

Dr. Stephen Greenberg

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Higingbotham: Good afternoon. Today is May 21st, 2024. I am Haley Higingbotham, an Archivist at the Office of NIH History and Stetten Museum. I am joined today by Dr. Stephen Greenberg. Dr. Greenberg is the retired Head of Rare Books and Manuscripts section of the History of Medicine Division [HMD] at the National Library of Medicine [NLM], where he worked for almost 30 years. Dr. Greenberg worked in a variety of roles at HMD at NLM, including as a Reference/Collection Access Librarian and Coordinator of Public Services. He currently is an adjunct Assistant Professor at the College of Information Studies University of Maryland at College Park, teaching courses on the history of the book. Thank you so much for joining me today.

Greenberg: It's my pleasure.

Higingbotham: To get started, could you discuss your background, including your childhood, early education, and family life?

Greenberg: I was born in New York City in May of 1950. The Bronx is where I grew up. It was very different back then than it would become in later years. Back then, it was called the borough of universities, because New York University still had their main campus up in the Bronx, and you had Fordham University and Bronx Community College and a whole bunch of other institutions of higher learning. The crazy part of the "South Bronx" that did not come into for many years later – my dad was a New York City public school teacher, my mom was the housewife, and I went to New York City public schools, the standard neighborhood schools back then. My high school was a little different. I went to a place called the Bronx High School of Science, which is what you would now call a magnet school or STEM school. There were three schools like that in New York City at the time. The schools pulled from all five boroughs, but Bronx Science was the only one that was co-ed at that point. We had guys from the neighborhood, but the women were from all over the city, some of whom had some rather dramatic commutes to get up to the Bronx. It was interesting. It was a very different demographic than my elementary school and junior high school because they just pulled from the neighborhood, and at that point, it was basically two-thirds Jewish and one-third Italian Catholic. Other minorities I never really got to see until I got to high school.

Higingbotham: After high school, what first sparked your interest in history? Did you have any role models who sparked this interest?

Greenberg: I don't know that I had a role model, per se, but I was a nerdy kid, and I did a lot of reading. I found I was reading more history than anything else. If I could point to a single author who influenced me the most at that point, it would probably be Bruce Catton, who is famous for his works on the American Civil War. Just to give you a kind of a point in space and time, 1961 was the Civil War centennial, and it was kind of an odd thing to celebrate. It went on until 1965 and a lot of new books on the Civil War were there, and I began to realize that history is not all that distant. Catton, who was a Northerner, brought a very interesting and very accessible kind of history, so I was drawn to that.

Higingbotham: This is kind of skipping ahead a little bit, but I wanted to follow up on that. Did this reading all about the American Civil War make you interested in the English Civil War? Because they're quite different wars.

Greenberg: That came later, and I will explain that. It made sense to me, but they are two very interesting events. Each in their own way shaped their countries going forward. The American Civil War was far more wrenching to the social fabric. The English Civil War, you know, there were famous battles like Cavaliers and Roundheads and things, but it never was the bloodbath that the American Civil War was. There's no Gettysburg

or Antietam or Chancellorsville or Spotsylvania, Vicksburg, Shiloh. There's nothing with that kind of ferocity. My interest came much later.

Higingbotham: Okay.

Greenberg: Getting back into the chronological track here, when I started college, and this would have been the fall of 1967, I went to the City College of New York, which was kind of the flagship school of the City University. I actually was accepted as a chemical engineer. I was coming from a STEM school, and so they all thought of us as being hard science types. I kept that major for about an hour and a half before I changed to history. History was something I was comfortable with. I had taken the SATs and back then they had the specialty exams for subjects you thought you could do well with, and we were all encouraged to take one in science and one in the humanities. I took the SAT achievement test in history and did very well. I became a history person, and I formally became a history major, literally on my second day at the school. But it was the 1960s; it was New York. City College is just a few blocks away from Columbia, and we all got wrapped up in the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, and also, and this is what is most relevant here, the fact that at City College, which was really quite old, having been founded in the 1840s, the curriculum was very rigid, and more than half of the credits that you needed to take for graduation were specified courses, not even subject areas. In the spring of 1969, the school was closed because of some student unrest that culminated in burning part of the Student Center – it was the 1960s. It turned out that it was one of the security guards who actually set a fire to the building. It wasn't just students at all, but we didn't know that until later, and basically the whole academic semester, the spring 1969 semester, was thrown out, and we were told you could basically start the semester over, as if those courses had never been taken. There were many new departmental offerings, one of which was anthropology, and that struck me as being, you know, new and sexy. I'd already worked a little bit as a docent at the American Museum of Natural History, and thought that anthropology sounds cool, so I got my degree in anthropology in 1971 with history as a minor.

