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Finding aid for the Robert Raz and Alberta Massingill oral history collection Collection 339

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Department

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Summary Information

Repository:	Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department
Title:	Robert Raz and Alberta Massingill oral history collection
ID:	Collection 339
Date:	2004-2006
Physical Description:	1.4 Linear Feet Five boxes
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The Raz/Massingill Oral History Collection is the result of a Friends of the Grand Rapids Public Library 100th Anniversary Project. It contains interviews with retired staff of the Grand Rapids Public Library conducted in 2004-2006. Those interviewed were librarians, library assistants and administrative, support and specialized staff who worked at the Grand Rapids Public Library. The information from the interviews pertains to the personal history of the interviewee, history of the Grand Rapids Public Library and the changing field of library science in general.

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Biographical / Historical

The Robert Raz and Alberta Massingill Oral History Collection had its inception in the one hundredth anniversary (100th Anniversary) of the Ryerson Library Building. There were several projects related to the celebration of this anniversary, including the opening of the Ryerson Building cornerstone, a week of public presentations and an exhibit on the history of the Ryerson Building. Those organizing the celebration also decided that it would be important at that time to begin to preserve the memories of the former library staff. Jennifer Morrison, a library assistant in the local history department, had the appropriate experience with oral history and was chosen to gather histories from retired library staff members. Three oral history interviews with current or former staff members had also been done by former City Historian Gordon Olson, who authored the book "Free Library for Everyone : the History of the Grand Rapids Public Library." The project started with a grant from the Friends of the Library and later received support from the Ryerson Foundation.

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Scope and Contents

All interviewees were asked for some basic biographical background. Special attention was given to any kind of educational or career background in libraries. The interviews focused primarily, however, on the narrator's career at Grand Rapids Public Library. Each was asked to discuss such things as the departments they worked in, the projects they worked on, the people they worked with and physical and organizational changes they had observed.

A special effort was also made to document developments over time in the philosophy and technology of library science which the interviewees observed during their careers. So each was asked about such things as their views on changes in patronage and patron requests as well as how and when the first computers and other library and/or office technology were used.

This oral history collection currently has three data elements. These are the interview master cassette tape used only for making usage tapes, at least one usage cassette tape and a typed written transcription of the interview. A fourth element, the release form, is not present in this collection, but is on file.

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Arrangement

An interview number was assigned to each interviewee as their interviews were taken. The collection is arranged in numerical order by the interview number.

Some interviews included more than one session. But, the interview number is used for all parts of the interview, including the master and usage tapes, the transcription and any ancillary materials which exist or may be added to the collection associated with that interview.

Each interview results in at least three items that are added to the collection 1. a user audio cassette tape UT (or copy) 2. a master audio cassette tape MT, used only to make user tapes 3. a typed transcript of the interview

Some interviews have several tapes, with tapes for different dates, if multiple sessions were required, and with more than one tape for longer sessions.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Department

111 Library Street NE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

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URL: <http://www.grpl.org>

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Friends of the Grand Rapids Public Library, Ryerson Library Foundation; accession number 2009.026.

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Related Materials

Related Materials

Coll. 109, GRPL Administrative Archives, may contain additional information which documents the work of an individual interviewed for Coll. 339 or may contain a photograph of them and their work environment.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Library employees -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids -- Biography
- Library science -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids -- History
- Public libraries -- Michigan -- Grand Rapids
- Grand Rapids (Mich.) -- History
- oral histories
- Grand Rapids Public Library (Grand Rapids, Mich.)

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Vanden Englel, Helen

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Ward, Bessie

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Collection Inventory

Usage Audio Cassette Tapes, 1-9

Gibout

General

Betty worked at GRPL from 1970 to 2000. Her interview begins with her library work in the Upper Peninsula. After coming to Grand Rapids she worked in a variety of departments including the Bookmobile, the Ottawa Hills branch and the Local history department. The second tape begins with Betty's transfer to the local history department and continues through retirement and post retirement volunteer work.

Title/Description	Instances	
Session 1, Gibout, Betty; May 27, 2004. (1 tape)	Box 1	Folder 1-1

Session 2, Gibout, Betty; June 1, 2004; Interview continues (1 tape). Box 1 Folder 1-2

Raz

General

Bob was the director of the GRPL from 1979 to 2004. In this interview he begins with what he remembered of his mother's career as library director in New Buffalo, Michigan and continues through his career to retirement. In this second interview, Bob focuses less on his personal experiences and more on his thoughts on libraries in general. He responds to some of the same questions he responded to in a 1979 Grand Rapids Press interview.

