

UC Berkeley

"Librarians Navigating Change" Oral History Project, UC Berkeley

Title

S Teplitzky 30-April-2025

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/46q191sv>

Authors

Glusker, Ann

Teplitzky, Sam

Publication Date

2026-02-02

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

“Librarians Navigating Change” Oral History Project

URL: https://escholarship.org/uc/berkeleylibrary_navchange

University of California, Berkeley - Library

Berkeley, California

Contact: Ann Glusker, glusker@berkeley.edu

Sam Teplitzky

Interviewed on April 30, 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.

© Copyright: Sam Teplitzky and Ann Glusker, under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en>).

00:00:11 **Ann**

This is Ann Glusker interviewing Sam Teplitzky on April 30, 2025, for the “Librarians Navigating Change” Oral History Project. This is a remote interview. Ann is in Seattle, Washington, and Sam is in Berkeley, California.

I've been starting with people by saying, could you tell me/us something about your background, whatever it is that you want to share? Whether or not you want to focus specifically on how you came to librarianship, that's fine—the focus is, please tell us how you ended up being a librarian.

00:00:54 **Sam**

Sure. After undergrad, I was casting about. I knew I wanted to go to grad school, and wasn't really clear in what. Through a series of bad decisions, [I] went to grad school in geography. Didn't really know what geography was. I thought it was maybe a merger of things I was interested in, [since] I did a lot of earth science, geology as an undergraduate, and art history as well. I thought there was some kind of merging of those, [but] it's just a totally different thing. So, I started off in grad school at UC Santa Barbara, and spent a year there. And then when I was down there and told people what I wanted to do, people kept saying, “Well, why aren't you at Berkeley? That would be a better fit.” Well, because I didn't get in, but I reapplied and then transferred up to Berkeley, and was in the geography PhD program, and got through a couple of years, and it just felt like I answered my questions. I felt like I couldn't really see how I would bring that to fruition.

Looking back and helping graduate students now, I would want to shake former Sam. But, at the time, my thinking was I really liked research. I was doing a project involving photo archives, and I thought, it's so nice to kind of be in the process, but not have that state at the end of it, and be able to kind of go in and out, and be as interested as you want, and not worry about the end goal. So, when I decided to leave grad school without the PhD, I was thinking about, what could I do that would be that in that realm? Archives was the direction I thought I would go in.

So, I went to San Jose State [University, for an MLIS]. At that point I was very done with grad school, but I saw that it was key to being in libraries and archives. So, I just went to San Jose State, which at the time was a weird combination of in-person, weekends, evenings and very very early online. I was able to jam through that very quickly, and started doing a lot of practicums, and volunteer work, and then part time jobs in libraries, to figure things out. All my practicums were in archives and photo archives and stuff. And then when it came time for a job

search, there were just a lot of cases where you were working under someone, and it was very clear that there just wasn't opportunity. Especially if you wanted to stay in the Bay Area.

So, I cast a wider net. I saw a job opening at Stanford for a Geology—I don't remember if it was called Geology or Earth Science Librarian. And I was like nope, nope, nope, not going to do it, not going to do it. And then they reposted it maybe six months later, and I still didn't have anything. I had a series of part time library gigs. I applied because I thought, well, probably means they don't have anyone who has a library and an earth science background. And then that was my first job. So, I very much shifted my trajectory away from archives, away from photos and that archive/museum side of things.

[00:04:33](#) **Ann**

And that was a departmental liaison kind of thing?

[00:04:36](#) **Sam**

Down there [at Stanford], they're called bibliographers or curators. I don't know why, but it was a bibliographer role. I think at the time collections were a much, much bigger focus, and, particularly there, it almost felt [like] more of an area studies role, because there was a lot of global collecting of, still, print. They were a bit more hands on in that approach. I stayed there for a few years. I started thinking maybe that actually this wasn't for me either. Which coincided with a family move abroad, to France. At the time it was not—I mean it's so interesting how much things have changed with remote work but that—it was not feasible. I was not allowed to take a leave [from] work. I don't even know. There were no standards for remote work, but none of those options were available [anyway]. So, I ended up just leaving the job, thinking I wouldn't come back to the Bay Area anyway, and thinking that was it for librarianship.

A couple years later, we did end up moving back to the Bay Area, but it was during the recession and was pretty hard to find work. It took a couple, [a] few years to land something. My first job at Berkeley was a part-time staff role in the Bioscience Library. And then when that freeze was lifted, there were a couple of positions that came online [at] the same time. I applied in that round, in probably 2013, yeah. And then that was the job I ended up with.

