

Rock Voices: The Oral History Project of SRU
Kevin Mclatchy Interview
December 13, 2023
Bailey Library, Slippery Rock University, Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania
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JN: Today is Wednesday, December 13th, 2023. I'm Jared Negley and I am here today at the University Archives interviewing Kevin Mclatchy for the ROCKvoices Oral History Project of Slippery Rock [University]. Kevin, thank you so much.

KM: Oh, sure. It's great to be here, see you.

JN: Yeah, thanks for being here today. So, you're familiar with the project, you've done a couple interviews.

KM: I've done a few, right.

JN: You know the drill, so we're just gonna jump right in here.

KM: Sounds good.

JN: Question one. Some biographical information about yourself, name, date of birth, where you're originally from.

KM: I'm originally from Newton, Massachusetts; it's a suburb right outside of Boston. Interestingly enough, Elliott Baker was from Newton, Mass., and Theresa Antonellis was like a couple blocks down from me where I grow up.

JN: Wow, what a coincidence!

KM: Yeah, she's in the Art Department. Elliott likes to tell the story about the Fig Newton recipe that was made up in Newton, Mass. And that's how we get Fig Newtons. That's a little side-bar.

JN: A little claim to fame, yeah.

KM: [Laughs]. Right. Did you want to know [about my] education? What was the question?

JN: Yeah, date of birth.

KM: 1947, from Newton, Mass.--born in Newton Mass. Went on from there--went to the local schools and then went to Boston State College, which was a former teachers' college, so I have

an affinity to Slippery Rock in that sense. It was absorbed by the University of Massachusetts. Then from there, I went to art schools, I went and studied at various places. I went to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts' school. And then I went to the Massachusetts College of Art for an MFA. Being a painter, an artist, you're a musician--you know--you get the craziest jobs as you go along. I had a checkerboard career before I came here [laughs].

JN: You mainly just studied painting in school?

KM: Primarily painting, drawing, a little bit of printmaking, some sculpture, but primarily painting.

JN: So then I guess, before you were here, you were also working at library jobs, right?

KM: Yeah, I did. Interestingly enough, the arts [have] a connection, I found out later . . . when I went to my art school they had a job placement and they mentioned MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), working in the library. Turns out they actually like artists working there in the library, especially musicians. So I went in there and started working part time. I was also teaching part time art at various colleges here and there. Eventually, just before I got married, I took a full-time position in Interlibrary Loan at MIT. It was a pretty busy department, as you can imagine.

JN: Yeah.

KM: So that was my library background. Then we decided to come out here when my son was born. There was more extended family, so we came out towards Neshannock initially, and then I ended up in New Wilmington. Before I even came out, I was looking for jobs and I was debating whether to go down to Pittsburgh, or I saw a job listed at Slippery Rock. Somehow, I can't remember the sequence, but Dr. Barbara Farah was the director of the library and she was from New England, so I made a connection with her [laughs].

JN: Oh, nice.

KM: She convinced me to not go to the city and stay at Slippery Rock. The cost of living at the time was really good.

JN: Sure.

KM: So I made that decision and never regretted it. It's been a great experience.

JN: Well that's great. So then, for the next one, what year you were originally hired, your department, the first job you had?

KM: Well, the year, that was 2000, August of 2000. It was Interlibrary Loan, that was the main reason I think they hired me. But at the time, Nora Long was the full-time position in Interlibrary Loan, so I came in and they split the position: half-time Interlibrary Loan and half-time out at Reference. So I had Jane Smith as my supervisor at Interlibrary Loan and Lynn [Hoffman] was my supervisor at Reference. I remember that I sat at this little desk out there, the original reference desk on the first floor and there were strict guidelines as to what I could say or help students with because the faculty had a clear delineation with the union and all that.

JN: Yeah.

KM: So I was basically out there to just maybe bring somebody up to look for a book or something like that.

JN: Oh, so you were like the first line and then if there was something complicated you'd send them on to a librarian?

KM: Yeah. Then I started to work with the Interlibrary Loan and eventually moved into Interlibrary Loan and Government Documents. So Jane Smith was pretty much my supervisor for most of that because she had ILL [Interlibrary Loan], as I recall, most of the time, and she definitely had Government Documents. I had experience with Government Documents too.

JN: So then when you first started was Nora Long also in Archives and ILL?

KM: No, she applied--that came a little bit later. I'm trying to remember. . . . Nora decided she--a position came up in the Archives. I didn't know Jan. I vaguely remember her when she was here.

JN: [Jan] Larish?

KM: [Jan] Larish, yeah. Nora applied for the position. At the time [it] was the only Library Tech position.

JN: Hm, ok.

KM: So that was an upgrade in pay, and Nora decided to take that. Then they needed a full-time person in InterLibrary Loan, so I moved into that position. Then Rita McClelland came in too, and the two of us worked together in InterLibrary Loan. It was [a] pretty busy unit while we were there; I'm sure it still is.

JN: Yeah, I can imagine. Especially pre . . . , you know, when there wasn't as much stuff available online.

KM: Right.

JN: To get an article you had to physically have someone at a library go scan it, or send it out, or copy it and mail it, right?

KM: Right, right. We'd make use of microfilm a lot, some of the older technology was just [laughs]. This university does have researchers, faculty, and so it was busy. We did a lot of requests. So, yeah it was all good.

JN: So then eventually was it that Nora, I think, she retired and did that open up the Archives position?

KM Yeah, she retired and that opened up the Archives position. I thought--it looked appealing to me. I thought, sure. I've loved history and being in the arts I've always loved the way original material looked. Just the look of original material aesthetically, it has a spirit of its own. I applied for the position and Judy [Silva] became the head of the Archives at the point I'm pretty sure.

