California Department of Education
Adult Education Oral History Project

Oral History Interview

OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NETWORK

JOHN FLEISCHMAN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Sacramento County Office of Education
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CALIFORNIA ADULT EDUCATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

OUTREACH AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NETWORK

INTERVIEWEE: JOHN FLEISCHMAN, Director, OTAN

INTERVIEWER: Cuba Z. Miller

[Session 1, March 5, 1998]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

MILLER: This is Cuba Miller interviewing John Fleischman, Director of the Outreach and Technical Assistance Network [OTAN] in Sacramento, on March 5, 1998. The purpose of the interview is to record the origins of and John's reflections on the project, as well as the impact it has had on California adult education.

Good morning, John.

FLEISCHMAN: Good morning, Cuba. How are you this morning?

MILLER: Fine. I'm looking forward to our session here. Before we get into the background and a lot of the details of OTAN, let's start by you giving us just a brief overview of the project as it exists today.

FLEISCHMAN: I'd be happy to. The OTAN project is a statewide project

serving the needs of California adult educators, educators that

may work in adult schools through school districts, [or] might

work in community-based organizations and libraries,

nonprofit organizations, community colleges. The project is

really designed to provide training, information resources, and

a communications network.

The primary project is divided into three major

components. There is an electronic communications

component, and that component is designed to connect adult

educators together electronically so that they can share

information, communicate, collaborate, exchange ideas. A

second major component of the project is an information and

reference services component. Within that component there

are five sections, five collections of information. The primary

collection is an electronic collection, and that collection today

represents the world's largest collection of information

resources relating to adult education.

MILLER: That's impressive.

FLEISCHMAN: We're impressed. We're very pleased with what we've been

able to accomplish over the last eight years, [especially what]

is delivered currently through the World Wide Web, and we'll

talk more about that. A second major collection is the VESL

[vocational English as a second language] Workplace

Clearinghouse, [a] collection of materials currently distributed

through [a subcontract with] San Diego Community College.

It represents curriculum materials, training materials that have

been developed by adult educators for the purpose of

teaching language and literacy within a particular vocational

context. Those materials are continuing to be collected and

distributed on a cost reimbursement basis by the community

college. A third major component of the information

reference collection services is an Archives collection. That is

a historical collection, materials that have been collected from

consultants and folks that have been involved in adult

education. We have materials going back to literally the turn

of the century, so we're real excited about that. And that's to

preserve our history of adult education, a long and proud

tradition of serving the needs of Californians. [The Archives

are] used both by researchers, by consultants with the State

Department of Education, by college students. . . . So we

really get a fair amount of use of that collection. The fourth

collection is an Educational Technology Center collection. We have upwards of about eleven hundred products relating to technology and adult learning: everything from software that runs on PCs, Macintoshes, Apple IIs, to CD-ROM products, to laser disc products, to various print materials; everything from software guides [to] materials that are used to assist the field with an understanding of the types of materials that are out there, in terms of using technology in the classroom.

MILLER: So they can sample things before making investments of their own.

FLEISCHMAN: Correct. They can sample things, and also we do quite a few presentations each year, and we use those materials to make presentations. So it really functions as a collection for us to display those materials. And a fifth collection, which is in essence our State Literacy Resource [Centers] collection. We oversee and we do centralized acquisitions for the eight Regional Resource Centers that operate throughout California. We also maintain a central collection of materials related to adult education. Everything from collections on family literacy and basic literacy and English as a second

language. So we have really a centralized library, State Literacy Resource Collection, here at the Sacramento County Office of Education. So that forms the second major component, the information and reference section of our component of the Outreach and Technical Assistance Network.

And the third major component of OTAN is the instructional technology component, and there are a number of separate efforts within that component. One of the primary efforts is to assist local adult education agencies in developing comprehensive technology plans.

MILLER: Okay, you actually will go into an agency and help them develop a plan for them?

FLEISCHMAN: That's correct. At any one time we're probably working with a half a dozen adult schools, and we've literally assisted dozens of adult schools over the past four or five years as we've evolved this component of the project. We're currently working with Bassett Adult School in southern California. They're developing a comprehensive plan. We're working very closely with their district. We're currently working with a program in Walnut Creek, developing their [plan]. They're

redoing it. As adult schools are making more significant investments in technology, they're beginning to understand the importance of the planning process. A second component of that effort of OTAN is development of online materials, and hopefully we can talk about that a little bit more when we talk about collaboration with other projects. Another part of that [compound] is training. We're currently very aggressively providing training throughout California to help adult schools with using electronic communication, accessing the Internet, understanding how to access resources. One other component of that effort involves the development of online training materials so that we can do a more effective job in distributing those materials. And a consistent and ongoing process, primarily provided by me, is working with publishers across the country and encouraging them to develop materials that are appropriate for adult literacy, adult education, English as a second language, because it is a small market, and many publishers just don't realize who the market is. So part of my role as Director of OTAN is to help identify the market for publishers, to help them in terms of identifying the types of curriculum that may be appropriate.

MILLER: And encourage them to develop materials so we don't have to develop our own. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: Exactly. Exactly, because we can never afford to do that. So many folks think of OTAN today as an electronic communication and information system, but, in essence, OTAN is much more than that. It involves training throughout the state [and] it involves assisting local agencies with the intelligent use of new technology. Many of them are just so overwhelmed with coming to terms and understanding how to bring new technologies into the local program. It involves working with publishers. And honestly, [when] they do think "adult education," they think "night school," just like a lot of Californians.

MILLER: Yes! [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: That's probably a good analogy. So, when you think OTAN, OTAN is not just a communication system. CASAS [Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System] is not just a test. [Laughter]

MILLER: Yes! Okay, that's a good analogy. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: That's right, it's much more.

MILLER: That's a good analogy, as a matter of fact. Okay, OTAN comes under the rubric of a demonstration project, and demonstration projects are developed to address perceived needs. At the time that you got started, what was that need or what was the vision that led to the establishment of OTAN?

FLEISCHMAN: OTAN was born out of a strategic planning process that was conducted during the late 1980s. The planning process involved representatives from every major entity involved in adult education, and I think it was a very successful process. They identified fourteen key recommendations. One of those recommendations identified the need for better communication, a more decentralized approach for doing staff development. So out of that, a recommendation was made that something be developed called OTAN, the Outreach and Technical Assistance Network.

MILLER: Actually, I think the original name they had for it was a bureau of something.

FLEISCHMAN: Oh really? I never knew that.

MILLER: And we got that changed. [Chuckling] *Bureau* sounds terrible.

FLEISCHMAN: A good piece of trivia for me. As you know, from that

strategic plan the State Plan for Adult Education was

developed, and in that State Plan for Adult Education it

called for this entity, OTAN. There was also some work done

by CCAE [California Council for Adult Education] that

identified the need for increasing communication [and]

information sharing. So there was a lot of work done

throughout the state that really kind of identified that need.

The vision, as I see it, can probably literally be best

summarized by a discussion I had yesterday with one of our

new PC support trainers. We have a new staff person, Betsy

Erickson, and she was in Merced doing training. We had

twenty-two trainees at the Merced Resource Center. It's in

the Central Valley and some of the programs are pretty

remote, pretty widespread. One of the teachers came up to

Betsy—Betsy's only been with our program for two weeks,

mind you, so she's pretty new—and said, "OTAN has been

my lifeline. OTAN has been my link. Without OTAN I

would not know what's going on in other parts of the state. It

has helped me to be a part of a larger effort, a statewide

effort. I would literally feel disconnected and not have the

kind of information and resources that I need to be able to make better decisions about managing what goes on in my classroom." And Betsy kind of smiled and looked over to me and said, "Wow, I really like this program. I really like what you guys are doing." I said, "Betsy, that's what it's all about." And I thought to myself, my goodness, that's the vision. That was *the vision*. And matter of fact, I could say here is one really concrete example. So that was very, very gratifying to me, to hear that from a new employee. And that's really what it's about. The vision was to connect a very disparate group of programs and services across California. Unlike K-12, adult education is a real mixed-provider system. There are programs up along the [valley] and down in Calexico along the border that are very isolated, programs up in Eureka, and some programs in downtown Los Angeles that are somewhat isolated from others. So OTAN has served to connect the field together and it has served to provide adult educators with information that they need to make better decisions about managing their classroom, starting new programs, and managing their agencies. So I think that was the vision. I think we've done a job at carrying out much of that vision.

And as we discuss further, the program, the very core of OTAN, has evolved over the years, as the needs of adult educators [have changed]. So the vision has never changed, but the core activities—

MILLER: The activities have changed, too.

FLEISCHMAN: The goal has diverted a little bit, and some of the very specific objectives have changed, as technology and as the needs of adult educators [have], but I think that's what programs need to do.

MILLER: Yeah. You speak of the isolation of some of the programs. Within a district there's frequently just one adult school, so that the adult school administrator or administrators don't have anyone within their district to share their problems with. Whereas principals from three elementary schools or two high schools have each other to give feedback. So you do have to go outside your district to get that support.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes. I mean that's pretty traditional. We've got a lot of adult schools in California, and very few are what I would consider large-scale adult schools where they have a large administrative staff. The majority of them are smaller and they need that kind of collaboration with other administrators.

So I think, in terms of what we've done in terms of connecting adult educators to information, whether it be electronic or print or more traditional needs, and how we connected them to each other, I think has served a need.

MILLER: Okay. Certainly the means for that connectivity though has been through technology.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes.

MILLER: And again we're talking about the beginning of the project, and you got started in, I think, December of '89. But anyway, at the beginning of 1990, how would you describe a technology profile of the state at that time?

FLEISCHMAN: Isn't it amazing how much the world has changed since 1990?

MILLER: Yes.

FLEISCHMAN: In eight years, really, the core economy of this country is going through profound changes because of information technology, and the information revolution is upon us. And again it has affected tremendously what we do in adult education, how we're able to operate our programs, how we're able to manage, how we're able to provide instruction.

In late 1989, December, exactly when we started OTAN, the world was very different. We set out at that time

to evolve and to develop an electronic communication system. The World Wide Web wasn't even a twinkle in Tim Bernier Lee's eyes. He's the inventor of the Web in 1993. The technology called Gopher wasn't available. Most people were using Apple IIs or IBM ATs. The computer power has literally grown twenty times since 1990. Adult schools had computers, but remember, the first microcomputers didn't really start hitting the scene until '82, '83. Most adult schools started acquiring them in the later '80s. So, in 1982 we had a lot of Apple IIs with about 128K of RAM, so relatively low memory. Modem speed at that time was averaging about 350 baud, at most. Some users were going up to 1,200-baud modems about that time. That was considered a very high-speed modem. Now we're dealing with 56,000 kilobytes per second. So, again, the world was extremely different. The number of computers was still at a relatively low ebb. There were some in administration, there were very few computer labs at that point in time, and very few users of computers.

MILLER: You were talking about modems and I was going to say, how many adult schools had modems in 1990?

FLEISCHMAN: Most people didn't know what a modem was. [Chuckling]

MILLER: Didn't know what it was, yes! [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: "What is a modem?" Right.

MILLER: And you say that a few of the schools did have some labs for

                 instruction.

FLEISCHMAN: Correct.

MILLER: What was the level of instruction by computer at that time?

FLEISCHMAN: Typically it was a relatively low ebb. Most of the software

                 was skill-drill type programs. Some of the agencies were

                 beginning to use tutorial programs, and of course the

                 integrated learning systems. Some were using the older

                 PLATO system—

MILLER: Not designed for adults. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: Not designed for adult education. There was nothing really

                 back then that was exclusive for adult education. So I look

                 back, just eight few short years ago, and it was pretty

                 primitive compared to where we are today. Now, in 1995 we

                 did do a comprehensive statewide survey. We use that kind

                 of as a baseline; we're now putting together another survey

                 [to analyze growth and trends]. I know that almost every day

                 I get calls from adult educators asking questions about what

                 kinds of computers, what kinds of software. So I know that

tremendous numbers are being purchased today, not only for connectivity to the Internet, which means increased connectivity to OTAN and the resources that we make available, but also for instruction—everything from business labs, to basic literacy, to English as a second language. CD-ROMs were nonexistent in 1990. The technology was there, the CD-ROM drives were there. Today you can't buy a computer without a CD-ROM. Today almost every major manufacturer of adult-appropriate and English as a second language-appropriate software makes it available on a CD-ROM. So we didn't have digitized speech, we didn't have digitized video. The world has literally turned completely around several times, in terms of availability, and that has affected adult education as well as education in general.

MILLER: All right, with this vision then and the kind of availability or lack of availability of technology for classroom use at that time, and, as I say, with this vision ahead of you, what in your background gave you the experience or the expertise to meet the needs of the vision?

FLEISCHMAN: Well, how far back should we go? [Laughter] When I was six years old. . . .

