

Interview with Erin Bishop  
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Interview # 1: July 28, 2009  
Hosea: Newlyn Hosea, ALPL Volunteer

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Hosea: Welcome. This is July 28, 2009 and this is an interview with Erin Bishop, a member of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. We’re at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library classroom and this interview is part of the Historic Preservation Agency Legacy Project. Welcome Erin and thank you for giving us time in the last few days before you leave the agency. Can you give us just a little bit of your background, education, where you come from and that kind of thing, before you came to the Historic Preservation Agency?

Bishop: Sure. I grew up in Springfield. My parents moved here when I was six months old. My Dad worked for the Department of Transportation and when they opened up the new building downtown, a lot of people from Dixon transferred down here. My Mom taught school in Sherman and grew up out in Chatham. Went to high school at Sacred Heart Academy and then went to college in Helena, Montana, at Carroll College where I studied history and French. I spent a year of my college career, my junior year, in Paris, France at the University of Paris Sorbonne getting a certificate in French. That was part of the requirement to get the BA in French.



**Erin Bishop on the day of interview**

Bishop: Sure. I grew up in Springfield. My parents moved here when I was six months old. My Dad worked for the Department of Transportation and when they opened up the new building downtown, a lot of people from Dixon transferred down here. My Mom taught school in Sherman and grew up out in Chatham. Went to high school at Sacred Heart Academy and then went to college in Helena, Montana, at Carroll College where I studied history and French. I spent a year of my college career, my junior year, in Paris, France at the University of Paris Sorbonne getting a certificate in French. That was part of the requirement to get the BA in French.

Upon graduation, I came back to Springfield to my parents' basement and I had a job at the mall in a clothing store. I took a public history class out at UIS, which was Sangamon State U, where I met Cullom Davis. Cullom was working on the Lincoln Legal Papers and asked if I would be interested in a contract, basically to do a lot of typing, typing of briefs and things. Kind of boring work but, you know, I took it because oh, it was history and it's this Lincoln Legal Papers project. So I still kept the job at the mall.

I probably was on contract for six or eight months, maybe six months, and then I went to Cullom and said I really kind of need a job with benefits and is there anything that you can do. And so they did create a position, or opened a position, but I still had to go through the whole state hiring process. I had to interview for it. There was a chance I wouldn't get it. You know, some PhD. veteran apply for it, I wouldn't get it, but I got it. So I started working for Lincoln Legal Papers so that ...

Hosea: Now at this time, were the Lincoln Legal Papers part of Historic Preservation Agency?

Bishop: They were. It was an odd arrangement. I was actually paid by Sangamon State University, as were several of the staff, but we were housed in the Old State Capitol. So I think it was one of those deals where, kind of, salaries were paid by the University but IHPA provided office space and phones. I'm not sure exactly what the arrangement was. So we were in the Old State Capitol.

Hosea: And what was the actual position you were hired in to?

Bishop: That's a good question. I don't know what I was called. A researcher or assistant.

Hosea: What were your duties?

Bishop: Well, originally it was a lot of office work. There was a field team, mostly men, guys, and they would go out in the field and they would spend the five days of the week out in the field and come home on the weekends. There was always a sense that they were, I don't know, they were higher up than the office staff. There was kind of this little division everywhere: the field staff and the office staff. I always

kind of aspired—because it seemed to me that they were the historians and the researchers—and I wanted to go out in the field; but I would have been the only female and I was only twenty-four, twenty-five. But, what saved me, or got me out there was, I was one of the few people that knew how computers worked. It was the era, you know, I didn't have any computer classes. We did get a computer lab at the college my sophomore year. I struggled to type term papers on the computers that we had, cursing the whole time; I could do it quicker at a typewriter.

But, I kind of got it. That was a phase in that project when they determined to leave microfilm behind and go with CDs. It was a huge ordeal because it took convincing the board. Microfilm was the standard for documentary editing. So to leave microfilm behind was really scary. And what are these things? At that point we were talking about floppies, three by fives, or round CDs. It was a big deal to make that shift. But I could understand the whole database thing and the commands and how to work the computer and that moved me up a lot quicker. I could operate the laptop when we went out to the field. So I got to go to the field. (laughter) I got to go and started on this track where you would go out maybe six weeks or something. You would just go out for the five days and come home on the weekends.

Hosea: And, in general, what would you do?

Bishop: What we were doing in a lot of counties was blind searches, where you withdrew every court case between eighteen- whatever, '30 and '61, whatever Lincoln's law practice was, which I don't remember anymore, searching for any clue that Lincoln was involved in the case. And, photocopying it—very tedious. Once in a while you would find a Lincoln document. But the majority of the time you were just scanning documents for signature, handwriting or his name.

Hosea: And your particular part in that was the care and feeding of the computer?

Bishop: Yeah, and just scanning. I was actually opening up documents and looking at them as well. And that's what we would do, is go through stuff. You know, it was fun, I guess, because of the crew. It was John Lupton, Bill Beard and Dennis Suttles.

Hosea: John Lupton?

Bishop: John Lupton, who is still with the project.

Hosea: And, what would they ...

Bishop: Bill Beard was one of the senior editors, and Dennis Suttles. Then every once in a while, Christopher Schnell came on and I think he is still with the project. Mike Duncan, he's not there any more. So, it was boring but it was fun, I think.

Hosea: At this point, did you have a career path in mind or was this just something you could do right then?

Bishop: No, it was something I could do. It was in my field. I had studied history but I didn't have any sense of what I wanted to do. It was tedious. When we would come back in the office, then what was involved was numbering all the documents and coding everything. Because it was a database system, so, if it was for the plaintiff how to code zero, zero, zero, one and the defendant is zero, zero, zero, two or something like that and then the type of case it was and that had a code. And then all the witnesses had a code and so you were assigning numbers to stuff.

Hosea: About what year are we at now?

Bishop: I graduated in 1990 so we're talking probably '90 to '93.

Hosea: Okay.

Bishop: It was just tedious back in the office. File cabinet after file cabinet after file cabinet of these documents you had to get through and give codes to, all of these names and things and then, there was no sense of accomplishment because you would get a folder done and you would look down and there is, you know, eight hundred more folders to go. It was just mind numbingly boring.

Hosea: And you were in various courthouses around the state of Illinois?

Bishop: Yeah, you would be in courthouses all over and then you would come back and work in the office for a while. A lot of that hinged on if you had any money. So when money would come in, we would hit the road. When there was no money, we would be back in the office. It got a lot more interesting when you got to the point where they were actually editing the cases for publication, but I never got to that point. So when I was about twenty-five, I really just was bored.

I always tell this story, Sandy would die, Sandy ... I have forgotten her name; she still works here. She was in the break room—this was when you could still smoke—and I was sitting in the break room. It was my twenty-fifth birthday and I was bemoaning the fact that I was twenty-five and I don't think I was still living with my parents, but, you know, I'm twenty-five years old and I don't have a boyfriend and I don't a life, you know. She looked at me and she was like, "Honey, I have been here twenty-five years" and she is smoking like a chimney. I just thought, Oh my God, I don't want to die here. I can't stay. I just want more. I want to travel again. I want to go back to Europe and so I started looking at opportunities to go abroad and the one that made the most sense, as far as how to sell it to my parents, was to go to school. But, I really just wanted to go live abroad. I wanted to backpack and be abroad and be a bum. But to tell my parents, I'm leaving a state job, because for them state job was gold and security. I'm going to leave a state job in my chosen field of history, which there aren't history jobs growing on trees, so I can bum around Europe. I just knew it wasn't

going to fly. But if I said, Oh, I'm going on and getting a master's degree, I'm going to graduate school and I'm choosing to go abroad, that would go over well.

That was my plan. My dentist was a Rotarian and the Rotary offers an Ambassadorial Scholarship for graduate study abroad. So he got me an application and I filled it out and I won it that year. It was \$18,000 and I chose to go to Ireland. They had a one year master's program in history at the University of College Dublin, one year from September to September essentially. And it was almost pure research. There were a couple of classes that you took.

Hosea: Research into what?

Bishop: Well, that was the thing. I got over there and had this fantasy that I was going to go into medieval history, but you had to have Latin and you had to have Irish Gaelic and I didn't have either one. So, okay, I guess I'll do nineteenth century because that's what I did here. I stumbled on Daniel O'Connell. Daniel O'Connell was a lawyer. He was a Catholic. He became famous or popular through riding the circuit and stumping. He garnered support and he was effectively the first Catholic elected to the British Parliament. Then he was very instrumental in abolishing the penal laws that were keeping Catholics from owning land, preventing them from entering professions, those sorts of things. So his life very much paralleled Lincoln. That would have been a little bit earlier than Lincoln. He was, I think, 1770s or something, '80s, maybe to 1844. So, no one had studied him as a lawyer. No one had looked at his law career. It was all about politics. No one had taken a great deal of time to look at the types of cases. It was totally what was going on, what the Lincoln Legal Papers were doing. Okay, I'm going to go do that for Daniel O'Connell.

It was very difficult and the uprisings in the 1900s, 1920s they burned down the four courts where all of the legal documents were stored. So, there really weren't a lot of legal documents left to go back and look at but I tried to piece together a sense of his legal career – how he stumped, how he promoted himself politically. There was a particular slander case that was a big deal. So I took at look at that one, and sort of how he garnered political support through his law practice. It was just kind of an angle no one had looked at.

