

Interview with: KATHRYN SILBERGER

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Lily Jandrisevits

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Transcript: Kathryn Silberger

Interviewee: Kathryn Silberger

Interviewer: Gus Nolan and Jan Stivers

Interview Date: 9 March 2023

Location: James A. Cannavino Library

Topic: Marist College History

Subject Headings: Silberger, Kathryn
Marist College Staff
Marist College (Poughkeepsie, N.Y.)
Marist College. James A. Cannavino Library

Summary: Kathryn Silberger talks about growing up in Riverside, Illinois before studying abroad in Bogota, Columbia, and eventually working in Brazil to set up a graduate program in library sciences. She then came to Marist College and discusses how she helped to digitize the library and her experiences watching the library move and grow. Kathryn also discusses her hopes for the future of the college.

Kathryn Silberger ([00:00:00](#)):

I think I remember you [laugh].

Gus Nolan ([00:00:03](#)):

They pay me to stay home now. You know, that's what they call retirement. Yeah. And it's a delight to have you come because I didn't realize, you know, that you went here, two lifetimes, you know, really it's absolutely amazing. Are we going to start?

Jan Stivers ([00:00:24](#)):

We are started.

GN ([00:00:25](#)):

We are started.

JS ([00:00:25](#)):

We are recording.

GN ([00:00:27](#)):

Yeah. We get very formal. Today is March 9th. We're having an interview with Katie Silberger here in the library. The interview is for the Marist College oral Archives, and it's done by the interviewing of my associate:

JS ([00:00:47](#)):

Jan Stivers.

GN ([00:00:47](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

And myself Gus Nolan. Today we're delighted to have with us,

KS ([00:00:55](#)):

Katie Silberger or Kathryn Silberger.

GN ([00:00:58](#)):

Very, very good. Alright. Okay. Briefly here's how it goes.

KS ([00:01:02](#)):

Okay.

GN ([00:01:03](#)):

We like to look at it in the four parts. Okay. Like, the early years, adult years, Marist, coming to Marist, staying at Marist, and then what we call the crystal ball. Where are we going? Yes--

KS ([00:01:20](#)):

Okay.

GN ([00:01:21](#)):

So, starting at the beginning, briefly, where were you born. brought up, some of those basic things.

JS ([00:01:27](#)):

Okay. I was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1952.

GN ([00:01:33](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

Oh, we don't have the details of the years [laugh].

JS ([00:01:37](#)):

It was a very good year.

KS ([00:01:38](#)):

It was a good year. Yeah. My parents were both World War II vets, and, you know, we were-- it was a good time.

GN ([00:01:46](#)):

Yeah.

KS ([00:01:47](#)):

So I grew up in a town called Riverside, Illinois, which is a twenty minute train ride from downtown Chicago, and was one of the first planned communities in the United States. Frederick Law Olmsted laid it out. And after doing that, he got out of Chicago for another, I don't know how many decades, and he returned to do something at the Chicago World's Fair. And it killed him [laugh]. He did not care for the Midwest, but it was a very interesting town to grow up in. I've been thinking lately about the fact that I got to see it at its full beauty. And Frederick Law Olmsted had to imagine what it would look like. All these trees were planted, and they were very young, small trees. When he designed the town [affirmative] that was what his last view of Riverside was. And I got to grow up with these gorgeous, beautiful trees and a lovely selection of them. And one of the things he had done was he made sure that you could-- there was, there were parkways in the street, so they were, they were big enough for a baseball game, you know, softball game, shall we say. And they had a tree that could be climbed, and every house you

Kathryn Silberger

could see one park from the house. [Affirmative] So that meant your parents could say, yeah, you can go to the park. And this created little communities within the community.

GN ([00:03:22](#)):

Very interesting. Yeah.

KS ([00:03:23](#)):

So it was a--.

JS ([00:03:23](#)):

That's interesting. Yeah.

KS ([00:03:25](#)):

A neat place to grow up. And I didn't appreciate it at the time, but the longer I live, the more I think about the fact that, you know--.

GN ([00:03:36](#)):

How long did you live there?

KS ([00:03:38](#)):

I lived there until I was 17.

GN ([00:03:40](#)):

Okay. So, then we go to the early years through those years. You have elementary education and high school?

Kathryn Silberger

KS ([00:03:47](#)):

Yeah. I went to Riverside, Brookfield Township High School, and then I went two years to DePaul University. I spent a year in Bogota, Colombia, and I decided that I really wanted to explore, you know, Spanish language, Spanish culture. So, I transferred to the University of--.

GN ([00:04:05](#)):

Oh, you're jumping ahead. We got to find more about you growing up.

KS ([00:04:09](#)):

Oh, [laugh] okay.

GN ([00:04:11](#)):

I mean, you just don't get there, you know? I mean, are you an only child?

KS ([00:04:16](#)):

No, I have a sister.

GN ([00:04:18](#)):

Oh. She'd be disappointed if we didn't bring this into it [laugh].

KS ([00:04:20](#)):

Yeah. No, no. I have a sister who's two and a half years older, and my family, my family had actually come to Riverside, you know, in the very early 20th century. So, I had cousins living around so we could all walk to each other's houses. [Affirmative] And I have a cousin who's five

Kathryn Silberger

weeks younger than I am. And we were very close. You know, there was almost like a twin thing going on because we would oftentimes find ourselves--.

GN ([00:04:50](#)):

I see.

KS ([00:04:50](#)):

In the same setting.

GN ([00:04:53](#)):

[Affirmative] Let's go to high school. High school was in the same town?

KS ([00:04:58](#)):

Yeah, it was. Yeah.

GN ([00:04:59](#)):

Okay. Describe briefly, for the freshman year, how many freshmen were there? Were there four different classes or one class?

KS ([00:05:09](#)):

No, there were four different classes. And yeah, there were four classes. There were a lot of extracurriculars. I was on the swim team.

GN ([00:05:20](#)):

Oh, okay.

Kathryn Silberger

KS ([00:05:21](#)):

I got to, I was on the gymnastics. We didn't have a team. I was on the tennis team. I was--.

GN ([00:05:29](#)):

So you're very athletic coming up un those years.

KS ([00:05:31](#)):

Yeah. And I was involved with the girl's club, so.

GN ([00:05:34](#)):

Oh, I see.

KS ([00:05:35](#)):

That was fun too.

GN ([00:05:37](#)):

How about after-school activities?

KS ([00:05:41](#)):

Well, that would be the athletics and this thing called Share Club, which was the girls' club.

GN ([00:05:46](#)):

Okay. Did you ever do any work to high school?

KS ([00:05:50](#)):

I worked in the summers.

Kathryn Silberger

GN ([00:05:51](#)):

Oh, you did?

KS ([00:05:52](#)):

Yeah. We had a, we had a summer house, [laugh].

GN ([00:05:55](#)):

Oh, yeah.

KS ([00:05:55](#)):

And, it was up in Michigan. And so I worked for a very eccentric woman named Gwen Frostic, who had a stationary business in Benzonia, Michigan. And I mean, she was just one of a kind. She had, something happened to her when she was a kid, and they didn't take her to the doctor. It may have been polio, I don't know. But she walked with, one of her legs kind of dragged, and she just did everything by sheer force of will. She was an artist [affirmative]. And she drew these wonderful stationary. I mean, they were just wonderful. And she wasn't all that nice of a person, but she was a very interesting person to be around.

GN ([00:05:55](#)):

Yeah.

KS ([00:05:55](#)):

You know, that was an interesting place to work.

GN ([00:05:55](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

Yeah. Okay. I've been doing this. She has better questions [laugh].

JS ([00:07:00](#)):

Well, but let's go back and fill in about college.

GN ([00:07:04](#)):

Yeah.

KS ([00:07:04](#)):

Yeah.

JS ([00:07:04](#)):

So you went to DePaul.

KS ([00:07:06](#)):

Yes.

Speaker 3 ([00:07:06](#)):

And you, did you take a year off to go to Bogota?

