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# Interview with Dana Rooks

Dana Rooks

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**Texas Medical Center  
Women's History Project**

**Dana Rooks**

**Interviewed by:** Darra McMullen  
**Date:** January 19, 2016  
**Transcription:** Darra McMullen  
**Location:** Office of Dana Rooks, University of Houston

DM: O.K. Just for the record, I'm the interviewer, Darra McMullen, and I am here with Dana Rooks, and this is going to be her oral history of her life and career.

DR: It's pronounced "Dan-uh".

DM: "Dan-uh"? I'm sorry!

DR: It's spelled with one "n", but it's pronounced "Dan-uh".

DM: It's pronounced "Dan-uh". Nobody told me that. O.K. I'm sorry; "Dan-uh".

O.K. Let's start with something simple. Where were you born and raised? If those were two different things, please let us know that.

DR: I was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and raised in a small town called Okmulgee.

DM: O.K. I'll need to copy the spelling down on that one, I think!

Did you have siblings?

DR: I have a twin brother and a sister who is 18 months younger.

DM: What did your parents do for employment?

DR: My father owned a pharmaceutical distribution company, and he died when my brother and I were six and my sister was four.

DM: Oh, my goodness!

DR: And my mother had a library degree from Emory (University), and so she immediately went to work as a librarian and became one of the most prominent librarians in the country – in public libraries.

DM: Wow! That's very impressive.

DR: Put three kids through school simultaneously for four years [college]. My sister was a year behind us in school, so she had all three of us in school.

DM: O.K. Did your mother start any new library systems, or other stuff that the common person would have heard of before?

DR: Well, she was very prominent in the profession in public libraries. She was an expert in building public libraries. She built - working with architects - she built 24 public libraries in the state of Oklahoma.

DM: Wow!

DR: And then she moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, and helped build the Tulsa city/county library that exists today, and was the head of all the branches and bookmobiles. And she went to the Oklahoma state library in Oklahoma City, and worked on building that one, and then stayed as a librarian there until she retired.

DM: That's very impressive! That's quite a career!

O.K. Did your parents' work influence your decision to go into a library career?

DR: Yes, to some degree. All of us said we were going into library work, and I'm the only sibling who did. I was supposed to go to law school, had been admitted into law school, and called up my mother in May after I graduated and apparently, I was ahead of my time because I told her I didn't want to go to school in the fall, and so she didn't tell me to come home and find myself like people do today.

And she said, “That’s nice, dear, and what are you going to do to support yourself with your English degree?”

And so, off the top of my head, I said, “I’ll go to library school.”

And she thought I’d just do that maybe do it for a year or two, and then go back to law school.

I got my library degree, and got my first job at the University of Oklahoma, and just stepped down as the dean after a career of like 45 years as a librarian.

DM: That’s a long time.

O.K. Can you think of any other childhood influences in your life or experiences that helped to lead you into a career in library work?

DR: Well, not so much specifically into library work, but just so incredibly fortunate that my brother, sister, and I had a mother who – this was back in the ‘50s, so it was a different world.

DM: Right.

DR: Just to give you an example – when my father died, my mother even though she was our mother, had to have a legal guardianship.

DM: Wow!

DR: That was the way; women didn’t have rights.

DM: Wow!

DR: She lived and breathed – she was so concerned that if something happened to her, the three of us would be split up. So, in Oklahoma, females could be emancipated at 13, going back to God knows when they made that rule up.

So, she lived and breathed [concern] until the day I turned 13, and I was taken out

of school; we went to court, and I was emancipated, so that I could, theoretically, be responsible for my brother and sister as an adult at 13.

She was a remarkable woman; she told all of us that there was nothing we couldn't do. She gave us a work ethic; she gave us integrity; she gave us just everything we were raised with; and all three of us have had incredibly successful careers in things we really loved doing.

She didn't care where we went to school; it wasn't up for debate whether we went to college I'm talking about. You could go anywhere you want. So here was this widowed mother, little librarian, who put the three of us through college [education]. [There were for the three of us kids] three undergraduate degrees, three master's degrees, and one doctorate [degree], which she paid for, and none of us had the courtesy to go "in-state". [Laughter from both DM and DR] So she didn't care where we went, but we had to go, and we had to do well, and we had to engage in activities.

DM: She had to pay the big money for out-of-state tuition.

DR: There was no financial aid because in those days; it was not like today; it was irrelevant that she had three children [in school] simultaneously. Not that she made that much money, but just looking at it, disqualified us for financial aid because it didn't count that she was paying three out-of-state tuitions. My brother went east to Rensselaer [University]. My sister went to Kansas, and I went to Oklahoma for one year but then to LSU to finish up, to graduate.

DM: Wow! That's incredible that she was able to –

DR: And her biggest concern was that all three of our graduation dates were going to be on the same day.

DM: So she might not be able to see them all! (Laughter)

DR: So she wouldn't be able to go to all of them, but it all worked out. They were all on different dates.

DM: Different dates, well good; that's an incredible story right there.

DR: She was a remarkable woman; she was highly – just nationally prominent; yet, in 1966, she was the Oklahoma Mother of the Year.

DM: Wow!

DR: She worked, but she still headed our Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts and went to PTA and all of the things you were “supposed to do”.

DM: Supposed to do. That's impressive.

DR: She was a very, very impressive woman.

DM: She must have had boundless energy to do all of that.

DR: Well, I don't know, but she did it.

DM: But she did it, O.K.! (Laughter)

O.K. Tell me a little bit about where did you go to middle school and high school?

DR: Well, we went to middle school between – let me think about it – I think that's when we left Okmulgee [small town where Dana was raised], and she [Dana's mother] went to Tulsa, like when my brother and I were in the eighth grade, and then we graduated high school in Tulsa, and then she moved to Oklahoma City while we were in college. So we never really lived in Oklahoma City; we'd just come visit for Christmas and such.

DM: Right.

DR: And so when she moved to Tulsa, she had three children, and my grandmother, her mother, lived with us at the time too. And so, she bought a house which at the time was kind of on the outskirts of Tulsa, so she could get more house for less money. And, of course now, it's completely engulfed, just like Houston. Areas that used to be considered way out are now central.

DM: Exactly!

DR: So, same thing there; so I went to a brand new high school that had one class in - only four of us – Nathan Hale High School, and we were like four blocks to walk to school everyday, kind of thing.

DM: And did you have any activities as a teen there that in some way influenced your decision to go into a library career?

DR: Again, it didn't. My mother was a huge believer in a well-rounded education, so we took – plus, she had three kids she had to do something with after school.

DM: Exactly.

DR: And the options didn't exist in those days as they do now. There were three of us, so she signed us up for lessons; so we had a piano lesson one day; we walked from school to the piano teacher, and each one of us would have a one-half hour lesson, and then we'd be done at 5:00 o'clock, and our mother would come get us. And so we had art lessons, and piano lessons, and dance lessons of every variety of dance and just about every variety of art – watercolors to oil painting to drawing. We just did something every day after school because, again, the schools didn't have – everybody had a mother at home, so she was trying to find some place to keep us safe and occupied, although we didn't worry about safe in those days, but keep us occupied.

DM: And productively, obviously.

DR: And gave us effectively an appreciation of the arts and different things like that, which she felt were very important.

