

WOMEN'S INFORMATION SERVICE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Transcript of Interview with Pat Ellis

Interviewee: Pat Ellis

Interviewer: Kati Murphy

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[00:00:00]

MURPHY: This is an interview with Pat Ellis by Kati Murphy on the 28th February 2017 at the State Library of South Australia. Also present is Caroline Pascoe. This interview is a part of the Oral History Project for the Women's Information Service.

MURPHY: First off Pat, I would like to just ask you some personal questions.

ELLIS: Yes.

MURPHY: First of all when were you born?

ELLIS: I was born in 1932 in Melbourne.

MURPHY: And can I ask you where you grew up?

ELLIS: Yes. Well after --- as a child I lived for a couple of years in Hobart where my sister was born, then a couple of years in Perth where my brother was born and then in 1939 we moved to Canberra. My father was a Presbyterian Minister and so we were in Canberra at the beginning of the war and I lived the rest of my childhood in Canberra, which was a very small place in those days and I went to school in Canberra, except that I went for three years to boarding school to Melbourne. And then after I came back to Canberra I worked in the National Library, for --- now five years. Canberra in those days didn't have a full time university, so, I worked in the National Library as a Library Assistant, and I studied part-time at the

Canberra University College, where at the end of five years I got an Arts Degree from Melbourne University. A bit complicated that. So, at the end of five years I had a University Degree, I had a Library qualification, which I managed to get while I was working in the Library and I had enough money to travel overseas. So, a friend and I went overseas and we worked in London during the winter and we hitch hiked around Europe in the two summers.

And then I came back to Canberra and worked for a year again at the National Library and then I applied for a position as Librarian of the Public Library of Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea.

And so I went up there and lived in Papua New Guinea for seven years. Where I got married there and I had my son was born there and then I came back to --- We had a year in Melbourne and then I came to Adelaide where my husband got a job in Adelaide, and I wrote to the Education Department. I had a three-year-old son, and said I would like a part-time job in a school library, you know.

In those days it wasn't too difficult to get jobs and I had a letter back from the Education Department saying oh you're a bit over qualified for a School Librarian would you like a job as a Lecturer, Librarian at the Adelaide Teachers' College part time.

I couldn't believe my luck. Because that was --- and so anyway I went for an interview with the Principal and here I was at the Adelaide Teachers College Library, all holidays off with full pay working part time as a Lecturer Librarian. Very lucky, and then I worked there the Adelaide Teachers' College when it became the Adelaide College of Advance Education , the Adelaide College of the Arts and Education, and then amalgamated with the Institute of Technology and became the University of South Australia. So I --- so in 1997 at the age of sixty-five I retired as Deputy University Librarian.

[00:03:44]

MURPHY: Right. That was very interesting, very succinct, thank you for that. You answered all my --- the rest of my questions all in one answer. We will move on to Women's Information Service now and I would just like to ask you some background information about your time at the Women's information Service. So when did you start volunteering at the Women's Information Service?

ELLIS: I started volunteering in 1997. When I was working, I was quite - quite - not worried exactly but rather daunted by the idea of retirement because I had worked practically my whole life since I was eighteen and I had one year off when my younger son was born. My second son was adopted so basically, it was a big thing for me to retire and I remembered when I worked in Kintore Avenue driving to work at the Adelaide Teachers College and seeing a notice up Women's Information Switchboard.

I hadn't ever used it and I didn't really know what it was but it sounded to me like it would be something good for women. So that before I actually retired, I looked up the number in the phone book and I rang and spoke to the head of volunteers who then was named Jo Cheshire.

I spoke to Jo and I said I'd be interested in volunteering and she said okay come in for an interview. I don't think we had to fill in an application. I can't remember that. Anyway, I went in for an interview with Jo and Marie, who was a long-term volunteer, and then was told that I had been successful. So I was able to start the training one week after I retired.

[00:05:33]

MURPHY: Retired and you mentioned Kintore Avenue. WIS ([Women's Information Service) was still located, obviously at Kintore Avenue when you started volunteering there.

ELLIS: It was.

MURPHY: It that was ---

ELLIS: It had changed its name. It used to be the Switchboard it was already the Women's Information Service.