In doing that, you start reading about this life he had. Thirteen kids ... well, they knew he had seven kids. Seven kids, blah, blah, blah. I go to find an article or a book on the wife and there is nothing written on this woman and I'm equating her to Mary Todd Lincoln. I asked my advisor, Can you recommend something on Mary O'Connell and he said, "You know, there's nothing. I can't think of a thing. There's nothing." I'm like, Nothing, not even an article, nothing. There's twelve hundred letters in the archives between the two of them – nothing, can't think of a thing. He said, "But you know what, that would make a great PhD. and if you want to stay I would recommend you for it". I was so flattered to be considered PhD material and I so wanted to stay in Ireland at that point that I said, Okay.

So, there was never this chart or this course that I chartered. It was just sort of this series of coincidence. I want to go to Europe; Okay, I'll go to school. I want to stay in Europe; Okay, I'll keep going to school. You know, it just sort of worked out. So, I stayed and did the PhD on Mary O'Connell, which meant suddenly I was doing women's history, which I never had had a course in, never read a book on it, never thought of it. It wasn't a subject. Didn't occur to me when I decided to do a biography of women, I'd be doing women's history. But I really loved it.

I'd always liked history but I think what I always loved about history were the personal stories and that was always the extraneous stuff. So, in women's history I found that that extraneous stuff was the heart of the research and the social history. I really did love it, so I did my thesis on that. I got two books out of it which was great: a biography of her, and then I edited a collection of papers between her and her son that were written the year that O'Connell took his seat in parliament. There was a lot of extraneous information in those letters about him actually taking his seat so it is kind of an interesting look at his personal life that particular year. And that was part of a series of books that were coming out that were documentary editing.

So, now we're in what, 1996 or '97 and the job prospects in Ireland were not good for an American. If I had really tried I might have gotten a teaching assistantship or something like that but my standard of living would have been the same as a student. At that point I was twenty eight and I think I was just getting to a point where I felt a need to grow up and be an adult and settle down and have a decent standard of living. And so I did leave Ireland. Again, came back to Springfield, came back to my parents' basement and started applying for teaching positions because that what you do with a PhD. in history. I think I probably sent out over three hundred applications.

Hosea: Were you qualified as a teacher?

Bishop: No, well you get a PhD. and you can teach history in the universities.

Hosea: Oh, I see, okay.

Bishop: They don't teach you how to teach. No, I wasn't qualified. Looking back at the courses I taught, I was horrible. Didn't know what I was doing. I'm a much better teacher now but that's from experience, not from coursework. So I would get rejection letters that would say, we had four hundred applications and we have hired Dr. so-and-so from X-Y-Z university. People that had jobs were getting these jobs and, it was just awful. I got a couple of offers like, you can come and fill in for five months for maternity leave and we will give you four thousand dollars. Terrible offers. I had just come back from Europe. I didn't have a car. I needed the job that was a decent job, so I got that book, *What Color Is Your Parachute?* They suggested you do informational interviews where you go and talk with people in a field you might want to work in about what they do. And

then ask them for other people you can talk to. You are not asking for a job but you're certainly talking to people. You always take your resume – and if they happen to ask for it, you leave it. And, so I came back to this agency where I had worked because there were a lot of PhDs and actually set up meetings with different PhDs to say, “What do you do?”

Hosea: By this agency, you are talking about the letters?

Bishop: No, IHPA.

Hosea: Oh, IHPA at this point.

Bishop: Yeah, using the people I knew, that I had met. I started meeting with them. And I vaguely had in my head, maybe I want to do documentaries. So, I started talking to people in this field and had a series of interviews. I met with Ted Hild. Keith Scully. Bill Tubbs and Bill Wheeler. And eventually, Keith Heron and Mark Johnson in the sites division and, Dick Taylor. I landed in Dick Taylor's office. We talked, and somewhere in the meeting, I mentioned I read and spoke French and his eyes lit up. This was the Ryan years of Illinois First money and they had just done a massive assessment on every site and assessed what it needed as far as historic structures reports, repairs, visitor centers, interpretative plans, media, and set up a list of priorities. One of the priorities they had hit on were the French sites in Southern Illinois that they knew very, very little about because the research was all in French. The documents were in French. So, Dick said, “Can you read French?” And I said, “Yes”, because my mother had badgered me to death when I lived in Ireland that I wasn't using my French and I was wasting it. She talked me in to taking a French course that final year in Dublin and I took that class. I don't know how good my speaking was but I had retained the ability to read. And so I was able to confidently say, “Yeah, I can read French.”

Hosea: What year are we in?

Bishop: We're in about '96 or '97. I think if I had not taken that course and he had said, Can you read French, I probably would have said, Well, I took it in college, dah, dah, I don't know. But reading nineteenth, eighteenth century handwritten French by people who are illiterate—a lot of it was spelled phonetically and you got Native American words, Spanish, French, and African words—the amalgamation of language was hard and a lot of it you would have to read out loud because you would have to hear it to understand.

I got hired on contract to do research specifically on the Jarrot Mansion<sup>1</sup> which is down in Cahokia. It was a contract position to write a research paper essentially on Jarrot and come up with interpretative ideas for that space. So that

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<sup>1</sup> The Jarrot Mansion State Historic Site is located in the historic town of Cahokia, Illinois. Cahokia is the oldest town on the Mississippi River, originally founded in 1699 by French Canadian priests as a mission to the Cahokia and Tamaroa Indians. The village evolved into an agricultural and commercial center during 18th century. <http://www.jarrotmansion.org/about/about.htm>

was my first foray into sort of historic site interpretation, museum interpretation and that worked into a job. They had a head count down there and they created a title and wrote a job description and, again, I had to apply for it and hope I got it. And I did get it.

Hosea: And do you remember that job position?

Bishop: The job was a Historic Research Specialist. There were only three in the agency. Kim Bauer, who is the Lincoln Curator, that's that title and now that's James Cornelius and Bryon Andreasen. So the three of us were Historic Research Specialists. And, I think it required a PhD. so I got that job and was hired on with the sites division. And, we did research ...

Hosea: Now, site division at that point, was it part of the Preservation Agency?

Bishop: Yes, and, I was in the central office staff. It was called technical services, which is a bit of a misnomer because that sort of sounds computery, but you had a curator, like a material cultures person, they had a conservator, they had an exhibit designer, a theatre guy, Phil Funkenbusch, Mark Johnson, research historian. Our job was to support the work that the sites staff were doing in the field. It kind of broke out that Mark Johnson did the northern half of the state, the Lincoln sites, and I was sort of the southern half of the state. That was never a meeting or anything planned. It just sort of worked out that way.

Hosea: So, you would be assigned to research a particular site or issue?

Bishop: Right. The Menard Home was my next big, big project and I worked on that for probably five years. That was my baby. Great house ... house of the first Lt. Governor. Nobody knew much about it and it was billed very much as the Mt. Vernon of the west. The interpretation was a very Anglicized, gentry interpretation and what came out of my research was these people are French and this is French Creole house. And, we had money. We brought in historic structures people from Louisiana to look at this house because it was so unique and it was very much like the homes you see in St. Genevieve in Missouri.

Hosea: Was the funding totally from Illinois or were there federal grants or other organizations?

Bishop: No, this was all state funded. There was a lot of money in those years and it was all coming in from that Illinois First project. That was my understanding. So, there was money to pay historic structures report people. To pay landscape architects. To pay all sorts of people. We had money and we did a lot. The Menard Home was just a jewel sitting down there and nobody knew much about it. I wrote an interpretative plan, re-did the media for the movie that you see when you go in...

Hosea: Now, what is an interpretative plan?

- Bishop: An interpretative plan would be the story you get when you go there as a visitor. So what happens when you walk in the door. What story do they tell through what they say to you, or exhibit panels, or the way the house is furnished. An interpretative plan determines the path the visitor is going to take through the house. The story that is going to be told, whether it's going to be told through interpretative panels or through a person or earphone. We had several brainstorming sessions, not only with staff but with members of the community who had a vested interest in this site: tourism people, historians, locals, teachers that brought their kids to the site.
- Hosea: The decision-making process at this point, was it a team kind of ...
- Bishop: Yeah, and it was great. I loved that. I thrived on that. We would have these fantastic meetings where we would sit and just great intellectual minds really trying to tackle what's the key issue here. What was interesting is, while all that was going on, the planning for the Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum was going on, and they were trying to hire designers. I think in the beginning it was sort of thought that the museum would be another historic site. So the sites division staff were involved in a lot of that initial planning. So Dick Taylor and Mark Johnson, for example, went out to California and met with BRC [Imagination Arts]
- Hosea: BRC?
- Bishop: Bob Rodgers, which is the design team for the museum. I think Dick Taylor, this was my opinion, was instrumental in getting BRC, convincing people that it should be BRC that designed this place. Dick was so taken with the philosophy of BRC – how they came up with their interpretative ideas, the process that you go through to come up with an exhibit – that he brought that back to the sites division and we applied it from then on to all of our sites as we approached them. So, you start with ...
- Hosea: And what are the elements of that?
- Bishop: Well, for Bob Rodgers you start with what is the fundamental change you want to occur in the visitor. So, you don't start with the facts. You don't start with the history. There is no point in the visitor coming to your site unless you're going to somehow change them. There is going to be a shift. So what do you want to occur to the visitor. If it's NASA, they want the visitor to support NASA with their tax dollars. If it's the French Pavilion at Epcot, they want people to think France is beautiful. The Cowgirl Hall of Fame, girls will feel good about themselves. So, what's the key thing you want to happen to people. So, we go brainstorm with the sites staff and one of the key things that came out was, because the Menard Home actually sat in a historic park, they would get campers and park people would wander down shirtless and shoeless with a beer in their hand from the park, and, "What's going on down here?" There was a disrespect.

