6-30-2017

Interview with Jonathan Miller

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Jonathan Miller and Wenxian Zhang Interview

June 30, 2017

WZ: Good afternoon. My name is Wenxian Zhang, Head of Archives and Special Collections. With me is Dr. Jonathan Miller of Olin Library. Today is Friday, June 30, 2017. So Jonathan, can you share with us your family background?

JM: My family background. Well, I was born in Sheffield, in the north of England, in 1961. Sheffield is a big steel town, or was a big steel town—actually, it still does produce a lot of steel; not so many jobs. I grew up moving with my family throughout Britain, living in the south and the north. My mother was a primary school teacher and ultimately a headmistress of a primary school, and my father was a civil servant in the Ministry of Agriculture. Solid middle class British household. I went to university; I was the first person in my family to go to university. My mother had gone to teacher training college, but I was the first person to go from that generation. I graduated from the University of Sheffield in 1983.

Britain was in the middle of a recession at that point, particularly in the north of England. These were the Margaret Thatcher years; a lot of de-industrialization. Not too many opportunities in Sheffield. So, I had an opportunity to leave and go to Venezuela and went with a friend to Venezuela and lived there for eighteen months, teaching English. And that's where I met my wife, Bethany Hicok, who is an American.

We went back to Britain for a couple of years, worked in London, and then came to the United States. So I came to the United States in 1988. Bethany wanted to go to graduate school and pursued that. She got her Ph.D. and pursued a full, happy, academic career, and I thought about what I might do with my life and all of the different jobs that I had enjoyed over the years. Like many librarians, I settled on this career because I knew someone who was a librarian: Bethany's brother, Paul Hicok, is in fact still the director of the public library in Troy, New York. And I said, "I could do that job," and explored what it took to become a librarian: a master's degree, an MLS degree; and did that at the University of Buffalo, where I graduated in 1992 and first became a librarian. And I have lived in the United States ever since.

WZ: That's very interesting. We just found out that we are the same age and my mother was also a primary school teacher all her life.

JM: Interesting. Interesting.

WZ: But when you say you go to Venezuela, so is that after you graduated? So it's not part of a school project?

JM: Not part of a school project. In fact, I graduated in '82 [actually 1983], and I went to Venezuela in '83 [actually 1985]. I spent those two years doing various jobs, mostly living in Sheffield. And being very politically active. So, I had protested against the Falklands War in—I think that was 1982, if I remember right. I'd been very active in anti-racism and nuclear disarmament movements in Britain. And in 1984, I had been supportive of the miners in the strike where the conservative government tried to break the miners' union and largely succeeded in doing that. So I'd done various jobs. I'd worked in bars. I'd worked for the city council. Those are the kind of jobs I had had up to that point. But it wasn't really going anywhere, and that's when I left to go to Venezuela.

WZ: How did you meet Bethany? She was also teaching English there?

JM: Yes. Venezuela was quite a prosperous country at this point. It was coming down off the great oil prices of the early '80s, which had been so difficult for many countries, but were great for oil-producing countries. But it was still pretty wealthy in terms of Latin American countries. And so, many people were interested in learning English. So I went to a private school and offered my services, and as a native speaker, they were quite interested in me. But I didn't have any teaching experience. So they said, You should go and see this young woman who teaches here. So I walked into this classroom and there was a beautiful young woman; she was teaching this class. I was quite smitten, and that turned out to be Bethany. So we started dating and then went back to Britain. And of course as an American, to work in Britain she needed some kind of visa status, and so we married in Britain. And we've been married ever since.

Dr. Jonathan Miller and Dr. Bethany Hicok

WZ: So, it turns out that you and I arrived in the U.S. around the same year, ’88.

JM: Yes. There’s a lot of parallels.

WZ: But you said when you grew up, you never thought about becoming a librarian in your career. So you decided to pursue an MLS. Tell me about academic librarianship as your career.

JM: So, when I went to SUNY Buffalo, to the library school there, I wasn’t sure whether I was going to be interested in public librarianship or academic librarianship. And I think this is still the case, but at that point, you could take courses that would prepare you for both. But reasonably early, you would begin to specialize in things that were either going to lead you into academic jobs or into public library jobs. And I was really thinking at that point very practically about what I wanted to do.

Bethany was, as I say, studying for a Ph.D. It was clear that she had found her life’s work; she loved what she was doing, and she was planning on an academic career. And I thought, Well, every university has a library, so I could become an academic librarian. Of course, every university is in a town that probably also has a public library, so I could have probably done that as well.

I think the defining feature was—I have a distinct memory of library school in that it’s very much a training for a profession; it’s a vocational master’s degree. And it doesn’t necessarily get deeply into the theory and philosophy of human information behavior and these kinds of things. It prepares you for a profession. But I could recognize that there were many things about librarianship that were intellectually interesting, and I thought I was more likely to enjoy working and thinking about those issues in an academic setting than I would be in a public library setting. And so I think that’s what finally made me decide to pursue academic librarianship.