DM: I think it is, and I agree it is, and I think it's really wonderful that she was concerned about making all of you well-rounded individuals because, obviously, from your successful careers that was really the right way to go. It wasn't just a matter of keeping you occupied after school. It had a lot of other benefits as well.

DR: Exactly.

DM: Great, O.K. You've sort of already answered this [question] already, but you can expound on it. What was your major in college?

DR: English! I was going to go to law school; I knew that, or thought I was, and you know you can major in anything, and my mother gave each one of us, individually – she never treated us the same, and so she gave each one of us a grade point average that was expected in college.

DM: Oh, my goodness!

DR: And I liked to party, which is why I went to LSU, and I didn't want to take anything really serious, so that I could really party. My grade point was a 3.25 that was expected. And so I figured in English, I could do that, because you only had to take 36 hours, and then for the rest of the 120 hours, you could take anything you wanted. So, I would pick courses based on whether I thought I could get an A, a B, a C, and then, I'd add them all up to be sure they all came out to a 3.25. That's how I picked my courses. It wasn't time of day; it was what did I think I could get.

DM: Oh, my goodness, O.K. Well, when you were in college, did you start sort of to



form a plan of what you wanted to do, or at what point did it change?

DR: It really didn't change until I was getting ready to graduate, and really again, I joined a sorority at LSU; I went to LSU because people told me it was a party school and it was fun, and I decided that was for me. So I went to Baton Rouge and pledged to a sorority at LSU and became president of the sorority and just had a wonderful time, and managed to squeak out my 3.25 for my mother, and then when it became time to graduate because I'd spent my whole life in universities, I just didn't want to go to school. I was never big on going to school. I did it because it wasn't up for discussion, but I really wasn't interested in it. So, when it came time, I'd been admitted to law school, and I just decided I didn't want to go three more years to school, so that's when I told my mother, "I don't want to go to law school."

And so again, she said, "Well you've gotta do something. Go get a job." As long as you were in school, she would pay, and so that was when I told her. She was so prominent in the day, and it was a different era too. So, when I told her I wanted to go to library school, then she just called up the Dean of the library school at LSU and I was in. I still had an application [on file] because I went to school there, but I never took a GRE; I never did anything. I just went to library school.

DM: Wow! Kind of lucked out on that one!

DR: Yes! My mother just called the Dean and said, "My daughter wants to go to library school," and so – whatever they did – so she just called me back and said, "You're in, and you start on such and such a day," and I went, "O.K. I can do that."

And then I got her to call and make exceptions so that I could continue to live in the sorority house because in those days, you couldn't live off-campus unless you lived

with your parents until you were 21, and everybody that I knew that was that age was either gone away to school or had gotten married or whatever they were going to do – gotten a job, and there was no one to live with, and just from an economic standpoint, we didn't have the money to pay a whole apartment just for me. So I was going to have to live in the dorm – the graduate women's dorm, and I didn't want to do that. And so she called the Dean of Women and convinced her to let me stay in the sorority house, where life was good. In the South, where we were all totally spoiled, living in the house because everything was done for us.

DM: Oh, wow!

DR: You stumbled down to breakfast, and people that worked for the sorority came in and made up your bed and picked up your clothes and cleaned up your room. And then when you stumbled back upstairs, it was all done.

DM: Must be nice.

DR: It was a great life. I don't think it works that way anymore, but it did in the sixties.

DM: It did then, O.K. Well, tell me a little bit about your graduate school experience.

DR: It was very different from most people's [experience] because, again, I was engaged with my sorority doing stuff there, so I didn't make a lot of friends in library school. I didn't get in study groups or any of those kinds of things because I still was having a good time and doing what I needed to do, and I got a 4.0 in library school. As long as I did that, my mother didn't care what I did, and so I just continued to have a good time and really didn't engage in library school the way most people would.

DM: O.K. How did you land your first job in the library world, and what did you think

when you got that first job?

DR: Well, this is going to be another different story. With all professions, they ebb and flow as do demand. You get in [to school] and then when you get out [of school], they're "overstocked", whether it is engineers or librarians, and then sometimes, there is a huge scarcity. Well, just by pure luck, when I was getting out of school, you couldn't find a librarian to save your life.

DM: Oh, wow!

DR: And the dean at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, just outside of Oklahoma City, of course, knew my mother extremely well and called up my mother and said, "Virginia, don't you have a daughter getting out of library school?", and she said, "Yes, in May." And so he said, "Well, tell her I'll take her." And so my mother called me up and said, "Do you want to go to work for Arthur at the University of Oklahoma?" And I said, "Sure. I don't care." And that's how I got my first job.

DM: Wow!

DR: And I loved it. They were getting ready to build a new undergraduate library, separate library from the main library; so, that's what he hired me to do, and so, I got to be engaged in that which, of course, I knew why he gave me that job because he wanted my mother to be involved in the construction of it, so she could go in and say, "Oh, you need more lighting than this." So she would look over the plans.

I lived at home during the summer because OU was the same way. The only time women could live off campus if they were under 21 was during the summer. You couldn't beg, borrow, or steal an apartment in the summer unless you knew way ahead of time, and I didn't know way ahead of time, and so, I couldn't get an apartment until late

August, or mid-August, when everybody finished library school, so I lived at home with my mother and commuted about 45 miles or something. It wasn't that far. Norman and Oklahoma City aren't that far apart. She would help me; we still had card catalogues in the day, and I'd get these huge, what we called card sets, and I'd put them in a box, and you had to separate them by subject and put them in alphabetical order and all this stuff. So, I'd take home a shoebox full of them, and we'd sit in the living room floor and arrange by card sets. She'd help me do that or whatever else I was doing. I was so fortunate there.

I've been fortunate my whole career; I've learned so much from the man who was the dean of libraries; he was iconic; he was one of the legends of our profession at the time, and he just sort of took me under his wing and just taught me so much. I was his only young one. He had – it's very interesting – Norman is very close to an airport space, and this was in 1971, 1970 I should say, and they had had a lot of officers that were killed in the early days of the Vietnam War, as advisors; they used to say those advisors had a life expectancy of about 30 days, and they did. And so, he had a whole contingent of Air Force widows, and of course, in those days, the high up military wives were educated and polite, and whatever, and so my dean would meet them, and he'd encourage them to go to library school because none of them had ever worked, and then he'd hire them. And so the next youngest person to me in the library – I was 22 – was like forties, 45 or something. So, he just took me under his wing and just opened me up to all the things that go into administering a library, and working with the administration, and took me with him on meetings with donors because I was this young thing, and all the donors were males. So, he'd take me to dinner with him. And so, I just learned incredibly -

well, from my mother of course, too. Just had a very unusual, but incredibly enlightening learning experience through that.

DM: Well, that was really fortunate, really good for you and good for so many other people down the road that have benefited from your work.

DR: Oh, yeah! I just fall into these things. I have been so fortunate. I met my husband there.

Again, you have to think about when this was. So, there was a librarian that was on the faculty of OU library, and her husband was getting a doctorate in chemical engineering, and so she knew me, and her husband knew this guy that was in the lab next to him, and they were both just horrified that there were these people in their twenties that were not married because everybody was in those days. Yes, if you were really good, you waited until the day you graduated and got married that summer, or whatever. A lot of them got married before that, and so they were just horrified that they knew these two people who were in their twenties that weren't married, and so they harangued us until we agreed to go out with each other, and then a year and two months later, 14 months later, we were married, and we just celebrated our 44<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

DM: How wonderful! How wonderful! Congratulations!

