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“Librarians Navigating Change” Oral History Project

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Gisèle Tanasse

Interviewed on May 5, 2025

By Ann Glusker

--For more information about this project, and the oral history method in general, please consult the Project Overview Document at the URL provided above.

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00:00:15 Ann

This is Ann Glusker interviewing Gisèle Tanasse on May 5, 2025, for the “Librarians Navigating Change” Oral History Project. This is a remote interview. Ann is in Seattle, Washington and Gisèle is in Alameda, California.

So, the way I've mostly been starting with people is to ask if you wanted to share anything about your background. Mostly, we're interested in how you came to librarianship, and what that path was like.

00:00:52 Gisèle

Sure. I think I did have a fairly interesting path getting started. My first job in libraries was at Berkeley. I was an undergraduate, and I was actually a student library employee. I worked in our monographic processing division, which really was the receiving point for monographs, and part of our acquisitions team in technical services. So, I had a very paraprofessional start to my career, and worked in tech services for about five years before applying to be an operations supervisor in the [UC Berkeley Library] Media Resources Center. And all throughout that time I was actually in library school at the same time. So, this really [was a] fun and strong formative experience in library school, working at Berkeley and working closely both with staff and librarians, [at the same time] as I was learning in school.

Then I spent several years, in that paraprofessional staff job, as an operations supervisor in the Media Resources center, before our longtime director Gary Handman retired. I was working in a professional staff role. I think at that time that was a Library Professional 4 [LP 4] and I got to do curatorial work that let me do some librarian work in addition to my staff work. Then in 2017 I became a librarian, the Film and Media Services Librarian. And I've continued on in that role since then, but now also have [been] serving as the Assistant Head of our Instruction Services Division, with a focus on service design. Which is really looking at evolving approaches to providing reference services and different public services to support users, but really trying to have an eye on balancing user needs with staff capacity and staff well-being at the same time. I would say that all of that has really been informed by my experience of having this dual role of having been a staff person for a long time and also working as a librarian.

00:03:43 Ann

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That's a tall order too, that balancing act. Can I ask... Just from what I saw on your CV, tell me if I'm wrong, but it looked like the dates were such that you got your MLIS [Master's in Library and Information Science] while you were actively working at Berkeley.

00:04:01 **Gisèle**

Yes.

00:04:02 **Ann**

Can you tell me about that decision and how that went? I got mine while working full time too.

00:04:08 **Gisèle**

I think for me I was actually... I was married. Once I graduated from undergrad, I was living a pretty independent life and my husband was... at the time he was out of work. This was right after September 11th. I was working in the mail room [then]. I reported to work on September 11th, and they sent me home, because they were like, "We don't know what's going on." So, they did send me home that day. But when I graduated from Berkeley, it was like I had all these friends who actually didn't go to college right away [after high school], and they worked [in] dot-coms [a company that conducts most of its businesses on the Internet, usually through a website on the World Wide Web that uses the popular top-level domain ".com" (Wikipedia)], because, people my age, as we were leaving high school, the dot-coms really wanted young people who knew how to use computers. So, I kind of felt foolish actually going and pursuing my degree because I had all these friends who were making a lot of money, having gone straight to work at different dot-coms. But then by the time I was graduating [from college], the economy was in very bad shape. I had this job in acquisitions, I became a staff member, like [a] career staff member in acquisitions. And it was just clear to me not to give up a good paying job while I went to library school.

I very much did want to become a librarian. So, kept that job. And I also taught French night school, which helped. It did help me to get a job, the job in the Media Resources Center, because for that I was doing a lot with video. We used the "French in Action" series. But I was also doing these fun things like making recordings to help people with their pronunciation, right? Like how to do French vowels. And there was a professor I had worked with, Françoise Sorgen-Goldschmidt, who had inspired this for me. She was my hero in my undergrad days. So, it's a very circuitous way in which all these interests of mine aligned. I kept teaching French, kept working in the Library. I did have some flexibility. I think they gave me, like, a couple hours

maybe where I could do schoolwork on the clock. But I remember there were times where I was very tired. I can remember one day being at my desk and just kind of holding my head up, and letting myself take a little nap. I was tired. Yeah.

00:07:27 **Ann**

Okay. I'm not supposed to insert myself, but there's a particular CD that Peter [Ann's husband] used to listen to when I was upstairs working [on getting my MLIS], and I still can't hear it, because it's like "The CD of Loneliness." Oh boy.

00:07:45 **Gisèle**

There's a Dave Brubeck CD that I listened to, to get myself through library school. Because it's so energetic that when I listen to it now, it... It's bittersweet. Like, there are fond memories with it, too, and it's just a beautiful album, but, yeah, there's the traumas there.

00:08:08 **Ann**

Thank you for that, because I haven't talked to many people that actually did the MLIS as they were already in a library career. That's really cool. So, as you think back over all that time—and I feel like I would include the staff time... this project [is] specifically aimed at librarianship, because I kind of came into it with personal interests about some aspects of it, but I'm interested in all your time in a library. What would you kind of say are the bigger changes that happened over that time, or the things you had to adjust the most to, or however you want to think about it?

