Interview with Carl Cottingham

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Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL Volunteer

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Pogue: This is Phil Pogue with an interview for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Project on the history and development of the community college in Illinois. We're on the campus of John A. Logan College in Carterville, Illinois. It is September 10, 2013, and I'm talking with Carl Cottingham about his experiences here at John A. Logan. I want to thank you, Carl, for being a participant in our project and representing John A. Logan. Let's begin with, some family background and your educational background?

Carl Cottingham

Cottingham: Sure, yeah. It's good to be with you today on this tape. I was born and raised in Hamilton County, which is about fifty miles northeast of here, on a rural type family farm. I went to a one-room school house until I was through seventh grade. [In] eighth grade I went into the big city school. They said, Ah, these poor kids coming from those little one-room school, they probably didn't learn anything. They were kind of surprised, because I did pretty well (laughs). [I] graduated from McLeansboro High School.

My family had a few people going to college. I had an uncle that was a teacher, but most of them were through with school at eighth grade. My dad graduated from high school; my mother went to one year high school and then started working in the factory. That was fairly typical. I think in my dad's class there were thirty graduates, so you can see there weren't too many people that went on to high school.

I graduated in 1958 and enrolled at Southern Illinois University [SIU, Carbondale, Illinois]. [I] kind of had in mind that I wanted to go into the library field, but I wasn't real sure. So I struggled around with different majors, including special ed [education], art for a while, and English. But I knew back in high school, because I was a volunteer in high school in the library. I just totally enjoyed it, everything about it, the books. I was a heavy reader and liked to get other people interested in reading. So I gravitated towards that and ended up with a minor in library science when I graduated from SIU.

I was immediately employed. There was quite a shortage then for, of course, all teachers, back in 1962. There was a shortage in Illinois of teachers and a shortage of librarians. So my high school principal, Carl Nation, came down and made an appointment with me and hired me on the spot (laughs). He said, "I know you were a good student. You kind of ran the library your senior year." And he said, "I'd like you to come back and do that and maybe teach some English, too."

So I did that; I was there for three years, really enjoyed it at McLeansboro High School. Then I had an opportunity to come to a bigger high school, Carbondale Community High School, as their audio-visual director. I worked there three years. In fact, it was quite an exciting three years, because we installed a lot of very advanced technology for the time. The school board was really interested in technology and being up-to-date in our teaching methods. So that was a good three years.

Then I heard about John A. Logan College or this new community college. We didn't know the name of it; at that time, it didn't have a name. But I heard about this new college being formed. In fact, Harold O'Neal, who I worked with, told me in confidence one day, he said, "They're going to hire me as the dean of students. They are asking if I know of someone who might take care of the library, and I told them about you. Very shortly I was interviewed, and the next board meeting I was hired.

That was in May of sixty-eight. The president told me that they actually intended to start classes in September (laughs). I said, "That's impossible. How can I put a library together in four months?" In fact, I'd already signed a contract to teach summer school at Western Michigan University at Kalamazoo, since I'd finished my master's and was working on my advanced degree.

He said, "Well, that's okay. We'll work with you." Basically, I built the library while I was up there teaching. Every afternoon I'd get on the phone, and we'd take care of building shelves and ordering the books. I came back in September with the excitement of starting a brand new college. You will want to talk to me later about the beginning of the college, but that was exciting.

Pogue: You said that you went to a one-room school through seventh grade. What do you remember about that experience?

Cottingham: Well, I remember a lot of times I was the only one in my class, but I would listen to what all the other students were doing, especially the seventh and eighth graders when I was, like, in sixth grade. By the time I would get to that grade, (laughs) I'd already heard the lessons several times.

I also remember that, since I was the only one in the class when I was in the sixth grade, the teacher would use me to teach the younger children. I have often joked that I started my teaching career when I was eleven, twelve years old. We had four or five little third graders, and I'd spend big part of the day with them, reviewing their lesson, going through the textbook with them. I kind of enjoyed that.

Pogue: Did you rotate through many one-room schools, or were you always in one?

Cottingham: Had the same one for six years, and then they consolidated two schools in seventh grade, so I went about four miles over to the next school. We combined two because there weren't enough; there were only like fifteen in the whole school. Seventh grade was not one of the better years (laughs). The teacher was not well qualified. Back then they…I had some teachers that were excellent, but some that were just not really qualified.

