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Florence Jandreau oral history interview by Yael V. Greenberg, 2 June 24, 2003

Florence Jandreau (Interviewee)

Yael V. Greenberg (Interviewer)

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USF Florida Studies Center
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Narrator: Florence Jandreau
Current Position: Administrative Assistant
to the Dean of the USF Library
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Abstractor: Mary E. Yeary
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TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

Year of arrival

She came to USF in 1971 as clerk I.

Circumstances that brought Florence to USF

She is a life-long citizen of Tampa. She was born in Tampa. She came to USF in 1971 just out of high school.

First hearing of USF

When she was growing up everyone was talking about USF. They talked about the changes that were coming to the large cattle field that was on Fowler Avenue. Fowler was a dirt road for a long time.

What did the campus look like when Florence first arrived?

Florence says the landscaping was bare. There were no trees, just sand. All of the trees have been planted since then. "Now it looks so inviting compared to then," she states. Florence says the UC existed when she arrived. Crescent Hill was right behind the UC. Florence says Crescent Hill was a big student hangout. The administration building was there as were the education and engineering buildings.

University Mall opens

The first day the University Mall opened was a big day for the USF campus. Florence says that campus people took leave just to go over to the new mall and see the stores.

University Restaurant

Jandreau says the University Restaurant was the only place where campus people could go to for food. The restaurant served a wide variety of food, from Spanish to just plain food. It was a hang out for staff and faculty. Happy hour brought a lot of faculty to the restaurant. She says during happy hour one could find the administrators and faculty there. They went there for lunch because there was no other place to go to. The only other landmark in the surrounding area was a motel on 56th Street and Fowler Avenue. She says the area was very vacant.

Sense of closeness in the early days

Jandreau says there was a sense of closeness on campus, as everyone knew each other because it was smaller then. "It wouldn't be unusual to see half of the campus in one day because of so few buildings to go to and interact in," she says.

How did she get the position of clerk I?

Before she graduated she started with her sister working in the registrar's office as an OPS. At that time she looked for a job and the clerk I position came open. She applied for it and got it.

Parents supportive of her working at USF

Her parents were supportive. Her father worked at USF in the air conditioning unit. Her sister-in-law worked in the College of Education. They had family ties to USF. Also, her brother-in-law was going to school in the College of Engineering. So it was a family ordeal.

Working in the registrar's office

Jandreau says that when she became clerk I one computers were not around. She had to haul big trays of data cards from one point to another. The students did not register in the registrar's office. They registered in the gym. Her job was to truck the carts of cards back and forth. Then she sat a desk with what she thought were thousands of students asking her thousands of questions that she did not know the answers to.

Registration process

The university gave a card for each course. There were not many cards for each section. When those cards were gone the class was filled. Students came to Florence asking her if there were any cards left for a course. The students would then take their cards to another place and determine their schedules. There were lines out the gym because students wanted to be there first. It was on a first-come first-serve basis.

Atmosphere on campus in 1971

Jandreau says there was a sense of excitement on campus in 1971 because a lot of buildings were going up. Plans were being made for the future, which was exciting. When they broke ground for the library it was an exciting day.

The new and current library building

Jandreau became very attached to the new building. One of her jobs was to come over and label doors and lockers that they had at the time for students. Jandreau and the secretary to the library director had to scare away mice and rats on the floors because the floors were empty and still full of construction materials.

Florence moves from the registrar's office to the library in what is now the SVC

From the time she was little Jandreau had always wanted to work in a library. She was looking for a job. The library position was the first one that she came across so she took the job.

Clerk I responsibilities

Jandreau was in charge of copy services. At the time the library did not have public copiers. She worked in a very small room with one other person who was clerk II. There were two great big copiers in the room that put out a lot of heat. Everyone placed their papers to be copied in the office. She says there would be stacks and stacks of papers to be copied all day long. Her office was located on the fourth floor.

Jandreau learns additional skills

Also on the same floor as the copying services were serials and government documents. To give her a break from standing all day, she worked at the information desk for government documents and serials for a few hours a day.