00:08:57 **Gisèle**

When I talk about my librarian career, I generally tend to focus on my time with media, and so thinking about this media portion, when I came into the Media Resources Center, there were very... The entire VHS and DVD collection was there. The first really interesting projects I worked on were around identifying our most heavily used titles, because those were the titles that we were going to invest in to stream, [and for which] we would do that technical work, the licensing agreements and coming up with terms that work both for libraries and for distributors. So, I think that initial phase of streaming was really about defining models that could work, because there was an awareness that if we bought streaming access to a title, it might be that we would never buy the film again. The way that independent educational media works is [that] these independent distributors tend to have titles in their catalog that really hold legs, and that are kind of their money makers, and it allows them to take a great amount of risk in buying films or

signing agreements for films that won't have a huge audience but that are very important, both for scholars and for institutions to have access to.

So, there was this awareness that there was a huge disruption coming to the marketplace because VHS and DVDs, they just don't last in library conditions. There's this re-buying that happens. So, there was that phase which I think was interesting. But the biggest disruption was, was certainly Kanopy PDA [Kanopy is an on-demand streaming video platform for public and academic libraries (Wikipedia)]. I say that there is a scar on our collection from when Berkeley took on this Kanopy PDA platform. Because in those first years of PDA where it was kind all... It was open season on PDA and...

[00:11:50](#) **Ann**

Can I ask you what PDA is? Sorry?

[00:11:52](#) **Gisèle**

Oh yes. PDA is patron-driven acquisition.

[00:11:56](#) **Ann**

Oh, of course. Okay.

[00:11:57](#) **Gisèle**

Sorry, for media. No, that's fine, me and my letter soup. Stop me anytime. So yeah, patron-driven acquisition for Kanopy was—once four plays of 30 seconds of video. So, once we hit four plays of a person watching a video for 30 seconds, it triggered a one-year license which was \$150.

[00:12:24](#) **Ann**

That's a very low bar.

[00:12:28](#) **Gisèle**

It's a very low bar. I know how many people are enthusiastic media users at Berkeley, right? Because we had [already] been streaming for... at that point, I'd been working with our streaming collections for almost ten years. So, I knew that we just didn't have the money to pay for what the demand would be. I had really advised against that approach. While I was on maternity leave... I [am] just going to say it... An AUL [Associate/Assistant University Librarian] at the time—do not stop the recording, please capture this—an AUL at the time came

to an agreement with the vendor, and basically when I returned told me, “We're doing this thing.”

[00:13:29](#) **Ann**

So, I'm making a screaming face right now.

[00:13:33](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah [laughs]. And the fact that I can smile, it's taken time, there's been healing. So, it was very difficult. It was a very difficult time. And in my personal life, I had a newborn baby. I had a newborn baby, and people who didn't know anything about media distribution markets, about how media was being used on campus. Me, myself, I was a national leader, very active in ALA [American Library Association], recognized by my colleagues, very accomplished. Well, I'm modest too, apparently. But you know, I think now I see it. Now I can really fully see these things, but at the time it was just extremely demoralizing, and confusing, and I think confusing to my national colleagues too, because they knew that I was very passionate about educating people around what the expense of patron-driven acquisition was. So I looked almost either like a hypocrite, or a person who was maybe unwell, that Berkeley would engage in patron-driven acquisition with Kanopy.

At the same time, now, looking back, it was a failure in that we used a lot of money... However, what we got from that was some data where we could see, “Okay, what we could afford would be...”—because the dashboard for Kanopy is very good—“What we could afford would be more along the line of like 10 plays at two minutes.” So, I had some good data to make advocacy, like, “Are you willing to make these changes?” and if not, we might have to take a different approach. The approach we've had since then has been essentially firm ordering [buying individual titles rather than relying on packages from vendors], and I think it did lead to really coming up with a media spending plan that put our values out very clearly and was also scalable. So, I feel much more confident [that] today, if we were to lose X portion of our budget, I would know the steps I would need to take to go on. So, it [was] a very difficult time, but I learned so much from it too, both as an individual, but also about our users and about the collection.

[00:16:55](#) **Ann**

And my guess is that you're then able to help others in your network. Like, “Okay, for a lot of reasons we went that route, and this is what you might be able to expect.”

[00:17:05](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah. And there were some moments that were scary too, because as those of us who were PDA survivors were coming out of it, we were also having discussions of like, “Okay, there's case law”, talking about these issues we have to think about, like RICO [Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act]. We could be criminally liable if we're... depending on what we're trying to do. So, our focus was very much around just kind of elevating how costs had gotten out of control, why we felt they had gotten out of control, and advocating with the vendor, saying, in this market, we have a history. We want the distributors to do well. Because when distributors fail, films go out of print and our users suffer. So how do we get to a market that's more sustainable, where institutions still have some curatorial power to buy from the big hitters, but also the independent distributors. I think things have been going better, but it's the same challenges everywhere. Not enough money and a lot of content, a lot of needs.