Pogue: How did you get library material in the one-room school, since that became your field?

Cottingham: That was a very significant moment. This one teacher, Mrs. Hamilton, that was one of the good teachers, one of the competent teachers, found out that the Illinois State Library would send books down to little schools. You could tell them the kind of books they wanted, and they would loan books to one-room schools. I can still remember the day those…about six boxes of books came (laughs). We must have not had ten books. I know we had *Ivanhoe* and a dictionary and some real young children's books. That was all that was in the library. I could still remember looking at those titles and grabbing four or five and taking them home at night (laughs). So, that's the way one creative teacher handled it. She knew what her resources were.

She also got me interested in art because she had a daughter that was going to school at, I believe, the University of Illinois as an art major. Every

time her daughter would be home, she would come out. We'd do all kinds of art projects (laughs). So she inspired me in that field too.

Pogue: When you went from the one-room school and the merged rural schools, and then went to a bigger high school, what were some of the bigger adjustments that you had to make?

Cottingham: It wasn't that hard really. I kind of enjoyed having a class of twenty-five or thirty; I can't remember. We had two eighth grades, I remember. I enjoyed being with more kids. It wasn't a hard adjustment; I enjoyed it, (laughs) got used to it and made a lot of new friends.

Pogue: How difficult was it to go back to your home school as a teacher?

Cottingham: That was tough, and it's generally not recommended. But I was a serious student and they had confidence in me. I had a sister that was like a freshman in school. I had three cousins in the school. They called me Mr. Cottingham, like everybody else (laughs), and it was fine.

We had a library there that was kind of unusual. It was very large, had like 8,000 books, which is a large library for a high school. It had a reputation of being one of the best in the area, one of the best libraries. A lady named Mary Afflack—spelled like the business Afflack, A-f-f-l-a-c-k—had been there for many years and built that library up from nothing.

When I looked around for a job in the library field, I'd go into a high school, and they'd say, "That's our library over there." Maybe in the study hall there would be a few books there. I thought, I don't want to work here. I want to go to a place where library really means something and is important to the principal and the school board. That's one of the reasons I went back to McLeansboro.

I was very much accepted by the faculty. Some of them were there when I was a student, and they remembered I was a serious student and had good results. Really it was a good three years. I had a good time there. I was twenty-one years old (laughs).

Pogue: As for teaching English, what kinds of classes did they assign you?

Cottingham: It turned out that mainly I just…I did some substitute teaching, is all I ended up doing, yeah. When the need arose, they would call somebody down to watch the library, and I would go fill in for somebody. But I never did teach fulltime.

Pogue: At Carbondale you were the director of instructional resources. This was sixty-five to sixty-eight. What was the popular AV [audio-visual] equipment of that day?

Cottingham: The big thing was dial access audio (laughs) was the big thing. We put in a system where a student could come into the library and dial up on like a telephone dial and put a headphone on. They could get their foreign language instruction that way. They could get reviews in math. They would sit there with their textbook and review. It was the biggest thing, back in (laughs) 1967, sixty-eight. Also, we did a lot of just the standard things, like slide projectors and overhead projectors.

We put in a lab where we could produce these materials. That was new. They asked me to do that and photography. They gave me student workers to assist in shuttling equipment around, to get it to the classroom when the teacher needed it, [things] like movie projectors. We were really the pacesetters in that time and did some exciting things.

Pogue: You talked about hearing about this new community college. Why did you have interest in that?

Cottingham: My dream had always been, I guess…The perfect job would be to either teach or be a librarian in like a small liberal arts college. That'd been my ideal when I was thinking about what I'd do for my career. I didn't see that opening up.

But I took a course at SIU from Dr. Sanford, S-a-n-f-o-r-d, where he talked about this new concept of the community college. I took that in, I guess, spring of sixty-eight, somewhere in there, because it fascinated me, this community college where you could have access to a lot more people for higher education. You could deal with both occupational and liberal arts in the same school. I thought, Maybe someday something will open up, and sure enough, (laughs) within a year it did.

Pogue: What do you remember about interviewing for that position?

