Norman Tanis, Track 2

Tape 1, side b begins.

JB: There we are. It's beginning—

NT: But even at that time, we did not—we did not have to lay off any tenure track librarian. And it's always been my strategy to—in working with the budget, to have enough budget leeway so that a cut is not going to cut so deeply in our permanent staff. And it never has, but we—we've had a lot of—we've had a lot of losses from other staff, it's just, people that just came on board or were working part-time.

0:00

JB: Have these taken the form of layoffs?

NT: Yes. So today, we still don't have as many positions granted us in the budget as we had in 1970. When the campus was thirteen thousand students. Hmm?

JB: And, what, with seven hundred thousand volumes more.

NT: And with seven hundred thousand volumes more. And an additional building of a hundred and ten thousand square feet.

JB: And in absolute numbers we have fewer staff positions now than—

NT: We have a hundred and twenty-seven positions today, we had a hundred and sixty-nine back then in 1970.

JB: That's astonishing.

NT: Yes.

JB: Not that all those filled in '70, with some cushion.

NT: Yes, that's right.

JB: But nonetheless, um—

NT: Then with automation, they've taken positions away from us also, which is a ridiculous idea because we've had to work harder and do more things in order to get automation in place correctly in this library. So, we've never had that—we've never had some output that said, Hey we're doing so well with these computers that we don't need so many people, I mean that theoretically may come but I've yet to see the day where it—that day dawning, yet. But, on the contrary, we had more work as a result of becoming an automated modern library.

JB: Why is that?

NT: Well, we had to clean up the database, and there's so much work in converting a collection of this size from the card catalog and the manual methods to automation and the computer. Most large libraries, research libraries, like UCLA and other places, never even attempted to do the whole collection. They just one day said, Okay, we're gonna start automating right here on May 18th, blah blah. And they did it forward, so they had two catalogs going. But, we—we insisted on a strategy in which we were gonna do the whole thing. But now, even today, we have years of work yet straightening things out.

JB: When did it begin? When did the process actually start?

NT: Well, we began working on it back in 19, about 1977. We began editing data—our data and sending it out to be put on electronic tapes. So, it's been very long, very expensive, and it isn't done today. Then, we send it out to vendors in various generations of the thing, something's always falling off or doesn't get done, it's—it's been a—it hasn't been a tale of woe, but it's—it hasn't been easy. (laughs)

JB: I suspect the faculty have only the faintest sense of that, you know?

NT: Yeah, right. Right. And that's probably the way it should be. I don't think the faculty has to––or should be bothered with that.

JB: One of the things—as a faculty member—I perceive, is that the budget cups—cuts come in waves or undulations. We're flush one year, it's bad the next, and so on, and so on. Is that an accurate perception?

NT: Well, no. I c—because I don't think we've ever been flush, if—unless we were flush in the year I came, in '69 or '70, which we probably were. But after that, I—I have always felt that we were—we've been understaffed. And I'll take a look at the—and we worked it up, the University California system, and we cut off all the librarians and staff that are engendered by the Ph.D. because they have a formula where it builds from undergraduate to Master's to Ph.D. So we took their formula, agreed upon formula, and, you know, cut out the Ph.D. part, and we are staffed about one-half as well as that formula would provide for them. And so we always felt that we are the underdogs in the system and have a big job to do and not enough to—
5:00 personnel to do it with, or enough money for the collection at (trails off).

JB: Its interesting.

NT: Cause I think it's absurd that a faculty this large with all its diverse background and its interests and the way strategies it employs to teach can get along with the limited number of periodicals and serials that we're able to provide. Because we may look very good in some book of statistics comparing us to Podunk U or something of that sort, but when you consider the

almost thousand full-time faculty members we have here with all their points of view, and the students and all their interests, it's a little thin. Of course, we understand that we're an entry point for information these days, were not a library, and that we can go out across the country and obtain things for our students and our faculty. But all the same, it's still thin.