JN: So that was about the same time she was able to get the Archives job when you started as well?

KM: Yeah, that's how I remember it, yeah. I know because she worked in Serials prior to then I believe.

JN: Yeah, I recall that because when I was a student here in 2004 or something, I worked under Joe [Drobney] in Serials. I remember Judy was the Serials Librarian. After a bit, there were a couple different ones. I think Cathy Rudowsky was Serials at first, no Judy was Serials at first, then Cathy Rudowsky took over.

KM: That sounds right, yeah.

JN: So, I guess, jumping back a little bit. What were your first impressions of the university itself when you got here? Over the years, I know a lot has changed, but if any particular changes stick out to you?

KM: I have to admit, I wasn't too impressed [laughs] when I came in, the first time I saw it. I guess it looks like probably many college towns: absentee landlords, the stores are geared primarily to the students. It seemed a little run down. Plus when I first came in, I was thinking I went down Main Street then just took a left on Keister Road. So if you just go that way and don't come in to see Old Main or the upper campus, at that time all you saw was just the utilitarian buildings, just plain brick buildings, the old football field. Even Bailey [Library] wasn't all that appealing on the outside, just utilitarian. I think the ARC (Aebersold Student Recreation Center) was here, I believe, pretty sure.

JN: Yeah.

KM: There was the old Student Union here, so there was a lot of building that went on once I was here for a while. I know the dormitories--there was the Rock Apartments, I believe they were here.

JN: Yes, yeah.

KM: And then I can remember all the construction that went on over on the hills where the new residential suites are up there now. That was major, all that building up that way. Then of course at some point we can get to the library renovations but there was also the new student union that came much later, now the Robert M. Smith Center.

JN: Or, "The Bob."

KM: Yeah, even the changing of Vincent Science Hall; and the PT (Physical Therapy) Building might have just been under construction or just finished when I showed up too. I remember even the Quad out front of the library, they didn't [laughs] have any cement, you know, just dirt paths going through. The students made their own shortcut through there.

JN: Well yeah, I think right where there's that sidewalk that cuts diagonal across the Quad, that was just a dirt path.

KM: [Laughs]. It was.

JN: And they were just like, "I guess we might as well make this a path since students are using it" [laughs].

KM: Exactly. Right, exactly. But, changing the front of some of these buildings, to me, aesthetically, made them so much better. And then the Advanced Technology [and Science], ATS Building came in too. I can't remember the exact year for that, but [the] mid-2000s.

JN: Yeah, I remember it was finished when I was a student here so that would have been like yeah, mid-2000s.

KM: I think the Smith Center what was that, 2016? Maybe even later than that.

JN: Yeah.

KM: That's quite a building, too, just amazing.

JN: So, contrary to your initial impressions, you were convinced to work here.

KM: [Laughs]. Right.

JN: I mean, did you . . . the contrast between the rural Slippery Rock and Pittsburgh, was that something you were more interested in, being out in the country or did you have that city mentality and you sort of were convinced to move to the wilderness a bit?

KM: That's a good question because we had already acclimated to the country.

JN: Okay.

KM: We had moved out to western Massachusetts, almost right up near the New Hampshire border. So it was very rural. I think the shock aesthetically was the town we came from was a picturesque old New England town with historical preservation and all that; picture the white steepled church and all that. So, to come in suddenly to a town like this was a bit of an adjustment. But the whole idea of being in a rural area was very appealing. Actually, that was one of the reasons it was enticing too.

JN: Yeah, because I can imagine it would have been a heck of a drive if you wanted to live in New Wilmington and commute down to Pittsburgh.

KM: Oh yeah. We probably would have lived down in the city of Pittsburgh. It also turns out that, we can talk about it later, but the union here, the pay was much better than it would have been there at Pitt (University of Pittsburgh).

JN: Oh yeah. It's still way better than people working at Pitt.

KM: So that was another advantage, yeah.

JN: So I know you already mentioned why you were interested in working in Archives itself, but I know you said you were in ILL (Interlibrary Loan) and Reference and Government Docs. For these other positions you had in the library, was it more of something you were interested in or was it like *This needs done, so hey Kevin you have some experience can you do it?* How were those decisions kind of made?

KM: Yeah, actually I loved ILL. It's part of my personality. Go investigate, go find--someone gives you a citation and it'd be fun to dig in there and find where it is, what school had it. I came from--when I worked at MIT, occasionally we had to use the old abstracts and indexes to get further information on something. But now that's pretty much all online. I also liked the contact with the patrons too. That was the one element that I kind of missed a little bit with Archives. Archives got more involved with patrons as time went on, but we were right out in the main lobby as you came in the main entrance ILL was right off to the right. Students would ask questions. Faculty and the community would come in. I liked that, it kept the day going, the day went by pretty fast.

I love that element of ILL, investigating, finding that citation. Didn't always understand what the subject was [laughs], especially with STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) or anything like that.

JN: Yeah, I think you get a little of that in Archives too, depending on what people are looking for. Just digging through some collection.

KM: Right, exactly right. It's fun to discover. Plus, there's an element, not so much in ILL, but in Archives an element of acquisitions and you're discovering this new material that's coming in that someone's kept. There's a historical element to it, or some subject you've never even thought you'd be interested in, but once you dig in, yeah, it's all nice.

JN: Alright, so. The next up is did the department you were hired in, well the library, change while you were here, and how so? I'm sure we've moved between a few colleges, I think, even since I've been here, in terms of where the library fits in the structure of [the university].

