

SDSU Archives Oral History

Interviewee: Louis A. Kenney

Interviewer: Lyn Olsson

Date: 3 June 1993

Today's date is June 3, 1993. My name is Lyn Olsson. The following is an interview with Dr. Louis Kenney who was University Librarian at San Diego State University from 1961 until his retirement in June of 1980. This interview is supported by a John Adams Humanities Minigrant.

[Ed. note: This is a briefly edited oral history transcription. Unless otherwise noted, names in brackets have not been confirmed.]

Lyn Olsson (LO): (Referring to list of questions) What do you think about this first one? You served as Camp Librarian at Camp Callan near San Diego. Did this influence your applying for a job at San Diego State?

Louis Kenney (LK): As a matter of fact it did. The fact that I had been in San Diego during World War II days. And when this job opened up at San Diego State as the College Librarian, I was especially interested because I had always thought I would like to return to California. I had enjoyed San Diego and La Jolla very much when I was at Camp Callan, which was near La Jolla, on Torrey Pines Mesa where UCSD stands today.

There was a big army camp there in WWII and I had the good fortune to be stationed there for about two and a half years.

LO: What were your duties as camp librarian? What kind of a library was it?

LK: It was a library geared to the needs of civilian soldiers, I should say everyone there was a draftee, and they had what could be called a good public library sort of collection. It was strong on current fiction, current events, and political events. There was a nice reference collection. I was not the head librarian, a civilian librarian named Rachael Dent was the camp librarian. She had her library degree from UC Berkeley and was one of the most admirable persons I've ever met in all my life. She was certainly an intellectual type, but she had the most charming manner and was just adept at getting people to do things--people would fall all over themselves trying to do her wishes, because she had such a manner and such a charm about her. Her later husband was a captain in the armored division in WWII, his name was Edwin Costana, and he was also a native Californian. He and Rachael had met in library school at Berkeley back in about 1938 or 39, or perhaps 39 or 40. And they were married later during WWII, but he served in combat in Belgium and in Germany; he was a very impressive man too. He eventually became the City Librarian at the City of Baltimore Public Library, and he was also the President of the American Library Association in the 1950s. Both were perfectly charming and talented and possessed natural leadership abilities. But I digress.

LO: I wasn't going to ask you very much about it, but since we're on the subject, is there anything about Camp Callan in particular

that left a lasting impression on you that . . .

LK: We referred to Camp Callan as "Campus Callan by the Sea." It was the most delightful military post I ever served; I was in several others later in WWII days, but certainly Camp Callan was the greatest. It was so close to La Jolla. And in fact there was a bus from the camp that went down to La Jolla every half hour.

I well remember my firstpay day in Camp Callan. I was drafted in Illinois and we were put on a train that dragged along for about three days and ended up at a place called Kearny Siding. And it was a woe-forlorn-looking place where we got out of this train, about a couple of hundred newly drafted soldiers. And there were trucks out there that picked us up and took us over to Camp Callan. But of course it was overlooking the ocean, a beautiful place. It was well kept and well administered. It wasn't a big post either. The spirit there was the best. After we had been at Camp Callan for one month we were paid, and the Army pay in those days was \$30 a month. And of that \$30 they withheld \$5 for your laundry bill for the month. And they withheld another \$10 for insurance, life insurance that they urged every G.I. to take out. And so on with some other expenses, I had approximately \$13 left in my pocket on the first pay day. And when you got paid they--this was about two months before Pearl Harbor--you had the rest of the day free. So several of my friends got together and we went down to the beach, the Cove in La Jolla, and spent the afternoon there, and then we decided "well, let's just blow it!" So we went to the La Valencia, the most elegant hotel in La Jolla, and had big steak dinners in

the patio restaurant. And sitting at a table, about two tables away from us fresh enlisted G.I.s was the General in command of Camp Callan with his wife. And we thought it rather amusing that us plebian enlisted men were sitting in the patio of the hotel with the General. Anyhow, we spent all our money and decided it would be okay to be broke another thirty days since it didn't make any difference with that little money.

In 1943 the military, the defense effort of the U.S. became more intense and the need for able-bodied soldiers to go into combat increased a great deal. So the military went through all these bases across the country where able-bodied soldiers were serving in these non-combat roles in camp headquarters and camp service jobs, like libraries, and since I was fully able-bodied I got orders to move to Oklahoma to join a new infantry division that was being formed there, and it was scheduled to go to Europe. So I went off to Oklahoma in late 1943. I was in an artillery battalion--155 mm artillery battalion--and I was a battalion headquarters clerk, which meant that I was a kind of a clerical assistant to the major who was the assistant commander of the battalion--a battalion has about 2,000 men--and our particular one had Howitzers, which are large guns/cannons. And so we trained, and in late 1944 we got our orders to head for the port to go overseas, and we went off to a place called Camp [Kilmer], in New Jersey which is very close to the Hudson River. On Christmas Day we went aboard ship, and it was the "Queen Elizabeth". There were over 10,000 men in the "Queen Elizabeth". We were in berths about

four high; they were canvas cots--canvas stretched between pipes--and they were about four or five high. They had mess halls all over the ship, and when we went to eat we were served on these little metal plates that all G.I.s carried, and you stood up in this sort of mess hall and ate as fast as you could, because obviously they were serving thousands And the other thing I remember was, I never got seasick, but most of our companions did. And the bad thing about not being sick was you had to clean up.