Title/Description	Instances	
Session 1, Raz, Bob; June 22, 2004 (2 tapes).	Box 1	Folder 2-1
Session 2, Raz, Bob; June 29, 2004 (2 tapes).	Box 1	Folder 2-2

Samuelson

General

Linda was head of the Grand Rapids Area Council for the Humanities for seventeen years. The Humanities Council had a partnership with GRPL from 1999 to 2004. She discusses the history of the council as well as her role in it. She also touches on her career with the Grand Rapids City Commission.

Title/Description	Instances	
Samuelson, Kinda; June 24, 2004 (2 tapes).	Box 1	Folder 3

Patterson

General

Roger worked for GRPL from 1955 to 1989. He spent time in several of the branches, most notably Ottawa Hills, as well as in the History and Travel department at Main. He shares his experiences with GRPL as a child, his background, education and career at GRPL. In his first interview, Roger gave an overview of his life and he answers follow up questions in the second.

Title/Description	Instances	
Session 1, Patterson, Roger; August 8, 2004 (1 tape).	Box 1	Folder 4-1
Session 2, Patterson, Roger; August 17, 2004 (2 tapes).	Box 1	Folder 4-2

Stocks

General

Bernice was employed by GRPL between 1942 and 1982. She graduated from South High School in 1933, went to Davenport and then worked in the GRPL business office through three of the libraries directors.

Title/Description	Instances	
Stocks, Bernice; March 7, 2005. (1 tape).	Box 1	Folder 5

Field

General

Tat initiated the Lakeland Library Cooperative as a grant project in the early 1970s and continued with it until her retirement in 1997. She describes the development of LLC as well as her earlier career at GRPL.

Title/Description	Instances	
Field, Harriet (Tat); March 16, 2005. (2 tapes) No transcription yet.	Box 1	Folder 6

Idema

General

Celine's association with GRPL started as a ten year old confined to her bed for a year with illness and benefiting from the Sick Child's program administered by Mae Quigley. She began her career here in the children's department at West Side in 1957 and then Main and finished it as head of the local history department. She retired in 1981. (Celine sent us some photos after her interview that show her and other GRPL staff in historic dress. These have been added to Coll. #109)

Title/Description	Instances	
Idema, Celine; March 28, 2005. (2 tapes).	Box 1	Folder 7

Vanden Engle

General

Mary Jean was trained as a teacher but quickly realized she was more interested in library work. She started part time on the information desk in 1971, was promoted and worked in the history and travel department with Roger Patterson, was laid off for over a year during the early 1980s budget crunch, then came back full time in the periodicals department and retired in 1992.

Title/Description	Instances	
Vanden Engle, Helen; March 29, 2005 (1 tape).	Box 1	Folder 8

Van Kampen

General

Don worked for the GRPL between 1969 and 1999. Taking his cue from the title of this collection, he came to his interview prepared to discuss Robert Raz and Alberta Massingill. The result is a thoughtful analysis of the two directors. He also shares an outline of his own career here.

Title/Description	Instances	
VanKampen, Mary Jean; May 10, 2005.	Box 1	Folder 9

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Usage Audio Cassette Tapes, 10-16

Walsh

Title/Description	Instances	
Walsh, Don; June 9, 2005 (2 tapes).	Box 2	Folder 10

Ward

General

Bessie started working at the Main branch of GRPL in December 1954 as a page earning seventy-five cents an hour and in three months was head of the Burton Street branch. She worked in several other branches and then came downtown to become head of public relations, during which time she initiated a series of Black History Month programs, and subsequently became the library's first volunteer coordinator. She retired in 1990.

Title/Description	Instances	
Ward, Bessie; October 4, 2005 (2 tapes).	Box 2	Folder 11

Turner

General

Don was in the maintenance department at GRPL between 1969 and 2000. He reached the position of night shift supervisor which he held until a city study resulted in a demotion to crew leader. He was responsible for maintenance work in all of the branches and the bookmobiles.

Title/Description	Instances	
Turner, Don; December 6, 2006 (2 tapes).	Box 2	Folder 12

Owens

Title/Description	Instances	
Nancy Owens (1) No transcription yet.	Box 2	Folder 13

Baldrige

Title/Description	Instances	
William Baldrige (2) No transcription yet.	Box 2	Folder 14

Warner

Title/Description	Instances	
Marcie Warner (2)	Box 2	Folder 15

Vettese

Title/Description	Instances	
Richard Vettese (1) No transcription yet.	Box 2	Folder 16
Master Audio Cassette Tapes, 1-9	Box 3	

Master Audio Cassette Tapes, 10-16

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Transcriptions 1-12 + partial 15

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