

Oral History Interview of Dr. David Barnett

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Name of Interviewee: Dr. David Barnett

Name of Interviewers: Randy Miller and Lowell Walters

Transcriber: Jesse Ronda

Interview Length: (1:18:59)

Notes:

Miller: (0:01) Welcome to this interview in the oral history project of the Liberty University archives. This interview is being conducted on October 19, 2010. Today we're interviewing Dr. David Barnett. My name is Randy Miller and I'll be conducting the interview today along with Lowell Walters. Greetings, Lowell.

Walters: (0:20) Why hello, Randy.

Miller: (0:22) And good afternoon, Dr. Barnett.

Barnett: (0:23) Hello gentlemen.

Miller: (0:25) And for our first question, we'd like you to just tell us a little bit about yourself. Where were you born, when were you born, and tell us a little bit about your childhood years.

Barnett: (0:35) Well, I was born in the great state of Kentucky back in 1956 on March 8 and shortly after I was born, maybe about three years old, we moved down to central Florida. My dad took a job down there in the school system as a phys ed. teacher. And so I grew up in the central Florida area until I was in my early twenties. At that point I transitioned to college at Piedmont Bible College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina and then went on to do some grad work from there.

Miller: (1:11) Ok. Now, did you grow up in a Christian home?

Barnett: (1:14) No, neither of my parents were or are believers but interestingly, they always made my sister and I go to church. So we lived right down the street from a little Baptist church called Friendship Baptist and so I grew up going to church that was a good gospel teaching,

gospel believing church and when I was nineteen I graduated from high school and was invited to participate in a, if your familiar with Peter Lore, he was a pastor at a church in the Titusville area, Florida, and they had a summer opportunity for people to come work with their youth department. So I went over and did that for a summer and while I was there he was teaching one night on a Wednesday night and I remember listening to him teach and just being struck in my heart that I really wasn't a Christ follower and um...so I struggled with that for a little bit because it was kind of embarrassing to be there working with their youth and not actually be a believer but over the next few weeks, under more and more conviction until I finally turned my life over to Christ and that was my conversion but I was only one in my family who uh...I think both my brother and sister have made a profession of faith but neither of my parents have.

Miller: (2:39) And what were you interested in majoring in when you went to Piedmont? What were your intentions at that point as to what you were going to do with your life?

Barnett: (2:47) I really didn't have much of an idea. I enjoyed being around the church. I had spent some time being mentored by some of the associate pastors after I had came to know the Lord and felt like I wanted to do something with people but wasn't really sure what that would look like and thought that a Bible college would be a good place to go. I asked my pastor and he was only aware of two. One was Bob Jones and I, I had heard of that and I was pretty sure I didn't want to go there so I went to Piedmont instead.

Miller: (3:17) And so did you spend the full four years then at Piedmont?

Barnett: (3:20) Actually, the Th.B. program there was a five year program so I managed to make it last all five years and graduated in 1982.

Miller: (3:29) And so, now you're a college graduate and you're looking at career options. What, what were you interested in doing or what was going to be the next step for you?

Barnett: (3:39) Well, there was a professor who had mentored me beginning about the middle of my time at Piedmont named Gary Meters. He had gone, he had graduated from Piedmont and gone on to Grace Theological Seminary and gotten his doctorate, his Th.D. degree and came back to Piedmont to teach. And we spent a lot of time together and he really encouraged me to go onto graduated school and seeing that as I graduated I really had know idea of anything else to do that, other...I did get married that summer but we really didn't know what the future would look like otherwise so we went on to grad school.

Miller: (4:15) And so you went to Grace and while you were at Grace what did you get for degrees?

Barnett: (4:19) I did a master of divinity degree there but because I was a Bible college graduate, a lot of the classes that would be in a typical M.Div. program I didn't have to take. So

I actually ended up with more of a Th.M. program with an Old Testament emphasis. But in reality, it's still an M.Div.

Miller: (4:42) And so you got that degree and now we're fast-forwarding through the early parts of your life here. Ok, now, how, how did you make the connection to the library world or what were you looking for after you graduated from seminary?

Barnett: (4:59) Well, I was still in seminary, probably about a little over a year into it, and we began to have, a couple of children came along and I really enjoyed the academic environment and was hoping to stay in it and considered, I had a gentleman who had a lot of influence in my life who was an Old Testament professor and I was thinking, "Well, you know, maybe go," and I was doing a lot of work in ancient Near East languages and I thought, "Well, I, I could go get a Ph.D. in ancient Near East, Eastern languages and teach that." That became less of a reality as the kids came along and so I was looking for something that would give me an opportunity to stay in an academic environment. So many good things happened to me in that environment. I mean, I've always, the Lord's always blessed me in the churches that I've been in but it seems like the people who have really influenced me have been teachers, professors that I've had along the way. So I was really interested in staying in that environment and a colleague, a gentleman who was actually in the library said, "Well, have you ever thought about this." And, you know, I, I had in passing but the more, more I considered it the more I thought it just made a lot of sense. So while I was at Grace, I actually began to do my master of library science program at Indiana University.

Miller: (6:12) So how far were the two campuses apart?

Barnett: (6:15) Well, Indiana University offers their program through a number of their um...they had sites at South Bend, at Fort Wayne, Valparaiso. So they had a, a number of sites. So I lived right between South Bend and Fort Wayne so I was able to...and they offered one course there each semester so I was able to do two courses at a time and then for my last semester I actually had to go down to Bloomington for a, for a semester to finish up.

Miller: (6:40) And so you got your Master's Degree in library science and that kind of brings us up to the point where we're ready to talk about Liberty then.

Walters: (6:47) So how did you first hear about Jerry Falwell and Liberty University?

Barnett: (6:51) I remember seeing a job ad for the...while, let me back up, while I was at Piedmont, we'd had a team, a singing team that had come to Winston-Salem and uh...representing the school, so I had just a little bit of familiarity based on that. But really, you know, I didn't follow politics all that much and didn't, hadn't paid a lot of attention so I was fairly unaware of who he was or what was going on in Lynchburg. But I was interested in finding a job. So I had applied at a number of places in the Fort Wayne area and saw an ad for this place in Lynchburg, Virginia. Well, my wife was from Roanoke so it made a lot of sense

that maybe that should be something we would look at. The Association of Christian Librarians was meeting that summer, or sometime in that timeframe, up in, at Taylor University. So I went there um...I'm trying to get the timeframe right...no, I guess I had come down and interviewed. I can't remember if I met Dr. Liddle at the conference but that would have been in the summer. So I think I had actually come down and interviewed and then, then did that. Came down that spring and interviewed, met everybody who was here, and went back and got the offer. That was the only job offer I had received so that made the discernment of the Lord's will rather easy for me and, so we moved down in August of that year.

Walters: (8:13) What, what position was being offered?

Barnett: (8:16) Assistant cataloger; something that, you know, we had, most librarians had long aspired to...

Walters: (8:22) And you aspired to, to that at that time.

Barnett: (8:25) Yeah, if it paid, yes.

Walters: (8:26) [*laughter*]

Barnett: (8:27) Yeah, I actually, you know, at that time technical services librarians were really in high demand in libraries and so it made a lot of sense to...so I had taken some extra courses in that as a library science student so that I would qualify to do that. So...

Walters: (8:42) Now, maybe we're getting a little ahead here but you mentioned Dr. Liddle, who was he and what was his role in that process?

Barnett: (8:48) Yeah, Ernest Liddle came to Liberty, I believe, in 1979 and served as dean from then until the early '90s. And so he was the gentleman who was serving as dean in the late '80s and so he was the one who hired me.