The trip was very quick, I think it may have been only days. We landed in Marseille, Southern France. On the way home after the War was over we were on a so-called victory ship, and it took at least twelve days, I don't remember now. And it bounced all over the ocean. The Elizabeth was just smooth, it just rocked a little bit, such a big ship.

LO: Your unit went into combat in northern France and Germany in 1945. Is there anything you can add to that? . . . that will be the end of our pre-Library discussion.

LK: There are all kinds of things I can tell you about that. But I think it would be better simply to say that as the War ended in late April 1945, our unit was way down in south central Germany near Nuremberg. The Colonel called me into his headquarters, the Commander of our batallion, and he said there are two young officers here from staff headquarters in Paris, and they want to talk to you. So these bright young Harvard graduates said that now that the war was almost over, they had planned a big information

and education program to keep these 3 million American soldiers' minds busy because there won't be anything to do. So they had a big planned program of information and education for them. And they said they had gone through the personnel forms of about half a million soldiers and they found one who had a library degree, and that was me. [laughter] And so they said "We're going to have a special course for military librarians back in Paris, and it will last two weeks, do you want to go or would you rather stay with your unit here in Germany?" I said "I want to go." The Colonel was dissapointed because he thought I would rather stay with the batallion and fight the Germans. But the War was practically over, there wasn't any resistance from the Germans any more. So all the bridges in Germany had been knocked out and the highways were terrible, but anyhow I got into a G.I. truck, a military truck, and we drove all the way back to Paris. It took more than a day from way down there in Germany.

There is a group of buildings south of the center of Paris, they're in the city of Paris, but they're called the Cite Universitaire (sp?), so that means "university city" and it's where foreign students lived who attended the great famous University of Paris. And we stayed in the Maison des Esta Uni(sp?) that's the home of the United States. And there were other dormitories, Maison Belgique, and so-on of the others nations. And so we had our classes there. The reason I get off on all this is because on the last day of our two week courses in which we learned all about how to run a library, how to do book selection, how to do

cataloging, how to do reference work, and everything else--as I say I was the only librarian in the group, there were others who had taught school or had some experience in that direction. The last day Gertrude Stein came to talk to us. She was a famous American emigre who left the U.S. in the 1920s along with a lot of other American intellectuals--F. Scott Fitzgerald, T.S. Elliott, Hemingway, and others. It was just wonderful, I'll never forget it.

LO: That time in Paris was probably the most exciting two weeks of your stay over in Europe.

LK: Oh yes, yes it was. I was very bored in the military. I hated the Army. In fact, by this time it had been four years, I had been drafted in August of 1941. The first year or two I thought well, I'm doing it for my country, and it's my patriotic duty, and this is a war against Nazis, a horrible force in the world. But after four years I was really, really tired of it.

But anyhow, that was the bright light of my military service, and I don't think we should spend any more time on that.

LO: Alright, let's get down to business then. Unless you want to tell me about your stay at the University of Illinois, for your M.S. in librarianship, we can skip over to San Diego State College.

LK: Well, I had a leave of absence from the staff at the University of Illinois, for the war, so I went back. And I had already completed some courses toward my masters degree in library science. In those days you had to go two years to get a masters in library science. And so I went back to the staff at the

University of Illinois and continued work and finished my masters in 1948.

From there I was looking for a promotion and hoping to move up in the library world. So I accepted a job as head of acquisitions at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. It was a rapidly growing institution in those days, and the library was growing by leaps and bounds. And it was very interesting and very exciting to be the head of the acquisition department in those growing days. We simply chased after research collections everywhere. And money was never a problem, we just had whatever we needed. We bought lots of foreign books too--French, German, Russian. They had a Russian institute at Notre Dame headed by an emigre Russian professor whose name was Gurion (sp?) and he had just carte blanche to buy all the Russian materials he wanted, so we bought hundreds and hundreds of volumes and sets of Russian materials. I even went to the trouble to teach myself the Cirrilic alphabet so that I could sort of transliterate the Russian.

LO: How did you pick up your languages?

LK: Well my mother spoke German, because she was Swiss-speaking German, and in my home town in Nebraska there were a lot of German-speaking people; I had heard German when I was a child. But I didn't really study German formally until I got to the University of Illinois. But I also studied French, two years in college, and had a lot of Latin, both in high school and college. I had a minor in Latin in college, believe it or not. And Latin is so helpful, it's the key to both French and German. If you know Latin grammar,

German grammar is just the same, almost identical. It's a great, great help to give you a basis. And I think it helps you to pass the intelligence test. I thought that for years and years, and I just read in the newspaper yesterday that people who know foreign languages can get higher scores on the intelligence tests than people who have not studied foreign languages.

LO: That's not surprising at all. There was an article not too long ago in the San Diego Union or maybe it was the LA Times about Latin, specifically, what benefits studying Latin can have.

LK: It has all these basic words from which French, Italian, Spanish, German, and English are based on. Something on the order of 70% of English words are of romance language, Latin origin. I remember I told my French teacher in college, when she said 65% of English words are of French origin, I said "No, they're Latin." And she said "But through French," and of course she's absolutely right, our English language words that are Latin came through French.

LO: I don't want to slight your doctoral work and so forth, but let's go ahead and start talking about San Diego State. I'm interested to know about the hiring procedure. Your application, recruitment, who interviewed you.