MURPHY: Okay and how long have you been volunteering?

ELLIS: Twenty years this month actually.

MURPHY: That is absolutely amazing. And again, you just answered one of my other questions 'Why did you get involved as a volunteer in WIS (Women's Information Service). So we've gone through that. When you were volunteering what was your main role when you first started as a volunteer with the Women's Information Service?

ELLIS: Well my first role was, mind you, this was a long time ago and one's record is hazy, but basically we just answered the phone and we got a lot of calls. So there would have been two or three volunteers. We wore headsets in those days. Two or three volunteers sitting around a table because remember at the --- in Kintore Avenue there was --- we did have a few pamphlets but people didn't actually come in. So there was really only the phone calls.

MURPHY: Right.

ELLIS: So we --- I think we all rushed for the phone when the phone rang and there were a lot of calls. Yes.

MURPHY: Okay. So how many, how long was a shift then, was it three hours?

ELLIS: I think it was one to five.

MURPHY: One to five and you mentioned a lot of phone calls. How many phone calls do you think you would get in a four-hour shift approximately?

ELLIS: Honestly, I can't remember that.

MURPHY: You can't remember.

ELLIS: But there were enough to keep you busy.

MURPHY: Right. Well it's certainly a little bit different.

ELLIS: A lot, yes.

MURPHY: Yes, and you are still volunteering?

ELLIS: I am.

MURPHY: Twenty amazing years later. Why do you keep volunteering?
Why are you still volunteering?

ELLIS: I think one of the reasons I keep volunteering is that I do other volunteering work where you are mostly with people of your own age and I've always really enjoyed the other people, the other women who worked at WIS (Women's Information Service). They're all ages from quite young to more mature but well even some volunteers not very many of my age, but I, I just enjoy the company very much. I enjoy the work of course as well and --- but I felt it was worthwhile. It was something worthwhile to do for women but also on a personal note, it was really good to be working with younger people and really and the feminist ideology that was in the background of all the work you do there.

[00:08:19]

MURPHY: Very much, so thank you, that's very true. I'd just like to ask you a bit about your experiences perhaps a little bit more in-depth. When you were working, especially --- so thinking over incrementally over the years what was the atmosphere or the culture in WIS (Women's Information Service) like?

ELLIS: Well it always been --- people have always been very, very friendly. I think to be fair I found it a bit difficult coming from a very senior position

where people did what I said and nobody argued. Oh no they did. I didn't quite mean it that way but what I'm saying is I found it difficult coming from a very senior position where people gave their opinions but you made the rules you know you sort of and then all of a sudden you're the bottom of the table so to speak. Even quite young people who are paid casually think that they can sort of tell you what to do.

Well I don't wish that to sound too negative but I found --- and this is going over --- it didn't happen in the early days so much because it was a different --- but sometimes over the years there have been, not the permanent staff the permanent staff have been wonderful but sometimes you had people who were employed casually who --- well they were told they had to supervise the volunteers and if you'd been there --- and they had been there say what one or two years and you had been there for many years and there were a few occasions when I felt a little bit put out shall we say. (Both laugh) But you know that's all right you can sort of sort that out. One is able to sort that sort of thing out. Yeah.

MURPHY: And if -

ELLIS: But always just let me say the atmosphere in WIS (Women's Information Service) has always been great.

MURPHY: It is actually. I love the working environment on a personal note. Can you remember, or when you first started volunteering what were the main aims and objectives of the Women's Information Service, and do you think they've changed much over the twenty years that you've been here?

ELLIS: I don't believe they have changed. I mean the Women's Information Service has always been to give to empower women to make decisions. I was always not very good at that. I'm a bit inclined to tell people what to do. So empowering people was always difficult for me I find --- I always found that very hard when people rang in you think you know you felt

that --- but I did my best to empower, but it was --- sometime can be difficult for people. But no, no I don't believe --- I think it's always been a service where women's needs are paramount and where it's the staff there have the certainly err you know the whole time really have the welfare of women in a whole --- well care about the welfare of women. Yeah

MURPHY: And when you first started volunteering how did WIS (Women's Information Service) operate? You mentioned that previously there was a table and there was a few of you around the table with the phone in the middle. What were the procedures in the phone room and perhaps when WIS (Women's Information Service) moved from Kintore Avenue to the Railway Station. Can you remember any of the procedures that you started with?

