

GEORGE V. FAGAN

Head Librarian, Tutt Library 1969-1983

Professor Emeritus of Library Science, 1983-

Interviewed by Judith R. Finley, April 12, 1995

Tape 1, side 1

First contact with Colorado College

- February 1955, came to Colorado Springs for first time, to research history of Air Force Academy site
- Met with Capt. George Henriquez, information officer for Air Force Construction Agency, who introduced him to Ken Englert, president of Historical Society
 - Englert took Fagan to lunch at Swiss Chalet Restaurant
 - Met Joe Reich, who introduced him to bankers and educators
- Met with Gen. Gill in his office at Cutler Hall
 - Gill walked him across campus to meet Louise Kampf, librarian
- Campus was very brown due to drought
- Impressions of Coburn Library: balconies and ladders similar to eastern libraries; remembers statue of Winged Victory in Coburn but never found out what happened to it

Genesis of job at CC in 1969

- Had close connections through his involvement with history dept. at AFA with CC professors such as Bentley Gilbert, Paul Bernard, Bill Hochman; had known Harvey Carter from Ursinus College; Lou Geiger, head of CC history dept. also a friend
- Other connection was as executive director of National Library Week
 - Bob Brossman was representative to this committee
 - Fagan often drove to Denver with Brossman and Reich for meetings
 - Started to have contacts with Pres. Benezet, who asked him to become librarian when Ellsworth Mason was planning to leave
- In 1963 shortly after Lew Worner became president, he asked Fagan again to lunch and to be librarian. Fagan declined, due to desire to complete 20 years of active duty in Air Force
- Later, in summer of 1968, Lew asked him again to be CC librarian and he agreed; told Fagan that he could still get into CC retirement program at age of 50
- Although hired for Feb. 1969, did not start full time until May 1, because Air Force delayed his retirement until August.
 - Acted as "consultant" between February and May

Needs of Tutt Library in 1969

- Fagan visited library in evenings and on weekends to make appraisal of needs
 - Impressed with bad housekeeping: noted that old bound newspapers were scattered in aisles on top floor
 - Noted how few students were there studying at night
 - Looked at periodical collections and saw many good runs but much that was not pertinent
 - Transferred 5000 forestry books to CSU
 - Transferred big runs of economics reports to UCCS
 - Good runs of 19th and 20th century literary magazines, but many were not bound
- Also talked to Louise Kampf, who had spent 50 years in library
 - She and Manly Ormes had saved everything
 - Told him that much stuff from Coburn was stored in house on San Rafael St. east of Cascade
- Rita Ridings (the historical link between old and new regimes) told im this house had been torn down and all stuff was put in a big garage behind Boettcher Health Center
 - Most of stored stuff becaem nucleus of Special Collections
- Fagan was able to get Helen Jackson to provide funds for hiring a person to work on a plan for the development of Special Collections
 - Then Rosemae Campbell became curator

Background of building of Tutt Library (1962)

- Kize Metcalf, former librarian at Harvard, was AFA library consultant, and noted planner of libraries all over the world
 - Metcalf worked closely with Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, who also were architects for new Tutt Library
- One of his proteges, Ralph Ellsworth, Boulder librarian, was named official consultant for CC
 - Wanted new CC library to be like New England colleges

Tape 1, side 2

(Continued)

- Envisioned doing combination public-college library, to be east of CC campus in new Special Use zone
- Keen on making Tutt a model for small college "modular" libraries
- Tutt became a prototype for other libraries to be built under federal National Library Construction Act

How Fagan viewed personnel needs when he arrived as Tutt librarian

- Traumatic experience coming from Air Force Academy to CC
 - Had staff of 85, with 15 librarians at AFA.
 - At CC, discovered "I'm it"
- Noted cliques in staff

- Most of small CC staff were part time, some for years
- Examples: Ellen Davis and Guss Games
- Fagan worried about getting retirement benefits for some of these people
 - Aided by Jim Stauss, who helped develop fringe benefits
- Fagan found that group of parttimers in cataloging dept. were Christian scientists, who used to hold daily religious meetings at library
 - One of them had tumor in her side and wore a blanket to cover it
- Irene Vaslef, one of catalogers
- Fagan found many handwritten cards in catalog, with no subject headings
 - Decided to switch to Library of Congress cards to relieve backlog of uncataloged books
- Reference people were Rita Ridings and Kee De Boer
- "Whole staff was in a state of flux"
- Started to build new staff around them

