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Authors

Glusker, Ann

Quigley, Brian

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“Librarians Navigating Change” Oral History Project

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University of California, Berkeley - Library

Berkeley, California

Contact: Ann Glusker glusker@berkeley.edu

Brian Quigley

Interviewed on May 1, 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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00:00:01 **Ann**

This is Ann Glusker interviewing Brian Quigley on May 1, 2025, for the “Librarians Navigating Change” Oral History Project. This is a remote interview. Ann is in Seattle, Washington, and Brian is in Berkeley, California.

So, how I've been starting with most people is to say, would you like to share some of your background? Whatever you feel comfortable with. But mainly the interest is, how did you come to librarianship?

00:00:48 **Brian**

Sure. I mean, that's a great question, it's an interesting question. I like to think that I'm somewhat of an accidental librarian. I will tell this story... I graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a BS in mathematics, and I went and got a job. My job title was “analyst”. It was at this company that I had been an intern at the summer before. They gave me the title analyst because they didn't really know what to do with me. I was doing lots of weird things, like looking at accounting [reports] to try to figure out what was going on with certain things [such as unexpected increases in expense categories]. But mostly I was running [charts and graphs from] spreadsheets for the higher-ups every month. That was my main job, and it was, like, directionless. I had moved back home, but all my friends were still down at U of I. And I [thought], “I really just want to go back to U of I.” I started looking around, trying to figure out how I was going to do that. This is about three months into my job that I start looking around for something.

On the one hand, I was thinking maybe I could just get a job down there, and move back and meet up with my friends. But as I was trying to figure out what I was going to do, I ran across this story that said that U of I was the number one library school in the country. I said, “huh, libraries.” I always liked doing research in libraries. I remember taking one of my friends to the library when he had a paper to do, to show him how to use the library. I was like, “Okay, maybe I'll apply for library school.”

But I had never worked in a library before, I'd only done my own research in libraries. So, I applied for library school, and—I think I may have been the only person in my class that this happened to—they called me and said, “Before we admit you, we just wanted to talk to you because your essay was a little idealistic and we want to make sure you really know what you're getting into.”

[00:03:20](#) **Ann**

Oh, my goodness! [Laughs.]

[00:03:25](#) **Brian**

So, we had a conversation. It was a good conversation. And in the end, they did decide to admit me to library school. And then, I swear, within one or two months of being in library school, I was like, “Wow, this was the best choice I could have made.”

[00:03:39](#) **Ann**

Oh, that’s so great.

[00:03:41](#) **Brian**

“This is so, so what I want to be doing.” So that's kind of how I got into libraries. Then from there, while I was in library school... I don't know how much of this history you want, but I can go over it.

[00:03:55](#) **Ann**

Whatever you feel like gives good context, or whatever you want to share, I'm interested in all of it.

[00:04:02](#) **Brian**

Even from the beginning of library school I was working in science libraries. So as a graduate student I worked at what was called the ACES Library, which was the agriculture library on campus, and then after graduation I knew I wanted to be a science librarian. After graduation I went to work at Texas A&M University, and I was their physical sciences librarian there. I worked there for a year, and then found a position at UC Berkeley in 2000. I've been at UC Berkeley ever since.

That first role was as the electronic outreach librarian in the Engineering Library. Then [I] just kind of moved on from there, became the head of the Mathematics Statistics Library, then became both that and the interim head of the Earth Sciences and Map Library, and then became the interim head of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Division [EPS]. Finally, the head [of EPS], and now the head of the Sciences Division. My career has been accumulating libraries, basically is what my career has been.

[00:05:13](#) **Ann**

This feels like the right time to insert this, although it's not actually the most important question. But I noticed that you had a four year long interim position...

[00:05:26](#) **Brian**

Yes, that's correct.

[00:05:27](#) **Ann**

How do you see that fitting into the way that library positions get shaped at Berkeley? I'm not sure quite how to put that question, because you're... The flow of your positions has been so direct, but expanding over time. I think that's a very common phenomenon for all of us, but even I was surprised to see a four-year interim.

[00:06:00](#) **Brian**

I think it was a symptom of the times. Because this was... when I first started, you know, that interim position, it was 2009. We were having the recession. There [were] a lot of cuts at the time, a lot of questions about what the future direction of the Library was going to be. So, there was a reluctance to fill that position until we had a clearer sense of what the structure was going to be moving forward, and, you know, in, what was it, I think 2012, we did the “Re-envisioning Libraries” process*. And that's really where the idea of the division structure came from, so then that interim position just got folded into the division structure.

[00:07:02](#) **Ann**

Got it, thanks. That actually makes a lot of sense. That makes me feel better about the little timeline [I gave to all the narrators] that's like, “Oh, you, you do have to pin some of these things to what's happening in the bigger world.”

