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Part 1

by Kathy Rankin

I made up a list of fifteen questions having to do with map librarianship and WAML and asked people who had been WAML members for at least 25 years to answer them as part of our celebration of WAML's fiftieth anniversary. These are the answers to the first six map librarianship questions with minimal editing. The remaining questions will be answered in the November IB. The members who participated in this section are **Dorothy** McGarry, **Greg** Armento, **Lavonne** Jacobsen, **Yvonne** Wilson, **Kathy** Rankin, **Mary** Larsgaard, **Muriel** Strickland, and **Riley** Moffat. Not everyone answered every question.

1. Why or how did you become a map librarian or a map cataloger?

Mary: I had wanted to be a librarian since I was in the sixth grade. Then I took a geology class while I was attending Macalester College. I really liked it, but I would have starved as a geologist as I wasn't very good at it. When I was a senior, we worked with maps, and I think I even saw a topo. I decided I wanted to be a map librarian. Library directors traveled to library schools in those days (the 1960s) and recruited librarians. I was interviewed for work as assistant documents and map librarian at Central Washington State College in Ellensburg.

Muriel: Fell into it. [I was a] Geography graduate assistant not [a] Library school [graduate]. Department Map Collection (Depository) acquired funding for full-time assistant. Offered job, rest is history.

Dorothy: I had been cataloging physical sciences and engineering books since 1971. About 1976 (I hope I'm not getting meetings mixed up), I went back to a week's meeting at LC where different people spoke on cataloging, but I remember one session that dealt with map cataloging. Then about 1979 (?) I went to a WAML meeting where John Schneider, head of cataloging for the LC Geography and Map Division, ran a workshop on map cataloging and provided copies of internal LC policies and practices for the participants. When it was decided to send UCLA maps to the Southern Regional Storage Facility (SRLF), it was necessary that they be cataloged although they had not previously been cataloged. I was the only one on campus who had cataloged maps, and I was



put in charge of training several library assistants to work on cataloging maps. Then UCLA received a Title IIC grant and I was the supervisor of the two librarians hired to catalog those maps. When the grant ended, cataloging of maps was transferred to the cataloging section where I worked (at the Physical Sciences and Technology Libraries Cataloging Division, as it was called at the time). A special large table was built and the set-up had drawers for temporary storage. Maps were brought to us, cataloged, and returned to the UCLA Map Library. I was initially in charge of training someone to catalog the maps and I reviewed the cataloging. We had a few Geology Library maps to catalog, also, but not many compared to the Map Library maps. When I retired, my successor (Sara Shatford Layne) took over.

Greg: Enjoyed the quirky aspect of it. Geographical exploration and interesting questions asked involving, maps, images and books and deep access to materials not many people encounter. Not your typical librarian roles that may have mostly dealt with books and journals.

Kathy: When I was hired at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas [UNLV] Libraries in 1989 as the Special Formats Catalog Librarian, I was told I would catalog maps. None of the maps either in the circulating map collection or in Special Collections had been cataloged, although we later did get MARCIVE records for maps. It took five years to decide what we were doing, and I started by cataloging maps for Special Collections. Before that, when I was at the University of Texas at Arlington, I did searching in OCLC for a batch of Special Collections' maps as part of a grant proposal to try to get a temporary map cataloger, but they didn't get the grant. When I took a new position of Special Collections Cataloger in 2006, I continued to catalog maps and atlases, and now most of the maps I catalog do belong to Special Collections.

Lavonne: I grew up in a geographically inclined family – we played geo games and pored over maps and atlases, etc. My brother had a National Geographic subscription.

Yvonne: I was not a map librarian. I was a government publications librarian for Orange County and California documents. However, my involvement with documents blended well with maps, since government is the source of mapping. I often appreciated knowing firsthand the next mapping issues and their true affect before the government documents librarians. This was especially true of U.S. mapping for USGS and Mines and Minerals Management



Service. I have always felt that government publications was always on the cutting edge of next direction for publishing and information distribution. In other words, the rise of the electronic sources and the reduction of print.

2. What is your favorite accomplishment in map librarianship or map cataloging, or what has brought you the most satisfaction?

Riley: Getting acquainted with my colleagues and learning from them.

Mary: My favorite work was cataloging. I was mediocre at it, but I have a lot of empathy for catalogers. Many of them are out of a meeting room, so not being there to defend themselves, they are assigned maps to catalog. Sometimes they are terrified at workshops—you can almost see the whites of their eyes when they arrive. When they get into the workshop, they find out it isn't that hard, and certainly easier than serials cataloging. I was the newbie in the crowd when we worked on the first AACR2 cartographic materials manual. It was a wonderful opportunity to work with Ben Tucker from LC and with John Schroeder, who was the head of LC's G&M division cataloging group. No one else in the map-library world seemed very interested. Hugo Stibbe, Velma Parker, and Vivian Cartmell represented the national map collection of Canada (from the National Archives) and maintained the Secretariat of AACCCM (Anglo-American Cataloguing Committee for Cartographic Materials).