Gearing up for the Block Plan 1969-70

- Glenn Brooks and Elaine Freed talked to Fagan about library changes that would be needed under Block Plan
- CC also joined ACM, which wanted central periodical bank
 - ACM wanted \$50,000 and periodical runs from each member
 - Fagan sent to Chicago and reported back to Lew Worner that this was not such a good idea
- Block Plan showed need to broaden CC collection to include non-Western materials
 - Area studies were expanded
 - Doug Fox and Joe Pickle stressed need for books on oriental religions
- Fine arts materials also needed beefing up
- Science people, (Barnes, Beidleman, Heim) also wanted more materials
 - Chemical Abstracts extremely expensive, and Otis Barnes agreed to continue funding these
- Library never had enough money for acquisitions
 - Jim Stauss finally put CC budget on a good base
- Fagan's salary when he was hired was \$15,000
- Under Block Plan, extended opening hours until midnight, and added weekend hours
 - This presented a problem, as women didn't want to work at night
 - Found Palmer librarian Duane Bakken selling shoes, and hired him to work at Tutt from 8 p.m. til midnight
 - Bakken recruited other high school librarians to help
 - Also supervised high school students and youth program kids to move books in summer

- Fagan started to hire other professional librarians, such as Casey Welch, from DU library school
- She met her future husband at library

Tape 2, side 1

Fagan's work with the Woman's Educational Society

- President Dorothy Bryson asked Fagan to speak to WES, April 1969
- When Zane Bowers was president, came up with idea of Colorado College Archives room, and WES agreed to finance it

Booksale

- first booksale held 1970 in outdoor garden level of Tutt Library
- evolved with more volunteers and later as a function of the Friends of the Library

Saga of Mark Lansburgh

- An art collector whose materials, (including furniture and manuscripts) occupied whole south end of second floor of Tutt
- had transferred materials from Santa Barbara to CC, but unclear whether he intended to donate them
- Stewart House had also been turned over to him for residence, but Burtons and later Stausses replaced him
- Pres. Worner ordered Fagan to get him out of library
- Lansburgh had one of best collections of illuminated manuscripts and prints, including Thomas a Beckett's Bible
 - Kept stuff in vault in library
 - Gave library quite a few items
- Fagan asked Lansburgh to remove his furniture: outcome was that he finally stopped teaching and faded away from CC

Government documents and newspapers

- Stored out in open on top floor of Tutt
- Fagan wanted to preserve from uncontrolled patron use
- Built cage as temporary measure to protect rare documents and newspapers
- Put newspapers later in basement and also old garage area, where roof started to leak

Beginnings of Special Collections

- Helen Jackson provided funds to organize CC and Colorado collections
- Fagan hired Rosemae Campbell to take charge
- Later Joanna Burton and Dale Hathaway worked: neither was trained librarian or archivist
- Through Helen Jackson, WES finally became involved in financing
- WES offered to convert old Lansburgh territory to Colorado

College Room as 1974 centennial project

- had been collecting CC materials in what is now Lincoln Room
- Fagan systematically took stuff pertaining to CC, to Colorado, and rare books of shelves for new Special Collections

Dewey decimal system versus conversion to LC system

- Despite pressure to convert, Fagan decided not to
 - Felt it would be too costly: \$250,000
 - Better to wait until computerization of library catalog and convert all at once
 - Fagan though computerization was "way far out"
- Prof. Loud had been classmate of Dewey at Amherst
- CC received plaque in 1976 for being one of first colleges to adopt Dewey system (in 1876)

Catalog computerization: the OCLC system, 1975

- CC was first college in Colorado, along with DU, to convert to OCLC cataloging
- Joyce Schneider, talented cataloger, eager to computerize
- Expanded in 1977 into acquisitions module