JB: I guess, you know, it's interesting that we see things differentially because the faculty, when he says, when he says, Things are good this year. When I use the term flush, I'm thinking book acquisitions, periodical acquisitions. I'm not thinking staff, that's the invisible side of it. What's the cost in terms of that inadequacy of staff, to the average user? For example, is there a cost in hours in the room?

NT: Yes, definitely. Because I think the institution library like this, which is serving a commuting institution, ought to be open twenty, twenty-four hours a day. I think as a mandatory, I think this campus would be busy until two in the morning. And I think it would get busy again at five or six in the morning if we had the services that we could—that we could offer them. But we don't have the budgets that provide for having the libraries open and serviced for that span of time. So, we hover around eighty-four hours a week and it oughta be a hundred and twenty-five, hundred and thirty-five hours at least.

JB: What are some of the other costs, in terms of service, in terms of resources?

NT: Well, we started out years ago with the ambition to have a sp—library specialists to match our teaching strengths. So, there would be a librarian specialist, both to do reference and to acquire books to match up with each curricular strength. And that we would have these librarians on every floor, available to students, and faculty, and we haven't been able to do that. We've been able to maintain a good re—an excellent reference desk, I think, in both buildings, and we do pretty well on circulation and keeping the books in shape, but it's been a strain.

JB: What were the worst dips in budget allocation, you can recall, can you pick out some particularly bad years?

NT: Well, I think the one in 1970 was horrendous. And they weren't so bad after that. We would lose—we—when we lost four of them, when our—when our card catalog was automated six months after we got the appropriation to automate it, we got a cut of four positions. Saying, you've made these savings now with automation, we weren't even up and going, (laughs) we were still trying to figure out how to get there. But they took four positions away from us. So, we've had to put a lot of our troops right on the front lines, fighting, and we hadn't had enough troops back, thinking about how to do things here and how—what's the best way to proceed. Or, I think more emphasis would have been put on collection development. And on instruction—library instruction—teaching students how to use the library, and faculty now because we have so many innovations in the library, the library is probably the most rapidly changing sector of the campus in the way it delivers its services. And we hadn't been able to give it the people—the interlibrary loans—interlibrary loans could grow

astronomically if we let it, and it ought to grow. But we don't have the personnel to service that kind of growth. And the same—the same goes for consulting all these electronic bibliographic sources that we have now. Whether it's standalone, mini-computer driven CD-ROM's, or—or entrances in the big databases around the country, and we don't have the instruction and individual help, and I guess I've always had the idea that there ought to be a coterie of
10:00 librarians who are available, kind of like Oxford tutors, to sit down with a person, either a faculty member or a graduate student or a student, tip the cup—coffeepot open and have a cup of coffee, and say, Now, what is your problem, what are you really trying to do here today? Or, on your thesis, or on your paper, and—or—here are the res—here is a rundown of the resources in the library and you may want to shift your paper's emphasis over slightly because we have these strengths and you'll avoid that weakness if you do that. And then there's UCLA and then they name the other resources, so we haven't had enough one to one relationship between the information providers and the library staff. And the UC's that—that's what I would like to see.

JB: I think a lot of teaching faculty are unclear as to the meaning of the word, library faculty. And you've just hinted that, when you talk about one on one relationships with students, then these really are teaching positions, in a way.

NT: Well, that's—that's how I—that's how I visualize it. That—that is really one of our goals, although we haven't gotten anywhere near it. But, is—is a cadre of librarians who are knowledgeable in the subject field and who can play a very important role in the education of the student and in assisting the faculty member in whatever other they're doing.

JB: Taking the average librarian, if that's possible, what percentage of his or her time do you think is spent teaching, then?

NT: I would think, well you can't say it about every one because there are a lot of technical services that probably don't engage in too much teaching, but the ones in public service are probably teaching half the time, at least.

JB: What would you like to see, optimally, for them?

