

## Oral History: Mary Holmes / 2019/11/8

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**File name: 2019\_11\_8\_MaryHolmes\_transcript****Key**

**AFL:** = Interviewer, Anne-Flore Laloë

**MH:** = Participant, Mary Holmes

[??? at XX:XX] = inaudible word or section at this time

**AFL:** So we're here today, it's Friday 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2019. We're at EMBL Heidelberg in Germany, and this interview is part of the oral histories programme of the EMBL Archive. My name is Anne-Flore Laloë, and I'm the archivist at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory. Now please could you introduce yourself?

**MH:** My names is Mary Holmes. I was Librarian at EMBL from 1974 to 1998 and I've come here, I think, to talk about my impressions of EMBL and my experiences here, and I'll leave it to Anne-Flore to tell me what I'm meant to say.

**AFL:** Fantastic! This is great. So you arrived in 1974.

**MH:** Yes.

**AFL:** So how did that happen? That was the year that EMBL –

**MH:** Started. Yes. Well I had been a librarian. When I first left university I had worked in a public library for a year and then I worked at Birkbeck College and the University of London for five years, and then my husband went to America as a post-doc and I worked in Boston University School of Education Library for a year, and then I had my first child, and I always thought I would go back to librarianship when my children grew up but then Ken took a job in Heidelberg and I felt that I most likely would never work again because at that stage I could speak no German. And so I didn't work ... I worked teaching children in Kindergarten English, and I did some work for the Springer Verlag editing articles and books, but I didn't do anything to do with librarianship. But I kept in touch with, I used to have the Library Association Record, and I saw that things were changing and that people in libraries now had computers, and then it was decided that EMBL should come to Heidelberg, and we knew the first director because he had worked with my husband in Cambridge, and also he had examined him for his PhD many years before, and we asked him round for a meal to our house, and he was talking about how EMBL was going to

be set up, he hoped, and he said to me, 'I want you to be the librarian.' And I said, 'I can't possibly do it. I have four children and I haven't worked in libraries for eleven years, and I see that libraries are now computerised and I don't know anything about computers.' And so he said, 'I don't want a computerised library.' And Germany in actual fact was much behind England and America in this. Libraries did not have computers in them at that stage, but I didn't know that. And so I kept on saying to my husband, 'We must speak to John and tell him I can't do this job.' I had worked for him a bit before, as a copy editor for the Journal of Molecular Biology, so he knew me a bit, but not very well. And every time I tried to bring up the fact that I couldn't possibly work for him, he just would look at the ceiling and talk about something else. And then suddenly I got a phone-call from somebody called Mr Embling who came here for a year as an administrator, as Head of Administration while they were looking for somebody else, he'd retired from the Department of Education and Science as a British civil servant, and he could speak very good German, and so he phoned me up and said, 'Sir John Kendrew says you're going to be the librarian. We have a lot of money but we have no scientists, or very few, and we have decided it would be a good idea if some money was spent on journals for the library, and perhaps you could order 30 journals, and back numbers for five years.' So I said, 'Well ... I have no idea what you're going to be working on. Could you tell me what subjects people are going to be doing?' And so he told me I think structural studies, instrumentation, cell biology and I think that was about it. <5:00> So I thought, well they're not offering me any money, that's fine, I can do this and it doesn't mean that I'm going to be the librarian. So I went around various libraries in Heidelberg to see where they got their journalism from, the Max Planck, the *Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum*, I even went down to ... we were staying in Geneva so I went to the World Health Organisation library and I went to Basel to look at the Biozentrum, and so I took my list of 30 journals, and found Springer, the Springer book sellers in Berlin, and at that stage Waltraud Ackermann had just started I think, and so she helped me order these journals. So OK, I'd done that. My youngest child had just started kindergarten so this was an advantage, because I had the mornings off anyway, and so I said, 'Well OK, but they're going to come and what are you going to do with them?' And so they said, 'We'll buy you some cupboards'. And at that stage, Mr Embling was in the *Krebsforschungszentrum* and Sir John was in some huts up on the *Kernphysik* site, and there were I suppose about six scientists, I'm not quite sure, some in the *Krebsforschungszentrum* and some up in the huts up here, and so I said, 'But when these journals come, somebody's going to have to register that they've arrived and see that the bills are paid.' So Mr Embling said, 'Oh, you can have a table in the corner of my room.' And so I had two cupboards and a table in the corner of his room, and I used to go two mornings a week, and register everything that had come. And then the whole thing was getting a bit ridiculous, and I used to actually put them in boxes and send them round to the six scientists so that they could all have a look at them, and just very luckily at that time, somebody called Hans Weiss, a scientist, a group leader, was coming, and the *Krebsforschungszentrum* wouldn't have him working in the *Krebsforschungszentrum* because he was working on something called *Neurospora crassa*, which could have infected their cells. And so EMBL looked around and they found what was called the *Alte Biochemie* in *Akademiestraße*, in the middle of town, where Bunsen had worked as a professor. And he still had his experimental labs at the top of the building, and a lot of it was taken over by the