Miller: (9:05) And so you mentioned that there was a demand for technical services librarians. Could you tell us why that was in the history of libraries at that point?

Barnett: (9:16) Well, there was, you know, technology was just beginning to make significant inroads in terms of some of the database work and collection building, or collection catalogs, electronic catalogs. And so, people who had some, some technical capacities were in fairly high demand and particularly in that area where there were a lot of, and as was happening at Liberty when I got here, respective conversion project where all of the paper cards were being, you know, submitted to OCLC and converted into OCLC records for us.

Miller: (9:52) And so, the three of us doing this interview today are all librarians and so we kind of understand all of that terminology and technology and so forth but basically, for the regular

listener, if you're old enough to remember card catalogs, this was when card catalogs were going out and machine readable electronic online systems were coming in. Now, were, was Liberty, did they still have a card catalog even though you were doing this retrospective conversion?

Barnett: (10:22) Yeah, we maintained our physical card catalog up until the early '90s. Probably at the point that we actually converted to the first Dynex catalog, we stopped inputting anything into the physical catalog but actually kept it around for another, probably year and a half or two years.

Miller: (10:38) So what years would those have been again?

Barnett: (10:40) Probably around 1990, '91 was when we converted to our first Dynex electronic catalog.

Walters: (10:47) And then you mentioned OCLC. For the common listener, what, what is, what was that at that time and what is that now?

Barnett: (10:56) Well, at, at the time, and it still is, basically it's a cooperative effort with libraries where we submit all of our holding records for our, our books and serials to a central organization which in this case is OCLC, allows us to share materials between libraries really easily and actually was the electronic record upon which our first electronic database was, was built. We didn't, as we were submitting, we would take our paper cards that were part of the cart catalog, you know, we had the author title cards, we had the subject cards, and so each, each individual book might have a dozen cards associated with it. But we would take the primary card for that book and then take um...input the information into OCLC and, and have an electronic record at that point of it. And then when we were ready to go to Dynex, we had to get a, a copy of that that we submitted to Dynex and that became the basis for our first electronic catalog.

Miller: (11:59) So Dynix was the company that ran this online catalog then for the library. And now it seems as though a lot of libraries are sharing their records that, if a new book comes out, the first library to, to see it will make a catalog and then the other libraries will just copy it but in those days was every library cataloging it itself so there was a lot of duplication of effort?

Barnett: (12:26) A lot of libraries were doing, doing materials, there were a lot of things that weren't on there but we did some copy cataloging. In fact, my first position was primarily just copy cataloging. They would, a paraprofessional would take a cart of books and go to OCLC and get the printouts and put them in the book and I would go through and confirm, make whatever adjustments were necessary and then submit the books for approval.

Miller: (12:49) Well now, you were doing...that was basically data work. You were in a backroom sitting there with a card of books and checking records and things. Do you consider

yourself more of a data person or a people person? Did you enjoy those days or do you enjoy more working with the public in public services? Talk about that.

Barnett: (13:09) Well, I like both, you know. The library traditionally has had to have the technical services team that does the acquisition, preparation, and, and sort of the back office sorts of things. But um...and I never really had a role other than dean in the public services area so I never really functioned fulltime as a, as a reference librarian or in instruction or any of those kinds of capacities, or at circulation, but transitioned, basically served in technical services for about three or four years then moved in, you know, I went from an assistant cataloger, the next year I was the head of the processing department, the next year I was the head of the technical services department, and the next year I became the associate dean, and then a couple years after that transitioned to the dean position.

Miller: (13:57) Who were some of the people that worked with you there in the library in those early days?

Barnett: (14:02) I think I was the eighth librarian to come onboard. Dr. Ernest Liddle was the dean at that time; he was the second director that we had. Richard Elmer, who had been the first director, was still here and was a cataloger. Miyako Kawaguchi was the head of technical services when I came and was uh...managed all the cataloging functions and acquisitions. Russ File was here as the reference information services librarian and a gentleman named, named Tom Agee was here assisting him. Another cataloger that we had at the time was David Espenscheid. And then we had a media librarian named Chuck Hagerty who managed that collection for us.

Miller: (14:47) Well good.

Walters: (14:49) You mentioned the, we talked about the online catalog coming on during the early '90s, what major changes have happened to the catalog system since, since 1991 or so when that was implemented?

Barnett: (15:05) Well, I, I think it's followed the route of, of all technology. A lot more interfacing with the web, a lot more, you know, at the time, even though we had an electronic catalog, it really was, you had to be on campus or in the facility to use it. You know, it was still fairly limited in terms of its access. As, you know, the next evolution technologically was the conversion of the, the print journal materials into an electronic format which initially then were, they were distributed in a CD-ROM format. So we had reels and reels full of CD-ROMs that you would, you would do an initial search and find out which CD-ROM your article was on and then you'd go chase down the CD-ROM and insert that and it was quite a bit to keep up with but it was exciting in those days. I mean, that was...

Miller: (15:53) And now these weren't PDFs of the articles, it was just the words, the text of the article was recorded on this CD-ROM.

Barnett: (16:01) I, I believe that's correct. You know, my memory's a little fuzzy going back that far.

Miller: (16:04) *[laughter]*

Walters: (16:05) There may have been some abstracts but in the...

Barnett: (16:08) Yeah, it was pretty limited.

Miller: (16:09) There, there were no pictures.

Barnett: (16:10) Very, very little of anything like that.

Miller: (16:11) Perhaps some charts or something but...and um...so we started with printed indexes, if somebody wanted a journal article they would have to go and actually physically get a printed magazine or journal, then it went to CD-ROM, and then what was the next transition for that?

Barnett: (16:32) Well, then the vendors began to, rather than distributing the materials via CD-ROM we began to see the, the internet become robust enough that the, the publishers, rather than distributing everything to the individual libraries, could house materials in their own facilities and then we could access those remotely. And so that was the next transition for us was the purchasing of subscriptions to the databases that then were, were served from the remote sites of the publishers or the vendors.

Walters: (17:03) So, and then, to go back, we'll come back to some of the technological things but talking about your career here, what year was it then that you think you became dean? Do you recall?

Barnett: (17:17) I don't, well, I don't recall it very well so I had it...let's see, I've got it written down here, 1992.

Walters: (17:22) Ok, and then as the library has grown and as these technologies have changed that we've been talking about, how has your role as dean evolved in your time here growing with the institution and then changing with the technology and that sort of thing? How have you, if you were to go back and do it all over again, would you do anything differently in that regard or is there anything in particular that strikes you as being different now than it was then?

Barnett: (17:57) I don't think there's anything...I think we actually, in some ways, were able to stay ahead of some of the curves. You know, we struggled during the late '80s, early '90s. There were some significant financial struggles for the institution but, but we were, you know, the library was the first place on campus to get an internet connection, we were the, we were, so we were at the cutting edge of some of those kinds of things and some of the technologies and,

and still are in many ways. I think that, you know, and that's part of our, our role in the academic community here at Liberty is to, you know, serve as a, as somebody who, or an organization that's kind of pushing out to the front and seeing what the options are. We're moving forward with something that the librarians refer to as a discovery service tool for our students which will be the first time we'll be able to, our students will be able to single search and access essentially the majority of our journal and book materials all in one search.

Miller: (18:57) Kind of like Google does.

Barnett: (18:58) Very much so.

Walters: (18:59) When you talked us kind of leading the area locally in internet access, can you recall what that was like to, who implemented that, that new development for Liberty to get involved with the internet and how did that look? Was it when Netscape came out or...?

