**Miles Conrad Memorial Lecture**
**NFAIS 2017 Annual Conference**

**CELEBRATING SERENDIPITY AND COLLABORATION: LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD**

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**ABSTRACT:**

Although every career has its own unique trajectory, when I look back at my own path, it was entirely unplanned and unanticipated, yet in hindsight, the pieces all fit together quite neatly. The progression from a compulsive reader signing up to work in her 8$^{th}$ grade library so she would have better access to the books to the Dean of University Libraries at a large research-intensive public university seems almost inevitable. The opportunity to participate in the transformation of the way information is produced, delivered, analyzed and preserved from perspectives as diverse as small special libraries and large academic research libraries, as well as from government agencies and information companies, has been both exhilarating and challenging. Nevertheless, while we do many things differently now because of the opportunities created by technology, we continue to share a common goal of providing essential, reliable information to users at the point of need and to seek ways to develop and employ technology to improve the accuracy and efficiency with which we accomplish that goal. Although some of us are motivated by profits while others have the opportunity to deliver "free" (no fee) or not-for profit services, we are not adversaries. We are colleagues who can and do benefit from collaboration and learn from one another. My own journey includes several interesting examples of successful collaborations that I hope will inspire, encourage and perhaps even amuse you.

I admit to being surprised to find myself up here delivering the Miles Conrad Memorial Lecture. I know (or have known) personally most of the recipients since 1994 and a few before that – and I have attended many of their lectures. (I think the first one I attended was given by Mel Day from NTIS in 1975.) All of them, even the few that I do not know, are people I admire greatly. I never imagined, or aspired to, joining them as a recipient of this honor, and it is indeed an honor to be here speaking with you today.

As one colleague said when she wrote to congratulate me: "No pressure … you have a blank slate to fill with a compelling, humorous, engaging, enlightening, uplifting, motivational talk." As if that was not enough, I have to follow Deanna Marcum, who gave a wonderful speech on Library Leadership for the Digital Age last year.

I read several of the available lectures and spoke with a number of colleagues seeking inspiration and advice. In the end, I decided on reprising the theme of Karen Hunter's 2001 lecture: "Looking Back to Look Forward." Although every career has its own unique trajectory,

when I look back at my own path to my present position, it was entirely unplanned and unanticipated, yet in hindsight, the pieces all fit together quite neatly. The progression from a compulsive reader signing up to work in her 8th grade library so she would have better access to the books to the Dean of University Libraries at a large research-intensive public university seems almost inevitable. The opportunity to observe, and participate in, the transformation of the way information is produced, delivered, analyzed and preserved from the perspective of small special libraries and large academic research libraries, as well as from government agencies and information companies, has been both exhilarating and challenging. But while we do many things differently now because of the opportunities that technology has brought, we continue to share a common goal of providing essential, reliable information to users at the point of need and to seek ways to develop and employ technology to improve the accuracy and efficiency with which we accomplish that goal. Although we may compete to be the first or the best, and some of us are motivated by profits and others have the opportunity to deliver "free" (no fee) or not-for profit services, we are not adversaries. We are colleagues who can and do benefit from collaboration and learn from one another.

I have friends and family members who have planned (or think they are planning) their careers in five and ten year increments, with specific long-term objectives. I met a young woman at the recent ALA Midwinter Meeting who will finish her degree in August and already knows she wants to be a library director in an academic research library. I didn't know that about myself a week before I was invited to apply for my current job, and yet I love this job and I seem to be well suited for it. Although it is extremely hard to control the forward motion of a career, I suppose it does help to have a goal to guide the choice of intermediate opportunities as they arise. My career has been much less intentional, and has both surprised and delighted me as it progressed. If I had to choose a single word to describe my path, it would be serendipity.

When I did change jobs, it was most often because a new challenge that I could not resist presented itself. In almost every case, I turned to mentors and trusted colleagues to ask: "Am I really qualified for this job? Can I do this job? Should I take this job?" Deanna may recall that she was one of the people I called to ask those questions when I was approached by the University of Florida (UF) and asked to apply for my current position. I am very grateful that she encouraged me to apply. I love this job and after almost 10 years I am still enjoying it and still thinking how surprised and grateful I am that UF was willing to consider someone with such a non-traditional background to lead our libraries. When he told the academic deans that I had accepted the position, then University President Bernie Machen told them I was a "diversity candidate," not because I was a woman, but because I had worked in government and industry and he further explained that "in academia we run the risk of only talking to people like ourselves." A few years ago, I found out that he had looked at the applicant pool and said, "Find me someone less boring." So I guess being a non-traditional candidate and not being boring were both assets – but it is difficult to discern which one tipped the scale!