[00:18:31](#) **Ann**

I'm feeling stunned, I have to tell you. The whole time you're talking, I'm feeling there's so many correlations with the data world, where you're dealing with vendors who may not be focused on the academic market. [And] there's incredible demand. [Even] if you had infinite resources, you still would not meet the demand. Almost every day there's a new thing being asked for. But also, your role in doing the licensing is... because the Scholarly Communications Office [has] been expanding and getting great, [has] great kind of skill sets, but you had to have a lot of that early on. That's pretty amazing.

[00:19:19](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah. And for that I want to do like, a total shout out to my dad. My dad was a sales guy. He worked for Motorola, and he sold police and fire radios. At Motorola, like, the inventor of the cell phone worked there. So, [my dad] shared a lunchroom [with]—he calls him Marty, but I think he prefers to be known as Martin Cooper—the inventor of the cell phone. So I had in my dad, like, he was a techie guy. He had the bricks. He had the first cell phones, and he sold some of the first cell phones to people. I just knew from being around him, I knew what sales guys, or, I should say sales people—but at the time, sales guys—I know what sales people have to do. They're driven by quotas they have to meet. If they don't make these things, it can be devastating. Has a big impact on you [personally]. It's very different from the stability that we enjoy in academia. And I think probably, if I'm really thinking about it, probably some of my dad's roller coasters around quotas [meant] I wanted something that I knew would be more stable. It means,

I think, in talking to vendors, I know that they will make accommodations to get the sale and to be confident about that, but also [I try] to value their time, I don't like to waste a vendor's time. I try to be as forthright with them as I can while also being a good steward for universities' funds, or for the people's funds. But I like talking to vendors, I enjoy [it].

[00:21:38](#) **Ann**

If they're smart at all about their product, and who they're selling to, they should know that you have this network, and that people are looking at what you and Berkeley are doing. So, I don't know if that's reflected in your conversations, but they should.

[00:21:57](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah. And we at Berkeley, we have great buying power too, and we have our name. And so that's how that's always going to be part of the negotiation.

[00:22:10](#) **Ann**

Can I ask a different question still related to this though? Because this is like monumental, this whole story, and I didn't really know about it, so I'm fascinated. So, I'm thinking of my time at Berkeley, and when people take leaves [of absence] and how the leaves get covered and stuff like that. You know, other people taking maternity leaves, I don't want to say names, but... of course there's no money to pay outside interim people. But in your case, and I think, for example for our data librarian's case, if that person took a leave, or [also] someone in scholarly communication, someone with very, very specialized knowledge, where things could go really badly if the right decision is not made...How could there not be some other like, solution? Like, we'll pay someone at Stanford or something to consult with us on this thing that we... my jaw is dropping a little bit.

[00:23:25](#) **Gisèle**

No, I think it's important to be clear on this topic. We had interim people in place. Their focus was really on the public service component of things, like in the day to day, keeping things running. I think the gravity of starting a PDA platform, or really taking on any kind of like database subscription that is basically like a, a permanent commitment—it probably would have been inappropriate for a person on an interim basis to make that selection. The person who was filling in at the time was Michele McKenzie, so, an accomplished professional who [already] was my right hand, thought partner and buddy in navigating these issues. Michele wasn't consulted about it, and I think I had been clear, quite clear. Like when Kanopy first did a vendor

visit with us, the aspect ratio on their digitized video was wrong. I gave them, [at] the first meetings we had, pointers on what they might consider doing. It was just [that] the person working in collections at the time was very excited about the platform. I think it was a genuine excitement about the platform, which is a great platform. People love to use it.

[00:25:12](#) **Ann**

“What could go wrong?”

[00:25:13](#) **Gisèle**

I think she felt, “What could go wrong?” and like Gisèle's got some backward thoughts about this thing and we're just going to tell Gisèle, “This needs to happen.” It hurt a lot at the time, but I hold no ill will towards the person for it at all.

[00:25:48](#) **Ann**

Did they ever say you were right?

[00:25:55](#) **Gisèle**

No. And really, Jo Anne [Newyear Ramirez] and Susan [Edwards] were very helpful in getting... We now have great funding for media. Today. We don't know what the future holds for us, but like in the past...

[00:26:18](#) **Ann**

Maybe that's another data [point]. I mean, I'm sure that helped in a way.

[00:26:22](#) **Gisèle**

It did help, in a sad way. Yes. It very much did. And that's what I hope, in my career I would be judged for. I don't know that I'm going to be, I don't know. I mean, I think it's already shown in my dossiers and in my reviews that we did have this problem. It was a big problem. And if I had been, solely, personally financially responsible for the problem, I would have hoped that there would have been some kind of, I don't know that punitive [is the right word], but I would have hoped that there would have been a talk with a person who had wasted this... Or, not wasted this much money, but overspent by like threefold, because that is what happened. Right? So it was a big financial mess.

[00:27:24](#) **Ann**

I mean, not even to do a pilot...

[00:27:29](#) **Gisèle**

I mean it was, it was.

[00:27:35](#) **Ann**

Oops, that was the pilot?