LK: I said a moment ago that I had wanted to return to California, but I didn't want to go to California if I didn't have a job. And jobs weren't all that easy to get in California in academic libraries. I had written a few letters. I had applied at UC Berkeley and was interviewed and nearly offered a job in the

acquisition department, but I was getting about \$200 month more in the Midwest than Berkeley would pay to a young librarian. And I thought well I'm not going to a library in California with a cut in salary so I didn't take it. But somebody said "If you still want to get a job in California why don't you apply to some of the [?] institutions?" So I wrote a letter offering my services to LA State and I got a nice letter from the Librarian whose name was Eschelman (?), very interesting character who was head librarian at LA State for a number of years. And Eschelman wrote and said "Well I have a beginning position, but you're probably not interested with your experience and your Ph.D. But I heard they are looking for a new head librarian at San Diego State College in case you might be interested." And so I fixed up my resume and sent it off to San Diego State and a couple of weeks later I got a nice letter from Dean Donald Watson, who was the Dean of the College in those days. And he told me they were ~~indeeding~~ looking to recruit a head librarian and they were interested in my qualifications. And he said that it was a very challenging and a very difficult job, and there are some difficult staff problems, "But if you are still interested let me know, and I will be on a recruiting trip soon. And we could arrange for an interview in Cleveland." I was at that time the chief librarian at the Air Force Institute of Technology at Dayton Ohio. And so the day came and I met Dr. Watson in the airport at Cleveland. And over lunch we had a very pleasant interview. He told me that there are some serious staff problems, that the administration had recently given

the long-time College Librarian, Dr. Paul Stone, another assignment, and that the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Sidney Gulick, is Acting College Librarian, and the Assistant College Librarian, in effect who was Mrs. Callie Becker, is running the library.

He said "It's a wildly rocking boat, and it will be a very difficult and challenging position. And if that's not to your taste I urge you not to accept if we make the offer. We will get in touch with you within two weeks to tell you whether or not we're going to offer you the position." But he said "I emphasize this is a very challenging and difficult situation, and if you don't think you could stand those kinds of big problems, don't accept."

LO: Did they receive very many applicants for the position?

LK: It's my opinion they had very few applications, very few. And they emphasized the fact that they wanted someone with a Ph.D. They really said that it was important to them in the qualifications in the candidate, and I understand that no other candidate had a doctorate.

LO: That's very interesting. Perhaps it had something to do with this institution's emphasis toward research and growth and development. They wanted all their faculty members of course to have Ph.D.s

LK: That is true. But San Diego State was still coming out of its State College and Teachers College background and there was wide difference of opinion among the faculty as to whether we should be going in the research direction or should we not. Are we an

undergraduate teaching institution or are we going into research? Do we want doctorates? The thing is, they had been hiring lots of young, new faculty members on this campus in the 50s and 60s, and they were hiring them from the big ten universities of the Middle West. There simply weren't enough recruits for faculty positions produced from the University of California, after all, there were only two of them giving doctorates, Berkeley and UCLA. And they were even taking their own graduates and hiring them rather than . . . So there wasn't a good enough supply.

Every winter, between semesters, in the dead of winter, Dr. Watson would go through the upper Midwest. He would go first to Minneapolis, and then down to Madison, Wisconsin, and then to Chicago, and then probably to Urbana, and then the University of Michigan, and Cornell, and all the way to Harvard . . .

TAPE 1, SIDE B

LK: (cont.): . . . he was getting these young Ph.D.s who were just finishing their degrees, and not only that, they were these bright and ambitious and enthusiastic and energetic Ph.D.s. Of course they went in mid-winter because they would give them the promise of a pleasant sunny climate in San Diego. And they jolly well used the climate as a come-on to attract these candidates. And so the kind of young faculty that were coming to San Diego State were these bright, enthusiastic research-minded, research-trained people, and they didn't know about the great colossus of the University of California as being "the" university in California,

and if they did they didn't care; they wanted San Diego State to grow and develop and become a big research university also.

LO: Do you feel the university administration wanted the leader of the library to have a Ph.D. because these incoming faculty members did too, and you needed to develop this library to support their research?

LK: They wanted the librarian to have that background, who understood what research, and the Ph.D. is all about. The Library Committee had developed some criteria for the new librarian to be appointed, and that was in the criteria. The administration was listening to the faculty in those days.

Dr. Stone was properly trained as a Ph.D. in library science from the great University of Chicago Library School which was the leading library school in the United States in those days. He was only the third one who ever received the Ph.D. But the poor man was becoming ill, and no one knew it, but he had become ineffective, and he didn't know it, and others didn't know it either, but he had a brain tumor. And he slowly went down in health and he finally died in 1966.

LO: I understand that he had been appointed to teach in the library school here at San Diego State College. He was quite an accomplished man, wasn't he. He was very much involved with the Library Association, as well as quite published.

LK: It's a curious coincidence that he died at 6 P.M. on June the 6th, 1966, and Dr. Stone himself was 60 years old.

LO: Would you go into Dr. Stone's inability to lead the library?

