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“Librarians Navigating Change” Oral History Project

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Lillian Castillo-Speed

Interviewed on April 24, 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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00:00:03 **Ann**

This is Ann Glusker, interviewing Lillian Castillo-Speed on April 24, 2025, for the “Librarians Navigating Change” Oral History Project. This is a remote interview. Ann is in Seattle, Washington, and Lily is in Berkeley, California.

So, you're welcome to start wherever you want. We had just been talking about something that happened recently that was kind of amazing, but many people I've been starting with, asking them about their background and how they came to librarianship. So, [it's] up to you where you want to start.

00:00:54 **Lily**

Well, that's a question that I get a lot, because people that I'm mentoring or people that are thinking about becoming librarians, I tell them the story. I don't want to go through the whole story, but—I wasn't planning to become a librarian. I was looking for something to do after my son grew up enough to go to preschool, and I volunteered in a high school library. From there, I was recommended to apply for a job in another high school library. A real job. And from there, I started to get the idea that I wanted to get more training. I really wanted to know what I was doing as a library tech. I tried to go to classes. This is way back before the internet. I tried to find a class on library tech [work]. I went to Santa Barbara City College, and was told that there was no such class anymore, but I was directed to the library of the campus and told, “Just go talk to somebody there. They might help you find another class.” So, I went. I walked into that library and I met a librarian. I assume that [she] was a librarian, in my mind, she was a librarian [they laugh].

I asked my question, and right away she asked me, “Do you have a BA?” And I said yes. She said, “Well, then you should apply to library school.” So that was the seed, that's when I started. I did apply to library schools. I ended up getting accepted at UC Berkeley. My family was ready to move on from Santa Barbara, and we came to the campus, and there was a library school still here in Berkeley at that time. I mean I didn't know what I was interested in, I just wanted to go to library school. One other little story on that was that before, when I was still at the high school library, there was a librarian there in charge of the library. But she was always behind a closed door. I met her, she wasn't unfriendly, it was just that her job always seemed to be behind the closed door, while my job was out in front with the other library assistant. We met with the students, etc.

I didn't know what I wanted to do at library school, but after a while I did. It was the times, it was 1980, [the] early 80s. Computers were in the news, and people were talking about computers, and desktop computers had just come in. So, I figured that's where I was going to go. I actually took extra classes. I [took] four hours a week extra, for an extra unit for a certain class, working with a professor.

And so that's where I thought I was going to go, but things changed for me when a fellow student in that class, that library school class, recommended that I take a class called “Ethnic Bibliography” that was being taught there. That was taught by a person named Francisco García-Ayvens, who was in charge of the Chicano Studies Library on the Berkeley campus, which I had never even known existed. I took the class. Francisco took the class on field trips to different ethnic libraries in the Bay Area, and that was my introduction not just to that field of study, but to the Chicano Studies Library.

That's where I got hooked in, that's what hooked me into the rest of my career to where I am today. I mean, I'm gonna say to where I am, as if there's a lofty thing, but I'm still there, hooked into that. Francisco became my mentor, my friend, my colleague, and the projects that the Chicano Studies Library was involved in became my long-term career projects. [There's more information available in the digital history of the Chicano Studies Library: bibliopolitica.org]

I was very fortunate as far as getting a job because Francisco was [already] there... You would think, like, “How am I going to get a job like Francisco's, because how many Chicano Studies libraries are there in the world?” There aren't that many, but it worked out. He needed to go. His family had moved back to [Los Angeles] and so actually, after a couple of years, he was going to go back to LA. And then after library school I got a job as a cataloger on a project, working with a team of, of other librarians. [A] wonderful experience working on a team. [It was] my first job as a librarian, and it was as a cataloger and we were working at the Sutro Library in San Francisco on a collection of old—like even 16th century, 17th century, 18th century, 19th century—Spanish language books from a convent.

I fell in love with that job, but it was short term. Anyway, it was short term because I quit it because Francisco's job came up. There was a vacancy. Having volunteered at the Chicano Studies Library all that time, ever since I walked in the front door [Ann laughs], they knew me there. I had my MLS [Master's in Library Science]. They hired me as the temporary librarian to

replace him, and then I applied for the regular job and I got that position, the permanent position. That's where it all started. And that's where I am.

I started with the Chicano Studies Library, but it wasn't, I wasn't out there by myself. It was like I became part of this group. Francisco got another job at in Southern California, but at the time, again before the internet, he was also always in contact, I could always reach him by phone. The other person that I could always reach was Richard Chabrán, who was my counterpart at the Chicano Studies Research Center Library at UCLA, and who had been Francisco's predecessor at the Chicano Studies Library.

They were all working on these projects: a database, an indexing project, publications. So, I became part of that group of that three, basically a three-person group. Because my days, at the beginning, were often just on the phone. You know, “How do I do this? What does this mean? What does this letter mean? How does this work?” And they were so helpful. I knew that phone number to Richard by heart. I still remember. It was second nature to call up. He would answer, because I was the one that was continuing what they had started with their projects. I don't think I understood or appreciated at the time. Now looking back on it, I understand it better, how lucky I was, how fortunate all those things came together for me.

I'm talking just about me and my career, because those projects have sustained me till now. That's one arc, I guess, of my career. The other would be the Chicano Studies Library itself—its history ended when it became part of the Ethnic Studies Library—and then my role as a supervisor of the Ethnic Studies Library was another, theme, I guess, of my career.