Cottingham: I remember it pretty clearly. Dr. Ivy, Nathan Ivy, interviewed me. He said, "You are not ALA [American Library Association] accredited." The program I went to at SIU was trying to get ALA accreditation; that's the library stamp that you're a good library school. They were more of a school library program. They were a section of the education program, and they called it instructional materials. It was heavy on working with faculty. That's how I got into the psychology of learning; they were heavy into that: Why use visual materials? How can we enhance learning? How can we help teachers? So, I said, "No, we're not ALA accredited (laughs). He said, "Is that important?" I said, "It's not to me. If it is to you, then you better tell me to leave." He said, "No, I kind of like that idea."

I said, "I'm not a librarian that knows about education. I'm an educator that can run a library." That's what I told him. He said, "I like that" (laughs). He said, "I want an educator; I want somebody that understands instruction, can work with faculty and also run a good library and the audio-visual part,

too, of course. That's the only part I remember of that, but it really rung a bell with him, I think, because he'd had kind of a bad experience with the typical library approach to providing books and other materials.

Pogue: When you interviewed, did you know where the building was going to be or anything else about it?

Cottingham: No. No, I did not. No, we were a college without buildings. In fact, he interviewed me in the county superintendent's office in Marion. They just had a little corner for his office there, in May. They hadn't even rented the temporary facilities yet.

He did tell me, "I think we're going to be able to rent some storefronts in Herrin to start the college, and we're going to borrow some classrooms from the Herrin High School at night, and we've got a church that's going to let us use their facility. The First Christian Church, there in Herrin would provide classrooms for day classes. Also, the Catholic Church in Herrin, both those churches provided space. I think we used their gymnasium.

Pogue: You were going to be in a variety of different buildings. How did you foresee this library taking shape?

Cottingham: Well, that was interesting. We had two storefronts and then one on the left, over on Cherry Street in Herrin. The one on the left was just an old, dilapidated store building. The floors were buckled (laughs), but we put shelves along the wall. We ordered a basic, kind of a packaged program that this company had put together for a new library for two-year colleges. I think it was about $3,000, and that's all we had that first year.

We had encyclopedias, basic dictionaries and just…mainly it was liberal arts kind of things, the classics and trying to cover the basic needs of English and math and social studies and the other things we were offering.

Pogue: How did that look, compared to what you were leaving in Carbondale?

Cottingham: It was much smaller (laughing), but I think the students were allowed, as I remember, to use the high school library at Herrin some. They just did without that first year. But by the second year, we'd made a lot more progress to build the library.

Pogue: Before we get into more of your roles at John A. Logan, could you give us some background about John A. Logan? How it got created and a little bit of the geographic nature of it.

Cottingham: The major impetus, as I remember, came from the county superintendents of the [schools], especially Williams and Jackson County. They got together and formed a committee to study it. I think they received some funding to study

that. I've seen a copy of that study, basically a feasibility study. I think it was required before you could start a community college district.

There were other people, like Harry Crisp from the Pepsi Company, and Bill Batteau, up in Elkville. He was just a person interested in education. He was a coal miner, I believe; his son was a teacher. They tried to look around to different communities and involve people in that committee. Several of those ended up on the original charter board. Mr. Alongi from Du Quoin and Harold Rice, also from Du Quoin, was a very key person in that, Harold Rice; Rannie Odum from West Frankfort.

They put together a very good committee that represented the district that they were laying out geographically and then proposed a referendum in 1968 or sixty-seven, and it passed. I can't remember what…It passed pretty decidedly; people wanted this.

The only contention came from the Carbondale School District because they basically said, Well why would we need to be taxed for a community college when we have SIU here? (laughs) The logic seems a little strange now because we ended up very soon getting more students from there than any other district. (laughs) But they said, "Our students just go across to SIU. Why would we need that?" But they really did (laughs). They tried to petition to get out of the district.

Pogue: You talked about the original storefronts being in Herrin. How did this site where we are today come about?

Cottingham: It was property that belonged to the national wildlife people. It was part of the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge down here. And it was not being used for anything for their purposes. It was one of the choice sites. There were other sites considered, I think in Herrin and Marion. Every town wanted it (laughs) to be in their town, of course. But they thought, Carterville's a pretty central location, and there's nice property right there on the lake.