LK: Shortly before I arrived they had put a huge addition on the little old library that had been built in 1930 when the campus moved out here to Montezuma Mesa. The State Colleges then were under the Department of Finance, and it was always felt that Finance cut expenses in every possible way. And in planning this new Library addition, the story I heard after I got here, was it is a wretched, inoperable, and inefficient and unfunctional place. The old library which had been added to about three times all of a sudden had an addition that was twice as big as the entire old library was, and all they did was they built four floors--they're just a big rectangular box, and for some reason or another the second floor was a mezzanine that ran down the middle of the building. Dr. Stone had a number of additional librarians added to his staff. And there were a lot of young people who had some strong ideas. And there were strong currents in academic libraries around WWII and just after WWII days, that the old academic libraries were inefficient because all they had was one main reference desk--there were some branch libraries out on the campuses of other American universities--but that they were inefficient. The trend was, then, that it would be more cost effective and yet serve this subject need of students to have subject divisional libraries. So when they put this addition to the old building, this was just a few years before I came, the staff, against Dr. Stone's wishes probably, persuaded them to break the library up into subject divisions. So the old library became the education library entirely, and then on the top floor of the

new building they put sciences and engineering, and on the middle floor they put social sciences and business administration. And then on that mezzanine that I mentioned which is a clumsy, unfunctional piece of building, they put the central circulation desk and reserve books. And on the bottom floor they put the humanities, including the fine arts. So up until this time when any student or faculty member used the library they just went to just one reference desk. Now all of a sudden they split it all up. And how can you tell the difference between political science and philosophy and literature and so-on. Who gets the Encyclopedia Britanica? Okay, then we buy duplicates. And they split the periodicals, but is The New Republic social sciences or humanities? And many of the faculty were unhappy with the library building when I arrived, and many library staff members were very unhappy with it. And so were the students, the students were confused.

LO: I didn't realize that the physical layout of the building and the way the collection had been divided up was a major problem when you arrived. I assumed that there were personality conflicts alone, and just innefective, old fashioned methods of operation. But this was much more extensive than that. So you had a big job to turn that around.

LK: It was much more than that. But there were serious disagreements between library staff members. The office for the Librarian was inconvenient, and not only modest, but not impressive at all. Dr. Stone stayed in his old office in the Library Building which was rather pleasant, a nice office in the old, original

building. It was rather spacious, and he had his own restroom, and even deans were jealous. [laughter] He had a nice view to the south into the old Quad. The old part of the Library was very nice. It had an Aztec motif.

LO: What did you have to do to turn the Library around. Did you make new assignments of supervisors, change acquisitions policies? How did you deal with staff morale?

LK: There were no policies, as such, nothing in writing. There was very poor communication within the staff. It was almost non-existent. But I felt that, for one thing, we would have to have regular meetings of the department heads, with me. So we started scheduling that immediately, at least monthly. They hadn't had any such thing. The only communication within the staff was a little bulletin which Mrs. Becker, who was Assistant College Librarian and my immediate assistant--she was very talented, very energetic, and a very good person. She was disliked by a group of the staff who were loyal to Dr. John Paul Stone because they felt that she in effect had done him in, and so she was a bad person. But on the other hand there were newer and younger librarians who had newer ideas, and she was young and enthusiastic, who supported her very strongly. So the staff was very split between them. There were two cliques, there were the "ins" and there were the "outs," regrettably. And I thought one of my first jobs was to try and bridge that gap between the cliques and to break down the barriers between them.

LO: How did you do that?

LK: Social events. We would have sort of receptions with punch and cookies on all kinds of occasions whenever possible, to bring people together. And we did have a little staff room which we used.

LO: Was this the beginning of LAFFS [Library Association of Faculty and Staff]?

LK: Oh yes, I started the Staff Association. There was absolutely no such thing before, it was unheard of. And the other thing I started was the "Library Bulletin," which was aimed at the faculty because there was no communication with the faculty, of this sort. And also a library staff newsletter. And as I had learned in institutions where I had worked before, it is not a publication prepared by the administration and edited by the administration, or the head librarian or administrative staff; you get a staff member to be editor. And you have staff people be the recorders. And so I was able to find someone to edit the first "Library Staff News" and I'm not real clear on it, but I'm pretty sure it was Awona Harrington who edited the first "Library Staff News." And this was for news about the staff, about the Library, it's accomplishments, goals, new appointments, all of this sort of thing. So that the staff itself got to know what the rest of the staff was doing.

LO: Where did you come up with these ideas? How did you know what to do when you came in?

LK: I don't know why I thought that communication was so important. I had worked in several libraries, but my earlier

experience was at the University of Illinois, and the University of Illinois had a library staff newsletter, and I was the editor one year and I thoroughly enjoyed it. So it was very much appreciated by the staff and people waited for it and looked forward to it. And I thought it was very important for staff morale. I told the administration I wanted to have it printed at the Duplicating Center, and I understand that an eyebrow or two was raised because one of the things Awona Harrington did was to put recipes for cookies and cakes in the staff newsletter, and when that got to the Duplicating Center they went all the way to the Business Manager who was Selwin Hardigan. I don't know if they asked President Love, but I think they did consult Watson I learned later. And he said "Go ahead and print it." They did not bounce it back, but they thought that it was rather frivolous, but I think the administration realized what I was trying to do, and that was to bring the staff together, to break down these social barriers within the staff.

I think one of the greatest things that brought the staff together, and pulling together, was when we began planning for this new Library Building, because then you had a goal, and it was for high-minded people to get together and do something great.

LO: Well let's talk about that now then, because it obviously was an integral part of the way you were able to turn the library around. Did you realize when you started here that you were going to need a new building immediately?

