Hal and Sharon Smith, who met while Hal was a student at Notre Dame, were both born and raised in South Bend, Indiana. Hal’s father, Ken, a football player, attended Notre Dame in the Knute Rockne era.

A member of the Advisory Council for the Hesburgh Libraries since 1998, Hal was for many years the chief executive officer of the H.H. Cutler Company, a children’s apparel company founded by his grandfather. In 1993, the company was sold, and Hal retired three years later. Since then, he has owned and managed H.C. Investments, LLC, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Hal and Sharon have five children — Linda, Julie, Michael, Timothy, and Kerry — and 11 grandchildren.

Focusing on medieval Ireland and northern vernacular literature, earnings from the Smith Endowment support the acquisition of works on early Irish history and culture, Irish archaeology, Irish bronze swords, the caves of North-West Clare, and the daggers and halberds of the early Bronze Age. Earnings from the Smith Endowment have also made possible the acquisition of works on Irish local history, such as histories of Killarney, Clare Abbey, and Killone; an early history of Tullamore; a history of the Diocese of Killaloe; and a history of Killala Bay. The Smith Endowment also assisted the libraries in obtaining the electronic resource CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts: An Online Resource for Irish History, Literature, and Politics.