And then when I was applying for jobs in the last semester of my master's degree, I applied exclusively for academic librarian jobs—quite a broad range of them, but exclusively academic librarian. After applying for forty positions and having one telephone interview, which didn't go anywhere, and then another interview with Ohio State University—that's the job that I got. But because jobs in academic libraries take so long to get, before I actually knew that I'd landed that job, I'd applied for another forty jobs. So I applied for eighty jobs in my job search. I always tell that to library school students today, because they get very depressed about how hard the job market is. In my experience, it's never been a particularly easy job market.

WZ: Especially the first one.

JM: Especially the first one. And it's a numbers game. You have to keep on applying and eventually, you know, lightning will strike, and you will land the job.

WZ: So what did your first job entail you to do at Columbus, Ohio?

JM: I was head of access services at the Ohio State University Health Sciences Library—John H. Prior Library. Ohio State is a great university and has a great medical center; the health sciences library is a very impressive library. I was very lucky to get it. I didn't know how lucky I was to get it. I went to my mentor, Lorna Peterson, who had been very helpful to me throughout my library degree and introduced me to the library thinker that I still find most valuable: S. R. Ranganathan and his *Five Laws of Library Science*. And I said, "Well, so I've been offered this position at Ohio State University, but it's in the health sciences library. Should I take it?" And she said, "Are you *mad*? Of course you should take it!" (laughs) And she was absolutely right.

So I arrived there in 1992, and this was just at the point when Ohio State was joining OhioLINK. OhioLINK was and is one of the most impressive library consortiums I think that we've ever seen in America. It was a brilliant implementation of library sharing and transformed library services in academic libraries in Ohio. It has been a model for many others to try and follow. So I was right there at the very beginning, and I was head of access services. So access services is circulation, document delivery, interlibrary loan. And OhioLINK was all about these things: how to make use of the collection that existed in libraries throughout Ohio, and how to very conveniently deliver them to the user who wanted them, wherever that user was in the state.

And so I was in on the ground floor of watching them do that, and it made me a true believer in library cooperation and what was possible when librarians got together. There are *huge* barriers to sharing, but if you can get through those, then the rewards are astonishing. I saw that students at the largest university in the state—Ohio State—with the largest collection in the state, would borrow books from tiny little community colleges. And that small universities would borrow books—eighteenth-century texts, texts in Arabic, all kinds of things—from other collections. And that you really didn't know what potential use of materials was out there until you made it available to people. And then patterns became clear that were not there before.

And I've taken that experience to Illinois, where I was involved again in trying to get Augustana [College] into the CARLI network. I took it to Pittsburgh, where [the University of] Pittsburgh was involved in the PALCI network. Tried hard to bring that to Florida, where we have still not

yet succeeded in getting over the finish line, largely because the State is trying to do it on the cheap, and you can't do this on the cheap.

So that was my job at Ohio State; it was a faculty librarian job. I was doing research and publishing. I was doing library instruction. I was teaching. I was managing a set of complex operations to do with the delivery of materials to people. During the time I was there, we renovated the library, so we all moved out of the library into a Quonset hut and then moved back into a beautifully renovated library.

I worked with a great group of people, one of whom was Susan Kroll, the director there. She has always been a model for me about how to be a library leader. And also with Eric Schnell, who was the automation librarian. He's the guy who came down to my office in early 1993, so just a few months after I'd started there. And he said, "Jonathan, I want to show you something." So he brought me to his office and showed me the first graphical user interface to the World Wide Web. It was the precursor to Netscape. There were only about five places you could go on the web at that point, but what it meant was you that could move your mouse around the screen, you could click on a link, and you would go somewhere and see other material.

We'd been doing this for a long time on the Internet. My first experience of working in a library was at Rochester Institute of Technology, when I was a library school student. We had had HyTelnet and Gopher and those kinds of things: pre-web, directory-based systems for exploring the Internet, and I had been able to go back from upstate New York and get to the systems of the University of Sheffield and search the library catalogue at the University of Sheffield, where I had done my undergraduate degree. The last time I'd searched that, it had been a card catalogue. And that was an amazing experience. But to do this in this graphical, visual way on the web—both Eric and I recognized that this was going to change everything.

And it has. My whole career from 1993 until 2017—and I'm sure this will simply continue—has been, how do we deal with the implications of the web? I think we're actually going to begin now to go beyond that. But just as the Internet is fundamental to the web, the web is fundamental to many of the things that we're continuing to do now with mobile technology and those kinds of things. But it was that early experience in 1993, saying, "Jonathan, come and look at this"—and as I say, the rest of my career has been about exactly that problem.

WZ: So you began your career as head of access services. That is quite unusual; most of the time people are just access librarian.

JM: I think the reason for that was because I had managed bars; I had managed bookstores. And so I had management experience. And access services, like technical services, is one of those areas of librarianship where there is an expectation that you will be supervising staff. So having that managerial experience—I think that gave me a leg up.