Barnett: (19:16) Well, Netscape...well, even before Netscape, you know, the, the internet was still around, it was just very primitive. So we had actually sent one of the librarians, Carl Merat, up to UVA for a week to learn how to navigate on the web so he was learning how to FTP and how, if you remember Bulletin Boards were a big deal back in those days...

Walters: (19:34) Gophers.

Barnett: (19:35) and Gophers. So, you know, he was learning how to do all of, all of that which, you know, thinking about it now sounds so very primitive and Netscape changed all of that. It, you know, gave us our first graphical user interface and, and from then...and I, I remember sitting in my office back then, we had the one wire that we had been able to get run and I can't remember who the vendor was who was providing the service for us and we had one, you know, machine hooked up. It, it was pretty primitive but, you know, we were just kind of looking at this internet thing and thinking, "Was it really going to be of any use?" You know, is there...

Miller: (20:09) I actually remember going, I'm about the same age as you and Carl, and going to a conference for librarians and saying, "Yes, the internet will be helpful for librarians but we don't see that it will ever be of interest to the public..."

Barnett: (20:22) Yeah.

Miller: (20:23) it will just be something that librarians use in the backroom." One of the other services was a Telnet that you could hookup to the Library of Congress and kind of look at their card catalog as well too but it was all very primitive but the browser really changed all of that to make it more accessible for folks.

Barnett: (20:38) I remember when I came in '87 and Russ File was the, you know, the information services or reference librarian and in those days you could do online searches but they were really expensive to do and so he would, he would have to do an extensive interview with you and find out what you were looking for and narrow down the keywords and then, then would come the magical moment of logging in and, you know, trying to do it as quickly as he could to get the information downloaded and, and then we had to keep...

Walters: (21:04) Was that through a modem...

Barnett: (21:05) Right...

Walters: (21:06) with dialog or something like...

Barnett: (21:07) Yeah, right, right, using dialog and a, and a dial-up to, to that. So it was, it was...but, you know, prior to that we were pen and pencil so it was, it was still pretty exciting.

Walters: (21:19) Now, investing with access to the internet, was that a lot of money at that time? What did that, I mean, you talked about one wirer who, couldn't remember the vendor but...

Barnett: (21:27) Yeah, it was a local vendor and we, we had the capacity, we had one wire that came in and I'm sure we hubbed out from it to give us multiple access points but um...and it, I'm thinking we were paying around a thousand or twelve hundred dollars a month for, for access which back then was pretty uh...a significant part of our budget.

Walters: (21:47) And was that much faster than a modem? I mean, T1s weren't around until the late '90s, were they or...?

Barnett: (21:52) Yeah, the, it was much faster than modem access but I, I can remember when we finally began to see download speeds that would hit, like, 90k a second...

Miller: (21:00) [*laughter*]

Barnett: (22:01) you know, and...

Miller: (22:02) Instead of fifty-six...well, it was 28k...

Barnett: (22:03) Yeah.

Miller: (22:04) and 14k in those days.

Barnett: (22:05) Yeah, and, and just thinking, "Oh my goodness, how, how could it ever been any faster?"

Miller: (22:09) [*laughter*]

Barnett: (22:10) And, you know, now you can get a, you know, a half-a-meg a second pretty easily on campus here even when it's packed.

Walters: (22:14) And so when did catalogs start linking into the internet instead of just being stand alone systems with dummy terminals?

Barnett: (22:23) I'm guessing we began to do that more and more into the, the late '90s we began to see some of the first efforts there. I don't know specifically but I know that was somewhere in that timeframe we began to see people moving in that direction as the graphical inter...graphical user interface became more popular and that gave us the opportunity to imagine an average person. You know, we were, again, we had sent Carl off to school for a week to learn how to navigate this internet thing so even, even thinking about your average user being able to do that on their own was really kind of out of bounds for our thinking at that point.

Walters: (23:00) Now, we keep jumping ahead to technology, I kind of want to try and go chronologically but we keep jumping around here but Dr. Liddle's no longer with us, we weren't able to capture an interview with him, but can you speak to what he was like or how...did you know, I assume you knew him fairly well. What was his history to the best of your knowledge and what, besides being the founding librarian, tell us more about him if you...

Miller: (23:29) I thought you said there was a dean even before him though.

Barnett: (23:32) A director, I think they referred to him as a director rather than a dean, but Richard Elmer I think was the first library director here at the University.

Walters: (23:41) Well, and Dr. Towns told us that some lady volunteered kind of from LCA even at the...

Barnett: (23:46) May have been.

Walters: (23:47) earliest days too, but...

Barnett: (23:49) And then Dr. Liddle came in I think as they began to look at accreditation and looking for somebody who uh...Mr. Elmer had his masters but Dr. Liddle had a Th.D., I believe from Asbury Seminary, and he was a, an English gentleman; very, very good guy to work with. He was, you know, kind of towards the end of his career when he came to Liberty and really wasn't very excited about some of the technology changes but um...which was a good opportunity for me, it let me work with him more closely in those things. But he and his wife, she worked in the college of general studies and they both were just really, really dear folks.

Miller: (24:34) Did he have his library degree in addition to his Th.D.?

Barnett: (24:35) Yes, don't remember where it was from but he did.

Miller: (24:39) Now, let's talk about this for those early days when you, when you first came here. As we've interviewed other people on these oral histories, we hear sometimes, "Oh, these were the really rugged pioneer days and there weren't sidewalks, you know, everywhere when you walked to class you were stepping on gray um...or red, red clay, mud with no sidewalks and things." How was our library comparatively speaking to other area academic libraries? I think today there are some things we're ahead of the curve on compared to others. In those days, were we a little bit behind? How, how were we comparison to other academic libraries of schools our size?

Barnett: (25:22) Well, in those days the emphasis really was on your physical collections and because we were such a young institution, those collections were fairly limited. Prior to my coming in '87 the University had purchased, I believe, two, two collections from colleges that were going out of business and so, had brought them in. Prior to my coming there had been a distinct seminary library and about the time I was coming the decision had been made to integrate that into the main collection as well. So they had the, the two collections that they had purchased plus the seminary collection that they were in the middle of or just finishing up putting all into a single collection. The DeMoss building itself, this first floor, had been completed, I believe, in 1985 and so the, the facility itself was fairly new and looks very much like it, it does nowadays. As you walk into the library now there's that wall, kind of mid, you know, about thirty or sixty feet initially, that wasn't there, so it was one long wide open space. The area where curriculum is was the technical services area and then the area where technical services is now were other offices for other offices of the University so it wasn't library space at that point.

Miller: (26:46) And so where was the curriculum library in those days?

Barnett: (26:48) The curriculum library was actually housed over in the education wing and had a paraprofessional who had managed the collection over there.

Miller: (26:57) And now, media services has always kind of been tied in with the library. Was it at one point tied in with the curriculum library as well?

Barnett: (27:08) Not until we actually combined them. When I came we had the main library, the curriculum library had its own space, and the media services library had its own space. All the AV materials were down um...just passed that uh...where that little food area is and the men's restrooms there, that little hallway going right passed that was where the media library was. So, all of the records and any kind of non-book kind of material would have been found in there.

Miller: (27:36) So you were kind of spread out a little bit...

Barnett: (27:37) Yeah.

Miller: (27:38) in those early days. Chuck Hagerty was the one in charge of the media...

Barnett: (27:41) He was.

Miller: (27:42) aspect of the, the library there? And now, at what point did you decide to pursue a D.Min. with Liberty?

