

This is a (partial) transcript of the UWA 100 Voices Oral History recordings made by Julia Wallis with Dennis Moore conducted on 5-Jul-13 and 12-Jul-13. See <http://oralhistories.arts.uwa.edu.au/items/show/1>

There was a big project undertaken in the Classics Department. John Jory, later Professor of Classics, and Dean of Arts, ultimately, had an interest in all the Latin inscriptions. He and I played in the same cricket team, he captained the University second grade side. One day at drinks after the game we had a long chat about writing an index to all the Latin inscriptions in Rome. I suggested we do a Key Word in Context (KWIC) index, which seemed the only sensible thing to do at the time, to get something out moderately quickly – though it took us 2-3 years. I took that project on with John, and I had to draw on other staff ultimately; I got 2 of my staff working on it. For years they would abuse me at drinks on Friday night because I had told them their helping by coming in for a weekend to get this project done, but it turned into 2 years! The main problem was that the inscriptions were 2 to 3 thousand years old, and every inscription you looked at produced something new to deal with, to be programmed for, because it hadn't been anticipated. So the programming lasted until the last inscription was coded and checked. It just went on for ever. But ultimately, it was published by the Deutsche Academy in East Berlin, a massive project and John got international recognition for it. The Classics department was quite strong at UWA then, having some very well-known Historians and Classicists. This was very early on for Classics, and the papers published were the first in that area. And that opened the eyes of some people in the Arts Faculty to computers, though I don't think they made over-much use of the computer. I remember one woman doing an index to the works of Proust or something, in French, but there was so much going on you couldn't keep track of every individual project using computers. People were users by then, and were in a much better position to do things on their own, and they could be supervised on their own. My early experience with research students, holding their hands, faded probably fairly quickly. I had new computers to buy and a bigger Computing Centre to run, and interacting with the wider community, in the public service and private sector.

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### **Latin Inscriptions: Extract from Dennis Moore's Memoires (2014)**

One project which was, from a computer science viewpoint, not ground breaking but innovative in the application domain was the preparation of an index to the Latin inscriptions which had been found in Rome. The project was also political important in that it indicated to the Faculty of Arts that computing was not necessarily limited to the science/engineering arena.

The Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum which had been accumulating since 1862 and published by the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities in (East) Berlin, founded in 1853 by Theodor Mommsen. Volume VI held the inscriptions found in Rome.

John Jory, a senior lecturer in Classics, was also captain of the University second grade cricket team of which I was a member. During post match drinks one Saturday Jory broached the possibility of preparing an index to Volume VI of the Corpus. Without thought of any possible attendant difficulties I found myself suggesting a KWIC (Key Word in Context) index and then rashly (and unprofessionally) committing myself to the project. The PDP-6 had at that time no industry standard magnetic tape but relied on the much smaller

Dectapes, and no secondary disc storage so that the machine was not the best equipped for such data processing. Handling large quantities of paper tape was not easy. Peculiarities of the inscriptions covering so many centuries meant that as each inscription was prepared by Jory for data entry, a possible modification to the program to accommodate unforeseen anomalies had to be made frequently. As I could not keep up with these changes I asked Terry Gent and Bruce Kirkby to assist to help out, stating that it should only take a week-end or two. This ended up a year or two which Gent and Kirkby continued to remind me in no uncertain terms for the next thirty years. In the end the Index (a massive ? pages in 17 volumes) was published by the Akademie and Jory rightly received an international reputation for not only one of the earliest use of computers in the classics but for sustaining a high level of scholarship over a long period. My name appeared somewhat unwarranted as co-author of the Index (viz DIONYSIVS GVILIELMVS MOORE), but it something to have your own name on the same page as Mommson in a list of publications.