KM: Right, exactly. When I first came in, I mentioned Dr. Barbara Farah, and I think she was only here for a few years, and then Phil Tramdack came in. As I remember, the reason they brought--one of the reasons they hired Phil was he had experience, he was an assistant director at a big university, but he also was involved with a major renovation of a library. I think it was in Trenton [New Jersey], I can't remember the school [The College of New Jersey]. It seemed to be that was his focus. Originally, they thought the building was going to be totally—major, like elevators replaced, a new addition added on to the back. So, yeah Phil was involved with that. Eventually, once he retired . . . 2014 maybe something like that?

JN: Yeah because I remember when I started in December of 2014 he was still here.

KM: Okay.

JN: I don't remember the exact time he retired, but I remember by the time I was full time, which was the following summer of 2015, Brad [Wilson] had already taken over and Jen [Bartek] was the operations manager, so.

KM: Right. I remember how that came about in a way. It was like there [was] already-- Millersville University [of Pennsylvania] already had a Manager of Library Operations and there was a move, apparently, in the library world to consider the idea that you didn't need a library director if the building had multi-use. There were all these various offices in the building. So, you needed someone to manage the entire building operation and coordinate all these various offices that had concerns about the building. I think Phil encouraged that in a way, and that's what opened up that position where Jen took over. Especially, that was helpful during the major operations [renovations]. Jen did a fabulous job. I can't imagine a library director necessarily being involved with some of that nuts and bolts of dealing with the maintenance and construction, it's a whole other thing. She did a great job.

JN: Yeah. Speaking of that, with the renovations, sort of along those same lines, how have you seen from when you started to when you retired the functioning of the library changing over the years with even technology, or how the different units have functioned? Along with that, too, have you noticed a change in perception maybe from when you started from students, the academics, and faculty then versus now?

KM: Yeah. When I first started there was still the card catalog.

JN: Oh, wow.

KM: Yeah, even though there was an online catalog I think they kept it because maybe they made the transition with every book in the library, so they wanted to have a backup just in case. There's photos here in the Archives of what the library looked like at that time. So if all else failed you could end up going down to the card catalog to try to look up. Someone would say, "No, it's in your holdings. We know it's in your holdings." So, we wouldn't see it, necessarily online, but then you go out to the card catalog, and it'd be in there. But that wasn't used that often. Then eventually we were confident enough with the people doing the cataloging that we got up to speed and knew what we were dealing with.

I mentioned microfilm; that was still big. [The library] had four or five microfilm units. People had to know how to use those machines and bring patrons over to use them. We'd use them in ILL. And CDs (Compact Discs) were common too [laughs], those are resting in the past even.

JN: Yeah.

KM: I can't remember ever using floppy disks [laughs]. We have some in the Archives, but by the time I got here I don't think they were using them in the computers. I remember Dr. Farah had, out in the reference area, she had those Macs [Apple Macintosh computers]. They were G something, the colored ones. You could see right through them [iMac G3].

JN: Yeah, the see-through. I remember those.

KM: The blue ones; they were all blue. In terms of students reacting, that brought a lot more students in. Before that, there was an old computer lab as you enter the main entrance of the library now, right off to the right where the coffee shop is, there was a long hallway and there were maybe twenty computers in there. They weren't out in the reference area. So they were all in there; it was a computer lab. They had restrictions on printing. Printing was a hassle back then. The whole idea of printing is a lot easier with some of the machines they have now. Back then, they were constantly jamming; it was an issue. I remember, too, it was also cold in there. I think they [have] since changed the law. I think smoking was allowed right outside there or something. You'd be in there and if you weren't a smoker, you'd be getting the smoke from somewhere.

JN: Yeah, I think they changed it so you have to be so many feet away from an entrance now. Although I think--I might be mistaken, but I recall on one of the original plans of the building—like you said, that was a computer lab but I think that was a smoking lounge at some point [laughs].

KM: Oh yeah, that's right! Actually that's right. Yeah, now I remember. That's why I was thinking [about] smoking, sure. Yeah, amazing when you think about it. You couldn't help but smell that.

JN: Oh, yeah.

KM: Yeah. So yeah, that was a big change. The students, as I recall when I used to sit out there, they [library staff] tried to maintain a quiet library still, even on the first floor, I don't think they encouraged group study necessarily. I could be wrong about that. There used to be these old desks [study carrels] that were up against the wall that you'd go up a stair and you could overview the whole bottom floor [laughs]. I always thought that was a little strange. Some students loved it, like sitting on a throne or something [laughs].

JN: [Laughs].

KM: I believe it was a little more quiet; we had to keep the noise down somewhat. Then eventually over the years, with all the computers out there [in the reference area], the library became *very* attractive, with people doing not only research, but they could come to the library and use all the computers, and get research help, and could print [for] free for the longest time.

JN: Yeah.

KM: And they were encouraged to do group study. So as the years progressed, if you didn't want to be dealing with all the noise on the first floor, you could work your way up--that's still the case now--the third floor is designated as a quiet area. So if you needed that quiet spot, you'd come up to the third floor.

Yeah, that was a change. Of course, there's ebooks (electronic books). They were just starting; Lynn was involved with that when I came. Of course, that's the world now; it's like an enormous collection of ebooks. Students might have used to have . . . this is a little aside about books, but I remember working at Interlibrary Loan and students would always try to get textbooks [laughs] through Interlibrary Loan and we had a rule they couldn't borrow a textbook from someone because they'd never come back until the end of the semester.

JN: Oh sure.

KM: A lot of schools never loaned them out anyways. The technology has been major. I mean even, I don't know if you even find USBs [flash drives] anymore on the computers. I think a lot of people just, everything's in the cloud.

JN: Yeah.

KM: We used to find all those USBs in the lost and found. Then the music, the music collection was all the CDs. We still have a fair amount of them, I believe. Then there were VHS. People could loan movies on VHS. We used to film with VHS. We have a lot of VHS tapes here in the Archives on various subjects. But that's another issue in terms of us for preservation.