*Dolmetscher-Institut*, and there had been I think a mineralogy group there, and they were just moving out, and so they said I could have a room in the *Alte Biochemie* and put my books there. So I rushed off to Speyer, where there was a library supplier, and bought shelves, and set up my one little room, and then all the journals came there. And gradually over the time, because this was '74, and the lab wasn't built till the end of '77, and eventually I had three little rooms all combining with each other, and all the stuff came there, and then I think about five or six groups of scientists, Gareth Griffiths was one of them, they all moved into the *Alte Biochemie* as well, so this was all expanding, and then people would say to me, 'Look at the plans.' I still hadn't said I was taking the job.

**AFL:** But were you paid at this point?

**MH:** No. For a year I wasn't paid. Nobody even realised I was there. I was just going in two mornings a week, and eventually it became every morning, and then Mr Embling suddenly said to me at the beginning of, I think it was October 1975, he said, 'Do you know you're not on the pay list?' So I said, 'Well it doesn't matter because I'm not really doing the job.' And so he then put me on the pay list and then I worked half-time, worked in the mornings. So for two years I had my little library there, and once a week they used to have an internal seminar there and people would take it in turns to talk about the work they were doing. Because people were so spread out, they didn't really know each other very well. And so then eventually the lab was being built and I <10:00> could say, one thing I did say was the library looks fine but I think we should have a library store, because this isn't going to be big enough for a long time. So underneath, in the cellar, in the main building, they built the library store, which at first was empty. And then in 1977, in December, we moved into the new lab. So that's how it started.

**AFL:** Wow. So three years of pre-library.

**MH:** Pre-library, yeah.

**AFL:** And then arriving here.

**MH:** Yeah.

**AFL:** So arriving, I think Sir John Kendrew moved in November, and so the library moved in December, and then the group leaders were all arriving, so what was it like on campus in end of '77?

**MH:** Here? Well it was great! It was very exciting. And of course I was having to choose furniture for the library, and John Kendrew very much wanted to have little green lamps like they had in Cambridge college libraries. We couldn't find any green lamps, we didn't ever have green lamps. We had some brown things that looked a bit like hairdryers, but they were OK. And the first lot of tables and chairs that arrived, they hadn't asked me what tables and chairs I wanted, and they were

absolutely horrible. They were sort of reddish brown and they had plastic tops I think, and I don't think they all came; I think they showed me a sample and I said, 'No, I'm not having that!' And so in the end they were a much lighter wood and we had green chairs I seem to remember, and then we had all the journal cupboards in the middle and then there was a bit where people could sit down in comfort and read the new journals, which we used to put on the table when they first came into the library.

**AFL:** And so this location of the library, it's where the library still is?

**MH:** It still is, but it's about a quarter of the size.

**AFL:** On the second floor.

**MH:** Yes, exactly the same place, but it's now only I should say about a quarter of the size. And even before that, the library store had been taken ... as long as I was here, we still had the library store. In fact the library store got completely full and to start with we just had ordinary shelves, but then we got the rolling shelves, but they were still completely full. And then in 1989, after the wall came down, there were a lot of people in East Germany who were very short of space ... very short of journals I mean, and we were very short of space, so we sent out advertisements to say that if they could collect the journals, and these were the things we wanted to get rid of, they could have them for free. So some of them came with lorries, and collected some of the chemical journals that we discovered we didn't really need, and took them away.

