

Oral History Interview with Christine MacGillivray
Conducted by Angela Baker, August 9, 1993
Transcription by Jeff Lipton, February 17, 2000

AB: OK, let's just start with a little background information. Could you state your full name?

CM: My name is Christine MacGillivray.

AB: OK, your date and place of birth?

CM: My date and place of birth? I was born on December 21st, 1936 in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

AB: Could you describe your educational background?

CM: Yes, I attended the convent of the Sacred Heart and from the convent I went to Saint FX University, and Mount Saint Bernard College. I started of in a degree program in Arts and from there I switched to secretarial and received my diploma from Mount Saint Bernard College in 1958.

AB: How long have you been associated with Saint Mary's?

CM: Do you really want to know that? Twenty-five years this year.

AB: So when you first came to the university, what was your position?

CM: I was secretary to the university librarian. Can they hear me on this thing?

AB: Oh yeah. So, secretary to the university Librarian. Where was the library?

CM: The library was over where the Burke Education Centre is now.

AB: So who was the librarian then?

CM: The librarian at the time was Father Gibson Hallam, and Father Hallam was on leave that year and as a result they had an acting university librarian, and her name was Margaret Kelly. So I worked for her for almost a year, while Father Hallam did a Masters in Library Science. Then Father Hallam came back. No, before Father Hallam came back, I think in the fifteen months that he was off, I think I had five bosses. Was wonderful. There was Margaret Kelly, Joan Brown was an acting university librarian in between Margaret Kelly and Father Hallam. And then Father Hallam came back and then he stayed for about a year I think. I might be wrong on that; I can look it up for you. He was then transferred to Willowdale and then he eventually took ill and died of a heart attack, I believe. After Father Hallam a Mr. Dossier(?) arrived, but he was only here for a few months. He was an American, and he came up to work but he didn't last very

long. I think that it was after that when Joan Brown who was the administrative assistant at the time became the acting librarian until they found a librarian. It was after her that they found Ruth Hafter, and Ruth was here... Let me check my notes, I might know when she started.

AB: Maybe in the early seventies some time?

CM: Probably sometime in the early seventies. I should have been more prepared for you. You're going to have a long lapse on your tape.

AB: Don't worry, I have plenty of tape. I can just make a note.

CM: I can look that up for you, I'm sure somebody knows. Anyways, Ruth was here and she was the one that was responsible for the building of this library. The library we are in now.

AB: How long was she the librarian?

CM: That's what I'm trying to think. She was here in 1970, so that's a start. She was here in 1970 and she left before this building officially opened. So I think this building officially opened in seventy-six.

AB: That's OK, we can find that out.

CM: So, when Ruth was here until then. After Ruth left to go to California to UCLA at Burkley. She is director of libraries now. Then [audible] arrived, and Ron has been here since, and is still here.

AB: What were the library facilities like in those early years.

CM: They were much smaller than this, believe me. There was only one floor of stacks. There was photocopying available. Security was done by the commissioners. You probably had half the staff we have today. The print shop was down in the basement of the old library. We used to call it the dungeon and down there we had all the Dewey books, all the Dewey books were kept in the basement the and all the LC books were kept upstairs.

AB: So how did things change over the years?

CM: How did things change over the years. Those are some good questions.

AB: First talk about personnel and then talk about resources.

CM: Well, as far as personnel concerned. When I first came here when didn't have a head of technical services and a head of public services as we do now. We just had the head librarian and the administrative assistant. Then a head of public services and a head of technical services positions started, I probably with Hafter. Those positions were held, head of Public Services with Barbara Dacey and Head

of Technical services was Lloyd Melansen. So that was the beginning of the divide in the library. Then after that, oh, we also had at the time a systems development librarian, Hugh Burnstead. Then we...

AB: What did that entail?

CM: That entailed developing new ideas within the library. It was before the age of computers. So he was working closely with Mike Tingley at that time concerning computers. Also they did IDs, library took over the ID system and this kind of thing. I don't know what everybody did, OK. I know what I did, or I did.

AB: How about the resources of the university library itself, how did they change?

CM: Like?

AB: The books, the services offered.

CM: OH, do you have a month? How can I answer that question?

AB: Just the large changes that stand out in your mind.

CM: Well I guess most things change with budget changes don't they, and growth and technology, and moving on, I mean the age of the computer... That's kind of a hard question for me to answer. Ron could probably answer that better for you. I mean we have far more resources now, far more computers than when I first came here. No word processing, e-mail. This kind of stuff, there was none of that, carbon paper, CD ROMS, Novanet system. All of those are new systems that are just taking off. I think positive steps have been made, whereas before everything was by hand, the old pencil method. Mind you sometimes I still prefer that, or your head, which ever works better.

AB: So as I was mentioning before, the time you came was previous to the time when women became full-fledged members of the university.