JS ([00:07:11](#)):

No, I did it as my, sort of my junior year abroad. Yeah.

JS ([00:07:15](#)):

And then at the end of that, you did not return to DePaul?

KS ([00:07:18](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

I didn't want to. I was in a sorority and I didn't like the way they treated people, you know, they were very exclusive in who you should and shouldn't be associating with. And, you know, I kept getting in trouble because, like, I'd played bridge with people in the student union that--.

JS ([00:07:36](#)):

Hadn't made the sorority, hadn't made it right into rush.

KS ([00:07:38](#)):

Well, they didn't approve of, let me just say that, you know, and I didn't want to be that constrained. And so the easier thing was just to go to a big place and--.

JS ([00:07:47](#)):

So you went to University of Texas at Austin?

KS ([00:07:50](#)):

At Austin.

JS ([00:07:50](#)):

UTA.

KS ([00:07:51](#)):

What a place.

JS ([00:07:52](#)):

Big difference. What a difference.

Kathryn Silberger

KS ([00:07:53](#)):

What a place. And it was still kind of a small town. And like at that point, Willie Nelson was just switching from pig farming to playing music [laugh] and, you know, you could go hear him.

JS ([00:08:06](#)):

Wow.

KS ([00:08:06](#)):

You know, like in a smaller venue.

JS ([00:08:08](#)):

In a bar. Yeah.

KS ([00:08:10](#)):

It was, you know, there was a lot of really good music. And riding a bike was very safe. I wouldn't do it now.

GN ([00:08:18](#)):

Yeah.

KS ([00:08:19](#)):

And I lived in a house with a bunch of other people. It was the house of the first sheriff of Austin [laugh].

JS ([00:08:28](#)):

Wow.

Kathryn Silberger

KS ([00:08:28](#)):

Yeah. And I mean, here's getting in some graphic detail but, you remember that guy, what was his name? Who shot people from the tower?

JS ([00:08:38](#)):

Oh, yeah.

KS ([00:08:39](#)):

Anyway, there were bullet holes in my room from that [laugh]. They were in the, it was a beautiful fireplace, otherwise.

JS ([00:08:48](#)):

Wow.

KS ([00:08:49](#)):

And about thirty-five years later, I was speaking at a conference and the people who were sponsoring me, you know, I said, I don't want to stay at the conference hotel. I want to stay in that house because it was now a B&B. [Affirmative] And the B&B owners had no idea the history [laugh].

JS ([00:09:06](#)):

That's so cool.

KS ([00:09:06](#)):

It was a lot of fun. Yeah.

Kathryn Silberger

JS ([00:09:08](#)):

Was it at UTA that you decided to go into library science?

KS ([00:09:12](#)):

It was, I worked in the library there. And there were, they were, there was this program after World War II called the Farmington Program. So, when World War II happened, there were great gaps in our collected knowledge about different cultures, particularly Japan. And after the war, it was decided that what needed to happen is they needed to divide up the world and make sure that there was a library everywhere that was collecting in as much depth as possible.

[Affirmative] And we were the library from Mexico and Brazil.

GN ([00:09:55](#)):

Ah, that explains--.

JS ([00:09:57](#)):

There's the connection to Brazil.

KS ([00:10:00](#)):

Yes. Yeah. And so, I mean, it was just an incredible place to work. And I mean, we would, we just had all this really interesting stuff coming through.

GN ([00:10:10](#)):

Were you a great reader in those days? Did you--?

KS ([00:10:12](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

Oh, yeah.

GN ([00:10:12](#)):

You did.

JS ([00:10:13](#)):

Still, still, right?

KS ([00:10:14](#)):

I, well, you know, with seven kids in the house, I don't read that much, but, I do like reading still.

Yeah.

JS ([00:10:21](#)):

So tell us about how-- you've got to Brazil. I get, I get the connection. Give me the logistics.

KS ([00:10:29](#)):

Okay. So, I went to library school at University of Texas at Austin. And I had two colleagues there. One woman was from Mexico, and one woman was Bolivian, but she was married to a Brazilian, her name is Molly Bone (?). And so, the girl from Mexico was getting out of a bad marriage, and her command of English was not great. And when you take cataloging, really knowing the language--.

JS ([00:11:00](#)):

Precise.

KS ([00:11:00](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

Is something. And my Spanish was good enough that I could help her. So, I started working with her, and Molly would hear us. And so, you know, we became this little threesome. And when Molly went back to Brazil, Brazil was going through a very interesting change in the 60s. They had been rather unpleasant to their intellectuals. And they had all left. And Brazil's best and brightest now were overseas. They had very good jobs. And the Brazilian government realized that they weren't going to be able to develop economically if they didn't have a university system. And the only way they could begin rebuilding was to bring in foreigners. So, in we came. And so Molly was then in charge of the library. She got the library school to bring me in. And right away there was a nice grant to set up a program in graduate studies in library science. But you had to have a master's in library science.

GN ([00:12:10](#)):

Oh.

KS ([00:12:10](#)):

Which I had. And so, you know, when the money was coming through, everybody's looking at me [laugh], I'm just out of graduate school. But it was a fun time because everyone wanted it to work. So I started working. I had some really good friends in Brasilia who worked, you know, with the funding agencies.

GN ([00:12:31](#)):

What are the years for this? About 19--?

KS ([00:12:35](#)):

This would've been, '78 was when I arrived there.

Kathryn Silberger

GN ([00:12:38](#)):

'78.

New Speaker ([00:12:39](#)):

And so '78 was probably when I started working on the program.

GN ([00:12:44](#)):

Oh, okay. Yeah. That's probably recent, I mean, in my mind, '78 is not too long ago.

KS ([00:12:48](#)):

Not too long ago. Yeah. And so, I mean, we got this thing up and running and it worked, and it was a lot of fun.

JS ([00:12:56](#)):

I had to look at a map to find out where Santa Catarina is. It's a tiny little--.

KS ([00:13:02](#)):

It's an island.

JS ([00:13:03](#)):

Island, yeah.

KS ([00:13:03](#)):

It's an island. Well, that was part of the sell, you know.

JS ([00:13:07](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

Yeah, for sure.

KS ([00:13:09](#)):

Pay my way down [laugh]. And plus, my father, during the war. Okay. So, my father was an attorney who got conscripted into the war. And he was to be let out on December 5th. And he had to wait until Monday, December 5th, 1941. [Affirmative] He had to wait until Monday to get out. And as you may recall--.

JS ([00:13:40](#)):

What happened on December 7th?

GN ([00:13:42](#)):

7th, yeah.

KS ([00:13:42](#)):

Yeah. I mean, December 7th.

GN ([00:13:43](#)):

The day that lives in infamy [laugh].

KS ([00:13:46](#)):

Yeah. So, they said he wouldn't be able to leave anymore. And, you know, he was about to be sent over to Europe to fight. And then somebody realized he had a PhD in law, and they put him into the Judge Advocate General's office. And they immediately sent him down to Recife, Brazil, where nothing was happening. And so, he really got to know the culture, and he loved the

Kathryn Silberger

country. So, he kind of was encouraging to me. [Affirmative] And, you know, so we-- Santa Catarina is way down south, but I mean, it was beautiful. Forty-two beaches [affirmative]. Many of them could only be reached on foot [affirmative]. It was a great time to live there [laugh].

JS ([00:14:34](#)):

What brought you back to the States then? Because you're there about five years?

KS ([00:14:39](#)):

We were there for five years. When the military started easing up, everybody was, you know, not sure that this was going to be okay. And then they kind of realized that they could start making certain demands that, you know, there were a lot of social issues that needed to be addressed. As foreigners, we needed to stay out of it [affirmative]. And they would want to have strikes. Now, as the director of graduate studies in library science, I could not sanction a strike without putting myself into some jeopardy. So, I said, get me out of here. I can't do this. So, for a year or two, I wrote grants for the library, which were real easy to get, but we really weren't working because so often we would have to stay out because of the strikes. And it was a little nerve wracking.