So then it had to be decided what the library was going to be called, and John Kendrew had been a friend of Leo Szilard, and he'd wanted this road to be called Leo Szilard Road.

**AFL:** Ah, *Meyerhofstraße*.

**MH:** Yes. But then the Heidelberg town council said they wanted someone who'd worked in Germany. And because Meyerhof had worked in the Max Planck, it was called *Meyerhofstraße*, so he decided that it should be the Leo Szilard Library. And he gave me pictures of him that he had got from somewhere or other, and we put them up on the wall. And Mrs Szilard did actually come and visit us. It would have been lovely to have met him. I would have loved to have met him. But he unfortunately had died before the library was here. But she did come, and looked all around. And amazingly, she knew a lot ... in those days people from the *Kernphysik* used to come and have lunch here, in our canteen, and she amazingly knew a lot of the people from the *Kernphysik* because he'd been a physicist and there were lots of Hungarians there, so it was a very nice visit.

**AFL:** So this is, the canteen just above the library?

**MH:** That's right, it was above the library in those days, yeah. And I think it actually didn't have its naming <15:00> ceremony till 1978. Well I suppose we came in 1977, so that would have been pretty reasonable. And then, in 1978, I thought I ought to have somebody working there with me because it was difficult, I was still working only half-time and also for holidays and things when there was nobody there for a long time, and so Susan Mottram came and worked with me for nine years, and that's the start of the –

**AFL:** ...Start of that cycle.

**MH:** Mm.

**AFL:** So I'm quite interested in talk about how the collection develops, because molecular biology is a new subject, Jack Embling had given you a couple of general areas to look at, but how do you build up a library on a subject that –

**MH:** We had a library committee. At the beginning I was doing it on my own, but particularly in 1982 when Philipson came, he made John Tooze my boss, which was fine 'cause I knew him quite well anyway.

**AFL:** John Tooze was Scientific Coordinator or something like that?

**MH:** Well he was Head of EMBO at that stage. He did become, with Philipson, that's true, he became Scientific Administrator I think he was called, but he was a very ... intelligent man, he knew about everything, and if I asked him a question he was very helpful and I always knew he'd give me the right answer. But at the beginning I think, as new groups came in, and if they were working on something that I didn't have, for instance developmental biology hadn't been part of it, and Janni Nüsslein and Eric Wieschaus were working on developmental biology, one went and asked them, 'What do you need?' And so gradually one built up the journal selection. And books, I think I very much did off my own bat. If people came and asked for something, of course one got it. But I used to read through the *Nature* book reviews every week and if you saw something looked a good book, then we would buy it. I think one got a good feeling about it. And of course electron microscopy, that was a big subject at the beginning, and they bought this thing called a STEM, I'm not quite sure what it stood for, scanning transmission electron microscopy I think, and we had nothing about that at all because it was a new subject, but then Arthur Jones was in charge of the STEM and he knew some of the things that one should get, so gradually as things came along, one built it up. And also looking round other libraries, you could see what they'd got. And particularly books, I think was just ... I mean people did borrow books but it was the journals that was the most important thing.

**AFL:** So what were the libraries that you would discuss with, were they most locally or other –

**MH:** Mostly local, I think, except for my trip to Basel, and if I ever went anywhere – I went down to Lausanne once, I mean that was just on a visit to some friends, but I went into the university library there and looked at what they had, and if one was in a place where there was a library, one would ... and of course at the beginning I was trying to think of a classification system and I went through all the classification systems and I can't remember what the DKFZ had but it was something that I thought was too complicated. So in the end I made up my own classification system, because there was Dewey and there was Bliss and there was Library of Congress and all these things, but they were really much too generalised in a way. Although DKFZ should have been good because it was the same sort of subject matter, but ... in the end I just made a much simpler one, and they're still using it I think.

**AFL:** I think they are, yes. I in turn use some of it for the archive.

**MH:** Oh, OK.

And so gradually we <20:00> built up and then I remember a man coming to sell us a label sticking ...

<Laughter>

And every Friday afternoon I used to do my labelling!

<Laughter>

But he was hysterically funny, because he was trying to show us how to do it and he was very clumsy somehow, and he kept on saying, '*Es läuft von alleine*, Mrs Holmes'. It was perfectly it did not *läuft von alleine* at all! Absolutely hysterical! And then gradually of course we realised that we couldn't be independent, so I went down to the University Library and asked if we could borrow books from them.