ELLIS: Well I can't really remember the procedures very well at Kintore Avenue. In fact, I don't think we were there very long. I haven't got the dates in front of me, but I doubt that I was there --- I don't --- do you know the date that we moved to --- yes --- I don't think that I was at Kintore Avenue much longer than a year and then we moved to the Station Arcade. The --- cos the Station Arcade was a great --- you know that was a big difference because of course people could come in. It was the --- you know it was --- people could come in and use the pamphlets and ask questions and things, so there was a huge step going from Kintore Avenue to the Station Arcade. For the better of course and so that was the big step there.

[00:12:52]

MURPHY: Did you notice when you moved to Station Arcade with the Shopfront instead of just having the phone room, you had the phone room and the shopfront. Did the phone calls reduce or did the way you handled phone calls or things change very much from going from Kintore Avenue to the Station?

ELLIS: We didn't use earphones anymore I think. I honestly can't remember whether the phone calls --- I think there was still plenty of phone calls and certainly, I think we had more volunteers. I can remember up to three volunteers at a time at Kintore Avenue. Whereas we just had two in the morning and the two in the afternoon at Station Arcade and we had more paid staff there. But a lot of, some of their time was up in the office of the Office of Women which was opposite and up a number of stories in the Roma Mitchell Building. Yeah, so yeah.

MURPHY: Do you remember who you used to volunteer with? Do you remember some of the names of the people that you started with and have worked with?

ELLIS: Look the turnover has been so huge over the years Kati. That I don't really --- but of course, I remember some people that I used to work with in the Library. I brought in --- there were three separate people that I brought in from the Library. Unfortunately, a couple of them stayed quite a while, one didn't stay too long but --- the most recent one didn't stay too long. I mean to be honest I really can't remember. I can remember more not the early ones so much. I can remember --- do you want me to give names?

MURPHY: If you can remember them.

ELLIS: Well I can. There was Wilhelmina [Millar], there was I can remember first names. You didn't always know second names. Yes, there was Wilhelmina, there was --- there was a group of volunteers who stayed for quite a long time and you got to know them pretty well. There was Marie [Tyerman] of course, dear Marie who died recently. There was --- she was a long --- she had --- she worked I think she finished her twenty years about three or four years ago maybe more. She was a volunteer for a long time; she had given it up in the last three years. There was Lies

[Zuidland] of course, who still works in Court Support. Oh no Lies was paid staff, sorry, Lies was paid staff. I remember more of the paid staff I think because they were there longer. Obviously young volunteers tend to turn over a lot because they apply when they are studying and then they --- so it's the more mature ones that stayed on. I can remember their faces but I have some difficulty remembering a lot of their names. Yes.

MURPHY: WIS (Women's Information Service) has seen also many changes over the years. What were some of the changes that were introduced or what are some of the changes that have --- you've seen introduced while you've been at WIS (Women's Information Service)?

ELLIS: Well the main changes that I --- that sort of --- are really the changes of location. I mean there were a few --- well I can just remember one thing when we were at the Station Arcade and at one stage I thought it was dreadful. They had a volunteer and a paid staff person sitting at the front desk and I thought nothing more intimidating than somebody coming in wanting maybe to talk to somebody about something and having two people sitting there. And I fought against that for quite a long time and eventually they decided it wasn't such a good idea because they just well you can understand why it wouldn't be such a good idea. Two people sitting at the front desk with nothing else to do but wait for someone to come in and but you know but the powers to be thought that was a good idea but --- but

[00:16:55]

MURPHY: And you fought, you expressed your opinion?