For them, they really wanted people to put a shirt on and be respectful of the site. And, not litter, want to volunteer there.

So these things are what we hinged on: will people treasure this site. So that was the shift. Will people see it as a special place and that a loving family lived here and that they will want to treasure it. And so they will treasure it by not littering, by putting on shoes and shirt, by volunteering, by supporting it with their tax dollars, by whatever. These are the things they will do, but the key thing was they will treasure it as site.

So, then you build an interpretative plan around that. What story will make people treasure this site? And we hit on the idea that a family lived here and a family that loved each other lived here. Because that is the emotional connection. That these people were regular, ordinary family members who are trying to survive out this wilderness and we can relate to that. They have kids that are flunking out of school. They have kids that are sick. All the problems that we have today, this family went through. So, that became our story model. It wasn't Pierre Menard, first Lt. Governor, it was a loving family lived here. Then there are themes: loving family lived here and they dealt with Native Americans and they dealt with the change between French ownership to American ownership. Other themes that get at all those political and economic stories that are so important. But, you tell it through these individual stories much like the museum. It tells the self-made man story through these individual emotional stories about Lincoln's mother dying, and then Lincoln's children dying and Mary Lincoln having to fight with the debutantes and the socialites in D.C. There are stories there. The slave auction, a family being pulled apart. That's what tugs on your heartstrings so that you buy in to the story.

Hosea: So, at this point, at any rate, everyone felt pretty good about the museum starting up?

Bishop: No, no, there was a lot of fear about the museum because what's it going to mean.

It's going to swallow the agency. It's going to destroy the agency. And, we were dubious; you know, you got a bunch of PhDs sitting down the road, academic historians making fun rubber latex Lincolns and, oh you're going to open a file cabinet and a ghost is going to pop out. It sounded stupid. It sounded hokey. We were very skeptical. Very skeptical. And skeptical of, can this humongous entity, because it was a huge – you had politicians involved and tourism people and historians involved—are they going to get it right or is it going to be a Disney theme park with very superficial history. So, we're sitting down there watching it.

Then there was also a great fear from the rest of the sites that they're going to tell the Lincoln story and nobody is going to go to the [other] sites, because they can get it all in this one air conditioned place. It took money away from the sites division. It took headcount. They got over a hundred headcount when they opened. So it's hard for an agency to go ask for headcount. "Well, we need two

more custodians down at Fort de Chartres.” “Well, we just gave your agency a hundred headcount. We’re not giving you any more.” So, the agency suffered. The sites division suffered to get this institution open. I’m pointing across the street. So, anyway, we were watching that and we were skeptical.

Hosea: Were you pretty much totally at the Menard Home at this point or were you also involved with other sites?

Bishop: No, Cahokia Courthouse had an exhibit that never did get done. The budget ran out and that got pulled. We worked on, again, a design plan for the Jarrot Mansion that never was funded at the end.

Hosea: For which mansion?

Bishop: The Jarrot Mansion, which is in Cahokia. We obtained the Boismenu House which was in east Cahokia.

Hosea: Can you spell that?

Bishop: B-o-i-s-m-e-n-u. And I wrote an interpretative plan for that. And then in, I don’t know, 2001 maybe, Lewis and Clark kept the scene. Because it was 2003, the anniversary of the Lewis and Clark expedition. There was a very strong contingency just outside St. Louis, very politically connected. The Lewis and Clark Society of America wanted a visitor center on the site from which Lewis and Clark left. Now, the problem with that is, the river shifted and we don’t really know ... the site now where the Missouri meets the Mississippi is not the site it was (laugh) but politics dictated and that’s where we were going to build a visitor center.

We were going to build a museum without one single Lewis and Clark artifact or piece of collection or document. So, we called it a visitor center. But we were charged with building a museum about Lewis and Clark with no artifacts to put in it and no documentation. Illinois doesn’t have anything. And we all scoffed at that a lot, but I got pulled off Menard Home and became, really quick, a Lewis and Clark historian, essentially not knowing the story at all. I honestly, I shouldn’t say this on tape but I will, I thought it was Lewis and Clark and Sackegwia in a canoe. I didn’t know there were thirty other guys in a huge keelboat. I had no idea. I was totally going off of a schoolhouse rock on that. I didn’t know. So I learned very quickly and became the lead historian on that project and we built a visitor center in Hartford. And worked with an exhibit design firm, Hilferty and Associates, Gerry Hilferty and Donna Lawrence was another, not Donna Lawrence that works down the road, but Donna Lawrence with a media specialist from Louisville, Kentucky. She was hired first because the idea was, we’ll do a really great movie, like an Imax type movie, because we don’t have any artifacts. We don’t have any documents. So, we’ll wow people with this great movie about Lewis and Clark in Illinois.

The other issue is we don't know all that much about Lewis and Clark. Nobody knew that much about Lewis and Clark in Illinois but we really were keen on telling the story of the five months they spent in Illinois. So Donna Lawrence was going to do this fantastic media piece and there would be kind of a museum attached to it. But, really, Hilferty was amazing and followed a lot of the same principles as BRC – what change do you want to occur in the visitor. What's the emotional pull when you get to the story you want to tell? And, so, they designed just a great exhibit down there and we had the big bicentennial opening event and it was two day or three day outdoor event and it rained and rained and rained and rained and rained. (laughter)

Hosea: In all this time now historic research specialist is what you were?

Bishop: Yeah.

Hosea: Okay. So you ended up feeling pretty good about this project?

Bishop: I felt good about that, yeah. The bicentennial event was a nightmare and I've learned now because I've been through three centennial, or commemorative events and I jokingly say I could market myself as a commemorative specialist because there is a sameness to everyone of these things, but that was my first experience with it. So, a statewide committee was formed by the governor, a bunch of bigwigs appointed to it, who weren't going to do the work and they barely had the time to have the meetings. And so, it fell to our agency to make the bicentennial event happen. But, of course, they got all the credit. (laugh) And, they ...

Hosea: But, did they pretty much stay out of the way?

Bishop: No, no, they wanted what they wanted and they didn't want to listen to professional advice from people that do this stuff every day. So, it was ... and it rained, you know, they did a three day outdoor event with no rain plans. And the mud and the muck and the vendors were going to provide food and the vendors couldn't set up so you had no food and you had staff working and no way to get food and the Post Office made a killing though. All these commemorative events, the Post Office always makes a killing because they do a stamp and stamp people will come out for anything.

It was interesting to watch how it worked. Because you would go to meeting after meeting after meeting and there would be grunts at the meeting who had no authority to promise anything and no money to do anything. And then they would have to go back and talk to their higher ups and nothing would ever get done until two months before the date when somebody higher up woke up and said, Oh, my God, we've got to do something. You know, probably a reporter finally called and then they realized, we've got to do something and then everyone ...

Hosea: So the museum you felt good about. The event itself, the commemorative event, you have less good feelings?

Bishop: Right, yeah. What happens with these things is all the people who do the work don't get noticed and don't get paid attention to and then you have all these hangers-on that want to come in and be a part of the event and they do. And the rest of us, covered in mud and wet and several months pregnant in my case, and not having eaten for eight hours, are standing in the background and they are never acknowledged. And that's the nature of it. Yeah, um-hm, so ...

Hosea: So, now you did not stay Historic Research Specialist all the time. What happened to that?

Bishop: Well, that's what I was the whole time I was at the sites division and then meanwhile the museum is opening and in 2003, we started seeing changes with Blagojevich – lack of money, no jobs being filled, furlough days. All the money was going, all the money resources and energy were going to the museum and, there was a sense, at least I felt, in the sites division that we were on a bit of a sinking ship and there wasn't a lot of opportunity. For me in that title there was no where to go in the sites division, to be promoted. On a personal level, my husband had gone back to school full time so I was the sole breadwinner and we were pregnant with our second child and so, I heard through the grapevine there was going to be an education position and I sent a letter. At that point, Richard Norton Smith [Founding Director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum] had been hired on. I sent a letter with a portfolio to him, because my friend and colleague, Phil Funkenbusch, did the same thing and Phil got offered a job. Richard never knew he existed and then when he got Phil's portfolio and saw everything Phil did, he said, I want this guy to run the shows. So, I thought, well, he doesn't know I exist. Nobody is tooting my horn so I'll just let him know I'm here. Never heard a word. And then it came out the position was filled. The position was never posted and it was filled in May of '04. Then we later found out that this was one of those public service administrator intern positions that Blagojevich was famous for doing; they would put a fifty-five year old intern at a \$55,000 salary to avoid any of the hiring process. And, so, that was the end.