**AFL:** So interlibrary loan?

**MH:** Yes. And they made me what was called an institute librarian, because all the institutes in Heidelberg have their librarians, like the physics department and the chemistry department and then they meet about three times a year, or they used to. And the chief librarian would talk to us all and think up new ideas and then Susan and I felt that actually although Sir John did not want a computerised library, we should actually ... I felt I should do it for her, because she'd worked in London for the British Library and started using a computer, and so we went along to the computer department and said, 'Can you please show us how to use a computer.'

**AFL:** So up to here you'd had card catalogue?

**MH:** Yes, we had a card catalogue. In fact all the time that I was there we had a card catalogue, although we started putting it onto the computer. And so they very kindly showed us how to use, I think the computers were called Nords, they were a Norwegian –

**AFL:** Yeah, I have read that name in a report. Do you remember who the head of computing was at that point?

**MH:** The head of the computing was Richard Herzog. But there was somebody, a Dutchman, who showed us how to use it; he was very kind and spent a lot of his time. I can't remember his name. Well of course we knew we weren't going to get a computerised system from John Kendrew, so that was no point in thinking about it, but then four scientists came and said, 'We want you to use online literature searches, we want you to set up online literature searches' so I had to then go to Sir John Kendrew again and say, 'Would you mind, this is not making a decision but would you mind if we had a demonstration from one of the firms that organise this?' and they were prepared to come and show us, obviously, how it worked. So then I had a bit of difficulty with the computer department because Richard Herzog wouldn't help me set up something so that this man could do the demonstration. But there was a student who worked with Nick Strausfeld called Peter Speck and I was telling him of my problems and he was very good, he was Nick's computer man, and he said, 'Don't worry, leave it to me. I'll do it for you.' So in some lecture room he set the whole thing up for me and this man called Mr [??? at 23:57] came and showed everybody who was interested how it worked. And Susan and I thought well, we can most likely manage it, and so I went back to Sir John Kendrew again and told him. He was worried it was terribly expensive, and I said, 'It's like a telephone. You only pay for what you use.' So he said well he couldn't possibly have all the scientists using this. That would be much too expensive. If just we, the two librarians, did the searches, that would be alright, because he could be in control of it. So this was really ridiculous because I mean we didn't really know what the people wanted, so we had to have them sitting beside us, it must have been so frustrating for them, while we did the searches for them. But anyway, nobody complained and at least they were glad that they'd got it. And so then we had a little room next to our office which had two terminals in it, and we would work on this. <25:00> And so that was, for both of us I think, very nice, because we were learning something completely new.

And then there was somebody called Ken Murray. Have you heard of him? He started the data library actually, in a way.

**AFL:** Yes, with ... was it just before Greg Hamm?

**MH:** No Greg Hamm was here at the same time, but I think he was a big help because he was a geneticist, he was a very big help to Greg Hamm. They worked on it together.

**AFL:** So here we're starting to get about the early eighties?

- MH:** Yes. And he came in and looked at our set-up and said, 'This is ridiculous. You're working in the stone age. You've got to have a better system.' And because he was quite an important person, he could go to the computer department and tell them that he had to give us a better set-up.
- AFL:** Because as well as the literature searches, you were starting to put the catalogue entries?
- MH:** No. We still hadn't got, because the idea was to buy a library system, and what we thought we would do was to have the same one as the university library, because then it would make us compatible with them. And I went to look at various demonstrations of it. It had a wonderful system for journals, but in the end neither Kendrew nor Philipson would give us the money for a library system. And so then when Kafatos came, I tried again and he was absolutely wonderful, he just said, 'Give me three *Angebots*, and that's fine. And by that time, to start with Susan Mottram was there for nine years and then Jane List, who was very, very good with computers. She had had her own computer, she worked for about 18 months I think because she decided she had got to go back to her boyfriend in England. But she was very helpful to me with advancing the computer ideas, and she walked into the library office and looked at my electric typewriter and what would be her electric typewriter and said, 'What on earth is that?' And I said, rather weakly, 'An electric typewriter'. She said, 'I can't work with that' and she picked it up and took it out and went to the computer department and said, 'Can you please give me a computer?' A terminal anyway. So I learnt a lot from her. And then when she left, Ingeborg Lehmann came, she's now Ingeborg Lehmann, she came and she'd just come out of library school, and so she was also very keen on using computers, and she was very keen to have a database system called Star, which had the advantage that they had an office in Speyer, and you could set up your own library system a little bit with it, and she also had a friend who worked at Dornier, which was an aircraft firm I think, near the Bodensee, who had used this system for her library, which was a much, much bigger library than ours, but it was very flexible, and so I gave Ingeborg the job of setting up a library system with Star. I think when David and Regina came, they decided it was too complicated and changed to something else.
- AFL:** Oh, did they? So David and Regina came –
- MH:** They succeeded us because we both left at about the same time. Her nine years came to an end and I got to retirement age in 1998, and so we got the two new people came.
- AFL:** So it's surprising to me that it took almost 20 years before –
- MH:** We were terribly – well, no, for German systems we were not terribly backwards. But for American and English systems we were very, very backwards.