[00:07:13](#) **Brian**

I don't think the Library would have a four-year interim position nowadays. I don't think that the campus might even allow them to have that long of an interim position nowadays. We usually want to try to resolve things more quickly now. But it was just the time that we were in.

[00:07:38](#) **Ann**

Thank you. So another thing that I hadn't realized that I saw on your CV, that I found really exciting in the context of this project, is that you've been on the team that does the *College &*

Research Libraries News top trends reports every two years. You've done three of those, it looks like. Am I right?

[00:08:00](#) **Brian**

I... Is that right?

[00:08:03](#) **Ann**

It looked like it. 2024, 2022 and 2020*.

[00:08:07](#) **Brian**

Yes. Three of them.

[00:08:09](#) **Ann**

So, I feel like when I'm about to ask you, what were some of the biggest changes you saw in librarianship over your 25 years at Berkeley, I feel like you're uniquely qualified to talk about that because you've just spent like eight years thinking about library trends. But are there things that you see as important ones that have happened at Berkeley during your time here?

[00:08:35](#) **Brian**

Well, changes or trends?

[00:08:37](#) **Ann**

Ah, changes. I think changes is the word I would use for me.

[00:08:41](#) **Brian**

Again, I've been here 25 years. I think we've seen a lot of changes over that time. In terms of what some of the biggest changes we've seen at Berkeley have been, certainly the move to the division structure has been a big change for us. I think it follows trends of what has happened at other libraries. I don't think we're unique in this way, but it's definitely an organizational shift. Away from more autonomous units to more centralized authority.

I think that has been a good change for us in many ways, but it's also been a very large shift for us, one that was in some ways easier for me in the sciences and especially in [the] Engineering and Physical Sciences [division], because that change came about because there were no unit heads left in Engineering and Physical Sciences. I was the only one, so it made sense to pull them together. We were down to three librarians total for all of Engineering and Physical

Sciences. We were in a position... I don't know how much of this history you want, or context, but we were in this position where I was the head of two of the units. Jean McKenzie was serving as head of two units, and Sue Koskinen was serving as the head of Physics and Astronomy. And then, Norma Kobzina passed away and she was head of the Bioscience Library. Sue Koskinen moved over to be the interim head of that library. And then Chuck Eckman left as our AUL [Associate University Librarian] for Collections, and Jean moved over to be our interim AUL for Collections. That left me and two relatively new librarians. So, it was a necessity. It was a necessity to bring us together and have us be the inaugural subject division, as Engineering and Physical Sciences. That's kind of the history there, but that's one of the big changes that we've seen.

I think collection development has changed so much in the time that I've been here, from really doing our paper slips [in order] to do title by title selection of books. But also, you know, there's been so much consolidation of the publishing industry, especially in science journals, that there were a lot of journals and journal packages that we would be managing ourselves as selectors that are now part of big packages. That's been a big change. I mean, literally when I started, there was no licensing librarian. Every selector... I don't know if every selector did it, but part of my job was to negotiate with vendors and sign licenses. Probably I shouldn't have been signing licenses. [They laugh.]

[00:12:22](#) **Ann**

It's kind of unthinkable now.

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

That was the way we did things. Because it was a new world and no one knew. No one knew what we were supposed to be doing or how we were supposed to be managing this. Thankfully, that didn't go on for too long, but somewhere around 2003 or 2004, I think we had our first licensing librarian who then took control of all that to make sure things were being done properly. But then [with] collections, we've just seen ever expanding digital collections. Back then [in] 2000 we had a lot of online collections, but things were still very much print-based. Now we have these expanding collections. So many of our journals in the sciences are part of big packages that are managed centrally and through the California Digital Library. Now so many of the big publishers, we have their e-book packages. So much of the book content that scientists need, we're getting through those packages. It's really changed how we do collection development. I think again it's a really good thing, more in this kind of idea of the packages.

There are problems with these big packages, but at the same time more institutions have more access to more content than they ever did before.

It's kind of leveled the playing field to a certain extent that many institutions have access to the same material and aren't having to necessarily rely on the big institutions like UC Berkeley to lend them the material any longer. But it, you know, it's taken some of the fun out of it too. [Ann laughs.] There was something fun about curating our collections through this title by title selection. I don't think it's a bad thing [that] we're moving away from that. But it's a change... It's a change and it's something that I enjoyed doing that I don't get to do so much anymore.

[00:14:42](#) **Ann**

Can I ask a quick clarifying question?

[00:14:43](#) **Brian**

Yes.

[00:14:44](#) **Ann**

So as a social sciences person, you know, my processes and the things that I'm looking at are different and I'm still doing slips. Maybe not as many packages, although we'll see. But the impression of those of us outside the sciences is that you all [in the sciences] have certain things that are non-negotiable that you must have for your disciplines and that you must have certain packages and it's harder to economize. Is that a correct perception?

