had done both things. Depository libraries could get a free password and they were only charging like \$3000 a year for IP access.

Well it turns out that they were not above board. Okay? Jerry Breeze and I talked. They were going to charge Columbia \$12000, and wait a minute, that's not acceptable, you know. But we got it for \$3000 for a number of years. Then they started raising the price and we heard they were charging people all over the place. The problem there is that congress requires them to make money. I sat down with—who was it? I can't remember who the head of STAT-USA was before the current head. I know we had lunch at the Depository Library Conference, and I told him that dealing with him was like dealing with a used car salesman because you never knew what the price was going to be. He still paid for lunch, but after that he had said, you know the GAO agrees with you. We have to have a standard price and it's going to have to be the higher price. So at that point, we just gave up and cancelled our subscription. We're using our depository password.

Now in the mean time, what was going on? I think in '95 before STAT-USA was threatening us too much is I heard from the editor of the *Monthly Labor Review*. The Labor Department, BLS [Bureau of Labor Statistics] wasn't really sure what to do with their data because STAT-USA wanted it and they [BLS] wanted to give it away free. I encouraged

them to give it away free, and ultimately that's what they did. So at this crucial point where STAT-USA was deciding it was going to charge Depository libraries, some of the places that they got the data from made the decision—we'll give it to you, but we're going to give it away free as well. So but that's just really the very early history....

Finchum So you almost need to be good at political things, not legislative type

things but working people.

York Yeah, and I'm not sure that I personally was that good except that I

believed in what I was doing and that actually, probably, came through.

Finchum A good steward for government documents.

York Well I was trying at that point. It's gone downhill since then.

Finchum But you set a good example for the rest of us. Did you have a mentor

anywhere along the way, within the library or within government

documents?

York Well, yes. When I first started, it was my first supervisor. She was very

good, and her name was Ann Gale. We had just moved into the new documents room, our first documents room, when she took her dream trip to Australia and died of a heart attack in the Sydney Opera House. Apparently she had a congenital problem that none of us knew about. And I would not go to Australia for many years. I was afraid. When I finally did go in 2003 and stood in the Sydney Opera House I

understood why she might have had a heart attack there because they have this long spiral staircase. That was sad. Pretty much I was on my own in the library, but in terms of GODORT, yes. Fran Buckley was my

regional librarian for a while. And in Michigan there was Dick

Hathaway and Jenny Cross. I remember Carolyn Kohler right from the beginning, but we really didn't have that much contact until we were in CIC [Committee on Institutional Cooperation] together. I think Fran

Buckley was probably the first.

Finchum And then did all of you come together to form a Michigan GODORT?

York Yes. And that was '78, I think. We had done some work together in '76

and that was—I'm sure it was '78.

Finchum And then someone had said you were a fan of Paul Thurston, he was

living in Michigan, and there's an award for him and you won it.

York Yes, he was our depository librarian, after Fran Buckley, at the Detroit

Public Library. And he did a lot of early work on coordinating, or at

least having a bibliography or index of which libraries in the state had which commercial indexes. He did a very early version of a combined item selection list for the state of Michigan. It was before it went national. So yes, I was a fan of Paul Thurston. I've been a fan of a lot of people, actually.

Finchum

You have a fan club, too. You said the document center had many different locations. Do you want to talk a little bit about....

York

A couple of them. 1975 it was a small room off the card catalog. Then we moved in 1982 to the floor above it and we had a huge space. But I wasn't the head of it. It was one of those things where—I was kind of demoted which was hard to take, frankly. So I was the Federal documents librarian. We did a lot of our own processing up there. What had happened is—our new director went into RLIN rather than OCLC, and RLIN wasn't buying GPO tapes. So we didn't have any catalog records for government documents. That's why we did a lot of our own processing. And we're back in OCLC now. But it was a long period, and RLIN [ultimately] got the records, too. So that was a nice big space, and we celebrated our 100th anniversary as a depository there. We had good times and lots of student assistants. We had fun, you know, exchanging silly gifts and everything.