MILLER: That's a good start. [Laughter]

FLEISCHMAN: All right, when I was eight years old I put an 8-millimeter

camera in my hands and I. . . . Honestly, when I was very

young. I filmed my sister's wedding, I think, when I was ten

years old. And seriously, I became very, very excited with

imagery and how images communicate, and early on I had

decided that I am going to work in this area. But I've always

been more interested in the education side of media versus

the entertainment side.

MILLER: Anyway, it has been a lifelong passion. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, a lifelong passion. When I was in college at UC

Berkeley, I spent a lot of time at the Berkeley Film Archive

and I studied the cinematic masters, everything from

Eisenstein. . . . Dziga Vertov was one of my idols.

[Chuckling] He did a couple of unbelievable. . . . Eisenstein

did some amazing film work. And I really began to study the

power of images, how they communicate. When I was in

college, I spent quite a few months over in Europe and

traveled and really saw internationally how media

communicates. I got a master's degree in instructional

technology. As a part of that degree, I got a secondary

teaching credential. I had decided early on that I'm going to really devote my career to using new technologies as a way to provide education. My first job was at a high school. And frankly, I didn't like the discipline problems.

MILLER: Yes. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: It was at an inner-city school, at Wilson High School in El Sereno, in Los Angeles.

MILLER: Why many of us moved to adult ed. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, right. And then I saw a job posting for something called Right to Read. And, wow, this is real interesting, working with adults. And I applied for the job and I received it. In the mid-'70s, from mid-'70 to 1980, I worked with a federally-funded [program], one of the twenty adult reading academies. I got very involved with that. And I had an opportunity to use media to train volunteers. I did a lot of tutor training myself in traditional techniques. We began to use a reel-to-reel videotape as a way of working with students, we used audiotape, I began to use magnetic card readers, and I looked for ways of bringing technology into the tutoring program. So that was really my first real entree into adult learning, and literally I became hooked on adult education.

MILLER: But you were also a pioneer in bringing a lot of these things into the classroom for instructional purposes.

FLEISCHMAN: Early on, I think, I didn't see a lot of that going on, so yes. I had the good fortune that this Right to Read program was based out of one of the largest adult schools in California, the Hacienda La Puente School District. So they had an extremely progressive ESL program, basic literacy, an extremely strong vocational training program, a vocational ESL program. So I really had a wonderful opportunity to work in a comprehensive adult school. So I learned about all facets of adult education. Ultimately I became the administrator of the ABE [adult basic education] programs, began an opportunity to expand the use of technology into our adult basic education classrooms, and then in 1982 I was offered a position with another division within the adult schools, the Correctional Education Division. My supervisor, Ernestine Schnuelle, came to me and said, "John, I know you want to do this media stuff full-time. We have these thousands and thousands of inmates down in the L.A. County jails who need to learn how to read. Would you be interested

in exploring the role of technology and how it could be used to advance literacy with this population?"

MILLER: "Would I?!" [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: Yeah, would I?! [Chuckling] So Ernie said, "John, I've got $5,000. You can buy a video camera. . . ." It was a wonderful opportunity, and I'll never regret having that opportunity. I spent seven years working in the L.A. County jails, helping to set up some of the core literacy programs, establishing computer labs, exploring how video could be used as a tool to help improve instruction in a variety of different areas. So it was a great opportunity for me to really expand my understanding and knowledge of adult learning, adult education, and to be able to apply technology on a broader scale in literally an area that had never been touched before. Jail education in itself was something new at that time, let alone the use of technology. So it was both a fascinating experience, and I was able to secure a number of grants and projects to help support the development.

In the mid-'80s, I became involved with some of the 353 . . . I guess at that time a 310 project, the Competency Based Adult Education [Staff Development] project with John

Tibbetts at San Francisco State University.[1] And through that process, we began to explore the role of video as a tool for training adult education staff.

MILLER: Teacher training, yes.

FLEISCHMAN: Teacher training, and we developed a whole series of videos on staff development. It really opened up my eyes to the power of technology as a tool for staff development. So I began to migrate my career more from the classroom, if you will, to doing resource and technical projects to support the field of adult education.

MILLER: And at that time you actually developed a professional-quality video production [unit].

FLEISCHMAN: Yes. That was the interesting thing about working in the jail environment. We had some seed dollars that were provided, and we were developing student instructional videos, but through these various projects and grants, I in essence became, I guess for lack of a better word, somewhat of an entrepreneur, and I sought out contracts and grants with various social service agencies. We used that fund to produce

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[1]Sections 309, 310, and 353 are the sections of the federal Adult Education Act that provide(d) funding for special projects such as OTAN and the project mentioned above. The section number changed with various revisions of the law.

video programs, professional-quality, broadcast-quality video

programs, and using those funds, not only paid for staff time

but also allowed us to buy professional-quality equipment. So

we developed a full-blown video production facility that

operated within the correctional education division at the

L.A. County jails. We called ourselves "the Video Guys from

the Hall of Justice." [Chuckling] And I had a great crew that

I worked with, and we would literally, towards the end of the

'80s, move all throughout California to produce videos for

training adult education teachers.

MILLER: And John, the computers that you were using there, I believe

you were having to program a lot of your own instruction too,

weren't you, because of the lack of commercial materials for

adults?

FLEISCHMAN: In 1982, we bought six Apple computers. They came with

16K of random access memory [RAM]. Today the average

computer comes with 32 megabytes of random access

memory. [Chuckling] There was no software available.

There were some very primitive word processing programs;

we used one called Home Word. We used a basic accounting

program called Visicalc. And Milliken had just come out with

some basic programs, but frankly, they were extremely complex and they were designed for kids. They were designed for K-6 students, not for adult education. Out of necessity, we started developing our own content, and we developed some basic literacy materials. That led to literally some attention from Apple Computer Corporation.

At that time Apple was in their heyday, and they had just come out in 1984 with something called a Macintosh. And a Macintosh . . . we looked at it. Boy, this looks like a revolutionary kind of machine! We purchased one, we played with it a little bit, and then I got a call from Apple. They'd heard about some of our work in the L.A. County jails. They invited me up to present to their corporate board. . . . It's a little sidebar, but it's kind of fun to tell. And they asked me . . . they were interested in what we were doing with technology in the L.A. County jails, and I told them what we were doing and told them some things that maybe they didn't want to hear, but they were pretty supportive. After the meeting, there was a little gathering, and the vice president at that time of Apple, David Barrum, came up to me and said, "Well, John, it sounds like you're doing some very interesting

work with literacy in the Los Angeles County jails. Could you

use a couple more Macintoshes to do some work there?"

And I just flippantly said, "Sure, I'll take twenty-five." And a

week later—

MILLER: And they gave them to you?

FLEISCHMAN: A week later I got a call from the deputy in the compound

downstairs at the Hall of Justice and he said, "Mr.

Fleischman, there's a truck down here with some things from

Apple. There's seventy-five boxes on this truck." "What are

you talking about? I didn't order anything from Apple." And

I go downstairs, and there's twenty-five brand new Macintosh

computers, twenty-five external hard drives, laser printers,

wiring. And to this day, I am sorry I didn't say, "Sure, I'll

take fifty." [Laughter] That was again the heyday of Apple,

so they had lots of money and they donated those twenty-five

computers. That led us then to really put a push on software

development for the Macintosh, and we developed quite a

few basic literacy programs. We purchased an authoring tool

called Authorware Professional, and we began to develop

MacLiteracy Program, software that would talk back to the

student and use synthetic speech capabilities. The response

from inmates was phenomenal. We put those computers at

the various facilities around L.A. County. And to see the

inmates' faces light up when they had a private tutor, a

patient tutor, something that would talk to them

personally. . . . So that was gratifying.

MILLER: So this project [OTAN] then was tailor-made for you. Were

there even any other applicants, do you know, for the

project?

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, there were several other applicants. I know that

Sonoma State University did apply for the OTAN project, but

when we saw the announcement in . . . I believe it was early

1989, I saw that and thought, boy, this thing is made for me.

How could we not go [for it]? Now, I *loved* what I was doing

at the L.A. County jails. I really loved it, and my first

response was, well, yeah, I'm interested in this, but maybe I'll

just kind of work part-time. Let's get a team together. And

so I kind of looked at it, went into it as almost a . . . it would

be something that I would do as a second [job, with] me kind

of working in an advisory role. We worked real hard to put

the proposal together. We came together with some great

ideas, but I really never saw immediately [how] I would be

involved. But once it was funded, then I saw the potential of OTAN, what it could do to change the structure of adult ed in California. So I became immersed in the project.

MILLER: Okay, to sort of summarize at this point then, the project was developed to help local agencies use technology to improve day-to-day operations in a variety of ways: instruction, training, resources, and so on.

FLEISCHMAN: Correct.

MILLER: And we've talked some about the profile at the time and the low level of technology, but a part of that was actually lack of equipment in local agencies.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes.

MILLER: What happened to change that picture of the lack of equipment? Because you got started and people couldn't connect with you. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: That's correct. I think a couple of things happened. One, the cost of technology began to lower. Moore's Law: every eighteen months the power of computer technology doubles and the cost halves. So one of the things that happened is the overall retail costs of technology began to drop, which would allow adult schools to purchase more computers. The

second advantage I think that we had is we had some folks at the State Department of Education, specifically Dr. Ray[mond G.] Eberhard, who was the manager of adult ed, who strongly believed, embraced the vision, saw the future, and understood. And to that end, he encouraged adult schools to use part of their 321 funds,[2] their federal funds, to purchase the necessary equipment that they needed to connect to the OTAN system. To purchase the time on CONNECT Incorporated, which was a commercial service we were using at the time, to use that money to pay for their monthly subscription fees. So we had a couple things going for us: a real strong support from the State Department of Education, lowering costs of computers, and awareness of the importance of computer technology, that I think helped us in beginning to build OTAN and building this network.

MILLER: That support was actually translated into a mandate, wasn't it?

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, it was. Yes, it really was.

MILLER: If you have 321 funds, thou shalt. . . . [Chuckling]

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[2]Section 321 of the Adult Education Act provides funds to local adult education agencies.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, thou shalt [subscribe to OTAN]. However, it was a

mandate, but it was also a non-enforceable mandate. I mean,

frankly, if someone totally resisted, I don't believe that their

funds would have been pulled. Had someone said, "Look, I

don't want to, I don't think it's right, I'm not going to do this."

But of course, then they would not necessarily get the

information that they may need in a timely fashion, so there

was certainly a disadvantage by not connecting to OTAN.

Although it did indicate in the letters that went out for

funding, thou shalt, yes. Certainly had someone contested

that and elected not to do it, they would not be required to.

MILLER: One year they actually gave a grant to purchase the hardware.

Was that a one-year deal?

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, it was.

MILLER: Or, as other people came on, did they get a—

FLEISCHMAN: No, it was a one-year deal where they specifically said, "Use

this"—I believe it was $5,000 that was made available, as I

recall. Although, subsequent to that they have been able to

use their 321 allocations to still purchase the equipment.

Now, of course, many other new agencies receiving federal

funds have come online since then, and they have not

necessarily benefitted by getting that one-time [extra funding]. But they can use their 321 allocations to purchase—

MILLER: Money to buy the equipment. Whereas previously that money couldn't be used for equipment.

FLEISCHMAN: Correct.

MILLER: It had to be used for. . . .

FLEISCHMAN: Yes. So part of it was, yes, policy helped build this. You can't just build without changing some policy at the State Department [of Education]. And even today those policy questions . . . and maybe we'll get into some of this, but those policy questions even exist today, because the Internet is changing everything in how people communicate, and some real tough decisions will [need to be made]. As tough as the ones were then, the ones we're facing [today are difficult] decisions [too].

MILLER: Okay, other than the lack of equipment and the. . . . I suppose we could say the lack of sophistication in the field was another obstacle that you had at the beginning. How did you address that? [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: I'm laughing, too, because that was a major obstacle, and that obstacle continues today. As technology gets more and more

advanced, we are required to provide that support. And we've addressed that in many different ways. We provide an 800 telephone line. We pride ourselves on *excellent* telephone technical support. So our staff is supremely trained in every aspect related to not only the use of OTAN Online and use of the World Wide Web, but also the fundamentals in the operation of the computer. Because some of our users literally are relatively new computer users, so we go one step further. Certainly a car dealer would not teach you how to drive the car if you bought the car, but literally sometimes we help people drive the car. Because we realize that in order to participate in OTAN they must have fundamental computer skills. So training has been a major barrier, certainly connectivity has been a major barrier, equipment has been a major barrier—all of these. And we continue to fight that battle, if you will, and address all of those issues.

MILLER: And with the rapid rate of change in the technology itself, that training aspect never goes away. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: It doesn't. No, the technical support never goes away. So literally we have a staff person most of the day that's online with our users out there. We are providing training

consistently, and we will continue it. As a matter of fact, currently one of our major pushes is to really do detailed training throughout California. We have developed eight new structured training programs related to use of OTAN Online, connecting to the Internet, and we're now conducting those across California.