NT: I—I'd like them teaching about 90% of their time and other people here to pick up some of the more clerical routine duties. And even administrative duties so that they would be free to become more tutor-like in what they do and not have this time pressure—now, they sit on a reference desk, and if they're serious reference librarians with a conscience, they—they have to give the students a certain amount of attention, on the other hand there are three more standing in line, waiting also, so you can't—you can't open up full bore, and so you comp—it's one long series of compromi—a day is one long series of compromises between the time you have available and the needs that you see in front of you there. And that's unfortunate.

JB: We're short on bodies.

NT: Yeah.

JB: We're not short of electronics, are we. That is to say, are we—are we or are we not stating your argument in—

NT: Well, no, yes we are, in a sense, for example, some of them are very popular and heavily used, and we can use a duplicate, such as Eric. Eventually, we're going to have a service point up on the third—third floor, I believe, and we could use an Eric CD-ROM next to the education books as well as down in the main reference point, just because of the amount of business.

JB: One thing that—

NT: And the other kind of thing I've always wanted to see is to reach out to the dormitories and the student's homes which we can do now electronically and give a lot more emphasis and instruction and counseling in order for students to access the catalog and large parts of our—and a lot of information from their homes or their dormitories or faculty from their offices or homes, or from New York City, if that's where they happen to be. All of that's possible today.

JB: It's being done to some degree.

NT: And it's being done to some degree. We have—we have it going on, but a lot of that takes a lot of work, helping people move in—move into this kind of mode of accessing information and that takes time and one on one relationships and patience.

JB: You feel as though you're—I think you said it or implied it a minute ago, you're educating
15:00 not just students but faculty alike.

NT: Yeah, so just as they are educating us, of course, consulting in their subject areas, because the library's mode of operation has changed so rapidly in the past fifteen years, there is a requirement to work with faculty members. I know the computer center works with them, and we should do more—we should work with them more, too, and have the personnel to do it. Because they can't be expected to just pick these things up on kind of an ad-hoc basis when they have a need some day, that doesn't work well. It's more difficult than that.

JB: One area where, as I understand it, remind me, state of the art is in the book retrieval system that will be in phase two. Can we talk a bit about that?

NT: Well, yeah, we're probably gonna be ahead of the art. (laughs) But you see, library planners and university administrators and others of looking into the next century, are saying, you know, There aren't gonna be any books around, everything's gonna be electronic, its gonna come out on big reels and be accessed by computers. Well, this isn't at all true. What's going to happen is a lot of the heavily used payoff stuff, in the library, is going to be on the computer, and it will be cost-effective to put it on the computer and access it that way through individual terminals either at home or on the library's site. But there's a whole group of books—of collections—that

are used only rarely. And I'm talking about millions, who are only used rarely and have all kinds of complications about getting copyrights, and all this, and we are left with a physical book catalogue that libraries are going to have to do something with, they're going to have to cope with this problem that is not going to suddenly shift from the book to an electronic resource or some sort of other. So, we've been thinking about this problem to see whether or not there is no way of storing books and then retrieving them rapidly from on-site sources, and we went to the industry to see what they call AS/RS [Automated Storage and Retrieval System] which we now call on our site the Leviathan Two. Which is a very rapid storage of materials, using the computer to, sort of, catalogue and keep track of them by a number—a unique number. And retrieve them in about five minutes or less. Faster than you could go up to the shelves and find the book yourself by means of putting books in bins in an arbitrary order, no order at all. And then, putting them on high shelves, and we have—had planned a cube which was forty feet high, which is a series of heavy steel shelves holding bins of books, with each bin having a unique address, and then sending a kind of a forklift object on a spire or a pole up and down those aisles, running on rails and the computer tells it, Stop here, turn around, and grab that particular bin right there, pull it out, turn around, and bring it to the front, and bring it to the top. Because we're taking off the top of this huge cube full of books, and—million volumes of books, and we're not taking from the bottom we're take—we have 'em brought to us at the top. And, so, this is a huge dark cube which has no light in it, with these things moving swiftly back and forth, bringing in—bringing up to the front and the top bins of books. Which we now––we have a little model of it, a very rough model in la—the lobby, and I ha—and I—and I'd like to present you a picture of it, which probably isn't very helpful either, but. Maybe I should (unintelligible)

JB: No, that's fine.