JN: Yeah. When I think, too. And still, it was sometime when I was a student here, so would have been 2003-2008, I remember they got rid of all the LP records.

KM: Right, right! Now they're cool. Yeah, that's right I remember those.

JN: My friends and I, yeah because I worked here, so I remember some of my friends came over from the Music Department and we [were] just digging through, looking for jazz records.

KM: Yeah, I'm sure they had a great collection. Because Stephen Hawk probably collaborated with the librarians, or somebody did over there probably.

JN: Oh yeah, maybe him or Terry Steele over the years. Get some jazz records for sure.

KM: Yeah, they have a great jazz program.

JN: Oh yeah.

KM: I can remember that. Also the sheet music collection.

JN: Yeah.

KM: Yeah that got a lot of use too, from the Music Department. Sheet music now probably a lot of it is probably online now, too. So, they don't necessarily have to come in.

JN: Yeah, I think I was talking to one of the Music majors because I volunteer and play with them for concerts sometimes, and I think they have a--no, actually it was when I was in Cataloging, I remember the Music Department was looking into maybe getting a subscription for that when Aiping [Chen-Gaffey] was here. She said "Hey Jared, can you look into this." Since I know music.

KM: Yeah.

JN: I think that's becoming a thing now with--you can have digital music that you can markup on your iPad or whatever.

KM: Right, right.

JN: But then the problem is that you're a student here and you get all this music, then you graduate and it's gone! I don't know if they grandfather something in that you can pay a little fee and keep getting it. But at least here if like, maybe you make a copy of a piece of sheet music for yourself and you just have that.

KM: Right, yeah that's a good point.

JN: Let's see, I might already know the answer to this one, but what buildings did you work in? Was it just the library?

KM: Yeah, just the library. Even when there was a period during the renovations I was still here. Some people had to temporarily go off.

JN: Yeah, I think it was--some the faculty moved out, but all the staff stayed in the building.

KM: Yeah, I couldn't remember if it was everybody.

JN: And again, speaking of the renovations, any memories from when you had to move the Archives—what? At least three times? [Laughs].

KM: [Laughs]. Three times, yeah. The original Archives, when I took the position, was in the conference room now, C202. That used to be Special Collections. And they used to have this dividing door--rollout door--folding kind of thing, that would separate the Archives from the Special Collections. It was packed. You can imagine, the room wasn't all that large; it was packed. At some point, I think it was the computer--Del Hamilton--made an executive decision to switch the computer loaning. We used to loan laptops; we used to let those out and let students borrow them. I think they wanted that space for that. So they asked us to come up here on the third floor. It was basically just room 319 and 318. (I think it's 318). I was in there, and *that* was still packed. We had to get new shelving to put in there. That shelving we still have, we had to make a decision about that. We had to make a decision about the weight of all that up on this floor.

JN: Oh yeah!

KM: Because structurally, that was a lot of weight to bring in. I remember just sitting . . . I just barely had any room. It was like not even two feet in front of my desk [laughs], and everything was just crammed. Thank goodness Judy [Silva] really had the vision to make this Archives much more than it had been ever before. We decided we definitely needed more space.

So, we eventually moved--IT used to be in here. Dean Lindy was right over here in this office, John Press used to be in the office you're currently in. I'm not sure if Linda Passauer was up here on this floor. So, it was always nice to have them around because the library would sometimes run into IT problems, and someone would be around to help us out a little bit. But they eventually moved over to Old Main [Maltby]. There may have been someone else in between, and that opened up some space for us. So these three main areas, we were able to expand and breathe a little bit. Then eventually we had these partitions that were put up, but that came along with the renovations that started to happen. They removed some shelving. Shelving used to come all the way into here from out there in the stacks. They were removed. Then that opened up some space because, at this point as things progressed, Judy had more classes up here and they needed that space. We only had temporary walls so, in theory, this is the quiet floor but then you'd have a class up here, so couldn't help but have some noise. There was more renovation that happened, eventually we had these solid walls up here.

JN: Because I remember when I first started in December of 2014, I was just in that back room at a table on a computer. I didn't even have an actual desk.

KM: [Laughs]. Right, I remember that.

JN: And then we moved everything down into Special Collections while they were renovating the third floor here.

KM: Right, yeah right.

JN: And so we each had our little desk on either side of the door there. Again, just crammed in all that stuff.

KM: Crammed all in knowing at some point we could move back up. Facilities [were] great when they helped us move it, but it was a challenge because . . . some people think of archives and they just think of 8 ½ x 11 business paper all in boxes, but we have such a diverse collection of memorabilia and realia in all these different sized boxes, newspapers in different sized boxes. Keeping that all straight and transporting it between the floors, that was a challenge, especially to keep it safe with preservation.

JN: I was going to say, do you recall anything that you did, because the flat files are just such a diverse array of oversize things, how did you go about transporting that safely?

KM: Right, yeah. I can't remember if we brought the whole flat files down.

JN: Just sort of left it in there?

KM: Yeah, I think so. We looked at them and wanted to make sure nothing would shake around that couldn't be moved. That's how I remember it. [Pause]. Facilities did do a great job, but you had to keep an eye [laughs] on what was going on. Because if they seemed to be in a rush-- because they're so busy, some of that material, [you] got to be like, "Guys"

JN: "Be gentle."

KM: "Be gentle with that material, please."

JN: Just like chucking the boxes around.

KM: Yeah, not quite that dramatic, but still [laughs]. Again, we had to figure out the shelving units and the weight distribution. And we met a lot with Mary Ann King. Because Mary Ann King was involved with a lot of the renovations here. She was the point person. I tried to convince her that even this space may not even be enough. We did have off-site storage too. I forget what year we started doing that. But we put a lot of the original newspapers out there in the cave in Wampum [PA]. I think we've since got those taken out of there now.