WZ: Then you worked briefly in Iowa, at the University of Iowa and Augustana College. Tell me especially about Augustana College.

JM: Sure. So I got there because, again, Bethany at that point had completed her Ph.D. in English, a very hard job market. And she had got a position at a small liberal arts college in

Clinton, Iowa, called Mount St. Clair—it's since been purchased by a for-profit company. In our marriage, we've always wanted to have equal careers and explore them equally. And the way we've tried to do this is by doing what we refer to as "leapfrogging." So, I get to make one move: so from Rochester, I finished my degree, and we moved to Ohio and Columbus with Ohio State. And so the next move, after she had finished her Ph.D., was hers. And so she moved to Clinton, Iowa. And then what I was looking for was to find a job somewhere close to her.

The first thing I got was a grant-funded job at the University of Iowa, which as you say, didn't last very long. And I realized when I got there that this wasn't really going to lead anywhere in terms of *my* career at least. And so I sent letters to every college and university library, with my resume, up and down the Mississippi River in Iowa/Illinois and got a call back from Barbara Doyle-Wilch, who was the director at Augustana. Augustana is similar to Rollins; it's a small liberal arts college, has a Swedish Lutheran background. Really very, very fine school. And it was my first experience of the liberal arts.

So she had a position open for an automated services and technical services librarian: the head of automated services and technical services. And I pointed out to her that I didn't know much about automation or about technical services, and Barbara is one of those wonderful people who—she hires people rather than a skill set. And so she said, "That doesn't matter, we have people who do that. I want someone who can manage this department." And so that's why she brought me in. I was lucky enough at Augustana to rise to become deputy director and then director of the library.

That was a place where I first became aware of this concept of the third place: this idea that the library could be a place where people find a sense of community and make community. This is a concept that comes from Ray Oldenburg and his book, *The Great Good Place*. First place is your home; second place is your work; and the third place is the place where you choose to be when you're neither at work nor home, and a place where you can play a part in creating community. Libraries have taken this on; they're very interested in this idea. It works very well with contemporary college librarianship. Barbara was particularly good at creating this sense of community, and I built on what she had done.

As automated services librarian, again in terms of the web—when I arrived at Augustana, we still had towers of CDs from ProQuest. And you would search a system—an online system—find a number, write down that number, and then go to the CD, grab the CD, take it out of the tower, put it in the drive, and scroll through the numbers, and you would find that number—that number was a document; it was an article. This was a huge advance, because before you would have done all of this in paper, but it was clearly annoying. And it was clearly annoying as people were beginning to make use of the web.

This was 1996, so this was the beginning of President Clinton and Al Gore's National Information Infrastructure, the superhighway to the Internet. People were beginning to think about commercialization of the web. They were beginning to search the web with directory systems like AltaVista and those kinds of things.

But we also had systems like LexisNexis, where you had to press certain buttons—like the F-key would do something. You had to tell people which buttons to press, so that they could get the document they wanted. Or OCLC—you couldn't hit the enter key to sort of send a command to the system; you had to hit the F-11 key. This was nonsensical. It wasn't nonsensical in terms of where they'd come from, but it was nonsensical to our students, who were beginning to think in terms of the web and digital information on the web. And so, a lot of that experience in the late '90s was taking us from that strange hybrid digital/print world—what we called the spaghetti of ProQuest, where the lines you got from one place to another seemed to me like a bowl of spaghetti, all mixed up together—to something which was much clearer and a much better organized website. And by the time we left, you were going to a link for ProQuest, and you were clicking on that, and you were searching, and you were getting full text in the early 2000s—even at a small college.

I had a historian who said, "This has really equalized the playing field." He was a graduate of the University of Chicago, one of the great library collections in the country and the world. And he said access to things like WorldCat, access to full-text documents, were beginning to level the playing field, so that he could continue his research in a way that had not been possible for faculty at small liberal arts colleges in the past. They would have had to travel—to Chicago, in his case—and continue their research. And they were beginning to see that they could do their research from their offices or from the library.

Those were the things really about Augustana. And working with a great group of people.

WZ: Sounds like you already had a very successful career ahead of you. So what made you decide to go to Pittsburgh?

JM: Well, then again, it's a move. So, Bethany—there's a lot of struggling liberal arts colleges in the Midwest, and Mount St. Clair was clearly not on a good, sustainable path. And so she was looking for something else. And she was lucky enough—because English has always been a difficult field—to get a position as an assistant professor, a tenure-track position at Westminster College in western Pennsylvania. And so I began looking in western Pennsylvania.

I was lucky enough to find a position at the University of Pittsburgh: head of public services in the Hillman Library, which is their main library. And so there I was managing the reference service, instruction, circulation, and government documents. What was really attractive about that job was—in the spirit of finding something intellectually exciting about librarianship that I mentioned with my library degree—I had the opportunity to do my Ph.D. at Pittsburgh. And so I did that. They funded me to do the Ph.D. in the School of Information at the University of Pittsburgh. So this really was an opportunity I couldn't pass up.