Higingbotham: Was there anything particular about anthropology, besides having experience in the American Museum of Natural History, or a particular area of anthropology that you were interested in, or was it more general?

Greenberg: What I was interested in primarily was what they were then calling “historical archaeology.” That was a new term then, and what it really meant was that traditional archaeology had been for pre-literate cultures. They said, “Well, hey, you know, what do we do with the artifacts of cultures that left a written record but didn't always talk about the little artifacts?” This is the time where places like Colonial Williamsburg were trying to make sense of certainly more than just kings and queens and presidents and generals. I was drawn to that. I started graduate work at Hunter College in the fall of 1971, and I was not terribly happy there because they kind of hadn't gotten the memo, and they were still doing anthropology the way it had been done in the 1890s. It was really kind of stifling.

When I was at City College, it wasn't a dorm school. There were fraternities, and I mean the old-fashioned Greek stuff, but that never appealed to me in particular, and there was another kind of thing called “House Plan.” House Plan was very 1960s: non-hazing, non-judgmental, not strictly limited by gender, a new way of meeting other people. I got very involved in that. At one point, we were large enough, and we had enough money, that we had a professional staff that actually helped corral the whole thing. We had three full time social workers who are teaching us to be very sensitive in the 1960s way of that, and the husband of one of the staff members was teaching sociology. I think he was out on Long Island at Hofstra, but I'd have to look that up and that's not important. We were sitting down, and we were talking, and he said, “Tell me what academic questions you're interested in.” I said, what was on my mind, and he said, “You know, you would do much better in a historically based sociology program.” He pointed me at the New School for Social Research which had its Graduate Faculty

Center, and they didn't believe in things like entrance exams. I had already taken the GRE so that wasn't a problem.

I transferred over to the New School and got my first master's in sociology, but then things got political. This is now the late 1970s, and the New York State Board of Higher Education up in Albany – which never understood what to do in New York City anyway but that's a whole other thing – decided there were too many PhD programs in New York City. In particular, there were too many PhDs in the social sciences, and why did we need the New School when NYU [New York University], which at that point had already transferred most of their firepower to the Greenwich Village/Washington Square area, was literally five minutes away. At that critical juncture, when the program looked like it might get closed down, my mentor, Benjamin Nelson died. The problem was I had finished my master's, I finished my coursework, I taken my comprehensive exam, which was a written comp, and the next step would have been to set up a dissertation committee, which would be four members of my department and a tenured member of another department as “The Dean's representative.” With Professor Nelson dead, we didn't have four members of SOC [Sociology], and the New School wasn't going to hire someone to give them immediate tenure if they were going to get shut down by New York State in the next week, so I started taking history courses. Initially, I was going to take them non-matric up at Fordham University, which was literally across the street from where I was living and where I was working. I sold cameras for many, many years to pay my rent and tuition and feed myself from time to time. I walked into Fordham and talked my way into the history program, and the chairman of the department said to me, “You know, you might as well take them matric. You've got the background. It doesn't cost any more, and who knows.” By the time the New School sorted out their stuff, I had earned the second master's in history and was working on a dissertation, and this is where the English history thing comes in.

Higingbotham: I was wondering because your degree is in late medieval and early modern –

Greenberg: It is a long and winding road. I was always interested in communication, and particularly communication during times of social unrest. That had interested me in history and anthropology – how things change. At the New School – which was kind of interesting, because they were very left wing Marxist, Hegelian notion of social change, which is kind of like whoa – it struck me that the America I was growing up in: the post-Vietnam, still Civil Rights movement thing, so much of that theory went back to the English Civil War, because when people like Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin and John Adams were looking around for role models, they're seeing people like John Locke and the English political philosophers who come out of their own civil war. I got interested in the pamphlets that were being printed in England, Ireland, Scotland, not so much Wales, in the 1630s and 1640s. That's what my dissertation was about. I got very interested in not only the political content of the pamphlets, but how they got physically produced and distributed. I wrote a remarkably boring doctoral dissertation on the 20-year period between 1640-1660 and the pamphlet press.