Barnett: (27:55) I got here in '87 and I believe they started offering the degree within a year or two after I got here. I think maybe '89 was about the time that they rolled that out and it, it was a no-brainer. I had the M.Div., which was the degree that the doctor of ministry is built on, is the completion degree for that, and I had the tuition benefit so it, it was free, so um...and they, and Dr. Liddle was very encouraging to me to move in that direction and go ahead and get that degree finished. So I started that, not the first year, but I think the second year after they were into the program I started.

Miller: (28:32) Before we leave the whole theological training subject, now, you've got a lot of theological training for the job that you eventually felt called to do here. Have you had an opportunity to use your theological background for anything else besides personal interest?

Barnett: (28:50) I've been very active in our church and was able to, you know, I've been able to speak quite a bit over the years and for a while, well, this would have been back in my seminary days, I actually did some pulpit supply work and those kinds of things, served as a youth pastor for a while after we first got here and so I've been able to do it in those kinds of ways.

Walters: (29:11) Did you teach any courses in religion or Bible or...?

Barnett: (29:15) Well, I did. Actually, I taught a course in Deuteronomy in the seminary for several years.

Miller: (29:21) Have you kept up with your Greek or Hebrew?

Barnett: (29:24) I still use my Greek. Not so much my Hebrew but I, I still keep a New Testament by my bed and I refer to it pretty regularly.

Miller: (29:31) [*laughter*]

Walters: (29:32) Speaking of teaching then, how...you, you teach some computer sort of information systems classes? What, what do you teach now online?

Barnett: (29:43) I currently teach a, a class in the business graduate programs in the management of information technology.

Walters: (29:51) And so how has teaching in style and delivery and all that changed and evolved over time with technology?

Barnett: (30:00) Well, in, in background-wise, and you're kind of jumping ahead a little bit chronologically, but, you know, for a while I was involved with the center for computer information technology and there actually taught undergrads in, in the classroom. I taught a networking class and then an introduction to management information systems. So the online course, the course I do now for the school of business is an online course and, and that format is a little different. We're able to interact with students in discussion boards and watch them interact and kind of guide them through the course in that, that sort of way. Actually physically teaching in the classroom hasn't changed all that much. I think, you know, the technology allows you to enhance some things, allows you to get to more information more quickly and allows you to deliver things in a, in a different sort of way but I think I still comes down to being, you know, being a good classroom teacher is still a craft that has to be honed and worked on.

Miller: (31:00) So tell us then about the move from having you being very, very focused in just the library, you became the dean and then the center for computing and information technology. Talk to us about that if you would.

Barnett: (31:17) In the latter part of the '90s, again, we began to have, the technology was advancing, we had internet connections, we were beginning to have a number of computers that were available in the library for people to access information on and at the same time there was another unit in the University that was an academic computing unit that basically took care of the computing labs for the University and they were housed over in science hall and had several labs over there plus an open lab and they were managed at that time by a gentleman named Maurice Zaffke. And Maurice and I got to know each other and as...it was kind of interesting, we were at the point where, you know, we had library computers where we really didn't want anybody wasting time on them doing something like writing a paper so we, we tried not to have any applications on them that people could use; they were for research and we were very purist in that sense. And then over in the labs, you know, they were, that was where you would go to write your papers so you didn't want to do any research over there and, and as technology grew and developed, we realized that, basically, we were kind of doing the same thing. So we had the idea at that point to merge our units, the library and the academic computing, into a, a single unit that we initially called the academic information resources; AIR. And Maurice was the "AIR-head" in that sense.

Walters: (33:00) [*laughter*]

Barnett: (33:01) So um...and so we, we managed, basically, the academic technology for the University at that point.

Miller: (33:09) About how many computers available for student use would have been in those early days?

Barnett: (33:14) In the early days the open lab might have had twenty machines and there were several classrooms so it was pretty limited. And then the library, we may have had eight or ten, I don't, don't recall exactly, but it wasn't, it was pretty limited.

Miller: (33:28) So then the center for computing and information technology, was that actually for teaching those applications or what, where did that come in?

Barnett: (33:37) Well, the, the progression went, went like this; we, around the, after we had kind of combined forces to create the academic information resource unit, we got a new president; Dr. Guillermin stepped aside and Dr. John Borek came. And, you know, again, technology across the campus was beginning to have an impact so offices, registrar's office, student accounts, you know, there were just a number of places where infor...where technology was beginning to have an impact. And we had a chief information officer who, who came to the University and then left rather quickly and we had been pretty successful in what we were doing on the academic side and Maurice was just a very, very brilliant and hard working man and the president, Dr. Borek, asked our unit then to just go ahead and take over all of the technology on campus. So we did that and over the course of uh...after doing that for a couple of years, and I kind of served as chief operations officer for IS and dean of the library for a while, and we got to the point where...at, at that time there were two technology related academic disciplines on campus. One was computer science, which was housed in the mathematics department, and the other was information systems, managing information systems, which was in the business department and was a specialization. And Dr. Rist and Mr. Zaffke wanted to see those two units combined, or not combined but taken out of the departments they were in and, and merged to create a, a single school that would house all of the, the technology curriculum for the University. So that was our initial effort was to create a major in the management of information systems and the computer science major and begin to build those faculty and those programs.

Miller: (35:38) Now, were those just bachelor's programs at first?

Barnett: (35:41) Correct.

Miller: (35:42) And can anyone get a master's yet in those?

Barnett: (35:45) No...

Miller: (35:46) No.

Barnett: not here.

Miller: (35:48) And so where was this CCIT then housed?

Barnett: (35:55) The, our faculty in my offices, we were housed up in the area where the mathematic, I forget what the lab area is now...

Walters: (36:06) Developmental math?

Barnett: (36:07) Originally when we did second floor, that was designed to be a café sort of experience for faculty but that didn't come to fruition in the way we were hoping and so that became the office space for the center for computer and information technology.

Walters: (36:22) Tell us about the merging of the facilities in 2001. In your whole experience there, it's my understanding you had to get quite pragmatic there with moving the collection and, and moving it in and moving, or moving it out and moving it back and...

Barnett: (36:37) Well, in 2000-2001 we added the two floors to the, three floors to the top of the first floor DeMoss for a four story building and, you know, it was a wonderful time, it was exciting but it was certainly challenging. To get the kind of support that they needed for the structure required drilling hundreds of holes in the, in the roof of the first floor structure, so as careful as the construction team was we were pretty consistently having water issues in the library, sound issues were a constant problem with teachers in classrooms and the first floor with various kinds of pounding taking place overhead.

Miller: (37:19) So were they trying to build this up above them while classes were in session down below?

Barnett: (37:23) Absolutely, yeah. And, and there was, you know, tremendous regard for safety concerns, you know, there was a lot of, you know, they, they worked, I don't know if they always worked, they probably didn't work around the clock but a lot of work was done on second shift so when classes weren't in session to protect whenever possible. And anytime there was heavy equipment moving, they were always had things roped off and protect students. Nobody was injured but it was a lot of work. And for, for the library to, you know, that was the point where we brought the curriculum library and the media services library in to join the rest of the facility. We had already taken over some of the office spaces that some of the other offices had where our current technical services, or information services group is. But we had to basically move the collection out and then move it back in over the course of a summer...

Miller: (38:14) And, and...so was there a, a period of months where students did not have access to the print collection?

Barnett: (38:21) During the, during that summertime but we were able to get everything out and back...get everything out, the, the downstairs construction completed, and everything back in by the time school started. But it was a, it was an enormous effort.

Miller: (38:36) Was this kind of an afterthought to build that on or was that always the intention to add those three floors when finances and that permitted?

Barnett: (38:45) Well, I think there had always been the initial design that that was something we could do. I don't know that there had ever been a firm design in terms of whether it would be one, two, or three floors that would be added but, but I think that there always had been the thought that expansion could take place upwards with that facility.