JS ([00:15:39](#)):

Yeah. That was before work from home.

KS ([00:15:42](#)):

That was definitely before work from home. And, you know, if it would be easier to put pressure on a foreigner, to blame a foreigner, you know, it felt precarious. And so, we just decided this was fun--.

Kathryn Silberger

GN ([00:15:58](#)):

You're an American citizen through all of this. You never had, you never had to give up here.

Yeah.

KS ([00:16:03](#)):

No, no.

JS ([00:16:05](#)):

So, you're saying, we, were you in married at that time?

KS ([00:16:08](#)):

I got married to Don down there. He was also doing the same thing. My husband's a mathematician [affirmative]. And so, you know, he felt the same way. He was interested in working with graduate students and meaningful work was kind of stopping while they were going through this social change. You know, it was a shame, but you know, some good came out of it.

JS ([00:16:35](#)):

But it was time to go.

KS ([00:16:35](#)):

Yeah. We just wanted to get back and--.

GN ([00:16:38](#)):

And how come you wound up in this part of the world and not out in the west?

Kathryn Silberger

JS ([00:16:43](#)):

Whose job?

KS ([00:16:43](#)):

It was Don's job. It was Don's job. His area of mathematics is combinatorics, which is a part of algebra that deals with combinations of things. And for the longest time it was, you know, theoretical and irrelevant. And then it became very relevant with computer science [laugh].

GN ([00:17:03](#)):

Oh.

JS ([00:17:04](#)):

And IBM was interested in SUNY New Paltz. You know, getting people in this field.

GN ([00:17:11](#)):

Yeah.

KS ([00:17:12](#)):

And so, you know, they hired him as a professor.

JS ([00:17:16](#)):

Professor.

KS ([00:17:16](#)):

Yeah.

Kathryn Silberger

JS ([00:17:17](#)):

And Marist had an opening.

KS ([00:17:19](#)):

Yeah.

JS ([00:17:20](#)):

Was that just serendipity?

KS ([00:17:21](#)):

It was really lucky. It that-- you know, like it was one of the luckiest things of my life. I have loved working here.

JS ([00:17:29](#)):

Oh, that's wonderful to hear.

GN ([00:17:30](#)):

Oh, wait, you, you're way ahead [laugh]. This is coming on the crystal ball later on.

KS ([00:17:35](#)):

Okay. No, but it was, so--.

JS ([00:17:40](#)):

That's-- so you came here for that?

KS ([00:17:41](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

I came, yeah.

GN ([00:17:42](#)):

Did anybody interview? Did, who is the dean? Or--.

KS ([00:17:47](#)):

Who is the dean? I think Vinny Toscano was the dean, but he was not on the committee. I remember Cas Norkeliunas.

JS ([00:17:56](#)):

Oh, yeah.

JS ([00:17:56](#)):

And Barbara Brenner, Barbara was the director of the library then. Yeah. But Cas was the person I remember. And I'm not sure who else. There was a guy named Billy Joel from computer science.

JS ([00:18:08](#)):

Oh, from computer science [affirmative].

KS ([00:18:10](#)):

I think Billy Joel might've been on the committee. And I don't remember who else. [affirmative].

GN ([00:18:16](#)):

Roger Norton wasn't here yet?

Kathryn Silberger

JS ([00:18:18](#)):

I think he was.

KS ([00:18:20](#)):

He might've been, but he wasn't--

JS ([00:18:21](#)):

On the committee.

KS ([00:18:21](#)):

The dean. Yeah. I don't think there was. Yeah. Vinny might've been the dean--.

JS ([00:18:26](#)):

Academic Dean. Yeah. Vice president.

KS ([00:18:29](#)):

And I actually, I started in a temporary position here because they had gotten a big increase in the budget, and so they needed somebody to do cataloging, so--.

GN ([00:18:42](#)):

Oh, yeah had a combination.

KS ([00:18:44](#)):

Yeah. So, for the first, I don't know, four months, I was cataloging sixty books a day [laugh].

GN ([00:18:50](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

Wow, oh boy.

JS ([00:18:51](#)):

Working through a backlog, I guess.

KS ([00:18:53](#)):

Well, no, they were just coming in. They were coming in. I mean, we'd gone from having a minimal budget, I think it was the effect of middle states.

GN ([00:19:03](#)):

Oh, yeah.

KS ([00:19:03](#)):

They said that, you know, budget is inadequate. And, yeah. So I, would just sixty-- sixty books a day fits a truck.

GN ([00:19:12](#)):

Oh.

KS ([00:19:13](#)):

And I was doing a truck a day. And we had just gotten-- this was when we first started computerizing in the library. The first thing we did was we connected to a system called OCLC.

JS ([00:19:25](#)):

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Kathryn Silberger

KS ([00:19:26](#)):

And we had a, I, you know, I can't, let me describe this, not-- I want to show it with my hands, but we had a terminal that was maybe eighteen inches deep, and it had a big cathode ray tube in it. And it was probably, is that two feet [affirmative]? Two feet high. And it had a non-standard keyboard. You had the qwerty in the center, but then it had a lot of function keys that were specific to cataloging. And we would then receive the cataloging cards. A couple, I don't know, a week later, they would be sent to us. We weren't printing them. And so that was the first automation we had in the library.

JS ([00:20:17](#)):

Wow.

GN ([00:20:18](#)):

Was Adrian Perreault at that time?

KS ([00:20:20](#)):

I'm sorry.

GN ([00:20:20](#)):

Adrian. Adrian Perreault.

KS ([00:20:22](#)):

Adrian Perreault was still here. He was, yeah, he was doing a little bit of cataloging. But he didn't really care for the automation.

Kathryn Silberger

GN ([00:20:31](#)):

No, no. He was not. He was a traditionalist of the, for his thought [laugh].

KS ([00:20:38](#)):

But yeah. But we were, yeah, we had that. And so, and we still used accession numbers back then. Every book would get plus one over the last number. And that's how we kept track.

GN ([00:20:50](#)):

Did Ted Prenting play a part in that, Ted Prenting?

KS ([00:20:54](#)):

I don't think so. I knew Ted, but he was not involved in--.

GN ([00:21:00](#)):

I thought computerizing the library. It was something he had something to do. But I can be jumping on the wrong train here.

JS ([00:21:09](#)):

We do want to find out how your role changed at Marist over time. I have a whole cluster of questions--.

KS ([00:21:17](#)):

Okay.

JS ([00:21:18](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

About managing the change process. Yeah, because when we think about how the college changed--.

KS ([00:21:25](#)):

Yeah.

JS ([00:21:25](#)):

That's phenomenal. And the library maybe--.

KS ([00:21:31](#)):

Oh, yeah.

JS ([00:21:31](#)):

Even more intensive than the most intensive site of the change that and computer science, I guess. So, we want to find out about that whole change process. But before we get there, just give us the chronology of your career. You started doing cataloging books, that didn't last long.

KS ([00:21:48](#)):

I started cataloging books. That was for a while. Well, this kind of ties in with the technology. So at some point within the first year I was here, someone over in IT thought they might need a computer in the library. And they asked us, [laugh] sort of, what do you want? And everyone was a little uncertain about this. And being the youngest person on the staff, I was maybe more open to seeing what it was [affirmative]. So anyway, I remember saying, I don't know what we'd need a hard drive for. You can just give us two-disc drives [laugh]. So that was the IBM PC we first got. And shortly after it arrived, my mother-in-law got sick in Cleveland. And I grabbed the

Kathryn Silberger

Doss 2.1 manual before I left. And we went off to Cleveland. And I was sitting in a hospital waiting room quite a bit. And I read the Doss 2.1 manual cover to cover, which was more help than you can imagine in doing automation work, because it was comprehensible as an operating system [laugh]. It was very simple. But I kind of got the idea of what you're going to, what are the main operations of the computer. And by the time I was into Doss 3.1, it probably was over my head.