ELLIS: Well I had a few words to say on the subject to people and I don't know whether it was what I had to say. Others didn't agree with it either and so it was changed. Yes and then, but strangely enough I don't from my point of view, I don't really see, I haven't really seen that much change over

the years. Except the fact that each change of location obviously there were changes in procedure in many ways. Like at Station Arcade people had access to pamphlets, which was a very good thing of course, and the same with the Grenfell Street. But the, you know the ethos has always been there. The feminist ethos and the helping women and you know and helping and empowering women to make their own decisions about and referring them to appropriate agencies because that's the big thing, to refer them to appropriate agencies as well. So except that in Station Arcade we didn't have a room we didn't have any privacy for people when they --- if somebody came in and wanted to speak privately to somebody there was literally nowhere and that was a big disadvantage at the Station Arcade.

MURPHY: So a good change has been going to Grenfell Street and having that little bit of privacy.

ELLIS: Oh yes Grenfell Street was a good change. Well good and bad, I mean Station Arcade was so good it was on people's route and Grenfell Street is no question a little bit out of the way.

MURPHY: Right.

ELLIS: People are --- there's not that many casual staff walking down --- not casual staff, people walking on the other side of Grenfell Street to just see it and want to pop in. That was a bit disadvantage but of course --- but we did have --- oh when we first moved to Grenfell Street there wasn't anywhere really where people, it's only our current location I think we have the private room. We had one at Grenfell Street either thinking that no.

MURPHY: Just really pushing your memory here ---

ELLIS: Yes maybe a ---

MURPHY: Even more. Who was the --- do you remember who the Co-ordinator or Manager, who the Co-ordinators or Managers have been over the time that you have been volunteering?

[00:19:23]

ELLIS: There have been a lot. There have been a lot in WIS (Women's Information Service). Do you mean WIS (Women's Information Service) or Office of Women?

MURPHY: No WIS (Women's Information Service).

ELLIS: WIS (Women's Information Service). Well I think Margaret Porter was the Manager of WIS (Women's information Service) when I first started. Then I --- and I remember Sophie [Allouache]. I'm just thinking of first names cos again second names don't come into it a lot. There was Sophie [Allouache], there was Carla [Granozio]; they've been a whole lot, a whole lot. There was --- ah let me think --- Wendy [Thompson], Wendy was a good friend. There was of course --- I really, I really, if I sat down and tried to make a list I'd probably think of more but just off the top of my head they're the only ones I can --- there was a very quick turn over at one stage that you know every couple of years. So I add those up and there would have been at least ten in the twenty years I've been here.

MURPHY: Okay.

ELLIS: I reckon. Easily well not easily, I think there would have been at least ten Managers of WIS (Women's Information Service).

MURPHY: Now I'm going to push your memory even more.

ELLIS: Oh dear.

MURPHY: Did you know who the Women's Advisor or the Director of the Office of the Status of Women was at the time?

ELLIS: Well the person in charge of the Status of Women. No. I mean Carmel O'Loughlin comes to mind. She was one of the ones when we were in Station Arcade. She was head of the Office for Women. The --- but --- of course Fiona [Mort] now, I know Fiona. But I can't remember. I can actually visualise one woman, but I can't remember her name. No, I can't remember any of the others at the moment.

MURPHY: That's fair enough

(Both laugh)

MURPHY: Do think just going back to various changes that have happened with WIS (Women's Information Service) over the years, do you think the service that the Women's Information Service provides has changed much over the years and if so in what ways do you think they've changed?

ELLIS: Well I really --- I don't I think the service has always been the same but there were fewer people taking advantage of it. There was a time when we had more money. There was money to send out brochures to every doctor and every school and everybody under the sun and it was much better advertised. I mean --- I think WIS (Women's Information Service) is the --- is a very well kept secret. A group --- I mean you'd be surprised. Well you wouldn't be surprised probably. But I belong to a women's a women's group called the Soroptimist Club and we've got --- had some younger members recently and they've never even heard of the Women's --- you know one was a lawyer, one was a --- they were all in sort of you know areas where they were interested obviously, very interested in women's issues but they had not heard of you know, Women's Information Service, had never come across there--- and I think that we just haven't managed to get ourselves into the public eye. Which is a shame really, because there's a lot of material available in our office that is very little used.

[00:23:03]

MURPHY: Do you think there is still a need for an information service for women?