Miller: (39:02) I have students ask me sometimes, "Why are all the books on the first floor? Why don't you kind of spread things out a little bit?"

Barnett: (39:07) Well, it, yeah, and that was something that, in the early design phase, we were hoping that we would be able to do enough infrastructure on the floors to support the weight of the books. Most people don't realize the enormous weight that books carry. You know, you think of, of stacking books eight or nine feet high right next to each other with uh...it's a tremendous amount of weight, much more than bodies, you know, having people in the same area would be.

Miller: (39:40) I, I've heard even greater, it's about twice as much as parking ramps for cars. Car weight is spread out over...

Barnett: (39:45) Right.

Miller: (39:46) a certain number of...

Barnett: (39:47) Sure.

Miller: (39:48) square feet whereas you're really putting this with three foot aisles in between um...

Barnett: (39:51) Oh yeah, it's very concentrated and so it was just cost prohibitive for us to move in that direction and so at this point we're constrained to uh...if we spread out with our collection, it would have to be outwardly instead of upwardly.

Walters: (40:05) Now, I know facility wise the, the library used to be adjacent to the creation museum when I was a student here in the '80s. The creation museum was moved out of its space and put into storage before the, the 2001 renovations, correct?

Barnett: (40:21) Correct.

Walters: (40:22) And what precipitated that? Was that a, a library, something SACS dictated or...?

Barnett: (40:29) No, I think that was more on a practical nature. I think some of the people who had been involved in the creation science museum had moved on. Without them here to manage some of that, I think there was a feeling...and, and so those materials were put into storage. Some were actually left in the space and we actually took over the space, put a door through, and had the, our center for academic, for the advancement of faculty excellence café, we had our first efforts of café in that facility. But mainly it was, you know, again, during some of the financial constraints in the late '80s that we had lost some of those staff and so it, it wasn't being used very much at that time.

Miller: (41:12) What were some of the tough economic decisions that you had to make as the dean of the library during those difficult times in the late '80s and early '90s?

Barnett: (41:20) Well, we had a couple of times where we had to do some, some downsizing so we had to let some people go and, you know, that's always tough to, to have to do that. I think when you work with people and get to know them and, and they really haven't done anything wrong, it's just an economic, an economic decision, not based on performance, and...so that, that's always tough. But that, that's probably, particularly as a new manager in those early years, that was a, a tough, tough thing to be part of and, you know, something that had to be done but a very difficult thing to do.

Miller: (41:55) Now, in those days we were primarily with print serials, print journals and periodicals and things. Today it really has switched around. I would imagine that ninety-nine percent of our journals are available online with only a few that are only available in print. Did you have to cancel subscriptions or have to stop buying books or what happened there?

Barnett: (42:16) We were able to be fairly consistent with our journal subscriptions. There were a couple of times where we may have cut them a little bit, you know, look for some high dollar items that we could get rid of. We, we probably, when there were things that were cut, we probably focused more on the, on the book side of things. I think at our peak we probably had close to nine hundred titles in our print journal collection. I think now that's probably down closer to around six hundred.

Walters: (42:48) Well, we've gone from, from [*chuckle*] Randy and I designate questions here sometimes and, and we have to regroup here. Randy, I'll take one of your questions here.

Miller: (42:58) Alright, that's fine.

Walters: (42:59) We've gone from just a handful of librarians to over twenty. Could you talk about the development of the team of professional librarians over the years and how that's changed? How has the, how have we typically gone about posting positions and what, how those positions have evolved and...?

Barnett: (43:23) Well, it's been, you know, the whole, not just the faculty, but the whole organization has grown quite a bit. When I came in '87 we had the eight librarians and, and probably not too many more staff than that, maybe ten or twelve...well, I take that back. When I came, we were doing the retrospective conversion, we actually were pretty robust in our technical services staffing, probably had about ten or twelve ladies back there that were involved with that. But once we finished that it was, it was a pretty small team. We had devotions together in the mornings when I first came and, you know, that had its own challenges but, you know, so I think the, the growth has, has been good but there have been some challenges in learning how to, you know, manage because you can't invest the same kind of time in each other when there are eighteen or twenty of you as when there are seven or eight of you. And so we've uh...the, the time demands keep you from doing what you'd like to do but I, but I think it's been very good for the organization. I think we've, as we've grown I, I feel comfortable in the way that we've done it. I think we've been pretty wise with some of the choices. We've, we've struggled sometimes to find the right kind of person philosophically and in terms of their skill set for the library. So there, there have been some times when that's been a little bit difficult but, you know, as I look back at that and I see the people that we've been able to bring in, I'm just very grateful to the Lord that we've been able to, that the people we have, have just been tremendous additions to our, to our library.

Miller: (44:58) Now, librarians have faculty status here...

Barnett: (45:00) Correct.

Miller: (45:01) and they have to abide by all of the regulations dealing with faculty as far as agreeing philosophically, being born again Christians, and so forth.

Barnett: (45:10) Correct.

Walters: (45:11) The librarians have had, who have been here a while, how have they adapted to the changing technologies? Did, did they gain their experience just by being on the reference floor or did we spend a lot on formal education? I know you've had some formal education but you were at a different level and in a different organiz...part of the organization at that, for a while.

Barnett: (45:38) Most people have come in and have, have gained what they needed on their own. We have I, I suppose, you know, the University itself offers a pretty robust suite of opportunities for people in terms of technology but, you know, in terms of actually being able to use some of the, the searching devices, other than some general workshops here locally, I don't think there's been anything specifically tailored for that.

Walters: (46:07) Without going too far into the future here, what do you see as the future of the library in regards to the purchase of books versus improvement in technology or even investing

in, you know, right now it seems to be a pretty strong emphasis on e-books and yet we're getting feedback from students that they still want print. Where do you think that'll all shake out here in...?

Barnett: (46:29) Well, I think it's a matter of time. I, I think that, you know, twenty-five years from now, we'll be making much less use of the, of the print materials. I think we're seeing generally, generationally a group of students who are much more comfortable using a digital product than paper but still like the paper. So I think it's kind of a mixed group that we get right now. You know, we have bought a lot of e-books in the last several years and the usage of those e-books has grown exponentially. So it's not that they're not using e-books but they still also like print books, so we're seeing a, a large, large amount of usage in, in both of those arenas and so I, I think we'll, we'll see that continue but I think we'll, you know, as libraries move forward and as universities and colleges move forward, I think that there's going to be some real tensions in identifying, you know, what, what is the role of the library and how do we fit into the academic community. It's going to look a little bit differently than it did, or than it does now. You know, I, I remember, you know, when I came here in 1987 and for several, a number of years afterwards, you know, there were no food and drink allowed anywhere in the facility. You know, if we walked by and you had a bag of M&M's out, we, we, you know, had to have you put those up into your backpack, you know, because we certainly couldn't allow anything like that around. No open drink containers. You know, we finally got where we would let somebody with a bottle, you know, if they had a cap on it we'd let them come in but, you know, and, and noise, we were the shushers back then and tried to keep the noise levels down and it was very much, you know, the library that, that our parents were used to and that library doesn't exist anymore. You know, the library space now is much more community oriented, you know, whereas we might have frowned upon you having that pack of M&M's, you know, I see people spread out now with a, a three course meal right beside the computer and, or at their works area and, and seem to enjoy that quite a bit.

Walters: (48:26) And yet back in the old days they could check out books and eat M&M's at home, you just...

Barnett: (48:30) Right.

Walters: (48:31) couldn't eat them in the library.

Barnett: (48:32) Right.