GN ([00:23:17](#)):

Just read the manual, you could do this. I mean, you could figure out what they're talking about without having the example in front of you?

KS ([00:23:24](#)):

Oh yeah.

GN ([00:23:25](#)):

Well, yeah.

KS ([00:23:26](#)):

Yeah. It was just sort of telling you--.

JS ([00:23:27](#)):

The structure was kind of logical to you.

KS ([00:23:29](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

It was logical. These are the kinds of commands you would give the computer to make it do these sorts of things.

GN ([00:23:36](#)):

I see.

KS ([00:23:37](#)):

And it was either going to calculate things, it was going to record information. You were going to save information and recall that information. You were going to copy that information. You were going to delete the information, and what else were you going to do? I mean, it wasn't connected to a network yet. It was pretty soon there after. And we got a whopping 300 baud modem [laugh].

JS ([00:24:06](#)):

Yeah. Right.

KS ([00:24:07](#)):

You know, I mean, I don't, no one would have the patience to work with 300 baud data transmission these days, but it was mainly character based. And so, I kind of moved into the automation stuff because I'd read the manual when nobody else had [laugh]. And I found it fascinating. You know, it was really interesting.

JS ([00:24:35](#)):

Yeah.

KS ([00:24:35](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

And so then the next thing we could do would be searching remote databases. So there was something called dialogue. I don't know if you remember.

JS ([00:24:47](#)):

I do. So, by this time, we are using the internet.

KS ([00:24:51](#)):

Well, sort of we're using. Yeah. Yeah. We're, I don't know if we were calling it the internet at that point, we were connecting Lockheed owned dialogue, which dialogue was a collection of online databases. And when you connected, you were paying by the second [affirmative]. So you had to really plan your search strategy very careful, carefully. It would be a wonderful training for young librarians now because we would do searches and knowing it was going to be so expensive, you know, it was sort of like being stuck in a taxi, in a traffic jam. You wanted to go in and have everything planned out. You think of your search terms, you think of your alternate search terms. You think about what you're going to do if you don't get what you expect, and you try to do it as efficiently as possible. And we're talking about five or ten minutes and you're off. And we, I would go down to New York City and take classes in this--.

JS ([00:26:06](#)):

Wow,

KS ([00:26:06](#)):

But it was great for faculty.

GN ([00:26:11](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

Where were you stationed doing this? Where, where was your office and where was the platform from which you worked?

KS ([00:26:18](#)):

Where was it? We were in that old building. So I was in--.

GN ([00:26:24](#)):

All the small Adrian small little ().

KS ([00:26:27](#)):

I was in a small, we were in the--.

GN ([00:26:30](#)):

() working there.

KS ([00:26:32](#)):

I wasn't over in Donnelly. They moved over to this location.

GN ([00:26:36](#)):

Yeah. No, Adrian building was one, one story.

JS ([00:26:40](#)):

It was behind the library, behind the--.

KS ([00:26:42](#)):

No, Adrian was a, was like a dorm hall. We were always--.

Kathryn Silberger

JS ([00:26:46](#)):

Adrian was a office.

KS ([00:26:48](#)):

Yeah. We were connected--.

GN ([00:26:49](#)):

Yeah. Well, I thought that's what the computer people were.

KS ([00:26:51](#)):

Yeah. We were connected to the chapel as we are now. They just tore the whole building down.

GN ([00:26:58](#)):

Oh.

KS ([00:27:00](#)):

I think it was, as I understand it, at one point it was where the new brothers were living and were being trained. The closets were all about as wide as this table because they had been rooms for people who did not have extensive wardrobes.

GN ([00:27:20](#)):

Right, right.

KS ([00:27:20](#)):

And I mean, we couldn't get things into those closets because they were so narrow [laugh]. And--

.

Kathryn Silberger

GN ([00:27:30](#)):

Oh yeah. All of that came down to put up the new library.

KS ([00:27:32](#)):

Yeah, yes.

GN ([00:27:34](#)):

Yeah.

JS ([00:27:34](#)):

It was downstairs. You would go downstairs to the library, remember?

KS ([00:27:39](#)):

Yeah, [affirmative] yeah. And so, I was on the entry level floor. And then all the books were downstairs.

JS ([00:27:49](#)):

Downstairs. Yeah.

KS ([00:27:49](#)):

And so, my office was back on the north end. And I don't know, we had the computer in the same room that we had the, remember card catalogs?

GN ([00:28:00](#)):

Oh, yes.

Kathryn Silberger

KS ([00:28:02](#)):

So, you have to keep one in the back room that has all of the books according to their accession number, which is the number they're assigned when they arrive. And it's sequential. So, you're, that catalog is what would be used for insurance purposes if you ever had to [affirmative] you know, if there were damage to the building and you had to replace it. We don't have it anymore [laugh].

GN ([00:28:25](#)):

Yeah, a card catalogue is a--.

JS ([00:28:26](#)):

This is a good time to ask you about how the library changed and maybe led the change as the college became a more complex institution. So, what did the library have to do to keep up with this growing college?

KS ([00:28:47](#)):

[Laugh] What did we have to do? The technology was coming to us, and there was, you know, in a way we were kind of just operating on our own. Nobody was watching what we did too much. So, one of the things we did very early on, we had one or two public computers. We had one public computer, maybe, or we got one public computer, but we got a CD ROM drive. And you could put a disc in there and you could let people search it themselves, and you didn't feel like you were stuck in a taxi, in a traffic jam. But it was such an early CD ROM drive that it was non-standard. And I remember it cost \$860. And we used to, hand out, we had numbers printed up to ten, and it was so popular with the students that they would come and take a number and wait

Kathryn Silberger

their turn, and we'd ask them to take like no more than ten or fifteen minutes, so we could accommodate people. But it was really popular and IT didn't really know what we were doing.

JS ([00:30:06](#)):

So that's very interesting. You were kind of, you said the technology came to you, and yet you had had to search it out yourself because IT wouldn't know what the students needed.

KS ([00:30:21](#)):

Well, they wouldn't know what the library world had. We would go to library conferences.

JS ([00:30:25](#)):

Conferences, yeah. So, you were doing it because at the same time that all this is happening, Dennis Murray is saying that technology is the key to the Marist future.

KS ([00:30:35](#)):

Yes.

JS ([00:30:36](#)):

If Marist is going to be on the map. We have to be on the map as a technologically advanced small college. So that's teaching and learning. Yeah. That's you guys.

KS ([00:30:48](#)):

And I mean, it was, I think the college was very supportive of us doing it. I mean, there was never a question about, you know, give us \$860 for this drive, which, you know, today is just outrageous. You would pay that kind of money. But it was, it was cutting edge [affirmative].

Kathryn Silberger

And the students, once we had that, they would wait for an hour rather than crack open reader's guide [laugh].

GN ([00:31:17](#)):

Oh, yes, yes. So that--.

JS ([00:31:19](#)):

This is interesting because sometimes we hear about change at Marist being very top down. And this is not, it's not being imposed on you.

KS ([00:31:32](#)):

We were so insignificant to everyone. They just didn't really know what we were doing.

JS ([00:31:38](#)):

Oh.

KS ([00:31:38](#)):

I mean, I don't know who Barbara would have told about this that would've understood what we were talking about. And she'd just say, kind of, go ahead [laugh].

GN ([00:31:50](#)):

How about the IBM grants and so on? Is that tied into this using Marist as a kind of sample, you know, the idea of like making computers so available?

KS ([00:32:04](#)):

Yeah.

Kathryn Silberger

GN ([00:32:04](#)):

And you know, that that became, in fact, only IBM could be used.

KS ([00:32:11](#)):

That's right. Yeah.

GN ([00:32:12](#)):

You know, there was that idea that we were kind of children of IBM and they were helping us along. And so, I mean, some of the languages wanted to get other computers and they said, no, no, no, you have to stay with the IBM network.