NT: I don't know where it went. If this isn't it, (unintelligible) since we're on the chairs. So, years ago, there were a number of libraries that tried to do that with mechanical contraptions—this is before the computer loomed so large—and the company took it up, went into bankruptcies,
20:00 or sold it, and they didn't follow through, and there was a lot of work to be done on it. And this machine here, this concept that started, libraries were picked up by industry who took about fifteen years and smoothed out all the wrinkles and made the thing work very well. So now were picking it up again as a library, after all the libraries said, This is—this'll never work and we don't want to hear or see it again. And with the addition of the computer and all of the long experience industries had with it, and we're going to apply it to storing books so that you don't have your books—the campus doesn't have the books stored remotely twenty miles away, or thirty miles away, and then they're not in very good order even when they're stored that far away. So we can—we can even handle books that are used fairly frequently this way. What—of course, the ob-–the objection has been that it ruins searching for a book just by going along the shelves and browsing. And we have some answers to that, I don't know if you want me to go in those answers now, but—

JB: If you'd like to, sure. This is a good time.

NT: We think, first of all, that there never was any true browsing possible, because so many books are not on the shelf where they're supposed to be. They're in the bindery, or they're in a–some special library collection, or they're out with a student or a faculty, so you only browsed a select few, perhaps a majority, but not all—all the books that were available. And that for students and faculty to use the bibliographic resources to get at the books is probably far sounder. And we are now just beginning to buy into a service that comes out of Colorado where we're going to have title pages available and videotape to faculty members in addition, so that—the ways of accessing collections are changing rapidly and enhance and make possible this high-density storage that we are planning to do in Leviathan Two, which comes as you may or may not know from the book of—ah, which book of the bible has the big whale in it?

JB: I think it was the story of Jonah.

NT: Jonah. The book of Jonah. And god said to Jonah, I want you to go down to Tyre or Sidon, or some place and straighten those folks out because they're all a bunch of sinners and he said, No way, I'm not going, and god said, You are, and Jonah got on a ship and went in the opposite direction and the seas went into a storm situation and bawk—and the boat started rocking, and Jonah's fellow sailors and compatriots said, Something's really wrong here, and Jonah made the mistake of admitting that his god is angry with him. So, they threw him overboard, and everything became calm and swallowed Jonah and three days later it cast him up on the shore, safe and sound, and then he reckoned as how he'd do what god told him to do. But it was the fact that he was swallowed in a timely fashion and then regurgitated unharmed at a pre—predestined position on the beach that we fastened on and used—and since this fish was called the Leviathan, we thought that the title for this service oughta be called Leviathan Two. So Jonah's our model, and that's the story of that.

JB: That's a vocal designation.

NT: Yes! Well, we are it, I mean, there are no other storage centers like this. The old mechanical ones that were tried years ago are broken down and largely out, and so the one that were going to be trying to get together here is going to be the only one in the world as far as we know.

JB: Somebody told me that Dugia(??) Tech Nationale is considering going this direction.

NT: Well, they're going in the direction of automating everything, but they don't really know where they're gonna go or what they're gonna do, there—they're just—the bureaucrats talking about automating this wildly and all of the scholar librarian archivists there are fighting it like hell saying, Let's restore our books here and knock off all this garbage talk about doing fancy things with electronic devices. So, I think that maybe sometime before they get around to deciding what they want to do. But there are a lot of advantages in this Leviathan Two because
25:00 you keep the temperature higher which helps preserve the book and greatly extend its life. Because the average book out there that's published today as it was a hundred years ago, is really a burning object. That is, it's oxidizing and it's got—it's got chemicals in it that break

down into sulfuric acid and they combine with oxygen and the book turns brittle, to that effect it's slowly burning. And the colder the book is, they've found, the slower it burns. So, if you can keep the temperature at 68 degrees you slow down an awful lot of this chemical reaction in books.