JN: Yes, now we use Iron Mountain.

KM: Iron Mountain, which is a first-class operation.

JN: Oh yeah, they got a lot of cool stuff there.

KM: I remember doing the tour there; that was spectacular, yeah. Judy and I went. I can't remember if someone else went from the Archives. It was just after 9/11, so the security was really high. MGM films are down there, the original MGM films. Social Security records for the entire nation, I think, in microfiche. Stephen Spielberg's Holocaust collection, video tapes, all the oral histories. Just amazing and there's so much more.

JN: Yeah, I know they've got a lot of veterans' records too. The VA (Veterans Affairs) has their own . . . you have to get clearance to work down there. I think they're digitizing records.

KM: And there's the photography place that Bill Gates bought. The premiere collection of photographs. There was a German collector. What was the name of that? [Corbis]. At any rate, this guy, when the camera was first invented, started collecting as many photographs as he could, and negatives. They have some of those. If you can think of any iconic photograph it's probably in that collection.

JN: Wow. Jumping to more general stuff. Outside of your library work, were you involved in anything else on campus with committees, or activities, or with your art background did you ever work with the Art Department, or teach adjunct or anything like that?

KM: Yeah, I didn't teach adjunct here, but Glen Brunken, God rest his soul, gave me a show at the Gault, Martha Gault Gallery. The old one [laughs], up on the hill by the police station. It was fun. People got a chance to see some of my work. They were pastels that I had painted at the time. That was only two or three years after I got hired here.

Subsequently, just the Archives interaction, we had a lot of interaction--especially Judy in Special Collections--with the Art Department. We have some unique materials, unique books. Johannes Itten's *Theory of Color* [Josef Alber's *Interaction of Color*] is in our Special Collection; they come up and use that occasionally. There's all sorts of magazines and other resources that are in Special Collections that students can look at through history, look at the visual imagery of it.

Theresa Antonellis, I mentioned, she was from my hometown. We connected and got involved with displays in the library, with her students showing their work. I think Barbara Westman had original handmade art books [that] the students would make. I can't remember if that was the Art Department, but we had a major show of handmade art books that was on display in the library in Special Collections too at one point. The Art Department let us borrow World War I posters and we had an exhibition up here. We collaborated not only with the Art Department, but the History Department and then the English Department, brought their students up here. It was during the centennial of World War I, so that would have been 2017, 2016, I can't remember. That was pretty neat having all those posters up. It's a nice little collection that the Art Department has.

JN: Nice. And with your connections here with the Art Department, did that ever translate with-- 'cause your wife runs the Hoyt in New Castle, was there ever . . . ?

KN: Oh yeah, yeah. Patti--my wife, Patti is the Exhibitions Coordinator at the Hoyt in New Castle. The Art Department has gone over there and they've had shows over there. The Hoyt tries to encourage involvement with the community, and encourage schools to bring their students to show their work. They work with local high schools. Students have had some work there, too.

JN: Any particular accomplishments from your time here that you want to mention or reflect upon?

KM: Yeah, and this brings *you* into the picture. The digital collection we have is outstanding, I think. When Judy first got involved we started to use CONTENTdm. We got some funding initially to do the news[papers], that was major too. We found some money to get *The Rockets* digitized, and they can be keyword searched, so that's a great resource for people, and for us, too. Initially I think we only had ten yearbooks in there or something like that. Then we collaborated with the Alumni House, and you were really involved with this too, and we had the student, that was a major undertaking too. We had all those yearbooks, the whole entire run of

yearbooks scanned and we had to quality check each book and make sure no pages were missing. Of course, we had the notorious yearbook from--1930? I can't remember the date, but. . . .

JN: With the babies.

KM: With the babies. With the faculty that were made into little babies [laughs].

JN: You had to make sure that page was there to get scanned, yeah.

KM: Right, exactly. And it turns out now we have two of them. We thought we only had one, but we have two now.

JN: So jumping back a little bit, when you first started, who were the leaders or “movers and shakers” on campus at the time and what were your impressions of that “old guard?”

KM: Well, when I first came here I pretty much stayed in the library. I know Dr. Barbara Farah ran a tight ship. I think it was an adjustment for some people because the former director [Bill Garton] took a slightly more relaxed approach, and I think Dr. Farah wanted to concentrate on service to the patrons. She wanted to make sure everybody was on board with that. I had no problem. Anyway, ILL was always on the move and out there in the front. But I think it was an adjustment for some people.

Then Phil [Tramdack] came and, I think he was right, he took the notion that a lot of these people already had the capability to do the job themselves, and if there was a problem *then* he'd address it. That was his approach and it was a good approach, I thought. But campus-wide, I think the presidents have an effect. Robert Smith, G. Warren Smith was just moving out, and of course, we have his collection here. But somehow there was conflict with him and Harrisburg. The faculty here, everyone really admired him and liked the job he had done here, but somehow, he was asked to leave. Then Robert M. Smith was the provost and was running Slippery Rock for a while. He may have still been a provost when all this development was going on around the campus with the residence halls, and eventually he became the president. That was a major, major undertaking. Also, he may have been a little bit involved with the downtown Slippery Rock development.

JN: Yes.

KM: I know Bob Watson, a few people from the college [university], John Bonando, and some people like that were involved working with the community, the town, to make the downtown area look much more appealing. Which it does, it really does look so much better now. They have those streetlights. There's a sense of uniformity if you go down[town]. They changed the drinking--I think it was a dry town.

JN: Yes.