So the job in fact was probably my least favorite librarian job that I've ever had. Pittsburgh's a great town; the university is doing some interesting things. I was finding myself, after being a director of a library, I was now a middle manager: a small cog within a large machine that was implementing a vision that I wasn't particularly interested in. It wasn't really focused on public services, on the user experience. It was focused on digitization and reengineering of technical services.

I did the job, but I focused my efforts, and my sort of joy came from doing the Ph.D. And I did my dissertation on the role of the Association of Research Libraries in the development of the 1976 Copyright Act. So it was a public policy degree, which took me right back to the beginnings of my undergraduate degree in political theory and institutions at Sheffield and my continuing interest in politics, and it combined that with something that had always been of great interest to me in librarianship, which was copyright.

As an access services librarian, certainly in terms of automation, and as a director, copyright has been a constant feature of my work. And so this gave me an opportunity to really explore how librarians had been involved in the development of the law and to deepen my understanding of copyright in higher education. And that's proved useful ever since.

In 2006, a colleague knew that I was unhappy at Pittsburgh and wrote to me in an email—Carla Tracy, who'd taken over from me as director at Augustana. And she said, "There's a director's job open at Rollins College." Rollins College is a member of the Oberlin Group, which is eighty select liberal arts colleges. Augustana was also a member of that group, so I'd been familiar with the group. And it's a signal of quality, basically, that Rollins is a member of this group. But I'd never heard of Rollins before. I'd never lived south of the Mason-Dixon line. My career had been in upstate New York, Ohio, Iowa, Illinois, and Pennsylvania. She ended her email by saying, "But you wouldn't be interested in living in Orlando." And I wrote back, "Why not?"

Because just a few months before this, Bethany and I had been discussing, Where was the next move? I mean, I wasn't happy at Pittsburgh; where would we want to go next? Our son, Sam, was in middle school; he was approaching high school; what did we want to do next? So, we had said we wanted a city—we wanted a more diverse environment for our son to grow up in. The suburbs of Pittsburgh are pretty monotonous [homogeneous] in terms of their ethnicity, and pretty conservative. So we wanted a more diverse environment for Sam. I wanted to work in a liberal arts college library. We wanted a community where we could both live and work; I had a long commute, and so did she. And we wanted somewhere warmer. And we wanted a medium-size city; not a New York, but a medium-size city, where there were some cultural opportunities. And we wanted to be closer to the beach, because Pittsburgh is seven and a half hours from the beach, which, for an Englishman, is just ridiculous.

So, here's this job in Orlando—didn't know about Winter Park: an hour from the beach, small liberal arts college, nice community; warmer, certainly. What a great opportunity. So I applied, and everything came together, and I was lucky enough to be hired as director of the library.

Now, in the spirit of our leapfrogging career, this was *my* move to make, but Rollins held out the promise that there might possibly be a position for Bethany. And I should have been more rigorous about that and got more than a spoken hint; I should have got a written promise. I didn't, and Bethany wasn't able to secure a position at Rollins. And so she has continued to work at Westminster College. And we have had—as we've had at many times throughout our career, because we've tried to keep this balance of very equal careers—we've had a period apart. Usually it's been just a few months; this one has now been eleven years, so that's been a bit long.

And she has regularly flown down from Pittsburgh. And since Sam left high school, I have regularly flown up there as well.

WZ: So, when you first came to Rollins in 2006, Olin was in fairly good shape. Under your leadership the library service has been transformed, so maybe you can share with us your first impression and maybe some challenges that you encountered.

JM: Sure, sure. I mean, it's difficult to go back and put yourself in that place again, right? Because you and I both now have this eleven years' shared history. So it's difficult to go back to what it feels like.

I have distinct memories of driving down I-95 and then I-4, and how foreign the environment was. Florida is very different from the rest of the states. But even the kudzu vines of Georgia—there began to be this change, this sort of tropical change, and it felt like you were going somewhere different. Although the distances are the same, there's a similarity between upstate New York and Iowa. They probably don't think so, but there is. There's a big difference between Pennsylvania and Florida. So I can remember the foreignness of coming to Florida about it. Though I can also remember in my interview here, which took place in July, walking out of the library at one point into that hot, thick, humid Central Florida air and realizing that the coolest part of my body was my armpits. (laughs) That reminded me of Venezuela. And I thought, Oh, I could do this. Because of course, Venezuela is just on the other side of the Caribbean and shares a lot of similarities in many ways with the history of Florida around the Caribbean Basin. So I remember the foreignness of it.

I also remember meeting you, Wenxian, and meeting Dorothy. I remember you two, and being quite intimidated. As you say, this was a well-run library. You were very impressive professionals, and I thought, I wonder whether I can do this job. Are they going to come to find that I'm a charlatan who has nothing to offer? So there was a certain amount of anxiety about whether I could do the job.