I just felt that was the end and I had a baby and went off on maternity leave. In December, Bob Coomer called me at home and said, "I understand that at one point you were interested in that position. Are you still interested?" And I said yes, because it was a promotion for me. I mean, I was scared. I loved working with sites division. We had such a great team and that collaborative approach and the intellectual debate, it was so safe there to sit in meetings and say, That's dumb, I don't like your idea, what about this. It was a great environment for this give and take and thinking and, you know, we had better products because of it. We challenged each other and it was just so great but it seemed like it was ending. And we needed more money. I needed more money. So, Bob asked me if I was interested. I say yes. He said, "Well, they're going to post the job. They are not satisfied with the current person and they are going to post it and you need to fill out your form and get it in." And so, I did. I got called for an interview then in January and I interviewed with Julie Dirksen and Susie [Mogerman?] and got the

job. And apparently, when Julie first started, Richard had given her my portfolio. So, I never had known where that landed but he did keep it.

Hosea: And the official position was what?

Bishop: It was a Public Service Administrator, Director of Education.

Hosea: Director of Education for the Historic Preservation Agency?

Bishop: No, for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

Hosea: Okay, okay.

Bishop: Because it was kind of inter-agency transfer, I came back from maternity leave some time in January. I was down the road two weeks and then I moved down to the museum.

Hosea: How was that position presented to you? What was it that they wanted this person to do?

Bishop: Set up the process through which school tours are filtered through the museum, work with Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau who is the central booking agent for all of the sites. To set up the process that school groups get their tours. To come up with curriculum and lesson plans that would be available to teachers online and in print. To create workshops. To network with the community of educators. To set up an advisory board. I guess that's about it (laugh). And get this ... a lot of it was to get everything done by May, you know the opening date, or April 19.

Hosea: April 19 of ?

Bishop: 2005. And I came in in January, I don't know, twenty-fourth or something and I had one staff person. I think my first day on the job, we were doing interviews for the education coordinator position. We had a huge teacher workshop that the previous director had set up. So I had to go to that and I didn't know what I was doing.

Hosea: Had processes been put in place, or you felt you had to start everything up.

Bishop: No, nothing, we didn't even have furniture. I called and said, what should I bring down and I was told, bring a chair and bring a trash can. There are no trash cans down here. We had to wear hard hats. The process of how do I get office supplies, no one knew how to do it. Because part of the problem with Richard [Norton Smith] and Eric, who came in to the run the place, no experience ...

Hosea: Eric?

Bishop: Eric Nelson, who was Richard's assistant. No experience in state government and how it works. No one knew how to buy office supplies. So, I just called my friends down the road and said, Can you send me Post-It Notes? I mean, and it was kind of a joke. We'd got those box of supplies that they had pilfered from their supply cabinet, you know. I brought my own bookcase. I brought books from the down the road. There was nothing in place, nothing. You know, one of the first things I said was, I need to build a resource library. I was handed a piece of paper. Write down the books you want. I was like, I'm talking \$2,000 worth of books. You're wanting me to write down by hand, you know, there's a piece of a paper with blanks. You want me to write down by hand the name and the title and serial number. Are you kidding me? I want to sit at Amazon and just click, click, click and buy them, you know. There was no process for anything. We barely had offices. I think the week I started was one of the first weeks we had moved in to the museum for office space.

Hosea: You were in physically now, you were in the museum, rather than the library?

Bishop: Um-hmm, right. From day one I was in the museum, and nothing was in place at all.

Hosea: Including programs and this kind of stuff, you were ...

Bishop: Absolutely nothing and I think on day four, I want to say it was Thursday, we took a plane down to the Clinton Library to see how they did it. It was the longest week of my life, that first week. I just ... especially because the sites division was very laid back. We did really good work but it was that kind of academic work where you're just quietly in your office reading and writing, or down in the library reading and writing and it's just a different pace. Here it was, I lost weight, it was running back and forth between buildings. It was meeting, meeting, meeting, meeting, meeting. Phones ringing off the hook. Unbelievably frantic, wild pace. You know, it was fun. There was a buzz but it was crazy and for me, I hadn't worked because I was on maternity leave. I had a new baby at home who wasn't sleeping and all the time I worked at the sites division, I was only 93 percent, which means I only worked 93 percent of the time. So, I had Friday afternoons off every week. Which doesn't sound like a lot but I had never in my adult career worked full time. So I really jumped in to a hornet's nest when I came back. It was a lot of work.

Hosea: And from what you were saying, whatever the other abilities there was a little lack of organization, just knowledge of how the bureaucracy works.

Bishop: Part of it was not knowing the state system. And, they were micromanagers. I'm not afraid to say that. They were not going to say to me, here's a budget of \$5,000, get what you need. They wanted me to write down every book and they would approve it, which ticked me off. What do you know about education programs? What do you know about site interpretation? Who are you to say what books are good books or bad books, you know, I thought that was

micromanaging. So, I knew coming in it was going to be difficult with those two. We had heard the stories.

Hosea: And so this takes time, I assume also when you're getting permission for everything.

Bishop: Well, yeah, yeah. So you either figure out another way to do it or you butt heads which ... the first week everything happened and I knew Eric Nelson was a bully and I just confronted him head on. I just had a, you know, okay, let's cut to the chase. I need to get things done and how do I do it and who do I talk to and who is in charge. Do I go to Julie Dirksen or do I come to you? You know, and he was taken aback. I mean I had trouble with him but not as much as other people and I think it's cause he was a bully and if he thought he could intimidate you, he did. You know, and other than that he sort of left you alone. I did have run ins with him later but I documented, documented, documented and I was always able to come back with this great email with all this documentation laid out that Eric, in March, you said this, and in April, you said this, and I proceeded and here's what we did and this is why it's this way. And then he never would respond and it would go away. And that happened on two or three different occasions where, you know, you just couldn't be bullied. But there was a lot of energy given up to that kind of stuff with them. They just really wanted ... we never had a budget. You never knew if you had any money. You had to ask permission for everything you did. And it just was very stifling.

Hosea: Was there a time during this seminal time, the beginning, was there a time when you were able to sit down and say, Well, this is my priority for the educational outreach from the museum or was it kind of all fighting fires and ...

Bishop: Yeah, it was all reactive. I mean, of course I had some ideas brewing about what the department should be. But I never had a meeting with the Director where we talked about what he thought it should be. Richard's sole focus, in my opinion, was that dedication. Whatever happened the next day, the doors fell off the hinges when you opened up for business, he didn't care. It was all ... and that was scary because stuff was not decided to get the doors open the next day because there was such focus on the dedication. But, no, I don't feel we've ever had an opportunity to really say, who are we as an education division and who do we want to be? I think we've got pieces of it but because of the rotating door of directors, we've never gotten there and there's been very little direction given. I think that's been throughout the whole complex. It's been a much more reactive approach. Tom Schwartz once said, and I think he's right, we've been in special events mode from day one. You know, you had the opening to deal with in the first six months of chaos and then you're planning for the bicentennial. You know, it just was constant.

Hosea: So after the dedication now, then almost immediately you began thinking in terms of the bicentennial?

Bishop: Right. The biggest issue that confronted us was a million, billion school groups wanting to come in. And they wanted to come in that spring. And we opened April 19, the height of school tour season. And what we'd resolved, what we determined, was there is no way we can handle it that spring. So we took groups on a very limited number that first year. And I think we actually, it was by invitation only. So, we sent out invites to kind of ... I don't remember how we chose them, but it was sort of a radius of a forty mile radius of Springfield. You're invited to come and we did it on a very limited basis so that we could figure out the system and the process for getting them in the door. The first thing was, Well, what are going to do with the kids? You need to come up with a tour. And, I mean, that was again the first week and I was ...

Hosea: That's what you were told? To come up with a tour.

Bishop: What are you going to do with them when they get here. We have to have a tour and we'll have to train the volunteers to give the tour and, I was like, I'm not doing anything with them when they get in the museum. What do you mean? Well, there's no logistically way, there's no way we can do this. And this was on everyone's mind. How are we going to handle all these kids. You know, we have to come up with a program or something. And I just ran the numbers. You're talking twenty-four buses a day. Average bus, which actually they're bigger now but it use to be forty-five kids on a bus now it's like fifty-six. So, let's say forty-five kids. You've got to divide them in to groups of fifteen which is still pretty big. That means you need three docents per bus and you're taking four buses an hour. So, you're going to need twenty-four docents in the ... I don't remember if it was twenty-four for the day or twelve in the morning and twelve, you know, twenty-four in the morning and twenty-four in the afternoon or what. But I was just ... there's no way you can do this. And you can't lead fifteen kids through these galleries and stop and give a speech.

Hosea: And did the narrow galleries and places cause a problem?

