

# Herzog, Dianne - CBPL 25th anniversary oral history 2023-05-19

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** [00:00:00] Okay, this is an entry for our oral histories for our 25th anniversary for the library building. My name is Antonia Krupicka-Smith. That's a n t o n i a k r u p i c k a hyphen s m i t h. And I'm the library director here at the Council Bluffs Public Library. We are recording in the boardroom at 400 Willow Avenue on Friday, May 19th, 2023. At two o'clock and today we're gonna be chatting with Diane. Diane, would you introduce yourself?

**Dianne Herzog:** I am Diane Herzog, d i a n n e h e r z o g, and I was associated with the Council Bluffs Public Library since July 1st, 1974 until July 1st, 2017. And in all those years I remained in the same job. I was the manager of the youth services department.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** That is wonderful. So you've mentioned what your [00:01:00] role was then, which is great. Um, what was your, what's your role now?

**Dianne Herzog:** I am retired and happily so, and enjoying, enjoying life with my grandchildren and my family and my yard.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Wonderful, wonderful. Okay, so 25 years ago. This building was built. Um, what I am interested in knowing is any memory you have associated with hearing about the planning of a new building, what was your memories associated with the whole planning process for a new library?

**Dianne Herzog:** Okay. The idea of having a new library first came up in the 1950s because the building, uh, 200 Pearl Street was packed then and starting to deteriorate. The actual bond issues that came up came 30 years later, and there were two bond issues in the 1980s, both of which failed. They failed [00:02:00] because of the financial situation of Council Bluffs at the time, which is, was not as fiscally sound as it is now, but more disturbingly, the people of Council Bluffs at that time were much different in their self-image than they are now.

And the most disturbing comment I had after one of the failed bond issues with someone who came up and said, we don't deserve a library like that. In 1992, we decided we would try again. And at that time, the long, long time director of the library, Mildred Smock, retired and a new woman, uh, Barbara Chernik came,

and Barbara was the director from, uh, Kenosha, Wisconsin. Uh, she was a library director there, but she was also a consultant and had done many buildings, which was perfect for what we needed. She also was a writer and very interested in paraprofessional library workers and had written a manual for them. She [00:03:00] was very outspoken. Um, the first thing that came out of her mouth when she introduced herself to the, us, the staff was, I am willing to go to jail to support first Amendment rights.

After that, Matt Walsh, who was then a city councilman, not the mayor, um, remarked about Barbara. She was just as likely to show up at a city council meeting or whatever with a machine gun as not. Barbara was very good at organizing and management, and she set out to get us positioned to try another bond issue. The first thing she did was try to get the library on 200 Pearl in some situation that we could move and transition because nothing really had been done in many, many, many, many years. Not only with the state of the building we had and weeding of books. There were [00:04:00] 363 boxes of books down the basement that were molding.

The basement had flooded and they were molding. You, if you were pregnant, you could not walk through the stacks at the library. It was just burgeoning with books. Nothing had been thrown away in 50 years. Um, she noticed that the procedures and um, personnel policies and all of the inner workings of the library, also needed to be updated.

And so she began working with that and changing staff there, staff patterns in looking at them. There were three of us at that time that were, um, managers, were directors, myself and I was head of youth services. There was Doris Wanek and she was head of the reference department and nonfiction collection and also special collections and Lynne Mildenstein and she was head of fiction development, cataloger and our [00:05:00] technology expert. We became a management team and started to go through and rework all of the policies, and she began to teach us management because we had not been allowed into that before. We also started looking at an automation system. Um, and started working on that. Uh, we, after much, much interviewing, we decided to go with Innovative interfa... Interfaces.

We were their first public library. It was mainly known as an academic, and we began the whole process of trying to first weed, because we didn't want to have to do all of these books

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Mm-hmm.

**Dianne Herzog:** And then barcode and get it all up and running. We had been doing MARC records since, probably the early eighties, but somebody, once upon a time, a cataloger had put a dot in some field, which when we decided to do smart barcodes generated duplicate smart barcodes. [00:06:00] So that all came, uh, with it. But we were, very, very lucky because we took community service workers at that time and we had a gal who was a, a DWI and had like a hundred hours of community service and she was a data entry person.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Mm-hmm.

**Dianne Herzog:** And so we got all of our records, uh, with her in community service to do.

In addition to that, Barbara started working with the public and trying to get us, um, an idea of what the public wanted and also to educate the public because the building we were in was so confining to what you could do... as a public library, our community had no idea the possibilities of what a public library could be.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Mm-hmm.

**Dianne Herzog:** So we started, um, having community town hall, uh, halls and listening to what people wanted, but also telling them, you can, we can do this and [00:07:00] whatever. And did you think about...