But at the same time, as you say, it was fundamentally a well-run library. And yet, there was a sense in which the library was beginning to be managed in the interests of the people who worked within the library—not everybody, not all the time—but in significant ways, people had sort of taken their eye off the ball: the ball being the user experience. And they'd begun to think about the library as *their* library instead of the students' library.

One of the first things I did when I came was to begin meeting with the staff within the library. So I had individual meetings with each person within the library. But also with each academic department. And what began to be clear was that people outside of the library had begun to slot the library into a certain place, in the way they thought about the library. So we had one faculty member who had explicitly written on her syllabus about library services, "The important fact about library services is that the students should use the University of Central Florida library." It was a much better collection, according to that faculty member, and "just don't even bother with the Olin Library, go straight to UCF." Another faculty member that I met with said to me, "I give the library five years." He said, "I give *you* five years." And what he meant was that he thought

the library was working its way towards obsolescence, and that we would be closed within five years.

That sense of being sidelined by the community wasn't universal, but it was there. Also you could see the mirror image of it from within the library, where people who were talking about their jobs were very much talking about how their jobs met *their* needs instead of the needs of users.

So we began to do some things to see if we could change that around. One of the first things we did was institute the LibQUAL survey, and we've done that many times since. But in 2006, we did it for the first time, and we got some measurement of people's perception of the library. It's available on the web; people can go back and see it. Hopefully, [Digital Archivist] Rachel Walton will have archived it by the time that anybody listens to this tape. And you can see there that the library is in many ways quite beloved, but in some ways not satisfying in services: our collections weren't adequate, our access off campus and in offices was inadequate. And there was a lot of concern about some of our public services. I don't think this came from LibQUAL, but there was a sense that we had a little bit of the sort of "shushing library" stereotype; that we were controlling people's behaviors in the public spaces. And students did not appreciate it.

And so we began to use some of this data, and talk about some of this data, and begin to try and reposition some of the ways we were thinking in the library. So very early on, we put the rocking chairs on the loggia, outside the front of the library; extended the Wi-Fi to the front of the library. It gave a much more welcoming aspect; took advantage of the outside.

They always say when you become a director, don't do anything too hastily; always take time to listen. And I think I tried to do that. But they also say you have one chance to make one change quickly, so decide what it's going to be. It can't be too deep, can't be too fundamental, because those take more time to do. But the change that I made was to get rid of the food and drink policy, with the exception of Special Collections and Archives, and with the exception of computer labs. We said, There's no food and drink policy. There just isn't one. It's not that you need to only bring in these things or not these other things, or put cups on your coffee cups or something like that. We don't have a policy about what color clothes you might wear, right? We don't have a policy about food and drink. We have a policy about disruptive behavior, so if you're having a huge feast and making too much noise, or you're bringing in particularly smelly food that disrupts other people's ability to study, then we'll talk to you. But apart from that, do what you like. I said to some of the people who were very concerned about this, "What do you imagine that people are doing with our books when they check them out? When they take them home? You don't think they're reading this book while they're eating a bacon sandwich or something? Yes, of course they're doing that, and now they're going to be able to do that in the library."

That began to change people's perception of the library. But also, just getting people to rethink how they engaged with users. We did a lot of thinking about the liaison program and how we work with faculty, so that we moved away from what had been a rather haphazard system, where

people built personal relationships, to a much more organized system of departmental liaison. And then a few years after that, evaluating our ability to liaise and our effectiveness in liaising.

At the same time as doing that, we began to tackle some of the issues in Technical Services. Part of the issue of managing the place for ourselves rather than for the users is, we were focusing a *lot* of staff resources and a lot of time on the print library—which is important, and it remains important. But it had become, by the mid-2000s, simply one part of what people wanted to use from the library. And as that faculty member indicated who sent their students to UCF, there were many things that we were not providing to people.

So we brought in R2 Consulting and looked at our technical services operation. And they said, You have to really cut down as much as possible the effort that you are devoting to the print library, and take those resources and devote them to the electronic library. And that's largely what we did. We created an e-resources librarian and eventually added a staff person to that group as well. We had already under [former Library Director] Donna Cohen begun building an electronic library; we'd got JSTOR, we'd got a whole series of great electronic resources. But we began pushing that even more and working with the State to see if we could get consortial deals where we could get access to a lot more online material, whether that's e-books or e-journals, and growing that as much as possible.

We ended our role as a Federal depository library. Rollins had been a depository library since 1909. But since 1909, Central Florida had been transformed. We had been the only institution of higher education at that point, and it was entirely appropriate for us to be a Federal depository library. But since then, UCF had grown up on our doorstep, and they had a much clearer mission to support government documents. And so we transferred much of our materials to them, and we just withdrew from the Federal Depository Program.