DR: Thank you. That was the other benefit of being at Oklahoma, being at OU.

DM: That is just amazing. It almost seems like all of these things sort of fell into your life, into your lap, to almost pave the way for you to do all the amazing things that you have done.

DR: And that summer, when I was living at home because I couldn't find a place to live in Norman, with my mother, I had spent the entire summer convincing her that I

wasn't getting married, even though she had only been married nine years and then had spent the rest of the time as a widow. She refused to remarry because she wanted to do what she and my father had agreed they wanted to do for the kids. Make sure we went to college, and in those days, women just didn't have that much control, and she was just afraid that if she remarried, that might not happen. And so I had spent the whole summer, which was just an anathema to her because her "dream life", which I'm not sure she would have enjoyed it that much, but her dream life was to be the mother at home, in the garden club, and in the PTA, and in the Boy Scouts, and in all the things that you do as a stay-at-home mom, and then, like I said, that didn't happen.

And so I spent all that time convincing her [Dana's mother] because I knew I wanted to be dean of an ARL library, which is Association of Research Libraries, top 100 research libraries in the country. I knew that in library school.

DM: How did you hit upon that as what you really wanted to do?

DR: It was the epitome.

DM: It was the epitome of success for a librarian.

DR: My mother was a public librarian, so part of it she always said was because I didn't want to follow her into public libraries, and so I went into academic.

DM: Research libraries.

DR: Yes, but within the academic, the ARLs are the 100 top academic libraries in the country, and so, I wanted to do that, and again, you have to think about the era. There were only two women in the 100.

DM: Wow!

DR: And so I didn't want to get married, and I explained that to her because I really

wanted to have a career, and even like those two women, they ended up – and I watched this even later, in the early days you either literally got divorced [or didn't marry in the first place]. They didn't call us the trailing spouse in those days, but you weren't the trailing spouse, so you either got divorced because you wanted to go take the next step up the ladder someplace else and the husband didn't want to, or you married someone who was significantly older or something like that, who was willing to follow you around as a woman, and so, I convinced her I didn't want to get married, and then after I dated the man that's now my husband for a little while – he's incredible. But I told him that I didn't want to get married, and I told him why. And when I told him there's only two of those, and I tell everybody I married him because he looked at me with great, total sincerity and said, "That's so cool; you can be number three."

DM: Awww!

DR: He has always supported my career, even though he is a remarkable, acclaimed research chemical engineer. Spent 30 years with Monsanto as one of their top research people – dozens of patents. He won their [Monsanto's award] – they have a corporate wide, world wide award every year that they give to their top research people, person, and he has won it three times. That had never been done.

DM: That's impressive.

DR: It is. He's quite brilliant, but he also is totally supportive of my career. He encourages me; he stands behind me in every thing I do, supports me in every way possible, and just is thrilled. One of his favorite things once I became Dean was going to events or something that the library would have, and he would introduce himself to somebody and they'd say, "Do you teach here?" or whatever. He has a very Southern

accent, and people would come tell me, “I just love it. I met your husband and asked him what he does, and he said, ‘I’m the husband of the Dean.’” But he’s an incredibly accomplished researcher in his own right. But that was what he was the proudest of – that I was the Dean at an ARL.

DM: That is wonderful! That is wonderful to be married to someone who is so supportive.

DR: Yes, you’ve got to find someone who is Southern, who was raised by an independent Southern mother.

DM: That’s right.

DR: And I did!

DM: And you did! That’s terrific! O.K. As your career continued to progress, what were some of the most important things you learned about how to be successful? Just as you moved along in your career.

DR: You hire the very best people, open the corral gate, and let them fly.

DM: That sounds like a wonderful philosophy.

DR: And they will do nothing but make you look good. Give them all the credit. You just hire the best, because most of them are better than me in whatever it is that they do. I just give them room to do it, encouragement, and support. I used to tell my librarians – I was Dean at the University of Houston here for a little over 18 ½ years, and one of my favorite things that they used to repeat to me all the time when they’d do something good, I would say, “I love to win.” They’d come in and they would say, “I won,” whether it was an award, whether it was an election, whether it was recognition in one form or another, getting an important article published, or whatever it was they did, they couldn’t



wait to run in and tell me because I always tell them, “I love to win,” and tell them they’re winners, and just stand back and watch them.

DM: Let them go!

DR: Watch them. Learn from them. Encourage them.

DM: That’s a great philosophy.

DR: That’s how I did it.

DM: O.K., great! When you first joined the University of Houston Libraries and you realized the enormity of the task, as I understand it, of improving and expanding the libraries, what was your first thought?

DR: I was Dean for 18 ½ years, but I was here for 15 years before that.

DM: Right.

DR: So, I was the trailing spouse. Interestingly enough on that one, my husband had done a research project that they wanted to convert to commercialization, and they were going to do that in Texas City. Well, we didn’t know where Texas City was, so he came home and told me they wanted him to move to Texas City, and again, this was in the seventies, and in those days in corporate America, they just basically told these guys where their next paycheck was, and if they didn’t want to go there and pick up that next paycheck, then they just didn’t have a job. So, fortunately, he was so brilliant, he told them I was a happy little camper; we were living in St. Louis; I loved my job; I was working at the University of Missouri at St. Louis; I was involved in the professional association at the state level; I was incoming president of that; I was just very happy. And so then he came in and told me they wanted him to go to Texas City, and so, I just said, “No, we’re not doing that,” and so he went back and told them, “No, we’re not

doing that.”

And so they flew in some of the top people, but he had them add to their policy, he got it in writing, that the wife got a job-hunting trip, as well as a house hunting trip.

DM: Oh! That’s cool!

DR: We were very young; that was 35 years ago, and they took us to the most expensive restaurant, which we had been trying to save up for to go to, and so they took us to this restaurant, and we said, he said, “My wife has a career, not a job. And so he told them his wife had a career and she was on her way to being an ARL dean, and we just couldn’t move to Texas City. And so then they told us where Texas City was, which was close enough to Houston, and of course, I knew Houston had two ARL libraries, but anyway, he demanded they change their policies so that the wives could get a job-hunting trip. And they did; they passed that corporate wide, and I told him after dinner, I said, “You know anywhere that I get an interview, it is going to be paid for.” And he said, “Yeah, but that’s not true of all the other women. You’re in a profession that does that – in the academic, the universities – that’s what they do, but in a lot of other situations, you would have to pay your own way to get an interview, or wait until you got there and be unemployed for awhile, or whatever.

So he got that, and then he got a written letter that if we were not happy, we could go back in three years, because that’s how long they estimated his conversion process would take, and so anyway, I had a job offer from Rice and a job offer from the University of Houston before we came, and picked the University of Houston because it had no where to go but up, and my husband always told me I liked climbing the ladder better than when I got there. (Laughter)

And anyway, so I came here, and yes, it was a very unsuccessful organization, but I started in December, and they hired in May a new dean, that was my predecessor, who was from the University of Michigan, Robin Downs, and he brought me into the administration in about six months, I guess, and so, we turned it around, changed the culture to a very service oriented, very dynamic, very innovative [organization]. Introduced all kinds of changes, and then in January of 1997, then I was selected, appointed as Dean.