[00:11:20](#) **Ann**

Can I interrupt for one [moment] and ask, how long were you at the Chicano Studies Library and at what point in that journey did it turn into the Ethnic Studies Library?

[00:11:32](#) **Lily**

We could do some calculations. So, I started at [the Chicano Studies Library in] 1984 officially, and then in 1997, the change to the Ethnic Studies Library happened. So, I don't know how many years is that 13 years?

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

Yeah. Yeah.

[00:11:52](#) **Lily**

Wow. I can't believe it. 84. Yeah.

[00:11:55](#) **Ann**

That's a big change after a long time. That's kind of why I was asking.

[00:11:59](#) **Lily**

Yeah.

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

It wasn't just like the year after you got there or something.

[00:12:03](#) **Lily**

Right, right. But, leading up to that, it wasn't an abrupt, like, "Okay, now I'm at the Ethnic Studies Library, and now all of a sudden I have this hat of supervisor." I had been asked to supervise the three libraries [the Chicano Studies Library, the Asian American Studies Library, and the Native American Studies Library] a few years before that, even before we had a space where we could all be together. So, I had already taken on the role of supervising other librarians, which was a big change. When I first started at the Chicano Studies Library, I was supervising work study students, a publications library assistant, and a serials library assistant. But not another librarian, so that was a change.

I guess I could continue talking about, [well] there's two different things. One is the Chicano Database and all that kind of stuff, and then there's the Ethnic Studies Library and all that. So, should I just go in like one and then the other [direction], or [laughs]?

[00:13:26](#) **Ann**

Sure, whichever feels like where you want to start. We've just been talking about the Ethnic Studies Library, so maybe start with that. But I have noted that I will later ask you about the Chicano Database.

[00:13:37](#) **Lily**

Okay. As long as we get back to that at some point. Some things that I learned, my experience of supervising at that level, supervising other librarians and more people, and working with administration, meaning our department and at some points, campus administration... One situation that I think helps illuminate... well, I'll just say it. When I first started working as the

Chicano Studies Librarian, there were two other libraries in our department. In the Ethnic Studies department, there was the Chicano Studies Library, [and also] there was an Asian American Studies Library, and there was a Native American Studies Library. Each was supervised by their own librarian. In one case, one was a library assistant who later became a librarian. We were, at that point, equals in the department, because I was not supervising them, they were not supervising me. The three libraries were on their own. They catalog differently, they process differently, they handle things [differently]. They were just on their own.

But one thing I noticed about the other two people in charge of the other libraries is that they were fearful, it seemed to me. They often were expressing that they didn't know what the department was going to do. Like, they were giving me the news, “Be careful about this, be careful about that.” They were fearful that the funding was going to be cut off. I was wondering about all that, I was wondering like, “What's that based on?” It seemed to be just based on not knowing. There wasn't much communication between the libraries, which were in always different buildings. Since I've been here, the libraries were in a different building than the department, so they were kind of remote. Later on, I found out basically that—when I was allowed to attend a department meeting, I forget at what point, maybe it was when I became the supervisor, or maybe it was earlier when I just asked to be at a meeting or something—I found out that the department in most cases wasn't even thinking about the libraries there. The fear was based on just not knowing, and thinking the worst. Or they hear something and say, “Oh, that means this and that means that.” But they didn't really have communication.

I realized back then, “Look, that's not a good way to operate, if you're always worried that something's going to happen.” Because you think the worst because you don't hear anything. So, I kept that in mind. First of all, try to get more information. Try to be in a meeting. [Try] to find out things, and [try] to let the other people know. Like, “Oh no, this is happening, not this [other thing]. These were the notes. This is what's going on.” As a supervisor, to try to let people know what's going on, that that's better. Or at least leave an open channel, that people could ask [me] if I don't think of the question that they have in mind [or] I say all the other things and then I leave something out. It isn't because I'm keeping the secret. It's just I haven't thought of that thing that that they really want to know about. Please ask me, you know! So, I've tried to keep that in mind, because that just seems so stultifying. Why have that fear? Every day to come to work and [be] like, “Oh, I don't know what's going to happen today”?

Anyway, that's how things started for me when I started at the Chicano Studies Library.

Later I was named by the chair as the supervisor of those libraries. And then we started planning, because we had an opportunity to occupy a building that had been vacated by the Business/Social Science Library, in Stephens Hall. And that was another lesson, working with the other departments that also wanted to be in Stephens Hall. At first there weren't any other contenders, so we made these big plans to have like three floors. We had volunteer students from the architecture school make these blueprints. And it was wonderful the plans we had. But then a dean, a certain dean who turned out to be more powerful than our dean—that's how it is on campus—came back from wherever, leave or vacation or something. As soon as that dean came in, then the power shifted and they wanted to have space. So, then we had these big meetings, and it ended up not going our way, the way we wanted it to at the beginning.

But we still got our space—we had the support of the Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor [to get] storage, so we got some storage space on campus, etc. What I can say, the support of our department was always there. I was trying to think back, like, “When did I not get support from our department?” I can't think of a time when we didn't have that support. So that has been very, very helpful. Through all kinds of different things that have gone on. So then when we got the word, we knew what we were going to plan, we knew the space we were going to have. The three libraries' staffs, the people in the staffs got together and we made a plan. We moved in, and we made everything equal. [Before this,] the three libraries that had been in Wheeler Hall didn't have equal space. The Native American Studies Library was so small, [and] the other two libraries [had] like double the space. So, when we moved to Stephens Hall, we made sure everything was exactly equal. We all worked together on consensus. Like where things are going to be.