[00:15:18](#) **Brian**

I would agree that there are core packages that we need to have, core databases and core publisher packages. And we are getting close to that point where we have trimmed so much that we're getting down to that level that it's getting hard to find things to trim any longer without cutting into our core collections in the sciences. I think the economizing happens through our collaborations, because we do so much of the collecting through Tier 1 packages and Tier 2 packages [Explanation of the University of California libraries tier system: <https://cdlib.org/services/collections/licensed/policy/tiered-approach-to-licensed-collections/>]. So, the sciences have a long history of working together on Tier 2 packages, and trying to get savings through those kinds of joint deals.

That's one of the ways that we've economized, and certain of these packages we can say, "You know what, we cannot afford to get everything from this publisher. We need to narrow it down a

bit.” And we can save a little bit of money that way. But it's a challenge. It's a challenge in that our job nowadays is really negotiating around prices for these packages, finding new kinds of content and new packages that our people need. It's less about the individual book selections, although we still have to do a bit of that as well.

One of the issues we see a lot in the sciences is [that] a lot of the content we need is recurring expenses. And what we have is pots of one-time money. How to try to make your selections within that environment? One of the ways we do that is by piloting things, so that we can package a few years together and use our one-time money to get something that's really a serial subscription. There are challenges with that, there are problems with that. Both for the Acquisitions Department to track those things, but also for us to remember when that pilot is ending so that we don't lose access without making a real decision about what's happening with it. And then also what is your budget when that pilot ends and do you have the money to continue funding it to go beyond that? So that's one of the issues that we encounter a lot nowadays in sciences. But it's this interesting thing where we kind of, we need that discretionary money to be able to buy some content, but also to help cover the inflation in our serials.

So, it's a weird balancing act that we have to deal with each year. The way we do collection development now in the sciences is different than when I first started, but it's not any easier. Right? We try to put these things in like the e-book packages and the approval plan. Things that are supposed to make collection development easier. And it does make certain things easier, but in total, what we're doing is not any easier. It's just different.

[00:19:26](#) **Ann**

Okay, thank you. I think I did kind of get you off track a little bit because I was asking about the big changes over time, and you had talked about the division structure. And then you were talking about collections. I don't know if you had anything else?

[00:19:42](#) **Brian**

I mean, gosh, there are so many changes. I would say the other two big ones I was going to mention, and I'll say them both briefly and then we can dig into them if you want, is... you know, reference services and engagement has evolved a lot since I started. And then the other thing is, since the time that I started, scholarly communications and data services have become core library functions, which... they were not even in people's mindsets when I started here.

[Well,] I shouldn't say that. There were probably little hints of it already bubbling up around places, but it wasn't anyone's core responsibility.

[00:20:29](#) **Ann**

Right. So, those are two really, really interesting things. Would you tell me more about the reference changes?

[00:20:40](#) **Brian**

When I started, most days of the week I had a two-hour shift at our reference desk in the Engineering Library. It was a busy desk, we had people coming in, we had people asking questions. We had to give that up over time, partly because we weren't really getting enough questions anymore at the desk to warrant spending the time there, but also because when you're down to three librarians across five libraries, you can't, you can't really offer reference desk hours anymore. That's when we really moved wholeheartedly to a tiered reference model in the sciences, where the student library employees at the desks are trained to answer some common questions and then refer the questions that need more expert assistance to the librarians. Which if we happen to be there, could be just calling us out from our office and if not, it's a referral to email, or an appointment. So, we've really gone from staffing reference desks to reference by email and appointment. That's, that's really what we're doing in the sciences.

[00:22:11](#) **Ann**

But that was happening well before COVID, it sounds like.

[00:22:14](#) **Brian**

Oh yeah, we had to institute that. Maybe it happened even beforehand in the Engineering Library, but certainly by the time that we formed the division, it was a necessity for us to move to that model.

[00:22:36](#) **Ann**

Yeah. Because I was still doing reference shifts in 2019 in Doe [Library].

[00:22:40](#) **Brian**

Sure. Yeah. And I should say the Bioscience Library still had reference shifts, I think, up until the pandemic, and then we just haven't brought them back.

[00:22:54](#) **Ann**

But interesting also thinking about what drove the decline in traffic?

[00:23:03](#) **Brian**

Yeah, I think a lot of it is discovery systems have improved, and the amount of information that is online has increased exponentially. So, for a lot of our people in the sciences who want to be self-sufficient as it is, they want to figure things out on their own... Having those improved discovery systems and an increase in the amount of information that's available to them, like, they can find a lot of information by themselves. Especially ready reference type information, which, when I started, we still got a lot of those kind of questions. A lot of reference questions at the time were, [for example], physical properties of different materials. And digging into our collections to find those answers for people, they can find those answers themselves for the most part nowadays.

