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Kenneth D. Stanton oral history interview by Nancy Hewitt, July 25, 1985

Kenneth D. Stanton (Interviewee)

Nancy A. Hewitt (Interviewer)

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Hewitt: I am speaking with Kenneth Stanton this afternoon, Director of Instructional Media, as part of the USF Silver Anniversary Oral History Project. Let me just ask you first of all, what was your first contact with USF and why did you decide to come here?

Stanton: I went to the University of Florida and received a bachelor's degree there. I am one of the rare breed that you might find around here. I am a true Floridian. When I completed my bachelor's degree at the University of Florida, I went into the United States Army as an officer and served in Vietnam. When I got back from Vietnam, I had originally sought a job in advertising and I was not successful in this area. I wanted to stay in the Tampa and central Florida area. I had some interviews with some ad agencies here in Tampa and was not very successful. I had a friend of mine who is currently a faculty member here. We are both from our little home town. We were neighbors. He had just completed his master's degree at Temple University, and he was looking for a job. So he said, "What about the new university in Tampa?" And I said, "Well, I doubt they have anything for me, but let's go over there and see." So he was a broadcaster at that time. So we came here to the division and each of us had an interview that was unannounced. He, with the radio and television operation we had here at the time, and me with the director of the division at that time, Gary Ichols. To make a long story short, at the end of the day he did not have a job and I did. They needed a graphic artist, which I had no idea of, and that was my training. So shortly thereafter I started here and have been here ever since.
Hewitt: Now that was in the spring of '64 that you actually started working here?

Stanton: Yes.

Hewitt: And what was the need for a graphic artist? What did they say you were going to be doing?

Stanton: Well, the Graphics Department provides all types of services to the University. At that time, it was more instructional in nature than anything else. Any type of graphic service that a faculty member might need, whether it would be a chart, an illustration, or anything for a classroom presentation. In addition, shortly after that, we got involved in television graphics for our television station. The administration obviously has need for brochures and all types of printed material.

Hewitt: So you were working with both faculty and administrative services?

Stanton: And students.

Hewitt: Now when you first arrived, do you remember what your first impressions of USF were after you drove over here for the interview?

Stanton: I had the impression that it was large. The institution was large and very sandy.

Hewitt: Were there any trees or grass by '64?

Stanton: A few. There were some trees, but there wasn't a lot of grass. And there was still in effect some sand dunes around. In fact, just east of the parking lot, adjacent to the Administration Building, there was a large pile of sand that ran the whole length of the parking lot. Students and staff
used to climb over it and run down. There were no hills around here so it was quite a thing to see.

Hewitt: All of the illustrations that I have seen of the University of South Florida that were on early brochures or early catalogues show the University with greenery. Were there any brochures that you know of that showed it with sand or were all of the pictures made with the trees and grass painted in?

Stanton: I know the photographs that we used, or the illustrations, we went to great lengths to find some area or some view of whatever we wanted that had some grass and some trees. That was a real effort on our part to find that. It was hard to do, too.

Hewitt: After you arrived in '64 and began your work as a graphic artist, could you just sort of trace your career here in terms of the kinds of jobs and responsibilities you had from that point on?

Stanton: Well, I started as a graphic artist and went from there, two weeks later, to direct the Graphics department. From there I added a Photography department to my responsibilities. A short time later, we added motion picture productions to those responsibilities. From there it has been a kind of a steady move upward by taking part in television in terms of early promotion of the television station in addition to all the graphics work. During that time the Audio/Visual department was added to my responsibilities that I personally managed. The Audio/Visual department included maintenance, classroom services, and a film library that we were expanding at the time. A short time later we added a dial-access audio/video lab that was located in the College of Education building. We have since moved that. But when we built
that facility, it was a state-of-the-art facility, and I moved over there for a short time to set that up and manage that. Since then the responsibilities that have been added are the responsibilities of the University Media Center, which is a curriculum library for the College of Education, and the non-book materials for the campus. We've recently added an instructional television fix service, which is a service that provides live classroom presentations to remote sites throughout Hillsborough and Pinellas County. About ten years ago, I became the associate director of the division and also the Associate General Manager of WUSF-FM and TV. Just two years ago, we added WUSF in Ft. Myers, a radio and television station. And I am currently serving as Associate General Manager for those facilities also.

Hewitt: So it sounds like both Ed. Resources and your own job grew enormously since you first arrived. When you think back to your first couple of years here, when the campus was much smaller, did you have much individual contact with administrators, faculty, and students in terms of providing services?

Stanton: Yes. I would say then it was not uncommon for me to speak personally with the president two or three times a week depending on what I happened to be working on. Now I may not speak to him for a month. When it was alot smaller, we had alot more personal interaction right up to the president's office and with alot of students. Obviously the student body was much smaller then, and this area was kind of isolated in terms of the community around it. At that time there was only a two lane black top coming out here from Florida Avenue, which had one gas station and the University Restaurant at that time, and that was it. So the place has grown and with it, the
number of faculty, staff, and students on campus. So you lose some of that intimacy that you had there before.

