

**Mary Ellen (Winter) Atkins**  
Secretary, Representative Karl Le Compte of Iowa

## **Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress**

### **“Before Today’s Technology”**

Mary Ellen Atkins describes using a mimeograph machine in one of her first jobs.  
*Interview recorded July 19, 2016*

Well, I went to my junior college. While I was there, in Centerville, after I graduated from high school in 1941, I worked part-time at our local soybean mill, in the office, as a clerk secretary. Did a lot of their work. They’d send out monthly newsletters to all their clients. And I would have to run the mimeograph machine, had to type it off on a stencil. That was way before today’s technology. That was quite an exasperating time. If you made a mistake on that stencil, you were able to put a little liquid on it. You’re supposed to fill up those things. If you didn’t do it, you had to type it all over again. It was a really frustrating time.