LK: They told me almost immediately to start planning the next

addition. And so we talked about it, and involved immediately were inputs from library staff and faculty, administration. The complaints about the subject divisions which I've already referred to were rather strong, and there was also discussion about central libraries getting too large, too unweildy for students to use. But the Department of Finance said that we were only going to have one Library Building on campus. About the same time we got out from under the Department of Finance because the Trustees were established in 1961. And soon the authority of the Chancellor started to take effect. Physical sciences, especially, wanted their own library in the physical sciences area, and the chemists wanted their library in the chemistry building, so there was a big push for that. So there was all this pulling again about if you're going to build a new building are you going to pull it all together and have one central library and one main central reference desk and get rid of those subject divisions, or what? And so we went round and round again on that topic and the discussion of should we make branch libraries on campus? Eventually the Trustees apparantly agreed with the Department of Finance that it's more efficient to have one central library on campus. And we are not going to imitate Berkeley or UCLA, and the State would not fund it that way.

So we had to settle on that. I got off on that because we were still talking about an addition to the old library, and they talked about putting it to the south of that old library complex, and everyone was convinced "Gee, isn't it going to be horrible!"

A building added to, added to, and added to, how can you make anything coherent out of it? And then one day, after we were toying around with that for a few months and making some general sort of plans, Daryl Holms who was the Executive Dean in those days (he was in charge of Facilities Planning), called me in and said "Lou, the Trustees have told us that libraries are "in" now, and we're going to have a master plan drawn up for the San Diego State campus because this campus is going to multiply and be about three or four times as large as it is now." We had 9,000 students then, you know. "And the campus is going to expand to the south. We have master plan architects, and they said there must be a new central library building." So he said we were going to plan an entirely new, perfect building.

LO: So you didn't really have to push for it, that was very fortunate.

LK: No, that's right. It was because of the master plan. And I think that the new Trustees need to be thanked because they came between the campuses and the Department of Finance, where the Department of Finance used to [endorse] only the cheapest possible way, which had nothing to do with what would be best for education. You had formulas, and you get so many square feet per FTE student, so here you can get . . .

I decided that I had to have the widest possible staff participation, and I appointed a committee of twelve from within the library staff, and it was not limited to department heads or administrators or professional librarians. There were several non-

professionals; in those days they used to feel very conscious that "only the librarians can do any serious thinking and planning about the library and we're not going to let those non-professional librarians in. . . ." Anyhow, I appointed Mrs. LeCompte who was the head of Interlibrary Loan at the time, a wonderful woman, and another non-librarian. She had been secretary to Dr. Stone for many, many years; she was a wonderful woman, very nice.

LO: So in addition to this committee of twelve you had wide input from everyone.

LK: We asked everyone for input. We met regularly, about every two weeks for a long time, doing this planning of the new library building. And we had first-rate cooperation from Dean Holms, and the architect who was appointed, Al Dennis. Al Dennis was employed by the State Department of Architecture, and people worried at first that he would just plan another box like they had for the old library building, instead of having some real library design and something aesthetically pleasant. But Al Dennis understood this from the start, he was degreed in architecture from USC, and he met with us often, many times. And he had an assistant too who came along. And they also had to consult Hope Associates [who drew up the master plan]. Hope is an important architectural firm here in San Diego and still in business. Plans had to meet their approval, and they understood that people wanted some real design and something aesthetically pleasant as well as a functional library building. And there's no reason why you can't have both. So Hope Associates, in their first master plan before an architect was

appointed to design the library building, made a sketch of a building. And there's a copy, I think, here in these files [in University Archives], and it shows this glass thing that's about seven stories high, maybe ten stories high. And the rendering shows it as kind of a bluish glass. And the faculty just hooted when they saw a copy of this." I had to appear before the Senate several times to review the plans for the Library Building and be ready for their critiques and suggestions, and they gave them too, they certainly did.

LO: So it changed quite a bit. It was whittled down; it went from windows to no windows, back to windows again.

LK: Yes, everybody objected to the no windows, including the librarians, especially the library staff. This was in the heyday of the so-called riots on campus, and windows had been broken, for example, in the Administration Building. During those days the rebels took 2 x 4's and walked around the Administration Building and knocked out all of the glass. So this glass building frightened them. There are some Bank of America branches in San Diego with no windows, I think you'll notice. It was the librarians who said "We do want windows" and so the compromise was these narrow windows on six foot centers, and I think it's a pretty good compromise. The engineers preferred no windows because they complicate the matter of ventilation and air conditioning because the sun comes in, or people open the windows, and if they open the windows they defeat your air conditioning system.

LO: Whose idea was it to have the floor plan we have now, with the

central core, and the expandable walls. I think it's a very well designed building.

LK: The Faculty Senate had, as I say, reservations about the building the librarians were planning and they wanted to be sure they had enough input, and they had a feeling that we should have an outside consultant who has a lot of knowledge and experience in planning university library buildings. And with that I recommended Ralph Elsworth, who was the Library Director at the University of Colorado at Boulder. The Administration agreed immediately, and he was hired, and he came to the campus and spent two days with us. He talked to the Administration, to the librarians, and he had a long session with the Faculty Senate. And he told us for the most efficient library building, you want a central core. Put the transportation, the staircase and elevators, in the middle of the building. Other plans had had them off on the right side or the left side, or the back of the building or wherever. And he said it's most efficient to have them in the central core, and have only one bank of elevators. Because if you have several elevators at separated points in a library building, one elevator will get heavy use and the other will get none. So if you have them all grouped together, that's the most efficient way to use them, and you can probably get along with fewer elevators if you can do that. He is the one who advocated the open staircase. The fire marshals hated it and wanted to stop it immediately. . .