Then we moved down to the second floor again in 1995. We had a smaller space but locationally it was better. There were traumas with all moves. A big problem with us was the floor load. We had to make some last minute changes. But the way we are now, it's a reference room. We don't have the whole collection there although we have a lot in microfiche, a lot of congressional. But it's basically a social science reference collection, in a way. Spatial and numeric data was added to the area a couple of years ago, and sometimes they actually do more business than documents. But we overlap each other. So we've been moving around. But what's moved around a lot is the reference desk. And they're tired of hearing it, "Well we tried that in 1978. The desk was there. Why are we moving it back there again?" You know, nobody wants to hear it.

Finchum

Can you think of how many times it's actually moved in your...

York

The reference desk? Five or six locations in 40 years.

Finchum

And how many locations for your Document Center then?

York

Four. So it's time to move again. You know it's been there 14 years.

Finchum

Time for a change.

York Without me, moving. I had the floor plan stuff down to a science, I

really did. And I joked about getting a retirement job helping people

move their collections.

Finchum You could.

York Except we still haven't unpacked everything from the 1995 move. Most

of it is unpacked but not everything.

Finchum *But you know what's in the box. No?*

York Can't remember. I don't know.

Finchum Well do you have a favorite story that you want to tell about anything

that's happened within the library?

York Well, I have some favorite reference questions?

Finchum *Sure.*

York And they all come from early in my career. One was a guy who came to

the reference desk, because for a while I worked both reference and documents, and he said, "I'm trying to trace somebody who died during the 100 years war who lived in England." And I went, "Uhhh". But I controlled myself, and I went way over to the reference room and got something on how to trace your British ancestors. I asked him if this would help. He looked at me and he said, "You see, it's not really an ancestor. It's a spirit I contacted last night." And then I got a phone call once, it was on a Saturday. Someone wanted to know the birthdates and the dates of travel to the U.S. of Soviet visitors. Then they also wanted to know the street address of earthquakes because they wanted to prove that the Soviet visitors caused the earthquakes, numerologically. So that

was another question.

Do you watch *Lost*? The TV program *Lost*? Well for any of the GODORT people who do watch *Lost*, it is well known from the TV program that the Dharma initiative began in Ann Arbor. Okay. Around 1974 when I was there, I used to see them having secret meetings in a 3A storage area. They had books, bookshelves and also couches. You could smell the pot because they were smoking pot. Now, how they took the submarine from Ann Arbor to the South Pacific, the library staff has been discussing that. We think they caught the submarine on the other side of the Argo Dam and took the Huron River to Lake Erie and then up through the St. Lawrence Seaway. Now, most of my colleagues think they went through the Panama Canal, but this was a top secret organization. So I actually [think they] went through the North West

passage which is how they picked up the polar bear. And you wouldn't appreciate this unless you had seen *Lost*. But anybody who's seen *Lost* knows that they go to and from Ann Arbor to the South Sea Island in their submarine. Although the island moves, so heaven knows where the island—maybe the island was in Lake Erie at one point, who knows. Anyway, that's the story of *Lost*. And we expect once the show has its last season this coming year, there will be a big thing in Ann Arbor about *Lost*.

Finchum

Well I'll have to stay tuned.

York

Stay tuned, yes. Well Ann Arbor is becoming a Mecca for Hollywood because it's cheap to film there. You know we can't make cars anymore, so we make movies instead of cars.

Finchum

You mentioned Russia a couple of times. You visited Russia with the State...

York

State Department and also on vacation, too. I did it twice. How they differed between '75 and 2000, you weren't being followed anymore. Because I know I was being followed in '75. I could feel it. That wasn't true in 2000. But you had to watch out for crime. The economy was in shambles and I think the Russian economy is a lot better now. But the hotel where I stayed in '75 was a pretty nice hotel. I was told it was pretty awful in 2000, with bugs. But yes, I did that.

Finchum

And they requested you to go to do what? The State Department?

