

TRANSCRIPTION RE:

**CSUMB Founding Faculty
Oral History Project 1995-98
Rina Benmayor, Project Director**

**Interview with Steven G. Watkins – Librarian Emeritus,
Tanimura and Antle Family Library**

**Interviewer, Josina Makau, Professor Emerita,
Humanities and Communication
College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences**

Transcribed by:

**Carol Roberts
carris.roberts@gmail.com**

Narrator: Steve Watkins
Interviewer: Josina Makau

1 **Makau:** This is Josina Makau and I am sitting here in Monterey, California. It is the 20th of
2 August in 2019, and I have the great honor of interviewing Steve Watkins for the oral history
3 project at CSU Monterey Bay. And I feel especially honored because Steve was a planning
4 Librarian hired in 1995, the first Director of Library Resources, and he was our first official Senate
5 Chair, not to mention the longest serving member of the University RTP Committee. So you can
6 imagine how much I'm looking forward to hearing what Steve has to say.

7 **Watkins:** Thank you, Josina.

8 **Makau:** So the first thing we're interested in knowing from you is what motivated you to
9 come to the University? Why did you even apply and do you have any interview stories you'd be
10 comfortable sharing with us? That you recall. It's been a while.

11 **Watkins:** Right, right. Well, prior to coming down to Fort Ord, I was at the University of
12 California, Santa Cruz for 11 years. And I was very fortunate there to sort of have some major
13 shifts in my responsibilities. It's almost as though I held three different positions there and that
14 was something that actually kept me stimulated and interested. I was able to do some fairly
15 innovative work with early Internet information systems. I was able to plan from scratch an award
16 winning Science and Engineering Library up there, as part of that team. I also essentially started
17 the campus web presence, and ran the campus website for the first couple of years. Things then
18 had sort of started to shift and I was coming to the end of some of those initiatives. I wasn't
19 actively looking for a job actually, but I happened to notice this and I think that the aspect of being
20 involved from the ground up and starting something new. . . because other aspects of my

21 previous career had involved doing that but much more on my own and not so much as part of an
22 institutional effort to create an entirely new university. Obviously very few people have had that
23 opportunity in their careers. So, I read the job description which was at that point fairly broad and
24 such since roles needed to be defined once we were on the ground. I read this Vision Statement
25 that happened to come along with it. We've all been at institutions that have Vision Statements
26 that sound really good and such and your day to day experience of it at many places is that it's
27 sort of in a frame on the wall and not necessarily a living document. So, I came to my interview
28 actually with some of those expectations that, "Well, this is really well written but do people really
29 believe this?" That was one of the most striking parts of my interview experience, in my
30 recollection, was that it was clear that the Vision Statement was really important to people, that
31 people intended to base their planning, their activities and their efforts around it. So I was very
32 impressed with that part of it.

33 **[3:44]** Some of the other things that attracted me were pretty clear. I'd worked in almost every
34 aspect of university library operations during my career, from student through to staff member to
35 my professional librarian career. So I felt like I understand the operational level, what it takes for
36 various departments and roles within a library to work together and function. But being able to do
37 that without everything already being in place and not hearing the usual refrain of "This is the way
38 we've always done that," embracing that kind of change and the opportunity to create things the
39 way we thought they should be rather than in response or in opposition to the way it had always
40 been done, that was really exciting.

41 I remember at some point towards the end of my interview -- I believe Ken Nishita, Chris
42 Taylor and George Baldwin were on my search committee --, asking each of them to let me know
43 what it was they expected of a planning librarian. I don't remember offhand what Ken said but
44 Chris Taylor said, "I need somebody who can get down on their hands and knees and install

45 wiring for CD ROM networks and the like and won't be above doing that kind of work." Yes, I
46 didn't respond initially to any of them. And George talked about the need to get involved in
47 teaching and being an effective teacher. So I think I had perfect ready responses to the first two
48 because I had direct experience, but quite frankly my teaching experience coming into this was
49 pretty limited. Limited mainly to teaching library tools. So that was clearly going to be one of my
50 challenges because as it turned out three days before classes started the first semester, I was
51 asked to teach a full section of a course on the Internet and such. So at any rate, I think that the
52 time was right, the opportunity to do a fresh start someplace was good. And I jumped on.