[00:27:40](#) **Gisèle**

But I think the portion that was ill advised was not capping it. And you know, if I'm gonna hold myself responsible for something, it may be that I was so adamant like, “No, we can't do this”, that I was not maybe included in the discussion of like, “Okay, if we do this, what barrier, what guardrails are we going to put in place, so this does not totally go off the rails?” And this is maybe why I'm such an advocate for balancing both the user and the staff people at the same time. Once you put out this like PDA model, “Okay, this is all available to you”, you then have all your instructors are building their courses around it, of course. And students are building projects around it. So, you can't pull the rug out from under people. I think the approach that we've always taken is, what you're trying to do first is core collection for instruction, and for research. We already knew what people are very reliant on. Anyway, I could talk about this for like 12 hours.

[00:29:08](#) **Ann**

It's also fascinating. I suddenly had something coming into my brain like, okay, we're not really talking about change. We're just talking about this fascinating example that many people don't get to see. I'm kind of thrilled that we captured it.

[00:29:19](#) **Gisèle**

But I mean that is probably for my domain, for my specialization, that was the biggest change.

[00:29:35](#) **Ann**

That was a real inflection point...

[00:29:39](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah, that change, that really changed a market.

[00:29:43](#) **Ann**

[And it] had big changes on your work. I mean, big time.

[00:29:50](#) **Gisèle**

Yes. And, I would say, my day to day. There was a moment where I found out that a colleague had passed away, and I was emotional, I started crying. My daughter, who was maybe four, she came, she came in, and she said, “Oh Mama, what did Kanopy do now?” [they laugh.]

[00:30:15](#) **Ann**

Oh no. That’s the saddest moment ever.

[00:30:23](#) **Gisèle**

I know. Yeah, My poor daughter thinks I’m... that this vendor would...

Ann

Evil Kanopy.

Gisèle

[This vendor] she can name by name, has done something else to her dear mother. So yeah, it was a big change.

[00:30:44](#) **Ann**

Well, I have a few other questions, but I think I’ll let them go. So, tracking towards the later part of your career, you started taking on management roles, interim director roles. How did that transition take place and what did that feel like?

[00:31:08](#) **Gisèle**

When I was first asked to do it—because I’m very happy as a film and media librarian, and I have national advocacy work related to exemptions for our users that I’m very passionate about, so that’s what I want to keep working for—my boss, Nicole [Brown] was going on maternity leave herself, and when she asked me [to be interim], I said, “Oh, I think so-and-so might be much more interested in this opportunity than me... It’s just not been something I’ve been that interested in, being in management, or on the management track.” And she said, “No, this would just be for you. This would only be an opportunity for you”. I think more than anything, having had that experience of going out on leave myself, I wanted to be there for my colleagues and for my boss who—and this isn’t just cheap talk at all—but Nicole has just been a great colleague and boss and mentor to me, [and] has helped me to grow in many ways. I just wanted to keep the shop, mind the shop for Nicole, and weather that storm.

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It's an interesting institution, I think, to be at that level of management. There's a lot that comes at you that I think our middle managers or our division heads don't necessarily get credit for, what they take in and how they shield us from things. So that was just a really fascinating perspective to have. That iceberg thing: there's so many things that are going on on a daily basis that we don't even know about. I guess [we should show] a little love for our division heads, for what they go through. Yeah. And I think it was it that Nicole's leave coincided with the start of some health challenges for me, so it was a bit of a whirlwind. But, you know, my instruction colleagues are just amazing. They're just very caring and they're teachers. So, when you think about teachers, teachers can do anything, and they've got each other's backs. And they're very loving and kind and supportive. So, I enjoyed that time, but I also I was glad when it came to an end, to be honest [laughs]. Yeah, I'm a worker. I like to do things.

[00:34:53](#) **Ann**

[And], you were doing your same job too. I mean, you already had a complete job, and so...

[00:34:58](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah. Yeah.

[00:35:02](#) **Ann**

Well, thank you for doing that. Then another question I have is, a lot of the people that I've been talking to have been subject liaisons. And I feel like your job is really interesting because you kind of are a subject liaison because film studies is a thing, but you also are what the literature calls a functional librarian. So [for example], I send people to you who want to show a film in a sociology class. You're handling this whole other thing. How do those balance? And do you [have] concern about the liaison part? Are they trying to suck you into the functional part? Because no one else can do your functional part. Not that anybody else really can do your liaison part, but you get what I'm saying?

[00:36:01](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah. I do definitely think that the functional part is more at the forefront of what I do, and I guess maybe my identity as a librarian. I think, too, [in] my subject areas, which also includes journalism, they're very much focused on the format. So even in my liaison work, most of my work with the faculty I'm liaison to is still also around the [media] format. I am sometimes surprised by [it]. I don't think I give preferential [treatment] when I'm buying film. I do think very globally around, across campus. And I think some of that is informed maybe by the work

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that I've done with American Cultures [UC Berkeley's American Cultures Center], that I do have some really strong relationships with our Ethnic Studies faculty and instructors and grad students... Probably the areas that do maybe get the short end of the stick are in the sciences. And I know definitely in business, so much of the collection is just very critical, I guess, of business. That's something that Hilary [Schiraldi] and I have talked about is, when we've tried to get things, it's like, "Oh, this is not friendly. Much of this is not friendly treatment."