Higingbotham: Did you always expect to get a PhD directly following your master's, or was that as part of the program was to get a master's and a PhD?

Greenberg: Well, back in the day – I feel like Methuselah's uncle – the way it worked in a lot of schools was you'd be interested in graduate work, and so you did your masters to show that you really had the guts to do it, and the brains, and everything else. And if the school didn't think that you were PhD stuff, then you got what was called a terminal master's. You got the masters, and you were encouraged to go away. It's interesting because, and again, I don't really know if it works the same way now; in some ways, I think it still does. When you got your bachelor's, unless you were going to a very large, prestigious school, you didn't do your master's at the same place where you did your bachelor's, you moved on. Now, if you were, say Ivy League, that was a different thing, and a lot of the Ivies, Columbia being one and Princeton being another, considered the undergraduate thing to be what they had to do it to get some money in, but the graduate programs were where the big brains would be.

By the time I went to Fordham and decided to seriously shift my emphasis to that program, it was my intention to get the doctorate, and the master was just showing that I could. Fordham was good to me. They made things easy in the sense that I was living right across the street, basically, but I didn't need dorms. They supported me; they gave me fellowships and a teaching assistantship. I looked good to them, I suppose, because first of all, and I don't want to make too fine a point of this, Fordham is a Jesuit school, and I'm a nice Jewish boy from the South Bronx. It's the 1970s. I was the diversity student. It was kind of weird. Of course, the program really would have preferred I'd turned out to become a Jesuit priest. That wasn't really in the cards. I'd always planned on teaching, always, but not in the high schools like my dad did. I wanted to teach in the colleges.

Fordham and I got along well, and I got my degree in 1983. I should also point out that I got married in 1980 to my first wife, who was a med student: her med school, Fordham, and I all got along just fine and dandy, so that wasn't really too hard, but timing has never been my strong suit. I entered the market looking for a teaching job in New York City at the same time that Maggie [Margaret] Thatcher was chasing all the academics out of England, and I was competing with these Oxford and Cambridge types with tweed jackets and pipes and little suede elbow patches – even the women! It was ridiculous. I could find plenty of part time work, but a full-time job was not really working out. There was a point – and this requires a little bit of New York City geography – when I was teaching at NYU down in the village, Fordham University up in the Bronx, and the Helene Fuld School of Nursing in the middle of Harlem. I was teaching history, I was teaching sociology, I was teaching anthropology, and I was doing some administrative work for the nursing school.

I got involved with the nursing school, because when I was still doing sociology, I had learned to read a little German, and I became the teaching assistant for a very kind, talented scholar named Roger Wines who was teaching, among other things, German history at Fordham. I was his TA because I could help him. He was doing an interesting study of the autobahn. While my German has never been really good, I could read a map in German, and Roger says to me one day, “You want to earn some money?” I said, “Is it legal?” He said, “Well, it's teaching.” I said, “Well that's kind of legal.” Roger's wife Margaret, always called Peggy, was a PhD nurse who was the Dean of the nursing school that I was talking about. That was what we used to be called a career ladder program, where you took a licensed practical nurse or licensed vocational nurse, who had a current license, and a year of experience, and they could come to the school for around for a year or year and a half, get an associate's degree, and then they could take the NCLEX, which is the licensing exam to become an RN [Registered Nurse]. Basically, that doubled their salary and tripled their job opportunities. It was nontraditional students, but very motivated. I'll take a motivated adult over a freshman who's in school because Mom and Dad promised the kid a sports car if they didn't flunk out.