Things got changed. I'll say a little bit about it. I won't say the whole story about this, but each of the librarians had an office next to their collection. It turned out, we figured out there could be an office next to each collection, so as Chicano Studies Librarian, I was going to be next to the Chicano Studies collection with a door that closed, and each of the other two librarians also had that. But, right before we moved in, we had a new chair. And I'm not saying that she wasn't supportive, but she had her own ideas of where the librarians should be. So, she changed that. My office ended up being behind the circulation desk. And actually, that's a good thing. That turned out to be a good thing. Remember I mentioned the librarian back in Santa Barbara who was always behind the desk behind the closed door? I realized I didn't want to be that person. So

[if] I'm near the circulation desk, and the door is always open, and people can come in, I can see, can hear what's going on. That's the right way for me, it's turned out that that was the right thing. So anyway, I'm really proud of the fact that—it must have been me who submitted this nomination for a staff award to our staff, you know how the awards work, the academic employees aren't eligible for certain staff awards, but the rest of our staff was—I put them in for a staff award that year as a team effort for moving our whole library, because there was also a move. All the stuff had to be moved as well, the logistics of that was amazing, and we have pictures, we have photos of that. But anyway, they did get that award and I was really, really happy about that. One of the librarians was kind of miffed that they didn't get included [they laugh].

But anyway, staff came, and went. Over the years, different stories for different [staff]. That's what happens when you're here for 40, over 40 years, there's so many stories. There's no time to talk about all of them. But, I guess what I'm leading up to now, what I want to say for the record is that the staff that we have now is so amazing. I like to think that it's like a reward for me, or a culmination. I had to go through a lot to get to this point where I learned how to interview people, and I learned how to help and train people and listen. That's [a] key thing, listen to people that. To the point where I know that we have the best staff that I've ever had, to work with.

[00:26:24](#) **Ann**

That's saying something!

[00:26:27](#) **Lily**

I'm proud of that. I'm proud of that and it makes me keep going. I've been here—I started in 84, so that's 40 years right there. Past retirement age. I could retire anytime I want, but I don't want to at this point yet. There'll be a time, but I'm [not] going to want to yet, because it's still a good time for me, the work is good. I know one of the questions on the list was about when I thought about retiring before, and it was when things were not good with staff, a staffing issue. That really does get to you. It does. It does affect how you feel about yourself and about your job, and getting up in the morning and going to work. That does make you question, like, “Do I need to be here? Can I be somewhere else? Please let me be somewhere else [laughs]?” That kind of thing.

So again, I mentioned the support of the department. I got through a particularly rough time with the support of the chair who was my supervisor at the time. Every time I see him, I want to thank him again. “Thank you!” I do in my mind. It was amazing, because—I’m talking about the chair at this point—I didn’t know him for a long time or work on projects with him or anything like that. He just understood. And then—thinking of a better word, I’m going to say automatically—it’s like he just stepped in to support me without question. I’m sure he knew the issues. It wasn’t like he said, “I’ll support you, not somebody else”, but he [knew] what was going on, and he decided to support me, you know? I take that, too, as a lesson to help. For me. To help other people that I’m supervising or, to not question. I’m trying to think in terms of, like if people want to take time off, or they need to do something that’s different from what they usually do, I’m not going to be the person that says, “Well, you have to justify that”, or that kind of thing. “I trust you, you know.” I think I get that from, the first time actually putting those two together.

But maybe that was from that experience of just having somebody have my back, and it actually being just so helpful, that that’s why I still stayed as a librarian. I didn’t quit. And I’m kind of passing that on in other situations where I can be the one who helps other people. And it seems to help, I think it does help. I don’t mean just helps them, but it helps the whole. The whole arrangement of the organization. I guess it helps the organization. I like to think that there’s a feeling of trust, so that when people say, “Well, I’m sick, I can’t come in,” they’re not gonna think, “Oh, Lily thinks I’m just faking it.” I don’t even go there. “Whatever you say—if you [can’t], you can’t. If you don’t want to come in today, you can’t come in today, I’ll just take it. The rest of us will carry on.”

Maybe I’m ready for a question, actually.

[00:31:25](#) **Ann**

So, could I add on to what you were just saying? Because one thing that you’ve said several times, and that I feel like I noticed in your CV and also in the other piece that you sent me, is your role as a mentor. One of the questions in terms of thinking about change in the field is how we support the next generation and what we do to make sure they succeed. I feel like that’s been a really core value for you. Can you tell me a little more about that?

[00:32:06](#) **Lily**

[The] first thing that comes to mind is that since I've been a mentor—I guess I was mentored myself—I know I've been a mentor probably almost 40 years, for students in the library. When there was still [a] library school here at Berkeley, students that work[ed] for me in the library that were just so interested in the work, they considered going to library school, and then I wanted to help them with that. People over the years, in different situations where mentorship came up, it's mostly the times that I think of in terms of students, who are either thinking of going to library school or they are in library school. I know that there's a mentoring situation where people are librarians already, like on campus, and I've done that through the LAUC-B [Librarians Association of the University of California- Berkeley chapter] program, but I guess they don't seem as memorable to me. What I remember more [is] when people come to me, they know I'm at the Ethnic Studies Library, and they're interested in that aspect of librarianship. Or, they see me as a person like them, maybe another Latina or another Latino person, who they can communicate with, or we have something in common, I guess.