Hewitt: How much influence did the people in Graphics, or what were early Educational Resources, have on programs that were developed?

Stanton: Well, I had an active part in the development of the University in terms of media support. We had a closed circuit system that was installed; our people were involved in writing specifications for classrooms; in developing the type of conduit systems which allowed us to expand the service to the new buildings and the new classrooms. It was the early times, up until about ten years ago, a time of rapid expansion where, in a lot of instances, we really didn't need to worry about whether we were going to get enough money. You were in a building process and you wouldn't worry about where you were going to put the money to do the most good. Of course, that has all changed now. We do worry about where we are going to get the money now. Any expansion, what I like to say, is out of the back pocket.

Hewitt: Now Educational Resources on this campus and Instructional Media is a centralized service. Is that the normal set-up for these kinds of services on University campuses?

Stanton: No. The older traditional universities don't have a centralized service. Each college, and in some cases each agency, has their own media and photographic support. This is a relatively new concept in terms of our education, and one that we try to maintain. We think it is a lot more economical and a lot more efficient to do it this way. The other institutions in the state system, for instance, the smaller universities, have somewhat of a centralized service. The University of Florida and Florida State do not at
all. For instance, in the University of Florida, the graphics operations there . . . I've personally visited seven different graphic operations on that campus the largest of which has twice as many graphic artists as we have in our one single operation. So I think that is probably a good illustration to point out that centralized service does push a dollar a little further.

Hewitt: Now since centralized services are more economical and more efficient, what would be the force that would push toward decentralization?

Stanton: I think tradition. Faculty and administrators that come from the older established universities are not prepared for our centralized service. They like to be able to have their equipment or their own services at their beckoned call. We don't have that type of operation, so therefore there is some criticism from time to time.

Hewitt: John Allen, the first president who was here, was very interested in interdisciplinary education, basic education, general courses, and liberal arts. Did that have an influence on the kinds of services and the kinds of instructional media that were developed initially?

Stanton: No, I don't believe so, in that media--I think it was just at that point we started to blossom on campus. People were becoming alot more aware of what you could do with an overhead projector, film strip projector, and a movie projector and realizing the value of a 16mm film. And of course there were alot of materials being produced and there was the ability to produce the materials cheaply and quickly on campus. We provided those services and the faculty seemed to respond to it in terms of implementing it into their
program. I wouldn't say that it had any kind of effect on what academic programs were introduced on campus.

Hewitt: Was there any connection between Educational Resources, the development of instructional media, and the development of things like the Mass Communications department or broadcasting teaching programs?

Stanton: Not that I recall. No. We participated with them in terms of providing some instructors. Some of our staff members have taught in that area. We have provided some services for years in that area.

Hewitt: What was the impetus for developing a television station at the University?

Stanton: Well the actual planning for that was started before I came.

Hewitt: Oh, as early as '62 or '63?

Stanton: I think it was about '63. The television as a teaching tool was just then, at that time, starting to gain nationwide attention. Since there was already a public broadcasting station in this area, WEDU, it was unusual to want or to need a second station in that area. The station was originally put on the air with the idea that we would serve a different market here in this area. We would serve adults and a college-level type market, whereas WEDU would take care of the kindergarten through the twelfth grade in terms of the educational support in addition to providing the standard PBS format in the evening. We have always attempted to provide a different format in the evening, and currently we only duplicate in terms of their programs, of WEDU, about 25%. We do more local production than WEDU does.
Hewitt: Now one of the statements in the original USF mission had to do with the fact that USF would be an urban university and that community relations would be a very important part of the USF mission. Are things like WUSF television, radio and the stations in Ft. Myers effective extensions of the University into the community, or do they really appeal mainly to students and faculty who are already connected to the University?

Stanton: Well, certainly they appeal to the faculty and students since better than 30% of our programming is directly broadcasted towards the students, through our Open University Program. So that's a large amount of time. In both radio and television stations, it has always been our goal to at least feature fine arts type events, public affairs, and this sort of thing. So the station in Ft. Myers, I think, is more typical of a public broadcasting station. Ft. Myers is the only public broadcasting station serving that area. So our programming would be alot more similar to WEDU, for instance, except that we provide that large segment of time devoted toward Open University programs.

Hewitt: During the first couple of weeks of my arrival here at USF, I was asked to do a television interview on WEDU for a public affairs show. There seems to be an assumption that if you are a faculty member that you automatically can do television shows with great ease. Is there any kind of orientation for faculty who do things like Open University to teach on camera as opposed to teaching in a classroom? I'm not sure the two are necessarily similar. Were there difficulties when the Open University programs first started with getting faculty who either were willing to do television or were comfortable and effective on television?
Stanton: There really isn't a great deal of difference between when we started the Open University program and the way it is now. We still have difficulty sometimes in getting faculty to do those types of programs. The process for selecting them is virtually the same. We do have a series of sessions where we help the faculty member become accustomed to the broadcasting environment. In addition, we use pilot programs where we will tape the faculty member making a presentation and then allow the faculty member to look at it. Sometimes that will take care of whether a faculty member wants to continue or not. Obviously some faculty members do better on television than others. Television, as a general rule, won't improve a faculty member's performance. You have got to want to do it and you've got to feel good about it. I think, given that, you can do well unless you have some unique set of personal circumstances which doesn't allow you to come across on television.