53 **[6:21] Makau:** Wonderful. Well, you've alluded to this a little bit but could you share even more
54 about some of your early job responsibilities? And also some of the differences in that experience
55 from your previous experiences.

56 **Watkins:** Sure. I'd worked mainly at larger universities and so the library organizations I
57 worked within were also larger. Therefore, you know, you tended to have more of a specialization
58 whereas my background is actually fairly generalized in terms of being exposed to lots of different
59 types of things. So that was a definite difference here, to be suddenly looking at a fledgling
60 organization in its whole and looking for the missing pieces and trying to figure out initial priorities
61 for it. So that was definitely a different experience. But, like almost everyone else, it was
62 incredibly stimulating and actually a fair amount of fun. I also had not had extensive supervisory
63 experience. Early on, I and the Co-Director for Library Services were the two in charge of the
64 Library. And despite CSU regulations we were actually the formal supervisors of the initial staff
65 that we hired and such. So that was a challenge.

66 **Makau:** I'm going to stop this for the siren. [tape stops and restarts]

67 **[8:05]** Sorry, Steve, I cut you off. I didn't want the siren making it hard for people to hear
68 everything you have to say.

69 **Watkins:** Absolutely. One of the other nice things was of course that librarians having
70 faculty status in the CSU put us from day one at the table in lots of conversations that were
71 happening among the founding faculty at that stage, where we could both learn and know. . . .
72 It's important in librarianship to have a good understanding of what the academic programs are
73 doing and where they're headed because you're trying to, among other things, build information
74 resources that support the teaching and learning and some of the research efforts that go into
75 that. But it also, I think, allowed us to contribute in a way where opportunities weren't always
76 there for a lot of librarians. Before UC Santa Cruz I worked at SUNY Albany, State University of
77 New York for four years and there I was on the Academic Senate and we did have a similar
78 tenure promotion process that involved a parallel process to the faculty. So this is actually a really
79 nice opportunity to be at the table in terms of learning as well as helping to influence things.

80 **Makau:** And speaking to that, did you see any drawbacks to some of the differences
81 between this and your experiences elsewhere?

82 **Watkins:** I'd say the lack of structure at the University as a whole in the beginning was
83 both a real positive and became a bit of a negative. There was freedom to see a need and just
84 run with it and such. And solve it. And solve it using your own creativity and working with your
85 colleagues to figure it out and such. So that part of things was wonderful. When it came to some
86 of the budgeting and such, necessary to sort of sustain ongoing operations it became quite a
87 challenge. But that very first year, in fact in the first few weeks we were there before classes
88 started, I remember that maybe a week and a half before the students arrived somebody noticed
89 that nobody had budgeted for any audio visual equipment on the entire campus. It turned out that
90 since I'd been dealing with the Library's equipment budget, which actually was fairly generous, it
91 turns out, we were able to carve out a big chunk of money on very short notice, order our initial
92 complement of equipment, digital projectors which were in their infancy back then, and we

93 actually committed one of our first temporary staff hires to actually manage an audio visual
94 delivery service for the campus. So one of the great things about that time was, again, you could
95 see a need, it didn't feel competitive, like we had to hold onto that money for all it was worth,
96 which is a situation you often get into later on. And that was great.

97 **[11:40]** But then when we would start to do planning for subsequent years and submitting budget
98 proposals and such, I think some of the leadership in the college we were placed in was great on
99 vision, wonderful on ideas and such but not so strong on the structure of the organization and
100 very slow to approve budgets. I know we worked with, spoke with some of the other units in the
101 college as well and – well, actually it wasn't a college then. It was institutes and ...

102 **Makau:** Centers.

103 **Watkins:** Centers. It was a center.

104 **Makau:** What was it called?

105 **Watkins:** It was a Center for – oh, boy – Technology and Information Resources or
106 something? It had the science programs. The computer and technology programs.

107 **Makau:** Oh, yeah. Who else was in there? I'm interested in hearing. So Science. Earth
108 Systems Science and Policy.

109 **Watkins:** The Computer ... I don't remember what they called themselves initially.
110 They've been through many name changes. But the sciences, Computer Science and
111 Technology Program and the Library were the three.

112 **Makau:** Oh, those were the units, okay, all together.

113 **Watkins:** Right.

114 **Makau:** And you suggested that perhaps some of the other unit directors shared your
115 concerns?

116 **Watkins:** Um hmm.

117 Makau: So you clearly were collaborating with them and trying to find feasible viable ways around
118 this challenge?