MILLER: Certainly the history of the project then has been a history of changes that have taken place, but we don't want to drop again what you were at the beginning, because you did have two major components at the beginning that are completely gone now.

FLEISCHMAN: Correct.

MILLER: So let's at least mention what those were and why they were dropped. I mean, what happened to them?

FLEISCHMAN: When the project began in 1989 through the State Plan and through the Strategic Plan for Adult Education, it was determined that not only this new communication system was needed but a more diversified or a more distributed system of providing traditional staff development was also needed. So, to that end, OTAN was initially designed to establish a

Regional Resource Center[3] system. In addition, OTAN was designed to conduct and broker staff development at those regional centers. So, for the first few years of operation, the technical part of OTAN, which is now a significant component of what we do, was actually a very small component. Our major emphasis was on staff development, and that again a major component. We went through the process of identifying Regional Resource Centers. We solicited applications from adult schools throughout California, we established guidelines, and we identified, through a competitive process, regional centers. The regional centers were designed to determine needs within geographical areas throughout California, and then to conduct training based upon those needs. So the role of the center became to broker that training, to identify the appropriate trainer, to facilitate the training, to do the recruitment, and to basically conduct the training, offer the training at that regional site. The OTAN project used part of their funds, a significant part of their funds, to basically contract with those regional

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[3]These are the same as the State Literacy Resource Centers. They have had various names, depending on both the funding agency and the contracting agency. They started out as CBAE Demonstration Sites in 1988.

centers. At that time Holda Dorsey was the manager of that component of the project. In addition to providing the training, the regional centers also functioned as depositories of information that was not appropriate to distribute electronically. There are certain teaching materials, copyrighted materials——

MILLER: Hard copies.

FLEISCHMAN: Hard copies of materials. So it functioned, really, in that capacity to decentralize and establish a distributed system providing staff development. It seemed to work well. And as OTAN evolved, so too did, I think, the thinking of the State Department of Education. They evolved what was then the staff development project through San Francisco State University [by adding] the ESL Teacher Institute. [Later] that training was provided through the Centers, and then the structure of the Institute was evolved into something new. A separate RFP was put out and the Staff Development Institute [SDI] was created, which basically evolved from the work that OTAN was doing with supporting the Regional Centers, [but] on a more formal basis. So OTAN at that point then no longer conducted and brokered that regional

staff development.[4] [OTAN] only supported the libraries, in terms of centralized acquisition and in terms of training the regional managers in the use of technology. And the Staff Development Institute then became the primary provider of staff development, along with the funding that was available at the time for the State Literacy Resource Centers.

MILLER: You had staff development for what, four years?

FLEISCHMAN: It was approximately four years.

MILLER: So the staff development, there was just a management decision to move that out into a separate project at this time.

FLEISCHMAN: Correct, a separate project.

MILLER: Okay, and then there was something that was the outreach in your name, originally. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, right. You saw that.

MILLER: Outreach to unfunded counties.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, that was one of the things the strategic plan process determined – that there were quite a few counties throughout

[4]The ESL Teacher Institute started operations under that name in 1985. San Francisco State University's CBAE Staff Development ended in 1988. In school year 1988-89 the CBAE Demonstration Sites managed staff development. OTAN began in 1989. SDI started in 1994.

California that were not providing adult education programs, or may have—

MILLER: And could not.

FLEISCHMAN: Could not, correct.

MILLER: Because of the funding mechanism.

FLEISCHMAN: Correct, could not. So that was addressed on a number of different levels. One was in new legislation, and that legislation served to expand the number of adult schools in California.[5] But a second way to address that was looking at OTAN as [a] way of devising methods of providing services to some of those under-funded or unfunded locales. We established a couple of pilot projects. One of those pilot projects was in the Glenn-Tehama County area. That's an area in northern California about 150 miles north of Sacramento, relatively a farming community, pretty spread-out, but with strong needs—some community college efforts, but very, very minimal, and some library efforts, but extremely minimal. So we established a pilot project in that region, provided some separate funding, provided an amount of a

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[5]Assembly Bill 1891 (Woodruff), Ch. 1195, Stats. 1992. OTAN outreach activities preceded the passage of this legislation.

strong degree of training and support, and helped to develop

a collaborative, a regional collaborative, designed to increase

enrollment in adult education and designed to use new

technologies as a way to serve that population.

MILLER: And it only lasted a little while.

FLEISCHMAN: Correct. About a year and a half.

MILLER: About a year and a half. And their thrust was what? I know

that there was quite a bit of equipment that was purchased.

Was it for checkout purposes, the laptops?

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, a number of different initiatives were attempted. One of

them was to, and that's exactly what they did. They

purchased laptops. Those laptops were loaded with various

commercial software, and then were taken out to various

rural areas. One example, off of Highway 5 there, I think, in

Glenn County, was a strong Hmong population. Many of the

Hmong had very, very large families, and they would

congregate in community centers. What they would do is

basically use those laptops and provide literacy instruction at

those community centers. Also, in some of the larger

population areas they set up some computer labs, and in

those labs they put on commercial software. So it was a

combination both of computer-assisted instruction labs that
were developed, where local residents could come in and take
advantage of using the computers, with assistance from
volunteers, tutors, and some part-time paraprofessional staff,
and there was also a system of using the laptops to take the
technology to the people.

MILLER: And then you mentioned that there was a change in
legislation that did provide money for start-up schools.

FLEISCHMAN: Correct.

MILLER: Which, in essence, negated the need for this component.

FLEISCHMAN: Right. Correct.

MILLER: Also, one of what has turned out to be one of the major
components of your project was not in it at the beginning but
was added close to the beginning, and that was the archiving.
What was behind that and how was that addition handled?

FLEISCHMAN: Well, frankly, a lot of what was behind that was an individual,
[Chuckling] and that individual is Linda West. Linda West is
an extremely well respected person in the field of adult
education. She has a strong background in vocational ESL,
literacy-related areas, she has worked in a number of
comprehensive adult schools, and she wrote what I consider

the book, the history of adult education. Literally, it's the book, *Meeting the Challenge: A History of Adult Education in California.* Linda, with her library science background, probably understands more than anyone the importance of documenting where we've come, to help us to better understand and provide direction for the future. So when we hired Linda, and she was brought in approximately [six months] after we were originally funded, we hired her back from another local adult school, back to where the project was originally housed at Hacienda La Puente Adult Education. Linda came on board, and, boy, from the very beginning she was emphatic, "John, it's really important to preserve the past. John, it's really critical." She became appalled when she saw these documents that were simply going by the wayside, lack of organization; and being a librarian-thinking person, she wanted to establish the organization. So the idea was then to begin to assemble all of these materials that never made it to a commercial publisher, teacher-prepared materials, professionally developed materials, project reports, the kinds of things that really would help preserve our tradition and history of adult ed.

MILLER: And, of course, a lot of those had accidentally been discarded.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes.

MILLER: So they had to be re-collected through the various garages

and storerooms. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: Yes. And we think about it, it is sad. That's your tax dollars

and my tax dollars. And so often that's true with projects,

isn't it? We put hundreds of thousands of dollars into

developing these reports, these studies. They go sit on a shelf

and they never get used. So I think the real idea is: let's

make sure that this information is properly organized, is

properly structured, is properly preserved. And not just the

print materials but also the non-print materials, the slides, the

videotapes, the presentations, and let's preserve that for the

future. Today, as a matter of fact, we're establishing a new

project to. . . . Because of the technology, it is now possible

for us to digitize and to make that broadly available to a great

number of people rather than simply housed here in one

location. So it's exciting. I think Linda had a vision for that

part of it. So Linda probably more than anyone was the

impetus for the archives component.

MILLER: Okay, now, we've talked about how you've continued to grow in scope, and so why don't we just talk about the changes as they went through. Why don't we start with the communication system, because it's easy to trace the changes that that's gone through, and then any of the others——as you say, you kind of keep adding services——so that we can get some detail about what you have today.

FLEISCHMAN: The electronic communications component has gone through profound changes.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, the electronic communication component has gone through extremely profound changes. In 1989, the world was very different with electronic communications. We did a survey of the field and we looked at what type of computers they were using, we looked at how many were connected currently to some type of an electronic communication system, how many users were familiar with something called a bulletin board system. And what we found was really rather depressing, that very few people were aware of electronic communications, very, very few had even used anything like a

modem, and of course the numbers of computers were at an extremely low ebb. So we set out to really determine the kinds of features, the kinds of needs, what we would need to do both in terms of training, in terms of technical support, and we looked at how could we best provide an electronic system.

We established a simple ten-point criteria. Here were the ten most important elements that would need to be a part of that system, and these components included something as simple as the ability of the company we used to accept a school purchase order.

MILLER: Important. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: Right, very important. We determined that at that point in time there were three ways to run the system. One was to establish what is known as a BBS, or a bulletin board, on a, at that time, a powerful microcomputer, establish basically a dial-in system throughout the state. Because even the Internet was at a relatively low ebb, so we would have to establish our own statewide dial-up system.

[tape turned off]

The second possibility was to establish a communication

system off of a mainframe computer that was being used at

the Hacienda La Puente School District. And the third

possibility was to lease time on a third-party computer system.

We elected, based upon the criteria that we established and

the needs assessment that was done with the field, to go

ahead and lease time on a commercial system. We selected a

company by the name of CONNECT Incorporated. The

company was established by former employees of Apple who

had originally worked on the development of the Apple Link

communication system. We did talk with many other

companies. One of those that we did speak with was Steve

Case, who is the CEO of, guess, America Online, who now

has eleven million members. Ah, but Mr. Case wanted

$75,000 a year for us to use America Online as the

communication system.

MILLER: That was a bit much. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, right, it wasn't in our grant. So we decided to go ahead

                  and to build the system on this proprietary system. And

                  basically what they did is they gave us direct access to their

                  computer, and then we proceeded to begin to collect

information. We collected course outlines, lesson plans, and we started loading them onto the computer system, organizing them. Then CONNECT Incorporated also provided a proprietary electronic communication system, so that it would allow people to do E-mail, to exchange information, to share their ideas. So it was nice in the beginning because it pretty much had all of the features. It was a graphical user interface system, otherwise known as a gui system, so it was extremely easy for folks to use. And that was very important. They had a statewide system of telephone access numbers, so that most folks would not have to make a toll call in order to access the information and to participate in using the electronic mail. We used the system, I think, very, very successfully for quite a few years, up until approximately 1994.

MILLER: The simplicity of the system was one thing that—

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, I think the beauty of it. Yes, the beauty of it. Because

                remember, we were bringing in adult educators, not

                technically savvy computer experts.

MILLER: Understatement.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, an understatement is true. So it really had all the

                features. It gave us, again, the graphical user interface so

that people had a very intuitive way of getting to information, including a very simple E-mail system. For example, when the users logged on, it actually showed a little picture of an in basket, and if they had mail there was a little graphic representation of a piece of paper in their in basket. So it really allowed us to have a closed system that was extremely easy to use, that accepted purchase orders, that gave us a lot of flexibility in terms of loading information, managing our information. We got regular monthly reports on numbers of use, access, numbers of accesses, level of use, how many people downloaded what files. So it actually provided an excellent system for us, in terms of managing the overall communication, the technical support, but not having to actually own the computer system ourselves. So that really did take a big load off.

The greatest downside was the cost for our users. The cost was $14 a month, which included one hour of usage. For each additional hour of usage, it was $9. So people who wanted to spend a fair amount of time online, the usage bills started growing rather rapidly. So some people were experiencing several hundred dollars a month in usage

because they wanted to download course outlines, lesson plans; and at that time, a top-end 1991 [modem] was a 1200-baud modem. [Chuckling]

MILLER: It took a while. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: It took a while, so it did become problematic. The other problem, of course, is it was a text-based system only. But remember, in 1991 you're still two or three years before even the existence of the [World Wide] Web at that time. It was the best game in town. Do I regret going with that system? Absolutely not. I think it was extremely appropriate. We brought a lot of people along for a number of years. So, for five years, six years, CONNECT Incorporated served us extremely well. Probably the most, as I said, the most prohibitive aspect was the sheer cost.

Well, the world began to change. In 1994, people started hearing about this thing called the Internet, and suddenly it wasn't just for wire heads and universities and think tanks, other people became interested. America Online started to grow. But even at that time America Online was not offering Internet access; it was a proprietary system only. So our users began to ask us, "John, what is this Internet? I

keep hearing more about it." And at that time in 1994, there

was something called Gopher technology. Gopher was what

is known as a client-server technology that allowed people to

use the Internet to share information, and it did it with a text-

based system. So people would log on to a Gopher site and

they would see files and folders, much like we had on

CONNECT Incorporated, but it operated on a more global

system of the Internet rather than a closed system. So we

saw the future and we knew that we would have to begin to

migrate what was OTAN Online to the Internet. So we

began in early 1994 really migrating a lot of our files off of

CONNECT Incorporated and building in essence what was a

parallel system, with the understanding that eventually we

would migrate off the CONNECT Incorporated computers.