The only other person on the faculty at the nursing school who wasn't a nurse was the librarian. Even the English teacher was an RN. The librarian and I got to be buddies, and the librarian's name was Patricia Gallagher, who I would later marry. But it was Pat who one day – we're sitting there, and I knew that my job was temporary at the nursing school, and sooner or later, they're going to hire a nurse to replace me as well. Pat said, “You know, you should become a librarian.” The nursing school was a 10-minute bus ride from Columbia, which had a library school at that point, and Pat literally got on the bus with me to make sure I didn't chicken out. I talked my way into the library school, because at that point I had a doctorate, and it's easy to get into a master's program when you've got a doctorate in hand. That was an interesting day. But the thing about Columbia was that had a program where you could major in rare books and archival management, run by a guy named Terry Bellanger, and Terry became my mentor. I explained the situation to him, and I said, “You know, I don't mean to sound crass, but if I complete your program successfully, what are my chances of getting a full time job?” He said, “Well, if you're not an idiot, and you're willing to leave New York City, we will find you a job.” I completed the program, and about a week after graduation, Terry sent me an email saying I should take a look at this job. The

job was at NLM, and it took a year to hire me, because federal hiring wasn't any faster then than it is now, but I moved down to work for the History of Medicine Division.

Higingbotham: I do have to ask really quick before we move completely on, you said they had a major in rare books and special collections and archives. What made you so interested in rare books? I know you did research on pamphlets, as you said. I was able to find your paper on dating pamphlets. Was that an element of it?

Greenberg: I like rare books. I literally went through probably thousands of pamphlets for my dissertation. During the block of time that I was examining, between 1640 and 1660, there was a what they called a stationer – we would call it a printer or publisher now – named George Thomason. Thomason woke up one morning in 1639 and said, “I live in interesting times,” and started collecting all these things. By the time he stopped, he had something like 23,000, and there are chunks of them in the US – New York Public Library's got some, Harvard's got some, Yale's got some, and The National Library of Medicine has some. They were extensively microfilmed in the 1950s, and then after my time, they were scanned. I was very interested in this. Also during my dissertation defense, one of the examiners said to me, “Really, very interesting. How did these things get produced? How did they get around?” I had been looking into that, so I was ready to go, and Terry's program was exactly what I wanted. I want to really put this on the record – if I have accomplished anything in my professional career, it's because of Pat Gallagher and Terry Belanger. The year after I graduated Columbia University shut down the library school because librarians don't make big bucks and turn around and endow the school; this had been cooking for a little while. We weren't at all surprised, and Terry moved the program down to University of Virginia where it's now called Rare Book School. The difference, of course, being that Rare Book School is an institute where you take a noncredit course. The kinds of things you take at Rare Books School, we took at Columbia for credit. There is still, to this day, not a degree granting program with a major in rare books the way there was at Columbia.

Higingbotham: That's a shame. Now you're at NLM, I believe it's 1992 if I have the dates correct, when you got your job as Reference/Collection Access Librarian.

Greenberg: What that meant, the way the federal government works, there's a job series and it says, “Librarian” but your job description has all sorts of different things. Reference and Collection Access meant that I spent 1/3 of my time at the reference desk waiting for people to walk in. There were two other full time reference librarians as well. Collection Access meant that I was theoretically the person who decided who got to see what in the collection. I was told in library school that the reason why you have books is for people to see them, plus NLM being a federal institution being paid for by the taxpayer dollar – saying no, to me, didn't make any sense. This was something that was changing. Just a few years earlier at NLM, they were much more restrictive of who could see what, and my predecessor had been much more restrictive because that's what she had been told to do. The position had been vacant for a couple of years, and the guard had changed as it were, and it was a much more like, “Well, yeah, sure. Of course.” Now, there were rules and regulations, you know, pencils only, that kind of thing, but I don't think I ever said to anyone, “You are not worthy of seeing this book.”

Higingbotham: I'm kind of curious. You were manning the reference desk. Were there walk-ins? I'm used to NLM now post-COVID, where you have to have an appointment. It's very strict on when you can come, and it's also with the fence up. This was before the fence was around the NIH campus.