Southwest Studies bibliography, 1972

- First use of campus mainframe computer by library
- Fagan proud of initiating this project
- Student Kay Caunt helped
- Provided basis for Southwest Studies grants obtained by Joe Gordon
- Library controlled CC Studies publications, decided to resurrect, and this was first issue of Bibliographic Series
- 2008 items listed in bibliography

Tape 2, side 2

The Hendee Lincoln collection

- Hendee lived on Wood Ave., in house that later became the president's house
- Fagan had known him from Civil War roundtable
- Hendee had agreed about 1956-58 to transfer his Lincoln Collection to Tutt Library
- Fagan worked out plan with Hendees to transfer materials to Tutt in boxes
- In planning for library addition, Carlisle Guy set aside a room for the Lincoln Collection
- Cabinets had been done by Jim Crossey for Colorado College Room, but unsatisfactory there, so used for Lincoln Room
- WES hired designer to build light wood cabinets for CC Room

Genesis of addition to Tutt Library, 1978-1980

- El Pomar grant of 1.5 million dollars announced October 1978; architect Carlisle Guy
- Active Library Committee discussed extensively needs for new library space
 - Committee members included Glenn Brooks, chair; Rand Morton; later Margie Duncombe, Dick Beidleman, Joe Pickle
- Originally planned to locate addition north of Tutt on San Rafael Street, but city said there were too many water and sewer pipes there
- Decided to put it on quadrangle south of Tutt despite objections that it would block view of Palmer
 - Not practical to put it on west side "due to stack arrangement"
 - Guy found problems in that city sewer line runs north-south across campus, so had to shift location a bit
- Many meetings on proposal; meanwhile Fagan asked for sabbatical to study other libraries and come up with ideas
- This approved, but El Pomar announced suddenly that they wanted to start building immediately: reason unclear to Fagan
- He did bring back ideas, worked with Peter Seeley, Guy's assistant
- Fagan's vision was that reference section was to be on main floor of new addition, and eventually that is where computer stations would be, such as catalog and individual p.c.'s
 - It was clear to him by 1980 that computerization was the wave of the future, but didn't dream at that time that there would be individual computers in student rooms with network connecting to library
- After Fagan's departure, this area was changed to Government Documents
 - "John, or whoever did that, made a big mistake"
 - Shocked when he learned Reference had moved back to old location; has not been back to library since his retirement
 - Fagan's theory was that CC could have outstanding reference collection even if a small college

Friends of the Library

- ALA had a Friends of the Library division
- Fagan started it at CC in 1976 with help of Isabel Ellsworth, Mary Kanas, Harriet Brooks, Mal and Lois Richards
- Put moneys from annual booksale into Friends treasury

Tape 3, side 1

Fagan's major accomplishments as librarian

- Archival collections: Colorado Room, CC Room, rare books
- Founding of Friends of Library
- Beginnings of computerization with OCLC
- Sees himself as basically a history teacher

- Interested in history of wars, development of aviation
- Became fascinated with Colorado history
- Also interested in development of printing, rare books
- Interested in editions of the Bible
- Books always a part of his life, on many library committees
- One of main focuses: book selection on an individual basis
- Concerned with preservaton: saw its value in Pennsylvania
- Appreciated value of archives from research in National Archives on history of Anglo-American naval relations
 - Started archives at Air Force Academy
 - Also started Special Collections at CC
- Found that CC hadn't done anything with its historical materials
 - Most materials were of pre-Slocum days
 - CC didn't want to turn over official president's papers
 - Without official sanction for archives project, Fagan decided to establish unofficial archives
- Hired Barbara Neilon as non-professional archivist and then sent her to library school
 - She didn't fit very well into library cliques
- As college progresses, archives will be even more important
 - Big growth of photo collection an example