That's one group. [Then] there's a whole lot of other people that are not in that group, and same kinds of questions and everything. We'll just leave it at that. Anyway, what I was about to say was that, I mean, going way back in time, was that the advice I gave back then, I'm often wonder if it's still realistic now, because I haven't been in the job-seeking world. I was only in the job-seeking world way back in the 80s. So, my advice back then, my standard advice, was always, “The first job you're going to get, it might not be where you live, and where you want it. The location will not be where you live. If you're open to going to other places, then you go there, get your experience, be there for two years, do a great job, and then you have more opportunities and you can look maybe coming back to where you want to be.”

That was my advice. Then I'm thinking, well, I don't know, things are online, so that was part of my advice. The other thing I would do also would [be to] ask them—and this goes back to the Latinos, Latino, Latina connection—I would try to tell them to sign up with REFORMA [The National Association to Promote Library & Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking—reforma.org] or the local chapter of Bibliotecas Para La Gente [The Northern California chapter of REFORMA, the National Organization to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking—bibliotecasparalagente.org]. Because that's what helped me when I was starting out, because I had mentors in that group. And they're always—I hope they still are—they always want to help people, suggest scholarships, write the letters for them, get them, tell them. I said, go to the meetings. They'd love to have you at the meetings.

And so I think some of them took my advice, and then they would be on their way and they'd go to the conferences. I like to think about that, those mentorship relationships.

[There are] a couple that I look back on fondly. One [is] a person named Julieta, who was a data entry person doing data entry for the Chicano Database. She graduated, but she did end up wanting to go into librarianship, then she became a librarian. I'd stayed in touch with her over the years, and it made me feel really good that she became a librarian.

Then, another librarian, I don't think it'd be a problem to say her name, [is] Kathy Blackmer Reyes, who is now at San Jose State University. [I think she is] director of [a center there] ...oh, it's got a long name... at the [Dr.] Martin Luther King, [Jr.] Library. There's a center there [which] has all the names of all the different ethnic groups as part of the name, and she's the director there [The Africana, Asian American, Chicano, & Native American (AAACNA) Studies Center]. She started out as a student at UC Davis. She became part of the people that I knew at Berkeley. And she hung around the library, and she ended up not going in her first direction [but] she ended up going back, and going into library school. She got her degree, she has her job and like two or three years ago she was named one of the *New York Times* "My Favorite Librarian" people. So that's Kathy, and she's great. I know I mentored her, because she helped...I edited a book and she helped me edit that book, back in the 90s. Even back then, she wasn't going into librarianship when we were doing that book, it was only later that she did that. So anyway, I could go on and on. I don't know if that's enough about mentorship.

[00:39:14](#) **Ann**

I mean it's fantastic. I also feel like it's leading into what I saw on your CV, with the many, many, many publications—and you wanted to come back to the Chicano Database. So, if you could sort of [talk about] that part of your life and career and changes you saw over time, that'd be fantastic.

[00:39:37](#) **Lily**

Okay, so, back to Francisco and Richard. I became the on-site person, little by little. For many years I felt like I was basically just the on-site person of a project that they were in charge of basically. So I followed directions, but I had to be the one who dealt with the programmer and the technical stuff and buying in the budget and all that kind of stuff, and making sure the dates that the project kept going from day to day. At some point I realized, "Oh, I'm in charge," because Richard retired—I mean he's still very much part of it, I can get him on the phone

anytime, and he gets me on the phone anytime and we help each other with stuff, [and] Francisco passed away in 2018, unfortunately, but up until that point he was very helpful—but still I ended up being the one, at some point I took on the reins. I actually saw myself as. “I’m the one in charge of this now.”

You know, when I was in library school, I interviewed Francisco and Richard to write an article, so I could write an article for the library school, for an assignment. It ended up being a chapter in the book that they were publishing at the time, and it was about the Chicano Thesaurus. Nobody had written about the Chicano Thesaurus before, so I wrote about it—there’s so much, Ann, there’s just so much to talk about—but, the database needed the thesaurus. So, it started with the indexing project. The indexing project was librarians from across the Southwest who sent worksheets to Berkeley. So, Berkeley, the Chicano Studies Library, that was the point in which we did the data entry. That got published, in thick green volumes. and that was the Chicano Periodical Index, of journals and magazines that didn’t get indexed anywhere else. That’s why they needed a thesaurus, for the subject headings (later on that got changed). It got published by G.K. Hall [& Co.] at first, for the first two volumes, but then they dropped it. So, the Chicano Studies Library, under me—I was also the publications unit, Series Editor Manager—published the rest of the volumes of the Chicano Periodical Index, as well as other reference works that came out of the database. [There were] different subsections, like one on art, and one on women, and one on anthologies—indexed and Chicano anthologies. Those all used the mechanism of the database that produced the Chicano Periodical Index, but they were different topics. Those were all published [as part of] the Chicano Periodic Index, by the Chicano Studies Library Publications Unit.