119 **Watkins:** Yes.

120 **Makau:** Is that fair to say?

121 **Watkins:** Yeah. And one of the nice things about the organization was that we did have
122 regular meetings of the leaders of the various areas within the Center. So that was helpful. That
123 notion, too, everybody knew everybody on campus in those days and such. So we were
124 encountering one another in meetings all the time or just in the hallway and such. So there was
125 ample opportunity to sort of keep each other apprised of what was going on.

126 **Makau:** Were there any avenues beyond the immediate administration in your Center
127 which I take to be a Dean's position, is that a correct assumption?

128 **Watkins:** Yes, correct.

129 **Makau:** Were there any avenues that the three chairs felt would be helpful in addressing
130 some of your concerns?

131 **Watkins:** Yes. We actually had a conversation with the then Provost about this and
132 asking for advice on how to try to remedy the situation or figure out a way for there be a better
133 mechanism or maybe even a more formal mechanism in terms of a budget process.

134 **Makau:** And was that helpful?

135 **Watkins:** Yes.

136 **Makau:** Oh, good. Okay, well thank you for sharing that. Please, please.

137 **[14:32] Watkins:** I would say that one other major challenge that we faced that was different from
138 other university libraries was that the then Chancellor, Barry Munitz, the previous year, I believe,
139 had made some rash statements before the State Legislature saying that there would be no need
140 to build library buildings on any future CSU campuses because everything was online. And in fact

141 in those days we were very fortunate because collections of core journals were just beginning to
142 be available online. EBooks didn't exist to any extent at that point. So we actually had good
143 discussions about that. We sort of took a pragmatic approach to it. We took the challenge on
144 seriously in terms of building our collections of academic journals. We had very few print
145 subscriptions over the years. We took advantage of being able to license access to some of these
146 collections. We were very fortunate in that, later on after some years, because the CSU
147 organized a centralized effort and even had some centralized funding to help all of the campuses
148 move in that direction, but we started on our own for several years first.

149 So I remember Chancellor Munitz coming to campus during the second year and walking
150 across the Quad with him and such and being able to say to him that we took his challenge
151 seriously and that as he would see when we were doing a quick tour of the Library, we were not a
152 library with online books, but we were largely a library with online journals and that was what
153 could be accomplished at that time along those lines.

154 **Makau:** What was his response? Do you remember?

155 **Watkins:** He didn't give a very lengthy response as I recall. [Chuckles] But I imagine that
156 he was at least pleased that we had listened to some degree.

157 **Makau:** And in the later years were there different perspectives coming out of the
158 Chancellor's Office on that particular point of view, because I know you have a beautiful library
159 today.

160 **Watkins:** Yeah, and actually we have, I think, Jim May, our original Dean to thank for the
161 fact that we were able to get a renovated building to use as a library for the first, let's see, thirteen
162 or fourteen years of the campus and such, because there may not have been money in the
163 budget otherwise and I think he really put his foot down for that. No, I think that what's been
164 happening is libraries at most universities have transformed themselves in some fairly

165 fundamental ways and they've become much more a Learning Commons. They embrace and
166 take on a lot of different roles as a neutral gathering point for freedom of expression and such on
167 campus. So the notion of the collections being the be-all and end-all has really hasn't faded, they
168 are still incredibly important because you need access to that material to do your research and
169 such, but I think they've become more. . .

170 **[18:03]** So it's clear from things like usage studies and such that libraries are still generally very
171 heavily used. I'd say perhaps except by the science faculty, all of whose journals are online
172 [Laughter] and they don't feel the need to come over.

173 **Makau:** That's funny.

174 **Watkins:** That wasn't the case at CSUMB, though. There were quite a number throughout
175 the years of faculty from the sciences who were there regularly.

176 **Makau:** So you've alluded to the Vision Statement and its meaning to you. If I've
177 understood you correctly that you were particularly inspired by the apparent commitment beyond
178 just words on paper that you found when you went on your interview and even as you began your
179 work. Have I understood you, first of all, correctly?

180 **Watkins:** Yes, yes. That's very true.

181 **Makau:** And as you think about the Vision Statement would you share some of what it
182 meant to you personally? And if it guided your personal work, how so? And anything else you
183 want to share about your own personal kind of sense of that statement and its meaning.