Walters: (48:33) Now, talking about all these electronic resources and such, there, education itself has changed a lot in going into distance education and now Liberty's distance education program is called Liberty University Online but you worked in the distance learning area for a while. Tell us about you experience there and how that's grown and changed here at Liberty.

Barnett: (49:00) Well, in, in the early days, most of the distance learning materials, and, and this was going back to when LUSLL started back in the, the mid '80s, was a, a video based format where we would send out VHS tapes with recorded class sessions on them for people to watch and then people would interact, they would take, have proctored exams and they would mail their papers in and that sort of thing. The, the format was offered, basically it was offered, you could enroll any day, there was no set term, and you had a hundred and twenty days then to complete the course work after you received your, your course materials. And that program, it kind of went up and down. When we got into the early part of the, of the 2000s, we began to see some changes in distance learning. That was an area that I followed just out of my own curiosity a little bit and so I attended some conferences in distance learning and began to see some work that was being done with some of the early course management tools like BlackBoard and some of the others that were available at the time. And we had actually already implemented BlackBoard as a course management system here at the University and were, were using it residentially quite a bit for the submission of grades and, and those types of things. So in 2004, again Mr. Zaffke had spoken with me and then with, with Mr. David Young, who was the executive vice president at the time, and asked me if I would, would go over and, and manage the, the distance program. So I, I did that and, you know, again, at that time it was primarily the video but we did have one, one group of faculty in the school of business who were creating some classes that they wanted to deliver in an eight week format and so we, and do it in an online format eight week term, and so we took that idea, we did some research, and uh...I had a great team of people that I worked with over there and we basically began to transition all of the distance curriculum at that point that we could into a BlackBoard delivered online format and a consistent eight week term. Instead of doing where you could register every day, we had two fall terms, two spring terms, and two summer terms that we did and, and began to move all the curriculum in that direction.

Miller: (51:35) So they basically mirrored, during our fall term there would be two eight week terms that would match our fifteen, approximately, week term.

Barnett: (51:45) Yeah and they were, they, they didn't quite match up but they were closer than they had been before and so that was a move forward for us. So we, we were, were pretty proud. In the course of two years we were able to make strong headway in moving curriculum into that direction and into that format and, and the program began to grow quite a bit in those early days.

Walters: (52:06) Were there any classes that, that pushed for staying with a sixteen format just for time to intellectually digest content or anything like that or...?

Barnett: (52:16) Well, there was, you know, as there are now, there were always faculty that had that argument, "Well, well nobody can learn my material in eight weeks," and, and we just felt like there was a lot of strong evidence to the contrary. So not everybody came onboard as, as quickly and, you know, I was, you know, young enough and, and still, you know, probably

pushing harder than I, I should have in some, some cases to get people to move in that direction because I was so convinced that it would work and it would work well for people. So I did that up until the spring of 2006, yeah.

Miller: (52:53) And so what was happening back in the library there, since we've been kind of having you be our historian of the library here, what was happening in the library while you were over at the campus north facility running distance education?

Barnett: (53:04) Well, the library had stayed part of the information services organization. Maurice Zaffke was still heading up all the technology development on campus in those days and was able to do that up until middle of 2006 and so the library had stayed part of the IS organization and under his leadership and then he had brought in, to replace me, a gentleman named Mr. Greg Smith and then Greg had served as the dean for a number of years and then in 2006 Greg was interested in transitioning back to his home state or getting a little bit closer to his family and so as I was transitioning out of the distance program it worked well for me to be able to transition back over to the library then at that point.

Miller: (53:54) Were there any changes in those few years? Was it hard to get back into the swing of the deanship?

Barnett: (53:59) Well, I had, you know, I hadn't been completely out of the loop so it, it wasn't uh...you know, there were some new faces to get to know. There were, you know, Greg had made some hires that I, you know, had, had to learn who they were and those kinds of things...

Miller: (54:14) I was, I was one of those. I, I, that's, that's...

Barnett: (54:16) Some of them...I'm winking at Randy across the table here.

Miller: (54:18) [*laughter*]

Barnett: (54:20) But, but other than that, things hadn't, you know, there hadn't been a lot of, you know, technology in the last four or five years really has, has progressed but we haven't seen the kinds of advancements we saw...

Miller: (54:30) It's not like going from the CD-ROMs to the...

Barnett: (54:33) Yeah.

Miller: (54:34) the web-based. It...

Barnett: (54:35) Yeah.

Miller: (54:36) it still is basically the same, it's just gotten a lot faster and a lot more voluminous...

Barnett: (54:39) Correct.

Miller: (54:40) and a lot more information out there.

Barnett: (54:41) Yeah, well stated.

Walters: (54:42) Now, you, you keep coming back to Mr. Zaffke, as I've known him Maurice Zaffke, could you give us a rundown on your experiences with him and just what he was like, his management style, his drive, and...?

Barnett: (54:57) Well, Maurice was one of the brightest individuals I've ever known. You know, he had a, a background working in the, the Senate of his home state. He had been a farmer, he had uh...he had been to Harvard, he had just a very, very brilliant hard-working gentleman who became one of my best friends. You know, I remember working the, the yardsticks with him on the high school football games when his son was playing football and, you know, we'd be, we'd be talking technology in between plays sometimes that was um...but loved the University. I remember working with him as early as the, you know, in nineteen...I think Maurice came in about the same time I did in 1987 so we were able to kind of grow together here at the University and he and his wife Jenny were here for a number of years. She still teaches as the, a faculty member in the school of engineering. But, but an incredible individual; I owe a lot to him for my own personal development.

Walters: (56:03) Talking about development and professional development in particular, how has that been supported or cut back over the years? In the '90s I'm sure it was pretty lean uh...

Barnett: (56:17) Yeah, the early years were very lean but there were still some opportunities. I, I think in the last eight or ten years, I think we've been very blessed. I think we have probably had one of the most robust and consistent budgets for our library faculty to utilize for, for professional growth and I think it's uh...you know, we, we've been doing that so long I think we, it, it's easy to take it for granted unless you've been here a real long time but um...yeah, it, it was, there were some days, some years where that was something that we just didn't even think about doing unless it was very local and a lot of the times we would find it ourselves.

Walters: (56:58) I know a number of our librarians are involved with the Association of Christian Librarians but several folks have been to EDUCAUSE. Have you, have you been part of that training and...

Barnett: (57:11) Yes, I was one of the, you know, when EDUCAUSE began, I went to some of their first conferences and was able to participate in that at a pretty good level. EDUCAUSE was probably the, the premiere organization in terms of bringing together people who were working with technology on campuses and, whether it was librarians or as technology progressed, you

know, networking people, classroom people, and trying to put all that together in a way that made sense.

Miller: (57:46) So what has the library's relationship been then with other local libraries? We've talked a little bit about our librarians and their professional development but how have we related, for instance, to Lynchburg College or Randolph College?

Barnett: (58:01) We, we've had, you know, it, it's varied. We've had, I think, an, an ok relationship. Back, I think in 1990, I think I was the, the president of the Lynchburg area co-op uh...but we, we always had some struggles because, you know, our collection, you know, we weren't buying a lot of new books and, you know, our collection was, was fairly challenged in some of those areas. We would have students who would be finding their way over to Lynchburg College and using their, their materials and, you know, and it was...every now and then I'd get a letter from a, another college library director here in the area asking us to please remind our students that they had their own library to go to. And so, so there were a few rocky days during, when, when things were tough financially that was, that was something that was an occasional challenge, I think, in terms of working with local community. I don't think that exists anymore. I, I think people, you know, most of the people who are in the local libraries have been there as long as I've been here so for the most part, you know, they've watched us grow and they've seen the changes and whether they uh...grudgingly so or not, I think would have to admit that we have come an awful long ways. I, I don't, you know, it's been ten or fifteen years since I've had any letters from any local directors asking us to please send our, you know, make sure our students don't go over there so, I think we've resolved that for the most part because we do have, I think, offerings that are, are far better than...