But I think for the most part, probably the functional is more at the forefront of my mind, I think because my departments are so focused on the format as well. I've never gotten a complaint of, like, "You're not focused enough on the books." I do think, too, all the departments are pretty focused on instruction. Like the research methods classes that we're focused on, and the thesis classes that I very much enjoy. I like teaching.

[00:38:45](#) **Ann**

Actually, can I ask just quickly, because I've always wondered this... Why [is] your subject area, or liaison connection, with Social Sciences and not Arts and Humanities? Do you know how that...?

[00:39:00](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah, there have been different points where they talked about that, about that question and switching back and forth. There was a point at which for film, I was with Arts and Humanities, so I would go to them. There was a point where we could do special funding. It was a slightly different process from what we have now. And so, there was a point at which I was almost double dipping. I'd go both places. But then definitely with Kanopy, Susan [Edwards, then head of the Social Sciences Division] was a good partner in advocating for more funding and helping to make sense of that whole thing, and so at that point, I don't want to say that I hitched my wagon more to Social Sciences, but it just became more clear that was where the fund management role should be. I'm not sure that I have that timing exactly accurate.

[00:40:15](#) **Ann**

But you played a direct role in it, sounds like.

[00:40:18](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah. There were discussions around where should this live.

[00:40:23](#) **Ann**

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So, even just from all of this conversation so far, I'm really sensing you having to step up to so many different changes over your time. I mean, even the fact that you started out in acquisitions, you didn't start out [in] film and media studies, and you developed into this national expert on it. And many people have not really had any direct answer to this question, but I'm going to ask it anyway. When you see a change coming at you, like, "Okay, now I've accepted this interim manager role", or "Now I'm going to be on this international committee, and I'm not quite up to speed", or "Now this vendor is giving me this new subscription package, and I'm not interested as much in it, but it's kind of the way things are going if I want that content", like all those kinds of things. How do you set yourself up for those changes?

00:41:27 **Gisèle**

Yeah, it's interesting because the answer might be different... well, maybe not. I was going to say, the answer might be different whether it's like an internal change, like a library or campus change, or if we're dealing with a vendor. So, I think Kanopy sticks out because it was one time where I really tried to put my foot down. I would say when I started in library school, they told us that in the next five years, 90% of the field will have retired or some—I don't remember exactly what, but it was like—in 10 years, it's going to be a totally different profession because all these people will have retired. And, I think there was the economic downturn. I think there was, at the campus level, there was the Enron crisis, right? [The Enron scandal was an accounting scandal sparked by American energy company Enron Corporation filing for bankruptcy after news of widespread internal fraud became public (Wikipedia).] People literally saw their 403Bs [retirement savings] just vanish in front of their eyes because campus was so heavily invested in Enron. It was devastating for people.

So, I did see a lot of people retire, and yet it wasn't quite as many as they foresaw when I was in library school. But, what I saw sometimes in people as they were approaching retirement, was there was two ways you could go. You could take this approach of, like, "I am now thinking about my legacy, and I see the people who are coming after me, and I believe in them wholeheartedly and I want to encourage them and support them." I was very fortunate to have people who had that kind of mindset. But I could also see these people sometimes, who I respected very much, who I knew trusted me very much, kind of put their feet down in weird ways over things that were just inevitable. And so, I love Gary [Handman] deeply, with all my heart, but I would be putting VHS tapes on trucks to go to NRLF [the Northern Regional Library Facility, now called Systemwide Library Facility-North, is a high-density storage site for infrequently used items in the University of California Libraries system], and [they were chosen]

by metrics that we had agreed upon, totally agreed upon. And he would be following behind me. He'd be pulling them off the truck. “Oh, not this one. Oh, no. Not this”

[00:44:19](#) **Ann**

Oh [laughs].

[00:44:19](#) **Gisèle**

“Oh, no. There's nothing else like this. Somebody's gonna need this.” And, I love the man. And yet he was driving me crazy because it was like, we agreed this thing hasn't been used in 10 years. It can go to NRLF, where it'll be climate controlled. It's gonna be better taken care of. And he just couldn't do it. I know that's been very long winded, but I have tried to ride that balance knowing there are things that I know because I have been doing this for so long, but also, like, try not to be blinded by that. I've done it better sometimes than others. Going back to the Kanopy thing, if I hadn't put my foot down so hard, I probably would have been in the room for more things, and I know that.

[00:45:20](#) **Ann**

That would be a really hard realization because I think the putting down of your foot was an important final step after a series of very, very well-informed calculations.

[00:45:35](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah.

[00:45:36](#) **Ann**

But they couldn't get the calculation. They didn't get what led into [it].

[00:45:40](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah.

[00:45:41](#) **Ann**

“Why is she being so intransigent?”

[00:45:43](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah.

[00:45:44](#) **Ann**

You know.

[00:45:45](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah. And some of that, I think for me, I have not always been the best storyteller. And I don't think I told that story well. I think I was very focused in my area, and very focused on my users, very focused on my goals, and not so much focused on telling the story in a way that other people can understand. And it's a difficult one to tell, because it's so different from day to day library work.