ELLIS: I do. Although I also think that one of the reasons that it isn't used as much as it used to be is of course more people have access to the Internet. I mean most of us these days if we've got a question about anything we just look up the Internet and I can't help feeling to those of us who have access and are able to use computers that that maybe one of the reasons that the Women's Information Service doesn't have as many phone calls these days and doesn't have as many people seeking information by coming in personally.

MURPHY: I just like to talk about the kinds of the type of women that came in especially over the twenty years that you've been there. When you first started what kind of women came in and used WIS (Women's Information Service).

ELLIS: When I first started, nobody came in because it was the Kintore Avenue --- you know that.

MURPHY: Sorry phoned in

ELLIS: I well remember that over the years not that many people actually come in. I mean it's a phone service that has always been the main one. But I don't remem --- ah it's funny yeah, one women that --- yeah.

MURPHY: I suppose to narrow it down for you, to help you, were they many older women, younger women, were they of a CALD [Culturally and Linguistically Diverse] background or Aboriginal background.

ELLIS: Very few Aboriginal women came in. Although we did employ, we

had somebody on our staff who was Aboriginal background for a long time. We didn't --- don't have many people from other Nationalities. We don't in my experience, but it's limited, it's only one day a week. We don't really have many older women either. But I --- it just seems to me that it's a sort of variety of women who come in. I couldn't personally put it down to any particular age group or type of person. Um no.

MURPHY: So a rather broad section of society would use the women -

ELLIS: Well I think so.

MURPHY: What --- okay what kind of queries would you mainly get?

ELLIS: The worst query is accommodation because that's always very, very difficult to find --- to help people in that regard and there are often a lot of queries on accommodation. Things to do with the Family Court are usually one of the --- my experience you know with divorce, separation, domestic violence I guess also child support, child welfare. And a -

[00:26:04]

MURPHY: So in your twenty years of volunteering have you seen the kinds of queries change much, or was it the same kind of queries when you were working in at Kintore Avenue and Station Arcade as we're getting now in Grenfell Street, do you think?

ELLIS: Well I actually haven't been on the phone for quite a long time because I've been mainly out in the front desk, so I can't be sure about this, and I really don't know that one. All that --- when I was answering phones there seemed to be a regular pattern of queries and sometimes people --- I remember one time when you used to have a lot of phone calls from somebody who just wanted somebody to talk to. She was a sick person and we --- in the end, we decided we could only give her fifteen minutes a time. But we realised that this person needed that sort of support and she

just wanted to --- so she I think she'd would almost ring every day.

But that --- there are strange things like that. We used to get some I don't think that has happened for a long time we used to get some quite frivolous calls like people wanting to know and they obviously were the days before the Internet or readily availability of the Internet, people wanting to have recipes and things like that.

MURPHY: Well at this time, you just mentioned that you helped this lady by talking to her fifteen minutes a day. Can you think of any other ways WIS (Women's Information Service) was able to help some of the women with their queries at the time. Like you said before mass information availability for everybody.

ELLIS: Oh you know there's no question that people didn't know --- I mean the main in my, my memory of the most the person, the group that well the agency that we referred people to most was the Women's Legal Service. I mean they're a great group. Oh, the other thing I haven't mentioned before is workplace, that was always a big thing workplace bullying and that type of thing and the Women's ah Working Women's Group they were very good you know they have always been good. But the Women's Legal Service has always been to me a basic place to refer people, because they give such a good service and you knew people were going to be looked after and that was I think I would could say that with referrals that would be in my experience that would have been one of the Agencies we would refer people to most. But certainly the Women's Working Centre was another one we --- I'd forgotten about that actually we would get a lot of queries from people having problems at work for various ways and they're often able to assist in there.

MURPHY: And how did it feel when you were able to help someone?

ELLIS: Oh very good of course. It's always nice to think that you've ---

and people can be very appreciative you know, oh thank you know and the other thing I've forgotten too. A few things are coming back now. Is sometime people ring up and just want to talk and we sometimes people have rung up and said that thank you so much for listening to me I feel a lot better now and da da da da. Just all you have to do is to just listen that's all they want. They want to speak to somebody they don't know, somebody they can't see and somebody who will just listen and sort of make an occasional comment, and that is I think is you know a very useful thing to do for people and it always makes you feel really good when at the end of that sort of conversation, supportive listening I think we call it, they say oh look thank you I feel much better now and will be able to do da da da. That's good.