TAPE 2, SIDE A

LK: (cont.): The fire marshal said absolutely not. The reason we wanted the open staircase was because this was to be a large building, and we're going to accommodate as many as three to five thousand students in a day, and there will be hundreds of people using that building. And you put the staircase in front where it's visible, and they'll use it, and put the elevators in the back so they have to walk past the stairs to use the elevators, this way you will be able to move large numbers of people between floors efficiently. And you want the staircase visible; if it's inside it won't be seen nor used.

So the fire marshal said it's a chimney, and if there's a fire it's not a safe escape route for people. So the compromise was then, okay . . . we wanted the lobby of the library to be completely open to the card catalog, now where the computer catalog is, and the main reference area, so you can see the reference desk as you come into the building. We didn't want a wall there, but they said for fire purposes you have to have a wall there, and okay, you can have the doors propped open. The doors are on a fused link, and the fused link means that if it gets hot the doors will automatically fall closed, they will swing shut. So you'll have a protected exit for people to leave the building. And at the circulation desk which we also wanted open, there are fire doors up above on a chain. They're also on a fused link, and if they become hot, those things will drop right down to the counters at the circulation desk.

LO: So those are the features that allowed you to have the open

stairwell. Were the emergency stairwells on the east side and the west side also compromise features?

LK: Yes, they had to be installed; we didn't necessarily want them, but we had to for emergency escape reasons, and it's certainly reasonable. And it's understood that you'd put alarms on them so people would not use them.

LO: So when Ralph Elsworth came in and came up with this fantastic new floor plan, laid it out for you, after that it was a pretty stream-lined process?

LK: Yes. He said you can have a general reference desk on the main floor and then still bring the subject divisions from the old building along, which we did.

He also told us to put offices and work stations of library staff hugging the core, because the staff walks from one floor to the other and one department to the other, and if you have them near to the transportation they will save time and energy moving from one part of the building to another. He said, do not put office staff out on the peripheries of the several floors because it's least efficient in use of their time. This overall plan said to put staff people in the central core near the transportation, and then you have book stacks on all of the floors next, and then reader stations and reader areas on the peripheries. And the reason for this is, that people using libraries, come sometimes just to get a book. So they take the elevator and they go to the third floor and they get a book out of the stacks and go back. You don't want the books out on the peripheries and the reader areas in the

middle because if someone is just coming to get a book they'll have to walk right through where people are studying, concentrating, in quiet areas; they'll have to go right through there out to the edge to pick up a book. And then they walk back through the area where people are studying. So this is his overall plan: Transportation and staff in the center, books, and then readers on the peripheries.

Ellsworth is very eloquent, and very friendly, and a very good speaker. He was intelligent and intellectual, and the faculty liked him. And he sold them the plan for the library building, and they just bought it. And it was a rose garden after that; no problems. Faculty just loved him.

LK: So then after that it was just a matter of hammering out some of the details about what the interior was going to look like and where service desks were going to be, where the work stations were going to be, and things like that. Did you plan ahead that stage for future computer installation, more electrical loads?

LK: We were very mindful of that. That's why we have the drop ceilings, where you can run conduits of any kind in these drop ceilings--there are several feet between this ceiling and the floor above it. And all of the columns--all of the columns in this building are on 24' centers--advice always was since libraries have book shelves that are three feet long, and there are all kinds of reasons why three feet is a good measure, if you have your columns--the architects called them the bays--on 24' centers, everything would be divisible by three, and you will have a more efficient use

of the spaces. And every column has a duct burried in it for electricity, electric lines, and for, there's another one that was thought to be useable--telephones--are the telephones in the walls?

LO: Actually no, when they do wiring for telephones, for coaxial, for hard-wiring of computers, you usually see it right out here on the walls. I have never seen them sink anything into one of those pillars, which is rather unfortunate.

LK: But we did talk about the fact that there would be great need for electricity, for telecommunication lines in the new building, and it was incorporated into the plans.

The other thing was the modular plan, so you could just move the walls anywhere. I think that was probably the architect's idea.

And the woodwork everywhere, the paneling in the lobby areas of the five floors of this building, Al Dennis did all of this planning, and he specified those wood panels, and he said that . . . We were planning the furniture for the building, and first we were told by the campus Business Affairs Office and by the Department of Finance that we would take the old furniture with us to the new building. And one day when Al Dennis from the State Department of Architecture, and the Dean for Buildings was in our group with us New Library Building planners, we were discussing the furniture for the new building, Beverly Johnson, first wife of former Vice President Al Johnson, was on our Library staff, and Beverly was an aggressive person and they were discussing the furniture, and Al said "Well you should have wood with a kind of

chocolaty-brown colored finish." And somebody said "Well how will we be sure to have the same finish . . ." He said "It's perfectly alright if there's a kind of a range of shades," that it would be boring and monotonous if you had all one exact color of furniture, wood, in your building, so you have a harmony of several different shades. So Beverly said all of a sudden "Well, here we are going into a brand new building, and this is going to be the showcase of the campus, and we have to drag this old furniture built by Prison Industries along with us. I think we should tell the Department of Finance we want all new furniture in the New Library Building." And she went into a very emotional and charged up plea, and they bought it! So from then on we planned brand new furniture, and we chucked all that old furniture; you see it all over campus now, in laboratories, and in classrooms, and auditoriums.