First people Jandreau met in the library

The first person she met was Dennis Robeson, who was the head of public services at the time. He stands out because he was very good-looking and she was very young. He took her around the library building on the day of her interview. She says the tour and the way Dennis was describing the library with such excitement added to her joy of working there. She started her interview with the assistant director. She felt honored since she was just a clerk I. Pat Oaks was the secretary to the director. She went to school with Pat's son so she knew her and this put her at ease. Jandreau told Pat that one day she wanted to be secretary just like her. Mary Sepanik was head of reference when Jandreau began working for the library. Jandreau says that Mary was older and looked a lot like her mother. Also, Mary supervised many young people who worked in reference. Her nickname became mother Mary. "Anytime you had a problem she would give you direction. She was the best mentor," says Jandreau. She says that Mary helped further her career. Jandreau told Mary about her dream of wanting to be secretary one day, and Mary told her she would make it.

Dream of being the secretary to the library director

Jandreau was schooled just for secretarial skills. She excels at secretarial skills. Jandreau's dream was helped by Pat's guidance. Jandreau saw the work Pat did and saw her working in her office and just aspired to be like her.

First impressions of Mary Lou Harkness

Mary Lou came around and visited Jandreau on her first day. Jandreau says Mary Lou was very sweet, intellectual, and funny.

Florence moves from the clerk I position to a reference position as clerk typist I

Jandreau stayed on the fourth floor in the copying service center for three or four months. Pat Oaks interviewed Jandreau for the job in reference. She got the position and moved to reference.

Jandreau is exposed to the library administration

When Jandreau moved to reference, her office was right next door to Mary Lou's office. Jandreau became engulfed in the administration suite. She would help cover phones and work on other tasks. This was the first time Jandreau experienced the library

administration because she was on the same floor and very close to the administrative offices.

The new and current library building opened in 1975.

Moving process

Jandreau says the moving process took a lot of planning and a lot of creativity. The moving company they hired had never moved a building of such stature before. Also, the moving company had never moved books. The company built special book carts. The book carts were pushed out of a window of SVC because they would not fit on the elevators. A special ramp had to be built for the book carts to be put on and then loaded on the moving truck. The moving truck then went to the new building to unload the books on the loading docks. Jandreau says everything to be moved had to be color-coded. Everything received a certain color sticker indicating which floor the item belonged on. The items also had the proper room numbers listed on them.

Any accidents while moving

Jandreau says they lost a couple of book carts over the side of the building. They had to go down and pick them all up. They also lost books in the elevator shafts of the new building. Book carts fell apart because they were constructed just out of plywood. Books were put on the wrong shelves. "There was a lot of cleanup after we got here," says Jandreau.

Formal ceremony to open the library

Jandreau says there was a big dedication day for the library. Margaret Mead came to the ceremony. Jandreau says it was a big ordeal. The library accommodated the large crowd of people on the first floor. "It was a big fancy day," she says.

Why did the library need a new building?

In the SVC building there were stacks of books on each end of the ranges. The ranges were very narrow. They tried to put in more books than there should be. The floors were sagging. They knew the weight of the books was just too much. They had books stacked on one another. There was no place for students to sit and study.

Florence moves from clerk typist I to clerk typist II

Her new job as clerk typist II was to type interlibrary loan forms; she typed 100 a day. Then she mailed the forms out for materials that the library did not have for faculty. She typed annual reports. There were no computers, just old electric typewriters. She enjoyed working with the faculty and obtaining materials. She helped faculty write books by getting the materials for them. She was acknowledged in several books for her help with them. She really liked the public service part of it. The interlibrary loan was all part of reference. It was not its own unit. As she progressed in her job she made interlibrary loan its own unit. The interlibrary loan added staff members because the demand was growing.

First computers in the library

No students were authorized to use the first library computers. The very first computers were not what computers are today. The library still had the card catalogs. Jandreau says that when the library got its first computers it was very exciting.