Muriel: Collection accessibility.

Dorothy: I was glad to see maps being cataloged at UCLA, and was also glad that when I retired there was a great librarian and a couple of great library assistants who continued to do excellent work.

Greg: Happy researchers leaving me in wonder that there was/ or we had access to particular obscure geographic resources and that I had the somewhat esoteric skills to ID results for them.

Kathy: I like providing access to local historical maps. We also did a project to scan some of our cataloged maps and put them on the web.

Lavonne: In the 1980's I designed a fill-in the blanks" card for recording maps - actual cataloging wasn't an option at the time. Made a proposal to the library director and was funded to do the project.



3. What do you see as the future of map librarianship?

Riley: Dealing with digital data.

Mary: MAGIRT is in the same general situation as WAML. NACIS has more of a cartography focus, especially for graduate students and faculty, and a GIS librarianship focus. The California Map Society is yet again different, some members work with maps and create with maps and remote-sensing images for a living. The vast majority of members of WAML and MAGIRT tend to be librarians. Many of the members of the California Map Society have demanding jobs that have nothing to do with maps and view maps as a recreation. The Colorado, Florida, and Texas maps societies are the same way. Tom Touchton at the Miami Map Fair started out collecting maps of Florida for fun, and eventually realized his early maps of Florida were a responsibility.

Dorothy: I'm not sure about the future of map librarianship as a separate activity. For a while, at least in some places, map librarians were put into other parts of the organization and not left in a separate function dealing with maps, and map catalogers often catalog maps only part of their time. I do hope, however, that the spirit and activity of people dealing with maps continues.

Greg: Networking our abilities with each other and professional/continuing education. Digitizing and making available more hidden resources. Geographic platform design and use. Balancing the print/historical with GIS/online. Bridging both with our human skills.

Kathy: I think there still is a need for map librarians. People still need help using GIS, finding maps online, and interpreting maps.

Lavonne: As collections seem to be concentrating in large universities, the specialist numbers will dwindle and /or librarians will morph over to data visualization, if a library can afford that.

4. What is the weirdest or most interesting request you ever received from a patron or the weirdest or most interesting map you ever cataloged?

Riley: There have been several odd requests from several odd patrons, but nothing I couldn't handle. It has always been fun though often challenging.



Mary: It should be a map of undiscovered treasure ships, but I didn't get that one, it was HelenJane Armstrong who got that request! Most map requests start off with "I need a map of..." usually of a particular time period, but I got one where the person needed a thematic map and didn't care what the geographic area was. I looked in Robinson's thematic cartography and found several the user liked.

Muriel: Sometime in the 1980s when the price of gold shot up and everyone was looking for maps of Public Lands. I had a patron who could be described as "old Prospector". He would not tell me what he was looking for but demanded my Social Security number. Several "whys" later. If I'd give him my SS# he'd give me his. Refusal got us nowhere. Only time I brought in my boss. Turned out "OP" believed we reported SS#s each day to some Government Authority. No #s were ever exchanged, nor did he achieve any maps.

Dorothy: No answer. Didn't work with patrons, never cataloged a weird map.

Greg:

Interesting Maps:

A French political map that had endonyms (nations of the world): Misr, Deutschland, España, etc.

A protest group's series of maps of the 1980s that had in detail the nuclear missile silos in the continental United States.

Questions:

Student asking me what was the correct geographical direction toward mecca.

"My great grandfather born in the late 19th Century near the border of Prussia, Russia/Poland and Austro-Hungary. The town began with an "Sch" Can you help me? The name may have changed.

Kathy: I like the mining claim maps as they look like a pile of different colored boxes.

Lavonne: "If you have 2 copies, why can't I just have one?"



5. What have you observed about people and maps?

Riley: Just about everyone enjoys and appreciates maps for one reason or another. I think it has to do with knowing where things are and the different things different maps can tell you.

Mary: People and how they use and relate to maps has changed so much with Google maps, GPS, and so on. Maps used to be considered mainly scholarly. Now people use a digital map to find where the nearest McDonald's is. Maps have become more prominent.

Muriel: Most are "untutored" spatially or geographically through no fault of their own.

Greg: How amazed and delighted people are when there is a map that fits exactly what they wanted.

Kathy: That many people find maps fascinating. I think many people like to look at maps and imagine themselves traveling to those places or look at where their ancestors came from.

Lavonne: General appreciation is becoming art appreciation rather than geoliteracy. My geography students aren't using them much but making maps with GIS for their own research.

6. Any other thoughts about map librarianship?

Riley: I've always been about historical maps and how they help us understand the past, where we came from. In the past decade or so, many historical collections have been digitized, which makes them more accessible but I still like the look and feel of paper.

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