Miller: (59:38) We've been able to be of assistance to some of the small uh...I'm thinking of a predominantly black college here in town.

Barnett: (59:43) Yeah, there are some local um...particularly the uh...Virginia University of Lynchburg, I think, is a school that we've been able to help quite a bit and allow some of their, allow their students and faculty to make use of our resources here.

Miller: (59:57) Was there ever a move to combine the catalog of all the Lynchburg area libraries into one consolidated system?

Barnett: (1:00:04) Well, well there was but we weren't invited.

Miller: (1:00:06) [*laughter*]

Walters: [*laughter*]

Barnett: (1:00:07) In the early uh...late '80s, early '90s I think the, the Lion Consortium came together with Sweet Briar and Randolph Macon, Lynchburg Public and Lynchburg College and

they did create a cooperative catalog that they've run and I, I don't know what the status of that is but in those days we were just so far behind in so many ways that it wasn't something that we could have participated in.

Miller: (1:00:33) And so we've mentioned just briefly OCLC and they have a catalog WorldCat that is there catalog there. Have we always been a participant in OCLC?

Barnett: (1:00:45) Since I've been here, yes.

Miller: (1:00:47) Tell us then a little bit about VICULA; V, I, C, U, L, A. What does that stand for and what is the relationship to Liberty?

Barnett: (1:00:53) Yeah, the Virginia Independent College and University Libraries, a, a loose organization of the librarians who aren't affiliated with the state institutions here in Virginia and we've participated with them I, I don't even know how long. Actually, I don't know that I can give you a date for that but, but that's been a good organization for us and then their association...

Miller: (1:01:19) What is something that they do, that they do for us or that, that we cooperate together with to do?

Barnett: (1:01:24) Well, basically it allows us an opportunity to meet together to discuss common concerns that we have and look for common solutions. The other thing that it lets us do is, in terms of sharing resources. So, working with them and another state institution called VIVA, we've been able to procure and have access to materials that we could never get at the same kind of price level that we're able to get because we're part of the consortium. If we were out there independently trying to purchase these materials from the vendors on our own, we would uh...you know, I don't know how much more we would be paying but it would be significantly more than we're able to pay.

Miller: (1:02:03) So VIVA stands for...Virtual Library of Virginia, isn't it?

Barnett: (1:02:08) Yeah, something like that.

Walter: I think so.

Miller: (1:02:10) I think so. And, and so, like, some of our databases that all of the privates want to have then we will share and then that presents a larger number of potential customers then to them...

Barnett: (1:02:21) Right.

Miller: (1:02:22) and so we're able to get some consortia discounts with them.

Barnett: (1:02:24) Correct.

Walters: (1:02:26) You've spoken about some of your colleagues in the library. Shifting gears here to a more macro-level view, tell us about uh...are, who are some of the early administrators or faculty who stand out in your mind and what do you feel their contribution was to the University? Just, anybody in particular...

Barnett: (1:02:48) Well, I think a couple that stick out to me, J. Gordon Henry was one. He was one of the, I think, the early chief academic officer for the University and then Russ Fitzgerald was serving in what we call the provost now, I think they had a different name for it back when I came. And then the gentleman who succeeded him who had been here previous to him then came back was Dr. Earl Mills and he took, was, had, probably, the strongest mentoring role, I think, in those days for me; worked with me quite a bit. I actually was involved, he and Dr. Henry were very involved in the development and organization of, of an accrediting association for Christian organizations called, Christian universities and schools, called TRACS. And so I was able to be involved early on and go on visiting teams to some of these fledgling Christian institutions who were looking for accreditation and, and Dr. Mills was just a great gentleman, a great friend, and a, and a wonderful mentor and did a wonderful part, you know, in those early days of accreditation with the University of getting us established.

Miller: (1:03:59) As, as you think about Dr. Falwell, and he passed away a few years ago while you were here and in the dean, what was his attitude towards the library and towards the ministry here? Do you have any specific memories of that?

Barnett: (1:04:16) I mean, he was always very supportive of what we did. I think he understood that, that what we did played a vital role in the community, in the academic community here and he wanted it to look as good as, as we could. I think the struggle for him was there were so many other financial pressures that it made it hard...I, I think, you know, had he had the money to give throughout those days, I think he would have been, you know, we certainly would have been an area where I think he would have focused more attention but um...I have great memories of him. I mean, he was just so personable. We had monthly chancellors meetings with him where all of the managers from across the campus would meet with him and it, it was just a great opportunity for everybody to kind of share what was going on in their areas if there was anything significant happening, but just to hear from him and, you know, just constantly reaffirming the vision, reaffirming what we were doing, why we were doing it, and why it was important, and why we needed to keep on and uh...

Miller: (1:05:16) Do you have a favorite quote from Dr. Falwell that's something you recall him saying?

Barnett: (1:05:24) Well, other than the, "It's always easier to get forgiveness than permission..."

Miller: (1:05:28) [*laughter*]

Barnett: (1:05:29) You know, that one kind of stands out. I've used that one a few times but uh...but no, that'd be the...I remember, I remember the bear hugs and the punches. You know, I had some rib punches from him that, that knocked the wind out of me and a couple of bear hugs that I thought would put me in the hospital.

Miller: (1:05:45) Well, so things really changed though. You were one of you said eight librarians when you first came here. Were things, were there more relationships between you and other faculty members and other librarians and even Dr. Falwell uh...I remember even when I first came here in the early 2000s, he would be at the Christmas party and things but it was just getting to be so big. Did you, did you notice that change and, and was that a little difficult?

Barnett: (1:06:15) Yeah, you know, the total faculty when I came was probably a hundred and forty, hundred and fifty and so, you know, we could all meet in one big room and, you know, be addressed by him and you, you knew most of the faculty. Even as a librarian you were, because you were in meetings uh...faculty, you could have faculty meetings more often because the schedule wasn't so robust so people were able to make meetings more frequently and um...so there, there was more of a sense of camaraderie, I think, in those days just because of the size, I think, really encouraged that and that is something that's a little different nowadays. You know, nowadays I see faculty names um...Lowell was emailing me the other day about a, with the name of a faculty member and I, I had no idea, you know, who they were or what they did or, or how long they've been here but uh...so I, I do kind of miss that because there was a time where, you know, in the early days, the cafeteria was actually over in the applied science area down on the end there next to, on the same end that Schilling Center is and they had a little room in there, a faculty break room, and they had doughnuts for a quarter and so, you know, every, every morning at ten o'clock, you know, there were four or five of the librarians who would race over there to mostly get doughnuts but um...and then there would be some other faculty in there and we'd have some great conversations and that was good.

Walters: (1:07:45) Alright, speaking of Dr. Falwell and getting a little more, touching upon his legacy and such, do you think the University is his major contribution to the nation or what do you think is going to be the, how will history summarize him in Evangelical Christian history or in political history? A lot of people talk about the 1980 Reagan Presidency when it comes to political side.