[00:46:22](#) **Ann**

Yeah. Although I will say in your defense—defense, isn't the right word, but you know what I mean—that the whole point of you being in that job is that you're the one with the expertise. Because the worlds at Berkeley are so deep and specific that unless you are immersed in that world, you cannot just come in for a half hour meeting and get what's involved. So that's the whole point for having librarians that are as skilled as we are.

[00:46:55](#) **Gisèle**

I think it's important to remember at the time, I was not a librarian.

[00:47:01](#) **Ann**

Thank you for that reminder. It's very important to remember that. And actually, that kind of recasts the story.

[00:47:12](#) **Gisèle**

Very much so. So, nationally, I think all my colleagues thought of me as a librarian. I think the typical person on the street would have thought of me as a librarian. But I did not. I was [not].

[00:47:29](#) **Ann**

And your CV for that time period, reads... I looked at the title and I thought, "This title doesn't say capital L Librarian."

[00:47:40](#) **Gisèle**

No.

[00:47:41](#) **Ann**

That's a whole other thing then.

[00:47:45](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah.

[00:47:45](#) **Ann**

Thank you for making that point. Oh boy.

[00:47:53](#) **Gisèle**

I know, I know. And I'm...

[00:47:56](#) **Ann**

We're kind of like looking at each other with understanding...

[00:47:59](#) **Gisèle**

We're looking at each other. But I mean, I think for the tape, it's so hard. I know it's not a tape, but we'll call it that. So, I had opportunities. Many people gave me the advice, "You have to leave here, because you can't go from being a staff person to a librarian. Like, you just can't, you got to go somewhere else." But for me, the Bay Area's home. I live three blocks from my parents and where I grew up, I live three blocks from where I went to elementary school and high school. My kids go there now. I wasn't gonna get a job across the country. It just wasn't... I don't begrudge anyone who does that, because I've been very privileged in some ways to have gotten to stay, and I have a very nice pension. So, there were tradeoffs that happened.

I think that there are times where I can look back on it, and it sometimes felt exploitative. But then when I look back on it, I also had a lot of opportunities and mentors who believed in me and helped me. So, the reality is, I think it was a career that had a little bit of both. I think I was able to get the job because I had opportunities to do things that other people at other institutions might not have had. And I was able to stay with my family and in an area that I love.

[00:50:24](#) **Ann**

I was just going to say, and again inserting myself a little bit, there's a lot of reasons people have to stay in a particular place. When I graduated from library school, I didn't have a library job. It took me two years to get one, because I had to be in Seattle, because my husband's self-employed. You can't pick up a 30-year business and move it to another city. You have to continue [in] the place that you've built it. So that geographic limitation is a big deal.

[00:50:56](#) **Gisèle**

And there was a time, let's see... so much of this hinges around the same kind of time when my son was born, which is about ten years ago. I had actually given notice that I would be leaving. There was a point where I was paying child care for two kids, so I was paying more in child care than I was making. And it was like, "This doesn't make sense." And it did feel like, "What am I doing?" It was very painful and very emotional, but it was like, "I don't think I can do this anymore." My son was about a year [old]. It was a lot of Kanopy stress. Like, I'm paying a lot of money to have this experience that is not positive. I had gotten a position at Alameda Free Library. Jennifer [Dorner] was my boss at the time. And it was painful and it was emotional. I hope she won't mind me saying this, but I think it was emotional for her, too. She did not want to see me go. And she said, "Well, maybe we can post a job and you could apply for that, and we could see what happens." And the pension is such [an important factor]. Because I have the old pension. It was like, if I leave, I can't, I won't come back. Because if I leave, then I'm under the new pension agreement.

[00:52:38](#) **Ann**

Yes... I hope you still have the old one...?

[00:52:43](#) **Gisèle**

I do still have the old. I do still have the old pension because... I hope she won't mind me saying this, but Beth [Dupuis] worked with me to keep me on. So Beth made some accommodations for work from home for me to be part time and work from home so that we could get the childcare to a place where, you know, when Albert was a little older, I was able to come back. And so, um...

[00:53:23](#) **Ann**

Oh. Ah. So I'm gonna get emotional.

I mean, it was so good for you, but so smart of them. Because when were they ever gonna get another Gisèle? They were not, and they knew it. I mean, I give them a lot of credit for knowing it.

[00:53:44](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah. So... So Beth always has a piece of my heart.

[00:53:51](#) **Ann**

Yeah. And see, this is the thing where I'll tell you, Gisèle... And this can be for the tape... (I'm so identifying myself as a boomer, when I keep saying, the tape, the tape!) Sorry.

[00:54:07](#) **Gisèle**

I said the tape, too.

[00:54:10](#) **Ann**

Right...

[Anyway,] when you read the other interviews, when they all get posted, you'll be like, “Oh, I want to see what that person says.” And that person says—because of course, you know them all—there's so many behind the scenes stories and decision points that I just had no idea that my colleagues were making, but also that administration had to make, that I hadn't realized. So, when you said that thing about what comes at you as a division head that you would never have known, I mean, I can only guess, having been a manager back when I was a medical librarian. It's such a complex organization, and it's like everybody has these stories. But I'm so, so, so glad they worked with you.