So, you know, we have less of those kind of questions in the sciences where people just need a quick answer that they would come to a reference desk for. Now what we get are much more complex questions that come in through email or where they set up appointments. They've expanded beyond finding, you know, books and journal articles on a topic to, "I need a data set to work with. I need to figure out how to manage my citations. I need help with Overleaf to write LaTeX in Overleaf. I want to publish in a journal and I'm trying to figure out how to do this open access." Just the nature of the questions we get has changed. And if they are asking a question where they're looking for journal articles and books on a topic, it's because it is a very complex topic that they can't find the information on their own.

[00:25:16](#) **Ann**

And wasn't it interesting, when [the two of us] worked together on the Big Data project, hearing how many people used networking, Twitter and other sort of ways of connecting with each other to get the information that didn't exist before?

[00:25:34](#) **Brian**

That is true, but networks have always been a core component of information gathering in the sciences. Especially you can look at some of the older studies they did in the 80s and 90s of engineers, and their number one information source is their colleagues. Like going to their colleagues to get answers.

[00:26:01](#) **Ann**

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Yeah. Actually, physicians also. So, what am I thinking? [Laughs.] But they didn't use Twitter in the old days.

[00:26:08](#) **Brian**

No, it's true. It's a different kind of network, a much more expanded network than, than people had access to before. And then you know, with scholarly communications and data services, I mean, those have been good areas for the Library to move into and areas that made sense for the Library, areas that aligned with our values and also aligned with our skill sets, right? So, I think those have been good for the Library, but challenging. Because what we've really seen is you can have people who are experts in those areas, but we also ask liaisons, like, we have an ever-expanding set of things that liaisons have to be knowledgeable about. It just keeps getting bigger and bigger and bigger. And no one can be an expert in all of those things...

[00:27:20](#) **Ann**

[Those are] some of the truest words ever spoken. Part of why I wanted to do this project was that I came [to Berkeley] in 2019, and I had a year before COVID, and it was my first liaison job. And it was so exciting to feel that my background mattered, and helped people, because I knew my subject area, [but] I've felt like, especially since COVID, that was kind of being lost due to a lot of different understandable pressures. Were liaisons going to matter anymore, or was everything going to become functional? But... Am I thrilled that there's scholarly communications people to help me with the more esoteric parts of the questions I get? Yes, I'm thrilled. So, I don't know where things will go in terms of the balance between those two. I guess we'll see.

[00:28:13](#) **Brian**

Yeah, it's tough. I think it depends a little bit on... I think we are still making the liaison model work here at Berkeley. And I know from asking people questions... In the sciences, we have talked before, when we've lost people, is it time for us to move to a functional model? Should we be changing what our [librarian] positions are? And so far, we've still kind of tried to hold on to that liaison model. A lot of the people who come to work for us, they're like, "The reason I wanted to come to work at Berkeley is because I could still be a liaison here." I try to keep that in mind a lot as we try to think about what the future is, but... We are not there yet, but we are close to the breaking point on the liaison model, right? So, it really depends on what our budgets look like in the future and what our staffing looks like in the future, whether we can sustain that as a model.

There may be things could evolve so that it makes sense for us to move away from the liaison model to a functional model, even if we don't lose any staffing. I could definitely see things changing in such a way, with more areas that we need to move into, that [it] could happen. But I think if we lose much more staffing, it's almost inevitable.

00:29:51 **Ann**

I mean, inserting myself a little bit, you know, my job is twice as big as when I came six years ago. And so, by definition, if I keep getting additional departments to be liaison for, and get[ting] up to speed [with] the ones that I don't have as much background with, that's less service that I can offer to my original departments that are closer to my background. It is what it is. I mean, everyone's doing their best, but budget is budget and retirements are retirements. So...

00:31:40 **Brian**

Then, the other thing I wanted to talk a little bit about, the data services stuff and those changes, because that has been something that we've built on here at Berkeley. I think we moved relatively early into these areas. Maybe not as early as every institution, but we moved relatively quickly. We, a group of us, myself, Mary Ann Mahoney, Jeff Loo, and I think Noah Wittman from what would now be called Research, Teaching and Learning, but I can't remember what it was called at the time. We participated in this ARL [Association of Research Libraries] e-Science institute. This would have been around 2011, 2012. The purpose was to develop a strategic agenda for Berkeley around research data management and data services. It was this kind of process where you came together with other institutions and had discussions and then you went away and did your work—an environmental scan, interviews, all this stuff—and then you came back together to kind of share your strategic agendas and get feedback.

We got that and gave that to the administration. And then soon afterwards we had an AUL for digital initiatives hired, who started taking action on some of those [recommendations] and starting to really form our research data management program, the different kind of data services that we offer. It was really interesting to have a role in that very early planning of what our data services might look like. We already had a data librarian at that time, but this was expanding beyond the work of that person and really getting into research data management. And then of course you and I got to participate in the Ithaka Big Data report* where we did something very similar again, with environmental scanning and interviews and trying to figure out what our

recommendations would be around what the Library and campus could do to support people with big data. So that felt like a nice kind of loop for me to have been involved in that first project and then also get to be involved in that Big Data project as well.