Hewitt: Do you keep the tapes of the Open University courses?

Stanton: We keep the tapes, but only for a specified time period. The time period is, with the approval of the faculty member, I would say that the average amount of time that we keep a tape is three years. As you know, being in an academic area, three years is about all you can take in terms of the relevancy of the material being presented. Then you have to go back and update it. We have updated several of our Open University programs over the years. When the department wants to pull that tape or series, we'll pull it. We are the vehicle. The department or the college presenting the material are the ones that really make that final decision.

Hewitt: Now the other area that I wanted to ask you about was the dial access lab and the sort of technology that is available for students to learn
independently. I know the media center has just been moved from the bottom of the College of Education up to the library. What was the impetus for developing that kind of program and is it possible to keep up with the state of the arts in that kind of programming?

Stanton: When we first designed and installed the dial access lab, the dial access made it possible for a student to come into a lab where several hundred video programs were instantly available. The booths were set up so that a student could tape those programs in addition to his or her responses. Also available are ten different video sources, so we could have ten different video programs available at the dial. Once a student has dialed a program up and it's started, another student could access it, but you would access it at that point where the tape was running. We have changed all that now. That was the old tape-and-reel type of machinery and electronics. Now we have gone entirely to cassettes in terms of the audio portions. None of that is reel-to-reel, it's all on cassettes. For the most part a student will come to the counter now and ask for a specific program. You'll hand a student a cassette and then they go and listen to it at the booth. Things have changed. We have simplified them a great deal. In terms of video, the old system was black and white and the new system is color. We have just completed the installation of it. We have four video sources available for up to 25 students. These are not dialed any longer. They are provided at a set time where a student or a group of students wants to view and they reserve the time. With cassettes and the individual tape machines now that are available, we have gone from a large master control type unit to an individual, more personalized unit. It is possible now in a lot of instances for the students to take the cassettes home and listen to them on their own cassette recorder. We have to be moving into the area, I'm sure soon, where
video cassettes will be available to students, the half-inch variety. I was reading the other day where over a specified market, the population of mainly college people and college-educated people, 40% have video-cassette recorders. That is going to change everything in terms of the video that we provide for the students. We have a lot of our students now who take OU courses, who actually make video tapes off the air and then use them for review.

Hewitt: Now given the shift towards VHS and Beta Max and those kinds of video presentations, will you be able to maintain a film library and move into these new areas?

Stanton: We have maintained a film library, but not to the level that we would like as you probably have been aware of. Funds are not as available like they were in the early years. But the need for 16mm film, I think, is still as great as it was. We can put a projector and a screen into a classroom a lot faster and a lot cheaper than we could put a video recorder or video play-back machine on a monitor into a classroom. The color monitors are expensive and playback machines are expensive compared to a 16mm film. It is still cheaper for a faculty member and easier to carry a 16mm to some remote spot and play it, then it is to lug the other two pieces of equipment. So we are not there yet in terms of doing away with 16mm film. The quality of the projection is still much better in terms of large screen, even though there have been some truly remarkable innovations in projected television.

Hewitt: Given how much Educational Resources has expanded in the time that you have been here, what would you say have been the most important positive develop-
ments and what would you say have maybe been the biggest problems in terms of developing Ed. Resources?

Stanton: I think the movement towards high technology in terms of the services. The instructional television fix service for one. The expansion of our broadcast services. The availability of recording equipment, both video and audio, cheap recording equipment, to a faculty member. The ability for that faculty member to use it in the field. 15 years ago the only thing you could do was go out and take 16mm movies and to edit 16mm film, and the expense and time involved in that was considerable. Now a small video recorder and a camera can go out in the field and tape something, and they can edit it on the spot. It is remarkable what you can do now in terms of recording audio and video. I think that is probably the greatest increase we have had.

Hewitt: Is it possible, given the growth of the University and the incredible changes in technology that seem to be occurring, to keep up with all those changes at a state university like South Florida?

Stanton: Well, we are trying very hard to do that. For instance, our staff are not generalists. They have specific responsibilities and in a lot of cases they have specific training. Then to bring all these people together I think is where Educational Resources has its strong point. So that if there is a given task, be it producing a video program or even a simple illustration for a classroom presentation, you can bring a lot of professionals to bear on that project and truly make it a real fine product to be used in the classroom.
Hewitt: Thank you very much for taking your time to speak with us today on this Silver Anniversary Oral History Project.

Stanton: You are welcome.