Bishop: Yeah, that fed in to it. I walked through there once and it was just like, you can't. It's meant to be self-guided. I'm not doing a thing and if you ... I'm not doing it. I think I shocked everyone because I just, I'm not doing anything with them once they get in here. And when I said the numbers, everyone realized, you're right. How can we have twenty-four staff people or volunteers a day just doing bus greetings, bus tours. We can't do it. We physically, humanly ... it can't be done in this facility. And maybe I wasn't thinking outside the box, but that was my solution. So, what we hit on was we have to develop materials for the teachers in advance of them coming. And try to get them here for workshops before they come and try to give them information on the internet and send them information so that they are really well equipped to give really good tours. But the other issue, I think is for people that don't work in museums, you have this really, this high ideal of what school tours are providing students. The reality is, twenty-four buses a day, forty-five kids. They come to Springfield. They do five sites in a day. They are herded through like cattle and there's no way around it and that's

what they want. And, people don't want to hear that but, I mean, I've worked in the sites division enough to know that's what the schools want. If they're going to pay to send a bus, which you're talking, if you're coming from Chicago, \$1,500 or more for a bus, and you're not going to see the Capitol? You're not going to see the Tomb? No, you got to do it all. They have to see all of it. And a lot of these trips are end of the year field trips. They're not education. They're not going back in the classroom after the trip to reinforce what they have learned. You know, it's not ... that's not what it is. Now, you do have teachers that are coming because it ties in and they want it to tie in and they make it a great experience and they do learn from it. But the vast majority are processed through like cattle and there is no way around it and they don't want more. And people don't want to hear that because they want to ... be more than that. They want to provide more educational value than that I think. But I don't think that's the reality.

Hosea: Now, during this period, are you ramping up staff? Is your staff increasing or ...?

Bishop: I had two education coordinators and we had to hire three site interpreters whose sole duty was meant to be working in Mrs. Lincoln's Attic on the floor of the museum. So, yes, I was hiring all those people. Unfortunately, I hired three site interpreters whose sole duty was to work in Mrs. Lincoln's Attic; they started in February and we didn't open until April. They had no office space. They had no computers. They didn't have telephones. What were they supposed to do for three months? So, we put them to work on trying to help the volunteer department create an interpretive plan for the museum. Just like a binder full of background information on Lincoln and the museum and the rooms and the exhibits and all of that. That's what they kind of worked on. And we came up with processes for inventorying the space in the Attic, and laundry rotation and procedural stuff, but that was something else that we were trying to work through is that space on the floor.

Hosea: Were you able to hire the people you wanted to hire or was that a process?

Bishop: No. Actually, they were hired – now that I think about it – Julie Dirksen hired those three people. I was able to interview for one of the education coordinator positions. And I don't know if I necessarily had any say in who ...

Hosea: So at this point your whole staff is like five people?

Bishop: Yeah, it always has been. Three site interpreters and two education people.

Hosea: And that's been your whole staff through pretty much the whole time?

Bishop: Right. And the woman I hired, unfortunately, you had to go through the state system; I really wanted a classroom educator but you're forced to take on people who have been in the state system. So, the people that interviewed for the position, none of them had teaching experience. Some of them had subbed prior to getting their state job or they maybe had been a teacher for a year back in 1972

before they took their state job. So, we ended up with someone who had just gotten a master's in history, had done some adjuncting, but her background was in administration and she worked at SIU Edwardsville in the business department. She wasn't a classroom teacher. It was impossible to go out and hire a museum professional or a classroom educator because the state system required the job title to be an Executive I, and, frankly, anybody with a BA qualifies to be an Executive I.

Hosea: There really wasn't anybody on the staff, including you at this point, who had had a lot of experience in education itself.

Bishop: No, not at that point. Then about a year later, the woman who had been hired as the initial education director was kept on as one of the education coordinators and she left. She did go back into a classroom. She didn't have a great deal of teaching experience prior, but she chose to go into teaching. She went back to teaching and we had another opening. At that point we interviewed and we hired Randy Wiseman, who came from the Department of Natural Resources but had been a classroom teacher for years prior to going to DNR, and at DNR she was an education person. She had created education programs for the Department of Natural Resources so she was highly qualified and we were incredibly fortunate to get her.

Hosea: I'm getting the feeling the major emphasis was on tours at this point and surviving that process and starting it out.

Bishop: At the very beginning, right. So, that first spring was limited, you know, the first day we would have five hundred kids come in, and the next day we would have eight hundred kids come in. And, then we got up to a thousand or thirteen hundred kids and we refined the system by which the buses pull up and we greet the group and we process the group. And what happens when you get the information—because basically, schools register through the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau, they give them a booking—then we get the booking. So, what's the process when we get the booking until they arrive. And that required working really closely with the guest services division which we were part of.

Hosea: So, you reported to Julie at this point?

Bishop: Um-hm. So volunteer services, front entry and education were all in one division.

Hosea: And, you said that one of the things you decided was to provide resources to the people who were going to lead these tours.

Bishop: Sure.

Hosea: Was there computer development happening at this point in terms of online resources or this kind of thing?

Bishop: I think we had a web site at that point because I think that was a priority. But it wasn't until the fall, really, that I was able to get the stuff online.

Hosea: And was this your responsibility to develop these resources and get them on line and this kind of thing?

Bishop: Yeah, I created all that.

Hosea: So you interacted with the IS department? Was there a computer group?

Bishop: No, they have outside vendors who do the web site. But, I'll give you an example of the micromanaging. We had all these temporary exhibits. Richard was all about the temporary exhibits and he wanted an education curriculum for every exhibit. They were changing out exhibits every three to six months, and we wouldn't get the [new] script. So, we're suppose to write an education component but we don't know what the exhibit is until the day it opens, practically. So, the one I did for *Blood on the Moon* and sent to Richard for approval, I never heard back from him again.

Hosea: Now, when you say script. This is something to send ...

Bishop: No, an exhibit script. I knew the story was about the assassination but that's all I knew.

Bishop: The exhibit scripts were being written by the historians. I was responsible for developing education curriculum, lesson plans, that fit with that script that I never saw. The only thing I knew was, it's an exhibit about the assassination. Only thing I knew about the first ladies' exhibit is it's an exhibit about first ladies. The Christmas exhibit, well, it's about Christmas. And I'm suppose to write a lesson plan, or discussion questions or something a teacher can use with that exhibit, and I was never privy to that information. That was a big issue. And then the things I would send—I had to send it to him for approval—and he was so bogged down, I never got approval. I wrote a great curriculum package for *Blood on the Moon* that's never seen the light of day because the exhibit was torn down by the time, you know, he never read it. And you couldn't do anything. Nothing could go on the website without their approval.

Hosea: So, if I have a tour group that's coming and I'm the principal or teacher or whatever. What's my interaction with you and your group?

Bishop: Uh, not a lot. You have to go through the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau because they have been the booking agent for all the sites in Springfield from day one. You have to fill out a form. You list the sites you want to go to. You give them a couple of dates to choose from. You send it off in the mail. You wait six months or so. It takes forever. They send you a schedule. You might get the sites you want. You might not. We get that same schedule. What we do then, is we have a packet of information we've created that we then send to each bus, each school group that's coming, with all of our rules and regulations. It tells

them exactly what to expect. They pull up on the day of. We have a volunteer greeter come out to the bus. Give them our rules and regulations. Give them all stickers and they go on through the museum.

Hosea: But do I get materials and resources ...

Bishop: You don't ... it's all online. So, you're directed to online resources. And they're not great. They're sketchy at best. It was not a priority because we were so ....

Hosea: So again, going back to reactive rather than ...

Bishop: Going back to reactive trying, to not having educators on staff that can really craft lesson plans either.

Hosea: So, after the opening, it wasn't too long and you had these various shows that happen?

Bishop: Shows coming up and exhibits and programs.

Hosea: And then you were into the bicentennial planning.

Bishop: Um-hm, yeah.

Hosea: Were you part of that planning process?

Bishop: Not so much early on but once Rick Beard was the director, then, yes, I was involved a lot. Because Rick did value education and thought that we should play a role in development as well as opposed to be this recipient of, here's what the exhibit's going to be about. And he thought we should be at the table at the beginning to determine what the exhibit is going to be about. And, so, a lot more involvement when Rick was on board. So some of the ideas ... the truck, the truck exhibit, that we did that was the big semi that went around ...

Hosea: Oh, that went around to the various sites.

Bishop: I was very involved in that. The Gettysburg Address reading that we ended up doing. Very involved in that. But my take on the bicentennial from a department standpoint was, I only have two educators and three site interpreters that have to keep Mrs. Lincoln's Attic running. We can't do a lot of programs. And we're not going to get a lot of bang for our buck if we do. Even if we did a program every weekend, how many people are we going reach. So, we hit on the idea, and really from day one when I came on board, we developed resources to give to teachers. So when they called us and said, What are you doing for the bicentennial, our response was we have all these resources we can send to you so you can celebrate the bicentennial in your classroom all year. The one thing we started on very early was something called Traveling Trunks; I stole this idea from Lewis and Clark. These are these suitcases that are museums in a box. They have reproduction artifacts, documents, photographs, CDs, movies, anything you can

think of and lesson plans and the teacher can check these out and take them into the classroom. The kids can hold the artifacts and there's lessons and stuff that and they can look at like reproductions of original documents. What's great about them is they are work up front but once they are done, they are sitting on your shelf. If you have a group coming to the museum and you want to do a special program, you pull it off your shelf and do a program. If you want to go out into the classroom, you pull it off the shelf and go out into the classroom. Or, a teacher comes and checks it out, and the only thing you're involved in, is checking it out. So, it's low impact on the staff once they are created. Well, what we did was, we went after a grant through the State Library and LSTA grant that allowed us to duplicate. We did the prototypes and it allowed us to duplicate a hundred and forty and then we put ...