Greenberg: This was walk on in. I would talk to my friends at the Library of Congress, and, you know, people walk by the Library of Congress and say, “Gee, I wonder what's in that building?” NLM didn't quite have that kind of a trade, because, after all, it is where it is. People don't go walking down Rockville Pike. There's nothing there, except for NIH and the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, which back then, was the Bethesda Navy hospital. We didn't get a whole lot of walk-ins, but the people who were experienced as scholars would contact us and say, “What do I need to do to use the collection?” Because if you're dealing with someone like

the universities, and again, I'm not picking on Harvard and Yale and Columbia, not much anyway, but Harvard, Yale, and Columbia exist for the Harvard, Yale, and Columbia community – the students, the faculty, and the staff. NLM has no native community except the people of the United States and by extension really the people of the world. People would call me up, and they'd want to send me resumes and things. I'd say, "Just show up." That all changed after 9/11, but it was like just show up. And that, in my opinion, is the way it should be. I think NLM has done a pretty good job of keeping things open and accessible, and when the building fully reopens, I hope they go back to more seats in the reading room, because the reading room—well, reading rooms. There used to be two. It used to have a seating capacity of a couple of hundred, and of course, back in those days also, and this was not so much in the History of Medicine side of the street, but in the main Reading Room, you had a lot of people who were called information brokers. This is before the internet. This is when things like this are just beginning to happen. But if you were a doctor doing research in some small town that didn't have a medical school and didn't have a medical library that could do interlibrary loans for you (journals weren't online yet), you would hire a broker who would come into the library to make photocopies of articles for you at a fee, and that sucked up an awful lot of NLM's available time and manpower. We did not get that a lot in History of Medicine, but it was a major issue for the library itself, and created a lot of issues that were solved when the internet comes along.

Higingbotham: It's very interesting to hear about pre-internet.

Greenberg: You're asking me, in some of the other questions, how the library changed. We were just beginning to get online. The indexes were online, but they were not, shall we say, user friendly – the original versions of MEDLINE™ and things like that. There were historical databases as well, there was HISTLINE™, but these are indexes. They were not full text. People would come to NLM and take a six-month course teaching them how to do the searching, because we're talking command line searching on a VAX [Virtual Address eXtension] main frame. This is not some cute little PC with internet.

In 2003 they changed my job title, and that was more politics and governmental stuff than anything else. The internet was up and running, the library was beginning to make things free, and we were digitizing, so the divisions were growing. At that point, they first began to have sections within History of Medicine Division, and there was a Rare Book and Early Manuscript Section and Images and Archive Section and an Exhibition Section; the library was deeply involved in having these excellent programs, because we were trying to get the public in. I applied for the position of Section Head and did not get the position. It was given to Michael North, who was my supervisor for a couple of years. Michael and I were a good team. I wasn't heartbroken that I was not given the position, but in order to make me feel better, I think, though I wasn't really all that upset, but also to better reflect what the division was doing, the position of Lead Librarian/Coordinator of Public Services was designed for me. And again, this is a government thing. Michael was the supervisor. I was a manager. I told people what to do in conjunction with Michael, but I did not write their formal evaluations. That was to reflect another layer of bureaucracy and just that there were more people. This worked very well because librarians kind of come in two flavors. There are the technical services people – the indexers, the catalogers – and the public services people. That's the reference librarians. Michael's great strength was in the technical services part, and my strength, as it was, was in the public services part. We sort of divvied it up, though Michael was the Section Head. Then, Michael was offered a position at the Library of Congress [LC], which was much more to his liking, and so he went to LC, and I was promoted to fill that position. I remember the HMD Division Secretary [Bergman "BaBa" Chang] at the time didn't understand why Michael was taking the job at Library of Congress, and I said to her, "One of Michael's great passions is incunabula – books printed with metal movable type in Western Europe between 1450 and 1501." It's always been his primary interest, and he's got the background to work with them. And I said to the secretary, "NLM has got 600 books of that sort, which is a pretty sizable collection. The Library of Congress has 5000," and she said, "Oh, okay."

Higingbotham: Before you were promoted to the supervisor level position, as the Coordinator of Public Services you would conduct tours of HMD's holdings. What did this really consist of?

Greenberg: Dropping back for just a couple of years, when I had been in NLM from a really fairly short period of time – remember, I had filled a position that had been vacant for a few years, and the person before me had to do things kind of by the book, I got introduced at a professional meeting as the “smiling public face of the History of Medicine Division,” which was good for a laugh, but I kind of took that to heart. I wanted to promote the collection, so I approached the NLM and NIH tour people, and I said, “Include us on all the tours, and I will show you stuff.” This got to be quite the little mechanism for getting tours in. We would get 200-300 people through on a good week. Sometimes it would be a school group. Sometimes it would be a visiting dignitary. Since a lot of these tours were handled through the NIH tour office, we would know in advance who was coming. If I was told that a health minister from Brazil was coming to visit, there would be 19th century Brazilian medical journals for that person to see, in addition to kind of the standard jewels of a collection kind of stuff. As long as I knew who was coming, I could cover it.