Then the, the periodical index went into CD-ROM [Compact Disc Read-Only Memory, a physical disc that, after production, could not be written on or erased]. That was another format, didn’t last that long. But this is Richard, Richard is always forward thinking. He’s the one that’s got the vision. He’s the one that went to talk to people in Mountain View, [in] Silicon Valley. And they listened to him because this was this all new stuff, all the stuff that we were doing was new for everybody. Anyway, so we did the CD-ROM. It had to be sold by our publications unit. Just like we sold a book, we also had to sell a CD-ROM. Long story short, eventually the CD-ROM went away, but we had instead RLG [Research Libraries Group—rlg.org]. People might remember what RLG was. RLG took on the database, to send out so people could access it as a database. That got taken over by OCLC [Online Computer Library Center, founded in 1967, providing tech services to libraries globally]. And when OCLC stopped doing that kind of

database, then EBSCO [Elton B. Stephens Company, “most known for its database and library services”] sort of took over. So, EBSCO is now producing [and handling distribution for] the Chicano Database, but we still are the ones [creating and] publishing it. They are distributing it to libraries across the country, and that's how we get royalties that keep our library going. The Ethnic Studies Library gets money from that arrangement to buy things that we wouldn't be able to buy otherwise, to keep the library going. I mean there's so much more, but that's the story of the Chicano Indexing Project, the Chicano Thesaurus, the Chicano Database and the EBSCO product.

[00:46:17](#) **Ann**

I mean, talk about change! I'm astounded! There [are] two things that are astounding me. One is that you did that at the same time as running the library.

[00:46:30](#) **Lily**

Yeah, I know.

[00:46:31](#) **Ann**

I mean, that's just like, how on earth? And the other is the ways in which you have stayed connected to it throughout that time. As you were telling the story, and I didn't really know the background until just now when you told me, I thought there was going to be a point where you were no longer involved, because sometimes that's what happens with the tech, like when you say, “EBSCO came.” It feels unusual to me that you're staying actively involved and there's benefit to you, that it's not extracting from you, but it's giving to you. So interesting.

So, can I ask... as you outline that, and actually as you outline the history of the library also, I feel like there have been so many times, Lily, where you've seen change coming at you. Like, “Here we go, here's another enormous transition.” How do you approach those times? Do you have strategies, networks, learning modes? How do you deal?

[00:47:55](#) **Lily**

One of the big changes was email. The internet and email. Again, back to Richard, because he was always ahead of things, I admire him a whole lot...I forget what exact year it was, but it was around the time when new things like Netscape [Netscape Navigator was “the first browser for the people”, created at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications, and an “early ancestor of Mozilla Firefox”— <https://www.firefox.com/en-US/more/browser-history/>] were [being introduced.] He organized a meeting among librarians from the different [University of

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California] campuses. I think we met at UCLA, where we just sat all day [and] he demonstrated how all these things work. We didn't all have them yet, but he was saying how they were going to work. We must have had email by then, but maybe it was like, for a little [period] between email and when everything else happened, Google and [such.] What I'm getting to is that we weren't by ourselves, I wasn't by myself. He was looking out for [us], he was trying to help us all. Maybe it had to do with the fact that we were marginalized. As a group. Like, "Let's stay on top of this because otherwise we're going to be left behind." That kind of thing. So, I guess that's one lesson, "Don't be the only one, be with the group, stay with the group." I've found lately, and this is more of a personal thing, that's helped me during stressful times right now.

There are other things, I don't want to forget to say it—I'm telling myself, "Don't be afraid, it doesn't seem to help." It also [goes] back to the [time] where the librarians were afraid when they didn't know what was going on in the department. It doesn't help to just to be afraid. Just shake that off, be something else. But don't be afraid. It's too hard to keep going if you're afraid all the time, so whatever you can do to just turn it off... I didn't have to even verbalize that to myself until these recent times. Maybe it was there before, but it wasn't until now. Just don't let it take over you.

The other thing—because I did take some notes earlier about this whole thing about change—and this kind of goes against what [my] story said about Richard gathering us up to talk the future, [is], don't act too quickly. Like, don't buy the brand-new machines that are supposed to be the best thing in the world right away. You might wait a while. [Just] because something's happening doesn't mean you have to act right away. Let's wait and see what else happens first, or something. That could be just me just being a little bit more timid about making big decisions without waiting to see how things settle out first.

[00:52:30](#) **Ann**

There's a lot of risk in investing too much too quickly.

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

And that's happened. There are things that we bought and over the years we paid something—[I] won't say what how much we paid and what it was for [they laugh]—but it's like, oh, boy, I wish I had that money back again. Because [I] shouldn't [have] bought that.

Okay, you're talking about change, could you say it again? There was something in the way you said it that made me think of something...

[00:53:15](#) **Ann**

You mean when I was asking about strategies, or approaches? When you saw change coming at you?

[00:53:21](#) **Lily**

Oh, yeah, when you saw change coming. There is some kind of a denial [at] first, going back to like, "Wait to see what it actually is here at the door." But I'm not sure...

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

No, I think you already gave some great insight into that. Did you want to talk some about the article you mentioned today? No need, but if you're interested....

[00:54:06](#) **Lily**

Are we running out of time?

[00:54:08](#) **Ann**

Oh, no, there's no running out of time.