The problem was, you can't buy it from the U.S. government. They had to go down south of the lake, where they wanted to develop the refuge, buy property and swap it for this. They could buy property there, and then they would give this property to the college.

I got to be in on some of the early…I had to take a vow of secrecy because they didn't want anybody to know. They put me on an airplane one day and said, "I want you to go up and take a picture of this land before we acquire it." Then we had a couple of students that came out with us, and we took pictures of the students on the site. That was after, I guess, it'd been released, because they had a sign up that said, "Future Home of John A. Logan College." It was not too hard a decision, I don't think. I wasn't in on the discussion, but I think it was pretty clear this was the best spot.

Pogue: And Highway 13, was that right here?

Cottingham: Yeah, it was right there, yeah; it hasn't moved. It was a good, central location, and Carterville was very supportive of it, of course. It's done wonders for the little town of Carterville. We were 3,000 people; now it's like 7,000 in the school district. Carterville has really benefitted from it in many ways.

Pogue: You mentioned a few of the other communities that would feed this district, Herrin, Carbondale—

Cottingham: Yeah, Herrin, Carbondale, West Frankfort, which is in the southern part of Franklin County. And there's a little school of Crab Orchard, right on the eastern edge of Williamson County. Well, there are eleven different school districts. I left out Du Quoin and Murphysboro; those are the large ones.

Pogue: How did the college get the name John A. Logan?

Cottingham: Well, it was actually chosen by a man from Michigan that knew our history better than we did (laughs), William [Bill] Anderson, who had been teaching there at the community college in Dowagiac, Michigan. I think it was called Southwest Community College in Dowagiac, Michigan. Dr. Ivy had been president there before he came here, and he knew Bill Anderson. Bill Anderson was quite a Civil War scholar, had already published some things. When they were talking, he [Dr. Ivy] said, "I'm going down to southern Illinois; it's near Murphysboro." And he [Anderson] said, "That's where John A. Logan was born."[1] (laughs)

So, when he came down, he [Dr. Ivy] talked to the board about…They were looking at names like Egyptian Community College or South…there was something, South Central or something. But he said, "You've got a major person here who was the most distinguished civilian general in the Civil War on the Union side, that was born right there in the district and had a lot to do with American history, ran for the vice presidency. Nobody even knew that. We'd forgotten it, although back in the 1860s and seventies he was a very well-known figure.

They said, "That sounds pretty good. I think we will name it John A. Logan College." (laughs)

Pogue: Did this surprise the community? Was it accepted right away? Certainly it would probably be good in Murphysboro.

[1] John Alexander Logan (1826–1886) was an American soldier and political leader. He served in the Mexican-American War and was a general in the Union Army in the American Civil War. He served the state of Illinois as a state senator, a congressman, and a U.S. senator and was an unsuccessful candidate for vice president of the United States in the election of 1884. As the third commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, he is regarded as the most important figure in the movement to recognize Memorial Day (originally known as Decoration Day) as an official holiday. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_A._Logan)

Cottingham: Yeah, Murphysboro knew. They had more memory than the rest of the district. And John A. Logan's wife had lived in Marion, so some of her family, the Cunningham's, had been from Marion. The Logan's had actually lived in Carbondale during the war because she wanted to be close to the telegraph and the railroad. So, there wasn't much objection, although I heard a lot of people say, "Who was John A. Logan?" (laughs) They also said, "What is John A. Logan College? I've never heard of it." But it caught on pretty quick. That was one of the joys I had, to be the historian and to be the one to go out and tell the story of General Logan and Mary Logan.

We had a professor at SIU named George Adams, Dr. George Adams—head of the History Department at SIU—that was a Logan authority. He had published the memoirs of Mary Logan. He had published other things on the general. I got to know him pretty well. He told me the basic story, and then I read, of course, all that I could get and did research in Springfield and Washington D.C., in the archives. I had a lot of fun doing that.

We had other people in the area that I met very quickly, southern Illinois historians, that helped me, like Barbara Hubbs, who was very, very helpful and encouraged me to collect things. We started buying whatever we could get that we could have here at the college to put on display as a little museum. Bringing Bill Anderson down here and the board deciding that made sense (laughs) has kept his [Logan's] name alive very much.