Although that's when I started was in the Fall, I was selected, became Dean, in January 1997, and one of the greatest needs we had was space, and so, yes, we did work with the University to convince them to let us – we had a master study done, planning study done, and we knew exactly what we needed; we had them cost it out, and we knew we needed 45 million dollars, and the University said. We'll give you \$25 million, and we said, "No." And we waited about a year and a half to start, and then finally, the President, Art Smith, who was the President/Chancellor, the first President/Chancellor combined – I kept saying, "Let me try to raise the money because it is not going to do it, but I knew it was going to be the last building we'd get, or the last addition. So, if we got something that was inadequate, they were not going to go back and do it again.

DM: Do it again.

DR: So, we finally convinced them, and then we went out and raised the additional money and made a major addition to the existing library, a 175,000 sq. ft. addition, and renovated the remaining space, and I know when we did it, when it was finished, a lot of the faculty – we would say we were building and we're renovating, and they came in, and of course, we had basically gutted it, and they'd say, "Oh my gosh!" I think they thought

we were doing carpet and paint or something, and they were just stunned because we had completely transformed the library into the very modern library that you see today.

DM: Today.

DR: It's a fabulous facility; the students love it; they love the library itself and the librarians. We have 17,000 people a day during the semester that come in there; before the addition, we still had 13,000; we had less than 800 seats. People were on the floor; they were everywhere. I used to tell the President that we were the only place outside the classroom, that at any given hour, had 13,000 people in it, and of course, the University has gotten bigger too.

DM: What was your approach when you had to deal with all the backlog of all the un-catalogued material, with everything kind of stacked up and was disorganized? I'm trying to picture, what was your first reaction – was it, “Oh, no!” ?

DR: When I came in, they had an entire floor, the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of the library, was closed and keyed off from the elevator to what they called un-catalogued backlog, which was estimated at something over 100,000 volumes, and of course, the whole library had only a little over a million, so it was a huge part of our collection. And so, we set new expectations and standards, and then, basically, part of my job as the Associate Dean was what I just said – to hire the people to do it.

DM: That were really good and really organized.

DR: And who weren't intimidated by it. I want my librarians dynamic; I want them fearless; I want them innovative.

DM: Where they'll jump right in.

DR: No matter what you tell them, there is nothing they think they can't do. So, they

amazingly just go do it. They just figure it out, talk to people, read, whatever they need to do, think about it, and they come up with an approach that works, and so that's what we did. At that point, I was, like, the head of cataloguing for that one problem. We had lots of problems. I was traveling the country, and I'd go out to libraries and talk to people and find out the name of somebody, and I'd fly there and talk to them because we couldn't recruit them. One of the things we did have, we had a mess, but we had a lot of money, and as all higher education did in those days, very early 80's. I told them we'd give them anything they'd want, if they wanted more technology, if they wanted more people, whatever they wanted, we'd give it to them if they could show us, if you did this, I could increase productivity by 15% or whatever they'd say. Just give me your case, and you'll get it, but you've got three years, and if it is not gone in three years, you are.

And we couldn't get anybody, and then finally, one of my good friends 'till this day, someone I worked with in Saint Louis, had hired in St. Louis, told me about this person that she was working with where she was then, and so, we brought her in, and she cleaned it up in a year.

DM: Wow!

DR: She just knew how to do it. She eliminated the non-sense and the redundancies, and it was done in a year.

DM: Wow!

DR: And so, that was the kind of people that we were looking for; that's the kind of approach we wanted was – you can't do bad work – the product has to be good. Actually, that was one of the things we were dealing with was bad product that we had on these projects we called them – to clean up some area that had not been done correctly. So we

had a lot of projects going on, as well, but that is how you do it. Hire the people, and that's what we did, and that person that I hired back in the early 1980's is retiring at the end of February (2016). She's been with us all that time; came from Kansas.

DM: When you first determined that realizing your dreams for the University of Houston libraries would take far more funds than you had initially, what did you do at first?

DR: Well, of course, I had come from the University of Oklahoma, where the library dean there did have a very active external funding for the philanthropic; so, like if he came across a rare volume or something you might want for special collections, well, he had a Roll-A-Dex where he could make a phone call; I'm not saying it would be for a million dollars, but maybe \$10,000 or \$20,000, and he could go through his little Roll-A-Dex and call somebody up and get that money. And so I had been exposed to philanthropic giving, to endowments, to formal dinners, and so I knew the key – as all states – but as Texas' funding for all universities really began to decline, I didn't foresee that we were going to go back to that golden era either, and that we were never going to be able to be anything more than adequate, or mediocre, or whatever word you want to use, average, without additional funding, and so one of the first things that I did was call a meeting of all the librarians and tell them that I was going to go out and hire a development director, and that the money wasn't in the budget, so we were taking money from other things we had done, and we were going to hire this person. I told them we weren't going to hire a librarian with a nice personality, because it's a profession, just like librarianship, and none of us likes it when they bring in a faculty member to run a library just because he's a heavy library user, and he doesn't know what he's doing.

I said the same thing. That was a profession; they have their own lingo; they have their own protocol; they know how to do it, and none of us did – including me. We were going to give the person a staff and put some money in so they could go to galas, charity galas; they could go to dinner; you know, all this kind of stuff, and everybody was sort of looking askance at me because in those days, most people did not think libraries could raise money, and so I told them, “We’re going to try it for three years.” If it’s not self-sustaining, at least, in that amount of time, then I’ll drop it. Well, of course, we were hugely successful. This is the head of development, at the time, on campus. When I went over and told her I wanted to hire a development director and I wanted to do this, and I wanted to do that, and she told me, she says, “Dana, I wish libraries were as sexy as football, but they’re not.” And I looked at her and I said, “To some people, they are.”

And she did not help me, but she didn’t stop me, and so, that’s how we got into it and then we started and that’s how we raised \$20 million, which had never been done on this campus. You get a lead gift – maybe \$3 million to build a \$20 million building, and then they build the rest of it, and they name it after that person, and then they build the rest of it from university funds or state funds, which they used to call tuition revenue bonds, and this building was built with over five-thousand.

Every other place [other universities] I’d worked, had a faculty/staff campaign on an annual basis, just as a routine thing that you did. We didn’t have one. I told them that I wanted to start a faculty/staff campaign, and we did. And they said, “No, it’s not going to be successful.” Well, none of them since – we did one two years in a row – have even begun to approach the faculty/staff campaign we did for the library. You could give to anything else if you wanted to, and some people did, but it was so moving because like I

would get – first of all, I picked two really prominent – one staff person and one faculty person, and I know when I told the provost at the time that I was going to ask them to be my campaign chairs for faculty/staff, he said, “They won’t do it because they’re too busy,” and I said, “Fine, I’ll ask them,” and they both did it, and they did a remarkable job, and one of them was a top named professor from this campus who spent half his life traveling through Russia and Europe, and he wrote hand written notes to every person who donated. He used his own chair money to – he didn’t like the promotional brochures, or whatever, we’d developed. He had them done by his Chair. I would get an envelope with two \$1 bills in it from a custodian with a note in it that says, “I think the library is so important; I hope this helps.”