KM: Then the brewery [North Country Brewing] was downtown. And, you had the old-school conservatives probably feeling like this is the end of all, it's going to wreak havoc. It turned out it's a great place for people to meet in the community.

Also the Sheetz down at the corner, used to be Wilson's Garage. Do you remember that at all? It was a small little garage. But in fact, Robert M. Smith mentioned that when he first came to town—you know, he was all on board [with] making this town more presentable, because parents would come into town. I remember him mentioning this in his oral [history interview], and what did they see? The first thing [as] they came in was a pregnancy center. So, you're thinking, what is the parent thinking at this point? So, all of that has been—I mean, not that I'm against pregnancy centers--all that is changing the perception as you come in. . . .

JN: Right.

KM: . . . and that's changed a lot. So that was major too. The growth that we experienced here during that time, it was quite impressive.

JN: Oh yeah, especially because they built all those new dorms to house students.

KM: Right, and the Equestrian Center, that was a whole program too that was for people with disabilities.

JN: So, I think you already mentioned a couple people, but anyone else you'd like to mention as someone who was particularly influential or significant to you while you were working here?

KM: Oh yeah, Jane Smith was great, very welcoming when I came here. You come from a different area entirely, and that made the transition real easy for me. Then Judy's been terrific. She did a fabulous job here; encouraged us in the Archives. Have to admire her go-to attitude of getting it done. So it's been good.

All of the staff here were great. That's one thing I should mention, is it's a friendly place overall. I had come from, well you were in an urban library too; it's a different atmosphere entirely. Some academics, I think, take themselves way too seriously. So, here it really feels--everyone feels a part of the community, the faculty, staff. So, it's nice, too.

JN: Yeah, that's definitely the Slippery Rock vibe.

KM: Yeah. Even other people--my brother-in-law teaches part time here. He just couldn't get over how friendly it was, when he came up. It shocked him [laughs].

JN: So you already have mentioned something like the renovations as kind of a major event, but if there's anything else you want to say about that or if there's any other big events that happened

on campus, either local or even national, during your time here, that you thought might be worth mentioning?

KM: Oh, sure. Well, when I first got here, within a year, 9/11 happened. It's one of those things everybody kind of remembers where they were. I can remember I was out in ILL. The Tutoring Center was right next door and there were TVs in there. Lo and behold, I got, unfortunately, I got to see the second plane go into the tower live. So that was pretty dramatic. I mean, talk about paranoia, everybody around the area were just--you'd hear about these people in their houses, taping up all the windows, thinking like someone's going to attack a nuclear reactor. A different situation, that's for sure.

But on a more positive note, one of the things that I remember standing out: we got really involved with the 125th anniversary of the college. We worked a lot with PR [Public Relations] and Gordon Ovenshine, and they were making use of what we had, of course, because they wanted to do a big spread on the history of the university. So, we were giving them a lot of material. I can remember the parade; it was a big event. Judy got involved with some of the speeches that were done. We had scanned all the catalogs from the normal school era to as far as we could get to the present, and they would take turns, the students would actually say every student's name that was listed in the catalog over the last 125 years or whatever. So that was nice. Then there were talks and other events related to it. So, we were highly involved in that. And as I mentioned, the digital collections, too.

But events, happenings, I don't recall any major--we'd have those snowstorms. I think there was one time the university was completely shut down at one point. I *think* we had a situation where all the electricity was out on the lower campus for quite a while. Someone had hit one of those boxes down here [laughs].

JN: Oh no [laughs].

KM: We didn't have a clue what was going on, but that was finally resolved. As I mentioned, the renovation was quite an adjustment. In fact, we were up here, I'm pretty sure you were here too when the heat--we were on the top floor, and it was so hot up here they had to bring in portable air conditioners. It did help with the humidity, of course we were worried about the collection too with the humidity. But Facilities did the best they could. I mean, it did help. We had [de]humidifiers running constantly in there too. Those are the major ones I can think of.

JN: Yeah. And then anything else, any other memorable events that come to mind and that maybe weren't necessarily big were just, you know, things that stuck with you?

KM: Yeah, there were two people here that I was friendly with and really enjoyed their company: Joe Drobney [Library] and Mark Campbell [Academic Support Services]. It's a sad thing that they died way too early, you know? I always think of them. Joe was great. He worked in ILL and he was a big baseball fan. We talked constantly about sports. He just had an

encyclopedic mind. Great guy. Then Mark was so helpful to students in advisement and all that. [He was] always upbeat when you'd see him. Great guy too. Of course, I mentioned Jen too. Jen did a great job with the renovation. All the staff, really, I have no complaints at all.

JN: So I want to also ask about SSHELCO [State System of Higher Education] conferences. Was that something that you always attended, or just when you were in the Archives or even too, anything about the Catalogers and Archivists conferences and memorable things about those or connections that you made through these statewide gatherings that we have?

KM: Yeah, I was thinking back. I think the first time I went out to SSHELCO the first time with Jane Smith, and believe it or not, Kathy Manning. Yeah. Kathy went out for the Circulation aspect of it. Jane Smith and I went more specifically--it was called DOMA (Documents and Maps), and (I had to look it up, I couldn't remember what DOMA stood for), but it was Documents and Maps.

JN: Okay.

KM: So we were the Government Documents [unit]. Each school has a so-called legacy collection, believe it or not, within the Government Documents section. We have in our collection, were out in the stacks, they would designate legacy and stamp them so they wouldn't be de-acquisitioned or whatever. They're like educational catalogs that were produced by the government, publications on education specifically. They're kind of interesting actually. So if anybody wanted to do a history on education in general, it's a good resource.

I didn't necessarily go out [to SSHELCO conference] much in subsequent years, but with the Archives, we'd go out and we'd connect. Sometimes I'd confuse--there was Archives / Catalogers meetings, and SSHELCO, they'd be separate. And of course, we hosted a SSHELCO. Was it SSHELCO or Catalogers, I guess?