184 **Watkins:** Sure. One of the threads that really captured me was the sort of general thread
185 of social justice that runs through the Vision Statement. I think during my undergraduate years
186 during the anti-war movement in the Viet Nam War era and such, I developed a fairly strong
187 sense of that kind of need for social justice. So that was something that certainly appealed. There
188 are some elements in the Vision Statement that almost anybody can attach their favor to, you

189 know, the notion about the creative use of technology to support learning. That was something I'd
190 been involved with for quite a number of years from the library perspective. And I think also one
191 thing that struck me was the sort of egalitarian notion. You know, in the early years staff and
192 administrators taught classes alongside faculty and such. The notion that everybody has
193 something to learn from everyone else even though they have different roles within the institution
194 and such, that aspect kind of came through strongly to me from the Vision Statement as well.
195 Then lastly I'd say the student centeredness. We made so many decisions over the years by
196 asking ourselves what would best serve the students, even when we were under some pressure
197 to better serve the faculty's research needs, for instance. We did not have the resources to do
198 both well and so that's something where I think we really succeeded and that was a driving point
199 for much of my time there.

200 **[21:13] Makau:** So that was really much of what guided your work. How central would you say
201 from your perspective during the early years, how central do you believe that the Vision was more
202 writ large to the University at that time?

203 **Watkins:** Right. I'd say that it was universally very present among the faculty which is the
204 group that I interacted with most, although I interacted with a lot of staff as well. I think some of
205 that egalitarian notion sort of after a couple of years when everybody realized we really didn't
206 have personnel regulations and procedures and this and that and such, a few of the more rigid
207 CSU practices I think started to be adopted. So I think staff in particular probably were feeling
208 less free or able to participate in ways they might have earlier. Among the students I really don't
209 know. But I certainly saw that student focus driving the faculty, driving the emphasis of the tenure
210 and promotion procedure and such, where it's instead of publish and perish, you'd better teach
211 well or perish, leave.

212 **Makau:** Can you speak a little more to that? Because you really were so instrumental by
213 serving, having the longest tenure on that University-wide committee which is so critical to the
214 tenure process. It goes beyond the department levels between the Provost and the Department
215 and for that matter even the Dean. So really that committee provides a very important basis upon
216 which the Provost makes his or her decision. As I recall there were five people altogether
217 serving. They were elected, is that correct?

218 **Watkins:** Yes.

219 **Makau:** Elected by all ... who?

220 **Watkins:** All of the tenured and tenure track faculty.

221 **Makau:** Okay. So it was literally just who had the most support from tenure to tenure
222 track faculty. You were consistently voted to be on that committee every time you put yourself –
223 you were willing to put your name forward.

224 **Watkins:** Sure.

225 **Makau:** So that situates you very well to speak to that process. Could you share some of
226 your thoughts about that in relation to the Vision and any other aspect of the University that
227 comes to mind?

228 **[24:02] Watkins:** Sure. As I just mentioned previously, most places you have teaching, research
229 and service, the three main areas of scholarship. While I wasn't on the very initial group that
230 drafted the first policy, basing it roughly on Boyer's four areas of scholarship I think was a much
231 better fit for our campus.

232 **Makau:** Could you tell us those four areas?

233 **Watkins:** I can try.

234 **Makau:** We can do it together. [Chuckles]

235 **Watkins:** I can tell you the way they were named in the RTP policy.

236 **Makau:** That's good. That sounds good.

237 **Watkins:** So it's the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, the Scholarship of Discovery,
238 Creation and Integration, the Scholarship of Application and the Scholarship of Service or
239 University Service. Professional Application, excuse me.

240 **Makau:** And that's different from the standard, if you will.

241 **Watkins:** Right. At most larger, especially Ph.D. institutions, research is the most critical
242 factor for faculty needing to demonstrate and, you know, make substantial contributions, I think.
243 Here, in order to be promoted or tenured and kept, you have to demonstrate quality ability to
244 effectively teach to facilitate student learning. It's the one drop dead category that you must
245 achieve a rating of commendable or better even during those initial six years of consideration. So
246 I think that that reflected very strongly on the Vision Statement. Over the years if people have
247 joined the University, some have struggled with that. But I think one of our main roles was to
248 make sure that – well, contributions to teaching and learning can take many different forms and
249 there's clearly some substantial differences in what they look like across disciplines sometimes.
250 So part of our role was, I think, to make sure that the standards that were all agreed upon were
251 being applied consistently and fairly across all of the colleges and the various departments. I think
252 there were instances of grade inflation so to speak, where people who were clearly liked and
253 such may not have been evaluated as critically as they might have been. When we would see
254 their record of achievements next to people from a different college or whatever and could
255 oftentimes see that there were some discrepancies in terms of how the standards were being
256 applied. So I think there was an important equalizing function there.