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Mm-hmm.

**Dianne Herzog:** Um, whatever we, whatever. And in addition, we had to fight, um, two problems. One of which was the mall that is up here on Broadway was failing. It had been occupied by vandals and all the glass was broken and they couldn't get anybody in. And the city thought, what a brilliant idea, we can kill two birds with one stone. You guys can move up into that mall.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Mm-hmm.

**Dianne Herzog:** And we have you as a brand new library, and we get rid of the mall. The... it many, many issues, part of which the part they wanted us to move into the floors were not strong enough to hold the books.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Oh.

**Dianne Herzog:** Um, the parking was a mess. It was on a very busy street for elderly to cross or children. So we were battling that. The owner of the mall at that time, um, took it as a personal affront and began attacking Barbara in the paper. [00:08:00] As saying, she did not even live in Council Bluffs and she had no right to be in here.

And so she was battling that at these town meetings. And then the school district and other people thought, we need a new school. Why don't we put you in a school and share? And so we did a lot of research and a lot of white papers on, no, we need a building that is all our own.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Mm-hmm.

**Dianne Herzog:** And started working on that. When this was all going on, Barbara came in April of 1992. In October of 1992, she was diagnosed with cancer.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Mm.

**Dianne Herzog:** Bone cancer. And so when all this is going on, she was going through chemotherapy.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Mm-hmm.

**Dianne Herzog:** And were trying to work and she tried to get the three of us, the management team. Prepared turns... transition in case something happened to her, [00:09:00] which indeed did. She died.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Mm-hmm.

**Dianne Herzog:** Um, just short of two years.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Okay.

**Dianne Herzog:** Of her being here. She had convinced the board that, um, we could be an interim group until we could hire a new library [director]. She had trained us enough and we had known enough, she had included us in a lot of the decisions that she felt confident, which is what happened.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Mm-hmm.

**Dianne Herzog:** So the three of us became an interim group working together. The, the first thing we found out two days after she retired, she had the contract for, um, the, in Innova Inno... II

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Yeah.

**Dianne Herzog:** Systems to come in here, at the hospital with her in a drawer ready to be signed, and she died. Nobody knew where the contract was.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Oh my gosh.

**Dianne Herzog:** And we had Innovative calling us saying, you're, I'm gonna be in breach of contract and we're going to sue you, and all kinds of stuff. And it was like, [00:10:00] She died. Oh.

So that was our first hurdle to do, but we were marching right along when the foundation came to the board and said, um, Iowa West has come and they are willing to give you a 6 million dollars, um, to start a fund for the library to build a library and not have a bond issue. And this solved a lot of issues. Um, partly because then the foundation could have control of the design of the building and we can get over this business of just having a square building with three windows in it and no architectural beauty or anything like that to it. So we said, great. And they said, but we want it now. The foundation has to move now on it. And we were, we're an interim group. We can't deal with this. And they said, you gotta, [00:11:00] so we hired a consultant whose name is George Lawson and George is still around, and he kind of walked us through and said, what you guys have to do, you have to really think about and have some kind of a design, very specific of what you want each area to look... look like.

And so we spent, I don't know, weeks and weeks and weeks every day working and working. And we came up with a document. Probably an inch thick, very specific of each area. You know, we need a plug here, we need a desk this high, we need whatever. Um, this painted this way, this kind of an ambiance, um, with it. Um, and George kinda looked at it, said yeah. This is good, uh, that we can use. And so on a very, very cold, cold night, um, in January, the foundation people and people from the [00:12:00] board and us and George and uh, Leo A. Daly, people came, um, for a meeting and we had our little document with us of all the things that we had wanted and thought we needed, and it was completely ignored.

The foundation had been talking still to the former director who they thought, they trusted and thought was the epitome of a librarian and knew everything

along the way, and she definitely had different ideas than what we had, and they were saying, no, we need this, and this and this, and this library. And it was like, no, this is, this is not the future.

After the meeting, George followed the people out from Leo A. Dalys and he reamed them, [00:13:00] and said, you have no idea what that foundation is talking about. It's so off base. We've got a document here that we worked on. This is what you need to do. You, how dare you ignore that staff that they worked on this. They know what they're talking about. And Daly said, okay. And that became the most incredibly wonderful, wonderful working relationship, ever experienced, uh, with Dalys. We were their first library.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Mm-hmm.

**Dianne Herzog:** And they wanted to get more information and the future so they could, they could go and, and offer their services.