JB: What about humidity?

NT: Well, we have a much better chance of controlling the humidity and doing independent of the other humidification in the major building. And we keep light away from it, and moisture, of course, is not one of our major problems in this part of the country where we happen to be so––it has a lot of advantages for the preservation of books.

JB: I wonder if the faculty know that? I don't think they do.

NT: Probably not. The arguments that we've had mostly centered around browsing. We also worked out a method where we can—where we can take several hundred of books out and create artificially near the site of the entrance of the AS/RS or the Leviathan Two, get a series of carrels for faculty members. So if they do want to browse in a particular classification or some classification we can do it. Given twelve hours warning or something like that.

JB: [Unintelligible] was well-received in Senate the other day as well.

NT: Yes, right.

JB: And I think—Let's change directions, if I may, just a bit, this is a library, but it is also an art gallery.

NT: Yes.

JB: What is the importance of Hans Burkhardt? As an artist?

NT: Well, I—I'd rather not—I'd rather not answer the question immediately that way, although I do have something to say about him. But, I'd like to say that one of my goals has always been to create a habitat or—or an environment for students where they not only can learn from books and periodicals but also from the walls and the art that are around them and were only in the beginning of this. We had the Burkhardt collection, we've had a number of other donors, we've got a major donor sending a lot of sculptures, small sculpture pieces which I hope to put in the library, by the name of Kachamakov. He's now dead. But he left these in his will to us a number of years ago, and the will has been in the courts since that time. Burkhardt is an important West Coast and American painter and his paintings sell for great sums of money. I don't think most people realize that. But it's never been our goal to be a Burkhardt collection here, it's to have art surrounding the students to educate—and not 'nice' art, necessarily waves lapping at lighthouse, not necessarily soothing art, but art that would challenge them. Hanging on the walls of the library and I—so that I consider that an important aspect of building a

habitat for a student or a faculty member. And that's where Burkhardt fits in, because Burkhardt was—was the most generous person in giving us his works and that's why you see a lot of them, but this is not envisioned as a Burkhardt collection. Although we may have a particular floor or wing that—that concentrates some of the Burkhardts and may mentions him by name, but—

JB: He gave these to us?

NT: Yes.

JB: As part of a bequest?

NT: Well, free and clear, while he was alive, yes. So, we have a lot of them, and so we're going to maximize that. We'd like to move into collecting as a university more to Chicano art since were situated here near the border, near Mexico, near Central America and South America. We'd like to be—make this a center for a collection which has a lot of emphasis on the Hispanic cultures that lie around us. And I think maybe that's the way it will go eventually, so the Burkhardt won't loom quite as large as it does today in the future.

JB: As I recall, my memory is faint, these appeared just about the time this building opened, am I wrong?

NT: Yeah, I think it did about that time.

30:00 JB: So, the concept of linkage between art and the volume, art and the periodical, art and pretty—all forms of library use was here from the arc, as it were. Was this your idea? Where did the idea urge in the end?

NT: Well, it was my idea—I wrote a grant to be before I came here, several years before I came here for the library I was at, which was—or not the library I was at, but the library before that, back in the late '50s and early '60s I wrote a grant to turn the library into a—into a simultaneously an art gallery both four di—three dimensional and two dimensional. And so, I had the idea for a long time, it's just that with the Burkhardt bequest, and the university's bewilderment with how to handle it came a solution and it was the walls of the library.

JB: And that was (unintelligible).

NT: And I did have these rails that they hang from, put up in advance of the gift, purposely while I had money, so we could turn our walls into galleries.

JB: Is insurance expensive for this collection, is housing it difficult?

NT: Well, housing is difficult, it isn't properly lit, and it isn't—they aren't properly hung—

Pause in recording as tape 1, side b ends.