And we then, approximately six months later, [made] much of

our information available via a Gopher server. Do you want

me to continue with a little bit of the history?

MILLER: Yes.

FLEISCHMAN: All right, let me kind of run you up to where we are.

Around, and I'm not sure of the exact date, but it was

probably late 1994 and 1995, we began the process of

transitioning off of CONNECT Incorporated onto a fully-Internet-based system. And we looked at the feasibility of rather than using the CONNECT Incorporated computers, of, in essence, running our own complete computer system and our own complete dial-up system, and we began to put that plan in motion. We did that for a number of different reasons: number one was people wanted access to the Internet; number two, we wanted to provide a more reasonable cost for our users; and number three, we wanted to begin to build a revenue stream, so that when the federal dollars were no longer available we would be able to continue the OTAN Project. So, over a period of approximately a year, we began to migrate our system. Now, at the same time, we transitioned our project from one agency to another agency. The fiscal agency up until that period was Hacienda La Puente.

MILLER: Your home school district. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: The home school district, where I'd spent eighteen years of my career. At that time, there was a decision by the State Department of Education that they would prefer our project to be based out of northern California. So we had

approached the administration at the Sacramento County

Office of Education, and Dr. David Meaney was extremely

receptive and really liked the idea of hosting the OTAN

Project. So, at that point we changed the location of the

administration of the project to the Sacramento County

Office of Education, and I believe it was on February of

[1994] we physically moved the project. And at that point we

actually physically moved the Gopher server. We had

purchased that computer. We were operating that Gopher

server from Hacienda La Puente. We literally put it in the

back of a car and drove it up here, and we hired a van and

we moved all of the furniture and desks and all of our

existing computers.

MILLER: How much down time was there involved in the move?

FLEISCHMAN: Actually, because we had a supreme organizer helping us with

the move by the name of Linda West, she did such a

wonderful job that literally it was over a weekend it was done,

and there was almost no down time whatsoever. Our

program, literally without missing a beat, went from one

agency to the next agency. We had done adequate planning

ahead of time. We wired the complete facility at the county

office, with an understanding that we would be building a much more exotic system. So we put in a high-speed local area network [LAN], we had digital phone lines, and we really equipped it properly, and the county office helped us establish a new headquarters for OTAN. So very quickly we were able to resume operation.

MILLER: So that was a major change that's outside the technology part, but still a major change for the project.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, a major change for the project. Then we were still running on the CONNECT system. We had approximately 450 subscribers at that time. We realized that we had to continue that migration. I had heard about something called the World Wide Web about this time. In the latter part of . . . actually mid-1994, the Web was just now beginning. There were only maybe a hundred Web sites throughout the world at that time.

MILLER: It seems like I've been hearing about it much longer than that.

FLEISCHMAN: [Chuckling] I know. Doesn't it seem like it, though? It's hard to believe, because every major business today—

MILLER: No, that's not very long ago.

FLEISCHMAN: Not very long at all. The Web was invented in 1993. The first Web browser came out in 1994. About 1995, a mosaic was developed at the Center for Super-Computers at the University of Illinois. So we finally had a piece of software that people could put on their computers to access information stored on Web servers, people like OTAN who make information available. So we started dabbling with it. We [found], wow, this is great. It is graphical-based, it's easy to use, you can do pictures, you can transmit video, you can transmit various types of media, text, and it's all hypertext-based. This is what we were waiting for! So we immediately put our brains together and said, "Let's make the conversion. Let's move off of CONNECT Incorporated. Let's move all of our files, put it into this format known as HTTP, or hypertext transfer protocol. We will buy and we will manage our own server, and at the same time, let's move all of our users over to the Internet and they will access our server through the Internet. So they'll be able to access not only all of the good information that is available through OTAN and communicate through OTAN, but they will also be able to access information stored on other Web servers.

MILLER: Elsewhere.

FLEISCHMAN: Exactly. So we'll move them off of this closed, proprietary system to a much more open system. And at the same time, we can provide that far cheaper, and still generate a revenue stream to begin to look towards long-term survivability of the OTAN project. So we just did that. And we started with a pilot project with twenty adult schools. We had them dial up OTAN. We ran it for three months. We put in an 800 number so people could access us throughout the state of California. They would dial us on the 800 number, that would drop them into the Internet, and then would allow them to access our information. It was very successful as a pilot project. We provided modems for people and free dial-up access. We worked very closely with them. And after that trial period, we then launched our new product. The folks at CONNECT Incorporated were not very happy. They were not very happy, but we were absolutely thrilled. Within a short period of time, our users went to seven hundred, eight hundred, nine hundred, a thousand. We were quickly up to about twelve hundred users, because we offered a much more viable service.

MILLER:	So it greatly increased your——

FLEISCHMAN:	Increased the number of users, opened it up, made it much more flexible, allowed us to really expand our horizons in terms of the type of information we made available. So we evolved our thinking on how the information was made available. Now, in the past three years the world has changed again. We are now delivering using the World Wide Web as our primary delivery mechanism, but we're delivering many different file types. So we deliver documents as what is known as PDF, portable document format. We deliver streaming audio and streaming video, which is the ability to play audio and video over the Web. We have done a tremendous amount of database integration. For example, all of the course outlines can now be approved electronically. We do surveys through database technology. We have an online database of all of the vendors that distribute instructional technology materials. So we have continued to evolve, using the structure of the World Wide Web, which is one component of the Internet, and we are using many different technologies to deliver it, all in an attempt to make it much more intuitive and easier for our clients to get to the

information. Simultaneously, we developed our own communication system. So we're using the Web to not only deliver our information, but also to allow our users to access, communicate with each other, to access list serves, to access usenets, to do chatting. So it has become a complete, if you will, environment for communication and a complete environment for accessing a variety of different types of information. So we have evolved from a wee beginning in 1989 to where we are here in 1998. In eight years, we have totally changed the technology. But we've evolved it to keep current, to make it available, and to make it easier for our clients to access and communicate information.

MILLER: And it's also the use of the Internet that's making possible the digitizing of the Archives.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, the Archives, correct. So the Internet and how the Internet has evolved, I think we've rode that star. We rode that ascending star, if you will. And not only is it changing the very fabric of commerce in the United States, but it's changing entertainment, it's changing how people access information. And Cuba, by next year, television and the Net will begin to merge, inextricably be tied together. People will

access information in new ways. So, is our thinking changing
and continuing to change? Absolutely. Absolutely. And we
will evolve the OTAN Project as long as we have funding
resources to do that, to make sure that our users—adult
educators, teachers, administrators, support personnel—can
access information and can communicate with each other in
the most intuitive and the most user-friendly ways.

Our objective with the technology is to make the
technology disappear. Because the system is about
information. People always ask me that. They get enamored
with the technology itself. That's not what it's about. It's
about getting information to people. And the reason OTAN
is now receiving 370,000 hits on our Web page per month,
that is unheard-of. That is unheard-of. That's extremely
attractive, [even] for a major commercial enterprise. Because
we have twelve thousand electronic documents, because we
provide an intuitive way to get to that information, we are the
world's premier resource for adult educators. Because that's
what it's about. Our system is only as good as the community
of users, and we've never lost sight of that from CONNECT
Incorporated to where we are with doing sophisticated

database integration via the World Wide Web. The

technology is much more sophisticated, but for the end user it

has gotten easier to use.

MILLER: Simpler to use.

FLEISCHMAN: Simpler. And I think that's reflected in the sheer use of the

number of documents, the number of page views that we have

on our Web site from all over the world.

MILLER: Now, you're still in transition, aren't you, to total Web. . . ?

FLEISCHMAN: Yes. And I guess that . . . you know what? We're always

going to be in transition. [Chuckling]

MILLER: Always.

FLEISCHMAN: There probably will never be a total steady state, if you will,

in terms of the technology. And I think even in any aspect

that any of us deal with in our personal lives, all we can do

with technology is make point-in-time decisions. Match our

resources with what our needs are and make decisions based

on a specific point in time. And that's the only way we can

make good decisions about technology. So, yes, we will

continue to evolve.

The one probably most trying technological challenge

that we've had is integrating the communications component,

the E-mail collaboration component, with the system of how we distribute our information, our lesson plans and course outlines and so on. That technology has changed more slowly. Up until last year, it was not possible to have a single integrated system to really do it effectively, that people would need to use two separate pieces of software. We're currently in that transition. It is possible for someone today to do all of their electronic communication, E-mail collaboration, and access information through the Web, but it is more efficient for us today still to have them do it with two pieces of software. And that's unfortunately where it gets difficult for some of our users. They're looking for the most intuitive way. Our goal is to have it just like TV: turn it on and it works.

MILLER: And there it is. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: [Chuckling] And there it is. So we have evolved, and we are continuing to evolve that one component of our system.

MILLER: But in fact, the changes in that system have fed into the other changes that you've made in the other components.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes.

MILLER: And has given rise to the other changes that have been made.

FLEISCHMAN: Correct.

MILLER: We've mentioned then in the information and reference

services that you're getting ready to digitize. Do you want to

say anything specific about the forum part of the. . . ?

FLEISCHMAN: The forum really represents. . . . You know, we're constantly

looking at helping to define clearly for our users and make it

clear. We realize that our Web site literally had too many

buttons, too many choices, and so it's a constant process of

kind of looking how we make information available to make it

easier for the end user. The forum, if you will, is the core

information that we make available to OTAN Online users.

It represents the electronic information that we've been

collecting for literally eight years: the lesson plans from L.A.

City and local school districts, and calendar information, and

on and on and on. So the forum is an integral part to our

Web-based delivery system, the way we've evolved it from the

CONNECT system to the Gopher system and then ultimately

to the World Wide Web system. And we've just recently

made another transition, where we have taken the many icons

that were on screen and we've simplified them. For example,

we had a separate icon for lesson plans and one for curricular

resources and one for course outlines. Now when you go to

the OTAN forum you'll see a button that says "For Teachers."

So the idea there is that we have evolved the forum again to

a more intuitive system for users to access the information.

MILLER: John, one thing, since this is a part of [the project] that I

have a particular interest in, and was again, in addition to the

[original] project, [is] the oral histories, the historical part of

it. Can you talk just a little bit about the entire oral history

component of the Archives?

FLEISCHMAN: The oral history component of the Archives is really our part

to document the history and the individuals that have changed

adult education in California. As you and I talked earlier,

adult education in California has been created by individuals,

by people. Just like in technology, when I go out to an adult

school and I see an exemplary use of technology, I look for

the person who did it. I don't look for the tools. And it's

always the same thing. The one commonality, if you will, with

technology, and I think the same thing in adult education, is

an individual who has cared, who has made a difference, who

had a vision, who saw something that was needed and helped

changed adult education. The [Oral History Project] is really

our acknowledgement to those individuals that have helped

change adult education in California.

I worked for a man who was my mentor, Thomas

Johnson. He was a very unique——

MILLER: A creative person.

FLEISCHMAN: Very creative. Very creative, very unique. I attribute some

of my thinking and some of the ways I do business literally to.

. . . He was my mentor. He helped me understand and he

gave me the appreciation for what adult ed is about. His

caring and sensitivity, his creative capability, in terms of

bringing people and bringing programs together and matching

them to serve the needs of adult education and adult learners

throughout California. So the Archives to me is a tribute to

those individuals. It documents their experiences, it

documents . . . an important part of the history of adult

education in California. We can look at shelf after shelf of

these reports, these documents, and of these projects——

MILLER: And they're not quite alive. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: Yeah, they're not quite alive. But you know, it was the

people, the individuals who did those projects, who brought

those programs to life, who helped shape adult ed. I look at

John Tibbetts and the work he did, and Dorothy Westby-

Gibson, and what they meant to competency-based education.

I look to Pat[tricia] Rickard and how she has changed our

ability to manage programs and to assess what learners are

using. I look to people like Lynn Savage, who helped

establish a new way of training English as a second language

teachers in California. These are individuals that have really

helped shape adult education in California.[6] So the Archives

are a tribute to that, our document to the future as well. And

now with these new technologies, we can preserve those for

all in the future.

MILLER: Let's talk about your interface with some of the other federal

projects, because much of your third component, the

instructional technology component, does involve working

with other projects, although you have some that you do

yourself.

FLEISCHMAN: Correct.

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[6]John Tibbetts and Dorothy Westby-Gibson were co-directors of three federal projects: California Adult Competency Education (CACE), California Competency Based High School Diploma Project (CALCOMP), and Competency Based Adult Education (CBAE) staff development. Pat Rickard is Executive Director of the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS). Lynn Savage was founding Director of the ESL Teacher Institute and lead author and editor of *ESL Model Standards*.

MILLER: So why don't we move on to the instructional technology

                  component, and then maybe start with what you do yourself

                  and then we'll move into the interface with the other projects.

