

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

HELGA SCHMID

Transcript of an Interview  
Conducted by

W. Boyd Rayward

at

Vienna, Austria

on

14 June 2000

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

CHEMICAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION  
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## HELGA SCHMID

1941 Born in Marburg/Lahn, Germany, on 15 June

### Education

1959-1964 Studies of mathematics and physics, Vienna University  
1964 Ph.D., mathematics, Vienna University

### Professional Experience

1966-1968 European Atomic Energy Community [Euratom], Belgium  
Post-doctorate Fellowship  
1966-1969 Scientific Programmer

1969-1975 International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA]  
Programmer/Analyst for INIS

1975-1981 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], Vienna  
Programmer/Analyst for AGRIS  
1981-2000 Head of AGRIS Processing

## ABSTRACT

Helga Schmid begins the interview by discussing the growth of her interest in the world of information. While attending the Vienna University, she studied mathematics and physics and also worked on gaining her teaching certification. However, after meeting her husband, she relocated to Belgium and worked for Euratom [European Atomic Energy Community], where she began training to be a computer programmer. In 1969 she and her family moved back to Vienna and she joined the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA]. While there, under the direction of Giampaolo Del Bigio, Schmid helped publish the first INIS [International Nuclear Information System] *Atomindex*. In 1975, she moved on to AGRIS [International Information System for the Agricultural Sciences and Technology] where she worked with varying software and helped the fledgling organization to organize and evolve its technological programs. In 2000, she retired, after rising through the organization to become the head of AGRIS Processing. Schmid concludes the interview by discussing briefly her knowledge of AGRIS in its present state and sharing some of the positive experiences she had throughout her career as a computer analyst.

## INTERVIEWER

W. Boyd Rayward is a research professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He turned to librarianship after graduating in English literature from the University of Sydney. He received his Ph.D. from the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago in 1973. He has held positions in the University of Chicago (where he became Dean of the Graduate Library School). He served as Professor and Head of the School of Information Library and Archive Studies and Dean of the University's Faculty of Professional Studies at the University of New South Wales in Sydney where he is now professor emeritus. He has published two books related to Paul Otlet, Belgian documentalist and internationalist, and a great many articles on history of national and international schemes for the organization and dissemination of information.

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Interest in mathematics and physics lead towards a career in teaching. Meet husband at Vienna University. Relocate to Belgium and train to be a computer programmer at Euratom. Return to Vienna and accept position at the International Atomic Energy Agency.
- 2 Computer Programmer for IAEA  
Work under the supervision of Giampaolo Del Bigio and help publish the first INIS *Atomindex*. Work with incoming INIS data, including checking and production of the INIS master file. Apply retrieval systems, such as IRMS [Information Retrieval and Management System].
- 5 Responsibilities at IAEA  
Implement photocomposition method to IAEA indexes. Help to create IAEA Thesaurus by studying the first Thesaurus, created by Euratom. Input software and help launch system.
- 7 Transfer to FAO under AGRIS and Early Operational Glitches  
Transfer to AGRIS for personal reasons. Handle the computer processing of the AGRIS data. Work on corrections for AGRIS data in Vienna and add numerous programs to system. Personally modify software to be multilingual.
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