[00:29:51]

MURPHY: It is actually, there's not much of that around certainly.

ELLIS: Ah no.

MURPHY: If there were times when you weren't, or if there are times where you cannot help someone, do you think you know why this is? For example if the information just isn't there or -

ELLIS: There are people who ring up who --- are --- have problems that they are --- you sometimes sense that somebody might ring up and --- a women might ring up and they obviously have been to quite a few agencies and you know they're sort of difficult, and in many cases nothing more you can do for them. It's always --- they're not the ones there are some people well particularly with accommodation. That is a really difficult area and sometimes it's just not possible to do anything and I mean there are numbers you can give them. Sometimes you worry too, that the numbers you give them particularly in the accommodation area whether that's going to be really helpful, because you don't know what the people are going to

be like on the other end and that can be a little bit of a bit of a worry when the person is in real need and you all you can do --- I mean some agencies you know perfectly well are going to help but other agencies you don't know and you just worry that they're going to give the sort of help that you would like that person to receive. But what can you do. But it's not good you feel you feel badly if somebody rings up with a genuine problem that is just something that's not within our power and I can't think of an example if you were going to me ask that.

[00:31:49]

MURPHY: Well the accommodation one was actually a very, it is very relevant.

ELLIS: The accommodation one it can be --- yes

MURPHY: And did you just this isn't just a side note. When you first started at Kintore Avenue and went to Station Arcade was accommodation a big issue like it is today for women?

ELLIS: Oh I think it yes I think so yeah.

MURPHY: Yeah, okay we spoke briefly about the Internet you mentioned it before. Before the Internet, before we had the tap tap tap how did you go about getting information to respond to the women's queries?

ELLIS: Oh we had a wonderful, we had a wonderful database called Infosearch and it's never been it was a well it was I used to call it a Thesaurus because I'm from a Library and that was --- it was a list --- it was a list of words. Like for example anorexia might be a word and then you clicked on anorexia you know on your computer and you went onto anorexia and they gave you a whole lot of Agencies that would help with that and it was a fantastic, fantastic resource and why they ever gave --- and then we went to whatever we use now communities whatever and it

was --- that's nowhere near. Infosearch was just great you just keyed in divorce just put divorce and it would come up with all the Agencies that could assist in somebody --- and separate --- it was a very comprehensive database and it was just invaluable and I can't remember when they we stopped having access to it. It cost I think WIS (Women's Information Service) had to pay for it, it wasn't free but it was it was well worth it, yeah.

[00:33:34]

MURPHY: And when, when the Internet did come in, how did it change things and how did it impact on the workers at WIS (Women's information Service)?

ELLIS: Well basically, we didn't have the Internet in Kintore Avenue and then when we went to Station Arcade it was available. So I think, wait a moment was it available in the Station Arcade. Now I'm having a memory thing here I'm just trying to visualise the Station Arcade. Did we have --- we certainly had it at Grenfell Street but I can't actually visualise it. Maybe we didn't have it there. I'm not sure about that, that is a funny thing I wish I'd remembered to ask somebody if there is anybody left to ask, which there isn't, (laugh) which there virtually isn't (laugh).

But um no I but certainly well the service we offered for people to come in and use the Internet that's always been very --- maybe not as much now but certainly particularly when we were in Grenfell Street that was very, very heavily used. It's a long time since I've had to actually say to somebody your times up because somebody else wants to use it. So that's I think since we've moved you know into the Office of Women area that that's happened. That never happens now, well hasn't happened to me. But, oh but you're thinking more of our access to the Internet I take it, yeah.

MURPHY: Our access and impacts on workers I suppose in terms of how

they the workers accessed information. Did we need as many workers with the Internet and so much information available so quickly and so readily? Those sort of things.

ELLIS: Yes it's hard to say. I mean again Infosearch was our main database. Well, yes if we couldn't use the Internet how were we going to find out about things. I'm just trying to think now going back to --- to the --- you made me think about Kintore Avenue. How on earth did we know anything? I mean was it all in our heads. Can't have been. But I don't think we had computers then, or did we. See this is the difficult thing I mean I'm just think now, how did we manage if we didn't have computers yeah.