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

I actually appreciated that the Big Data project had social science presence because it's interesting to me hearing that the sort of initial one in 2011, 2012 was e-Science, which makes sense of what I know was happening back in the day.

[00:34:52](#) **Brian**

They eventually changed the name of that institute to e-Research. But it started out as e-Science.

[00:34:58](#) **Ann**

It's really interesting. But I think it's been hard for libraries in general to figure out, you know, we're all in a university structure... And I'm seeing it with AI [artificial intelligence] now, like, well, where does AI sit? Here you have Berkeley with this very complex structure and a lot of silos and a lot of stakeholders, and I think just these things kind of are unsteady or not pinned down for a while because the territory is complicated.

[00:35:36](#) **Brian**

That was definitely true with data services, trying to figure out what the Library is going to be doing, what other units on campus are going to be doing. In the run up to developing the Berkeley Institute for Data Science, BIDS, there were all these meetings that brought together researchers and librarians and all these people on campus together to kind of talk about how we would be moving into data science areas. And I think it was really great that the Library got to be involved. We need to draw where our lines are and we need to collaborate with people on campus. But there's also this thing where if we're not moving fast enough, then some other entity on campus is going to do it, right? And so, we end up getting... the Library develops its services, but there are these other services on campus. I think maybe in the end that works out to be a good thing. The Library decides what its niche is and focuses on that, and we collaborate with these other units that are taking on other aspects of the area. But I wonder sometimes if we lose the opportunity to have more of a role in something because we've let another unit kind of develop that service.

[00:37:12](#) **Ann**

But it's so interesting about change because you can't tell at the front of it what your role is going to need to be moving forward, because it hasn't developed yet. And we're all at capacity.

[00:37:26](#) **Brian**

Yep. And that's why I say, I think in some ways it's a good thing that we've kind of developed, different units on campus develop different aspects of a new role, and the Library kind of figures out what its, what its part in that is, what it can take on, what its boundaries are.

[00:37:52](#) **Ann**

Yeah. I just got a sudden flash, though, of how very much different what we actually do is than what many people think we do. Like, I was just thinking of that thing where people aren't coming in for reference help anymore, but... it is kind of a marketing challenge, branding, whatever modern word you want to use about it.

[00:38:19](#) **Brian**

I think engagement is definitely a challenge for us in that faculty used to come into the library to check things out and photocopy journal articles and all of these things. And then they'd stop and they'd chat with you while they were there. And you could talk to them about all the new things that were going on in the library. You could help them with whatever issues they were having... Now people are coming into the library to study, and people are coming into the library to check things out, but not on the scale that we used to see. Well... I shouldn't say that, we have more visitors now than we ever had, but they're not all coming into, like, check out materials any longer. And then we are not the only ones that have taken on so much more. I feel like the faculty are much busier than when I started. The students are much busier than when I started. There are so many other things going on all the time. It is very difficult to get anyone's attention, to help them see all the different things that the library can do for them.

[00:39:44](#) **Ann**

Yes. Huge yes on that. Okay, I'm gonna just let that silence sit there for a while, while we ponder that the pace [is] increasing over time. So sort of revisiting the questions here, the question I want to ask is, you've done a lot of work across networks. In fact, I noticed that you [are] on the [Physics, Astronomy, Mathematics Community (PAM) board] of the Special Libraries Association as [the SLA] organization is disbanding, which is a very intense thing. But I'm wondering, what of the things that we've been seeing at Berkeley do you see as Berkeley-specific and what are profession-specific? [I ask because] you have a big professional network, so you

know what's happening at other places too. To me, your opinion of context at Berkeley is informed, you have a pretty good sense of what's happening field-wide in academic libraries, [so I'm just interested in] what of some of the changes you've seen feel Berkeley-specific to you versus happening across the profession. Berkeley is a challenging and, in some ways, unique environment, I find.

[00:42:34](#) **Brian**

Yeah... I don't know. That's hard to say. I mean, I can talk about things that are Berkeley-specific, but I feel like they're still all embedded in overall trends within the profession. So, we can talk about our shift to the division structure as a very Berkeley-specific thing, but it's based in the context of, organizational structures are changing across academic libraries all over the U.S., right? They're not all choosing that structure, but they're all changing their structures and figuring out new ways to lead, and operate. And I should say, just going back to one thing I said earlier that with the division structure, we moved away from more autonomous units to more centralized authority, which I do think is true, but maybe makes it sound like Berkeley has a different structure than I intend to be talking about because we are still a very collaborative organization. We are an organization where, yes, a lot of the authority is centralized, but there's a lot of opportunities for feedback before decisions are made. And librarians, even if units aren't necessarily so autonomous, librarians still retain a lot of autonomy. So, I just wanted to clarify that, because what I had said might sound different than what the reality is.