Computer problems

She remembers having microchips sent to her in the mail. She had to call a phone number and a computer technician guided her through the process of opening the CPU part and trading out microchips in order to enhance the services.

Jandreau was promoted from clerk typist II to clerk typist III to LTA I (Library Technical Assistant) to LTA II to Supervising LTA II (She became clerk typist III in 1974; she was supervising LTA II until 1988).

In 1988 Florence became executive secretary

As supervising LTA II Jandreau handled student employment and the payroll. Her office was in reserves, which was in the basement away from administration. There were some problems. They took Jandreau completely out of reserve because they were moving reserve to another location where they did not need a supervisor. They moved Jandreau to administration. At the time Mary Lou was retiring, and the acting library director was taking over. As administration expanded and new processes developed they needed additional help, so Jandreau moved to administration. Mary Lou then retired in 1988. Art Ketchersid took over as acting director until Laurene Zaporozhetz became the permanent director in 1989. Laurene was the first director that Jandreau was truly executive secretary to. The other times Jandreau took on a secretary role was when the library administration tried to survive without several positions and tried to do what they could to get everything done.

Florence realizes she has made it to executive secretary

She says it was very rewarding. She really did not realize what she had done until she thought about it and realized she had set a goal and reached it.

How had the library changed by the time Mary Lou retired in the 1980s

Jandreau says one of the major changes was the coming of technology. The phone system began to change. They did not have rotary dials anymore. They finally got push buttons. They had multiple lines. Jandreau says the structures and organizations of libraries were changing.

Directors with different focuses

At the time Mary Lou retired, Art tried to advance the library further in to technology. Then Laurene became director. Jandreau says that each person has a different personality and a different focus.

Laurene

Jandreau says that Laurene was very different from Mary Lou. Laurene was younger, had been educated at a different time, and had many different focuses and organization

and management styles. The university also changed at the time with reporting authority. The university had an associate vice president that covered the library. “Our direction was just changing completely from where it was just three years prior to Laurene coming,” she says. The staff had been there for almost twenty years and it was hard on them to change when the new director arrived. Laurene was director from 1989 to 1990.

Associate vice president of the library—Ann Prentice

The associate vice president was similar to what the provost is today. She was the higher reporting person for library director. She took care of the media resources, such as educational outreach and the media center.

How did the library receive funding when Florence first arrived?

Funding went from the university to Mary Lou. Then Mary Lou purchased books for the Tampa library and the St. Pete library.

Initial resistance to technology changes

Florence says there was some resistance to technological changes. There was one cataloger who refused to have a computer put on her desk. She wanted her old IBM typewriter.

Next director of the library

Sam Fustukjian, who was the St. Petersburg library director, became the new Tampa library director in 1991. He was acting director for one year. Then the university conducted a search. He was appointed to the permanent position. He was the first male director since Elliot Hardaway in 1967. “He was a man of visions. He was not happy with you saying you couldn’t do something because if he wanted something he would get it,” she says. He fought for St. Petersburg while Mary Lou was director of the Tampa library. Once he arrived in Tampa he found himself fighting against St. Petersburg. “He knew who he should fight for, and he fought for the Tampa library. He saw technology that we couldn’t see. He was very frustrated with some of the staff that just didn’t see some of the changes that were coming about,” she says. Technology was a large part of his vision. Sam passed away in March of 1999.

Managing without a director

Sam became sick in September of 1998. “We all worked as a team and as the director,” she says. There were three other staff members besides Jandreau. One staff member was the assistant director for administrative services. The other staff members were Larry Heilos and Jim Gray. “The four of us did the best we could until February when they appointed Derrie Perez from the library school. She had worked on the task force to reorganize the library system. She was one of the most logical choices to be the acting director,” she says.