FLEISCHMAN: The instructional technology component, as we discussed

                  before, is really about helping adult education agencies in

                  California to use technology more effectively, to make

                  informed decisions when bringing new technologies into

                  administration and into the classroom instructional use. As I

                  mentioned earlier, it's extremely difficult when an adult school

                  manager has so many things to do on a day-to-day basis.

                  They're thinking about course outlines and class rolls and

                  sign-ups and registration and community publicity. Many of

                  them just simply don't have the time to really think through

                  the process, which for many is just *overwhelming* when it

                  comes to new technology.

                      So, one of our overriding areas in this is helping

                  agencies with the decision-making process, and through that

                  we guide them through the technology planning process.

                  What are the critical steps that you need to go through?

                  Every day, literally, I get a call from an adult educator:

                  "John, what kind of computers should I buy? Should I get

the Windows 95 with 32 megs of RAM?" And my response

always is the same: "Don't buy the computer. Buy software

that's predicated on the needs of your learners." Determine

what the needs are. Don't do something that's totally

different than what you already do. Use new technology to

extend and expand upon the good education that you already

provide. Assess their needs, determine the competencies.

From those competencies you can make well-informed

decisions on what type of software will address the students'

needs. When you know the type of software, hey, your

decision for hardware is real easy. What does it run on?

How many megabytes of RAM are needed? Does it need a

CD-ROM? Is it available on the Internet? So make software

decisions predicated on the needs of learners.

MILLER: And that's a hard thing for people to understand.

FLEISCHMAN: Oh, yes, it is. Yes, it is.

MILLER: To start there rather than with the equipment.

FLEISCHMAN: Right. And that has almost been my mantra, is to really help

               agencies. So, that is a core part of what we do with the

               component. And I mentioned the other things that we do,

               which is assisting vendors in making decisions, managing a

library, and doing various presentations to acquaint people with new technology. So I'm literally almost every week somewhere in the state doing a presentation, and getting people interested and excited and understanding the potential of new technologies and meeting the needs of adult learners. And the potential is amazing, and yet we are sorely under-utilizing the power of these new technologies. So, as we invest precious tax dollars in buying this new equipment, we must make informed decisions. There's nothing I hate more than going into an adult school and seeing a lab, an expensive $70,000 integrated learning system, that's collecting dust——and I've seen just one too many——because an intelligent process wasn't used when purchasing that lab. Teachers weren't involved, they didn't look at the curriculum, it didn't match their needs. So, yes, I'm on a bandwagon, and it's rolling down the hill, and trying to help. So that's probably core. Now, how has that evolved into our collaboration with other projects? Let me kind of address that.

MILLER: Yeah, we have these other federal projects in the state.

FLEISCHMAN: Well, OTAN is a developmental project. It's a technology project. In some ways we're kind of a think tank. We put

together ideas, but we don't necessarily . . . we're not charged with the ability with providing training, if you will, on a consistent basis. That is the role of the Staff Development Institute. So here was a natural. We evolved through the OTAN Project, through the instructional technology component, a process for doing staff development. We developed forms, we developed guidelines. We did a lot of technology planning. That process was evolved into an ongoing structured workshop training program for Staff Development Institute. They hired some trainers and some writers, they fleshed out the materials, and designed it to be used as part of a staff development training program. So that's one direct collaboration that we have with the Staff Development Institute.

Now, another crossover that we have with all of the 353 projects is using the OTAN technological infrastructure. We have purchased some rather sophisticated equipment, Internet servers. We're currently running four different Internet servers, Sun and UNIX workstations. Powerful quad . . . what are known as quad NT [Windows network software] servers, things that would not make a lot of sense for other

projects to purchase or to establish. So that technology is used to deliver information by the other projects. So one of the things, Staff Development Institute has all of their training information online. Participants can register online. They run their Web site off of the OTAN server. So we've really done a lot to cross over and to use the infrastructure that has been developed by OTAN to serve the communication needs for other projects.

Similarly, the California Distance Learning Project [CDLP], even a stronger crossover with the OTAN Project. We are currently hosting four major student instructional initiatives using OTAN technology to deliver that information. We have a partnership, for example, with CNN, the Northwest Bureau, where we take news stories and rewrite them for instructional delivery. So, through the OTAN technology we're providing direct instruction via the World Wide Web for literally thousands of students, under the auspices of the California Distance Learning Project.

MILLER: Okay, now, who does the rewriting for this? Is that from the Distance Learning Project?

FLEISCHMAN: That is actual staff of the Distance Learning Project.

MILLER: And they've got a staff of people who rewrite the materials

                   for it?

FLEISCHMAN: Correct. So there's staff from the Distance Learning Project.

                   They take the stories as are reported by Greg LeFavre and

                   the bureau correspondents from CNN [and rewrite them for

                   instruction] as part of the partnership. CDLP actually

                   developed a public-private partnership with CNN. And in

                   exchange for unlimited, unrestricted access to the news

                   stories, the project, OTAN, hosts the CNN Web site. Then

                   staff of the Distance Learning Project take those news stories

                   and rewrite them down to other grade levels, to a lower grade

                   level, develop an outline, and develop a variety of

                   comprehension and vocabulary exercises based on that news

                   story. They add sound with the news stories, and it becomes

                   literally a very powerful supplement for traditional instruction

                   in a variety of different areas. And it's being used by adult

                   schools throughout California to supplement traditional

                   instruction, and it's directly via the Internet.

MILLER: I'm kind of surprised that CNN hasn't done a feature that

                   they broadcast on that kind of collaboration.

FLEISCHMAN: [Chuckling] Just last week I had a call from the vice

president of Turner Communications. Of course Ted Turner

owns CNN, and I think they have recognized that this one

Web site is taking thirteen, fourteen thousand hits a day from

all over the world. And as the Web becomes more viable

commercially, I think Turner Communications is realizing this

has some economic viability. So this partnership may have a

short life. [Chuckling] But in the meantime, we've had a

wonderful, wonderful experience.

MILLER: I was hoping that might be a source of future funding for you.

[Laughter]

FLEISCHMAN: Oh, wouldn't that be wonderful. Last week I had a message

. . . and literally every week I get messages from all over the

world because we don't restrict use. It's designed for

California adult learners, but I had a message from the

director of the Rulov Network Center in Moscow, and the

director said, "Thank you so much for providing this literacy

instruction. It is helping me to learn English," because all of

the stories have corresponding audio. And I literally . . .

every day I'm literally getting messages from all over the

world from people that are using it. So lots of anecdotal

information on how it's being used. But here is a partnership between another 353 project, the California Distance Learning Project, utilizing the infrastructure that has been developed with OTAN, and taking advantage of that to then focus their energies more on content, restructuring, instructional design, and so on, to deliver the content. So, again, it's the infrastructure.

Similarly with CASAS. CASAS needed a Web page, and so we began hosting their Web page. We gave them direct access to the server. Now, since then, over the past six months they have evolved it. Because CASAS understands the importance of the Web, they have established their own Web server, so we're no longer hosting the Web server on—

MILLER: But you got them started.

FLEISCHMAN: But we got them started. And likewise we've worked with CASAS on a number of different initiatives. For example, we just put up an adult education survey online. OTAN staff built the survey, CASAS wrote the questions, and we put it up online. In the past, we collaboratively did a project called the Online Action Research Project, and we collaborated together. CASAS did much of the conceptual work, but we

actually constructed the database, the systematic process for collecting the information. So there's been, I think, a very mutually beneficial relationship, where OTAN has formed and has developed a core technological infrastructure, technical capability that has served to benefit the other projects.

MILLER: Hasn't CASAS started experimenting, piloting assessment online as well?

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, they have. They have done a pilot project, as a matter of fact, through the auspices of the Distance Learning Project. CASAS was allocated some resources so that they could experiment in doing some direct Web-based assessment.

MILLER: So that's the three projects working together on that.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, and here is another three-project effort that we're extremely excited about. It's called Teacher Training Online. Staff Development Institute, under their current contract, is charged with implementing alternative ways of doing staff development. You just can't keep sending teachers out to remote parts of . . . trainers out and training teachers. As you know, there's high turnover among staff. So, a more effective way of doing teacher training, of using distance

learning to do teacher training, is part of the current contract.
The Staff Development director, Joan Polster, came to me
and wanted to explore the feasibility of doing Web-based
instruction. Well, that's an area that through our partnership
with the Distance Learning Project we've been exploring, and
together as a collaborative among the Distance Learning
Project, Staff Development, and OTAN—all three of our
efforts—all three of the projects put in resources, all aligned
with our contract deliverables, but mutually together we have
developed a prototype and now have operational our first
course of Teacher Training Online. We have a course
training adult educators on implementing family literacy
programs. So that is now up and running as of about one
month ago, and we're now doing everything from registering
teachers to tracking their progress, to doing assessment, to
providing streaming audio and video. It's very exciting, and
this is truly a project that couldn't have happened without the
infrastructure of all three projects.

MILLER: And John, I also wanted, in terms of discussing the other
projects, certainly impact on the other projects. There has
also been an impact on the way the Adult Ed Unit operates.

Now, for one thing, when you were talking about how the

three different projects can work together to do something,

that obviously requires the support of the department,

because that might not have been a part of your original . . . I

mean the contract that you're operating under now. And yet

they give you the flexibility to. . . .

FLEISCHMAN: We've had enough flexibility. Under the Distance Learning

Project, the clear charge there was to experiment, explore

new ways of delivering information. So there was some

flexibility built into the objective.

MILLER: That's the project that has that kind of—

FLEISCHMAN: Correct. OTAN and SDI, a lot more structured. We have

twelve very specific objectives that we're currently delivering,

but within that we have a little bit of wiggle room that would

allow us to reallocate some of our resources to doing these

kinds of activities, enough wiggle room that it didn't require

going back and amending the existing contract. And a lot of,

again, what OTAN has done is provide the technical

infrastructure, which is something that we have made

available. So it's a matter of using our existing computers,

utilizing the sophisticated software that have already been

developed, and pretty much just kind of repurposing that. So

it's not really taken a tremendous amount of resources from

OTAN to deliver teacher training online. It's been more

direct resources contributed by Staff Development Institute,

which would be developing the actual content. They've hired

the two family literacy experts to develop the content and to

do the actual HTML, which is taking the content and

converting it to an online delivery system. And the California

Distance Learning Project, which has provided some of the

necessary resources to make that happen.

MILLER: I do want you to address, however, the impact of your project

on the way the Adult Ed Unit does business, because they

took training there too. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: Yes. Folks in K-12 within the department look over to

OTAN and I think their jaws drop.

MILLER: They're jealous.

FLEISCHMAN: They're jealous, yes. [Chuckling] I wasn't going to use that

word, but they're jealous, and I think we've had the flexibility.

Bureaucracies exist. And maybe because K-12 is a much

more structured type of environment and there are much

more approval kinds of processes, and just the very nature of

how the beast, if you will, has evolved that it has not allowed

for the kind of aggressive movement to embrace the new

technologies, to communicate and use these new technologies.

So, through the vision of the department and through the

good thoughts of the strategic plan and the folks that were

involved in that process, we created this vision. And we had

these federal dollars to allow us to make these kinds of

changes. The department also embraced these changes for

their day-to-day operations, because they knew that they're

dealing with a geographically dispersed group that they need

to deal with. It's not like K-12: there's a superintendent,

there's high school principals, you know who to go to, how to

get things done. And here you've got multiple agencies,

multiple people at different levels. So the only way, I think,

was to explore new ways of [communicating]. Much as it

served to meet the needs of the field, it's also served the

needs of the department and the employees in the

department that have oversight over implementing these

federal programs; [it] has allowed consultants who have

responsibility for a region to communicate with that region.

It has allowed them to communicate among each other to

share information. Some of our most active users of OTAN are department consultants and managers. They use it as a way to share information. I regularly get E-mail messages from most of the consultants and most of the managers, and they know that that is the best way for us to communicate and to share information. Bill Gates, the forty-billion-dollar man, he runs his organization with E mail. That's how he communicates with his frontline managers. If it can work for Bill Gates, it certainly can work very effectively with the Department of Education in California.

MILLER: So, like a field consultant then could set up a group address to send the same message to all of his agencies, instantaneously.

FLEISCHMAN: Correct. And they all get that. As you know, the system is designed so that we have a news area of OTAN. So when funding information is announced, it goes to the news area, and all of the users. . . . So anyone from the department. . . . Of course, we've restricted that group broadcasting feature because we don't want everyone sending out——

MILLER: You don't want me sending out a group broadcast.

[Laughter]

FLEISCHMAN: No. So it is restricted to a few key employees here at OTAN, and to a few key employees of the Department of Ed. But typically they will run most of that through us anyway, and they will ask us, "Will you send out this new funding announcement, or this new survey information?" So almost every day there is a news message. It really functions well for the department to immediately communicate with the field and provide information for most all adult education programs throughout California. So not only is it communication among each other with the projects, but also communication with the field itself. So I think it's really served over the years as a way to really change how they communicate, how they share information. It allows them to get things done in a different and much more efficient process.