Barnett: (1:08:17) I, I think we're years away of knowing exactly how deep his influence went. You know, when you think of the influence of the church and the number of people that have gone out from that across the nation and across the world. When you think of the influence of people who have graduated from the University and done the same thing and they're, and they're literally all over the world at this point. And then when you think about the people that he rubbed shoulders with and influenced and mentored in a very quiet way, at, at all different levels

of whether it's in the entertainment industry, you know, he, he loved talking about his friendship with Larry King and the influence, you know, the opportunities that he had had to share with him. Whether he was meeting with the president, a senator, a governor, he was just always out, always energetic, and always, you know, never backing away from the truth of the gospel in his encounters with people and, you know, it, it may not be until we get to heaven, I'm, I'm sure that, that we'll really understand what kind of real influence that that, that had on our, on our country and us as a people at this point.

Walters: (1:09:30) Well, before Liberty University got founded as Lynchburg Baptist College and all that, LCA had been founded a few years before that. You've had children come through both of those uh...well, through both LCA and LU. Can you speak to your experience as a parent to students of both of those institutions?

Barnett: (1:09:59) Well, we, we were very, you know, we put a lot of thought into where we wanted the, our kids to go to school and so when we chose LCA I, I think you know, it was fairly early still for them, they weren't nearly as large as they are now, and it was, it was a great place for our kids. I think, you know, when, when my daughter got to uh...was ready to enter middle school, I went over and visited, at the time we were living in the Sandusky area, and I went over and visited with the principal and, and just looked at the facilities and the programs at the middle school, the public middle school over there because I, I thought, you know, "Am I, in the choices of schools, am I limiting her possibilities for her future in, in the choices that I'm making?" And I wanted to be sure that I wasn't doing that. So we, we actually went over and, and looked at, at the middle school and programs and different things over there and left feeling like, you know, the opportunities that she has where she's at, you now, she's not missing anything, you know, that we really, that, they're, they're doing as well or better in some ways over at LCA. So we were, we were very pleased. I think, you know, they were much smaller than a lot of the public schools so it gave them a lot of opportunities to participate and things extracurricular, you know, whether it was band or the athletics and be very involved in those areas. Academically, you know, both of them did very well on their SAT scores which to me were kind of the, the, you know, since everybody was taking those that was my opportunity to see how well they did and they did very well. So we were very pleased with that and then, and then the same here at Liberty. You know, my daughter went through the nursing program and has been nursing successfully now for years and I remember her going to work here locally for her unit manager was a friend of mine and just listening to her remarks, you know, about my daughter's abilities as a nurse and a lot that we tribute to the training and what she got here at LU. They just do a tremendous job with them. So, yeah, this was, this has been a good place for our family.

Miller: (1:12:11) One thing I notice as we, I was looking back over the questions that we had prepared beforehand, we didn't really talk about, you went up to UVA for a while. Would you tell us about that degree and when that was and why you went to get another Master's Degree after the other degrees that you already had?

Barnett: (1:12:25) Well, the, when I was working in the center for computer and information technology, most of my technology expertise at that point had just been picked up and just...

Miller: (1:12:36) On the job.

Barnett: (1:12:37) on the job and so they felt like with me being in the position of, of managing that academic area that it would be better, I could better serve and represent the University if I had more formal background. So while I was working in the CCIT for those two years, I did a, a master's program at the University of Virginia in the, the management of information technology. It was a program that we did a two week intensive in the summer and then met every other weekend for a year.

Miller: (1:13:12) Now, when you were in CCIT, was, were you also totally in charge of the library or did you have somebody who was assisting you with that?

Barnett: (1:13:19) Various people were assisting but I was still carrying some of that and then it, it began to transition more, I mean, it just became apparent at that point that, you know, we needed to get some other people into, that's when we even reached out and got this Lowell Walters guy eventually came in and it was hard finding, you know, good people that we...

Miller: (1:13:41) [*laughter*]

Walters: [*laughter*]

Barnett: (1:13:43) no, Lowell's been a great, a wonderful addition to our staff here.

Walters: (1:13:47) I'll give you the dime after [*laughter*].

Miller: (1:13:50) So, would you as we're, as we're kind of wrapping up our time together, could you give us kind of a SWOT analysis. You're a business type person here, what are some of the strengths of Liberty, the weaknesses that you see, opportunities, and threats? And do it both for the University, from your broad perspective, and then particularly for the library.

Barnett: (1:14:12) Well, I think the, the strengths, you know, and particularly since Dr. Falwell's passing which allowed for some, you know, a level of financial stability that the University had not experience prior to that. Merging with the timeliness of the changes and the distance program and the success and growth of that program. I, I just think we're in position now, you know, the, the influence of this university now with sixty thousand students a year encountering at some level a Liberty University professor or Liberty University course just is becoming, you know, it's just exponentially growing and so I think that's a tremendous strength for us. I think if we can continue to put resources back into growing these programs, identifying, you know, the, the choice, the governor's choice to have our chancellor serving on a state panel that's looking at higher education, how to improve it and make it more efficient. We've, we've

learned a lot in those areas and I think we have a lot to offer the academic community around us. And they're not always happy with it. I think, you know, nobody really likes change and I think in higher, higher education particularly, you know, we've got people who are pretty embedded in doing things the way we've always done it and, and we work for an organization where that just isn't the case at all. In fact, you know, saying, "Well, we've always been done it this way," is usually a way to get things changed pretty quickly. And, and that's been very refreshing and, and just an incredible opportunity. You know, as I look back and look at being here during these years of growth and seeing how it, it's given me opportunities to do things that, you know, I think, "Ok, if I had gone to Indiana University in 1987 as an assistant cataloger, where might I be right now?" And I, I hate to even think about it, you know. I, I might be up to a full cataloger and, you know, buried back in a room somewhere and so I, I'm just profoundly grateful for the opportunities that have been at this institution. I think that's a real strength for us that we're able to grow in those ways. The library, I think, is well positioned. I think that because of the growth and because of where we're at and because of the changes in, in a number of different areas, I think we're positioned to look at what does the library look like for the future and then make some significant changes in terms of facility or facilities. You know, whether we're at a place where we need to consider a graduate library or a seminary library or a north campus library or however we need to, or a, a just tremendously large central library...

Miller: (1:16:53) Free standing, separate building type...

Barnett: (1:16:54) Yeah, whatever that's going to look like, I think it's time for us to, to do that and I think could be really the crowning touch for the University in terms of, of really giving a different level of credence to our desire to really be compared to some of the other universities that we look at as pure institutions at this point.

Miller: (1:17:17) Now, one of the reasons why we hastened to do this interview is because you're going to be leaving us shortly, after twenty-three years here. Could you tell us a little bit about the future plans for your life?

Barnett: (1:17:29) Well, I will be going to the central Florida area, again, back where I grew up. I still have parents and siblings who are down there and so I'm going to transition down to there. I'll be serving as the director of library services for Osceola County which is a county just south of where my parents live and so I'll be able to be more involved with them as they enter into some, some challenging stages for, of their life and be able to help them and just very excited about the opportunity, you know, transition to a public library environment, out of the academic library. So it's uh...there are some challenges there, I'm sure, for me but I, I'd like to think that I'm kind of mid-career. You know, here in my mid fifties I've still got a couple of decades left that I can, can still be pretty productive, so looking forward to it.

Miller: (1:18:24) You going to continue to maintain a relationship with the University, perhaps teaching some distance classes?

Barnett: (1:18:28) Very much so and I, you know, I told Dr. Godwin, he, he always, he refers occasionally to this “two-for club,” you know, the people who have gone and come back and they’re, for their second round here and, you know, I certainly haven’t ruled that out; I, I love central Virginia and I love Liberty University, so we’ll see.

Miller: (1:18:46) And with that we’ll conclude today’s interview with Dr. David Barnett. This interview has been conducted as part of the oral history project of the Liberty University archives.

[end of interview]