Hosea: They have somebody else put these together.

Bishop: No, we put them all together but then we sent them out to libraries all throughout the state. Because the library already has interlibrary loan system, so rather than have what a lot of the sites do, they have the kid at their site, they are in charge of checking it out. And they only check it out to people who can drive in and pick it up. The Jefferson, the arch, the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, they have these kits. They will mail them but the teacher has to pay \$35 to get it mailed; a lot of times that is out of the teacher's pocket. So, by putting them in the libraries, that solves the problem of delivery because this delivery system exists in the libraries and it takes the onus off of us. We've created these kits and our names are on it and it's a resource, but we're not doing any of the work with delivering them or checking them in or checking them out. They become the library's property and the library is responsible.

So, we partnered with the Lewis and Clark Library System and the different sites and we got the grant and created these kits. We bought all the stuff, did all the copying and the laminating and putting them together, the assembly, but then they got shipped out to libraries throughout the state. And, the great thing about that grant was, we had budgeted \$400 per kit. Well, when we went to make a hundred and sixty, we said to the vendor, you know, I want to buy a canteen, but I want to buy forty canteens. Can you cut me a deal? And they would. And almost inevitably, they would knock off twenty, twenty-five percent. So, when we got done, we were twenty percent, twenty-five percent under budget and they don't want you to give the money back. So, we were going to put binders of lesson plans; that's the old fashioned way to do it, a binder with lesson plans in each of the kits. So, we hit on this idea, let's do CD's; we found a company that reproduces CDs but you had to buy them in thousands. So, for four grand, you could have 10,000 CDs reproduced. So, we went back to the granting agency and said, Can we spend some of the overage on getting these CDs reproduced. And then what we'll do is we'll send a CD to every library and media center in the state of Illinois, which is about 4,000. And then we'll have 6,000 left to distribute during the bicentennial year. So, we kind of refinagled the lesson plans so that you didn't have to have the kits to do the lessons. So that if you didn't have a kit,

you could still utilize it. And so, we used that grant to print 10,000 of these CDs and send them out. We sent 4,000 out to every library and said, help us celebrate the bicentennial; here's lesson plans for teachers. Then we had 6,000 [left] to distribute.

We had been developing a poster series specific for the bicentennial. It was four posters with lesson plans on the back. We were still in development on that, but we did the same thing. We went back to the granting people and said, we want to print 10,000 of these. We'll send 4,000 out to every school library and media center in the state and then we'll keep the other 6,000 to distribute nationally throughout the bicentennial year. And they said, Yeah. So, we printed the posters. So, we had a four poster set on Lincoln and we had the lesson plan and that was great then during the bicentennial year because we had resources. So teachers would call us and say, Well, I'm just wondering what you're offering for the bicentennial and we could say, Well, if you're in Illinois, you can check out the kits from the libraries but we can also send you a four poster set and a DVD. You can, it's free? Yes. And we'd mail them off. And so that was great. That just worked out wonderfully well and I think that was a good choice given the budget limitations and lack of staff and time to do the bicentennial. So that was our strategy.

Hosea: So this takes us to not very long ago.

Bishop: Right. Um-hm.

Hosea: The bicentennial, and now are you getting ready for the Civil War?

Bishop: No, again, we have an interim director. And we have no money. So, it's a very difficult time right now. It's a sad time. It's a good time to be leaving, frankly. But, you know, my budget was \$66,000 or something like that last year. I have fifteen this year. And ten of that is for printing the stickers that the students wear and all the materials we send out to the schools in advance of the tours. So, I really only have \$5,000 for the programming.

Hosea: So, not much.

Bishop: Not much, yeah.

Hosea: Do you deal at all, or try for federal grants, or ...

Bishop: We do, yeah. And that's the role of the Foundation.

Hosea: The Foundation.

Bishop: The Foundation in supporting us. The grant to do the kits was a federal grant through the Illinois State Library, but we also do corporate sponsorship. We have the Horace Mann teacher institute that we've done every summer. We just completed our fourth year.

Hosea: That's funded by Horace Mann?

Bishop: By Horace Mann Educators. Um-hm. And that brings fifty teachers here every summer for a week to study Lincoln and we present a workshop.

Hosea: What level teachers?

Bishop: K through 12.

Hosea: That gets taught by your staff, or ...

Bishop: It's a combination. We rely on our historians. We do site tours. So, of course, the experts at the sites give the tours. And then, we always try to bring in at least one, you know, big name historian. We had Catherine Clinton here this year. We had Matthew Pinsky here this year. Then what we do is we try to show them how to take all the content back to the classroom. So we do give some pedagogies and methods for teaching all this heavy duty content stuff that they've been learning all week.

Hosea: And how long a period? A week.

Bishop: They come in on a Sunday and they leave on a Friday afternoon.

Hosea: And, it sounds like you feel good about that program.

Bishop: It's a great program. It's a great program. I knew it coming in, it's not funded enough. We want more money. We need more money to do it right, but the reviews every year read like we wrote them ourselves. It's phenomenally successful. It's easy to do though because, you know, we're sitting here in this location with these great sites around us and such great professionals at those sites. Tim Townsend gives just a fantastic view of the Lincoln Home. Justin Blandford does an amazing job interpreting the Old State Capitol. We go out to New Salem and Charlie Starling gives a great tour of the village. So, you've got these. All we have to do is come up with the schedule. You know, Tom Schwartz does a great job. James comes in. Bryon Andreasen is wonderful. So, all we have to do is line these people up and put them in the right order and keep everyone on schedule and it's a great program. Really good.

Hosea: And do you use two groups that I hear about and wondered if you utilize. Number one, we talked a little bit about a different kind of intern, but actual interns, do you use those?

Bishop: We actually run the intern program for the library and museum.

Hosea: Oh, you do?

Bishop: It runs through our department and what was happening when we first opened, was, you would get random phone calls. You know, Tom would get a phone call,

Hi, I'm a college student and I want to intern. Or they would call Kathryn or they would call me and they would want an internship and it was sort of, if you caught the right person on the right day who just happened to have a project, you might get an internship out of it. What we tried to do then was formalize it so that anybody that would get these random phone calls could say, well, here's the process. Go to the education section of the web site. There is an application there. Three times a year we take applications. Carol Manning runs it out of the education department and she goes through the applications. Then we also require the staff here to submit a request three times a year. So we don't ever try to put an intern with somebody who doesn't want an intern. Just because a kid wants to work in the Lincoln collection, if James doesn't have work for him or if James is bogged down on another project and can't oversee one, we're not going to give him one. So James has to say, "I need an intern". And James almost always does take one. Then Carol's job is to match up the kids based on what they said what their experience is or their qualification, and what they say their interest is. Then the supervisors who have requested interns have to interview those kids and kind of duke it out. Sometimes you might have a couple different supervisors wanting a particular student and they sort of have to fight it out. Or, they might agree to share. So the student gets a more rounded experience.

Hosea: Now, these are non-paid positions?

Bishop: These are non-paid positions. Occasionally... We do have an arrangement with Illinois College; every year we get two students, Illinois College pays them. Every once in a while I will, or other people, will write an intern into a grant and that intern might get paid. An example would be: we had a summer scholars program for two years in a year and I wrote in a \$1,000 stipend for an intern.

Hosea: What's the summer scholars?

Bishop: Summer scholars is another grant-funded program that brought high school students in for two weeks in the summer to do research. The first summer they created an exhibit and the second summer they created an online magazine. Both years they researched the 1908 race riot because that was an anniversary date that we were marking. So, that was another good program. That was probably... I'm most proud of that program.

Hosea: Of the race riot ...

Bishop: The summer scholars program.

Hosea: You were the one that brought that into fruition.

Bishop: That was a mess. What happened is, when we were new, everybody wanted a piece of it and they were throwing money at us. So, the Foundation would call up, "I've got a donor, come up with an idea". It didn't matter what ... and this donor specifically wants to deal at risk youth. So it doesn't matter what your agenda is or your priorities, are you looking to handle at risk youth or not, they've

got \$80,000 they want to give you, come up with something. That's how that program came about. That's how a lot of our programs came about. The tail wags the dog.

Hosea: Now what's your relationship with the Foundation? If you come up with a good idea, can you go to them and say, it would sure be nice if we had someone to fund this?

Bishop: Yes. We're getting more to that now that I could catch my breath and develop, think about ideas. But, yes. That's the plan as it gets to that, where you send them ideas. But every once in a while they'll come back with somebody that, you know, we've got a nibble on this and can you expand it, or can you develop it, or can you whatever. The summer scholars program was the first year we opened. We've got this group. They're going to give us money. Got to come up with something. It's got to deal with at-risk youth. So we came up with this idea that we would bring kids in in the summer and they would intern and job shadow and then create a final product.