York

To give a presentation to an international conference on government information in democracy in St. Petersburg. The reason they wanted me there was to talk about putting information on the web and making it readily available to the public, how we were doing it in the U.S., and to try to inspire them to do the same thing. I gave the conference presentation there, and also in Moscow a second time for some of the Embassy staff. I also visited libraries and I think the public libraries were actually doing a really good job of being an intermediary legal advisor. They had a lot of legal materials. Citizens came who were upset about their rights, and the libraries would bring in lawyers. So they were doing a really good job on the legal front. But listservs like we have, like GOVDOC-L weren't going to work there because I think they were charging you to receive a message. That wouldn't have worked for them.

For two years after that, the Russian visitors [that came] to the U.S. would go to Washington, then they'd come to Ann Arbor, and then they'd go someplace else. So I saw them for two years. There was a really awkward moment when we had an open discussion about

government secrecy. Now of course the State Department was trying to promote democracy by opening up government through the internet. But I think some of them were still pretty skeptical and also pretty scared of Putin, too, who maybe a person to be scared of. So it was an interesting experience. They were really far more progressed with using the internet than you might think they were. In fact they [the Russians] were the ones who first told me about Google. But they don't have a lot of free government information. There's some, but not all countries are as giving as our country.

Finchum

Through your career you have had library students under you? You've kind of mentored them. Any one or two who stand out?

York

Well there are a number of them that stand out.

Finchum

Naming names, maybe I should rephrase that then so no one will feel left out.

York

Well, Cass Hartnett, John Hernandez, Suzanne Holcombe, is it still Holcombe?

Finchum

As far as I know. We'll say that for now.

York

Okay. But there have been a number of students. But those are the people who have been in GODORT.

Finchum

What was your approach in helping them learn the collection? How did you instruct or lead them to learn the collection?

York

Cass remembers better than I do what I did to her. I really sat down and showed them things in clumps. [I would say], "Okay, today and the next week, we're going to work on congressional. This is how a bill becomes law and here are the sources" and whatever. And maybe give some exercises. She [Cass] keeps telling me the tale when I did that to her with the 1980 census. I did have a training program, but I was always a back-up [for reference questions].

Now, I think as far as learning yourself, which was one of the questions I saw, I think it's really invaluable to browse, to work on reference questions on your own time when you're off the desk so you can actually spend the time researching, and to prepare lectures for classes or bibliographies. What I tried to do is not only find the right source, but figure out if that was my project, what would I need to know to use it? You know, it's one thing to say. "Oh, well that's on the census CD and here it is." And another thing to say, "Well for the data you actually need, you're going to have to pull it out through extract and let me figure

out how to use that program so I can show you how to do it yourself." So follow it all the way through.

There's a public health class for instance where they have to choose an Indian tribe and then collect data, demographic data, about that tribe as well as health data. Well, how do you choose a tribe to begin with? Where do you go for that? Do you go by a tribal name? Do you go by a state geographic area where they're living? And what tools do you need to even take that first step before you take the next step?

Finchum *It's a lot of hands on.*

York Yes. Thinking it through.

Finchum Well do you have a favorite moment in the span of your career? Or two?

York

The favorite moment, I think, is one that all document librarians have many times over and that's when you have a person who has been looking for information high and low and maybe even for a couple of weeks. And they come in and see you and you go "Oh, okay" And you

weeks. And they come in and see you and you go, "Oh, okay." And you pull that off in five or ten minutes and they are so grateful. I think all of us have experienced that. And then you have a fan for life. And the other isn't one moment, but it has been overwhelming, because I think all of us struggle with our home institutions at times. Just the way GODORT has embraced me and it's made me feel so good, and I know I don't deserve it. And I'm just enjoying it so much. And I'm going to miss it.

But I mean this is really—it's wonderful.

Finchum I can see why they embrace you, you've done a lot. Friendly and always

helpful and great to be around.

York I can be very funny, believe me.

Finchum We'll switch to funny then. Any funny stories from conferences that you

want to share.

York Funny stories from conferences. No. Funny stories from my own life,

yes.

Finchum Well....

York I think probably the best one was having my panty hose fall down to my

ankles while wearing a choir robe.

Finchum You have to tell a little bit more about that then if you're going to just

dangle it there.