MILLER: I know that it's now possible for agencies to file their course lists.

FLEISCHMAN: A-22s.

MILLER: The A-22s. Form A-22, which is their approved course list, via OTAN. Have they reached the point that any other official reports are going in, like year-end reports on their 321

grants and things of that kind? Are they allowing that to be

filed electronically?

FLEISCHMAN: It's taken a long time to get where we are today. Remember,

there's a certain discomfort, if you will, with many individuals

when you start using cyberspace and electronic means for

moving documents. When we first put A-22s online, it made

a lot of adult school folks nervous. They needed something

in their hands. They needed some kind of validation. So we

had literally returned to them an electronic signature by Peter

Wang [Consultant, Adult Education Unit] to verify that this

document was received. Here is your paper, print it out and

keep it on file. So we're moving very, very cautiously and

very carefully. However, now that we've implemented a

number of reporting systems beyond A-22, we are now

aggressively moving to do just that——to establish online

databases for year-end reporting, the J-19, various kinds of

reports that are required both for federal reporting, for state

reporting——now that the technology is secure, it is safe, and

we have built in numerous redundancy systems that make it

extremely protected in terms of backups. So yes, it just takes

a while to change the system, to go from paper and hard copy to bits and bytes that move through the wires.

MILLER: We can probably look forward to the day that . . . if these baby steps that are being taken by the Adult Ed Unit, if they work, that the entire department. . . .

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Session 2, March 6, 1998]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

MILLER: So, can we look forward to the day that if these first steps

being taken by the Adult Ed Unit to collect official reports

electronically, if they're successful, do you think the rest of

the department may be willing to try online data collection?

FLEISCHMAN: I think so. I think because of the success of OTAN in

establishing a method of using the Internet and with the

technology to collect information throughout California, I

think we're in some ways paving the way for the rest of the

department to collect information.

I think one example is that the county office here in

Sacramento, since the OTAN project, has received a separate

[CDE] contract to establish a comprehensive Web site for the

Special Education Division. As a part of that Web site, we're

taking the legacy databases, which are data that has been

collected over the past fifteen years, that was part of

something called Special Net. . . . It was hosted by GTE and it was a statewide electronic system to distribute information. But as the world has changed and the Internet has come along, it is no longer a proprietary system. GTE was not interested in coordinating it anymore, so the department approached us, based upon our work with OTAN, and asked if we would then convert that technology into a Web-based technology and to enhance and embellish. And we've done just that. We've integrated a number of database technologies. One example is a calendar where anyone throughout the state can put in information related to special education training and events. That is then screened by someone at the Department of Education who then approves and posts that information onto the Internet.

Another excellent example is a jobs database, so that any district in the state of California who has an opening for special education can post the job. They put in their CDS code, they put in all the background information and appropriate links, they click on a button, it waits until someone at the department logs on as the administrator, approves or denies, and maybe calls to get more information,

and then posts it live. So then anyone, not only in California but throughout the world, can then go in and search that database by county, by type of specialty. So they have really kind of a specialized database now for posting and for recruiting teachers. And I think it's just a matter of time now until it evolves more into malleable data.

MILLER: Into other. . . .

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, and I think that's the wonderful thing about the Web is its ability to aggregate information over distance. And what has been such a problematic area for us is accountability, and this is the age of accountability now, not only very focused in adult ed, but certainly all areas. As the legislature puts more money into education, they want to know what happens with those dollars. So here we have a technology that can do this. And I think OTAN has been instrumental in kind of paving the way and, in essence, creating a vision, if you will, for the department. The department is now running Gold Mine, which is a comprehensive Web site, and not a lot of database integration yet, but that's coming. And I think that's what's very, very exciting about OTAN is we've had the resources. We've had a very focused, targeted group that we're delivering

to, and it was kind of the marriage of those two elements, and probably also because we're outside of K-12. We were not under the microscope, if you will, and we were not being scrutinized for anything and everything as it is with K-12, with standards and testing and assessment and so forth.

MILLER: So you've had the freedom to run a true pilot and play around to see what you could do and not do, and they can build on your success.

FLEISCHMAN: Absolutely. So I think that has benefitted the department.

MILLER: Yes, that's good. John, at the beginning of the interview I had asked you about a technology profile of our adult schools in the state in 1990. Now, we've been talking about eight years of increasingly more sophisticated technology. Just in brief, what do you think that state profile for our adult schools would look like today in 1998?

FLEISCHMAN: It was a different world in 1990 than it is in 1998. Back then a 386 was a very powerful machine, a 350-baud modem was considered a very fast modem. One megabyte of RAM was an unheard-of amount of RAM. Typically it was less than a megabyte. And now we wouldn't consider today using anything less and purchasing a machine with less than 32

megabytes of RAM. Of course, every machine we buy today

has a CD-ROM. CD-ROMs were unheard-of back in 1990.

They were available, but there was very little software. It

made no sense to buy those kinds of things. Monitors, we

were still using mostly monochrome monitors. Now it's color.

So the world has changed so much. And again, if we look to

Moore's Law. . . . He was one of the co-founders of Intel,

and according to Moore's Law, every eighteen months the

power of the computer doubles and the cost halves. And

that's really held true, even accelerated in some cases beyond

that. So, because of that, because the cost is a lot cheaper,

because the software is out there, because computers are now

so well entrenched and accepted, and so many people now

use computers as part of their jobs, it's changed every aspect

of our lives. So the sheer numbers of computers in adult

schools have increased dramatically. Where we didn't have

labs, we didn't have lots of computer labs back in 1990, in

most adult schools you go in today, you will see a computer

lab. Matter of fact, in many of them you will see multiple

labs. Even in the smaller adult schools you will see

computers in most classrooms now. We're just now beginning

to see the real influx of the technology into English as a second language, which, as you know, is where the explosion is.

MILLER: It's the exploding field here.

FLEISCHMAN: It is the exploding field. And I think again a lot of it [is] because the software is now available. Where there was a real dearth of software in 1990, there are a lot of excellent programs for basic literacy, basic language instruction. There are integrated learning systems today that have been designed for adult learning, where there was nothing in 1990. So the sheer availability of the technology is much greater, but the need for training, the need for support, the need for planning—

MILLER: Is even still greater.

FLEISCHMAN: It is still greater, yes.

MILLER: What overall impact then. . . . I mean, if the schools have bought into the technology and they have their labs and they're making much more use of it, what overall impact then do you think that the project has had, and continues to have, on adult ed in this state? And here I'm thinking in terms of

level of use of the project. And not only level of use but

perhaps quality of use of project products.

FLEISCHMAN: That's a broad question. I think we've had impact in a

number of different areas. I think one of the major areas of

impact that OTAN has had on the use of technology in adult

education in California is to hold out a vision, to kind of, if

you will, point in the direction of what could be. That by

constantly pushing the envelope, I think real change happens

in a lot of local agencies by an individual, by a small group,

and it's by rallying the troops around what can be. Real

change with technology starts with a vision, and I don't care

whether that's in a classroom or whether that's at a school site

or an agency site, or at a state level site or a national site.

Real change with technology starts with a vision. From that

vision you can then begin to define a plan and how to achieve

that vision. But it's holding that out there in front of you. So

I think OTAN since 1989 when we were first funded, I think

we've held out that vision of what technology can be. We

have primarily focused on the role of electronic

communication and collaboration. And of course, who would

have known that so much of what we are today. . . . I mean,

it's unbelievable, isn't it, when you think about it, that in 1989

this stuff didn't exist. The Internet was a small part. Some

folks out there knew that it had potential, but

nobody—nobody—could have guessed that multi-multi-

billion-dollar companies a few short years later would be

created out of nothing, that didn't exist, based on this new

communication technology called the Internet. So I think we

were at the right place at the right time. We created

something that was very unique, and I think, because of that

vision, we pulled a lot of programs along with us.

OTAN has also served to help structure intelligent

planning and to push the envelope on really making

administrators aware that technology just doesn't happen by

itself, that it does require forethought, it does require

planning, it does require an understanding of your internal

and your external resources and how those resources come

into play. So I think OTAN has had that role in helping

adult educators come to grips with the necessity of doing the

planning, of the necessity that decision making is not a real

simple task, and simply bringing computers into a program is

not going to make a difference. And there are a lot of

naysayers with new technologies, and many agencies have

eliminated other very effective programs in order to buy labs.

And this can sometimes be very, very negative, because if they

don't do the proper planning it's not going to be that

effective.

MILLER: And the computer is never going to replace the teacher

anyway.

FLEISCHMAN: No, never.

MILLER: It's how she uses the equipment as a tool for instruction.

FLEISCHMAN: That's really what it's about, is that the technology in adult

education will allow us to extend, to enhance what we do

already, to reach to new populations, to do things differently,

to free up the adult education teacher to do more strictly

human endeavors that we can do better as humans. There's

nothing that's going to change that. The instructor still is the

most important and the most key ingredient. Even as we

move more into distance learning in the next century, it's still

going to be. . . . The teacher's role is still critical as the

controller, the planner, and—

MILLER: Giving feedback, conducting the assessment, and so on.

FLEISCHMAN: Absolutely.

MILLER: Can you give us some ballpark figures on the level of use of

                  OTAN?

FLEISCHMAN: Certainly. OTAN today, in terms of sheer numbers, is really

                  phenomenal. Last month, February of 1998, we received

                  370,000 hits on our server. So, in terms of information that's

                  being accessed, if you will, electronic information that's being

                  accessed off of the OTAN Web server, upwards of twelve,

                  thirteen, fourteen thousand documents are now available

                  electronically through the Web site. So, in terms of sheer

                  numbers, the access is phenomenal.

                  However, we do not have what I would consider a real

                  strong handle on what exactly happens with that information

                  when it gets down to the user. What do they do? Do they

                  download? What do they do with that information they

                  download? We keep very, very close track of all of our

                  telephone calls, of all of our reference support service that we

                  provide, and every year we've done . . . or twice a year,

                  actually, we do a random sampling and mailing. A significant

                  number, about three hundred surveys go out. We just

                  completed a mailing now. And in essence that is a survey,

                  and we attempt to endeavor to find out what people actually

do with that information. It certainly is not a scientific approach, but we do get back information, and that's reflected in our biannual reports that we complete of what basically people do with that information, what their priority is, how many, and what percentage, for example, go to the calendar information or use the course outlines and lesson plans.

MILLER: Your data collection does that also, doesn't it? I mean your electronic data collection, in terms of which parts of the forum are open.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, it does. We run a program called Webtrends, which gives us more information than frankly we can even utilize. It tells us exactly where people start at the Web site, what pages they go through, how long they stay on each Web page, if they download anything. It tells us, matter of fact, so much information that really it's more. . . . Like I said, it's more than we can possibly use, but it does help us to kind of redirect our data collection efforts. So, if we know that consistently people are going to the calendar, we're going to put more emphasis on putting calendar information. If we know consistently they're going to look at ESL software, then we'll put more of an emphasis on putting ESL software

evaluations online. So it helps redirect our data collection efforts, which of course is a major part of what we do with OTAN—getting good information and putting that information online.

MILLER: And, of course, some of the areas of the forum are strictly information, but then there are the parts like the course outlines and lesson plans, that one could almost make a jump and assume that they're being put to a different use than just picking up a bit of information.

FLEISCHMAN: Correct, and that's really reflected. Because again we have lots of calendar information, we have lots of curricular information, so it really covers the gamut. Some people again do come in specifically for only one aspect, but a lot of the instructional personnel will come in for the more core information. As much as possible, too, we're beginning to move that information into databases. So, for example, all [abstracts] of the holdings of the regional centers, [and] abstracts of our collections here at the central office are all in a database. So it simplifies [access] for the end user. And as I mentioned earlier, we're really constantly looking at ways of how can we make it easier for people to get to the

information they need? Our mantra more than anything over this past year is: keep it simple. Keep it very, very simple. Technology can quickly get overly complex, and adult educators who are busy with their day-to-day business don't have time to really go in. So it's keeping it simple, letting them get specifically to what they need when they need it.

MILLER: Since you electronically pick up the quantitative data, is the evaluation that you're going through now concentrating on the qualitative impact?