KS ([00:32:29](#)):

I think we got computers because of that. I mean, it was very easy to get them. I remember we started out with an operating system called OS/2.

JS ([00:32:38](#)):

Alright. That's right.

KS ([00:32:39](#)):

And I learned OS/2. And there was, I forget the name of the language to write the little configs--.

JS ([00:32:47](#)):

Cobalt, basic.

KS ([00:32:48](#)):

No, no, no, no, no. It's one you've never heard of.

Kathryn Silberger

GN ([00:32:51](#)):

Something Canadian, ABCD.

KS ([00:32:53](#)):

But easily forgettable.

JS ([00:32:57](#)):

Then, a few years later, Marist had some programs that went fully online. Of course, now we have more of them.

KS ([00:33:05](#)):

Yeah.

JS ([00:33:05](#)):

But I think the first was the MBA, the fully online MBA.

KS ([00:33:08](#)):

That's right. Yeah.

JS ([00:33:09](#)):

So, what did that demand of the library?

KS ([00:33:13](#)):

By the time they went with an online MBA, our databases had switched from being locally based. We were getting everything online that we could. And so, yeah, we had them.

Kathryn Silberger

JS ([00:33:30](#)):

Wasn't a big thing by then.

KS ([00:33:31](#)):

Yeah. And one thing that happened when they tore this building down, and we were over in the Steel Plant, that was also a time when the, sort of a big change happened with the computers as well. We were starting to then get the databases delivered through the internet, and it wasn't clear if the internet was going to be robust enough to sustain that level of searching. I remember that kind of being an issue. And it also, you know, by going to these online databases, we could then tell the online MBA students that they had access to a few business databases and--.

JS ([00:34:25](#)):

And pretty much to everything that on campus students had in terms of searching and resources.

KS ([00:34:32](#)):

Well, it took a while for everything to get there.

JS ([00:34:35](#)):

Okay. But some of the big providers were available. I mean, right now what we offer them is much more complex. And we've added in something called, Lib Guides, where we make sort of mini websites to support a specific class. And we highlight the databases that will be most useful. Database developers for some reason, like to give funny names, you know, just odd names that don't tell you anything. Like there's a business database called ABI inform, it started out being American Business Information, which told you what's in there. Right?

Kathryn Silberger

GN ([00:35:22](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

KS ([00:35:23](#)):

And then they said, no, we're going to call it IBM or no ABI inform, well, only an old librarian who remembers American Business Information knows what ABI stands for. And so, we really need to sort of point out to people what are the best databases to use. And so, putting in that system, we did that one in 2012, is--.

GN ([00:35:50](#)):

Who was your group? Who were your colleagues at this time?

KS ([00:35:53](#)):

At which time?

GN ([00:35:55](#)):

With this coming of the databases and is there a turnover on the staff or?

KS ([00:36:02](#)):

Yeah, there was--.

GN ([00:36:03](#)):

New people coming on with expertise from--.

KS ([00:36:07](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

Well, when Barbara decided that she just wanted, Barbara Brenner decided she just wanted to do acquisitions. So, then we ultimately hired John McGinty and John was with us through the changeover to, you know, from the old building to the new building. And then he left. And he was very supportive of, you know, pursuing the automation. That was good. And, then everything kind of consolidated when Vern was here. And then we got Becky, who, Becky Albitz, who's the current librarian, who's just-- head librarian. She's really extraordinary. And she has helped us really expand in a very intelligent way. You know, we've got something to support every area on campus. And as new things become available, I'm getting way ahead of myself. But for example, advertising is, you know, marketing and advertising has just undergone a sea change. They're not buying ads on television anymore. They're buying ads on social media. They're buying, I mean, they're all these new terms for, in which ads would be placed. And we have to keep up with that. So, we will end up getting new databases that cover something that didn't exist before [affirmative]. You know, they're really interesting to read.

GN ([00:37:48](#)):

Were you ever approached to go somewhere else? Were you, in other words, let me put it another way. Were other colleges-- was Vassar doing the same thing. Was St. Mary's doing the same? I don't think so. Tell me.

KS ([00:38:04](#)):

No, I think we were ahead of St. Mary's. Yeah, I mean--.

GN ([00:38:13](#)):

How about West Point?

Kathryn Silberger

KS ([00:38:16](#)):

West Point's hard to know about because they don't let you on campus [laugh].

GN ([00:38:20](#)):

Yeah.

KS ([00:38:20](#)):

We were always doing okay. I mean, one of the things we did early on that some of the other libraries hung back from doing, this goes back to sometime in the 80s when we first started digitizing the catalog. So, we had, I don't know, maybe 70, 80,000 cataloging records. And to change those from a print card to a online record is going to take some time and some money. So there was, I think it was New York State, but it might've been federal money to convert your catalog. And we would send one drawer of the shelf list at a time. If you did that, you had to agree to loan those books on interlibrary loan. We were going to do that anyway, you know?

JS ([00:39:21](#)):

Yeah.

KS ([00:39:22](#)):

We, most libraries have this idea that, you know, like, don't worry about who's loaning more this year, because some years you're going to be a net loaner and some years you're going to be a net borrower. Just worry about good will. So, we said, hey, we'll do that. And there were other libraries that were saying, I don't know that we want to make that commitment. So, we got a lot of the money because other libraries were kind of on the fence. They weren't sure they needed to do it. So, we got a lot of it converted that way.

Kathryn Silberger

JS ([00:39:57](#)):

I remember that being a point of pride for Dennis. He would take people, if I would bring a speaker to campus [affirmative] and I would bring them over to meet Dennis. He would bring them into the library and show them how you could search or something. And often he would enter the speaker's name to see if we had it.

KS ([00:40:16](#)):

Oh, that's great.

JS ([00:40:17](#)):

Yeah. He was proud of it. He was really proud of it.

KS ([00:40:19](#)):

That's good. Yeah.

JS ([00:40:21](#)):

Tell us about what you had to do to support teachers and students during the pandemic.

KS ([00:40:27](#)):

Oh, well, that was, yeah, hit and miss. It was easier to support the faculty. We put up things for the students, but we weren't sure what was going to work. So, we had a structure with these things called pathfinders and course guides, you know, subject guides, I should say. And those were in place. But we used to, we talked to a lot of classes. So, since everything was sort of, you know, happening at different times, we made a lot of videos.

Kathryn Silberger

JS ([00:41:10](#)):

Wow.

KS ([00:41:10](#)):

I have been doing a lecture to the business classes for thirty-five years, and I broke it into videos of, you know, say three to five minutes. One of them is a little bit longer, but otherwise I just broke it into these little bite size things. And the usage statistics indicated it was not a successful endeavor.

JS ([00:41:35](#)):

It was not. Did you say?

KS ([00:41:37](#)):

It was not.

JS ([00:41:38](#)):

Oh, they didn't-- see, I would've said, oh, they'd much rather watch a three minute video than read a guide.

KS ([00:41:46](#)):

Well, that's what we thought.

JS ([00:41:47](#)):

What you thought. That's why you took the time to do it.

KS ([00:41:49](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

Yeah. But, you know, you just have to look and learn. And it was such uncharted territory that we didn't really know. And it was a good guess [affirmative] but it was the wrong guess [affirmative]. We also developed various forms of online reference service. And we would be available to do Zoom reference consultations. Now, one of the nice things about that, you know, we were all working from home and, you know, my feeling was I don't care what time I start and stop, you know, I put some hours in on Saturday, Sundays, and evenings just to see if there was interest in that, because we do have an online MBA program that covers the entire country. So, I was thinking of, you know, like California, when I'd put in some evening hours, I wouldn't work them unless somebody said, I want an appointment. That actually worked quite well. And what I discovered doing it, I maybe did ten of those. Everyone who took one of these odd hours was working in the medical field, and I was so glad I could thank them for what they were doing.

JS ([00:43:10](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

KS ([00:43:11](#)):

And just, yeah. You know, just say to them, I am here to help you with whatever you need. God bless you for what you're doing.