York

No, I mean, that's what happened. I went to Antarctica in January and I have tales about that, but this one place we went, maybe Neko Harbor, I'm not sure. It was hard to walk up the slope to see the penguins. I mean penguins were everywhere, but it was a volcanic island. I walked up to the top and then realized it was going to be even harder walking down. So I decided to go down on my derriere and ran into a volcanic rock and tore my pants and realized I would have to—at age 63 would have to climb over this rock to get down so I could get back in the zodiac. And I just burst out laughing and thinking, 'stranded at this volcanic rock with a hole in my pants at the bottom of the world,' and just started laughing.

I do have a tale. CIC is the Big 10 schools. We had a meeting about 10 years ago and I was still in the cast from breaking my foot running to give a census lecture. We're on the airplane and they say now you're going to have to get off and take another plane. So I had to stand in line for 45 minutes in a cast to try to get a ticket on another plane. And then they say, "Oh you can take this plane. It's leaving in 15 minutes at the other end of the airport." So then I had to run all the way to the other end of the airport in the cast to get on the plane. Except it wasn't going to O'Hare, it was going to Midway. So we landed in Midway and a storm was coming so they had to bus us to O'Hare but my luggage didn't make it. I started crying so they felt sorry for me and they sent me to the hotel near O'Hare free and delivered my luggage later.

I called my cousin and she said "Well Grace, the storm is coming." Okay, so I went to bed and I woke up at 5:30 the next morning. I always leave a light on in the bathroom, but the light was off and I thought that was odd. Well what happened is there was a blizzard and all the electricity was off in the hotel. So there was no electricity. Fortunately I was on the second floor. The CIC met on the first floor where there was a fire place because there was no [central] heat. And I had to get down from the second floor to first floor on my derriere because I was in a cast and the elevators weren't working. So then we spent the whole day meeting there. We did get out at night.

The hotel promised us extra blankets which they never delivered. The hotel gift shop was open, but they didn't have a cash register working because there was no electricity. So I bought a sweatshirt and ended up sleeping overnight in the sweatshirt with a hat because there was no power in the hotel. So the next morning we were able to get out and I was able to get home. And the hotel didn't charge us for that one night. So when I put in my travel expenses, I asked for this sweatshirt reimbursement and the university refused to give it to me. The library director had to intervene and say this woman's been through enough. I think Carolyn Kohler would have remembered that. I don't think Lou

Malcolm even tried to come up. John Shuler was around, although he didn't commute. Mary Mallory was involved in that too. So that storm drew us closer together for warmth if nothing else. Something.

Finchum *I think everyone has a few travel stories with conference don't we?*

York I was in DC, would have been '97-'98 or so. The hotel had to evacuate at 2:30 in the morning and there was a rumor Linda Tripp was in the

hotel.

Finchum Well, I understand that you will be retiring soon. Any plans as to what

you want to do afterwards? I hear you have a list.

York Sleep number one. Learn how to cook veggies. Get lots of exercise. Swim, make my own cards. Travel, I don't know. I mean I've done my

seven continents now, Egypt and Israel, maybe. I think, just live off the list. I've been on the list for at least 30 years. Every day do this, this, this, this, this, If I can't cross it off, then it has to go on another list. Just

live off the list.

Finchum Do you anticipate staying active with ALA or the GODORT community?

York I plan to be a member. I'm keeping GOVDOC-L. How active I'm going

to be I don't know. It will depend on how much the dues are and whether I can afford them. I have the money saved for next year's dues.

So, we'll see.

Finchum *Is there anything you want to cover before we do my last question?*

York No. I just really love GODORT.

Finchum Then my last question is when history's written about you, what would

you like it to say?

York That's kind of like writing my tombstone.

Finchum *Not quite.*

York This is probably more of a formal answer than I should be giving. But

she believed in people and justice and democracy and found her own niche among all three. And I do believe in justice and kind justice. I don't know how to explain it. I do believe in justice and I believe treating people as people even when you disagree with them. Caring

about people and seeing them all succeed.

Finchum And then no-fee public access.

York

No fee access. Yes, that fits right into it.

Finchum

You've been fighting for that from day one. I appreciate you taking the time to do this. It's been great. I hope it wasn't too hard.

York

No it wasn't too hard.

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