By the time I graduated from college, I had worked in my junior and senior high school libraries and my college library and had summer jobs in four special libraries. I went to graduate school at The Catholic University of America with the specific intention of working in special libraries

2

(the first and probably the last intentional act in my career planning and execution). I did spend a decade in special libraries, first establishing the technical library for the COMSAT Laboratories, then establishing an information center for an NSF-funded research project on the diffusion of innovation, and then finally setting up and managing the information services for the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment (OTA). Each opportunity came about through a chance meeting or a referral from someone who knew me only slightly. In each case, I had unique opportunities to work with technology, including early library automation and database development, not to mention being at COMSAT during the very early development of satellite communication. It was at COMSAT that I first recognized that a research library was an essential tool to its patrons, as valuable as any expensive piece of laboratory equipment, both for its content and its services. This perspective has been reinforced throughout my career and is particularly relevant in my current position. I also learned to welcome the challenge and embrace the opportunities presented by new technology. If I ever lose that, I will know it is time to retire!

While working at OTA, a colleague from the Congressional Research Service was asked to recommend a librarian to work in product development for an information company in Denver and gave them my name. It seemed unlikely that they would hire me or that I would want to move to Denver, but my college roommate lived there, so I decided to accept the interview – and eventually spent five years with that company and its affiliates. After several years in Denver, I was transferred back to D.C. to work on acquisitions and government relations. Another instance of serendipity was a request to assess a proposed acquisition and prepare a draft business plan with a very tight deadline. My boss acquired an early black Apple II (they were not yet available in stores) and a copy of VisiCalc (an early predecessor of Lotus 123 and Excel) and I spent the weekend at the office, with my baby, learned the technology, produced the analysis, and continued to be given opportunities to use those and other new technologies.

That position led to engagement with the Information Industry Association (now the Software and Information Industry Association) and NFAIS, and eventually to other jobs in the industry in product development, acquisitions, marketing and government relations. Serendipity placed me at Disclosure when the company was developing the first commercial database for distribution on CD-ROM, another instance of having an opportunity to engage with new technology before it became widely accessible.

While working for Lexis-Nexis (then Mead Data Central), I was appointed to the Depository Library Council, the first member who was not a government documents librarian. I was chosen because I had experience with electronic databases, CD-ROM publishing, and telecommunications. The Government Printing Office (GPO), as it was named at the time, was preparing for electronic distribution of government publications to depository libraries and needed someone with relevant experience. That in turn led to an invitation to move back to Washington and work at GPO, where I planned for the transition to a more electronic Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) and set up the Office of Electronic Information Dissemination Services. I was there when the legislation passed to establish GPO Access and I was at the White House to demonstrate it to an auditorium full of government officials on the

same program that was to be the first showing of WhiteHouse.gov. The White House technology failed, which is not uncommon with live demos of new technology, and the White House projection device was not working properly, so I sat on the floor of the stage with my feet dangling over the edge so the laptop I was using could be attached to the backup projector, but I was able to do my live demo. I decided then and there that I would never give a more awkward and uncomfortable presentation and, if I could survive that, I could handle anything that might ever occur in a future presentation – but preparing for this lecture caused me to reassess that conclusion. After all demonstrating a live database, even with the challenges of uncooperative technology, is really much easier than giving a "compelling, humorous, engaging, enlightening, uplifting, motivational talk." But here I am.

When we launched GPO Access, it was a database that delivered only ASCII text, but what our users wanted (as did the users of commercial products like Lexis and Westlaw) was the typeset *Federal Register*, *Congressional Record* and other government publications. Shortly after launch, GPO received a visit from Adobe to show us a pre-release version of the Portable Document Format, and that changed everything. Magically, we could deliver a searchable, typeset version derived directly from the printing process. As a result, I had the opportunity to go with representatives of Adobe to present the way GPO was using the application to a number of government agencies and industry conferences. The users of GPO Access were wildly enthusiastic. The agency publishers and the information industry quickly adapted their services to take advantage of the new capability.