257 **[27:14] Makau:** In terms of the notion of research would it be fair to say, based on your
258 extensive experience, that faculty who actually worked in the area of *studying* pedagogy, of
259 writing about pedagogy, what are some of the strengths and limits of various approaches to an

260 asset based, say, approach to pedagogy and so on, that that would actually be understood to be
261 part of the Scholarship of Discovery as well? Is that a fair statement in that in some sense it's
262 different from the more standard approach to what counts as research?

263 **Watkins:** Yes, exactly. There were a lot of activities, that one in particular, where you are
264 disseminating information about what you've learned about effective pedagogy. There were
265 elements of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning that emphasized that. One of the only
266 ways that you could raise above a commendable rating to an outstanding rating in the
267 Scholarship of Teaching and Learning was to have influenced the teaching and learning practices
268 of others.

269 **Makau:** Ah.

270 **Watkins:** That was the overarching criterion for that. So yes, clearly people who thought
271 deeply about their pedagogy, tried new things, learned enough from it to share their successes
272 and failures with the academic community at large, a lot of that sharing happened in the context
273 of writing articles, contributing to books, presenting at conferences, etc., which are activities that
274 would be counted under Discovery, Creation and Integration. There are also instances where
275 having learned that, one might convene a practical hands on workshop about techniques and
276 such, and sharing it in that context would actually potentially be considered under the Scholarship
277 of Professional Application. So it's interesting that I think there were drivers there that developing
278 a thread that was based on teaching and learning could actually benefit faculty in the tenure and
279 promotion process in multiple areas.

280 **Makau:** Thank you. Thank you for sharing that. So as you think about the early campus
281 culture, can you speak a little bit to – and as Senate Chair you would probably, and on RTP, you
282 probably know a great deal about workload and its relationship to people's experiences and to the
283 writ large experience on the campus. Can you speak to that at all?

284 **[30:15] Watkins:** Sure. A little bit. I alluded earlier to the notion of the egalitarian, the notion of
285 the structure of the campus. A similar sort of principle applied early on to the structure of the
286 Centers and the Institutes themselves. There was an intention that faculty would work across
287 disciplines and that a group of faculty could coalesce around some new academic thread and
288 create an Institute in a much more fluid fashion than an academic department, a more formal
289 department, could happen. That was, I think, good for a lot of creative thinking but in practice I
290 think was difficult to implement. It also opened the door for the administration and the President at
291 that time to actually say, "Oh, this would be an interesting program, I'll start that up on campus,"
292 without involving faculty in a formal way the way curricular development normally would. So I do
293 think that there were challenges there. There was resistance to actually putting a more formal
294 structure in place, I'd say for the first five years or so. Partly because of this, and I don't
295 remember if it was Year 2 or Year 3, a Faculty Senate did start meeting. And I know that Richard
296 Harris and I believe bobbi Bonace were a couple of the early leaders of that. But it was a group
297 that was meeting without any real formal authority. There were some written guidelines. They'd
298 never been accepted or adopted by the University or signed by the President. It did provide an
299 important early foundation, though, for faculty voices and debate and input into policy to the
300 extent it could happen, from an opportunity where all the faculty were there at the table
301 essentially. As the campus grew, I would say that the egalitarian notion once again raised a few
302 problems in that early on everybody literally was at the table. We would all sit around the table,
303 the entire faculty, and talk about things. But it became time for a more representative sort of
304 structure, a more true Academic Senate to actually represent points of view. So I think that was
305 another thing that was driving that. I can remember a number of instances where somebody
306 would not be at the table and not trusting their representative and show up at the 12th hour with
307 objections. It didn't take much more than one articulate and vocal person to derail a lot of things

308 that were potentially on the table back then. So I really think there was a crying need for more
309 structure, and I think one of the main drivers, as I mentioned, was to have an organized and
310 authority faculty voice to balance the notions of ideas of the President.