**AFL:** It speaks a lot I think to your skill to be able to do this, to run a library for an international lab for 20 years with no computer system!

**MH:** I know, if you look back on it! But I suppose you see there weren't even ... by the time <30:00> we left, you were just getting e-journals, but that didn't start until ... yes, the middle of the 1990s I think.

**AFL:** So I guess with that in mind, I'm trying to imagine what one of these literature searches that you would have carried out in the early eighties, with the scientist next to you, what did that look like? How did that work?

**MH:** Well it all used to come up on the screen but then it would all be printed out with a whole list of articles on a particular subject that they wanted.

**AFL:** And so you would connect to a database that –

**MH:** Yes, we had about three of them that we'd connect to I think, and according to ... the first one was called Dialog, I think it was run by Boeing or something, I'm not quite sure, I think it was Boeing, and that was the biggest one for a long time. And then there was another one in Switzerland that was a name I can't remember, which we didn't use so much, but I think we used Dialog a lot of the time. And ... I have to look up ... and strangely enough I thought when I leave, how ... because I often would look up things for myself... how on earth am I going to survive, because how I can get all this information? Would it be alright to remember the passwords and use it?

**AFL:** <Laughs>

**MH:** But by the time I left in 1998, the web had become so important that you didn't really need it anymore, and of course I presume, I'd have to ask Regina and David exactly when it was that the scientists began doing their own searches, because I'm sure it must have been pretty soon after we left.

**AFL:** And then I guess the databases that became available were quite different and were set up to ... do them themselves.

**MH:** Yes. Well ... Bio-something ... I think it's quite easy now, you can just go in and find any sort of journal, and I just didn't really think of it but Ken wanted an article of something, from something that they didn't have in the Max Planck, and of course what we used to do, we used to belong to something called Adonis, and this would give you any reprints from any journal that you wanted, and you would just order these reprints and they would come, and ... so I went to the librarian in the Max Planck and said, 'Can you get this reprint?' and of course I'd sort of forgotten, because by the time I was leaving this could have also happened, she just looked it up on the computer and got the article and gave it to us! It's all so much easier now than it was in those days. And we did actually at one stage ask if we could have a

terminal in the library that people could use, and we got a laptop, not an Apple. Because I had to get something under €1,000 I think, 'cause otherwise it had to go through the ... Roy Ormond, who was then head of computing, didn't want me to have it. He was quite controlling, he liked to have control of everything, but I could order it if it was less than €1,000 because it didn't have to go through the purchase committee. And stupidly enough, we put it out there I think during the week, we didn't chain it down, and by the Monday it had gone.

**AFL:** Astonishing!

**MH:** So somebody had come in and pocketed it over the weekend. So after that we never ... we saw that the two Macintoshes were firmly chained and ... because they were much bigger computers in those days than they are now, not like the little laptops that you can get.

**AFL:** So you mentioned earlier the library committee, so the library committee still exists.

**MH:** It does, does it? It's Toby Gibson, so I –

**AFL:** Toby Gibson is the –

**MH:** Well Toby Gibson was on it then, yeah.

**AFL:** OK, wow!

**MH:** I mean not at the very beginning, but ... well that one had somebody from every programme.

**AFL:** And how about, what was the relationship with the sites? Did you serve Grenoble and Hamburg? <35:00>

**MH:** Oh yes, we had a lot of communication with them. We used to get things for them. But they had their own little libraries I think.