DM: Awww!

DR: That just broke my heart. Yeah, that’s how we did it, and all kinds of things. I wanted to do a tele-fund and didn’t know how to do one, and I went over to the Development tele-fund people and said I wanted to do it. Well, issue number one was I didn’t have a list of donors because we didn’t have graduates, and we hadn’t done fund-raising, so whom were they going to call? And so they said, “Plus, even if you can somehow make up a list, you’re not going to make enough to pay for it, because I, in my misinterpretation, I thought they would take a cut of whatever you raised, and they don’t. It is transaction based; so they make a call, for example – it costs money. “You’re not going to make enough to pay for it, and you don’t have any names.” So, I called up four or five of the deans and told them what I wanted to do.

Interviewer’s Note: There is a brief break in the interview here, while the audiotape is



turned over. Interview proceeds with Darra McMullen's statement.

DM: O.K. I think we should be all right [to proceed with the interview].

DR: So, I called up a few of the deans, and I asked them if they would give me lists of people that they had called for two, three, four years who had never donated to them, and they did that, and I took those lists over and they said, "No, it's not going to work because they're not donors."

DM: Right.

DR: And I said, "Well, O.K." So, I convinced them to let me put the money up front; the other deans were furious that they asked me to do that, because they thought I wasn't going to make the money, and so, I encumbered the money that they estimated they'd spend trying to do it, and we set the record that year.

DM: Wow!

DR: For contributions, of all the colleges, for everything! So, I used as my example, "Oh, you think people won't give money to a library." And so we did all kind of things like that, and raised \$20 million in about 14 months.

DM: That's amazing! Incredible!

O.K. So would it be fair to say that you got a lot of your fund-raising information really kind of partially, early on, from your mentor early in life, and then later, kind of just by doing and trying to grab any little opportunity that you had, really?

DR: Well, I got exposed to it early on, but I really didn't have any idea how to do it. I could see the results of it, the benefits, that kind of thing. And one of the reasons I told my librarians I was going to hire a professional was because I didn't know how to do it,

and that's what I told them. And so, I learned from my directors all the time. I hired a wonderful one that had been at American University before I hired her – in D.C. Each one that I tried to hire I couldn't get somebody that was so experienced because it is like trying to play tennis with somebody that doesn't know how to play.

DM: Right. Exactly.

DR: They'd just get frustrated and leave.

So, we were sort of growing together, and she was teaching me how to do it. So everyone I hired after that, I tried to get at or slightly above the level that we were at, and tell them that they were supposed to take me to the next level, and so, that's what we did.

DM: That was really good thinking!

DR: Same thing. I just hired really outstanding people. I wouldn't hire a [inaudible word] person. The development people kept sending me people, and I'd say, "No, that's not who I want." And so, I just had a really succession of just remarkable developmental directors. And they're a very mobile profession; they don't stay, but I've had them for up to six years in one case, which I can hardly believe I had one for six years.

DM: For six years! That's terrific and very – I mean, this worked out so wonderfully for you, for the university, for the city, and up. That's great!

Did you learn any lessons in your experience in fund-raising that would be useful to just the common person?

DR: Well, one thing was – I think I was like most people in that really I was intimidated by it, and didn't think I would be comfortable asking people for money, and of course, that's what you hear from most people when they haven't done it, and one, I found out that it was just an incredible opportunity, because in doing that activity, I met

people in Houston that I would never had an opportunity ever to [meet], and some of them have become really good friends with that operate in a circle well above any circle that I'm in, but it has been such a rewarding, on a personal level, getting to know these people and becoming friends and knowing about them. And the other thing I learned was that people want to do something, and so often what we ask them to do is something we want to do, and what we need to find is what is their passion, and then use that passion for something we do want, not something we don't want to do, but to adapt that [passion]. I mean at one point when we were doing the campaign for the building, and I had a donor, who for some reason, she had a half-million dollars she wanted to give us, and I said, in those days we didn't ask you for anything except the building, unless we had no choice.

DM: Right.

DR: And she told me she wanted to name something after her mother, and she had a ½ million dollars that she wanted to use.

So, I made her like three different proposals to name different parts of the library in her mother's name, and she wanted to do it, but she didn't want to do it. She just kept saying, "Oh, I don't think so." Well, finally, in desperation, I had made her three different [proposals in] areas, I can't just go back and do #4. Well, I knew they had an endowed chair at another university in the name of her father, and so, I offered her an endowed chair in special collections, which was the area she had been involved in widely, and her eyes just lit up, and she just said, "My mother would love that."

So, you just have to find [what works for each donor] – and that [the endowed chair] was something that we wanted; it was on the list so to speak. You just have to find

that thing that strikes their passion, and meets your need. But I just found it, and nobody was insulted; I don't go ask somebody like me for a million dollars; if they want to help, if they're enthusiastic, maybe you ask them for a little bit more, maybe because at that point in time, they've got something else, or they have another pledge – to their church or something. But they don't get insulted. But what I've found is a lot of times, they'll come back later, even if they couldn't do what you wanted at that time, when they can, they'll come back; they do want to do it.

DM: They do want to do it.

DR: Yeah! So I keep saying, don't be discouraged; don't be afraid. I never found anybody insulted by trying to ask them to support the library in some way, but you do need to learn how to do it, just like if you're going to run a library, you need to learn how to run a library. If you're going to fund-raise, you need to talk to people who are in that business, or another library dean who is doing it, and just be open to learning and to being taught. That's what I found with so many deans; they didn't want to be taught by somebody. Well, I always wanted to be taught by anybody who wanted to teach me.

That was my idea.

DM: That's the way to go; learn from those who know.

DR: That's right; that's the fastest way.

DM: O.K. In your opinion and assessment of yourself professionally, what were your greatest contributions to the founding of TexShare?

DR: TexShare was interesting because the University of Houston Libraries and my predecessor dean came up with the idea of TexShare, and the reason we came up with it is because we needed the resources of the other libraries in the state because we were a

young university. We couldn't buy many books before 1962, when we became a state institution; we were this little bitty junior college. So, when Dr. Phil Hoffman applied to be a state institution, in I think '62, the early '60s, that was the first time we had serious money and started really buying books, and so, as the University grew, as they added more faculty, more disciplines, we hadn't been buying books for a hundred years, and so we needed access to those kinds of things, and so my contribution really was helping him sell it to TLA, the Texas Library Association, which is really, the one who got it passed. And then, TexShare was not an entity, so when we got the money, we had no place for them to send the money because TexShare was not an institution or some kind of legal entity.

DM: Right.

DR: And because of, not surprising, university competition, none of us wanted to send it to just one institution – to UT Austin, or A&M, or even to UH, and so we formed a group and convinced the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, under Ted Ashworth, who had been the director there for about 25 years and convinced him to take the money, but we convinced him to take the money strictly as a pass through. So he had to be legally responsible for it, but we didn't want him to take a dime from it, which he agreed to do. And we partnered with UH and partnered with A&M, which was interesting because my best friend, who I had hired in St. Louis, was also – had become an Associate Dean at Texas A&M.

DM: Oh! That helps!

