

Time to Think

Open University Journeys in British and Irish prisons during the years of conflict, 1972-2000

Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Jenny Meegan**
Interviewed by: **Pat Jess**
Date of interview: **24/08/2016**

Important

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it.

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Clip title:	I saw a door saying OU Archive, and I knocked on it
Duration:	00:03:30
Clip start point in full interview:	01:01:07
Clip end point in full interview:	01:05.53
Interview identifier:	064_T_03

Description: Jenny Meegan the Open University member of Staff responsible for starting this project, recalls how a chance visit to The Open University Library at the Milton Keynes Campus paved the way to help put the project, at the time an organic piece of work confined to the Belfast office, on a proper institutional and research footing. Jenny singles out the University Archivist as a key member of staff who helped advise and guide and worked on the project enabling it to become this formal online digital archive housed by The Open University Library and compliant with data protection regulations. This partnership between Open University staff in the Ireland office, the University and the University Library took the project to an entirely new level.

Transcript:

We have talked in terms of the process within a framework, the inevitably loose framework of action research but there must have been something more structural which was holding this together, which was giving this some kind of a home,

Yes, and, going back to the autumn that we started, one of the absolutely key things that got this project on the ground was the support of The Open University Library. John [John D’Arcy National Director of The Open University in Ireland] and I had talked about the original idea for doing this archive and shortly after that I was in Milton Keynes, in Walton Hall, [The Open University main campus] for a meeting. And I happened to be in the library in Walton Hall and I saw a door saying OU Archive, and I knocked on it and met a really nice woman who was the Archivist who was extremely interested in the proposal. And this person had actually been responsible for doing an Open University oral history project a few years earlier. And in fact, Diana Purcell and some other people from here were interviewed as part of that. But it meant that they were building a website, they had an Online Digital Archive and they had a model. And Ruth [Ruth Cammies], the Archivist, she really was totally instrumental in making things happen.

We went over and Philip and Naomi, John and I went over in January or February and met with Ruth and we were guided, the Open University in a way used a life history approach [in the first OU Oral History Project] I think, we were guided in the mechanism of doing the recording, they lent us a recorder to do the recordings on, they advised on the technical details, they basically got us up and running. One of the very first things Ruth said was “you have to think about what you’re going to do with this”, looking back at my notes from the period I wish I’d listened more to that! They were instrumental in getting the conversations about consent and data protection. As I say, over the years we have had a series of meetings but the support of the OU Library and especially the Archivist, Ruth came over here actually. She came over for three days and she advised us,

Jenny Meegan Clip

she looked at our systems, she helped us work out what to do and I think we took her on a visit to the site of Maze, Long Kesh which at the time you were able to visit. But it was through that institutional support and through Ruth's experience and advice that really framed this.