**AFL:** Grenoble does. I wonder whether Hamburg might have used the DESY Library at all?

**MH:** I only went up to Hamburg fairly recently when they had their fortieth anniversary, and I think ... I was only there for a few hours and I didn't look around. Actually Ken wants to go up to Hamburg and see what's happening to all the new work that's going on there, so some time we'll go up and have a look at it.

**AFL:** So the library committee still exists, it still steers the sorts of things that a library should be doing, and actually one of the things you were saying earlier of how to

communicate with the researchers to know what the library should offer is still one of the key roles, the library committee is liaising on these subjects.

**MH:** It was quite useful. I can't remember exactly what it was that somebody in Kai Simons' group wanted, and he was being very, very pushy about it, but I thought it wasn't a good idea, partly because things were changing so quickly. And so I said, 'Well you'd better come to the library committee meeting.' And so he came, and we talked about all sorts of things and I can't remember what his name was, I said, 'Now, what about your project?' And he said, 'Oh, well I was talking to my brother yesterday and he tells me it's now out of date so we're not going to ...' And it was literally like that, things were changing. Particularly with e-journals, because I think all the publishers were so worried they were going to lose money, and they kept changing the ballpark as it were or the goalposts. And so I was quite pleased at that stage that I was going to retire, because it was so difficult to make a decision about anything.

**AFL:** So this is a great history, overview of the library. I want to ask you more generally about EMBL then. How was it like socially, how was it like –

**MH:** Well it was fantastic! I mean it was really absolutely wonderful. I mean there weren't so many people but we still had the parties, but it did mean, because there weren't so many people one got to know everybody, and so it was really amazing and people from so many different nations and everybody was very friendly and it was a great life.

With the journal ... that were how the unbound journals were kept, it was alphabetical, so under W, I think it was near [??? at 38:23], as the journal was then called, we had a box with a bottle of whisky in it and four small glasses, and this bottle of whisky was for emergencies.

<Laughter>

When people came in and said their contract hadn't been renewed, we rushed to get the whisky.

<Laughter>

**AFL:** In the W's.

**MH:** And then somebody called Tom something came in, his ... yes, his contract hadn't been renewed one Friday afternoon, I remember, I rushed to get the whisky and it was empty. Somebody had found it!

<Laughter>

But we managed to find, I think in our cupboard in the library office, we had a bottle of some liquor or something, so we gave him a little of the liquor instead!

<Laughter>

**AFL:** That sounds like a very supportive environment.

**MH:** Yeah!

**AFL:** I should go check the W's in the library!

**MH:** <Laughs>

**AFL:** That might be the thing to do!

**MH:** And in one of the ... to start with we used to have just a little book lift between the library and the library store underneath, and then one of the lab Christmas parties there was this film about, a very good film, I really don't <40:00> know who had these films, you didn't get any of them? You did? This one, there was one I remember climbing the north face of the lab, and there were people – I mean they turned the thing over, they had people climbing up and into Arthur Jones's room, with crampons and various things, 'cause there was the mountaineering club. And the other, I think it was the same film, they had on the journal cupboards, I mean they were sort of like this, and then they had these slats, and the most recent journal was on the outside and the old ones were in the compartment, and so they had people lying on the tops of all these journal cupboards and then they were being carried off dead, carried off and put into the book lift, except I mean it was very clever filming because it really looked as if they were being ... because this was the end of their contracts you see. I don't know whether it's still talked about today, but the end of a contract was an absolute nightmare for anybody.

**AFL:** How so?

**MH:** Well because it was either your three years was coming up, your six years or your nine years – the nine years wasn't so bad because you knew you were going anyway, but the three and the six it was always very worrying, were you going to get a renewal. Do they still have three-yearly reviews?

**AFL:** Yes, we still have three-yearly reviews for most positions. It's three plus three plus three, or five plus four for head positions, departments. But it sounds as though the renewals were actually really quite ... questionable, they weren't automatic?