I wrote in a director because I didn't have time to deal with it. So, we hired a director and the first year was suppose to be the planning. What shape is this going to take? How is it going to work? It was going to be on Lincoln because it was all about Lincoln. Well, she worked for a few months, just part-time. Then Rick Beard came in to me and said, "Does it have to be Lincoln? Could it not be about the race riot?" I loved that idea and I knew we had to do something on the race riots because the anniversary is coming up and so I said, Yes, that's great, let's do it. We got back to the director, she's a little ... hm, you know, she's got to change gears. Come May, she quit. The program is opening in mid-July and she has done nothing except outline that it is going to be a two week program and this is kind of how it's going to work but that's it. So at that point you can't hire another director and it fell in my lap. We had a million things going on and I was angry and I didn't want to do it and I thought it was going to be a disaster.

The other thing was, we could not get kids recruited. The idea to work through counselors and the counselors were going to recommend these at-risk kids and we're going to work through the schools and the Boys and Girls Clubs and I don't know if we were too late, or if we weren't pushy enough or what, but we could not get recruits. We had four kids. So we finally said, Okay, we're going to take away the at-risk category, we're going to open it up because we got to fill the seats, and we did a press release. Come and work at the museum for two weeks, do this great project, do this great program. We got sixteen kids and we took them all. What I've heard from other museum places is that it is almost impossible, kids want to work. They want to make money. A lot of these programs, especially if you're targeting at-risk kids, you have to pay them to come because they need a salary. They need money. That's what they are doing in the summer. Also my experience was if the kid did not have an adult in his life, even the non-at-risk kids, even the kids that were living out in Piper Glen and Panther Creek. There had to be a parent or an adult saying, this would be a good

opportunity. You need to enroll. Make that phone call. I'll call for you. It took an adult pushing the kids into it. But anyway, so they came in. They spent two weeks and at the end of the first year, they created an exhibit, in two weeks time, on the race riots. And it was fantastic. It was a portable exhibit. Very graphic and cutting edge and teenagerish and kind of had a graffiti appeal to it, or feeling to it. It was just fantastic and what we were able to do with that was tour it the whole year then of the race riot anniversary. It traveled all over the state and I would say, tens of thousands of people saw that exhibit. And it was a great group of kids. It was really a fun two weeks and I didn't want to do it and I thought it was going to be a disaster and it was probably one of the highlights of my career. And then the next year, I went ahead and stayed director and we didn't hire a director. We decided to do an online magazine and we kept the same topic. They created this fantastic online magazine that we then submitted to the American Association of Museums and we won two awards for it – international awards. So, I am very proud of that program.

Hosea: The other group besides interns here: do you make use of volunteers at all?

Bishop: We do. We have one volunteer that is a regular in our department helping us assemble the packets that go out to the schools. We also rely on volunteers occasionally when we do workshops and then we have done a lot of special events, like our Strawberry Party in the summer. We have done craft events at Christmas. We do craft events for birthday parties and in a lot of those cases, we use volunteers to assist at the events. We also rely on volunteers in Mrs. Lincoln's Attic to provide breaks, coverage occasionally, that sort of thing. So, yeah, lots of work with the volunteers.

Hosea: Now, all that you mention these special programs, like the Strawberry Party and these things, are these things you look forward to? Or are these things you got to do that get in your way?

Bishop: It depends. I came up with the Strawberry ... I love the Strawberry ... the first time we did it, I thought it sounded like a really cool, fun event to do out in the park. And, it was. It was hot but it was a good event. What I found for us is summers are the worst times. We are so busy in the summer, and adding the Strawberry Party, it's just hard to do it. We did it this year to meet the needs of the museum as a whole because there was a concern that the Illinois Gallery was not going to be open. It was going to be dark on Memorial Day weekend and there was a real concern that with the crowds coming in, if you don't have that gallery open just spatially, and you are crowded, there is no more space for people to go in to. So, it's kind of nice to have it open just for traffic pattern. But also...

Hosea: The Illinois Gallery being the temporary exhibit area.

Bishop: The temporary gallery. But also people are coming on this big, busy weekend and this gallery is closed. It's one of the biggest weekends of the year and you are not offering your temporary gallery. So, we hit on the idea, let's do a Strawberry

Party that weekend in compensation or whatever for not having this gallery open. Here's another area. It's another thing people can do. It's another place they can come. And, it's a built in audience. We know we usually get 2,000 people to the museum on that day. So you are guaranteed a successful event if you open up something in the Park across the street. So, we did it.

Again, a lot of those programs come out of programming meetings that a lot of people are involved and it is to meet the needs, as a whole. What you try to do with every exhibit, every temporary exhibit, is hit your academic audience. You know, get a program for your academic audience. Get a program for your family audience. Get a program for kids. Get a program for the non-initiated. You know, or something new. We call it like a pop-culture event where we can target people who don't go to museums. Examples of that would just be the recent Craig Morgan concert where we had a country western singer come in and sing. You know, we probably got people here that had never been to the museum. Was the tie-in very tight? Not really. It was, you know, not necessarily that related to the exhibit, but it was a good event and we made money on that. So ... what was I ... I know I lost track of the question.

Hosea: We were talking about volunteers and using them?

Bishop: But we do use volunteers a lot.

Hosea: Now, I have some just general questions.

Bishop: Sure.

Hosea: When you create materials, I know at one point you had told me that you helped to write the little signs that are up explaining, interpreting an area. Kind of what level of person are you seeking to ...

Bishop: Museum industries, the sixth grade reading level.

Hosea: Sixth grade reading level.

Bishop: Most people, that's what they read at is a sixth grade level. So, when you're writing under fifty words and at a sixth grade reading level.

Hosea: What's your attitude ...

Bishop: We don't always do that. We don't always do that. I would say we almost never do that.

Hosea: It's always higher than the sixth grade?

Bishop: Um-hm. And that's kind of been an ongoing battle. You know you got your historians writing books to put up on walls and then you have your exhibit people

and your education people trying to edit them down to fewer words and more easily understood words. (laughter)

Hosea: I know you mentioned that at the very beginning, part of the way you were able to start was your computer expertise and that kind of was an entry way for you. Do you see an increased use of technology and dependence on technology as we go forward?

Bishop: Absolutely. I would say almost every break I got, honestly, had to do a lot with computer. For example, when I was looking for teaching jobs, the interviews I got was because of my computer experience at the Lincoln Legal Papers. And when I first got out of college, when I first got out of my PhD, I actually worked for a company where I helped them design a website. I didn't know what I was doing. There is software that you can use to design a web page. You know, it's not rocket science and the stuff I designed looked terrible by today's standards. But I needed money, I jumped in, I got paid ten bucks an hour to mess around with this. When I put that on my resume, that's how I was getting interviews for colleges to teach because they wanted to set up intranets in their departments.

Hosea: Yeah.

Bishop: So, anybody can teach twentieth century U.S. history but this girl can set up a web page. That's why I was getting job interviews. At the sites division, I also worked on—which would be part of the education background for me—was training sites staff and volunteers. We really embarked on a program of doing more staff training and more volunteer training. Part of that, what the staff requested, was a newsletter, because the staff out in the sites felt very isolated. So I got the job of writing the newsletter. So I started with the basics, but then I was like, Hey, maybe I can design this so it looks pretty, which led me to Publisher or Front Page [graphic design programs]. Then we did a conference and I wanted to do a conference program. So, just playing around and messing, I discovered PageMaker. And then, when we decided to do our interpretative guide for the Menard Home, we hit on this idea of let's lay it out and make it really attractive, make it like a magazine. And that's when I decided, I'm going to go take a class in graphic design because I think it's really interesting and it's fun and so I started taking courses. I've taken three courses, I think, in graphic design with Photoshop and Design, PageMaker, Illustrator.

That has served me well here because I feel like, as a presidential library, when you give someone a lesson plan it shouldn't be a Microsoft Word document. It should look flashy, clean, attractive. There is no one here to do that. There is not a print shop or a marketing department. We have a marketing department but you can't hand them raw material and they lay it out for you. We don't really have that. So without the skills that I developed, I'm able to make these lesson plans look nice, and crop photos and edit things and mess with computers. I have a staff that's not that computer savvy. Now, they are learning but I definitely think it's really imperative in the state system to have it because the majority of

your state workers are of a certain age that computers just weren't around and it's becoming more and more relevant and important.

Now, we are looking at doing more webinars, online workshops, which involves a level of technology that a lot of people wouldn't understand or be comfortable with. Saving everything into PDFs, that's just standard now, you know. So definitely. We use power points; teachers want power points. That's our new thing is to create power points that you can put on the web site that the teacher can then use in the classroom when they are giving a lecture. That's something new in the last couple of years that teachers are asking us for. Can I have a power point? Every presentation I give, a teacher says, Can I have a copy of your power point? So, that's a big thing. Flash drives are a new thing too that we have learned; if we can hand teachers everything on a flash drive, they love that because they can walk out with a flash drive instead of a big binder of photocopies. So, all of the technology is just running away.

Hosea: And you've been, in some ways—at least in your present position—you've been involved with this marriage between museums and the educational community. Is that an association you think works well together? Do they serve each other? Is that a good thing?