DR: Yes! So, her dean and my dean decided that the two of us should do TexShare, and she was new to the state, whereas I had been here 12 to 15 years at the time, and I

knew everybody, and she was this techie expert, so it was a good mesh, and I always tell her, still do to this day, when she came to my retirement ceremony and brought that story up, I always said I was fluff and she was substance.

DM: (Laughter)

DR: I was the front man who went around the state to the institutions, to their presidents, to whatever, and she was the one that actually made it work on the technical side. In those days, she put in tape-loaded databases and went and showed people at the various institutions how to work it. We put in a variety of systems – so how to make that system work. If you had to ask me one thing, I think that's probably the thing I'm most proud of. We started with, at that time, 52, four-year state supported universities and colleges, and I felt it was essential to get all 52 of them in there, and they had to pay.

DM: Oh, O.K.

DR: Because I'm a great believer in the economic theory of if it is free, it has little value. So, we based the payment – I think the smallest group was \$2,500. I don't remember the numbers, but there was a middle sized group and a large group, and I divided up the – and a lot of people said how did you decide who was small, medium, and large, and I said I did it at my breakfast table, and I just went and said, "Small, medium, medium, large, and then I sent it out and said anybody who thinks [you're in the wrong group]; I did not want to fool [with too many details]; I was still being an Associate Dean.

DM: You were still busy, right!

DR: I didn't have time to collect all the data, and then try to fight with people over where the lines were drawn; so, I just made it up. So, if you don't like what you are, then just call me, and I'll put you in the other group that you want to be in. It was really

interesting because some of the mediums called up and said, “What do you mean I’m medium? I’m one of the big boys!”

DM: I want to pay more! (Laughter)

DR: Actually, it was quite a bit. It was a prestige thing. A few of the mediums said, “I don’t have that kind of money; put me in with the small ones.” But the small ones didn’t want to be the little guys. They had aspirations, so they wanted to be mediums, so I just put them where they wanted to be. But in some cases, particularly in the small ones, this is a lesson I learned is that the libraries were so small, that they really didn’t have any \$2,500. They couldn’t rearrange their budget or anything else to do it, so I would call them up, call the librarian up and I’d say, “Well, who in your university has the money?” Well, it didn’t take me long to figure out in those little places it was the president, not the provost. I also learned the size of the president’s office was directly inverse to the size of the institution.

DM: (Laughter)

DR: “So, let me give you some talking points when you go talk to your president.”

[Dana explains to the librarians]

“Oh, no I couldn’t do that,” [say the librarians].

“O.K., I’ll come out there and go with you when you go to talk to your president.”

[Dana offers]

“Oh, no I couldn’t do that.” [The librarians reply]

“Well, could I talk to your president?” [Dana asks, becoming more concerned]

“Oh yeah, if you want to do that, go right ahead.” [Librarians answer, relieved]

So, that’s what I’d do. They weren’t mad because I didn’t go over their heads.

I'd fly out there, wherever that was, and I'm not a driver, so I'd fly there and talk to the president and tell him what we were providing him, and like for instance, one of the institutions I went to was a state institution which had 52 journal titles in the whole library. We were getting like 2,600 full-text on-line in that first iteration.

DM: Wow! In that first iteration!

DR: I gave him his data of what he had, and I said, "I'm giving you 2,600 full-text, fully searchable journal titles," and he opened his desk drawer and pulled out one of those big checkbooks and wrote me a check. And I said, "Oh no, sir; I'll send you a bill; you don't have to do that." I didn't know what he was doing. I thought he was writing a memo to somebody to send me the money, and he handed me a check, and I said, "I'll send you a bill." And he said, "You think I'm not going to give it back?" And I said, "Thank you very much, sir!"

So, we got all 52 [institutions] to agree to what we call the TexShare card, which is any student or faculty member in any of those institutions can go to any of the other institutions, whether they live there or are on Spring Break, or whatever reason, they can check out any book just like they're any undergraduate or whatever level they were, they get the same privileges that that university would give to their own undergraduates, graduates, or faculty. I got them all to agree to that. I had one librarian tell me, "What if we start this on Monday, and I come in on Tuesday, and the shelves are empty?"

I said, "I know what I'd do, I'd run over to the president's office and get him by the hand, and say, "Look! Isn't this fabulous?" I said, "What an endorsement of you and your collection policies and the books that you have and duh-to-duh-to-duh."

DM: Right!



DR: “If I were that president, I’d double your budget right there on the spot.”

“Oh, O.K.!” [says the librarian].

DM: They hadn’t thought of that! [Interviewer says, joshing about worried librarians].

(Laughter)

DR: Of course that [empty library shelves] didn’t happen. And of course, we added the private universities the following year, the 41 at the time, 41 private universities, and then we moved to the community colleges, and then a few years later, when I wasn’t doing it anymore – I did it for either three or four years, I forget, where I managed it along with Mary Lou. I reported to the Coordinating Board; I’d go to the orientations for the new Board of Regents that the Coordinating Board would have. I’d travel to the universities, talk to the libraries, but also talk to the president, the provost, or whomever I needed to talk to and did the interviews, but it was just such an incredible project for the citizens. We developed our elevator speeches.

As I told them, we were the WalMart of libraries, and I had all these little things I would tell people, but I think probably from a benefit thing, I’m real big on collaboration and cooperation, and I’ve been involved with the medical center library the whole time I’ve been here. At one point back when Dick Lyders was the director, probably in the ‘80s, maybe into the ‘90s, I can’t remember, I was over there so much he said, “I ought to get you an office here!” “I’d really appreciate it if you’d do that,” I said.

We were just doing so many things together, particularly technology things, like when we were first automating our catalogs, or having them in electronic form I should say. We were doing a union catalog, as they call it, a combined catalog; it was on CD ROM, and we put them in a CD ROM machine [player] that had the five disks. Of

course, you didn't know it, but you'd put something in, and it would flip around to that disk, so you could see if some book you wanted or journal you wanted or whatever was at one of the area libraries; we had seven members of HARLiC. The Med Center and University of Houston were two of the biggest leaders in that effort. We'd do things like have this combined catalog so you could do things like stay at the UH Library, where if we didn't have some thing you could see, does the Med Center have it? Does Texas A&M have it? Does UTMB or TSU - not TSU at that time [have it]? Rice?

We had a courier system that would get you next day delivery, so we paid for a little courier that ran around to all those libraries. You could even get same day [service]. Like if we ordered a book from someplace that he had been to before he came to us, then a lot of times he'd pick that book up from them because it was real quick to throw it off the shelf, put a rubber band and a flag in it; that's all you had to do to "ship" it. You just listed it for UH; so if he'd been to Rice before he came to us and it was in the box, then he'd deliver it to us, if we were his next stop, or vice versa. So, we had a courier system, the TexShare card for reciprocal borrowing; we had all the electronic databases, and we expanded those every year at huge savings. Because we were buying for the state of Texas; that's what I used to tell the vendors is you're not losing business; you're getting business.

DM: Right.

DR: Because these guys over here – when we started, the two databases we bought to start with, there were only six of us who had them, and now they're in 62 libraries.

DM: That's good! Really good!

DM: What would you say were your greatest contributions to the Texas Digital

Library?