MURPHY: Do you remember what -

ELLIS: Because we had computers at work, so I was full conversant with using a computer.

MURPHY: So you mentioned that you were sitting around a table at Kintore Avenue with the headphones on.

ELLIS: I think we had computers I really do think we did had computers.

MURPHY: And you had --- I'm pretty sure you would ---

ELLIS: Of course, we have to had; otherwise, we wouldn't know how to find out anything. Yeah. So we would have had computers on the table yeah

MURPHY: Right

ELLIS: But not one of I think we had to share, you know share access to a computer. Yeah

MURPHY: Okay yes there was one computer between three people?

ELLIS: That I don't remember. That is detail, after twenty years Kati I do not remember that.

MURPHY: My apologies. So what did WIS (Women's Information Service) do to help Women learn the technology this new technology.

[00:36:43] `

ELLIS: Oh yes then we had courses we had to do that --- oh now that's coming back I had forgotten about that. Yes, we ran classes for people to learn how to use, how to use the Internet some way or another. But we were expected, we were all expected to be able to help people do that and I think it was one on one, it was one on one so it wasn't a class and I think we --- and I think we all were told how to do it and somebody --- people had to book to --- before they came into --- then we helped them go through, there was a manual, with a manual. I don't --- can't remember why and when we stopped doing that, but they decided it wasn't necessary. Oh I know why, because the City Libraries were giving really, really good computer courses and it was felt we were just doubling up and they had more time and staff to do it. Yeah that was the reason. So we referred people to the City I mean the City Library at the moment has got a very good digital hub.

MURPHY: I would like to talk about WIS (Women's Information Service) and the community now. Can you remember in what ways WIS (Women's Information Service) has been involved in the community, for example Outreach Services, talks?

ELLIS: Well WIS (Women's Information Service) talks have always been a big thing. Well I have done quite a few myself. Mainly I've done them to groups coming in from TAFE (Technical and Further Education). In fact there was one in yesterday [27 February, 2017] I remember the Lecturer who was with them she remembered back to the Station Arcade days same

Lecturer. So I think WIS (Women's Information Service) talks are very, very useful and we of course give them all over the place and also running a WIS (Women's Information Service) stall at different occasions. That's probably very good publicity too. I mean publicity is the big thing if only we can get out there and let people know we exist because it's a wonderful Agency that is so little known, as I've said before. And that is the problem and getting something publicised is pretty difficult.

MURPHY: The --- do you know, do you remember what kinds of Community Groups that WIS (Women's Information Service) did have and may continue to have a connection with?

ELLIS: If you mean the digital hubs and things?

MURPHY: Community groups, perhaps the Multicultural Groups. Things like that, different community groups.

ELLIS: I haven't really been involved in that so I don't know. But I do know that WIS (Women's Information Service) has I don't know if it still has I expect it has sort of hubs all over the State [South Australia] whereby people WIS (Women's Information Service) provides them with a computer in different Libraries and places and people can access WIS (Women's Information Service) information and stuff yeah.

[00:39:50]

MURPHY: Okay we will go on to the next one. WIS (Women's Information Service) has collaborated with numerous Government and Community Groups that assist women. So we have with the Women's Financial Advice Service, Modern Banking for Older Women, Tax Help, Rural Internet Access Sites, were you involved in organising or participating in any of these programs at all?

ELLIS: No, no not really.

MURPHY: Okay during the 1980s Women's Information Service held it's phone-in on issues such as domestic violence, housing stress and disability. Did you participate?

ELLIS: 1980s!!

MURPHY: That's what it says here. Did you participate or help in any of these. No because you started in 1997 did you.

ELLIS: But there were phone-ins after I started I wonder if they got that that---

MURPHY: Did you --- have you participated in any phone-ins at all?

ELLIS: I haven't participated no, I haven't participated in phone-ins. But I know there were phone-ins while I was working at the Station Arcade definitely.

MURPHY: And do you remember what they were targeting?

ELLIS: I think there might have been one, on domestic violence but I'm not really sure no.