JN: Oh, it was the Catalogers meeting.

KM: Right, the Archivists / Catalogers [meeting], here at Slippery Rock. Each school takes turns from each side [of the state]. But SSHELCO was always held out in Harrisburg. It was always good to connect with people from the other schools. I know Marilyn Parrish at Millersville [University of Pennsylvania] was a great help to Judy and myself, along with the other people. They were all great to make connections with because, in some ways, we learned that our situation was a lot better than some of the other schools. Millersville has a first-rate operation going for their Archives. We toured that and looked at their collection. But, sometimes I almost get the feeling that when we presented some of what we had accomplished, that some of the poor other Archives unfortunately didn't have the funding, or somehow the administration didn't want to have the focus on their history like we do.

JN: Yeah, it's really diverse levels of funding and staffing because some places like Slippery Rock would have a faculty and one or two staff; in some places it's just one faculty member who's maybe only part time Archives.

KM: A difficult situation.

JN: But any sort of reflections you have on being an AFSCME [American Federation of State and Municipal Employees] member and how that has affected your job, maybe positively or even negatively here at Slippery Rock?

KM: Yeah, I mean the positive side was, I mentioned already, the pay compared to Pitt [laughs] was a lot better because of AFSCME. Every time the contract comes up you have to battle over health issues, but everyone's dealing with that. I guess in the big picture, you don't like to think it because you're making--every year they make you pay more contributions to your health care. I think we have a pretty good situation compared to a lot of other places in that regard.

The big snag when I was a staff member, it was very active, you could join in meetings and when there was a vote, you could go down and vote with the fellow staff members, which, there's so much more members in that local [AFSCME Local 819]. But in a way, unbeknownst in a way to me even, was once you became a Library Tech (Technician), you were considered a supervisor and you had to go into a different local [AFSCME Local 2247]. That wasn't all that well represented on campus necessarily. I'm trying to remember his name now in the mail room, he [Roy Corso, Stores/Mailing Supervisor] was the point person, and he would go down to Kittanning where that Local is. Which now I think, are you still get involved with it?

JN: Yeah, I'm still the steward here. Because right after he retired, there was a length of time, right, that there was nobody?

KM: Yeah it was horrible. In fact, we had confusion over our Local number too. I mean, some people thought we belonged down in Pittsburgh, and were we connected with Clarion somehow? So, at one point the contract came up--a new contract--and there was--I've since learned not to take them too seriously, but at the time I was worried about my son's tuition [dependents of AFSCME employees at PASSHE universities eligibility for tuition waivers while earning an undergraduate degree], you know how Harrisburg or whoever, the administrative people overlooking the whole System. Usually, when they come to the contract they fire everything worst possible they're going to take away, and one of those was taking their tuition [waivers] from the staff person so their son or daughter could not attend [tuition free]. So, I know Jen and I went down, Kathy Manning might have been involved too because her son might have been still here, I can't remember. I went down there and lo and behold, there [were] mostly the guys from The Department of Transportation [PennDOT], the guys that do the [snow] plowing. On the positive side of that is they're pretty powerful, so that union has a say. On the negative side, they didn't connect with the academic stuff at all. Their focus is the Department of Transportation. Occasionally there'd be some people from Clarion [University of Pennsylvania] that were like

part of Facilities, or something like that, that were supervisors of Facilities. But I remember feeling mystified like, well we're telling you what we want here and hopefully they'll keep it. As it all turned out they kept that tuition [waiver]. Then my father-in-law at the time used to be an HR [Human Resources] guy and said that they had nothing to lose by doing that. So they're adding a few seats to a classroom, it's nothing major.

JN: Yeah that's just that bargaining tactic that they just throw out the worst possible contract, you know, for us as the first round and then kind of have to go back and forth. But yeah, I can say not much has changed. You know, the meetings are still me and then I think there's like one or two other office type people and then the rest is just PennDOT workers, because I think they probably live the closest too depending on where they work, so.

KM: Right. Kittanning is a little bit of a drive.

JN: Yeah. I think they just have generally more issues with management and even again-- because they're actual supervisors--you know, unlike us who are sort of supervisors in title only for the most part.

KM: Right, right.

JN: So, they have a lot of other issues with grievances and stuff that fortunately, at least at my time at Slippery Rock, we haven't really had to really have the union come down and do any grievances or anything. So, they have a lot more, or even using seniority to get different contracts as they switch, depending on the season. So it's way more complicated. We just sort of show up and do our jobs [laughs].

KM: Right, right, right. I remember when that confusion happened about what Local--we finally brought someone here and we voted. Plus, they allowed us to vote. We hadn't voted in *years* because [of] the supervisors. I think Kathy Frampton had a lot to do with that. She was in touch with them. So that was well, and you finally get connected with someone and didn't feel totally lost. The other Local for the regular staff and office workers here is I think it runs pretty well.

JN: Yeah. They actually get to meet on campus for their meetings like during lunch.

KM: [Laughs] right, exactly. Yeah.

JN: So do you have any particular thoughts about any particular challenges working through the COVID epidemic? And then what was either different or the same returning to work afterwards?

KM: Yeah. The COVID was definitely an adjustment, of course everyone was terrified, and rightfully so. The mask wearing, in a way, I felt a little bit insulated, we're up here on the third floor we didn't necessarily have that much contact with people. The big change--talk about technology--was doing Zoom, a lot of Zoom meetings. Even our patrons, you'd get to the point

where we were helping students out through the Zoom meetings. I think in some ways they may have preferred that.