[00:44:32](#) **Ann**

That is very helpful. Thank you.

[00:44:36](#) **Brian**

The other thing that I think of as Berkeley-specific is how the budget has changed over the time that I've been here. But again, that's within the context of, all libraries are seeing budget cuts, right? But what I can talk about are the specifics of the Berkeley situation and what I perceive as a change. Although maybe people who've been here even longer than me would not see it [that way] ... There have—in all academic libraries, but, Berkeley particularly is what we're talking about—there have always been cycles of lean times. What feels like has changed in the time that I've been here is that the lean times have now become the norm. So, we'd have the cycles of lean times before and then we'd have nice, more robust times where budgets were increasing. Nowadays it just feels like the lean times are the norm. And that feels like a change to me.

I wasn't here in the 1990s, but you can go back to the 1990s, and they had really bad budget situations, hiring freezes. They weren't hiring new people for a long time. And then there was the Blue Ribbon report* that the faculty did, about how the Library should be funded and how the Library should function. That led to increased funding over several years. And that led to the position existing that I could even apply for. I was one of the first in a string of hiring, a hiring spree they kind of got to go on, because we were getting increased funding as a result of that Blue Ribbon report. That's kind of where I'm starting from.

But then—we had a series of these—we get to the 2010s. We're in another tough time. The Library is talking about how we need to change how we do things. We asked the faculty for input on what our priorities should be because we can't fund all of them. And the faculty said, “We refuse to participate in this process. You're not going to make us choose.” They did the Commission on the Future of the Library* instead, which again, recommended that the Library get increased funding. And we did get increased funding for like a year or two. And then the cuts started again, and very soon we had lost all that additional funding plus more.

So, we were even in a worse place than when we had started, in some ways. So, you had the Blue Ribbon Report where the increased funding lasted for several years. Then you had the Commission on the Future of the Library, where the increased funding lasted for a year or two. Now we have in the 2020s, our most recent one, where there was the Joint Academic and Administrative Working Group on the University Library*, which also recommended increased funding for the Library, but none is forthcoming.

Now, I've seen in the LAUC-B [Librarians Association of the University of California- Berkeley chapter] minutes that we did get an increase of \$2 million. So, I guess that helps a bit. It's one year of inflation or something. But, other than that, we haven't seen anything. And, you know, I understand that we're in a particular time period where the campus budget doesn't have the flexibility to provide additional funding to the Library. So, I can understand that, but it seems like I see a trend there, that I don't know if it's a trend that'll continue. But from, you know, getting increased funding on the... on the basis of faculty advocacy and how long that funding lasts, over time... Does that make sense?

[00:49:11](#) **Ann**

It makes absolute sense, and actually fills in some gaps for me. The thing I just keep thinking is when you go into many, many library resources, it says “Access provided by UC Berkeley”, but

it does not say “Access provided by UC Berkeley Librarians.”. Or, I shouldn't say [just] librarians, [but] library staff or library whatever... People click and they just think that it's there, and they don't realize what they have till it's gone...[Sigh.] But anyway, that was very helpful. Thank you. I think, actually, when I've asked [other narrators] the question about what's Berkeley-specific, the necessary responses to very problematic budget situation has been a very common feature of that.

[00:50:10](#) **Brian**

We're a scrappy organization.

[00:50:14](#) **Ann**

[Laughs.] We are.

[00:50:16](#) **Brian**

We find our ways around these challenges. That doesn't mean that we don't need the additional funding or the additional staffing. We're not doing things necessarily in the ideal ways that we would do them if we had the funding that we really felt was necessary to provide the services that people are asking for.

[00:50:42](#) **Ann**

I think one of the moments that also kind of informed my deciding to do this project was speaking to someone who had been at Berkeley a very, very long time. When I was experiencing the serials review, and that was my first time of like, “Oh, my goodness, that's a lot of money to have to find,” I mean, I was really freaking out. And I mentioned [it] to this person, they're like, “Oh, yeah, budgets come. Budgets go.” [Laughs.] Just... so kind of fatalistic, you know, we'll find our way out. We always find our way out. It was kind of fatalistic and optimistic at the same time. So, I hear you about the creativity of response and the thoughtfulness of response.

[00:51:29](#) **Brian**

And, you know, you can go back through those old CU news [General Library of the University of California, Berkeley newsletter], you can see evidence of these cycles of lean times. I mean, they've always had to do these serials reviews and serials cuts and stuff. Maybe not always, but for a long time they've had to do them. And they've always had these cycles where their budget is not as healthy and so they have to cut back on things. So, there's a long history there of that. I don't know, there's just something that feels different about it now.