Pogue: Since you, yourself, didn't have that much knowledge on John A. Logan, what kind of interesting material did you find in your research on him?

Cottingham: I think, especially at the Library of Congress, there are 45,000 items in the Logan collection. That's a major collection, as you know in your field. Mary Logan had a keen sense of history, and she knew that someday people would want everything she could keep. The joke is, she even kept his underwear buttons (laughs). Barbara Hubbs used to say that. I have sat days at a time in the Library of Congress, going through piece by piece. We photocopied a lot of that, and it's here at the college, where people can see it. It just added to my presentation when I'd go out and talk. I had good visuals to show, slides to show of his life.

I don't guess any major new discoveries were made, but we got the whole story anyway. I'll tell this one little human-interest thing. Mary was twelve years younger than Logan. In fact, almost thirteen years' difference. He was twenty-nine, and she was barely sixteen when they married.

He had heard about Mary when he served in the Mexican War with Mary's father, Robert Cunningham. Her father was from Marion. He was a captain, and Logan was a lieutenant. They were stationed in the Santa Fe area, and they talked a lot. Captain Cunningham would get letters from his nine-year-old daughter. They would share letters with each other. John A. Logan—

he'd been about twenty-two years old, I guess—said, "Someday I'm going to marry that girl. She is incredibly bright." (laughs)

He was a prosecuting attorney and traveled around through the area, and they [the Cunningham's] were living in Shawneetown at that time. He was in charge of the land office in Shawneetown in the 1840s. When they were selling land down here for twelve and a half cents an acre, a lot of people were coming in (laughs). So, he would stop by and visit with Mary. It got pretty serious.

The letters are all in there, between the two of them. They would write almost every day when he was away. Sometimes, like one Sunday, he would try to be down there and court Mary. But one of the letters was missing. There was a letter that was gone, that should have been there, and there's a note from Mary saying, "To the future reader of these papers, these were just a little too personal." (laughs).

Pogue: When you went out and did talks on John A. Logan, what were some of the questions that you would get, or what would you emphasize?

Cottingham: The main question I got was, "Wasn't he really a southern sympathizer at one time?" (laughs) That's the big question. And it's still asked today, I guess, because he didn't really come down on the Union side until August, after Fort Sumter; that was in April, right? There was several months there that he seemed to flounder. He wasn't sure because, of all of his family back here, his wife's family and his family in Murphysboro were **strong** southern sympathizers, as were many people in southern Illinois.

But finally, in August—I think it was the nineteenth of August—he stood up on the back of a wagon, over there in the Marion square, and declared himself for the Union. He had a commission in his pocket to raise a regiment, and he started that that day. He kind of feared for his life because there was talk that if he did that, they would shoot him because there were many people that did not sympathize with Logan at all. This was definitely a Douglas Democrat area.[2] They were not Republicans at all (laughs).

Pogue: You talked earlier about the storefronts and so forth, and you've explained how the land was obtained here. During the building phase, what phases were you were involved in in your position?

Cottingham: The first phase was temporary, barracks-type buildings that were built in the fall of sixty-nine. They barely got them finished; they actually had to delay school because they weren't finished. It was a rainy fall, and I remember

[2] Douglas Democrat refers to those Democrats who supported U.S. Senator Stephen Arnold Douglas of Illinois in the 1869 U.S. presidential election. (https://ipfs.io/ipfs/QmXoypizjW3WknFiJnKLwHCnL72vedxjQkDDP1mXWo6uco/wiki/Douglas_Democrat.html)

coming out, trying to get the library together and had to walk on boards to get to the door to get in. One time they took me and my staff in in the front of a bulldozer. It was the only way we get into (laughs) our work that day. That was phase one.

There were about five barracks-type buildings, wood buildings, built. They had a student center; they had a vocational building and two classroom buildings. That was adequate for the enrollment. We had 700 students, I think, that second year, but that was adequate. They also used other facilities, especially in the vocational area. They had to use some of the high schools and other facilities for occasional needs.

One of the interesting things they used was one of these air-supported…they had two of them, air-supported structures. One was for automotive-type vocational building. The other one was a gymnasium. It kind of got to be a joke because every time they needed them, they'd leak, and they'd just fall down (laughs); something would go wrong. Eventually they got rid of them. That was a disaster. I think the technology is pretty good today—I see them around—but that must have been early in the development, and they were not very reliable at all.