Shortly after leaving GPO, I went to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS), which was later merged into the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). NCLIS was a tiny agency with only five employees and 15 part-time Presidentially appointed, Senate confirmed Commissioners, with a big responsibility for advising the White House and the Congress on the information needs of the American people. We only generated a few reports and recommendations each year, but we were involved in so many important aspects of information policy: kids and the Internet, information services for people with disabilities, the role of public libraries in the provision of internet access (long before we even imagined access on our cell phones and iPads), and the role of libraries in response to terror attacks and natural disasters, to mention but a few. When the agency closed in 2008, I was one of the authors of the final report summarizing its accomplishments and identifying future initiatives that remained to be addressed.

Many of the NCLIS reports, most of which are available online in the UF Digital Collections (http://ufdc.ufl.edu/NCLIS), are as relevant today as they were when they were issued. Although the technology has changed dramatically, the issues and the importance of access to information remain constant. For example, in 2000-2001, NCLIS undertook a major project to assess the then current state of government information policy and propose a comprehensive reform to simplify and clarify the Federal government's commitment to public access to its information.[1] In that report, the Commission recommended that the "United States Government formally recognize and affirm the concept that

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[1] U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, *A comprehensive assessment of public information dissemination: final report*, 4 volumes, Washington, DC: NCLIS, 2001 (http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00038081/00001/allvolumes).

public information is a strategic national resource." It also recommended "the inclusion of a standard provision in the enabling legislation for each agency incorporating public information dissemination as a primary agency responsibility integral to its mission." Currently, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is the only cabinet level agency in the U.S. government that has dissemination of information in its core mission – the primary legislative language establishing the agency and charging it with its fundamental responsibilities.[2] These legislative proposals are as necessary – and perhaps even more necessary – today as they were then.

From NCLIS, I returned to GPO as the Superintendent of Documents, the second librarian and first woman to serve in that position. When I was there the first time, we projected that within 10 years the FDLP would transform from a program that was disseminating government information primarily in print into one that was primarily electronic – and we were right. In 10 years, the FDLP went from 95% print distribution to 95% electronic access, and most of the items that remained in print were also available in electronic form.

GPO was given early access to the technology to digitally sign the electronic documents. At the time, this was particularly reassuring to the government documents librarians who trusted the authenticity of print and their ability to preserve it for future generations. Acceptance of digital access in addition to print access was relatively easy. Acceptance of digital access without print access was not! But government publishing had changed, the information industry had changed, and user expectations had changed. There was no way to put the genie back in the bottle – even if we had wanted to do so.

GPO had successfully migrated from hot metal to electronic technology for the production of its print publications many years before, but the transition to electronic dissemination and access, with the resulting decrease in printing, was more difficult both for the agency and the Federal Depository Library Community. GPO was fortunate to have Bruce James as Public Printer at the time. He was a visionary leader and an entrepreneur, and I learned so much about managing extensive and fundamental changes in organizational culture and service delivery from working with him.  In hindsight, perhaps it is not surprising that the University of Florida would be open to hiring as dean of university libraries someone one who had not worked in an academic library since she graduated from college, but who had been broadly and deeply involved in the policy and technological changes that had transformed government and commercial publishing, and who had led the transformation of the FDLP from print distribution to electronic access, both at the beginning of the process and as it resolved.

At UF, 87% of our materials budget now goes to electronic resources. We continue to maintain large print collections, but the low use materials (including our entire print government documents collection) are in offsite storage so we can devote more space in the campus libraries to students. Although they can access the electronic resources remotely, the students

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[2] "There shall be at the seat of government a Department of Agriculture, the general design and duties of which shall be to acquire and to diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture, rural development, aquaculture, and human nutrition, in the most general and comprehensive sense of those terms…" 7 U.S.C. §2201.

flock to our libraries to study, to collaborate, to use a variety of new technology, and, of course, to drink Starbucks coffee! (Two of our four largest libraries have a Starbucks in the library and the other two have easy access to an adjacent Starbucks.) Every time we add tables and chairs (and power outlets), they are immediately filled with students. Two and half years ago, we cleared 26,000 square feet in the science library, added a maker space, a visualization wall, over 20 group study rooms, and over 700 seats and 1,400 power outlets. (We have already increased the power outlets!) Attendance in that library went from less than a million visitors a year to over 1.6 million – without a significant drop in attendance in the other libraries.