LO: Some of it has worked its way back into the Library. I've noticed [laughter].

LK: [laughter] It was ugly furniture. They had birch colored furniture, and they had these funny narrow tables. For some reason or other they had tables that were about 20 inches across; long narrow tables. So from that time on, we planned new furniture. And we still had to contract with the State Prison Industries. And we made two trips up to Chino, the place where they build it, and they showed us all the different models of furniture they make, and they imitate any commercial-style furniture. So this furniture around here is of good quality, and they imitated exactly what we specified. We went to catalogs, private furniture manufacturers,

and they built just what we wanted.

LO: It must have been a tremendous amount of work preparing for the new building. Number one, planning the building, number two, figuring out what furniture everybody is going to need in the new building, and figuring out the built-ins.

LK: We asked one librarian to be in charge of all of this planning and coordinating of the furniture selection, and that was Lester Smith, who was head of the old Humanities Division in the Old Library, he was a reference librarian there. He left us, you know, and went off to Northern Illinois University where he became the Library Director, and I think he's retired back to San Diego. Anyhow, Lester was an art major, and he was very particular and fussy, and did a very good job. He was very intent on good design. He said "We don't want blocky furniture." He wanted the thin metal legs, elegant, you know, not blocky big stuff. So he had a lot to do with the furniture that's in here. And then eventually we hired Dale Marriott, who completed the job of planning all of this furniture, placing the orders for it, and making the specifications of exactly what was wanted. He was head of circulation in those days.

LO: Who was in charge of organizing the move?

LK: He was. Dale, and we hired somebody else as an assistant to him, but I don't remember who it was now.

LO: How did that move go, how long did it take you?

LK: It went beautifully. They hired a moving contractor.

LO: You didn't have each faculty member and each student check out

fifteen books and then check them back in at the new building?
[laughter]

LK: No, we talked about that but decided that it really wouldn't work because the collection by this time was probably 400,000 volumes. And no, everything was very carefully organized, and Dale Marriott (and crew) had put stickers on the floors in the new building everywhere that matched exactly where everything was to go. And they devised some special system for taking a whole shelf of books, and they put them in the moving vans--they had big moving vans which were loaded up. I think it only took, at the most, two weeks.

LO: Did library services go on as usual, for the most part, unless of course the book was in transit?

LK: Yes, I don't think we closed the Library to service, I can't remember now.

[About the opening of the building] we tried to get maximum publicity for it of course. And so we arranged with the President of Associated Students to move the first book, so he went to the Old Library, and we gave him that bible which was the first book ever added to this library back in 1898, and he personally carried it to the new building with the photographers taking pictures and so on. So we did a kind of a P.R. job.

We had the formal dedication of the library building during open house, on a Sunday, and Irving Stone was our speaker. Friends of the Library sponsored it, and we thought we were going to get a big crowd so we held it out in the Open Air Theater. And only

a handfull of people showed up! We were very dissapointed because here we got this important, famous writer from Beverly Hills, Irving Stone, who has written so many famous books. And here we had this big powerhouse, and I don't think we had 50 people in that great big Open Air Theater out there. Just the Friends of the Library showed up.

LO: Was President Love very interested and involved in the planning of this building?

LK: Yes, he was always in the background and was supportive; he didn't seem to take an active role in it. I can tell you at one point though, when it became pleasantly clear that he was backing the library. He relied on his deans to do things, and I said Dean Holmes did the coordinating on the library building. But at one point we were discussing that we need to have carpeting in the new building. And the Physical Plant people were all opposed to it, the custodians, the janitors, because they have a formula also that drives their budget for the custodians, and for every some number of square feet of floor space in a building, the formula provides one custodian in the budget. And the Department of Finance, then devising these formulas, said that keeping vinyl or tile floor clean is more difficult because you have to mop it every month or week or something like this. But if you have carpeting you vaccum it and its easier to keep clean, therefore the formula is less rich, you need fewer custodians. It would have meant that fewer custodians would have jobs to work in the Library, and so they were absolutely against it and they loudly protested that they didn't

want carpeting. But the staff and librarians in our new building planning committee had really wanted strongly to have carpet, and we did some research into the literature, and prepared a document about how important it was, and we gave it to the Executive Dean. And so they decided that the only way that this could be handled was to bring President Love into the matter because the custodians were headed by Hardigan who was the Business Manager, these days he's called Vice President of Business Affairs, and Hardigan was on their side, not the Library's. So we arranged this little meeting in Dr. Love's conference room, just outside Dr. Love's office. And President Love came in smiling, and he had this benign, pleasant, handsome way, and he said "Well, what's the problem here? Mr. Hardigan, will you explain what your wishes are about having carpeting in the new building?" He told about how his custodians were all against it, and how the formula would be eroded, and they feared that with one erosion of the formula, we'd get the foot in the door and they'd lose more positions in the future, you know that beauracrat's story. So Dr. Love turned to me and said "Dr. Kenney, what do you think about having carpeting?" So I told him it sets an atmosphere in the Library of a place that's for quiet and study and research, and that it's aesthetically more pleasing. And most libraries across the country have carpeting in them.