**MH:** No, they weren't automatic, they were quite questionable and some people did go after three years and some people went after six years, not so much after six years. I think if you'd managed the three years, you'd get the nine years mostly, but

not automatically. There was always the thought that they might change subjects, they might not be ... well, I mean neurobiology stopped and they all left.

**AFL:** The unit or the people researching it?

**MH:** Yes. There was only one group that was doing neurobiology, and when Philipson came in he wanted to get rid of that group, and eventually the group leader got a job in America and so then everybody from that group went. I think one or two technicians or something – I don't... even that I think, I seem to remember. Gareth Griffiths had been in that group to start with I think, and he then became a group leader, but I think that had happened before the head of the neurobiology went.

It was absolutely amazing. It was a very ... I was very grateful to John Kendrew!  
<Laughs>

**AFL:** For him having forced you to accept the job?

**MH:** Forced me to take the job and for the fact that he said, 'cause he said, 'Literature searches in my library? Over my dead body!' And he was still alive! <Laughs> I think he was helped very much ... well he was pacified a bit because he wanted to know, he asked me a question about a scientist, and so I said, 'Well just wait a moment, I'll find out for you' and I went and looked, I did an online literature search and found out the information and gave it to him, and so he said, 'How on earth did you find that out so quickly?' 'On line literature search!' So I think he was a little bit pacified by that.

**AFL:** Actually seeing what the results were.

**MH:** Yeah.

**AFL:** I just want to probe you on a couple more things. The transition between the Directors General, how was that? So first between John Kendrew and Lennart Philipson, and then between Philipson and ... Fotis Kafatos.

**MH:** Sort of slightly difficult, for me, because John Kendrew had already been a friend of Ken's and mine, and I knew they hated each other.

**AFL:** Kendrew and –

**MH:** John Kendrew and Philipson were big enmity between them, so I didn't ... quite know what to expect. <45:00> And well, John Kendrew went off to Oxford, and Philipson turned up, and one day I went in and there he was sitting in the library. Now John Kendrew had never, to my knowledge, ever sat in the library. I don't even remember him actually looking at journals.

The other thing, which is completely going back, one of the very good things about setting up the library was that John Kendrew had had a very good library in Cambridge, in Peterhouse, where he was a fellow, and he gave me, or gave EMBL, all of his old journals, so we got a lot of back numbers of I should say about ten journals. So that was a big help.

Another was that a Max Planck director, Professor Wieland, was selling off five of his journals, because I think he was getting up to retirement age, so I bought those at a very cheap price, and the other thing was that the library at the Weizman Institute in Israel, they had a lot of things, well, two or three things, not a lot, they felt were redundant, they didn't need anymore, and I did want them. And so they gave me those, so they came over from Israel, and that was very, very nice as a basic to start us up with.

**AFL:** Perfect.

**MH:** So that was good. Anyway, when Philipson came, there he was sitting at a table reading a journal, and I hadn't ever met him before, so I went up and spoke to him and he came into the office and actually very, very quickly we became very good friends, and I got to know his wife and ... but one of the problems was that it was expected that he would hate me because ...because he did tend to dislike people who'd been friends with John Kendrew. And that was one of the reasons for the neurobiology going, and there were quite a lot of people that ... were under pressure from Philipson to leave. I think the only ones that actually went were the neurobiologists, because the others were much more involved in another programme. I know one, Kevin Leonard, he was putting pressure on him, but he was really ... and it was the people that John Kendrew had given permanent contracts to, that's what he didn't like. And of course I'd got a permanent contract, but that was alright because it was decided that people who were in service industries should not come under the nine-year rule. So there was me and the driver, Erich, and the photographers, and various people who were not scientists, it wasn't gonna change for us, the programme wasn't gonna change or anything. But there were various people who were under pressure. I think most of them actually stayed but it was a bit difficult for them. But in actual fact Philipson used to come into the library every day, he didn't always sit at a table, he used to sit sort of balanced on the table where all the new journals were.

**AFL:** OK, just prop himself up.

**MH:** And look through to see what had arrived that day. And so that wasn't really a problem at all. But ... the person who shall not be named had sort of spread it around that I would be having trouble, and there were a whole group of people who wouldn't even look at me. I mean it only happened perhaps for a few weeks or something like that. Because they thought I was a *persona non grata* and so they ... I might be poisonous and infect them with my ... <laughs>

But that just made laugh quite a lot because I knew the whole thing was completely ridiculous.