When I went to UF, I was already active in NFAIS, having served as the member representative for GPO, and I was on the NFAIS board. I continued as a member representative for the Smathers Libraries at the University of Florida – the first academic research library to become a member – and I remained on the board. When I told my staff that the Libraries were joining NFAIS, they asked me why, and I read them the mission statement. (There have been slight modifications through the years, but it is substantially the same.) It currently says: "The National Federation of Advanced Information Services (NFAIS™) is a global, non-profit, volunteer-powered membership organization that serves the information community – that is, all those who create, aggregate, organize, and otherwise provide ease of access to and effective navigation and use of authoritative, credible information." Our Libraries do all of those things! In fact, we recently established the LibraryPress@UF, which is an imprint of the University of Florida Press, so we are now officially a publisher as well as a research library system.

Through the years, as my staff have participated in various NFAIS seminars, webinars, and conferences, each person has returned saying something like: "When we go to library meetings, we are talking to people like ourselves. When we go to NFAIS meetings, we are talking to people from different types of organizations who are trying to solve the same problems – and we learn so much!" They come back with new approaches and innovative solutions, having learned from both conversations and presentations.

They have also learned to respect their new colleagues – and it is that acceptance of the people they have encountered through NFAIS that has led UF to participate in two important projects that I want to share with you briefly – a bilateral collaboration between the Smathers Libraries and Elsevier[3] that has recently expanded through CHORUS to include other publishers.

In conversations with my provost, vice president for research and the faculty senate research council over several years, I was asked repeatedly why the Libraries couldn't solve the problem of identifying UF faculty research publications with minimal burden on our very busy faculty. There are many more academic faculty than library faculty, and they are very productive, generating over 8,000 journal articles per year, so we also needed a solution that placed minimal burdens on the library faculty and staff.

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[3] Additional information about the Elsevier project is available in *Collaborative Librarianship*, Vol. 8 (2016), Academic library and publisher collaboration: utilizing an institutional repository to maximize the visibility and impact of articles by university authors (http://digital commons.du.edu/collaborativelibrarianship/vol8/iss2/4/).

Since UF authors publish between 1,100 and 1,300 articles in Elsevier journals each year, I approached Elsevier to see if I could obtain author manuscripts directly from them. I learned that Elsevier had recently developed Application Program Interfaces (APIs) to facilitate identification and downloading of metadata for articles by university authors into local institutional repositories and was looking for a partner to test them. My staff quickly decided to use the APIs, rather than to continue to seek the manuscripts. This collaboration has provided real benefits to both UF and Elsevier. These include:
- Collecting information without burden on UF faculty publishing in Elsevier journals.
- Facilitating University oversight of compliance with public access mandates.
- Achieving cost savings and efficiencies for the Libraries and UF through automation.
- Testing and refining the Elsevier APIs to provide smooth scalability for engagement with future academic collaborators.
- Improving understanding of publisher and academic library perspectives and addressing constraints inherent in these roles.

To put this in context, there is not a culture of deposit at UF. We had only seven Elsevier articles on deposit in the Institutional Repository (IR@UF) when the project started. They were all supported by the UF Open Access Publishing Fund, which required deposit of the final article in the IR@UF. We now have metadata for over 30,000 articles by UF authors published in Elsevier journals, some as far back as 1949, and we are continuing to expand the scope of the project and to test new features.

About the time that we began the Elsevier project, I attended a session on the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy mandate for public access to federally funded research at which Howard Ratner spoke about the CHORUS project. He used a slide with the word compliance in the center and several figures surrounding it representing a funding agency, a publisher, the public, a librarian and a researcher. I went up to Howard after his presentation about CHORUS and told him that the person on my campus who was losing sleep over compliance wasn't on his slide: the Vice President of Research. I acknowledged the need to initially focus the development of CHORUS on publishers and funding agencies, but pointed out that this was a three legged stool and there were three figures from academic institutions (the librarian, the researcher, and, once added, the VP research) who were not participating in the design of the CHORUS system. I suggested that when they were ready, UF and other academic institutions should participate in the development of CHORUS to ensure that it met our needs as well as those of publishers and funders. A few months ago, Howard contacted me and said they were ready to expand the partnership and asked if UF would participate. I quickly agreed. Elsevier is represented on the CHORUS board and kept the board informed about our bilateral project and that contributed to the willingness of other publishers to participate in the new collaboration. Seven publishers are working with UF and several other academic libraries on the pilot project.