FLEISCHMAN: That's correct. We understood, we know that we've been at this for a number of years and we have done a very consistent process of an internal evaluation, and we did some very . . . what I consider lightweight external evaluations early on in the project. No real strong emphasis was put on a major external evaluation since we've really gotten going with the World Wide Web and distributing information on a very broad basis using the electronic technology to do that. So we put out a request for applications about six months ago, and we received six applications back in. We awarded the contract to Abt and Associates, which is a Maryland-based research firm with a strong background in evaluating adult

education programs. And they have been, and will conduct over the full two years of this current contract, an in-depth evaluation, looking both at the quantitative kinds of numbers, the kinds of things that we've done in the past, but also extensively at the qualitative: what do people do with the information? So, at this point now we've gone through a lot of the quantitative aspects, and now we're really going extensively into the qualitative. There will be a whole series of interviews. We will be meeting, and evaluators will be talking and doing telephone interviews and on-site interviews both with the department and with major adult schools. And not just with the users, but more than anything we also want to know, those that don't use the system regularly——

MILLER: Why not. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: Why not, exactly. Because that will help us redirect. As a matter of fact, I had a message from Judy Alamprese, who is the principal investigator for the project, just last night and she was posing some of those questions: do we want to do kind of a redirection of the project midstream and kind of evaluate that? And absolutely, you bet. So, based upon these initial qualitative interviews, why do people sign for OTAN

and why aren't they using it on a regular basis? What are the barriers? And then yes, we will redirect our efforts. So, in essence, it's almost like doing some . . . we'll be able to really actualize some of that research as it's taking place.

MILLER: Will that evaluation be going through all of the anecdotal records that you've collected on users?

FLEISCHMAN: [Chuckling] I hope so. Why not?

MILLER: You had mentioned that you have a large file.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, an incredibly large file of anecdotal information. I do think that's part of it. That is part of the evaluation. I mean, that's real people who are using the information that's changing the way they do things, and they feel strongly enough about it that they take the time to write us, okay? And most of these are unsolicited anecdotal information. It's not part of the biannual survey that we do, it's unsolicited information. And to me that's real valuable information. It's just like that story I told you previously about our new trainer who was down at the Merced Adult School and one of the teachers came up and [told] what OTAN has meant to them to help keep them connected, feeling a part of the whole, made the difference with them in becoming an adult

education professional. So those are the kinds of things that

probably are the most meaningful to me, honestly. But yeah,

statistically and research-wise, when we send our information

in to ERIC, and part of the record and the history of what

OTAN, and yes, the millions of dollars that we've spent on

this effort, I want to really have that documentation. I want

to be able to also write up some professional journal articles

to really document what we've done, to hopefully benefit

others in education, just like the impact we've had on the

Department of Ed. We've done things that are just now

being explored nationally. Yes, there are other networks, but

this has been, I think, relatively unique. Certainly in the area

of adult education it has been very, very unique, and in many

ways, somewhat unique for all of education.

MILLER: In terms of the impact that you've made on the state, I

understand that it hasn't been too long ago, whether it was six

months or within the past year, that you gave individual

agencies training on setting up their own Web sites.

FLEISCHMAN: That's correct. One part of the Internet is the ability for

everyone to publish, the ability for everyone to make

information available. And I think it's critical that agencies

be given that power, if you will, to be able to distribute their own information on a smaller basis. I think everyone can now publish. Just like with PageMaker and the laser printer. That technology lets everyone make newsletters, [so] now we have the ability to basically allow everyone to publish information. So most adult schools are starting with simply putting their brochures online, and some adult schools are putting up registration forms for their avocational classes. I think it needs to be put in perspective. Simply because you can put up a Web page doesn't necessarily mean you should put up a Web page. [Laughter] And what happens is most people don't realize the sheer effort. Now, certainly what we're doing with OTAN has a very direct purpose. We're distributing curricular and calendar information that helps people making decisions, and it's a very, very focused effort. But simply putting an adult school brochure online, and if your primary target population is non-English proficient, who are not connected to the Internet, does it really make sense? So most adult schools do now have a presence, because the administrators felt it was important: "We've got to have our Web page up."

MILLER: Do you know how many do have Web pages?

FLEISCHMAN: I would say upwards probably of 150 to 175 adult schools now

                   have Web pages.

MILLER: Okay, between 30 and 40 percent of the adult schools in this

                   state.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes. And the depth of those Web pages range from an

                   equivalent of a three-fold brochure to literally their entire

                   course catalog online. So it really ranges. And some are

                   actually beginning to explore now other areas of using the

                   Internet aggressively in the classroom. Some of the

                   community colleges, for example, Rancho Santiago

                   Community College has made a real strong effort to now

                   actually have students publish Web page information and get

                   actively involved and communicate and collaborate. So we're

                   going to see a lot more of that, too.

MILLER: And when you mention Rancho Santiago, that's one of the

                   community colleges that has primary responsibility for adult

                   ed.

FLEISCHMAN: Correct.

MILLER: So that you're speaking of the adult ed portion of the

                   community college.

FLEISCHMAN: That's what I mean. That's correct.

MILLER: Okay, I just wanted to clarify that. John, I know that you're

active at the national level, in addition to your state activities.

What do you think OTAN's impact has been outside of

California?

FLEISCHMAN: I think OTAN's impact has been significant outside of

California. I think again, because of the pioneering work that

we did here in California, it has been an impetus for the

United States Department of Education to create a similar

type effort. I think it has also been an impetus for the

National Institute for Literacy to create a similar type effort.

Unfortunately, I would hope that we could have a stronger

ability to articulate those efforts, but because of turf

boundaries, politics, sometimes it's not as realistic.

MILLER: So there is no formal coordination between the other—

FLEISCHMAN: No, only informal. Only on an informal basis. Again,

because of our work, because of our ability to connect the

sheer number of schools that we connected and we could

demonstrate that were actively participating in the

communication system, actively participating in getting

information available online and using it as a way to exchange

data, I think it has been seen well beyond California. You

and I both know California is unique, in terms of its

infrastructure to support adult ed——and by *infrastructure* I

mean money. Money to support adult ed. California puts

close to a half a billion dollars a year into adult ed.

MILLER: The largest publicly funded adult system in the country.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes. So most states can only kind of look in awe and dream

about the day that they might have the degree of connectivity,

the level of interconnectivity, the number of folks actively

participating in a statewide type system. So I think again

we've kind of been a model and we've kind of shown the

direction, hopefully. Certainly it's not the answer, and

certainly as technology evolves there will be a new way of

doing things and different ways of doing things. But certainly

I think we've been a pioneer for the rest of the country.

MILLER: Is there any way. . . . Well, I'll start with this other question

first. How many subscribers do you have outside of

California?

FLEISCHMAN: Approximately 10 percent. I would estimate about 150

maybe. Between 125 and 150 are outside of California, and

that's again just a guesstimate. Now, remember those are . . .

when you say subscribers, those are people that are using the electronic mail, kind of the private parts of OTAN. Do remember that most of our Web information that we make available is public domain. So the things that are private that you must have a membership for, a subscription for, is the E-mail, the collaboration with other people on the E-mail system, and it is the parts of the Web site that are really California-specific. So that would be the calendar information, things relating to the California Department of Education, and so on.

MILLER: Our state legislation.

FLEISCHMAN: Exactly, but it does not include the broad area. So all of the things that we have collected from adult schools around California and well beyond are all publicly available. So when I say 370,000 hits per month, of course a majority of those, *a majority of those* are beyond California, and a significant number are beyond the borders of this country. We have vast numbers coming in from France, Japan, Belgium, Korea. Matter of fact, if we were to go in and look at the country list, probably 120 countries regularly visit the OTAN Web site.

MILLER: You actually get a country list in your data collection?

FLEISCHMAN: Oh yes. Yes, we do. [Chuckling] Yes, we do. Matter of fact, I'm going to print you out a copy of just last month's trends so you can see the phenomenal amount of data that we're able to collect.[7]

MILLER: Okay, we'll include that at the conclusion of the . . . as an appendix.

FLEISCHMAN: I hope we can. I think it's really fascinating to show the impact that I think this project has had well beyond the borders of California. Of course, the funds for this project are designed to support California, so our interest has really not been to serve those beyond California. Our interest is to improve adult education. This is a California 353 project designed to address our goals here in California and our State Plan. Now, I think it's wonderful that others have benefitted. I think that's our contribution to the rest of the country and the rest of the world, and that's great.

MILLER: Well, I think it's also really kind of the idea behind the federal demonstration projects, to see what could work someplace else. And even though a lot of the information is

[7]A sample of selected categories of data is in Appendix I.

specific to California, the fact that it could be transported

someplace else fulfills the federal purpose of the project.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, it does.

MILLER: So that's very good. Okay, John, I think that all project

personnel have anxiety attacks as they think about the future,

but I'd like for you to pull out your crystal ball and tell us

what you see is the future for OTAN. Federal funding is

always iffy. We never know how long it's going to last, so. . . .

FLEISCHMAN: That's quite true. Having been an adult educator now for . . .

oh, it's coming up on twenty-five years. . . . Oh, my goodness.

[Chuckling] My first years . . . I have been on projects for

twenty-three of those twenty-five years, yet I am by nature a

very security-minded person, and so there is always a degree

of anxiety. The wonderful thing about being in a position to

manage and direct a project like this is that it is so terribly

unique. It offers both just an absolute sheer excitement of

being able to create something where nothing existed, to be

able to serve people and adult educators in new and different

ways, and that is an absolute joy that just cannot be replaced.

I mean, it's a professional experience that is marvelous. It

cannot be replaced by anything else. It's wonderful to be the

classroom teacher, but it's really wonderful to be able to

create things on a broader scale.

MILLER: To be in a position to make change happen.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, it really is. It really is. And along with that goes, of

course, the downside, which is all projects have a life. And

actually, yeah, that's kind of what I would like to see. If we

have accomplished something and we have met our goal, and

it is doing what it needs to do, then either it needs to be

institutionalized, incorporated, or if we have met a specific

goal and we've done something and accomplished something.

Now, obviously a communication collaboration system is

something that needs to continue to live. Should it

continually be supported by special project monies? Probably

not. Should it develop ways to generate revenue and

maintain some kind of an infrastructure? Yes. And that is

the direction that we've taken the project. We have directed

it towards [the capability of maintaining] a revenue stream;

therefore, the subscriber, the membership if you will, [may

have to support the services]. We knew day one this project

would close. We knew from day one we were going to build

something that was unique, that was special. And it's only

been reinforced over the years that we are building something

unique, that has value, that is special, and that needs to

continue to serve adult educators in California. Today, if the

federal funding did disappear, we could generate enough of a

revenue stream to continue to run this project. Now, not to

the degree——

MILLER: To maintain it.

FLEISCHMAN: To maintain it. Let me qualify that. Remember, OTAN is

more than a communications system. We maintain libraries,

we do technical support, we do technology planning. So we

[could] have enough of a revenue stream to, in essence,

employ a core staff: a technical person that could support

users, a person to probably collect and process information,

and someone to handle the books. We'll probably end up

being a three-person staff instead of an eleven-, twelve-person

staff, and that's basic. So we wouldn't be able to provide the

field training, the level . . . and it would be a lean business.

But we could continue to support this electronic system.

MILLER: You could keep the calendar up-to-date, you could——

FLEISCHMAN: Correct, correct. Yes. And you know what? That's the same

thing that the commercial world is struggling with: how do

we maintain a Web site once we put it up? This is the golden

age. Everyone is putting up a Web site——every newspaper,

every magazine, every business imaginable but no one has

really figured out quite how to maintain and how to generate

revenue. Now some are, and many folks say this going to be

a multi-billion-dollar business, but how else? Now, once we

are no longer under the state-funded auspices, well, then we

need to kind of get commercial. And some people might

look at us and say, "Yuck!" But I've been approached I don't

know how many times, Cuba, by publishers, "Can't I please

pay you to put my information on OTAN? How much money

do you want? We'd love to pay you. Let me put an ad up

for my book. Let me put some sample materials on and we'll

pay you a monthly fee."

MILLER: So that would be another source for maintaining the system.

FLEISCHMAN: Another source of revenue, yes, so subscribers——

MILLER: A good one. A good one, actually.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, I think so too. So that is part of our American way, and

                 I think if we're going to maintain a system like this. . . . But I

                 feel good about that. So I feel good that I know now what

                 would . . . or what might OTAN evolve into? I know exactly

what OTAN is going to evolve into. We're going to move
into different new directions that will move beyond this more
closed fear, if you will, of folks that we work with. We're
going to move definitely into distance learning. And that's
part of our efforts right now, collaborative efforts with the
other 353 projects, is to develop and refine a system for
training teachers via the World Wide Web.

MILLER: Yeah, you had mentioned that you're working with SDI on
that.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, SDI and the Distance Learning Project.

MILLER: And the Distance Learning Project, on the instructional part
of it.

FLEISCHMAN: The second thing we're going to move into is direct
instruction for learners. It may not be that we build it all, but
we need to be in a position to guide publishers. We'll never
have the resources to do what's necessary, but hopefully
OTAN can play a role in being influential on new Web-based
learning. That will evolve. There's no question in my mind, it
will evolve. The very nature of a television will change into a
much more interactive instrument. And that is our entree
into the adult functional illiterate's home. Those with limited

English proficiency, the first thing that those folks buy, those new immigrants, is a television. So we will have a new way. So I'm convinced, and whether it's five years from now or ten years from now, what OTAN will evolve into is providing that.