**AFL:** Of course, and things were just going to blow over.

**MH:** And the other thing I used to do, Frieda used to do the annual reports and the research reports, and she used to –

**AFL:** Frieda...

**MH:** Frieda Leenart, she was very clever with the computer programme that they later had, after Nord, whose name I can't remember ... but because I had done the ... copy editing for John Kendrew <50:00> for the Journal of Molecular Biology, he wanted me always to read it through for the English, so every year I'd have this month or two when I was checking through the research reports and of course John Tooze used to read them through as well so I always felt fairly safe that scientifically they were fine!

<Laughter>

So that was another job that then went with the library job. But then when Philipson came, he changed it because he thought it should be a more professional ... I think for the annual report, I don't know if he did it for the research report, I'm not quite sure, so he had it printed by a real printer, and then gradually it became more professional. Well, I think we got somebody who was a sort of publishing person, Russ Hodge.

**AFL:** Russ Hodge, yeah.

**MH:** And David States

**AFL:** Exactly. That was with the beginnings of OIPA, the Office of International and Public Affairs. I think that was around the late nineties.

**MH:** Yes. That was as I was about to go I think.

**AFL:** So that sounds like quite a ... I'm not sure how to describe that transition between John Kendrew and Lennart Philipson.

**MH:** There was quite of –

**AFL:** Tensions.

**MH:** Yes, there were ... when Philipson first arrived there were quite a lot of tensions. I think Kai Simons was very happy, because he was a Scandinavian and the Scandinavians tended to stick together a bit. But at the beginning there was a bit of tension and of course there was also a little bit of tension because John Tooze then had a new girlfriend, and I'd been a very good friend of John's first wife, and so ... but that was also solved by her coming and working in the library, and she was American and she needed a bit of help and she was quite a lot younger than him and so I think ... that solved itself as well. But there were strange changes going on. But that didn't happen when Fotis Kafatos came.

**AFL:** Yes, so that was more –

**MH:** It was much more calm and he, 'cause he was a much calmer person, I think.

**AFL:** Fotis?

**MH:** Fotis.

**AFL:** Fotis was a calmer person? OK.

**MH:** Well he was not political. He had a very good lab, he was ... different I think. I found him a much easier person, in a way, than either of the other two in some ways.

**AFL:** And I guess you never worked under Iain Mattaj, obviously.

**MH:** No. 'cause I'd left by that time. Fotis was there for a few years after I'd left.

**AFL:** This is fascinating.

**MH:** And I'm sure Iain would have been fine because I knew Iain as a scientist.

**AFL:** Of course, because he had been a user of the –

**MH:** Yeah.

**AFL:** This is fantastic. I'm just going to ask you one last question. Is there anything more that you want to say, a piece of advice, an anecdote, a story, just something about EMBL that stands out?

**MH:** I can't think of ... I mean things have changed so much that it's just unbelievable. I can't imagine. I was very, very grateful that I got this job, which I certainly would have not looked for another librarian job, I don't think. I was very grateful that I got

it in such an interesting stage in the life of a librarian, because you know, I came in with completely traditional old-fashioned method, and then went out on the brink of everything changing.

**AFL:** That's phenomenal.

**MH:** And so this was an incredibly interesting time for all of us I think, for all librarians. It was a very, very interesting time and ... so I'm eternally grateful <55:00> that I got the job.

**AFL:** And that you did so well with it. A lot of how I still experience the library today is, you set those foundations.

**MH:** Yes, but how many people actually get offered the job of setting up a library? I mean it was ... it was incredibly lucky that I was just in the right place at the right time. And at the same time, one got to know so many people and got to know ... and in a way I got to know an awful lot more about science. I mean I'm not a scientist, and I had ... OK, I'm married to a scientist, so I'd heard a lot about it, but ... I hadn't got so much knowledge as ... and also of course reading all the research reports through, I knew what everybody was doing, so I was much more involved in science than I would have been in anything else. So ... it was absolutely great!

**AFL:** Your enthusiasm certainly comes through in this interview, so thank you so much, Mary, for your time.

**MH:** OK.

**AFL:** Thank you.

<End of recording>