[00:54:11](#) **Lily**

I had made another note, but I wasn't sure where it fits in. Let's see... I think maybe I'll go back to the article later. But, there's one other thing. Maybe you could tell where it fits in. It has to do with supervising, but also with dealing with the campus.

[00:54:38](#) **Ann**

There is something on the question list about your place in the campus hierarchy and the kind of different missions of different leaders as they come into positions above you. And that has huge impact on your day-to-day, and the longer-term vision.

[00:55:06](#) **Lily**

There is something that I've thought about, looking back on this process of moving the libraries, the three libraries into this building. That's when we actually did come in contact with other people, who we had to negotiate [with]. Negotiate is the nice word, but on our own we'd say, "Oh, no, they're fighting." Like, "How are we going to fight them?" It would be that kind of a

thing, and afterwards, I realized that people have different personalities. Of course, that's a truism. I mean, there are different approaches that people can take, based on their personalities, when they're in a struggle, or dealing with change, or dealing with other people. I notice about myself as a leader, as a supervisor, that I resisted when the staff—and when I say the staff, it could be the staff from 30 years ago—when this not-any-particular staff seems to want me to act more boldly, or to fight, or to stand up to somebody, and make it personal. Like where it seems like it's like personal, “The person that wants to take our space.” I'm not sure what [they want me to do], write a nasty letter to the Chancellor? Or attack, do some kind of thing like that, like “That's the way to win, is to be on the attack mode”? That's not something that I... I don't feel comfortable.

For a long time, I think I would question myself. Like, maybe I'm not the right kind of leader because I don't do that. I've seen other people, other leaders do that, where they attack, or they try get around or talk [over each] other, [or] do something else that's kind of underhanded, that kind of thing. It made me wonder, “Am I short-changing my staff because I'm not doing that? I'm not being brave enough to do that? Is it bravery?” That's the thing, that's my person[ality], I'm not going to feel comfortable doing that, no matter what. If it had to be done, I guess I would do it, but I'm never going to feel comfortable with it. So, I've always avoided that. There are other ways it seems, and it seems to me that's been borne out through the last 40 years. Seems I didn't have to go that route for the most part. I mean, there are other ways. Even if it's waiting people out, like, finally that person left. Okay, good.

[00:59:18](#) **Ann**

Like, “I'm still here.”

[00:59:21](#) **Lily**

Yeah, I'm still here. I'm not saying that there isn't another way to do it, but just for me, that hasn't been what's worked for me. I think that if I did try to do it, I would be very unhappy and maybe that would [cause] me to retire, like, “I feel like I'm no good at this, and I should just give up because I can't do it.” But I didn't. I tried other ways, for the most part trying not to antagonize other people who may have power now or may have power later, that I come in contact with. I'd rather work with people in a friendly basis, even if the end result is not good, [and] not take it personally, not say, “Okay, well now I'm gonna hate you forever.”

[01:00:39](#) **Ann**

There's a lot there. Yeah.

[01:00:41](#) **Lily**

Again, I might be repeating myself, but it just feels it's a personality thing for me that I don't do that. And the staff take me or leave me, that's how I am, let's do it a different way. That kind of thing.

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

Thank you for that.

[01:01:12](#) **Lily**

Did we talk on record about the 40th anniversary program where I spoke out about the graduate students?

[01:01:42](#) **Ann**

No, no, we haven't dug into that yet, and I'm really, really [interested]. [I] want to hear about it because we have a question, "How would you like your work to be remembered?" [So] yes. Please tell me.

[01:01:58](#) **Lily**

So, I was not even sure how I got asked to be on this, but, Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez is a newer professor. She used to be a graduate student actually, in the Ethnic Studies graduate program. I didn't realize the 40th anniversary of the Ethnic Studies graduate program was basically this year—this was going to come anyway, even if we didn't have all this other political stress happening—so she was in charge of the [anniversary] program. She asked me to be a speaker a while ago, so I had said, "Oh, yeah, sure, I'll do it." As we got closer to the time, the urgency, or the uncertainty, the stress, the tension about the politics of our department increased. By the time I sat down and wrote down my notes for what I was going to say, she said she wanted us to keep it to 15 minutes. And I [said] sure, I'm pretty sure I would. And then I struggled over, like, "Do I need slides? I'm not good at slides." That's a whole other thing that we didn't talk about, the technical thing, because there are certain technical things that I'm just... I know how to do slides, but I just don't like to do them. Anyway, so instead of doing slides, I'm just going to write something down that lets me express my gratitude for what graduate students have contributed to the Ethnic Studies Library over the years. I've been here so long that I can say they contributed to the Chicano Studies Library and to the Ethnic Studies library. A lot of contributions, many contributions, were very important. The words I had at the end were meant

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to be defiant. Basically saying, we have to document everything that has to do with our resistance and our activism. But not just that. What I really wanted to say, [and] I'm not sure if it came out in the talk, was that other people supported our department over the years. When they came out to protest and support, that needed to be documented to show that we weren't just ourselves selfishly saying, "We want ourselves to keep going on because we are important. Other people were supporting us." And that has to be documented. The graduate students were very helpful in doing that. So the story I told... Do we have time for this story?

[01:05:34](#) **Ann**

Oh, go for it.

[01:05:35](#) **Lily**

Okay, so I told the main part of this and I could send you my notes on it. The story I told had to do with the 1999 Third World Liberation Front strike on campus. Were you aware of that? Have you heard of that?