DR: [I was] one of the founders, co-founders. We started with the four public ARL libraries, which is us [UH], A&M, UT, and Tech, and to us, to me, as I told them, it was the next extension after TexShare. TexShare was all about print. It was all about identifying the print, getting the print through a courier system that we'd put in – where we'd moved from fax machines, following that technology. If you just needed an article from a journal, then we scanned it and sent it to you. If you needed the print monograph, then it was about getting that to you through the courier system.

If you wanted to go there, then you could go there, and if you found something to check out, then you could check it out, but you could get it by showing your HARLiC card and use the collection or whatever, but it was all print. Because, again, of when it was [the time period].

So, the next logical step was digitization, and the difference in the technology between TexShare, which was still needed; we still need that stuff, and creating a digital library and a recognition again from UH's part that we couldn't afford that. We couldn't buy the equipment; we couldn't hire the staff; we couldn't store half the electronic storage – all these things – but collaboratively we could. So, by putting in a large sum of money, but not even close to what it would have cost us for the personnel and the equipment, all that kind of thing, we got a much richer [experience for the user]; when we started out, it was going to be just those four libraries, so whatever we were digitizing out of copyrighted material, special collections, all kinds of things, but then graduate students, even undergraduates, the students and the faculty didn't have to go to A&M, to Austin; it would be digital. Then at least, they [students, faculty] could find out what

they [the universities] had, and then if they [students, faculty] really thought they had to see that piece of paper, or that work, they could go there. They would know it was there; they would know whether it [a particular library] had what they were looking for.

DM: So, it would save them a trip.

DR: Absolutely!

DM: Maybe more than one trip!

DR: And then, of course, after they went there, they would have this digital copy for their product, their scholarship, or whatever, that they could refer to as much as they wanted that was so far superior to if they'd gone there and gotten a photocopy for that purpose.

DM: Exactly – for that purpose.

DR: So, again, it was more bang for the buck, but also, again, it was this service, which is what TexShare did, it provided access, and that's what TDL was trying to do – to take these rich resources that are in these libraries, and now, of course, we've expanded beyond these four public ARLs.

DM: Right.

DR: And make those resources available not only to our own faculty and students, but worldwide.

DM: Great!

DR: So if you believe a university's mission is to expand knowledge and scholarship, then it brings awareness and prestige to the university, then people go, "Oh! I didn't know they had Larry McMurtry; I can go there," or whatever – all in one place, so they didn't have to go to this library, that library, and the other library. They just went to the

Texas Digital Library, and they could find out what an amalgam of really rich resources in all these universities [there was], one stop shopping so to speak.

DM: That's incredible, and very useful to everyone!

DR: And cost effective, and it puts together – in other words – we may have material in this area, and so does UT; it is different material, but that scholar then can find out what's there and find all of it; maybe he still has to go to both places, but maybe he wouldn't have thought to look at us for that or whatever.

DM: What would you like to see in either TexShare's future or the Texas Digital Library's future? If you had your dream, what's their next step as far as you're concerned that you'd like to see happen?

DR: I'd like to see them if not become a single organization, at least become a much more integrated two organizations and to have access to the kind of funding that – one of the catch phrases we used with TexShare was “The resources of Texas for the citizens of Texas” because, of course, to a great extent, state resources, philanthropically, but resources from people in Texas have built these collections, and it's only to our advantage that the citizens of Texas have access to these collections, whether it's a hobby interest, whether it is doing their research in a certain area that has nothing to do with what they do – not just an academician, but you have people who, Betty Chapman, who is not on anybody's faculty for instance, that writes histories of Houston – very valuable in other areas too. European scholars know we have something that they're doing research in. Just expanding the knowledge base of the world. It is so cost effective; it raises the standards for everybody. It includes people who would never be included at that level. Just like on the TexShare databases, the little, small colleges – how many of them did we

have? I don't remember the number anymore; I'm not as involved in it. We have well over 100 databases; they might have had 15, but their citizens, their students, their faculty all have access to that.

DM: To the others [colleges and universities, the interviewer says in agreement].

What advice would you have for the person out there who has either a dream job in mind or a dream idea to pursue in some way, but is not quite sure how or where to start pursuing that idea?

DR: Well, first of all, don't ever give up on it. And the second step is keep working on it. In other words, if you're at the stage where you need to do research, then go to a research library and research it. If you want to start your own business, well go find out the kind of things you need to know about the area – in other words, it's probably not a good idea to put an Oriental rug shop in a depressed area. We have information that can help you do that; we have sources that you can go and find help in, and so I just think the thing is that you've got to pursue your passion or otherwise, like my husband says, "She has a career, not a job." You're just going to a job. I know when I told my husband that I was going to retire, which was my plan, and he just looked at me and said,

DM: He just couldn't imagine that! (Laughter)

DR: No, that's what he said. He said ever since he'd known me, and we've known each other a long time, and he said, "You are your job." And I said, "That's the saddest thing I've ever heard." And he said, "No, it's just the opposite. Think about these people, who after they get out of church on Sunday, they start getting depressed because they've got to go to work on Monday. I have trouble fighting you to keep you home." "That can wait until Monday morning; you don't have to go into the office to do that," [her husband

would chide her].

I couldn't wait to get into the office, and my 45 years in libraries just seemed like no time because I enjoyed it. I had bad days too, of course. But I had wonderful jobs; I worked with wonderful people; I had colleagues that I'm friends with to this day. I learned so much from all those groups, and I just had a wonderful life.

DM: You really found your passion and what you wanted to do.

DR: Yeah! You've got to do that, and if it takes getting some more education, well now days you can figure out how to do that because you don't have to quit your job and move 500 miles to some college.

DM: Right.

DR: Get on-line and figure out how to do it. Don't be afraid to take that opportunity; put your hand up and say, "I'll do it; call on me," so to speak, which I think a lot of women are afraid of; negotiate for what you want; work your tail off; go for it.

DM: Go for it! All right.

DR: Yeah! Exactly.

DM: O.K. Great! Another question; you sort of answered this earlier, but maybe not all the way. What would be the epitome of success to you professionally, and do you feel that you've reached that yet, or if not, what would be some of your next goals?

DR: I hate to sit here and say I don't have any goals in my professional career, but I really do think at one level it's time to step back and do something else.

DM: Maybe shift gears?

DR: It's not like I'm going to sit on the couch and watch soap operas. I've never watched soap operas in my life. But I think the epitome was at one level, the recognition

of my colleagues, who appreciated what I've done and particularly in the state and in the Texas Library Association, which is just an incredible organization, and they have three awards that they give out. They tell me I'm the only one – well, they have more than that [awards], but three personal ones; they have a Librarian of the Year; they have a Distinguished Service [award], and a Lifetime Achievement [award], and they tell me I'm the only person that has ever won all three.

DM: Gee!

DR: That means a lot to me because, again, it is an evaluation by your peers, a recognition; it's not that I'm looking to just get plaques. [She points around her office to the various awards.] I used to have a much bigger office, so I only picked out a few things to bring over and put them in a box and said, "Whatever is in this box, it is going." But, you know, I'm still involved. I got a call the other day, they want me to head up a task force at the Texas Library Association, and I said, "Yes, I would," but I'm really not looking to – I know some people are – but to stay and do it until I'm 85.