Then some people could work from home, too. So IT [Information Technology] had to do a workaround so we could log in to our computers in real time as though we were sitting at the desk. Initially it was a little glitchy, but we got through that. So you hear about this all the time, there were people, people had long commutes suddenly this is a lot better than wasting so much money on gas to work from home. You know, talk about a union, that's the downside of the union that doesn't seem to want, our contract, or the way it's written with HR, there wasn't that much flexibility. Because of the pandemic they allowed it, I guess, because it was considered an emergency situation or whatever. But I think there's a little difficulty from the working at home continuing in certain positions after that.

JN: Yeah, I don't think that's, again because our contract is so wide with all the different people in AFSCME, there's nothing in it specifically about remote work. So right now it's the wild west in terms of, I think even different departments have different rules on Slippery Rock campus, let alone between the different schools themselves. So I'm hoping that something that can get put in a later contract because it's just all over the place at this point.

KM: Right. That would help. And then, I'm trying to remember, I mean, I think I left right after things sort of [pause] things were starting to come back to normal. I remember thinking that, on the positive side, it helped me adjust to the fact, I knew it was going to retire. So, in a way it helped me adjust to the fact that I was at home coming in two or three days, working from home. So that helped, believe it or not, in the adjustment thinking about retirement. Hopefully we don't have to go through anything like that again.

JN: Yeah. Well, I think too, right around when COVID hit was when we started working with Franklyn Charles.

KM: Oh right.

JN: And that COMM256 class. So, I feel like, wasn't it, if I recall when we were allowed to come back to campus here and there, wasn't there a mad dash and you were trying to scan all this stuff for these students so we could get it, put it online so they didn't have to physically come in?

KM: Judy set up that LibGuide, and you did, too. I remember doing a film for the Archives. I mean, I have a background in the arts, but [laughs] there's a little bit of challenge once you get into editing and all that doing a video presentation. So, we did the tour of the library. You did the tutorial on how to access resources within the Archives. Do you still use that at all?

JN: I've actually--I had to redo it recently. Just because of where things are--changed a little bit. But yeah, no, I did redo that. I don't know if the physical one is still, well because they can come in so they don't need the physical tour [laughs].

KM: Right, do the tour like the real thing. It's nothing like the real thing. Especially--that's my opinion in terms of Archives, too. That always impressed me about students when they finally see original material: photographs, those original postcards, letters, correspondence, the actual item. They're so used to seeing everybody is--they're so used to seeing everything digitized now. It has a sense of removal from--doesn't seem to be a big deal. So when you actually see the real item, that makes a big difference.

JN: Then I'm trying to recall that you retired, was it June of 2021?

KM: I believe so, yeah.

JN: Did you say like you were already thinking about it? Was it, did they sweeten the pot a little bit?

KM: They did sweeten the pot.

JN: To encourage . . . ?

KM: Yeah, there was a buyout [incentive]. There was a formula to it. You had to have so many years and I fit all those elements to it. Yeah [I thought], *I'm gonna go for it*.

JN: I mean if you're, if you're getting close, why not get out when you got a better deal [laughs]?

KM: Right. Exactly. Couldn't refuse it. The only thing I think that might have been different was, they may still do that now, but they made sure that I turn that ID [Slippery Rock University staff ID] in [laughs]. I had to sign papers that [stated] I would never apply for any job again in the state system [PASSHE] or something like that, or at least Slippery Rock. I think that was part of the buyout.

JN: Well, that might just be for any employee when they retire.

KM: Oh, ok.

JN: Because I remember talking to Judy about--we're talking about the Cheng Collection. I think we're gonna get that processed in the future and talking about who can do translation, and we're naming a couple of retired [people] Aiping, and a couple other people. It's like, well, could they actually work here? It's kind of unclear if they can actually work here again, because they've retired.

KM: Oh right, yeah.

JN: So that might just be across the board.

KM: Okay. Interesting. So, someone would have to volunteer I guess to get around that.

JN: Not quite sure. But so what, if anything, do you miss about working at SRU?

KM: I guess the first thing I noticed was that I was, it's nice to have young people around. I used to love to work with the students. They're always thinking about the latest issue, and high energy and all that. So, when you're getting up there in age it's nice to have young people around. So I miss that element. And just the campus and the people, some of the staff. Right now though, I'm spending a lot of time, more time with my art, which is my first love in a way. What was the rest of the question?

JN: Just like what you missed about being here.

KM: Yeah. I think that's primarily it. A friend of mine said I should volunteer. I live right by Westminster College, and *why don't you just volunteer down there?* I haven't got myself volunteering [laughs] there yet.

JN: Well, I'm sure you can keep busy painting, so you don't necessarily need another hobby [laughs].

KM: Oh yeah, right.

JN: So do you have any particular words of wisdom or things you would like for current or future Rock community members to know?

KM: I was thinking, if people could still maintain that friendliness on the campus, that'd be great. I get the feeling everyone here generally tries to provide for the students and cares for them. So as long as people keep that up, this university will just be a great place to go [and] be involved with. So that's my only word of wisdom. I'd hate to see it turn into, like a big urban academic situation, which I can't see it happening, where you're just kind of a number on the office door kind of thing.

JN: So how would you like to be remembered?

KM: Oh gosh. I guess someone who provided good service in the Archives, in InterLibrary Loan. That's about it [laughs].

JN: Well, that's the last official question. So is there anything else you, anything particular that you want to mention or talk about before we wrap up here?

KM: The only thing is it's been great doing this with you. Obviously I know you. We worked together, so a colleague. So that's appreciated. It's been fun, actually.

JN: Very enjoyable for me as well.

KM: All right, great.

JN: Well, with that, thank you so much again for interviewing here today, Kevin. I really appreciate it.

KM: All right. You're welcome. Thank you.