[01:05:57](#) **Ann**

Sorry to say, no.

[01:05:58](#) **Lily**

That's okay. In 1969 there was a Third World Liberation Front strike. That's what formed the [Ethnic Studies] department, and our libraries, and then our Ethnic Studies Library. Thirty years later, a lot of the promises that were made hadn't been kept by the campus, having to do with like hiring more faculty. There were some faculty positions that they hadn't released, they hadn't given to us. There had been a conference where all this came together. There were speakers, faculty were speaking about it, and that conference ended up rousing a lot of frustration. That triggered a thirty-years-later strike. There was a meeting of the faculty that I attended, and the lecturers were allowed to attend. Usually the lecturers weren't allowed to attend, but I and the lecturers were allowed to attend. Ron Takaki, [a] famous person, wonderful person, said, "Hey, the students are out there striking for our department. We can't not strike for our department. We as a faculty have to support them. We can't just let them do it." Also, there were hunger strikers, maybe I'll get back to that, that's very painful for me to think about people going on hunger strike for the department.

So he had a sign up, Ron Takaki. I'm not sure if he signed [it and] he sent it around, or a department chair signed [and] sent it around. But anyway, there was a list going around saying, "Put your name and your phone number, and we'll call you to come if we need you. Like, if the police are going to come, be on the list. We'll call you and then [you] come to campus and support [the strikers]." So, I put my name down, [with] a couple of lecturers that were there, and most of the faculty, I think. It was kind of hard not to put your name down. The list went around. The next morning, I did get a call and I showed up. It was before dark when I set out. But by the time we got to campus the sun was out. Ron Takaki was on Sproul Plaza giving a speech. I was with the strikers in front of California Hall and a couple of other lecturers that I knew. And from then [on] we kind of bonded, we were just there just to help, because the others, the supporters, the strikers were sleeping. They were in their sleeping bags in front of California Hall. We were just sitting there. Then the day came up anyway. That's just one part of the memory that I have of that.

Another part of the memory was that the graduate students started to use the Ethnic Studies Library as a meeting place to organize. So, our Ethnic Studies graduate students were there and I mentioned them by name in my talk. The negotiations did go on. One thing I do want to add, because it was that hunger strike I didn't want. This is just me. I didn't discuss it with anybody, but I resisted putting the Ethnic Studies Library as one of the things that they were going to fight for, because of the hunger strike part of it. I didn't want the hunger strikers to be fighting specifically for the Ethnic Studies Library. Like, somebody didn't come and ask me, but [also] I didn't volunteer and say "Yeah, and the Ethnic Studies Library too needs to be supported", because I was very uneasy about that. But it didn't come to that.

Anyway, the negotiations went on, the strike finally ended. Oh, I know, [I don't want to] forget this crucial part. A few days into the strike, the police came in the night time and took out all the banners. There were all these banners, and posters, and flyers that were brought in, not just by the students and the organizers of the strike, but by the community, by elementary schools, unions, non-profits, other organizations. They had all these flyers, everything, signs. And the police came one night and took them all, got rid of it, made everybody leave in front of California Hall and took all the signs, and who knows what happened to those. But then the next day the strikers came back. The banners started to come back little by little. So [in] a few days, maybe about a week later, they were all there again. Not the same ones, but they all came back. And so when the strike did end, I talked to a graduate student named Dian Million.

I asked her—I mean this is the night before it was going to end, they knew it was going to end like the next day, well I forget [exactly] how the timing was, but that night, before I left the campus, before I left the library—I asked Dian Million, she was a graduate student who was, who was particularly interested in Native American Studies, if she could bring any of those flyers, and banners and things to the library, if there's some way she could get them and save them. She had worked for me in the library, so I knew her, I trusted her, and she knew it was important. That it was an important thing. So, I say this in my talk, I did something that the library person in charge of a library should never do. I gave her a copy of the key to the library.

[01:10:14](#) **Ann**

Wow!

[01:10:24](#) **Lily**

So that she could bring the stuff to the library if she was able to get it. I mean, the stuff could have disappeared by the time she tried to get it or, who knows? Or she wouldn't have enough help to get it. So, I gave her the key. And then the next day, I think it was a Saturday, because there wasn't anybody else, I think I was the only one there, I opened the door [to] the library, and that was the peak moment for me. Huge pile of banners, posters, flyers, that was... now I'm going to choke up. And the key, she gave me back the key. And those have been cataloged. Janice Otani, our archivist at the time, cataloged those. They're in 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] right now. There's a record for them all. All that is there. That was just so amazing. And that's what I mentioned in my talk. And so that's why I said, “Thank you, graduate students. We need to document. And that was documenting how people besides us were supportive of the Ethnic Studies Department.” And they were victorious. I mean, they got what they wanted. Even [though I was] sorry about the hunger strikers. They ended up being okay, but still, I just didn't like that, [it] just gave me a bad feeling. But, anyway, if you talk about a peak experience, that's what I talked about in my talk. And I think maybe that was also part of what made me choke up at the end.

Because, you know, the documenting all that, it's work. It's hard work. This is what I said then, [and] I'm thinking now, that there's a department that pays a librarian or two or three to do that, and an archivist, even if it's part-time, and [that] continues our library, that maybe that's why I'm still here too, because our department still believes in our library.