CM: Right, I think there were a couple of women probably in evening courses and things like that and then shortly after I came which probably been say around 1970, 69-70, the university became co-educational and at that time, wow, did we get an influx from Mount Saint Vincent. The girls were coming down to the boys' college and that made a big change. I would guess the enrolment probably increased quite a bit at that time, but that would be Elizabeth Chard's department.

AB: Your perceptions count too.

CM: Thanks.

AB: What do feel that females, did they change the nature of the university campus?

CM: Hope so. Oh sure, I mean the whole, it was the age of the sit-ins too, and there was a totally different atmosphere because I think there were a lot of Jesuits around, it was still a Jesuit college at that time. There were a lot of student protests sitting in the admin. area, but the administration being so nice to them, would come out and serve them coffee. That sixties attitude, and then having the girls come down I think really added a whole new life to the university. It just wasn't an all boys' school. It just wasn't the guys hanging around here and doing their studying and the girls going to the Mount. I think boys started going to the Mount and girls started coming to Saint Mary's, so it did make a difference.

AB: What effects do you think when the Jesuits stopped the administration of the university?

CM: I think that was kind of sad myself. Having grown up in Halifax, and knowing the Jesuit college and really it was, now people aren't entering the priesthood as they did in those days, I think in that respect, I guess it's good that we didn't have anyone to run the university, but it was a very homey atmosphere and a very comfortable atmosphere. That's still there because we are a smaller university, but it's not the same as then they were there because it can't be, things have to change. When the Jesuits were here, like if it were a fine day OK, or something like that, somebody would call and say, why don't we just take the afternoon off or something like that and because it was such a small family, it wasn't as businesslike as it probably today. Now it's more business and we didn't have any unions and that has certainly made a difference too.

AB: What differences has that made?

CM: Well I think that when we had the unions, we tend to watch that rules are abided by and that we abide by rules and as were before we would have been able to be a little more flexible.

AB: Have you noticed any changes in the nature in the student populations, in terms of gender or age or ethnic origin?

CM: I don't deal with the students that much. I used to when I did IDs, but yes, I think I've had. I think I notice more older people attending and coming into the library, so who are... seem to be going back to university more than just the young people coming. As far as, and of course there are more women now and women are becoming more educated, well, we now have Kim Campbell. What can I say? And Audrey McLaughlin. So things like this are certainly taking place and you see it here.

AB: How about ethnic origin?

CM: I think that over the years there are a lot more Chinese students here and yes, I would say that has increased also. Probably all ethnic origins. We do have a China program, so of course we are going to have a lot of students from China.

AB: What do you think students wish to gain from their experiences here at Saint Mary's? Do you think that has changed since the sixties?

CM: I don't think so. I think everybody who goes to university is hoping to get a job and a better education. First of all, a better education so that they can get a job and I think that was always the case whenever you went to university. You wanted to get out and get a good job and you need an education to do that. And it's getting more and more so because more and more... I mean I couldn't believe the graduating class of this year. I mean it's just fantastic, the number of people who are university educated and still the jobs aren't there. That the sad part.

AB: So what effects did the big increase in size have had on the nature of Saint Mary's?

CM: Well I don't think people are able to get the attention that you would get in a smaller university. The individual attention, I don't think can possibly be there, I mean, how when you have thousands of students and not a large increase in staff and larger classes I hear, you can't get the attention you would get when it was a smaller university. When it was a smaller university you really got an excellent education, that sounds like you don't get an excellent education now, but you don't get the individual attention is what I mean. I don't imagine you would as when it was smaller. Everybody knew everybody else's name, the professor would know your name, and I'm not saying that they don't know, but, I'm very cautious here! But you would see people on campus, and you would know almost everybody that was here, by name. Well I can walk across the campus now; there are lots of people I don't know. I'm sure there are lots of people that don't know me after twenty-five years, but there are so many changes and so many people and so much larger as before, everybody knew everybody else.

AB: What differences have you noticed - you mentioned the staff hasn't grown as much. Have you noticed any difference in the way the staff interacts over the years?

CM: I can only speak for the library, and I would say yes, I have. I would think that as you grow there are little cliques in each department and this is what has happened in the library too, so that before when we were in the other building we were all one group, we all went to the same staff lounge, we all mixed together. When now it seems that the professional librarians go to the faculty lounge and the library assistants hang out together, and the clerks hang out together, and it's not the same as when we were a smaller group. Does that answer your question?

AB: Sure. Are there any other things you would like to add? Any changes?

CM: There's probably a whole lot of things I would like to add and change! As I had told you I had you written down for a couple of days and this is done without any preparation. If I had given it a little more thought, but as far as the changes that have gone on through the years, I'll be glad to think it out more clearly for you

and write something out perhaps or talk to you again some time. Sometimes I find when you're talking to other people who have been here and you're in a group discussion things come back more readily. You know like other people that have been here for some time, say Kevin Clearly, Elizabeth Chard, people like that, that knows what's going on. When you get talking to other people it brings back memories and things like that. Whereas as sitting here like this, trying to think of all those days and all those things. If I got into the swing of it I would remember much more.

AB: OK.

Tape ends here