MURPHY: You're not really sure. Okay. During your time at WIS (Women's Information Service) from when you started, thinking over how things have changed, what were the important women's issue of the day and were these issues reflected in the kinds of calls you received?

ELLIS: That's rather a difficult question and I'm not really --- I mean

MURPHY: I suppose maybe in the late 90's (1990) when the Internet was become more readily available that may have been an issue for the women to start learning the Internet and you may have received more calls in regarding places where to learn, where to use it. Can you think of any other issues of the day through the 2000's that may have impacted?

[00:41:57]

ELLIS: I can't really. I mean domestic violence is the big thing now but it wasn't some much then. It has always been an issue but not with so much publicity. I honestly can't think of anything as you say helping women use the Internet. I'm just trying to think of any major women's issues over those years and just off the top of my head, I just can't think of any particular issues. There has always been ongoing issues and they are still ongoing so there's not much.

MURPHY: They are you mention domestic violence before and from my memory, thinking back to 97 (1997) and through the 2000's domestic violence was known but it wasn't really brought out in the community

ELLIS: Absolutely.

MURPHY: Like it is today. So have you noticed a difference in your --- not so much on the phone anymore but in the Shopfront, or comparing what you were talking about in the phones maybe even fifteen years ago. So have you noticed if there's been a change in the attitude towards domestic violence, and you mentioned accommodation before, did you received calls for accommodation back then. Is there more calls for accommodation now because domestic violence is more out in the open?

ELLIS: Well you're right. Domestic violence is so much more out in the open now that it's --- I --- it's really hard to remember whether you had more calls. I have only had limited calls on domestic violence over the whole time I've been there. I mean although and probably there are more now because it's more open and people are more liable to ask for help and ask where they can get help. I'm sure that's the case but not in my personal experience. Yeah.

MURPHY: This is a bit of a back to the Internet. Did the introduction of the

Internet affect your relationship with the women who used the service?

ELLIS: I'm not really quite sure what that means, because honestly the Internet was with us the whole time. I mean you know I was on the Internet at work and I was on the Internet when I started, so I don't see how it could. I mean it just --- the Internet has always been a wonderful aid particularly this Infosearch which was a Database on the Internet to help people but I don't see how it could affect your relationship with anybody because people who came in and did our Internet --- I can't remember what it was called but whatever the help we gave to the people on yeah it was --- it was certainly always been a wonderful aid to the volunteers at WIS (Women's Information Service) no question about that. But I don't really see how it sort of interacts with the people who except perhaps their likely to ask our help I guess. Yeah.

[00:45:09]

MURPHY: So one final question for you Pat. Is there anything that you would like to add?

ELLIS: Right.

MURPHY: Any thoughts or comments that you have as a general

ELLIS: Well really all I can say is that in my twenty years at Women's Information Service I have thoroughly enjoyed my interaction with other volunteers, with staff, and with users. It's been a --- it's a wonderful service for women. It's unfortunately so little known and we really have to do something to make --- I don't know how because to make it more well-known it takes money and money is what is not a lot of these days, and it's just a great service. For me personally it's been a great place to do voluntary work and I'm really glad that I had the idea when I retired to ring up and volunteer and was successful and it's been it's been a lot of

pleasure. Well it's been personal pleasure it's been also I felt really good at working in a women's area where I felt I could be useful.

MURPHY: Well a little birdie told me that in the twenty years that you have been working at the Women's Service volunteering that you've had one sick day.

ELLIS: Yes, that's true. I'm very fortunate that I'm not a person who gets sick and so far and that is true that was only a couple of years ago when I was really not that sick. I just had terrible lethargy and I just felt I couldn't get up and out and I was diagnosed with something that I didn't even have anyway but yes. So that was that one day I didn't come in but it's true I've been very fortunate in that way.

MURPHY: Well I think on behalf of every single person at the Women's Information Service and Office for Women, we thank you for your exceptional service over the last twenty years, because I think there's people that work less years than that and put less effort and have more sick days than that.

ELLIS: Thank you very much Kati.

MURPHY: You're welcome Pat.

ELLIS: It's been a great pleasure.

MURPHY: Thank you.

[00:47:36)

END OF TRANSCRIPT