Pogue: What were you able to put into the library and these temporary buildings?

Cottingham: We had regular library shelving, and by that time the collection was up, maybe 15,000 books. It looked pretty respectable. We had a reading area and had a photographic dark room. That's one of the things I also took care of, photography services for the college. We had offices and work areas for the staff. It was not too bad really.

Pogue: How many years were you in that facility?

Cottingham: Until seventy-one. The first phase of this building was finished, and we moved. That was a nice big move into that new library.

Pogue: Were you involved in the decision making, concerning what would be in that facility?

Cottingham: Yes, very much. Dr. Ivy very much wanted to involve me and trusted my judgment, so we were very much involved. In fact, every stage, we were not only involved in the library design, but also classrooms and anything related to instruction.

Pogue: What were you able to put in that facility, as compared to the temporary one?

Cottingham: We had a graphics department; we had a larger photographic lab, and we had what we called a learning lab, which was a place where people would come to view movies or any kind of audio-visual materials that were assigned by a class.

It was kind of a new design; nobody had ever done anything quite like it, and it was very successful. It was a large area, about the size of two classrooms, and we had all the equipment set up where students could come in and just immediately…I told them to run it like McDonalds. When they come in, you take care of them, so they don't have to wait, and make sure everything works right.

That was part of this concept that we were trying to get across, to connect what happened in the Learning and Resources Center and the classroom. If a teacher assigns for you to look at, say, a set of slides or whatever, then when that student comes in, they should have no problem at all, no bother, to be able to use those materials. It worked very well. In fact, it was copied in several other colleges, including one in England, over the years that I was operating that. And it's still there today. It's changed a little bit over the years, as audio- visuals have changed. Now it's mainly computers.

For a long time, we offered television-based courses. That's where students could go to view the television program. It was a good concept. They also could give tests and support courses that were self-paced, where students were at different places in the course. That was very helpful, too. It was very student-centered. Students never went away frustrated, as they do many times in using audio-visual materials, if you've had experience with that (laughs).

Pogue: Well, you served in the Learning and Resources Center and then eventually you would become dean?

Cottingham: They did that…I was associate dean at the beginning, and then they made that change. Seems like it was latter seventies, seventy-eight, somewhere in there, they decided to change it. I think they originally had president and then deans and then associate deans. They created vice president positions, and then they moved us to the deans. That was in the seventies.

Pogue: What kind of responsibilities did you have in that position?

Cottingham: I was much more involved in the instructional team planning. When the instructional administrators would get together, I sat at the table with them, whatever was coming up, even curriculum matters and whatever. But it didn't really change much. I was always involved in that somewhat. It gave my position a little bit more credibility, I guess.

Pogue: You also were involved in the international program?

Cottingham: That was in the eighties. There was a time that we got really excited about international things, here at the college. And it was a time where we had resources to do it. We had a board that was kind of interested in it and administrators. That's when [college president] Dr. [Robert L.] Mees came. He was very interested in that. In fact, he traveled, himself, to China quite a bit. He actually spoke in Beijing to the Higher Ed Council of China, through

an interpreter. He actually published articles in their periodicals over there about how they could use community colleges. Dr. Mees was very involved and had quite a voice, in not only China, but we were involved in mainly the Netherlands and the UK, very heavily, with exchanges for students and faculty.

I got to travel some and set up cooperative arrangements for students and faculty. That was always exciting, especially the one to China. That was a challenge (laughs). It wasn't too successful. We did it one time. We sent two faculty members there and had one person come here. Then it just was too expensive.

At that time, the board was kind of getting more conservative about why are we spending all of this money? It really wasn't that much. Mainly it was, with the faculty, it was two-week exchanges. The person from here would stay in the other person's home, so basically the only cost was the travel, airline ticket.

It was a good, good program. We had some good things come out of that. You would match up with your counterpart and stay two weeks, maybe three weeks, with the other person, and they would come here and stay for three weeks. We did the same thing with students. [There's] not too much going on now; it sort of got shut down, but that was exciting.

Pogue: In your role in continuing education, what have you been doing with that?