Fagan's biggest frustrations as librarian

- 1969-70 was year of big transformations on American campuses
- During first two weeks of his tenure, a stalker ran through library: Sally Payne Morgan, the doorkeeper, shouted!
- Noticed how badly CC students dressed
- Librarians, at staff meeting, asked if he would enforce dress code
 - Fagan surprised to learn that they meant their own dress
 - Librarians started wearing jeans and slacks
- Emphasis on feminism and women's studies baffled him
- The biggest library quarrel was between smokers and non-smokers
 - Librarians could smoke in their own cubicles
 - Jo Mohan, a chain smoker
 - Nancy Knipe also a smoker
 - Crisis came when OCLC terminals put in cataloging and acquisitions room: Fagan wanted all staff to learn OCLC
 - Joyce Schneider and Fagan learned first
 - Woman with allergies to smoking (Cathy Kaufmann, a quiet Mennonite woman) had to resign
 - Dr. Bodman phoned and said this woman could not work around smokers
- This was Fagan's most painful experience as librarian
- Jesse Brown, custodian, refused to empty Jo Mohan's ashtrays

- Fagan decided there would be no smoking in staff room
- Finally said no smoking except in private offices
- If he had it to do over again would prohibit smoking altogether

Relationships with President Riley and Fagan's retirement

- Fagan met with Riley at Hearthstone Inn before Riley formally hired
 - Fagan said he would be 65 and asked Riley to start thinking about new librarian
 - Riley asked Fagan to draw up recommendations
- Fagan talked with Riley again after he became President
 - Sticking point was relationship of library with audiovisual people: Fagan never warmed to Gus Mundt
 - Riley put Audiovisual under supervision of librarian
 - Mundt opposed to videotapes, felt library was violating copyright law
- Riley had told Fagan to stay until new librarian hired
- At December 1992 Friends of Library dinner at El Paso Club, Riley praised Fagan and library
- Next day, asked Fagan to come to President's Office
 - Surprised to see Dean Brooks and Bob Broughton there
 - Riley said "Now that you are past 65, I want you to resign"
 - Fagan totally unprepared, had no prior notice
- His lawyer son persuaded Fagan to protest that this was against age discrimination law
 - So he wrote letter saying he wanted to stay til age 70
 - Did not really intend to stay until age 70
- Riley then brought in Evan Farber from Earlham College to do evaluation of library
 - Farber an "anti-war Quaker", a "funny guy who got off the deep end"
 - Walt Hecox and Joe Pickle escorted Farber around
 - Fagan never saw the Farber report
 - Later Riley tried to make amends after it was all over, made Fagan emeritus professor
- Fagan's last job was to do book sale "all by ourselves" without library staff participation
- Fagan would have appreciated smoother transition
 - Sue Myers had to be acting librarian for whole year
 - Fagan would not have hired John Sheridan if he had a say
- Fagan left under a cloud, not happy

Advice to a librarian of the future

- You cannot replace books with computers
- Need well-trained librarians who love and use books
- Main purpose of library is to serve readers
- Therefore librarians must know readers and their needs: computer specialists don't necessarily know books

-Libraries must preserve the written word

Postscript: discussion of the Penrose papers

- Tutt Library agreed to closure of papers until after 2000
- Papers surveyed by Helen Geiger
- Transfer of papers to Tutt Library was formal process
 - Resolutions passed by both boards (El Pomar and CC)
 - Written records of this exist somewhere
- Later El Pomar refused to grant permission to Marshall Sprague to do biography of Penrose
- Young Thayer Tutt acted illegally when he retrieved Penrose Papers
 - Mike Grace did not want to upset El Pomar
 - John Sheridan did not know enough of background, called Fagan for advice
- Young Thayer asked Fagan to help him decide what to do with deceased Russell Tutt's papers and books
 - This was occasion to broach subject of Penrose papers with him
 - El Pomar setting up center for archives, wanted papers for that center
 - Fagan told him all the problems of administering archives
 - Suggested that Thayer pay to have all microfilmed
- Fagan suggested to Sheridan then to get estimates for microfilming: "only a few thousand dollars"
 - Thayer Tutt agreed to this
- "Legally CC owns those papers: if it came to legal battle, CC would win"
- Russell would be upset if he knew about it
- Thayer did same thing to Penrose Library and Pioneer Museum
 - Made them give all old Broadmoor photographs back
- It worries Fagan that El Pomar is trying to rewrite history to downplay Penrose and upgrade Tutts
- Legally, El Pomar gave rights to Penrose papers up: CC should determine who uses them after the year 2000