DM: Right.

DR: Life's too short, and I came up, of course, in the days when we didn't know there was such a thing as balancing work and life or work/life.

DM: Work/life balance?

DR: We weren't balanced; we weren't, and I honestly, I want to enjoy myself; I want to enjoy my husband; we were just talking the other day – I took a leave before I came back, after I stepped down as Dean, and we just enjoyed it so much because we just didn't feel like we were just ships passing in the night.

DM: You actually got to see each other.



DR: With our two schedules – we just like being together; it doesn't matter whether we're doing something important or just sitting there solving the problems of the world.

DM: Right.

DR: So, I am going to be tangentially involved in libraries, but no, right, wrong, or any different, I don't have any major earth-shattering goals I'm trying to get to, and I'm approaching 69 years of age, and I never thought I'd be working that long to be honest with you, and we're very fortunate that we didn't have to do that. We're very comfortable; so, I'm not in that position, but I'm planning on staying involved mildly, and having a good time.

DM: A really good time, and kicking back a little bit.

DR: Yes!

DM: Do you have children?

DR: No!

DM: When would you have had time? (Laughter)

DR: This sounds terrible, but in addition to not wanting to get married, I watched my mother, who I don't know how she did what she did, and in all honesty, I didn't want to do it. That's what I told her, but I have a pre-nup that says no kids, but I told my husband I didn't want kids. I was surprised he married me because he loves kids. So, for years, we do what we call "Rent-a-Kid"; and we take somebody's kids – he wants to go to a ballgame; there's lots of our friends [happy to have a short break from parenting], not so much anymore because their kids are older. They'd love it if he'd take two of their kids to the Astrodome or whatever, or a baseball game. So we did "Rent-a-Kid".

DM: So you sort of played like the favorite aunt or uncle?

DR: Yeah, him more than me, but that was just a decision that I told him. Besides not wanting to get married so I could be an ARL dean, I said I really want to work, and I don't want to be less of a mother than my mother was. She never complained; she never held it over our heads, or anything like that, but I just saw what she did.

DM: It just seemed like too much, huh?

DR: Yeah, I love what I do, and that's what I want to do. So, my sister was charged with giving my mother grandchildren, which she did.

DM: Which she did! (Laughter) O.K. So, your mother wasn't upset then.

DR: No, she lived.

DM: One thing that I have not asked you, and it wasn't given in any of the material to me, what is your official title now?

DR: Oh, I'll give you a card. It is Assistant Provost, Strategic Initiatives. [Dana's voice trails off as she moves across the room to her desk to get the card.]

DM: Oh, O.K. And what exactly does your job entail now?

DR: Well, just working on things that the Provost is interested in; in other words, I don't want to get walled in to something that's going to need some consistency for two or three years because I don't want to work that long. Either getting something started, or sometimes, you just need some things in the middle or whatever. So, I'm just doing a variety of things. A lot of what I'm doing, though, centers around trying to get a handle on what the university does in the area of community engagement, not a volunteer thing, like going to the Houston Food Bank or something, but how are the faculty and their students involved in the community in whatever it is that they're doing, how is it going to advance the community of Houston in some way. You know there is such a wide range

of things we have. We have [university] students who are tutoring seniors [in high school] in SAT in the schools. They've gone over to the schools and identified a dozen people or so.

DM: Right.

DR: Like at Yeats or something that have college aspirations, and a lot of them the barrier to that is the scores.

DM: The scores, yes.

DR: And so, they're tutoring them, and like last year, they're raising the scores like a hundred points a kid!

DM: Hey! That's wonderful!

DR: And then we've got others – like the College of Optometry has a vision van, or whatever they call it, that goes around to community centers and does testing for kids, and then through donated funds and through like, if you have old glasses frames that are still good, and you just wanted a new set, you can give them [the old frames] to them and they'll use them.

DM: Oh, O.K., for folks that don't have any money.

DR: For folks that don't have any money. Sometimes, the frames are more expensive than the lenses.

DM: Than the lenses, yes.

DR: Those kind of things. There's just a whole variety – the architecture school does what they call a side build course, where they look at a park or a school or something, and they build them something – like in a park, they build them a pergola or park benches. They get that experience, but it is also contributing to the community. So trying

to get a handle on some of that and see how we can help the faculty and students in identifying, maybe some funding, whatever, and then obviously, with the community to see what kind of needs might be out there.

DM: O.K. All right.

Do you have any advice specifically for women in the workforce about how to be more successful in pursuing their dreams?

DR: Self-confidence. They say, and I think it's true, one of the things I used to spend a lot of time doing was hiring people; that's not the only job as Dean, but I think it's the most important job a Dean does, is who they hire, but what you'll find is if you have a job out there, and five things you're supposed to have as qualifications, women won't apply if they only have four; men will apply if they have one.

DM: Right. (Laughter)

DR: You have to come through, but you have to believe in yourself. You have to be willing to come through whatever that is; I don't care if you're heading up your son's Cub Scouts. If you tell the Cub Scouts you're going to go canoeing –

DM: Then you'd better go canoeing.

DR: Yeah, if you don't know where you're going to do that, then you'd better go find some people with canoes and whatever, and get that done. And same thing at work, but I think the most important part is just to again have the confidence to step up and say, "I'm going to try that. I'm willing to try that," whether it is applying for the job or taking on a project while you're there or whatever, is to have confidence that you can do it, just to believe in yourself. The self-esteem thing, I think, is the biggest thing with women.

DM: The biggest obstacle to their success?

DR: They just think, “Oh, I couldn’t possibly do that.” Well, why not?

DM: Or, as you said, they think, “Well, I know three out of four things, but I don’t know the one, so I can’t do it because I don’t know the one.”

DR: Yeah, exactly.

DM: Is there anything you’d like to add, on any subject, that I’ve not covered in this interview?

DR: Well, I’m a big believer in helping women; I have been so helped; I have had so many people who have encouraged me, supported me, advised me, helped me do things I didn’t know how to do – whatever it is, and I think you have an obligation to do that yourself, and I have a number of people that I have mentored, and one of the things I always tell them is that they have to do better than me, and they do. One of them is currently the dean at Ohio State; one of them is the new director at Columbia University, the new dean, and she was at New York Public before that as their director, and one of them is the head of IT, the CIO, at the University of Kansas. She’s a librarian, but she’s really good at that stuff, but what she’s really good at is the administration and policy stuff. I would never ask her to fix my computer, but that’s not what you need that person for, and she’s a political animal; she’s charming; she’s compelling in getting things done, and she’s the VP for information technology, but I still get calls from them all the time wanting to bounce an idea off, or saying, “This just came up.” They always know what to do, but they want to tell you, and you say, “Yes, that’s exactly what you should do,” kind of thing.

DM: And then they feel better after you’ve told them. (Laughter)

DR: Yeah, one of them I’ve been doing that for 40 years, but I think you have to pay it

forward, as they say, and women don't tend to do that. In fact, they try to block other women, which is just beyond my understanding.

DM: It doesn't make any sense to me either, but I've seen some of that at times. O.K.

Is that about all, or can you think of anything else?

DR: I think you pretty much covered the ballpark there!

DM: O.K., well, thank you!

DR: Thank you!

DM: I appreciate it!

END OF INTERVIEW