Positions that had been devoted to that were devoted to other things: positions like periodical specialist, or government document specialist, or—we had an acquisitions librarian. We changed all of those things to a whole set of different titles, different sets of responsibilities; much more focused on the digital library. Building that digital library in terms of the collection, but also helping people navigate that digital library. We were an early adopter of a discovery service: Summon, from Serials Solutions, which again was a sort of Google-like experience for students, which they were familiar with.

All of this led to a real sense of satisfying more of the needs of the users. In fact, that same faculty member, who was the one who advised her students to go to UCF, came to me and really wanted to point out to me that she no longer did that, because now we were able to satisfy her needs for that online information and that journal literature. The faculty member who told me that we'd be gone in five years never did come back and say, "Oh, sorry, I was wrong," but has since retired, so we've outlasted him at least.

All of this did not happen smoothly. I mean, I do definitely think this wasn't me coming in and making these changes; this was me leading a team to make these changes. And there have been a similar set of changes in Specials Collections and Archives as well: the addition of Rachel [Walton] for digital archivist and the development of a digital records management plan; a much

greater emphasis upon online finding aids with ArchivesSpace. You'd already done an awful lot of digitization. The development of Rollins Scholarship Online. There's been this big refocusing as well of this operation.

But all of this didn't happen very smoothly. I mean, you and I know both know these were some pretty challenging decisions for some ways that people had worked for a long time, and there were people who really got excited and bought into this vision. There were others who it really did not. And some of those people have moved on, and they've had successful careers elsewhere; others have retired, because the library that they knew had changed. But I don't want to imply that this was some smooth process. This meant a *lot* of big discussions; very open sort of conflict trying to get to good decisions. And I certainly know that I have not won every argument that I've been involved in over the last eleven years. But I think through that discussion we've arrived at a better place than we might have been if we had kept on going on the trajectory we were on.

One of the other changes that I made is, I came into a library which very much at that point seemed to be working on consensus decision-making. Even if we knew that somebody didn't like a particular discussion—a topic—we would not even raise that topic. But even if we raised it, we wouldn't act on something unless we had consensus. So I think I began to help the organization get beyond that and really see a place to value open dialogue in which people fundamentally disagree, but could respect each other's positions. And that's led to a lot more openness in the library—some people have said, too much. Openness to exploring different ideas, hearing different viewpoints, and moving forward—not necessarily on the basis of consensus. And that I think is probably fundamental to enabling us to make the changes that we've made.

WZ: Yes, the library is definitely very different and a better place because of your leadership.

JM: It's the *team*. It's not because of me, it's the team.

WZ: Yes. Besides your administrative duties, you also function as a part of the faculty. So I want to give you the opportunity to talk a little bit about your research and your teaching. I understand you're also teaching a course on "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised."

JM: "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," Gil Scott-Heron's famous poem. Yes, so I've taught an RCC [Rollins College Conference] course since 2009. Not every year, but I think I've taught it five times.

So you know, the RCC course is a way of introducing students to their college careers. And we do a lot in that course, including introducing them to the library, but also getting them used to how they're going to need to read; how they're going to need to write; the various services available to them; and understanding their place, finding their place—finding their anchor at the college.

But the theme of mine has been around the history of recorded information. So, at least when we do it chronologically, the course begins with the invention of writing, and I bring the students down to Special Collections and we look at some of the wonderful artifacts we have down here:

Sumerian tablets, hieroglyphic, papyrus scrolls, medieval manuscripts, early printed books, those kinds of things. And that's a wonderful moment for them, to actually get their hands on these artifacts.

Dr. Miller and his students in the Rollins Archives, 2013

We start with the invention of writing five thousand years ago, and we move through the transition from the scroll to the codex during the first to the third centuries of the Roman Empire—the Common Era. At least in the West—this is very much a Western history, if I can use that term; we really don't have enough time to get into what might have been happening in Mesoamerica, in India, in China. So then, from the transition from scroll to codex, we go up to the transition from manuscript to printing—fifteenth-century Europe. Then we go through the Industrial Revolution and the proliferation of formats, with the ability to not just record text, and therefore language, but also sound, image, moving image, during the Industrial Revolution in the early part of the twentieth century. And then we end at this moment in which we find ourselves today: this transition from an analog world of print to a digital world. And the changes that that is making and that will continue to make. I believe that we're only at the beginning of this process at the moment. Even in the eight years since 2009 that I've been doing this course, I've had to change the course radically. It's been a great experience.

I've always involved a community engagement part of the course. For many years, I had the students working at Fern Creek [Elementary School], and they would work with fourth graders working on their writing. It was a great reminder to our students, who have got into a selective liberal arts college—they're generally good writers, good readers—to take them back to that stage where children are struggling to learn how to read and write. And the reason that's

important is, every human being learns a language—to speak and to understand a language—unless there's some medical issue which stops them doing that. And they do it incredibly early, and they could do it with three or four languages if they want to, quite easily. Many of the world's population speaks multiple languages.