Cottingham: That was in…trying to remember the dates…About seventy-five through seventy-nine, we had the person who had been running it retire. It was sort of floundering, and that was a time we didn't have a lot of money. So they said, "You're going to have to help us with this. You're a good problem solver. Go over and take over adult and continuing ed for a while."

That was a big department. They had all of the adult literacy programs; they had the alternative high school program; they had all the hobby courses and the business-related courses.

Finally funds got better, and they were able to hire another administrator. I think they could see it was too much for me. I had about twenty-one people reporting to me, and it was pretty stressful.

Pogue: During your time here, you've worked with a number of different presidents. How did those presidents view the role of the Learning and Resources Center?

Cottingham: I think we got off to a really good start with Dr. Ivy. He really agreed with my concept. Dr. O'Neal, I'd worked with him before; he was very supportive. The others, I'm not sure I quite got the concept over to them, but they were generally pretty supportive, and they respected what needed to be done and my opinions and my philosophy on it.

But we had the one president that was only here for less [than] a year that tried to eliminate my position, tried to get me fired. Other than that, (laughs) things were fine. I think he was on a power play or something. He was not an effective president.

It's a good place to work, and people do respect one another. The budget is generally very open and transparent, where everybody can see who's getting the money (laughs). That's always a battle in library, because sometimes it gets pressed down, and other, more glamorous things, like athletics or whatever, get more funding. But I enjoyed the fight; it was always interesting.

Pogue: Some of the unique programs at John A. Logan include training for teaching the deaf? What is that program?

Cottingham: It's really not teaching the deaf; it's teaching sign language for people who are used to interpret for the deaf. I can't remember what year it started. I think it was probably back in the early eighties. It's been very successful. They had people go to some pretty prestigious jobs. They come out as very effective signers.

We've also tied in with—I don't know how you say it—Gallaudet University, which emphasizes work with the deaf. We have a very close working relationship with them. They have an office here. That's been a good thing that's come out of this. They've also noticed that, because this program's here, that there's a concentration of deaf people in the area. They come here because they know they're going to have support.

Pogue: Another important role for John A. Logan is the retraining for business and industry. What have been some of the important efforts there?

Cottingham: This has been a very, very strong program. They really have been leaders in the state in the retraining of people for business and industry. They get very specific. They will go out and talk to an industry. They said, "What can we do to help you be more profitable, be more productive, be better for your employees?" And they will design, together, a training program. It may be a two-week thing; it may be a one day; it may be a whole two-year program. It could be onsite, or it could be here at the college, very flexible. They use the faculty here somewhat, or they can go out and hire people. They can even hire people from the industry itself.

I was involved early in one of the first attempts at this. We had a business in Murphysboro that made jackets, these insulated jackets. That would have been back in the early eighties, I guess. They were seeing all these factories going to China, and they said, "What can we do to make ourselves more productive?" They asked that we would set up a video training center

where, when they brought in someone new, they could train them quicker and more effectively.

It was very, very effective. The man came to a board meeting one night, and he said, "Your college just saved me a $120,000 dollars this month (laughs). The board said, "How did we do that?" I was sitting there, and he told us what we'd done. The board was very happy about that, because they said that's the sort of thing we need to be doing. I think, from that, there were other people doing things, too, not just me. That's the only one I know about.

We kind of did a time and motion study and figured out how the fast… The women that were sewing fast were making money for the company, and the ones that were sewing slow were not. So how do we get this slow person up to this speed quicker? They could come in during their break and watch the videos to see how the fast person worked. We'd film the fast person, and then they could watch it.

Out of that and many other—I'm not the only one that responded to a need in the community—has come a major force at the college. And businesses have moved here just because of that, because they know that we will help them with their training and do it very well.

Pogue: Were you involved with setting the standards for the Learning and Resources Center?

Cottingham: Yeah, we had an association of community college learning resources folks. That was back when the colleges were just beginning in 1968. They said, "Hey, we need to set some standards, and we need to get these out, get them distributed, so that the community college will be strong in the learning resources area." I was on that committee of three or four people, and we visited a lot of people.

We drew up standards, and we surveyed what the colleges were doing in relation to learning resources, like the size of collection; how much staff do you need; what kind of organization works best? We proposed some things that were pretty much accepted throughout the state. That was quite a nice opportunity to have some leadership in that area.