Um, Tom Findley was the lead and, um, architect and Jeff Monzu uh, was the one who actually did this building and all the design, and he was 27 years old at the time. And then Dennis Forslund was the interior [00:14:00] designer and we, we just had the most incredible working relationship with them, and they went over backwards. Um, we met every week. We could put change orders in. They should never allowed us to do half the stuff that we did. We went on field trips with them all over in Minnesota and Iowa, uh, to see new libraries and we took 'em and we would just go through and, uh, the desk, the big work area, uh, in the youth department right now is an exact copy of one of them we saw up in Minnesota. And I said, Jeff, get a picture. Take a picture of that. I want that. And, and many, many things in this building are, take a picture of that. We, we want that. They taught us so much about architecture in the process. Um, and they were so detailed on how they went about this building. This building is built in "moment" architecture. There are no [00:15:00] load bearing walls. In this building, they, the whole support is with the columns that are here. We ran into trouble, half of this lot is on a hundred year floodplain. The other half is a 500 year floodplain. The 100 caused issues of what we are going to do.

Um, there was a gas station here at one time. The gasoline leaked. There's a pump out front. That they have to monitor all the time for that. And they looked at the site and um, what kind of building that they wanted to build. They decided on the prairie style, for a variety of reasons, but I think the most interesting was where we are located on this side. It's downtown, it's the business area on this side to the east, it is residential. They did not want to build a [00:16:00] building that would be a wall, that would be a barrier. They wanted

a building that would be a transition and a bridge between the residential and the, the commercial part of town and that prairie style kind of blends that. It's kind of a big house style. The roofs that are over on the east and the residential side match the roof height over here. The buildings over here match the roof height on this side.

They took, oh, they wind speeds coming up and down the street to see if we would create a wind tunnel here. They had huge problems with the book drop of how we could have people drive in and enter so that the driver's side was next to the building and we had a one-way street here. Um, they located the building facing south because they wanted the sun [00:17:00] to melt the snow. They decided inside the interior decoration, um, they decided kind of the prairie style and so all of the colors, nothing, nothing was put in this building without a meaning and without thought. So the colors that were chosen are of the prairie, and if you look, uh, at the stained glass windows, there's a lot of images of the prairie and a corn and a blue and, and whatever the, the big window that is at the entrance is called the Phoenix.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Mm-hmm.

**Dianne Herzog:** And it's called the Phoenix because the Phoenix represents change. And they want people to know that when you come to the library, you change and the person that you come in to the library is not the same person as you leave [00:18:00] because you've changed, because you've experienced what's going on in a library. And so that window there is to remind everybody. You have changed. You are the, you are a phoenix because you have come to the library. They did everything in vertical lines, and if you, you look there, everything is vertical in this building. And when you first walk in, you can tell and from upstairs all of the lines that are there. And there's a lot of geometry, a lot of triangles. In fact, when I used to give tours to kids, we would go on shape hunts of how many triangles can you find? There's not very many circles, but it's all this very, very linear, uh, and even the furniture at one time was all the Stickley with these very straight lines, um, that were all through there.

Um, it, it was just a wonderful ex... experience, uh, with it. We had many fights. [00:19:00] Many, many, many fights, uh, with the architects of what they thought was pleasing and what we did not. They wanted, for example, um, on the south side of the building, the second floor, they wanted to put a planter out there with live flowers on the outside that we would have to climb out and water and plant and we said no. We won that battle. The one, the battle we had the most was the hole in the roof. We did not like that second floor opening, that big atrium because we said kids are gonna throw things over, kids are gonna

spit on people underneath there, the sound is just going to carry, it's going to be terrible, all of which has happened in the past, but we got the hole in the floor anyhow.

But it's part of that incredibly, [00:20:00] beautiful structure when you walk into the building and you're just uplifted. Your eyes just automatically go up and follow these lines that just reach up and, and, uh, touch you along the way. It, it is absolutely a magnificent, magnificent, um, building, um, that we made, and I truly think that, um, it was the anchor for a lot of urban renewal here, in, in, um, downtown Council Bluffs. That was kind of the first spur of, yeah, we can be something else. We can, we can grow and, and do.

Um, partly through there we got a new director and his name was Jim Godsey and he was from Rochester, New York, uh, not New York, Rochester, Minnesota. Uh, he had just been, uh, part of a, a redesign of the Rochester Public Library. He was assistant director and then he came here and helped finish out and, and whatever, um, with the building, [00:21:00] um, and get us ready, ready to move. Uh, we closed, uh, sometime in June, I think of, of, um, 1998 and he asked me if I would like to lock the building up, for the last time I had been here, I dunno, 24 years by then.