Sometimes it got tricky. The hard thing was kids. I remember one day, the head of the NLM tour office called me up and said, “You're going to hate me.” I said, “Okay, tell me why.” She said, “I'm bringing 35 middle school kids into the reading room.” And I said [Greenberg grimaces], “Okay.” Then she said, “You have a half an hour or so before they get there.” Half an hour was enough time. I mean I was just running down to the stacks to bring up some stuff. This was a Wednesday, and it was the Wednesday before the last Harry Potter novel was going to be published. I have two kids, and we knew about this. I don't know how good you are in the Harry Potter universe. JK Rowling mentions a few real people, including an alchemist named Nicolas Flamel, who, in her universe, is still alive and made the magic philosopher's stone, which of course in the American edition, they call the sorcerer's stone, which makes no sense. Flamel was a real guy, and we had at the library some 16th century treatises that are ascribed to him. I brought them up, along with a couple of other books that were kind of alchemy, because alchemy is just chemistry that doesn't work. The kids came through, and the kids were excited. There were no readers in the reading room that day, which was good thing, because it was noisy. It was very noisy. They made so much noise that Elizabeth Fee, the chief of the division, and Patricia Tuohy, who was head of exhibitions, came out and said, “What's going on?” I explained it, and they were delighted. They both said to me, “How many more books in the collection do you have with Harry Potter connections?” I said, “Well, a couple of hundred.” As I said, this was a Wednesday. By Friday, we had a Harry Potter exhibit, and Harry Potter became an ongoing theme. We had traveling exhibits. We got written up in the Washington Post – all sorts of things. Of course, the one thing that we did not have for the exhibit were copies of the Harry Potter novels, because that's out of scope for NLM, but my daughter, who I guess was 14 or so at the time, graciously loaned us her copies. We had been to Britain with her and her brother, so we actually had copies with the English titles as well, because in England, it's “Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone”, not the Sorcerer's Stone. That kind of covers the gamut of what we did. That was a rather spectacular example.

Higingbotham: I think I saw on YouTube, there was a recording of some lectures you did on the same topic too, on how Harry Potter came to NLM. Very interesting topic. It's always interesting to me when pop culture can be connected to these older items. You have talked a bit about when you got promoted and how that changed when you had the supervisory status now. Were there any challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned over the course of your career at NLM? I know you were there for almost 30 years.

Greenberg: As supervisor, you don't spend as much time with the stuff anymore, because the great joy of being a rare book librarian is getting to play with the toys. When you're supervisory, you're filling out government forms, which there are a few. And of course, along came COVID. March of 2020, we sent everybody home. We had to figure out, and I had to figure out for my people, what they could do at home. I mean, literally, I walked

through the library one day and I said, “Take your laptop and go home. I'll be in touch.” That went on for about a year before I retired.

Let me talk about the collaborations we did. COVID-19 will feed into my retirement, so let me jump around a little bit. I've always been professionally active. The two groups that I was the most active with and represented NLM and HMD for a lot was the Medical Library Association [MLA], which is about general medical librarianship. Then, there was Archivist and Librarians in the History of Health Sciences [ALHHS], now called LAMPHHS – Librarians, Archivists, and Museum Professionals in the History of Health Sciences. I was active at their annual meetings where I would give papers. I think I held every elected position in LAMPHHS that there was to hold. I was eventually honored to receive their Holloway Award, which is the Lifetime Achievement Award. That was interesting too because much of what I did needed to be done as an “outside activity”. For two years, I had to pretend that I didn't work at the NLM, because you had to keep things separate. This also affected my teaching. When I was teaching at the University of Maryland, and also at The Catholic University of America, teaching the same course in both of the library programs about the history of books, it was done as outside activities. It was a “secret” that I worked for NLM, which is like, yeah right. The Medical Library Association is a much larger organization, much more broad. There is a History of Health Sciences section; I was chair of that. That's an organization that has changed so much over time that I became a fellow of the Medical Library Association, I was a Distinguished Member of the Academy of Health Information Professionals: Distinguished is actually a category – there's Distinguished, Senior, Full, whatever. Since my retirement, I have stopped working with MLA, because there that organization has gone in a very different direction. It's not that I disagree with the direction; I can see why a lot of people think it's necessary, but there's no longer anything there for me to do. I have left that, but I'm still active in LAMPHHS. I'm also active in the American Association of History in Medicine [AAHM], but you get to a point where you can be the older statesman or something, but the organizations are different, and you have to kind of step aside and let people do what they now think is important. There's not always an understanding between the younger generation and the old fogeys like me. Things are different. I continue to go to LAMPHHS, and I will continue to go to AAHM, because they come to me and say, “Can you do this?” As long as they want me around, I will stay there. I don't have that feeling with MLA, and that's why I have left it.