311 **[33:54] Makau:** In your experience over the years was there any sense of change in terms of
312 faculty, staff and your own workload. And if so, can you speak to that at all?

313 **Watkins:** Sure. Clearly at the beginning, since nothing was in place, what did they say?
314 They used to call it? "Riding the bicycle while putting it together" and riding at full speed? Yeah,
315 workload was very intense. You know, nearly every day, every week, long days. That was tiring
316 but it was also exhilarating, totally exhilarating, because you could really see things happening
317 and taking shape quickly. I know that in terms of the faculty in particular, work force and the level
318 of number of faculty positions always lagged a couple of years behind the State funding. I think
319 there was a built in problem there for a campus that was growing so quickly, where the only
320 recourse was we have hundreds and hundreds of new students the following year, we need to
321 offer expanding curriculum, so we would hire lecturer faculty to teach specific courses without an
322 ongoing commitment to them. Then the enrollment would justify the need for full time positions,
323 that you would then submit that justification the following year. Then the State might fund it the
324 year after that. So there was a built-in workload factor for faculty in particular there that was a
325 structural one that was very difficult to overcome. I do believe that's one of the reasons why we
326 ended up with a faculty composition that was so heavily on lecturer faculty and not so much on
327 tenure track.

328 **[36:06]** The staff, I remember most of our staff, at any rate, embracing some of the same things
329 we did early on. They got a chance to recreate an operation that they had worked in at another
330 place and leave behind some of the things they never liked about it and try the things they would
331 hope would work. But as I mentioned before, I do think some of the need to adopt more formal

332 personnel policies, I think that really hampered staff development at some point. I mean if I were
333 in that position and would have been working that hard and that much extra and such, well, I'd
334 probably stop putting in a lot of that extra, too. It was quite a long time before it felt like we were
335 closer to being adequately staffed. I remember in preparing for the first WASC [Western
336 Association of Schools and Colleges] accreditation visit, I was having to work on things related to
337 the Senate structure. One of the things we faced were there were so many committees and
338 senators and alternates, that to staff the entire Senate structure, every full time faculty person
339 needed to have one and possibly two positions, roles, in some way. I remember spending a lot of
340 time trying to think of ways to streamline the committee structure to have sitting senators also
341 serve as committee members and chairs and such so that it would take fewer people to staff all
342 the necessary structures. We didn't have a lot of extraneous committees in my opinion but the
343 workload there, where you have to cover all of the roles that you would at a large university with a
344 fraction of the people, that was another workload factor for the faculty.

345 **Makau:** And you've described a process that appears to reveal the need for service on a
346 substantial number of search committees. . .

347 **Watkins:** Oh, true.

348 **Makau:** . . . in addition. Is that correct? Is that a correct inference?

349 **Watkins:** Sure.

350 **Makau:** Do you have any stories you want to share about any of that dimension? The
351 recruitment feature? The search committee and its role? Its relationship, for example, to the
352 Vision if you think there might have been one? Anything else, perhaps some examples that you
353 would be willing to share?

354 **[38:54] Watkins:** Sure. I came in the second round of the founding faculty. I think one of the
355 most dramatic illustrations was the original thirteen, I believe, founding faculty members had to

356 recruit for forty other positions and had 100,000 applications. 100,000? Ten thousand. 250
357 applications per position. So 10,000 applications to sort through. Thirteen people, forty positions,
358 everybody serving clearly on multiple search committees.

359 **Makau:** While teaching, I assume, a full load.

360 **Watkins:** Oh, yes. Teaching a full load, yeah, during the initial year because that's what
361 they were there for.

362 **Makau:** And developing curriculum that didn't exist. Have I understood correctly?

363 **Watkins:** Absolutely.

364 **Makau:** Developing a catalog that didn't exist.

365 **Watkins:** Yup, yup.

366 **Makau:** It sounds like quite a workload.

367 **Watkins:** Yeah. So I was glad not to have that. But you know, part of the pleasure of
368 working on a lot of the search committees that I served on was that we attracted a lot of really
369 good people to the campus over the years. I think to some extent that's still very much true. So
370 while there were oftentimes large numbers to wade through, it was always very gratifying to see
371 that there were some highly qualified people. In many instances a diverse pool as well, although in
372 some areas it's difficult to recruit that. It also gave us a chance to serve. I served on one of the
373 presidential search committees, one of the provost search committees and several other upper
374 level administrative positions over the years. So having a chance once again to bring a faculty
375 perspective of sorts to that process was always good. I don't know if other units had a harder time
376 with it than the Library. The recruitment piece didn't feel like a huge burden to us.