And, um, he let me lock up and he said, how do you feel? I said, are you kidding? How do I feel? This is the most wonderful, cuz that building had major, major... we had in the children's room we only had three plugs, one of which was in the ceiling. Um, so it was, it was just a delight to think about moving. Um, and we moved, uh, we had a gal on staff named Maggie Baker, who was a whiz and could count feet of shelving and drop things in, and we had boxes labeled and, [00:22:00] and we really only had to back shift, very little. I mean, everything just went on just perfectly along the way. On the first day, um, on opening morning, the whole parking lot was just jam packed with people wanting to come in and Jim said, do you wanna open up and open the doors for everybody on the first day? And I said, I would love to do that. I did not know the doors were already unlocked, so I locked them and people are trying to get in and the doors are locked.

So after I unlocked them, then everybody could come in and we were so proud of our building and, and, um, we had worked so hard to get everything ready and one of the staff, I can't [00:23:00] even remember who said, oh my God, here comes the unwashed masses.

So yeah, that's what I remember.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** That's great. Um, so. We were trying to figure out the timeline of how long the library was closed in the move. So it sounds like it was like two months. It wasn't very long at all.

**Dianne Herzog:** Mm-hmm.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** So it was just, you know, end of July and then there was like a open house at the beginning of August and then really opened up in September, so...

**Dianne Herzog:** Yeah, Yeah. And it was supposed to open earlier, but we had our little snag with the computers, which, uh, put us back a couple. Couple...

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Couple weeks. Yeah.

**Dianne Herzog:** And, and whatever to get it going. And yeah.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** So a question I like to ask too is, um, what's, what would you say is like the biggest mistake? You know, how you plan and you plan and you plan and you plan, and then all of a [00:24:00] sudden it happens and you're like, well, that didn't turn out like we thought. What do you think was that thing that you were like, well, we really messed that up, let's change it quick.

**Dianne Herzog:** There were a lot. There were a lot. Um, part of the part of it is, if we had had an interim library, between the 1900 building and the 1998 building, if we had something maybe in the early sixties where we kind of transitioned to a modern library and the possibilities of a library and learned what you needed in a library, I think we would've designed this differently. Um, but we had no idea. When we were in this building, we had no idea. Um, we had a very, very minimal staff. So the first, the biggest mistake was not putting in a teen department and really, really looking at and putting it in a [00:25:00] prominent area rather than where, many years later, it ended up being up in adult reference, which is the worst place you could ever put it.

Um, and that should have been the, there was a small teen area here that was right outside the offices. It had a really cool jukebox design and, and whatever, but we did not have a teen librarian. We could not afford it. It was me and I didn't have time. I was, I had so much to do with the, the youth department and it, it was just a basic thing, of books, and it should have been what it is now for them.

Um, I had, probably two full-time, two and a half people from my department, never in a million years thinking the explosion of programming that we would do. The possibilities of what could happen [00:26:00] in this building. Kind of thought about it, but, and I would've designed that children's room much, much differently.

Um, to accommodate the staff that we eventually had because there's not enough room. The storage, for all of our stuff where the... the storage room that we have now is actually a storage for the furniture that went into, uh, the community rooms. And we just kind of took that over because we, I mean, we just, abso... what happened to that youth department, we absolutely exploded in, in what we did and our room, um, I would've designed a little bit differently too. We had, um, stadium seating in the window back there, which, should have been called jump off and see how far we can go seating and, or if, if I'm in a class and I'm [00:27:00] sitting here, I love to kick the back of it rather than listening.

And so, you know, that whole, and it, it really hampered the amount of space and, and whatever you can do. And then as we changed, of course we had no idea, um, we began as a library and in that time... you know that in the nineties and early two thousands, libraries changed and they, and we changed here, and people primarily did not come to us for books. They came for other opportunities and we should have designed, if we had known, we would've designed it for those opportunities rather than so stack heavy and book heavy. That was their same thing with the reference. But at that time, that's what was in, and we were right on that cusp of everything changing, as well as computers.

We had [00:28:00] a computer room, um, right next to Tom's office. There was a little room and had, you know, five, six computers in it. Um, no ventilation... lasted about six months. This was a big mistake. So yeah, a lot of stuff. A lot of stuff but, how do you know, how do you know? So...

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Well, I really appreciated you sharing your memories. Um, is there any other like, um, shining memory that you're like, somebody's gotta remember this. Somebody's gotta know this.

**Dianne Herzog:** No, the big one is, I locked the door on the first day instead of opening the door on the first day.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Yeah.

**Dianne Herzog:** Yeah. It, it was just, it was just the most incredible experience. It really, really was. To see and, and to be part of that, and yeah, and that opportunity, that opportunity to do that.

**Antonia Krupicka-Smith:** Sounds great. Well, thank you. [00:29:00]

**Dianne Herzog:** You're welcome.