JS ([00:43:18](#)):

Yeah, for sure.

KS ([00:43:19](#)):

And, yeah. And some other students were pretty good about using that. Some of the, we got more, chat, online chatting. the--.

Kathryn Silberger

GN ([00:43:32](#)):

Go ahead. You finish.

KS ([00:43:33](#)):

Yes. Okay. Yeah. The length of a reference consultation got longer. We were doing fewer, but they were taking longer time. So, I--.

JS ([00:43:44](#)):

How do you explain that?

KS ([00:43:45](#)):

I think that the interaction was more in depth. I think that people when they're asking you questions in private and they're not worried about colleagues seeing them.

JS ([00:43:55](#)):

Oh.

KS ([00:43:57](#)):

That they are more comfortable exploring in greater depth. They don't feel like people are seeing them as being unknowledgeable [affirmative].

JS ([00:44:09](#)):

That's very interesting.

KS ([00:44:10](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

Yeah. That was a surprise. But, you know, I think they just got a more in depth consultation because they didn't feel conspicuous.

JS ([00:44:20](#)):

Yeah.

KS ([00:44:20](#)):

As they might feel in a room that's got a glass front.

JS ([00:44:25](#)):

There's a lesson there for future planning.

KS ([00:44:27](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

GN ([00:44:28](#)):

Okay. What it's going to move to is that you gave us this wonder whole background and so on, and now I'm saying, well, here we are. What about the tomorrow, the crystal ball? Where do you see Marist in the tomorrows, ten years from now? Is Marist going to be here? Will it be Marist?

KS ([00:44:53](#)):

Interesting.

GN ([00:44:54](#)):

You know, is the, in other words, the change and the movement and the development, is it so universal that we'll be lost in the turnover of it? Or will we keep our own identity and be able to

Kathryn Silberger

continue into the future. Or you have done in the past, to bring us from the card card catalog to the digital world. Now where are we going? Is the same thing gonna happen in the next-- do you see it changing?

KS ([00:45:30](#)):

Oh, I'm sure it's going to change, but how?

GN ([00:45:32](#)):

Yeah.

KS ([00:45:33](#)):

I mean, change, you usually don't expect it's the disruptor that, you know, comes along that no one sees. I mean, one of the things I think about Marist that is just so important and will sustain us, is that this is a caring community. That there's a lot of human contact here. There's, you know, I've been reading this book to, I have lots of kids in my house, about something called, have you filled your bucket today? And the basic concept is this: we all carry an invisible bucket. And through acts of kindness and consideration and camaraderie, we fill people's buckets. And there can be bucket dippers who, you know, take out of people's buckets, bucket fillers get their own bucket filled, bucket dippers lose from their bucket. Marist is a bucket filler community. And I think that is so important.

GN ([00:46:35](#)):

Yeah. I had to add to-- this is a story. I think it's true, but the ship off the northern part of, was it not? Or I didn't know Brazil.

Kathryn Silberger

KS ([00:46:48](#)):

Yeah.

GN ([00:46:50](#)):

Would be, or, and, the Amazon comes rushing down and the ship sent out common helpers is we need water. And there was no wind and they couldn't move and so on. And the road came back, drop your buckets where you are, because there's fresh water there. And the concept of the story of the telling is, enjoy the moment. Drop your buckets where you are and enjoy what you have, you know?

KS ([00:47:20](#)):

Yeah.

GN ([00:47:20](#)):

And take the best of it, you know? And so, your whole idea of buckets [laugh] here, helping each other.

KS ([00:47:29](#)):

Yeah.

GN ([00:47:29](#)):

You know, there is a tremendous Marist spirit about, oh, even coming in here, a guy came and held the door for us.

KS ([00:47:37](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

Yes.

GN ([00:47:37](#)):

Out of nowhere. You know, because it's just kind of one of those things that's part of the spirit of the phrase or whatever you'd call it, you know, that that makes that so--.

JS ([00:47:48](#)):

Well, it's an explicit part of the mission. A sense of community.

KS ([00:47:52](#)):

Yeah. But Marist has done this, I think, more effectively than so many institutions. And I think that'll sustain Marist in a way that you may not find at less personal places.

JS ([00:48:08](#)):

And you've given us a good example with the individual reference consultations.

KS ([00:48:14](#)):

Yeah.

JS ([00:48:14](#)):

About how that will continue despite changes to format and structure.

KS ([00:48:22](#)):

Yeah.

JS ([00:48:23](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

That's going to persist, I think.

KS ([00:48:26](#)):

I think it will. Yeah. The other thing is I think the library is so well integrated into the curriculum, and, you know, one of the things I'll tell students in some of the business classes is, you want to learn this because, you know, you're going to get a grade in this class. But also, the person who knows how to find information often gets invited to meetings when they get into the workplace. Being somebody who knows how to find accurate information is a real asset.

GN ([00:49:02](#)):

Yeah.

KS ([00:49:02](#)):

And we're coming up, I mean, I think one of the conundrums that we're facing right now with social media is that there is so much inaccurate information floating around that having a command of how to find credible, solid information is becoming a rarer and more valuable skill.

JS ([00:49:31](#)):

Yeah. Critical. Absolutely.

KS ([00:49:32](#)):

Yeah. I mean, if you're going, for example, into marketing.

GN ([00:49:36](#)):

Yeah.

Kathryn Silberger

KS ([00:49:37](#)):

You got to know what's actually true and what isn't because if you are marketing based on false assumptions about the population, you're just going to blow a lot of money.

JS ([00:49:51](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

KS ([00:49:52](#)):

You need to know.

GN ([00:49:54](#)):

The data has to be accurate.

KS ([00:49:55](#)):

Yeah. And so, you know, like everybody's getting really exercised about Chat GPT these days and artificial intelligence, and I mean, certainly there are going to be a lot of misuses of it, but, I imagine that somehow we're going to learn to work with that a little bit better. And there are many ways in which it's going to be quite useful in the business area. One of the things I tell students about is that, if you go to the investor relations page for a company, they issue quarterly, they have quarterly earnings reports, and they usually have a conference call with investors. And if you can get a transcript of that call, what's valuable about it is you have large institutional investors who, you know, have a certain interest in the stock doing well. And then you have the company people, and it's the one time where you have a-- and they're really sort of adversaries in a certain way, not in a rude way or anything, but, you know, they have different sets of interests. If those transcripts can be, boom, produced very quickly and indexed so that people can look at

Kathryn Silberger

that information, you know, efficiently, they don't have to look at the whole long transcript, or even worse, listen to the recording of the conference call, that's going to be valuable. You see what I'm saying [affirmative].

GN ([00:51:33](#)):

Yeah. See the point you're saying about the accuracy. I mean, what we're going through now with Fox News, for instance, you know, and the whole, the lot people know it's not true, but, you know, still saying things, you know, on to big groups of people who then get convinced that what you're saying is true, even though, you know it's not true. You know? And so, it's a dangerous world and we need people to be capable of correcting it. You know? How do you correct this? Where do you go to get the right sources? Where do you go to get the right information about the quality of products, you know, about the quality of what the medicines, this whole thing now and--.

KS ([00:52:26](#)):

Well, with the medical world, you know, one of the things that has happened with Google, I think maybe starting at the beginning of the pandemic, you know, it's a big advertising agency, basically [affirmative]. And when Google started, it was doing a pretty good job of indexing a lot of government sites. And, you know, go to, if you want reliable medical information is medlineplus.gov. It is not getting indexed at all in Google anymore--.

JS ([00:53:02](#)):

Because people are only going to-- Google's only doing what comes up most frequently for the users?

Kathryn Silberger

KS ([00:53:08](#)):

No, I think Google is doing what generates ad revenue [laugh]. That's what Google wants. They want ad revenue. And the companies doing search engine optimization are, you know, following what Google tells them to do. And they're going after ad revenue, and the government is not going after ad revenue. And, you know, so like, if I want to get reliable medical information and I'm not talking to a medical provider, that's where I go. It's harder and harder for people to find that.