One of the outreach things that I have to include here is, that I don't think it's in operation any longer, but for many years, there was an NIH Speakers Bureau, and it was handled through Building 1, the NIH Office of the Director. There was at one point a website where you can actually sit down on the keyboard and say, “I want someone to talk about,” pick your topic, tell them the kind of group, and you push a button, and a face came up. If you typed in history of medicine, you got me. It was originally supposed to be for local groups, but they put it on the NIH website, and it stopped being local. My “local engagements” representing the library included Los Angeles, Omaha, and Brownsville, Texas. In case you don't know Texas, Brownsville is about as far south in Texas as you can get and still be in Texas. It's right across the border from Matamoros. That was always delightful. You get to meet people, you get to find out what interests them, find out what their local treasures are, and show off your stuff.

Higingbotham: You covered some of this stuff, but I do want to ask – so much of your research consists of history of the book, and I know you will talk about your teaching very shortly, but how much of the presentations and the papers that you had after you started working at NLM were shaped by what was available at NLM and your personal interest in pamphlets and rare books?

Greenberg: It's about half and half. You know, when you're working full time and you're not an academic, because when you're on an academic calendar, there's this thing called summer, but when you're working as a librarian and you don't get summer off – also, academics get money to travel and sabbaticals and things, and NLM could do a very limited amount of that. It limits you to what's in your own backyard, but that was not a hardship, because the backyard was so big. It was pretty easy to shift my focus to medical pamphlets. Then, as I

stayed at NLM longer and I learned the history of NLM and the importance of NLM and its indexes, the “Index Catalogue [of the Library of the Surgeon General’s Office, US Army]” and the “Index Medicus”, in the development of medical knowledge, I began to write articles about what NLM had accomplished. The article that I’m probably the proudest of is an article I wrote with Patricia Gallagher at the time the “Index Medicus” and “Index Catalogue” were both being put online, and people wanted to know what the differences were. Pat and I wrote an article which explained that, which was published in the *Journal of The Medical Library Association*, and we actually received an award from ALHHS with that article. It’s nice to be in a situation where someone asked a complicated question, and working between two institutions, because Pat was still at the New York Academy of Medicine at that point – she had left the nursing school and I was in DC – and we were able to actually work together to publish that article. Occasionally, I would write things about pamphlets. I got interested in the plague pamphlets that were published in England in the 17th century. And of course, Kristin Heitman, the Deputy Director of ONHM, that’s how Kris and I first met, because she was interested in the plague bills. She had questions about how they were physically produced, and, like, I can do that. I have run a 17th century hand press, and I’ve set some type. I know how that actually works. I never felt that I was cut off from doing the kind of research that interested me, because I was still asking the same questions. How does this information get out? How does it get around? How do people learn what they learn, and how does the printing press become part of that?

Higingbotham: Well, it’s always good when you can still do kind of what you’re interested in at your job. We’ll transition to your retirement. You’ve talked about it a bit. You retired from NLM in June 2021, while you’re still active in the field, as you’ve detailed, why did you why did you decide to retire then?