This is a natural process. It's part of what it means to be human. It may be one of the defining features of humanness. Many animals communicate; we communicate in far more sophisticated ways. So that's a natural process, and we've been doing it for hundreds of thousands of years.

Writing and reading has only developed in the last five thousand years. It takes us a lot longer to learn how to do it. For most of human history, most humans have not learned how to do it; it's only in the last two hundred years that we've really, at least in the West, had common mass literacy. It is an unnatural act, and the reason for that is the technology that each generation has to learn how to use. And so it's important for the students to get into that space of those nine-year-olds, when they are learning these skills. It's also a great opportunity to get them outside of the Rollins bubble, which is a space of enormous privilege, and into a school where a huge proportion of the students are on free lunches. Fern Creek is a school that supports the Coalition for the Homeless, so students who are homeless. So that's a great experience, and it's usually the most valuable portion of the course.

Unfortunately, Orange County Public Schools, in their wisdom, is changing the focus of Fern Creek School. So I moved away from that the last time I taught it and went to the Mayflower retirement home, which is a very, very different home. It's another place of enormous privilege; you have to be pretty wealthy to live at the Mayflower. But these are old people. And so what I had the students doing there was working with these older residents to explore a piece of information technology that they were interested in. Maybe they wanted to learn how to use Facebook, Twitter; how to make videos; how to back up or secure their laptop; whatever it might be. How to use their phone more effectively. Whatever it might be.

This was great, because it not only again got the students out of the bubble and got them thinking about Rollins in a different way, it got them working with a very different generation of people, which was also useful. But it also got them to realize that although they were very comfortable using the technology that major corporations had introduced them to—largely the Apple corporation, Facebook, and Google—they felt a great sense of command over those things. Their knowledge of them was extremely surface. These corporations had made these services so easy to use that students used them without any effort at all. Now here was a seventy-year-old person coming to them and saying, "Show me how to use this service." And they realized they had to explain it in a way that was understandable to a seventy-year-old. Maybe explain it again and again and again each week. These older people were not ignorant of technology; they knew a lot about things. And they would come in and say, I'd like you to teach me to do this quite sophisticated thing. "I want to make sure that the security software on my PC is up to date and protects me from these things, right? Show me how to do that." "I want you to help me embed videos in this PowerPoint that I'm doing, which is going to be presented at this thing, and I want the sound to just play—and oh, by the way, I use a different operating system than you; I don't use a Mac, I use a PC." Whatever it might happen to be. So they would have to come back to the

college, learn how to do whatever it was, and then take that back to the Mayflower. That was a great experience for the students.

So all of these things led to them understanding about information. In the latest iteration of the course—I'm talking about it changing over time—we began talking about machine learning and artificial intelligence, which we were not really talking about when I began the course in 2009. Then we were talking about the transition of newspapers into online news organizations. We took the students down to the Orlando Sentinel. Now we're talking about artificial intelligence, and that's a very different conversation for liberal arts students to be having. And to be thinking about how their degree prepares them—or not—for what is going to be a new world of work, and more than just work, that they are going to come into. Are they being prepared by their degree for that new world?

WZ: So now, looking back, how do you view your Rollins career?

JM: This has been one of the greatest experiences of my professional life. I knew when I came to Augustana that I fell in love with the liberal arts. I fell in love with the scale of it. I fell in love with the fact that you could know almost every faculty member on campus, and that you could have really interesting conversations about science, philosophy, literature, art—all kinds of different things. And that you could know personally many of the students that you dealt with. That scale of librarianship.

I've always been really interested in human information behavior and the interface between the human being and information resources; that's the piece of librarianship that really interests me. If you do that at a big research university, it's as though you're doing it on an aircraft carrier. Change can be made, and if you do manage to make change, it can be really significant for a large number of people, not just the people at the institution; it can have an impact nationally. OhioLINK being a great example of that. The University of Pittsburgh's work with Chinese universities being another great example of that. But it was enormously difficult to make that change. At a liberal arts college, you may not necessarily have that level of impact, although there are people who have had it: Evan Farber at Earlham [College] with the introduction of bibliographic instruction; Fred Moffett creating the Oberlin Group and then going on to, I think, the Huntington Library and opening up the Dead Sea Scrolls. Amazing what he did.

So you can make significant change, but it's rarer. But what you do is you get to make it in people's personal lives, at a much deeper level with individuals. I have much better relationships with students and faculty here than I ever had a research university. So it's been one of the most valuable experiences to me, coming back to the liberal arts.

And when I came to Rollins, I'd been on the five-year plan: I'd moved every five years, more or less, and that's the way you make progress in this profession of librarianship. But that if I wanted to do something more fundamental, to make a change that would stick with an institution, I needed to stay longer. So I had planned on staying for at least a decade and that turns out to [be] what I've done.