First impressions of Derrie

“She had so much enthusiasm and a friendly demeanor,” says Jandreau. She had a good hold on the reorganizing of the system. “It has been a rough ride because people didn’t understand why a library system was needed. Her task has been nothing

but uphill battles, but she has one a few,” she says. Derrie’s focus is more on the central services. Sam’s focus was on public services. She is the dean of the USF library system, which encompasses the regional campuses as well. She is very involved in the Latin American Caribbean initiative that is on campus. She steered the library toward that way by hiring a Latin American Caribbean studies librarian. Jandreau says the library has done very well with the Latin American Caribbean studies program. Derrie was a member of REFORMA, which is the part of the American library association geared to the Spanish speaking community. Jandreau says Derrie’s involvement with REFORMA strengthened the Latin American Caribbean studies program.

In 1995 Florence became administrative assistant to the dean.

Why have employees of the library stayed for so long?

“It’s the people. You are here with these people longer than you are with most of your family members. We’re more or less like a big family, especially during the ‘70s and ‘80s,” she says. The library celebrated birthdays and do many other interlibrary activities. “As we grew further and further with staff, jobs changed, more stress came, and more duties came, those kinds of things stopped, but the friendships still remain,” she says.

Mold outbreak

When Jandreau worked in reserve one of her duties was to be in charge of the “mold people.” There was an outbreak of mold on the fifth floor that was just incredible. The outbreak occurred around 1985, ten years after they moved to the new library building. The mold was half an inch thick on the books. She says it was just awful looking. In the basement in her office was a rack of trench coats, rubber gloves, masks, and mold reducing products. One of the security guards came up with the mold agent and sold it to the library. She had to hire forty students during one semester to come and put on the attire, go to the fifth floor, and wipe books down with the mold reducing agent. “It was quite a smelly process. I nicknamed them the mold people,” she says. Air conditioning problems, the humidity in Florida, and unsealed windows caused the mold problem.

Flooding

If it rained really hard there would be water running down her wall in the basement, which did not make her feel very safe. Right after a hard rain ants would come. Documents were also in the basement at the time, and they had major flooding problems.

The library does have a disaster preparedness committee.

Security guards at the library

When the library was in the SVC building there was always a security guard because there was no security gate. A guard sat at the door and checked the belongings of students and staff members as they went out. Security guards routinely walked around the building and checked for food since there was absolutely no food aloud. If the guards found someone with food they would toss the person out of the library. They worked with the university police. When the library moved to its current building there was still

security because it was a much larger building. Then the library eventually stopped having security guards when the university police became more active.

Students removed from the library

Jandreau says students were removed from the library often for having food or getting in fights.

What is she most proud of in her thirty-two years at USF?

She is proud of her personal accomplishments at USF of starting out as a clerk right out of high school and getting to where she is today.

Changing of the title of secretary to administrative assistant and Jandreau's work with the International Association of Administrative Professionals

She says secretary is more of an assistant. To her, secretary assistant does not sound good. The association decided to change its name in 1998 or 1999 from Professional Secretaries International to International Association of Administrative Professionals. This encompassed the office managers, which was a brand new title to the country. It also encompassed office assistants, administrative assistants, and assistants. Jandreau says the new names were better titles than secretary. "It gave them [employees] a better well renowned name," she says. Jandreau says there is a USF area chapter of the International Association of Administrative Professionals. She says there were a couple of people at USF who belonged to the then Professional Secretaries International. They were tired of going across town for meetings. They began the chapter in the USF area and asked Jandreau for her assistance.

Any particular changes at USF that stand out to Florence

The changes that stand out to Jandreau are the physical changes on campus and the increased community support of the university. "The continued growth has made such an impact on the community from the pasture that it was to what it is now," she says.

Where does Jandreau see the library in the next decade?

In the next decade Jandreau sees stronger technology at the library. She thinks there will be a reduction in workforce because of technological advances. She also sees the expansion of the building not just for books, but also for labs and classrooms for technology.

Last words

"I think to be successful we all have to be a team player and understand that not everyone has the same views as you or I have. And we have to be very understanding of those changes, and want to change, and want the best, and want to strive for the top rating of the university," she says. To highlight Jandreau's team player attitude, her favorite saying is an African proverb, which says, "A single bracelet does not jingle."

End of Interview