The most important goal of the CHORUS project is facilitating compliance. The steps are to identify articles by UF authors; check the metadata for the funding source; verify deposit in the

appropriate funder repository; and report to UF through a dashboard that CHORUS is developing. The report might indicate that Professor Smith published an article based on a Department of Energy (DOE) grant and it is in the DOE-mandated repository, while Professor Jones published an article funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) that is not yet in the mandated repository. A subsequent report might confirm that Professor Jones' article is now in the NSF repository. The UF office of compliance will be informed about articles that have been published and can match them to the funding source in our grants management system. The staff will only need to follow up on articles that are not yet deposited. Together we are developing an automated system that identifies UF faculty research publications with minimal burden on our very busy faculty and on the library faculty and staff and it reduces the burden on the UF office of compliance. The system will become even more valuable as more publishers participate.

As I said in the beginning, although some of us are motivated by profits while others have the opportunity to deliver "free" (no fee) or not-for profit services, we are not adversaries. We are colleagues who can and do benefit from collaboration and learn from one another. When I look forward, that is the future that I see. We will continue to have divergent views over some policy issues and the libraries will continue to resist the annual price increases that go up faster than our budgets every year, but we will also learn from one another and find ways to benefit from collaboration.

There is an old African proverb that I often quote: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together!" The Smathers Libraries are active participants in a number of collaborative initiatives that provide significant benefits to our university, to our partners, and to others who share in the results of our efforts. Each of these initiatives requires a significant effort to establish and sustain trust and to maintain the value to the collaborators. Each step often takes longer to plan and to execute because a number of people have to be consulted and have their preferences and concerns addressed. Nevertheless, we continue to invest in these initiatives and to seek additional opportunities for deep collaboration because, in the end, they take us much farther than we can go alone, as the two projects I have described demonstrate.

Ultimately every collaboration is a risk. They won't all work well. They won't all be sustainable. But we have to be open to the possibilities and able to identify the ones that are likely to pay off – and willing to recognize the value of the lessons learned from the ones that don't. We need to be able to identify the risks, but focus on the benefits to our own institution and the others we seek to join us. We need to able to convince others (internal and external) to participate, and we need the patience to persevere even though it is likely to take longer than expected.

And, to be honest, we won't be able to convince everyone. Some colleagues in the library community were critical of my collaboration with Elsevier, but my own staff did not waiver from their belief that we were doing something important and worthwhile. I know that my own experiences in libraries, government and the information industry made me more open to

these collaborations and that the experience of my staff at various NFAIS meetings made them more confident in the face of criticism and more comfortable with their industry colleagues. I am very fortunate to have such talented and committed staff working on these projects and in the equally talented and committed participants from Elsevier and CHORUS.

Successful collaborations build trust and make the next collaboration with that partner (and perhaps with observers) easier. They surprise and delight, so even though it is hard work, the rewards both personal and professional are great – and it is more fun to travel with others than to travel alone.

So I will end by saying, if you are a publisher with a great idea and need a strong collaborator, I hope you will consider sharing your idea with me or with other librarians you know – and if you are from a library, I hope you will seek opportunities to collaborate with publishers. Libraries all have limited resources, so we can't accept every opportunity that interests us – but we will participate when we can and I believe that both libraries and publishers will benefit through our collaborations.

I don't know if I have met the challenge of delivering a "compelling, humorous, engaging, enlightening, uplifting, or motivational talk," but I have shared a little of my personal journey and philosophy and truly hope my enthusiasm for the opportunities and collaborations that lie ahead is contagious. When I think back to that awkward demonstration of GPO Access and the vision of the Clinton administration to create WhiteHouse.gov and direct agencies to establish websites, I could not have imagined the amazing transformation of libraries and publishers from that day to this one. I am optimistic that there will continue to be more changes that will inspire and delight us as we pursue our common mission to "create, aggregate, organize, and otherwise provide ease of access to and effective navigation and use of authoritative, credible information" for the users we are all dedicated to serving. I fully expect that NFAIS will continue to be an important catalyst in that process.

Thank you again for honoring me with the Miles Conrad award.