And in fact, I think that I have made that change. We've gone through a really interesting year here at Rollins. We're in the midst of a new round of strategic planning. And there was a very interesting idea that developed about developing a hub of student success and retention within the Olin Library. But from my perspective, the ideas as they were developing—we were trying to squeeze a bit too much into what is a relatively small building. When that conversation broadened out from a relatively small group that were thinking about this issue to the broader community that included the students and faculty of the college, there was a really interesting reaction. There was a petition on Change.org from the students, and there was a colloquium with the faculty, which was very well attended—for most of these colloquiums, very difficult to get a big audience for anything at Rollins, particularly around strategic planning. People were very concerned about this idea. They wondered why we were trying to change something that they regarded as so successful as the library.

But what really struck me about that discussion, both from the students and from alumni and from faculty, was that they weren't talking about this in the way [of] many such discussions. You know: I love the library, I love the smell of old books, I love the quiet spaces where I do this. That wasn't the focus of the conversation, which is quite a conservative conversation to have. The focus of the conversation was: this library has been transformed. It is a site of enormous value to this community, as a community space. The librarians are working at a very high level partnering with faculty, they have a very successful partnership with information technology. Why would you want to mess with something that's so successful? And the people who responded to the survey and who spoke in the colloquium were really talking and were recognizing what the librarians had achieved over the last ten years—beyond ten years, because as I say, I think this began well before I arrived; it began under Donna. That they really recognized what we were trying to achieve as a library serving a liberal arts college campus in the second decade of the twenty-first century. That I found really quite moving: to see that we'd actually communicated that to them. Because I wouldn't have been at all surprised if we'd got that conversation about "I love the smell of old books," which is not uncommon in higher education, and that was *not* the conversation.

So, I think when I look back on it, the fact that we won the ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Award; the fact that we have a gate count of 359,000 people a year coming in and out of this building; the fact that the librarians are so well respected on campus as faculty partners; and the fact that people seem to understand our place in the liberal arts college of the twenty-first century—that I'm pretty proud of.

WZ: So, besides management, teaching and research, you are also doing running, kayaking, gardening. So when you go to Williams, are you going to pick out a mountain to climb?

JM: (laughs) So, Williams is in a very different part of the country, in western Massachusetts, in the Berkshires, surrounded by these gorgeous green hills. People say that if you go there, you need to enjoy the outdoor life. We're going to take our kayaks with us. It won't be kayaking on lakes and rivers with alligators, it will be lakes and probably a little bit more whitewater—not too much, I hope—and probably it won't be all year round. I'm looking forward to doing a lot more hiking. I have tried cross-country skiing once in my life; failed miserably, have no

intention of trying it again. So, if I can't actually just hike in the hills during the winter, I'll try snowshoeing.

Bethany and I, our son Sam, who's a chef—we're all foodies. Florida is a fantastic place; Winter Park is a great place for foodies. We won't be growing mangoes in the back yard, or pineapples, which I've been able to do here. But there is a great food scene, a great local food scene, so we're really looking to explore that.

And we've found an apartment that's three miles from campus, which is about where I live now from Rollins. Has a bike path the whole way to campus, which is what I can do at Rollins. And is on a bus route. And so, I'm hoping to recreate at least part of what I have so loved about living in Winter Park and Central Florida, in the Berkshires.

WZ: Anything else you would like to share with me?

JM: I was pretty uncomfortable doing this interview with you. I've always thought of this oral history project as something that you do for really significant members of the Rollins community: people like [Professor] Ed Cohen, who retire after fifty years; or presidents of the college; or very important alumni; or those kinds of things. I've only been here for eleven years, and there are many people who've been here much longer. You, Wenxian, have been here longer.

And I have always been uncomfortable with the idea that—as I've been leaving, people have been saying, Oh, you've made such a difference, you've made such a difference. I think I contributed to making a difference, but what was so important to me is, it's the team that's made the difference. This has been a great place to work and a great set of people to work with. So that trepidation that I felt when I first came here—can I live up to working with you, with Dorothy, with people like that? Yes, I think I can. But it's been an absolute delight to do it. And I think we have achieved a lot together, and I think you will achieve a lot after me.

WZ: Well, thank you so much, Jonathan. That's a surprise to hear I intimidated you, because when you first came here, I said, "This British guy, his ancestors, after all, forced opium on my people." (JM laughs) So I learned a great deal from you, and I just want to thank you for your great leadership, thank you for bringing the library into the twenty-first century, and wish you the best at Williams.

JM: Thank you. Wenxian, you're doing this, and you're doing incredibly high-quality work. You're going to go on now to be the interim director of the library. And you're doing this in a second language for you, and that is quite remarkable. I couldn't do that in Spanish; I certainly couldn't do it in Chinese. And you do it with such grace, and very, very expertly.

I do remember one thing. When you were showing me around Archives when you first arrived, you told me that you were running out of space. And I'm sure you still believe that you're running out of space, but I have never met an archivist in my career who doesn't think that what they're doing is running out of space. Hopefully you'll still be able to manage the archives of the college going forth.

WZ: We are trying. Thank you.

JM: Thank you.