Pogue: While you were here at John A. Logan, what traits did you see that made a successful community college teacher?

Cottingham: I usually came into it after they were hired, although I had a few times that I had some input. Generally, we were looking for people that were good in their field, that knew their material, but cared about students. That was the key; they cared about students more than content. A teacher can be…some are totally subject oriented, and some are totally student oriented. You sort of need a balance of both of those things. They need to be very competent in their field and to be able to teach that, but they need to care about the

individual student. Most of our classes are small, with average about twenty students in a class, so you can get to know the students.

A lot of the faculty you'll see down here in the student center, sitting with students, talking and socializing. That's the sort of thing that we promote. We didn't need a lot of research people, although we have many people that have published textbooks and had done research. The main thing was they cared about the student; they know how to teach.

That's kind of a problem, because in public school we require a certain amount of pedagogy when they come in. You have to have courses on how to teach. But in community college, there's no such requirement. We had to make the judgment ourselves about did they have experience where they had taught; did they have successful experience? If not, were they open to learning how to teach?

I was involved many times with new teachers that really didn't know about how you can help people learn better, retain the material better. But that's the main thing, I think, that they care about students, and they are outgoing and not just close themselves in their office (laughs) or in their laboratory and do research, like you might have at a university.

Pogue: As we close our interview, what challenges did technology present as you began your career in 1969?

Cottingham: It was mainly shuttling equipment around and trying to get faculty to look at material and to get money to purchase the material. To any faculty member, we would say, "Here's a bunch of good material that relates to your class, and we'll get it in here and let you look at it." That was the main thing that we did. "And we'll support you in the classroom when you need to use that material," whether it is a video projector or whatever.

Back then it was sixteen millimeter films and…That was when we started. Now, today it's very different. My last five years that I was here, before I retired, we introduced the Internet. That's changed everything because when computers can talk to each other and send vast amounts of information from one to the other, [when] it becomes interactive, that's basically the best audio-visual tool ever built. The computer does everything (laughs), even talk to you. It can be almost like a tutor.

I think the last time I heard, the online teaching here at the college, the number of courses that are being offered, is about 25 percent of the instruction is going now by computers. It's been a big change. We did a lot of production of materials back then. They still do quite a bit of that here too, but it's really changed.

Pogue: As we close, tell me what memorable experiences you think about when you hear the mention of John A. Logan.

Cottingham: (pause) Okay. I think probably those early days when there were so few administrators that we did everything. We built a parade float. The administrators were out building a float the day I came to work. The president helped me uncrate my desk, those kind of early days of starting the college and then coming to this campus, seeing the library take shape and a facility that we could really be proud of and parking lots that you could actually use.

Then I think about seeing the student body grow. Sometimes it grew a lot from year to year, and the community responding to that was really good. The college was very sensitive to kind of keeping our work alive. They would shift me around to do different things, like the international education. That was a high point. I got to travel. I got to help faculty do some traveling that really enriched them as teachers, when they would go see how another teacher is doing it in England somewhere or Netherlands or China. That was very exciting.

One of the funniest things I remember, it's…John Logan was known to…he smoked cigars, and he enjoyed bourbon once in a while with his buddies. But Mary was a temperance leader. She did not appreciate his drinking. One day I was sitting in the office, and a lady called on the phone and said, "I'm calling from New York City, the Seagram's Building, and we want to name one of our new bourbons, Black Jack Bourbon, after the general." I kind of started laughing out loud. "What's wrong?" I said, "Well, the general wouldn't mind, but (laughs) his wife would seriously object." They went ahead and did it. They contacted some of the family and got legal permission, I guess, to do it, but don't think it was very popular (laughs). That was one of…A lot of funny things happened.

It has been an incredible thirty years. It's taken me up in airplanes and all over the world and meeting some really interesting people and working with some good and a lot of great students. It's been very good.

Pogue: Carl, I want to thank you very much for sharing your history at John A. Logan, the role of the Learning and Resources Center, and how the college developed from storefronts and into a campus that is certainly a strong point for this region of the state.

Cottingham: Thank you. I appreciate the privilege.

(end of transcript)