[00:52:08](#) **Ann**

Well, I do feel that a lot. I'm getting such a strong sense of how much changed after COVID. And I have to say that during COVID, I'd only been at Berkeley for a year, and as I say, it's my first liaison job, my first job where I had any responsibility for collections at all, I was amazed at the creative and fairly effective, given the situation, responses to people needing materials. I mean, the whole start of the e-Reserves thing, it was like, "Wait, you can do that? That's so great! Like I can give my users good news. That's so great!" In the midst of this pretty devastating loss. I mean, you know... I was really impressed, I have to say.

[00:52:59](#) **Brian**

We can be very creative, we can be very innovative. Everyone that works here is very service-oriented. So, we're always going to be trying to find the way to help people.

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

I think actually I'm going to shift direction a little bit back to you personally. Looking at your CV and what we've talked about today, you've had some twists and turns in your job responsibilities. It feels like a pretty steady core direction, but you've taken on lots of new things. Do you have any comments about like, your approach to change? Like when you... But I don't have to give you an example, I'm sure you're thinking of some in your head right now, but when you see change coming at you, what is your kind of response or strategy or approach?

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

Yeah, for me, I think it's that I really just kind of try to focus on the work and getting the work done. Like, I can be flexible and change, adapt to whatever is coming at me. I'm just going to be focused on trying to get the job done. And what, what I need to do to do that, that's what I'm going to be focused on. I think that's just for me, personally, something that really helps me to adjust. It's like, "Okay, there's this change coming. What does that mean for me? How am I going to keep doing my job with these changes?" If I focus on those... And you know, as a manager, I can't even just think about myself, I also have to think about like, "Okay, how, how is the division going to manage these changes? How do I help the staff through these changes?" But I feel like if I just focus on those things, it helps me. It's just kind of then like, I don't know the word that I'm trying to come up with, but it's just like I just have to get through it and I just keep going. As long as the change is not contrary to my values, where I don't feel like I'm being asked to do something that compromises myself or my division, and as long as it's within my skill set or I can train myself up on it...

I certainly have moments of feeling uncomfortable in it, but I just kind of focus on, “I just need to get things done, and I’m just gonna keep doing things.” [They laugh.] Like, that’s kind of how I do it. But I will say I am someone who likes new challenges. Part of why you see that trajectory in my career is after five, six, seven years, I want to not be doing the same thing. I can be doing aspects of the same thing, but I want something new that is, like, creating a challenge for me that I can work on. And so that was when I became the interim head of Engineering and Physical Sciences division. It was just at that point in time where I’m like, “I need something more. Here it is.” And then, I was kind of in that cycle now. “Okay, I’ve been the head of the Engineering and Physical Sciences division for quite a long time now, at this point, I need something to change a bit.” And, like, the opportunity to take on all of the Sciences came up, and I’m like, “Okay, here’s a change.” And maybe I need even more changes in the future. But, I am someone who always needs a little bit of that kind of change to happen. Otherwise I lose a bit of my motivation in the job.

[00:57:39](#) **Ann**

What I’m hearing, but tell me if that’s correct... I don’t hear you sort of getting paralyzed by uncertainty, because I think that some of the changes that we have faced, at least in the time since I’ve been at Berkeley, I have found quite challenging because I’m a huge planner, and I want to sort of really, really have things kind of locked down as much as I can. Not locked down, but... I [want to] know what the path is, and I think a lot of the changes that have been coming recently are like, you can’t even know what the path is. You’re kind of coming back into, “What do I need to do now to get the job done?” I’m going to hold that thought for myself.

[00:58:31](#) **Brian**

The uncertainty definitely is a challenge. There have been multiple times, especially in my career as a manager, where we have had to decide on a path forward. We have to try to see into the future, figure out what our strategy is, what our best approach is. But you can see five different futures, and you would make different decisions based on which of those five futures is the one that arrives. And that can be certainly a real challenge. In those situations, eventually, though, you have to make a decision. Those are things where I do kind of stew and think about them for a while, because you do have to kind of think through, like, “This would be best if it was like this, but this would be best if it’s like this, And this would be best if it’s like this.” And. And. But eventually you have to make the decision. And what I try to remember is that almost all of those decisions are adjustable.

[00:59:53](#) **Ann**

Oh, that's good.

[00:59:53](#) **Brian**

Like, you're committing. You're committing to a path. But if the future starts deviating from that, you can always make adjustments.

[01:00:04](#) **Ann**

So, this dovetails with... Another one of the questions is, what is your advice to the upcoming generation of librarians? I don't know if you have any, or you want the past few paragraphs to be your advice.