And another thing we'll evolve into is we will hopefully expand our sphere of agencies. We are moving into again a collaborative environment with new legislation on the horizon—whether it's this year, next year, the year after where adult education will be part of an overall system. We will need to collaborate better with job training agencies, social service agencies, Employment Development Department. So, hopefully, the other thing that we're doing here with OTAN is we're really looking at how can we couple this technology with multiple social service agencies to effectively not only provide information, training, communication—not only for the provider but also for the client that may have multiple disabilities, if you will—in terms of reentering the workforce, increasing literacy. Because there are many barriers.

MILLER: You know, John, you were talking about publishers

                     approaching you wanting to . . . and it reminds me of the

                     public/private collaboration that produced *Crossroads Cafe*.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes.

MILLER: So there's no reason that there couldn't be that kind of

                     public/private collaboration to maintain this system and to

                     deliver instruction through it.

FLEISCHMAN: I agree. We work within bureaucracies, and that's one of my

                     frustrations with this entire project. [Laughter] There are

                     many things—

MILLER: How did you know what my next question was? [Laughter]

FLEISCHMAN: That was a leader into it. Honestly, that has been probably

                     one of the greater frustrations with the entire project, is I've

                     seen things that I think: well, this is just common sense, we

                     need to move in this direction. But it doesn't fit regulations.

                     And I do realize, I understand regulations. These funds come

                     from the federal government. There are certain guidelines,

                     they can only be administered in a certain fashion, they must

                     be delivered in a certain fashion. But it has created—

MILLER: But the feds bought off on the public seed money for

                     Crossroads Cafe.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes. Okay, and likewise with the Distance Learning Project, which as you know we've been actively involved with in supporting the infrastructure for that. We've done several public/private partnerships. Our partnership with CNN, for example, is a public/private partnership that's been sanctioned by Delaine Eastin [California Superintendent of Public Instruction]. OTAN delivers the CNN Web site, in essence, the OTAN equipment. Now, it's done under the public/private partnership with the Department of Education and spearheaded by the Distance Learning Project. But in essence, the CNN Web site really is operated in conjunction with OTAN. So we in essence are delivering a private Web site. But, in exchange—and that's the most important part—we are getting unlimited, unrestricted access to using CNN stories for literacy lessons. So there is a definite clear-cut very mutually beneficial exchange, and that's what a public/private partnership is all about. And likewise if we were to move . . . but putting up commercial advertisements is a little bit different.

MILLER: Yes, it is.

FLEISCHMAN: Yeah, but I think that would be an exchange. Our users would have to put up with viewing advertising from the Web pages, which we see a lot of them now. But that is a primary source of revenue. *The* primary source for people that run Web pages today is Web page ads. That's how people are generating revenue.

MILLER: And of course as long as you could limit ads to adult learning-related. . . .

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, right. Exactly. That would kind of be something that. . . . Assuming we were no longer federal- or state-funded, that would be something [we could do with] some guidelines. And that probably would be one of the policies that we would establish. We would not accept advertisements from inappropriate—

MILLER: Well, just as the software that you collect, which is commercial, is all adult-related.

FLEISCHMAN: Right. There are so many questions related to that, so many questions. But going back to the original question, there are both wonderful joys of running a special project like this, and then there are also some real heartaches in running a project like this. Probably the greatest one is just running headlong

into the bureaucracy, the bureaucracy of administering a
project like this, not only through the local fiscal agent but
also the bureaucracy in terms of state mandates, which
represent a significant—

MILLER: State contract.

FLEISCHMAN: State contracting process, regulatory information, and so on.
You try and do things that are unique, that are different, and
typically when you're running a program this size, it just
brings a lot of attention. So you're constantly under the
microscope, being looked at: are you following the
regulations in this pattern and doing this in this fashion? And
when you're trying to make change, it's difficult when you
operate within a very structured, confined space.

MILLER: And, John, does that come mostly from the control agencies?
Have the Adult Ed Unit personnel given you support and
help in trying to do that?

FLEISCHMAN: Absolutely.

MILLER: What's the role of the Unit here?

FLEISCHMAN: Yeah, in any bureaucracy there are, if you will, the bean
counters and the program people. And program people in
general have been incredibly, incredibly supportive, and

they're looking to change, they're looking to the future. But typically the more frustration has arisen with the bean counters. And I understand the very important role that they play.

MILLER: Working with public money, we have to have them.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, working with public money. Yeah, I'm a taxpayer and I don't want my tax dollars misused either. But that again is one of the frustrations. There is no other way around that. So you work within the system. We work within the system. I've learned how to work in that system. We've taken OTAN to where it is because we've done what we've had to by working in the system. Yes, I would have liked to have done things differently, but, yes, it would have been inappropriate. That's part of the structure we operate programs like this in.

MILLER: Okay, this falls within the same general area, but perhaps looking beyond OTAN now, the other projects that are in existence now, and as you indicated, you've worked with projects most of your professional life. Do you have any just general comments about or recommendations for these special projects in California? Can you globalize them?

FLEISCHMAN: I think we have been on a good trend, in terms of the major projects. We're continuing to focus on assessment, we're continuing to focus on staff development, we're continuing to focus on technology. And that's part of what these special projects are about. It's to do the kinds of things that cannot be done by local agencies, that may not be able to be accomplished by or administered through the State Department of Education. As I mentioned earlier, we're moving into an era of accountability, so it's nice to see that CASAS is able to structure, restructure, and to kind of facilitate the process of greater accountability within California, achieving greater accountability. The Distance Learning Project is fulfilling a unique role. Now that new technologies are allowing us to have two-way interaction into the home, the kinds of work that the Distance Learning Project is doing is extremely critical. Staff development is always essential, so I hope we can move more into looking at alternative ways of providing staff development and expand in that direction.

MILLER: You know, there's always been some kind of a staff development project.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, there has been. There has been, yes.

MILLER: CBAE Staff Development, the ESL Teacher Institute, SDI as it's organized now.

FLEISCHMAN: And absolutely necessary. I look back and I have been affiliated like you for many years with the 309, 310, and over the years the special projects, and I think having the large projects has a certain effect and can do certain things that simply smaller projects, one-shot projects possibly cannot do. I would hope maybe in the future we can explore both sides, and maybe being able to operate. . . . Maybe we can offer as we begin to revise our strategic plan and look towards possibly developing a new plan for adult education in California based on the federal dollars, that we can begin to look at how can we also utilize some of the, if you will, smaller, very one-shot single projects that accomplish a very, very specific task. I think that can serve the needs of the state quite well, that sometimes the larger projects do get a little overgrown, if you will.

MILLER: Well, the large projects provide support.

FLEISCHMAN: A core or infrastructure, but I also look back at some of the mini-grant projects that we did years ago and I saw good

things come out of that. So, I think, in terms of what we do with our R and D monies, I think I would like to see a mix of efforts.

MILLER: Our teachers loved the mini-grants.

FLEISCHMAN: Oh yeah. Typically it's a real shot in the arm.

MILLER: And it gave them a real buy-in to the state programs.

FLEISCHMAN: It's a real shot in the arm. Typically it's very, very beneficial because you get a lot more out of those mini-grants, and the money that you're putting in becomes a labor of love.

MILLER: [Laughter] You sure do.

FLEISCHMAN: You're laughing because I know you've probably worked with some of those, and I did too, and I put in a tremendous time to be sure that was successful. But in an era of constant change and new learning, new ways of doing things, maybe seed dollars. . . . It's kind of like start-up business money. I think that could be possibly an effective use of the dollars.

Now more than anything——more than anything——I would like to see some legislation take place that would allow us to begin to use some of our state monies to do these kinds of activities. I frankly think it's a travesty that we only use our federal dollars to change adult education, to do R and D.

Could you imagine somebody like the military or something just using a small chunk of their money to do R and D? That's absolutely ridiculous. Here we put $450 million a year in state funds into adult education, and not a penny goes into research and development. That's insane. That is absolutely crazy. So I think our priorities need to change a little bit. We don't know what's going to happen at the federal level. We need to refocus. California is going to continue to be a state of immigrants. Technology is going to change what we do and how we can do it. We must learn to do it better. We have over five million Californians that aren't receiving necessary literacy or language instruction. We need to find better, more efficient ways to do it, and we're simply not going to do it with 10 to 15 percent of our federal allocation. It's just not going to happen. So that would be probably one of my greatest hopes, is that we would have the wisdom and the foresight and we can move some legislation that would allow us to begin to really look at how we can do things more efficiently with the resources that we have.

MILLER: That is one thing that California has done, though, they have . . . many years they have used more than that 10 or 15

percent that the feds say you need to use for your

demonstration projects.

FLEISCHMAN: Yes, they have.

MILLER: We're going to be winding up pretty quickly, John, so I want

to give you a last chance, [Chuckling] just kind of anything

else that you might want to add or kind of final thoughts

about the project.

FLEISCHMAN: Technology is going to profoundly affect our lives and the

lives of the learners that we work with. It's going to affect

and continue to affect entertainment, education, every aspect

of what we do. Eighty-three percent of all new jobs are

technology-related, and yet education is still not doing what

they need to do in order to really understand and come to

terms to best use technology. Administrators rarely use the

technology, and if they do, they use maybe 2, 3, 4 percent of

the power of the computer to really make any change. I

would like to see us implement a requirement on all adult

education agencies in California that they have a technology

plan, so that as a requirement to receiving state

apportionment, or certainly federal apportionment, federal

321 dollars, that we require each agency to have an approved

plan on how they're going to implement and integrate technology.

MILLER: So, to receive a 321 local assistance grant, that a technology plan will be a part of that.

FLEISCHMAN: An approved plan, which would encompass every aspect—

MILLER: So, do you think that'll show up in our next State Plan?

FLEISCHMAN: I hope so. Who do you think's going to be in there lobbying for it? [Laughter] I think it's critical now, because I'm seeing so much money being spent. Now, certainly the work of OTAN has helped a lot, and there's a much greater awareness. Certainly the work of SDI. They do have a module on technology planning. But in reality, *in reality*, very few have a technology plan in place. I don't have any percentages, but I know the numbers are relatively small. And yet they're spending some. . . .

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

FLEISCHMAN: So a requirement for a plan for . . . as a requirement for receiving 321 dollars to me makes a lot of sense. It would force even smaller agencies to think through the process, possibly to collaborate and cooperate more with agencies that

are nearby that can provide the necessary guidance and support as they begin to get involved more with technology. So, to me that's real important.

The second area that I'd like to see more focus on is a greater percentage of our state dollars being allocated for nontraditional approaches. We currently have what is known as the 5% innovative [funds].[8] I don't think that we've focused enough energy on that aspect. I think we need to look very carefully at where we've been successful with the 5% projects, where we've not been successful. It is the kind of a regulation that allows both for incredible use and for incredible misuse of the funding allocation. And yet if we're going to really explore new ways of reaching those millions of California adults, we're going to need to do it using nontraditional programs, non-seat-time-based programs. And we have some real major barriers to break through in order to achieve that. We don't have the proper measurement tools. So I would like to see that program more carefully tracked. I would like to see more focus on that, not only

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[8]Upon application to and approval by the Adult Education Unit, 5% of a local adult education agency's state funding may be used on innovative, nontraditional approaches to delivering instruction.

from the department but also from our special projects, to really look at what can we do to really effectively build alternative programs. And although being a technologist, I don't just mean technology. It can be anything from workbooks to a whole range of different approaches we need to transcend beyond the classroom.

MILLER: And yet even on the 5% projects, which were to give you that flexibility, the way they've been implemented is they're running more like an independent study program, which was not the intention of the legislation that allowed them.

FLEISCHMAN: No. So here was a great concept that was developed. But sometimes it's difficult [implementing] great concepts. . . . I would like to see us revisit that, and really as a part maybe of our revised strategic plan [determine] what does it take to really move forward with an alternative way of reaching adult learners? To both document that and then to propagate those successful techniques into new areas. And again, just look, even though California puts all that money into adult ed, we're still not doing what we need to do in reaching all of those. So, now that we have these new tools, the new technologies and the new possibilities, let's really explore that

and let's really understand how to develop and implement those so that we can really kind of rebirth adult education, give adult ed a new era here in California.

MILLER: You've certainly come up with enough, John, to keep OTAN in business for another eight, ten, twenty years. [Chuckling]

FLEISCHMAN: [Chuckling] Cuba, I'm never short of ideas. That's my problem, I've got too many ideas with new technologies and what can be done. The frustration is lack of resources, lack of time.

MILLER: Well, you certainly have an exciting project. It stays right on the cutting edge, which is exactly what demonstration projects are supposed to be. I know that you're proud of what you and your staff have been able to do to make that possible. So I just want to thank you, both for the interview and for the contributions you've made and continue to make to California's adult education programs.

FLEISCHMAN: Thank you very much.

MILLER: This interview was completed as a part of the California Adult Education Oral History Project.