Greenberg: Okay, so this is a little personal. At that point, I been divorced and remarried. I was now married to Pat Gallagher, and Pat came from New York down to work at NLM. I was in HMD, and Pat was in the National Information Center for Health Services Research and Healthcare Technologies (NICHSR), and we were both working from home after March of 2020. In February 2021, she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. At that point, she was past 65, and I was past 70. I said, “Why are we still working?” So we retired. The reason it took from February until June is that the Chief of the History of Medicine Division asked me to stay on to do some transition planning, and I agreed that I could do that with the understanding that that would have to be secondary to taking care of Pat’s health, which he understood. We worked that out pretty well. At that point, I probably had enough sick leave and annual leave accrued that I could have basically gone on leave for three months, but that that wouldn’t have been very fair to anybody. Then Pat passed away. My retirement was official June 30, and then Pat passed away December of that same year.

Higingbotham: Sorry to hear that. Now that you’re retired, you are teaching, as you said it was always your goal. You’ve taught in the past half day courses for the Medical Library Association and longer weeklong courses. But what made you decide to teach now in your retirement?

Greenberg: Well, I had not planned on retiring when I did. I made the right decision. I don’t regret that, but I had not really planned my retirement. The first eight months of it were dealing with Pat’s health, and then with the aftermath of that, suddenly I’ve got a lot of time in my hands. My friends are still working librarians. I have friends at NLM. I have friends in Medical Library Association and in ALHHS. I have to do something, and thinking is always kind of nice. I travel a great deal. Photography has always been a hobby and has been useful. I’m active in photography.

Higingbotham: What kind of photography?

Greenberg: Primarily landscape, but I’ve actually self-published a few books, and I’ve had a solo exhibit and a two person show and contributed stuff at a place called Photoworks, which is right near NLM actually. It’s in

Glen Echo Park. I've done a lot of technical photography over the years as well. People, back before scanners were as good as they are, people said, "Ooh, can I get a picture of that page?" Yes, you can.

But teaching keeps me thinking and teaching keeps me sharp. My other hobby is music. I'm a pretty good photographer. I'm a terrible guitarist, and I've been playing guitar for so long, it's almost embarrassing, but you have to do something. Shuffleboard has never been of interest to me, neither has canasta. It's funny – I tend to travel north rather than south on vacations. Another thing that actually is still going is that I was approached just about the time I was retiring to contribute a chapter to a book that Princeton University is sponsoring about a book dealer who basically spent a career buying and selling Arabic and Persian manuscripts around the world, including to NLM, back in the 1940s when we were still the Army Medical Library. That was supposed to be a symposium, but then COVID happened, so that went away. That became a book, and at some point they [thought], "We've never gotten the 17 authors together." Princeton had money to do this, and so they decided to have us all meet and spend a few days going over each other's stuff. They decided to do that in Ireland at the Chester Beatty Library, which was one of the institutions that bought from this guy. Princeton paid for me to go to Dublin for a week. If I was still working for NLM, I could not have done that, because for a private institution to send me to a foreign country – no [Greenberg shakes his head and laughs]. I'm leaving a week from today to go to Norway, and I'll be sailing on a cruise that starts in Bergen and then works west through the Norwegian Sea to the North Sea, ends up in Shetland and the Orkneys and Edinburgh and eventually London. Many pictures will be taken. I've been promised the midnight sun and Aurora Borealis, but you're seeing that in Maryland these days.

Higingbotham: Yeah, it sounds quite beautiful. Well, we are at time. Is there anything else you would like to say? You kind of have already talked a bit about the evolution of HMD and the overarching narrative of your career. Is there anything else you want to add?

Greenberg: I'm looking at the questions here. I think we pretty much covered it. I think we're pretty good. I would like to say kind of in closing that I never thought I was going to end up as a medical librarian. If you had spoken to me in 1971 when I was graduating from college, and said, "Okay, where are you going to be?" That would not have been on my list, and I will admit I had barely heard of the National Library of Medicine at the time that Terry Belanger pointed me in that direction, but NLM has been a wonderful place to work. I've met good people, I worked with spectacular materials, and I don't regret going down that path for a minute. As I said a minute ago, I hadn't planned on retiring when I did, but I don't regret that. I'm not a big one for regrets, particularly, and I look forward to the day that NLM's renovations are complete, and the building is fully open to the public, as it should be and as it will be, because that part of the NLM mission is still there.

Higingbotham: Thank you so much for joining me today.