[00:55:08](#) **Gisèle**

Yes. And David Eifler deserves some credit, too, because I had told him what my plan was, and he said, “Don't do it. Your son is very young now, and I know you feel like you need to do this, but you'll lose your mind at the public library.” [This] is no disrespect to public librarians. I enjoyed some of the work very much there, and very much enjoyed my colleagues, but I think David just knew from working with me that there was an intellectual component and this national component that very much motivated me, that it's just not the same. It's not the same in public library work.

[00:55:57](#) **Ann**

Your academic path was already so invigorating to you.

[00:56:01](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah.

[00:56:02](#) **Ann**

Like the Kanopy thing was a mess, yes, but the path was not a mess.

[00:56:06](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah. Right. And, to engage in the Kanopy battle the way that I did, you only do that when you really care, when it's really important to you.

[00:56:21](#) **Ann**

Wow. Well, there was a question here about, have you ever thought about leaving?

[00:56:26](#) **Gisèle**

I know. I saw that one. Oh, I gotta give my shout outs to Beth Dupuis and to David and to Jennifer, too.

[00:56:35](#) **Ann**

That's awesome. Okay, so I'm going to ask you another question, which I have not actually asked other people because it just seemed like... Not necessarily like it was just going to go off into a tangent, but I feel like with your position, it's very connected. Which is—what are you seeing as the changes coming with AI? Because AI and film... [For] everybody else, AI seems to be not coming into our content decisions, it's coming into our instruction decisions. But for you it's actually affecting, I would believe, some content decisions. But I might be wrong. I'm interested in your viewpoint.

[00:57:32](#) **Gisèle**

I think that AI, when we're talking from like a functional format basis, is actually pretty exciting. Like from some of the visual analysis and searching in video. So, a few years ago it became possible to search a video through transcript syncing. And it's funny that that didn't cross my mind as one of the biggest changes because it's actually very exciting. It saves an instructor. When we think about [how we] used to fast forward the tape, and you'd be playing the tape while fast forwarding... [it] was this whole weird thing. It was not good for the tape, not good for people. Takes a long time. You tend to miss it—it's really hard to like find a specific clip. And so, transcript syncing, which is grounded in, I guess, maybe language manipulation, because you're searching the transcript and it's synced to the video—that was a big breakthrough that has been very handy. So I think now with AI, there are these promises of some of the research work that David Bamman [a faculty member of the UC Berkeley Information School who studies natural language processing] [has] been doing around predictability... Like if these terms are in a film, there will [probably] be like a weapon or a gun in a scene. So, there's some exciting things there. Your question around acquisition decision changes is an interesting one, but I think the

market has changed so much that there are very few institutions that are really focused on kind of cherry-picking titles. I don't know if that makes sense—that really what we're licensing are large packages.

[00:59:47](#) **Ann**

Okay. That makes sense.

[00:59:48](#) **Gisèle**

And the rest is very much driven by instructor needs. So, AI might significantly influence what an instructor is made aware of, and it might influence how the films are made. But in terms of my curatorial practices, I don't think I ever could have predicted that we would be buying film the way we are right now. That was a surprise to me. To me looking back, it's very much driven, I think, by the PDA disruption. And you're seeing that on the book side of things too, with like Clarivate not selling stand-alone titles anymore [buying a book from them is buying a subscription to it, not a persistent copy]. That's a practice that they have had for quite some time with film. Not for every film, but there were several distributors where you couldn't get titles outside of the subscription package.

[01:01:04](#) **Ann**

And to me, for someone with your deep knowledge and expertise to say, “I did not see that coming”, it's kind of an amazing thing about change. It's like, “Okay, if you did not see that coming, nobody saw that coming.” So, it does make you wonder—not to paint them as Machiavellian because it's all an ecosystem—but “What are the publishers sitting out there cooking up now?” Like, there's some new thing that we're not... It's going to hit...

[01:01:38](#) **Gisèle**

I think they're like, who can they eliminate to save costs? AI has already made that clear. Right? Movies written by AI.

[01:01:50](#) **Ann**

Well, that's what I was thinking, about content.

[01:01:54](#) **Gisèle**

Publishers, they're just gonna write the books themselves.

01:02:01 **Ann**

“What could go wrong?”

01:02:08 **Gisèle**

“What could go wrong?” Right. I think that's what we've seen. Like, what could the internet [bring], right? But we're [also] seeing that more just on the open web. You know, things that are clearly written clickbait, written for people, that's clearly AI.

01:02:18 **Ann**

Thank you for that. That was so interesting. I think it's going to be really fun to get to that part of the transcript and be like, “That's so cool.”

01:02:31 **Gisèle**

And hopefully it would be fun too, to be totally proven wrong. Somebody prove me wrong.

01:02:38 **Ann**

Please! But on a different topic, I'm very, very interested, and I know this from how you mentored me when I first came, [in] you as a mentor. You've had a lot of mentorship, you've been a mentor. Could you talk about that a little bit? And like any kind of change-related... I don't know if it has a sort of a change component to it, but I tie it to the question, what would you advise the next generation of librarians as they're moving forward?