[01:15:48](#) **Ann**

That's so moving, Lily, what you're saying. It's really deep. We don't... many of us do not have that deep connection with what Berkeley's about, what the collection's about, what our work is about. That was all in that moment, amazing.

[01:16:12](#) **Lily**

And what's crazy too. Well, I'm crazy. But what I'm realizing is, I probably didn't realize it as much until I had actually had to talk about it that Friday when I gave the talk, and put it all together, and then connected with the moment we are in right now.

[01:16:38](#) **Ann**

That would take another many hours of talking, to even...

[01:16:43](#) **Lily**

Yeah.

[01:16:49](#) **Ann**

So, how are you feeling right at this moment? Are there more things that you would like to say? I feel like when I look at my list, and I've been keeping some notes, I feel like that's all the things that I was hoping to ask you about, that I was hoping you would talk about. But I'm loving hearing from you. I don't know if there's more in your notes that you wanted to share. I mean, this is your time. You're the narrator.

[01:17:18](#) **Lily**

I know you asked about professional changes, but—I know we've all gone through this—one of the first things I thought of was things like the reference desk. The reference desk went away. It didn't affect me directly that much, but the whole idea that, “We're not going to have a reference desk anymore,” it didn't affect me that much but the idea of it affected me. The idea that there wouldn't be a reference desk [and] this just kept going further. Fewer and fewer hours, fewer and fewer, until, like, “Oh, it just went away.” I'm not even sure how to express it. I was puzzled by it, or I lamented it, I guess. I lamented it.

[01:18:46](#) **Ann**

It's very connected to our identity as librarians, I feel like.

[01:18:49](#) **Lily**

The whole thing with LibGuides [Library research guide (LibGuides is the proprietary software they are currently hosted on)], you are a wonderful LibGuide person, I am not a LibGuide person. I see it as so important and so useful, but it's always a challenge for me to work on. I've had to enlist other very nice, willing persons to help me with it. It's the kind of thing, like, if I did it every day, then I would. I would be better at it. But it's kind of like, "I was gonna pick it up again.... Okay, now how do I do this again?"

[01:19:33](#) **Ann**

Yeah, I think people connect with information in different ways. It's always interesting to me going in and talking to people about using Zotero [a citation manager; "a free, easy-to-use tool to help... collect, organize, annotate, cite, and share research"—Zotero.org] that adore it. And then there's people that say, "I can't do it." They're not, they're not un-techy people, they handle tech, [but] that format isn't how [their brain works] (I'm inserting myself here, sorry). But also, interesting what people don't connect with.

[01:20:05](#) **Lily**

I know. I'm glad you said that because when I do get challenged by stuff like that, I say, "Okay, I'm the manager of a database that's been around for a long time. I hope—there are problems, I can't say that it's going to last forever because it might end very soon, but—I know how to handle data. I'm a database manager. I'm not new at this. It's just there are certain things I just do not want to spend a lot of time on, because I can spend my time on other things.

[01:20:55](#) **Ann**

I also want to say, it's kind of amazing that your database is still pretty much functioning in a straight line from where you started. It must have been so well designed back then for it to weather so much change.

[01:21:11](#) **Lily**

It's not perfect, [but]... And here's another thing with my career, I guess, is that [I have] my blinders on for what's going to happen after I'm not here anymore. My best plan is that the library, the department, will hire another librarian who will love the work just as much as I do, and that they'll let me come in and train the person, that there'll be some way of doing that, and then they'll just take off with it.

So, when I came in, I was a library school student. I started volunteering. I was already doing stuff, I already loved it at that point. And then, luckily, I was able to take the job as a temporary

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librarian. I don't know how that can be replicated. There's going to be a different way that's going to happen. And again, there aren't that many people that are going to say they might [be ready]. But okay, just to bring in Francisco again. He once told me a long, long time ago in that mentoring situation, sitting in his office—it's in my brain, but I'm not sure how I can say it, make it come out again— “There's always going to be somebody who comes after, somebody who knows how to fix a car. Okay. But then the person who comes after that is going to have a different tool to fix the car and know how to, want to fix it a different way. A better way doesn't mean you're not fixing the car the right way the first time. But there's always going to be somebody else.” I think he was telling me that, and I think I was the person that was going to fix the car a better way.

The times of change, there are different tools available. I'm hoping there's another person that's going to come in and say, “Oh, look, let's start over again. Okay, we still have the data. Let's put it in. Let's put it in a different format. And now we'll do this [other thing].” You know, that would be great as long as the data is still there and the whole idea is still there. I know I'm not the person to take it to that level.

[01:24:05](#) **Ann**

But you kept it until this level, so...

[01:24:07](#) **Lily**

So just going to try to keep it as long as possible. Yeah. So there.

[01:24:15](#) **Ann**

So there!

[01:24:18](#) **Lily**

Oh, gosh.

[01:24:21](#) **Ann**

Anything else you want to add or do? [Does this] feel like time to wrap up, or what do you feel?

[01:24:26](#) **Lily**

Feeling like probably time to wrap up. I did write some notes and I did mention the notes, but if you have any other questions, anything that I didn't...

[01:24:45](#) **Ann**

I'm feeling like I'm looking through my questions, I took some notes from the stuff you sent me that I wanted to be sure to ask about, [and] I've asked about all of that, so I feel really good about it. If you feel good.

[01:24:58](#) **Lily**

Yeah.