377 **Makau:** How important was the Vision to the recruitment? And also selection processes.
378 At least that you recall during those years.

379 **[41:17] Watkins:** Right. I think some of the same themes I mentioned earlier would show up in
380 our interview questions. We always asked for observations, candidates' observations about the
381 Vision Statement. Lots of student centered questions, in terms of that as an emphasis. The
382 ability to deal effectively with a diverse student population which the campus always has had. It's
383 one of the rich aspects of being there. As things went by over time there were fewer of those
384 opportunities for sort of the entrepreneurial notion of doing things completely new. But yes, so I
385 do think we tried to always bring the Vision Statement into the interview process, sometimes not
386 very successfully.

387 **Makau:** Do you remember any instances of success or lack thereof that you'd be
388 comfortable sharing?

389 **Watkins:** Yeah. I'd say that most of the people we ended up hiring for the Library faculty
390 gave very thoughtful and effective responses to ... They demonstrated they had clearly read and
391 thought about the Vision Statement. Clearly we were also assessing them for other skills. I do
392 think we've had a very student focused group of librarians there throughout the time. So yeah, I
393 think that has had some effect.

394 **Makau:** Thank you. You have mentioned a number of key personalities and their influence
395 on the formation of the University. Are there any others, persons from your perspective that you'd
396 want to talk about?

397 **Watkins:** I remember when we were in a work group to start drafting the original
398 Constitution for the Academic Assembly and then the Bylaws for the Academic Senate that would
399 – to whom the responsibilities would be delegated for carrying things out. There were some great
400 people on that group and one that sticks out to me was Betty McEady. She had both deep
401 experience, could articulate things that the rest of us would be struggling with, and in terms of
402 crafting our words carefully she was invaluable. Because in a document like that the nuance of

403 wording can become very important down the road. So she was clearly important. At that point I
404 was I think serving as Senate Parliamentarian and then became Senate Chair while negotiations
405 were being finalized between the faculty and the administration. Diane Cordero de Noriega was
406 the Provost at the time. So I had frequent conversations with her. She was playing intermediary
407 between President Smith and myself negotiating things back and forth. I always really
408 appreciated her style during that. It was non confrontational. But she would of course be firm and
409 direct on things. She needed to be. I think it resulted in a more realistic document. Some of the
410 early drafts had the faculty claiming purview over things that they legally do not have any
411 business doing. Some roles that are delegated to the President by definition. So she was
412 definitely an important player there.

413 **[45:36] Makau:** Great. Thank you. In the early years do you recall any struggles that you
414 witnessed or were involved in? Particularly difficult challenges in those early years that come to
415 mind.

416 **Watkins:** I remember one of the times I was most impressed by Peter Smith as President,
417 I think it might have been the spring of the first year. If not it might have been the fall of the
418 second year. Things were chaotic and kind of spinning out of control. I think everybody across
419 campus was feeling some of that. It wasn't clear we were going to succeed at some level, almost.
420 Maybe some of this was his background as a politician from Vermont but [Chuckles] he actually
421 gave a very inspiring speech to the entire faculty and staff assembled group and such that I think
422 really put people back on track in a way that without it, it could have actually been fairly
423 disastrous. He said a lot of the positives of running quickly and doing things were very strong but
424 some of the negatives were that not one hand knew what the other was doing and there were
425 some conflicting efforts underway and not the best communication always across the campus. So
426 that was a big challenge. I remember when we finally got the opportunity to design our new

427 Library building. And we went on tours of various recently built academic libraries with the Provost
428 and the President. We had gotten our Library building all designed and it was almost ready to go
429 out for bid, when Peter Smith decided that we should take a serious look at putting an
430 administrative office suite on the top of the fourth floor of the building, ignoring any notion that the
431 operating hours, the time, the mission of who is in the building and such would have very little in
432 common. So I remember us making an effort to point that out to the students. In fact, the way the
433 original design was the fourth floor would have had views through the atrium area out across the
434 Bay. And that was a public student-centered space and this administrative suite would have
435 blocked that entire view, essentially. So we challenged it.

436 **[48:38] Makau:** Who is “we”?