01:03:17 **Gisèle**

I think with mentorship, some of it is helping people to see some of the things they just don't know about themselves. Helping them to see where they're great. And also pointing out to them maybe some of the potholes that might lie in the road at our institution. There can be many of them. And I think sometimes there have been some points where I've maybe struggled with this. And I'm probably also feeling very sentimental because [a colleague] who has been my right hand buddy for almost a decade now, has just moved on to another position. I think there's times where things I worry about in mentorship are like, “When are you making the potholes that people might run into worse by pointing them out? Are you just kind of reinforcing these problematic issues?” And also, striking that right balance between seeing somebody who's maybe cozy in their position, so happy with where they are right now, but knowing that they may be called to do something different and something more challenging.

I don't know. I never taught my kids how to ice skate, but I would imagine it would be like putting ice skates on your kid, and then at some point in time you gotta push them on the ice. Right? I guess that's how you teach people... that must be how you teach people to ice skate. I haven't taught a kid to drive yet. Probably a similar thing. Well, I did take my younger sister out driving...

I think sometimes when people, they're enjoying what they're doing, but you can see [they] have these talents and these gifts that can be applied, and definitely in the library. There have been times where it would have been in my unit's best interest to keep a person in the work that they're doing, but knowing the opportunities that I've had and the excitement and interest and like, amazing things that have come out of some challenges... I think there was a point around when I got my full librarian dossier where my thinking went more to really, what's in the best interest of my colleagues and our users? So, kind of thinking more about the library rather than my own operation.

[01:07:09](#) **Ann**

Although I know you're happy for them that they got this job.

[01:07:13](#) **Gisèle**

I'm very happy for them, and happy for the library, and I'm happy for me. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. They're [still here at Berkeley]. They're here, and it's great.

[01:07:25](#) **Ann**

But it's a big role change.

[01:07:27](#) **Gisèle**

That's a big role change, and it's made my personal life harder, because I'm filling in for them now. I'm gonna have to train somebody new. But I do think that that's maybe the mark of a full librarian... or at least for me, this kind of mark of excellence is that I can see that there's something bigger happening here. I will want to be all in on that bigger thing, rather than maybe what might benefit me most individually. That sounds so sappy, but having that big picture, what's the best for the library and globally, colleagues and globally, [and] our users, more than [for] me.

[01:09:09](#) **Ann**

And then for individual people coming into the field. Any comments?

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[01:09:15](#) **Gisèle**

Definitely, going back to my own beginning, don't go to library school without working in a library. I think some of my cringiest moments of librarianship were listening to people who weren't working in a library at library school. Because it was like, you have no idea what's going on. I think in some ways that's why I've been a good liaison to journalism, because journalism, much like librarianship, it's a very, like, practical degree. It's not in a vacuum. Like, you're gonna have to go out and you're gonna have to do some very difficult work that you're not going to be paid well [for]. There's going to be a lot of... There's going to be forces working against you. So definitely, to young folks, don't go to library school without having worked in a library.

I think, too, it is service work that is about helping people, and so taking joys in other people's successes and, more than [sharing] knowledge all the time, it's almost more like sharing skill sets with people, and helping people to be successful, and [realizing] their goals and their hopes and dreams. I think that's what I love the most about it, is in reference, and in coaching people you're sometimes opening a window, or opening their eyes to something, or pointing to another option. If that sounds exciting to people, then it's probably a good field for them. There are many adventures in librarianship that you can't even begin to imagine.

[01:11:28](#) **Ann**

Oh, you said a mouthful. I think that can be the subtitle for this project: "There are many adventures in librarianship that you can't even imagine." [Laughs]

[01:11:38](#) **Gisèle**

Yeah.

[01:11:40](#) **Ann**

Love it. Well, I have come to what, for me, I feel like that's... I'm looking over at my questions and really, really everything I feel like you've touched on. So, the last question is, how would you like your work to be remembered? But before we go to that question, is there any other thing that I didn't ask you about that you wish I had asked you that you wanted to talk about?

[01:12:11](#) **Gisèle**

Kind of stopping... looking at the questions here.... I think we pretty much. I think we covered it well.

[01:12:26](#) **Ann**

I think so, too, personally.

[01:12:29](#) **Gisèle**

What would I like to be remembered for...

[01:12:32](#) **Ann**

Or how would you like your work to be remembered? Either way, those are a little different, but I like them both.

[01:12:38](#) **Gisèle**

I think I'd like for the next generation of librarians and library workers to feel like, "Oh, Gisèle left us in a good place to keep this going." I want the next generation to feel believed in, trusted, that they know... I hope they know that I have confidence in them, that I respect [them.] And I guess that whatever I'm still putting down is something that feels useful still for people to pick up, and to make their own. And to know that probably in librarianship, and certainly in media librarianship, that change is the constant. And, even for formats, the formats will keep changing in really cool and exciting ways.

[01:13:50](#) **Ann**

That's fantastic. Thank you so much. Do you feel okay with this?

[01:13:56](#) **Gisèle**

Yes, thank you.