Bishop: Well, I think from the fundraising standpoint, everyone wants education. All of the donors out there, all of the corporate donors, that's what they want to give money to. So it seems to me education gets a lot of lip service but it doesn't pay off in other ways, I guess. I definitely think that is crucial for the survival of museums, is how can you make yourself necessary, I guess to the education system in your community because that's what is going to get you your funding. If school groups come to your site, if your site is threatened with closure, that's a huge group of people – taxpayers. People that are going to fight for your organization. And I also think that studies show, adults who go to museums were kids who went to museums. So, for me, the most important thing a kid takes away from our museum is museums are fun. It's not anything to do with Lincoln. It's, I like museums. That was cool. That was fun. Because that's going to get them back. It's going to get them to go home and talk about it to Mom and Dad and Mom and Dad will come back and buy tickets. Because our tours are free to school groups that book through our system, they grow up to be museum goers. Kids that have good experiences in museums become members and they support with their tax dollars and with their donations and they sit on boards that give money and, you know, that's important.

Hosea: So, I gather the flashy interactive show aspects of the museum, which troubles some people, that is a positive in your view.

Bishop: Oh, absolutely. I mean I think a perfect example is the Campaign of 1860 which is where you have the modern TV monitors and all of the platforms of each candidate are presented in video clips, just like campaign commercials. We took a lot of heat from that. The idea came from teachers. And, it's distilling a really

complex issue down to these sound bites that that is what, you know, good or bad, that's the generation we live in and that's what kids relate to. Teachers love it. They also love the Civil War in Four Minutes. They want it. They buy it. They use it in their classrooms. They don't have the luxury of spending a week on the Civil War, but they don't want to skip it, you know. So this gives them that ability.

Hosea: You've been a professional during the time that the role of women and various organizations has changed. Have you been at all frustrated in terms of being a young professional woman in terms of being taken seriously, and these kinds of issues?

Bishop: Yeah, yeah. There have been situations, I don't know how detailed I want to get. There have been situations, you know. There have been accusations. How I moved up as quickly as I did. It can't be because of background and brains. It must be, you know. I tend to be pretty lighthearted and pretty silly and sarcastic and I think sometimes that's been seen as not serious - not academic enough or bubble heady or too young. Then you run the risk of being too aggressive. You know, you're not assertive, you're aggressive, you're a bitch. What's been kind of fun working down the road at the JR Building, and at the Lincoln Legal Papers, I was like one of the only females, very male environment. Very interesting. They don't do birthdays. They don't do potlucks. They don't acknowledge anything. You know, they don't go to lunch. People don't dress.

This is a very female place, the Lincoln Presidential Museum, and it was weird because it's all, When's your birthday? We celebrate birthdays. And like the first Valentine's Day somebody left little Hershey Kisses on my desk, and everyone dresses. In the morning, you know, the first thing in the morning when you get your coffee, is you're looking at what everyone's wearing and it's a place of a lot of strong women. So that's been a little bit of a different environment for me. It's been kind of funny. I definitely have seen sexism in my career. Absolutely. I've also been really blessed with some of the men I've worked with that have definitely recognized, that I have a brain and have talent. So, I've been fortunate in a lot of ways too.

Hosea: And that was the next question. Who have been your strong influences in the agency? People that you had a high respect for.

Bishop: I think Dick Taylor. I think Keith Herron, who is gone. I think Mark Johnson is one of the best researchers I've ever met. Phil Funkenbush has been just an inspiration and a friend. So, that's the key of that sites division. That's the core staff that I worked with at the sites division and those are the people that I just really admired the most, I suppose.

Hosea: You told us about some of the achievements that you feel best about, such as the summer scholar. Are there any others that ...

Bishop: Well, I'm incredibly proud of the Menard Home interpretative manual that we created. In fact, I was getting to go away on maternity leave when it was almost finishing and it was like more important that I give birth to this manual than this child.

Hosea: (laugh)

Bishop: You know, it was ... I certainly labored longer with it. But what we did with that manual was, most manuals, if you go in to a site or a museum and ask them for their interpretative manual, you'll be handed a three ring binder stuffed with old photocopies of everything imaginable.

Hosea: Every site has one?

Bishop: Pretty much, yeah.

Hosea: Okay.

Bishop: They would have nothing or they would just have a binder as a volunteer and it's often times very badly organized. The photocopies are so old, they are illegible, you know. That's the reality in a lot of places. What we hit on with the Menard Home, is you've got this really complex story and how do you train staff and volunteers. And the other issue is, if you're working in the site, you can't read a book. Because the doorbell rings and you have to give a tour. And you just sit down and get another paragraph done and the toilet backs up. And you have to go fix that, you know. There is all this stuff going on so it's impossible to really sit down and spend a great deal of time on training, especially at some of our sites where you only have one or two staff people. You can't take them out for training. So, what was interesting is, the Iraq war was just starting. I remember picking up a *Newsweek* because I didn't understand all of these different entities that were involved in this war and all these players; *Newsweek* laid it out with a lot of graphics and a lot of arrows and a lot of sidebars and a lot of little articles. And I thought, geez, we don't need to reinvent the wheel. Maybe we should present our interpretative plan more like a magazine. And make it a lot more colorful because now printing anymore, it hardly costs more to do color printing than black and white. Maybe we can design it in such a way that it allows the interpreter to read snippets because they can sit down and learn in fifteen minutes this little bit here, you know, just this little esoteric fact and not have to read David Herbert Donald<sup>2</sup>.

That's what we hit on and so that was when I was taking the graphic design classes and I laid it out and designed it and we all wrote it. We all wrote different components and we came up with a theme. Each room had a thematic approach and you had a thesis statement for each room. You had key points and then you had artifacts that you showed on the page. If you were a new volunteer, all you had to do is look at this two page spread, memorize a couple of the key points, be

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<sup>2</sup> Award-winning Lincoln specialist and author

able to point to a couple of pieces of furniture that reflected those key points and you could do an interpretation. As you got better, and had more time, you could flip through and learn things. You would also be able to tweak your interpretation based on your interests. If you were interested in women's history, you could do more of the women's approach. If you were more interested in Native Americans, you could do more with that. So, we laid it out beautifully. Everything was great. And then we had layoffs. The site manager resigned and retired. One of the girls left to take a different job. It was never really used; we printed maybe a hundred of them and they sat in boxes. But we did dust them off and I've presented them at maybe three or four different museum conferences. The title of the workshop is "Taking a Cue from Cosmo – Interpretative Guides that Sizzle." The idea is *Cosmopolitan* magazine, you know, it's the idea of that magazine approach and making them really colorful. You're not necessarily dumbing down. All that information is still there but it's put in these chunks that are a lot more easily digestible, with a lot of images. And that's how people read any more. That's how people take in information. That's why news magazines look the way they look. That's why *USA Today* looks the way it looks. So, let's take that approach instead of thick dense pages of text. So I'm really proud of that manual. I've gotten great feedback from other institutions, and I think other institutions are adopting that technique because it can be done in-house with these graphic design programs that are really easy. Publisher, anybody, can do it. Lay it out and then, you know, get it printed.

Hosea: And I got to do the other side. What's your major frustrations?

Bishop: The politics of state government. Decisions based on politics and not what's right or good. That's constant. The mediocrity that unions breed. You can't hire the person that's right for the job because you have to go through the union. You can't fire someone who is incompetent because it's based on seniority. Job descriptions that are written so vaguely that anybody can qualify. You're stifled with hiring. You're stifled with firing. Or not even just firing, just, Okay, this person doesn't work in this capacity; can we readjust and give them different assignments. No. (laugh) You know. And you can't get rid of them. That's not good for the person. They are protected but they are not working at their skill sets. It's just ... it's frustrating. And it's constant. And it's .... I don't know, I told my husband once, I said, It's like poison darts. It's no one thing but you're constantly getting nicked and eventually it takes its toll.

Hosea: I think anyway, Illinois is a little bit unique here that we have a presidential museum and right across the street we have a presidential library. How does that interaction work? Is that a good organizational way? Do they assist each or get in each other's way or ...?

Bishop: I think it works. I think there is a lot of history and baggage. I think it's getting better. You have a library that existed for years and years and years and years and years. And then you have this new entity of the museum, that's getting all the attention and all the money. And so there is resentment. There is a division in

that a lot of the front-line new staff at the museum don't know anything about what goes on in the library. Don't know the people over here and don't know the bigger agency. Most people that got hired on in the beginning had no idea that the ALPLM was part of a larger agency. Don't know anything about the agency. So, that causes a bit of a division, or friction. Just based on kind of ignorance really. It's not anyone's fault I guess. It's not malicious.

Hosea: There isn't a lot of movement of people from the sites to ALPLM or vice versa?

Bishop: No, no. When we first opened there had been a lot of layoffs in the Department of Natural Resources so those people had rights to the jobs. So we did hire quite a few people that came over from Department of Natural Resources because they were recalls. Again, we got lucky, great people. No museum experience. No real history background, you know. I think in a lot of cases we got lucky because we got hard working diligent people but it's a crap shoot. You know, there are issues. I would definitely say there is issues between the two sides of the street and I think it's been a constant battle to sort of bridge that. But I think it's gotten better. I think it's going to take the right Director to make it really work. I think Rick Beard was on the right track but he didn't get to stay long enough to make it happen, so ...

Hosea: And lastly, I guess, is there anything I haven't I asked about that you wanted to say.

Bishop: I don't think so. And I probably said way more than anybody would ever want to know about anything.

Hosea: No, I think it will be very good. Thank you very much for your contribution.

Bishop: Thank you. Thanks.

(End of interview)