JS ([00:53:44](#)):

It's going to be way down on the page or on the next page.

KS ([00:53:46](#)):

It's not going to be, yeah, in the first couple of pages if it's there at all. So, when I talk to classes, some of our databases now will include websites and blogs and podcasts. And I'll ask them, what's the difference between this and Google? Where are you going to get the better search? Where are you going to get the better search results [affirmative]. And usually someone knows it. One person will pick it up that, you know, the way that our database providers make money is by providing us with good academic, solid academic information. The way Google makes money is through advertising [affirmative]. And I think that having people understand this, and we're going to have to get some kind of, we're going to have to come up with some kind of understanding of when that kind of popular information is useful. And that knowing how to get accurate information is a life skill at this point.

GN ([00:54:54](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

There's a person who knows it because of experience, or knows it because of study and experience, you know?

KS ([00:55:03](#)):

Yeah.

GN ([00:55:03](#)):

Actually having worked in the field and seeing the difference between the two sources, which one is the better one? I mean, not one, which is the more popular one. Yeah. You know--.

JS ([00:55:16](#)):

Gus's questions have taken us to the future, the crystal ball.

KS ([00:55:19](#)):

Yeah.

JS ([00:55:19](#)):

I want to go back just for a minute.

KS ([00:55:21](#)):

Okay. Sure.

JS ([00:55:21](#)):

I want to ask, early in your career here at Marist, you had a Fulbright.

KS ([00:55:26](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

I did.

JS ([00:55:27](#)):

Tell us about that and tell us if you think it had any lasting impact on your career, your direction.

KS ([00:55:33](#)):

I don't know. All right. So, I'm almost embarrassed about how I got it when I was getting ready to leave Brazil. Yeah. I mentioned, I wrote grants after the political thing, got a little uncomfortable. Writing grants was pretty easy. So, I was working in the library and they'd given me a job title that no one could figure out what I was doing, so I'd be safe. And the last grant I was working on was for a, like, scientific and technical library degree. And it was being funded by the Fulbright Commission. So, you had, you know, the Fulbright works where you had the US Fulbright office, and then the national office of the country where you're located. So, there was a Brazilian office. So, you know, when I start working on something, I like to get it done. And we were having a meeting with the head of the Fulbright Commission in Brasilia, and he thought we'd done a pretty good job on the grant, and he'd said, going to bring it back to lecture in this program. We really want you to come back. We're going to bring you back to lecture in this program [laugh]. And then, like two years later, maybe a year and a half later, I don't know, two years later, probably, they advertised a Fulbright that required--.

JS ([00:57:02](#)):

Exactly what you had.

KS ([00:57:03](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

[Laugh] Fluency on MLS, and you had to have near native fluency in Portuguese, Brazilian Portuguese. And so, it wasn't a real competitive thing [laugh].

JS ([00:57:18](#)):

That's a great story. You may be underselling yourself. I want to talk about what I know of as another, a real feather in your cap and a contribution to the community. And that is your service to the New Paltz Board of Education.

KS ([00:57:34](#)):

Ooh [laugh].

JS ([00:57:34](#)):

You served on the board and I think on the board for one year, and then president of the board.

KS ([00:57:40](#)):

I was president for two.

JS ([00:57:41](#)):

Two, yeah.

KS ([00:57:42](#)):

Yeah.

JS ([00:57:42](#)):

So, what did you hope to accomplish and how did it go [laugh]? And how did you ever find the time to work full-time and run a family, take care of a family? And do that?

Kathryn Silberger

JS ([00:57:55](#)):

I don't know. What did I want to accomplish? I wanted to give the school support. I wanted to make sure that academics were getting supported. New York State at that point was cutting back on the percentage of the income tax that went to higher, that went to the K-12 budget [affirmative]. So, they were cutting back. There were cuts coming to the school. And I, yeah, I didn't want to see that happening. I wanted us to make good decisions. And then we were working on building a school. Now this thirty-five years later was the point of pride that nobody even thought about or remembered in the community. But do you remember how exercise people were about the fact that we put an air handling system into Lenape and they were angry that we were putting in air conditioning for kids? So, when COVID happened, I was able to smile because they could put COVID filters. I mean, they could put, have the filters into the air handling system.

JS ([00:59:11](#)):

And of course, now what we're saying is all these buildings need to be upgraded.

KS ([00:59:14](#)):

Exactly.

JS ([00:59:15](#)):

Their air systems.

KS ([00:59:16](#)):

And nobody said, boy, that board of education had foresight [laugh].

Kathryn Silberger

JS ([00:59:22](#)):

No, no.

KS ([00:59:24](#)):

Nobody remembered. But I just got a moment of pleasure.

JS ([00:59:27](#)):

Yeah. I'm glad you did. I'm glad you did.

KS ([00:59:29](#)):

Yeah. I wanted to support academics. And--.

JS ([00:59:32](#)):

What other high points for you? Especially at Marist, but not only at Marist, what were some accomplishments that bring you the greatest satisfaction.

KS ([00:59:45](#)):

They're little ones. I mean, it's like working with a student and every once in a while they'll send you an email and thank you. It doesn't get any better than that.

JS ([00:59:56](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

KS ([00:59:57](#)):

Right?

Kathryn Silberger

JS ([00:59:58](#)):

Or bringing along junior colleagues, younger colleagues, helping them.

KS ([01:00:03](#)):

Yeah. That is fun.

JS ([01:00:05](#)):

Breaking in library directors. I hate to use that term. I shouldn't use that term, but helping library directors be successful when they onboard.

KS ([01:00:14](#)):

Well, I mean, yeah. Helping anybody onboard and I mean, I just feel like it's a nice, I feel so grateful that I'm in a place where I like going to work in the morning.

GN ([01:00:26](#)):

Yeah. Oh, okay.

KS ([01:00:28](#)):

That's a real blessing. And I like working with faculty. I like working with the students.

JS ([01:00:34](#)):

Yeah.

KS ([01:00:35](#)):

And you know, I mean, just trying to do a good job consistently. Yeah. There's a lot of pleasure in that [affirmative].

Kathryn Silberger

JS ([01:00:44](#)):

Are there any places you think Marist took missteps or missed opportunities? That--.

KS ([01:00:52](#)):

Hmm, that's an interesting question. You see, I wouldn't second guess people [affirmative]. You know, having done, well just let me say having done the board of education [affirmative], having been in a position where you have to make decisions based on what you think is correct to do, and somebody will always think you're wrong and somebody is always trying to manipulate you. And it is so hard sometimes to get the full set of facts out of people. You know, doing that level of administration is not easy. And I think, you know, Dennis has done, I mean, Dennis was just incredibly good at what he did. I'm impressed with Kevin Weinman [affirmative]. I think he's, you know, we got lucky again.

GN ([01:01:53](#)):

Yeah, we did.

KS ([01:01:55](#)):

And so no, I wouldn't say that I would criticize--.

JS ([01:02:01](#)):

That's great.

KS ([01:02:02](#)):

Anyone for anything because--.

Kathryn Silberger

GN ([01:02:04](#)):

Okay. Saying that, is there something you'd say about a policy we have that we might-- like remuneration award? The pay scale or the hiring practice or the social network. We have been talking before about, there's a need for the college somehow, or to make a place where people could-- there's so many different schools.

KS ([01:02:33](#)):

Yeah.

GN ([01:02:33](#)):

There's a lot of a lack of interaction as compared to was when you were here thirty years ago. You know, that kind of social mix seems to be--.

KS ([01:02:43](#)):

Yeah, harder.

GN ([01:02:44](#)):

Harder to come by now.

KS ([01:02:47](#)):

Well, you know, one thing I think they could do.

GN ([01:02:49](#)):

Alright.

KS ([01:02:50](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

Is I think they could designate a space where people could have lunch. They should have, you know, when they're not using the river room, for example, have it be a faculty staff lunch area.