[01:00:23](#) **Brian**

I don't know if I have much to add. I mean, in terms of dealing with change, I think my approach is one that could be helpful for other people as well. But I also think how you deal with change is so personal. And that approach is not going to work for everyone. That's one of the things that you have to deal with as a manager as well, in helping people to get through change, that sometimes you have to help different people in different ways to get through change. Right? And so, it's hard to give universal advice on what people can do. But what I will say is, for newer librarians, early career librarians, it is important to really think about what aspects of librarianship you are passionate about, what are the things you're really interested in, and make sure that you carve out time for those in your schedule.

[01:01:46](#) **Ann**

Which makes it such a plus that we have as much autonomy as we do at Berkeley.

[01:01:51](#) **Brian**

Yes.

[01:01:52](#) **Ann**

That kind of comes full circle, too. Thank you for that. This is very helpful to me personally. And then I guess at this point I feel like we've kind of come around to a lot of the things that we wanted to talk about. I might ask the final question that I've been asking people, [which] is pretty much how you'd like your work to be remembered. But I wonder if there's anything that you

want to be sure to say before we get to that, or anything that I didn't ask that you want to be sure to say?

[01:02:34](#) **Brian**

No, I don't think so... I think we touched on everything that you had shared in advance and everything that I had thought that I might want to talk about.

[01:02:45](#) **Ann**

So, you know, sounds like you feel like this is great, that we've kind of touched on most of what we wanted to.

[01:02:55](#) **Brian**

Yes, [but] I'm going to tell you a story.

[01:02:57](#) **Ann**

Oh, please.

[01:02:58](#) **Brian**

Because it relates to the change thing, [something] that I didn't say, but I had on my mind. With that change question, I'm reminded very early in my career, within the first year or two, we had a project where we were trying to... When I first started, every library maintained a list of links to electronic journals in their subject areas, if you can believe it.

[01:03:25](#) **Ann**

I can believe it.

[01:03:27](#) **Brian**

Oh my god, we all did that. So, in the sciences we were looking for a more streamlined approach. I was on this group that was designed to figure out a way that we could use the catalog to generate electronic journal lists in different subject areas. And there were a few of us on this committee and one of them was someone from a different field who had been [at Berkeley] for a long time. We were in a meeting and we were talking about wanting to have this thing, and make it easier for people to find journals. And this person said, "Well, they should just look it up in GLADIS [General Library Automated Database Information System]. That's what it's there for." GLADIS was our telnet version of the catalog. And I said, "Oh, no, none of our students are going to do that. None of our students are going to use the telnet version of the catalog and look

it up like that.” And [the person] was exasperated. They were like, “Uh, uh” and had to walk away.

Anyway, so here's someone who's been here a long time and like, is having difficulty with the particular change. Right? So, I gave you all this stuff about how I deal with change and everything. But I will say I am getting to that point in my career where I do notice myself sometimes being like, “Well, why can't we just do it the way we were doing it?” [They laugh]. Which is actually kind of a funny story to include, I thought you might get a kick out of it.

01:05:26 **Ann**

I do get a kick out of it! To be honest, this is just weird, but, ever since I let my hair go gray, I look at myself, and it's like, “Oh, my God, I'm [a] little old lady librarian now.” And I feel like that's how others look at me, and [I'm] like, “No, I'm a little cooler than that, just a little.” But then I notice myself, [and realize,] “That was totally a little old librarian thing to think.” [Laughs.]

[Anyway,] there's always going to be things we [think of] afterwards, but did you want to say anything [now] about how you'd like your work to be remembered?

01:06:18 **Brian**

I would say it's hard to separate how I want my work to be remembered from how I want to be remembered.

01:06:31 **Ann**

Huh!

01:06:32 **Brian**

And so, I will say three things that I would hope people would remember about me. One, that I was a very supportive and caring manager. I think I try to provide everyone with the structure and support and flexibility that they need. And I think that people appreciate me for it. Two, I'd like to be remembered as someone who is open to piloting things to see what will work. Like, not always having to plan everything out, but giving something a chance, knowing that you can always back away from it later. That works for small things, not for big things, but, you know, just kind of trying to do a bit of that piloting of things. And being supportive—sometimes that's not [about] my ideas, but that's supporting people within my division to pilot things that they're interested in piloting.

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And then three, [I'd like to be remembered] as someone who is just really always willing to help out and do the work. I think all the many interim assignments that I've had over the years are kind of an indication of that. But, you know, I've also had my involvement in two strategic planning processes here within the Library... I've been on multiple AUL search committees to help us find new AULs. I've had the work on the e-Science Institute and on the Ithaka Project. So, I just hope that people kind of remember me fondly for those three aspects of my career.

[01:08:29](#) **Ann**

I feel that they will. I haven't been as close to your career as the people that would be remembering you, but I saw what you did on the Big Data project, and it was quite significant and had all those aspects, so thank you.

*Full citation information and links for this content are available in the "Works Consulted/Further Reading" Appendix, located at the project URL on the title page of this document.