LO: Were you talking about carpeting throughout the library, including in the stack areas?

LK: We didn't get to that detail then, that came a little later.

and later they decided that the stack areas didn't need carpeting. So I guess the custodians half won, and we half won. We did get it on the whole first floor, because we said that that was going to be mostly reader stations, and not stack area.

And so Dr. Love smiled, and he said "I think so too." And that was it, the meeting was over! [laughter] And Hardigan and Tim Hallahan looked so glum. But that's all it took.

LO: What was the original color scheme? This may sound trivial, but I'd like to have a visual picture of the way it looked when first opened.

LK: It was a mottled pattern that was essentially orange; it had red, and orange, and brown woven into it. And it's still on the first floor down there.

The Department of Finance itself did a study that showed that carpeting is cheaper, and it does have to be replaced, and they had studies on how long it will last--I don't remember exactly, but something like 15 years, this is industrial grade carpeting.

Let me tell you about the swatch of carpet on the main floor, entry. It didn't wear well, and it was beginning to look pretty ugly a few years after we were in the building. We had put in a request to replace that carpeting, it was simply ugly and in rags. And we found out accidentally through a Physical Plant guy, that they had decided they were going to replace the carpet with terrazo, and they were going to put a brass plaque of the seal of San Diego State University in the middle of that floor. And finally someone came and asked me just where we wanted to have that

great seal located in the new terrazo floor, and boy, I hit the ceiling! I talked to my staff, and everyone was violently opposed to it. So I went straight to the administration, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and they stopped it, said no, put carpeting back in there.

LO: Boy, they really tried to sneak that carpeting in there didn't they?

LK: It was Bill Erickson. They felt that it would be more efficient, you know, you don't have to clean it all the time. But we said aesthetically it was bad for the main entrance to the building, because we wanted it quiet and reserved, and aesthetically pleasing; not necessarily elegant.

The other thing we were afraid of was that people would be afraid to walk across the seal.

LO: Going back to that original topic of President Love and the carpeting . . .

LK: We can thank him for the carpeting.

LO: But I understand that he never set foot in the library.

TAPE 2, SIDE B

LK: That's true. And I don't think you could call him a strong intellectual. He was a wonderful president, we admired him very much, and he had a wonderful attitude. He was always supportive of us, and of academic freedom and all. The faculty liked him and so did I. He came into my office one time, shortly after I had

been appointed as head librarian. At that time my office was right by the front entrance to the library and you didn't go through any secretaries to get to it, so you could come right on in. And he smiled a rather ingratiating smile and asked how things were going, and I said something about having an awful lot of things to do. And he said "Well, I didn't have anything to do this afternoon so I thought I'd stop by and greet you." And to my embarrassment afterwards, when he said he didn't have anything to do I said "Aren't you lucky, I'm awfully busy"!

LO: In other words, "Please go away Dr. Love"!

LK: I realized my mistake. He was an extremely busy man, and he went out of his way just to see me.

LO: Did you ever have the opportunity to guide him around the library and show him what was going on?

LK: You know, I don't recall very well. I have a vague memory of taking him around in the new library soon after we were in it. I'm pretty sure I did take him on a tour then. He was a very informal person; he didn't, you know, set up appointments two weeks in advance.

LO: About the construction of the library building. Some of the pictures of the library under construction show the big plywood wall that was erected around the construction site. And of course there was graffiti all over it. What kind of reaction did this graffiti get--did anybody even give it a second thought; was it an issue?

LK: I don't think graffiti was a thing in those days. And

although I think there was some writing on that wall, it didn't amount to anything of consequence. Perhaps spray cans weren't available.

LO: I was hoping to see some connection between the artwork on the plywood walls around the Student Services Building construction site, and the Love Library construction site. But I guess there was none.

LK: You have a question down here on your list . . . "Did you accomplish what you intended in the first five years?" Perhaps I should tell you something about the change to the Library of Congress. I did have in mind that we needed to change from the old Dewey system to the Library of Congress classification system, before I came. I was brought up at the University of Illinois, which was perhaps the biggest library in the world on the Dewey Decimal system. But at Illinois the whole staff knew that we should have switched to Library of Congress but we didn't because the cost would be just too great. The staff here was divided in their opinions about whether we should change. So we appointed a committee, and finally one day, I think the committee recommended that we should do it, and we should do it now, and it wouldn't cost too much, and we would organize in a way that we could do it very cheaply. And so I simply announced one time that starting on a certain date we're going to change to the Library of Congress. And the person who was at that time head of the cataloging department said "Well, I'm against it. I know more about the Library of Congress classification system than anybody on

this entire library staff, and that's precisely nothing!" And within days she resigned. In those days librarians could get jobs everywhere because there was a big, big shortage of librarians, so she just took off to Chico with an appointment there. They were still on Dewey Decimal. And Doris Murdock became head of cataloging, and she thought it was just exactly the thing to do and this was the right time. She very carefully laid out plans and we did it. It took a lot less time to do than we thought because it was reduced to a routine job done mostly by student assistants.

LO: Thank goodness you did it when you did, because at the rate the collection was growing later in the '70s it would have been a horrible task.

Let's quit for now, although there are more questions I would like to ask you in another interview. Thank you, Dr. Kenney.

LK: Thank you, it's been a pleasure.

A A A

[Ed. note: The second interview with Dr. Kenney was never conducted. He passed away December, 1993.]