Do you remember when they had some horrible little space in the old cafeteria?

GN ([01:03:07](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

KS ([01:03:08](#)):

And they gave us a subsidized price on it too [affirmative]. I got to know so many people back then. It was early on in my career.

JS ([01:03:14](#)):

You brought me to lunch a couple of times there [laugh].

KS ([01:03:19](#)):

But I mean, I think that's something we need.

JS ([01:03:21](#)):

Right.

KS ([01:03:22](#)):

I feel pretty strongly about the DEI [affirmative] initiative, you know, diversity education, diversity, equity and inclusion [affirmative]. And I mean, one thing I think we really need to look at as a campus is we need to get a private grants office. Because a lot of the DEI money would

Kathryn Silberger

be, we would be getting it in such a way that we would be limiting it by the class of person getting it, which is not always good for federal or state grants.

JS ([01:03:55](#)):

Tell me more about that. I don't, I'm not following.

KS ([01:03:56](#)):

Well, if we said, okay, we want to get this for first generation Americans.

JS ([01:04:02](#)):

Okay.

KS ([01:04:02](#)):

So, we're in a sense discriminating, we're not making it available to everyone.

JS ([01:04:06](#)):

Okay.

GN ([01:04:07](#)):

Yeah.

KS ([01:04:07](#)):

And so, if you get a private grants office, you could have scholarship programs or support programs that you didn't have to worry about them not being, you know, there's a [affirmative] a place for private and a place for public grants and we don't have a private grants office.

Kathryn Silberger

JS ([01:04:26](#)):

That makes sense.

GN ([01:04:27](#)):

Oh yeah.

JS ([01:04:28](#)):

I never thought about that.

KS ([01:04:29](#)):

And I think that's something that really needs to happen and, you know, see if you can get money to build up an endowment. Because there are things you can do with private money you can't do with public money, just as there are things you can do with public money that you can't do with private money. To me, that's part of the brilliance of the United States is we have strong private and public infrastructures.

GN ([01:04:52](#)):

Yeah [affirmative].

KS ([01:04:53](#)):

And we should be taking advantage of that [affirmative].

GN ([01:04:57](#)):

See part of the other side of that coin, John Ansley is a very lucky, smart, clever in getting a number of grants. Okay.

Kathryn Silberger

KS ([01:05:06](#)):

Yeah.

GN ([01:05:06](#)):

But people think that that can be used anywhere actually, when the grant comes for the Lowell Thomas collection or something, it has to be used in the Lowell Thomas collection.

KS ([01:05:18](#)):

Yeah.

GN ([01:05:18](#)):

So, when he goes and asks for money for us running this thing, not that he ever did, but [laugh] let's say he did, you know, well take some of your money from, you got 30,000 over here, that's where it has to stay, you know?

KS ([01:05:32](#)):

That's right.

GN ([01:05:33](#)):

Yeah. So, it's, that's a unique idea. We'll have to put that in big letters [laugh].

KS ([01:05:42](#)):

The other thing I thought we should do, I mean, now you've got me going. I thought it would be very interesting for computer science to develop more user-friendly interfaces taking particularly federal data and making that more manipulable by end users. So, you know--.

Kathryn Silberger

JS ([01:06:09](#)):

Poverty data, housing data--.

KS ([01:06:11](#)):

Yeah. I mean, even the stuff that comes out of EDGAR, the stock information, the EDGAR system is kind of kludgy, but it's all public data. And if you developed interfaces that worked more dynamically with it and you know, with some of the AI that's coming along, this might be possible. That would be a way of really making Marist stand out nationally because people would use these things.

JS ([01:06:43](#)):

It also democratizes this national resource.

KS ([01:06:48](#)):

Yes. Yeah.

JS ([01:06:49](#)):

People can access it.

KS ([01:06:51](#)):

And there are, you know, companies that don't really want the government doing that too well, because they want private sector to be able to get them there and do that, which, okay, let them try that. But if Marist, you know, with this great computer science department, developed, I've been trying to push this one for like ten years [laugh].

Kathryn Silberger

JS ([01:07:14](#)):

Did you talk to Harry Williams?

KS ([01:07:16](#)):

No. [laugh]. No. I told, I think I told--.

GN ([01:07:20](#)):

Roger Norton?

KS ([01:07:20](#)):

No, no, no, no, no. Who did I tell? Someone over in the president's office. But yeah, it never went anywhere. But I mean, I think that would be a way of really distinguishing Marist, making it possible to visualize that data. You know, I mean, the visualization technology has gotten so advanced. If you made it easy for people to use that it would be something. I mean, the census recently just combined a lot of their products into something now called data.census.gov, and they're starting to do that. And you know, that's I think the kind of stuff that has to happen [affirmative]. And if that were done with a much broader data set. And I mean also, you know, the American Community Survey, which is annual sampling of just all sorts of stuff. If you start integrating that with other sources of data, the census has done that to some degree. But that could be done with all sorts of stuff. And just like Wharton, the Wharton School of Business put together a database that, you know, this is kind of, people think of Wharton as being a very advanced place because of it. Marist could really distinguish themselves that way [laugh].

JS ([01:08:43](#)):

Kathryn Silberger

When I was looking, I think at your LinkedIn profile, I saw that early on you had a series of papers and presentations about something called federated searching. Am I getting that right?

KS ([01:08:58](#)):

Yes. You got that right. Yes.

JS ([01:08:59](#)):

So, is this a natural outgrowth of that?

KS ([01:09:03](#)):

Well--.

JS ([01:09:04](#)):

A way of making it easier for people to land on a page, see where to go, figure out what to do with it.

KS ([01:09:14](#)):

Yeah. In a sense, federated searching, yeah. Was one of the first efforts in that. The reason I was writing those papers, we haven't even talked about this. We were development partners with a company called Serials Solutions. And they were one of the early companies that looked at all of these different databases that we had and said, you know, after about the third database people give up, let's take all the data in all those databases, we'll search all of them and then come up with the best search results. And it was really fun being development partners. You will never have a tech service call like you have when you're a development partner. You know, you call

Kathryn Silberger

them up and say, I don't think this is working correctly. I think you need to do something different.

JS ([01:10:05](#)):

Which is useful feedback for them.

KS ([01:10:07](#)):

Yes. And they say, oh, you do tell us about that. What would you like to see [laugh]? And then when you're no longer development partners and you have to deal with regular talk service, it's a shock [laugh].

JS ([01:10:20](#)):

I remember that. I remember that section because we would go to a search page.

KS ([01:10:24](#)):

Yeah.

JS ([01:10:24](#)):

And it would say, well, do you want to look at ProQuest? Do you want to look at this? Do you want to look at that? And Serials Solutions was on there.

KS ([01:10:32](#)):

Yeah.

JS ([01:10:32](#)):

That was part of that whole thing. That's interesting.

Kathryn Silberger

KS ([01:10:34](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. That was fun stuff. Yeah. Yeah. But--.

JS ([01:10:38](#)):

Katie, was there anything that you thought you might want to get on the record today? Anything that we haven't talked about that we should besides Serials Solutions partnership [laugh]?

KS ([01:10:49](#)):

No. I don't think so. I don't think so.

GN ([01:10:54](#)):

Well, we're going to call you back, you know, if we think of something more because, this isn't so, I mean, informative, I was not able to follow half of the conversation because I only read and write English. I have nothing to do with technology, you know, [laugh] so but, it's been, really, I know people will be looking at when this is transcribed, and good luck in doing that because the way this, we were talking here with such speed and so on. Nevertheless, we have good people doing it.

KS ([01:11:29](#)):

Oh my goodness.

GN ([01:11:30](#)):

We'll be put into a, you know, it can be read as well as listened to. And I'm sure within a year or two people will be calling you and saying, you know, in that interview you said.

Kathryn Silberger

KS ([01:11:43](#)):

Oh dear [laugh].

JS ([01:11:46](#)):

You only said nice things about people. Thank you very much, Katie.