437 **Watkins:** Well, the Library but actually I would have to say the most effective challenge
438 came from some of the student leadership. I don't think our challenge won the day. They had the
439 architectural firm do a redesign to incorporate this. And in the ten or eleven months it took to do
440 that the price of steel internationally went through the roof. And so when they put the new design
441 out for bid it was millions of dollars above budget. So that forced us to cut back a number of
442 areas. We actually eliminated the entire fourth floor, for one thing, and had to make other
443 compromises, many of which are common in building projects at any rate, that you design your
444 ideal and have to value-engineer certain features out of the final product. So at any rate so I
445 would say that was a clear point of contention for us and an interesting opportunity to actually
446 work with some of the student leadership.

447 **Makau:** When you think about. . . you left as a FERP faculty, is that correct?

448 **Watkins:** Yes.

449 **Makau:** Can you tell us anything about your decision to move on and to take that route
450 and your experience of that and what you remember about it?

451 **Watkins:** Right. Well, by the time I fully retired in 2018 I had worked continuously in
452 libraries for 45 years starting as a student assistant and through staff positions, etc.. So I felt like
453 I had accomplished many of the things that I had come to CSUMB to put in place and many
454 things that I had no idea I would get to be involved in. The notion of being able to pare back to
455 half time, and the way we've tended to do it was half-time spread out across the academic year
456 rather than one semester full time and one semester off, was great. During a lot of phases of my
457 career at CSUMB I was on multiple committees at the same time, involved in lots of things. One
458 of the nice aspects of the Early Retirement program is that your committee assignments seem to
459 pretty much melt away. Yet, you're still there to work with the students, to do a core of what your
460 responsibilities always have been. And we were fortunate in the Library to be able to hire new
461 Assistant Librarian faculty before our actual retirement ended. So I had more than a year, just
462 about a year of overlap with my replacement. So that notion that having the benefit of the
463 experienced people there and being able to pass some of that along, mentor new colleagues,
464 was I think invaluable. A lot of times somebody retires and leaves and there's months before the
465 next person arrives to take their position on and a lot of that institutional memory is lost. So I am a
466 strong supporter of the FERP program for that reason. It doesn't really cost the University and
467 with the right planning you can actually hire almost two entry level faculty on the salary of the
468 retiring person.

469 **[52:36]** And I planned it mainly to I guess correspond with my full retirement age basically, in
470 terms of Social Security and such, but also because my wife was looking at retirement a couple of
471 years after I started the FERP. The timing seemed right and financially the planning looked like it
472 was manageable. And so it was a really nice way to taper off.

473 **Makau:** It really worked well. It worked well for the University from your perspective and it
474 served you and your family as well.

475 **Watkins:** Yes.

476 **Makau:** You've alluded to much of this but I want to just open the floor in kind of a really
477 open way. Anything that occurs to you that you haven't yet shared about your own
478 accomplishments and your disappointments and whatever legacy that you might hope to leave
479 behind?

480 **Watkins:** Sure. I do think that the notion of having been a key player in establishing a
481 governance structure is a legacy I am very proud of. I think similarly, upholding the primacy of
482 teaching and learning in the RTP [Retention, Tenure, and Promotion] process as the University
483 was growing and a lot of people with serious research backgrounds joining the University, I think
484 that was an important role. I was involved during my entire time there with my professional
485 organization, which was an International Association of Marine Science Libraries. We would hold
486 conferences annually, rotate them around different regions of the world. So I had the opportunity
487 to meet lots and lots of colleagues from many different countries and visit the countries and
488 experience the cultures. One of the last projects I did for them was developing a little device that's
489 essentially a Wi-Fi point of presence -- it's portable, the kind of thing you might take on vacations
490 so that you could set up your Wi-Fi connections--, and building into that a collection of 20,000
491 digital fisheries publications from around the world, all open access publications that had been
492 collected into repositories in various places. The notion here being that we have lots of members
493 on remote Pacific Islands and in areas of Africa, areas of Eastern Europe for whom Internet
494 access was very unreliable. Electricity was very unreliable. This little stand-alone device which
495 costs about \$50 each put an entire mini library, a digital library at the hands of anybody with a cell
496 phone, essentially, or a laptop. So that was one of the culminating things of some of the
497 technology work I had done throughout my career and such but looking at a need that would
498 actually serve some heavily underserved areas of the world. That's a legacy I also am proud of.