[00:06:17](#) **Ann**

I love the twists and turns. You have that in common with a lot of people. But part of what's interesting to me about [your story] is that you didn't necessarily think that librarianship was where it was going to end up at some points of that.

[00:06:39](#) **Sam**

No. And there were, I mean it's, it sounds linear in the, the ret-conning of it, but there were a lot of jobs applied for and not, not obtained.

[00:06:52](#) **Ann**

No need to [get] into it, but why did you say that you wanted to shake your younger self?

[00:06:58](#) **Sam**

Oh, it's so obvious. Like, I write papers now, I could have finished. I should have recognized that there was a situation with my advisor that was not okay, that I should have switched people. [But] I felt like I'd already made one switch. I was very lonely and it wasn't ... Grad students I encounter now are generally in a cohort and within a lab group, and that's more common in the sciences. And geography is a weird mix of—it's so sort of social science, sort of physical science—you know, mix of approaches, both in terms of the discipline, but then also in terms of like the way you're funneled through grad school. I should have just realized that it's not me, it was the setting. I should have advocated for a different advisor. Like, yeah, it wasn't insurmountable what I had to do. And yeah, I do regret that a bit.

[00:07:55](#) **Ann**

So, if you don't mind, I'm just... This is kind of weird, but I'm just going to jump to mentorship then, because the thing that I'm thinking as I'm listening is, if you had a good mentor, you wouldn't have had to have figured that out on your own and [in the end] not figured it out. I see you being a mentor, a strong mentor to a lot of people. And, how has that woven in with like, helping other people navigate changes in libraries?

[00:08:27](#) **Sam**

I would say (it's not that related to libraries, but it's been very important to me)—there was a moment where I suddenly realized—I can't remember what group, one of the professional organizations I was a part of—there was an opportunity to ask to be a mentor or to receive a mentor, be a mentee or be a mentor. And I think it was when I felt new still, or, when I was coming back into the field after having time away. I asked for [a] mentor, and then I was asked to be a mentor instead. And ever since then I was like, “Okay, let's do this.”

© Copyright: Sam Teplitzky and Ann Glusker, under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en>).

I feel like some of it is past mistakes, but also helping people see what opportunities there are. Libraries attract an interesting sort of person generally. A bit more introverted, humble, maybe more hesitant, and people who are very willing to wait [their] turn. And I think that does a disservice. Sometimes you just need someone to say, “No, go for it”, or “Apply for that”, or “Join our group.” It's not my natural state. It took a while to get there, but I've felt that it's important to do that. Other people—not my Berkeley grad school advisor, but other people—have done that for me along the way. So, I recognize the importance of it.

[00:09:50](#) **Ann**

I appreciate that. I appreciated your mentorship when I first came. Okay, so now you've arrived at Berkeley. It's about 2014. Thinking back...

[00:10:03](#) **Sam**

I arrived in 2011. I became a [librarian] in 2014.

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

Oh, that's true, sorry.

[00:10:11](#) **Sam**

Another thing I can kick myself for is being hired after the retirement plan changed, or having a start date after the retirement...

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

Darn it! That's a shame. But that's another discussion...

[00:10:25](#) **Sam**

Yeah.

[00:10:26](#) **Ann**

So, when you think back to either 2011 or 2014, or however you want to think about your time, what are some of the biggest changes you've seen over that time? I know that's an enormous question. You can break it down however you want, but it's really been a time of change those however many years.

[00:10:46](#) **Sam**

I was thinking about that ahead of time, and I had initially written down some thoughts. And then it occurred to me in the car before, like, no, the actual biggest change was that I came into that role [just] as the [library's] divisions were forming at Berkeley. And I think this is particularly significant for science librarians, or librarians who existed in a branch or subject library structure. [In the branches], the career path was very different, where you might work with someone else, but often you came in and you were both the subject librarian, the liaison, and the head of that space. So, you managed staff, you managed the space. You did all of those things for good or bad, but you did those things, and it elevated your position a bit.

When I came in, that had just been dissolved. So, we had these two new [sciences] divisions. I was a subject librarian in an independent space without any managerial roles. Anyone who interacted with my predecessor kind of expected that of me, faculty and people in the department. So, there's that kind of odd fit of being perceived differently than what the role actually was. But then, everyone in the division and in the library [was] learning the ropes of, like, no, now we all report up this [new] way. So, [now] the staff I work with, I don't manage. They're managed this way, and I'm managed this [other] way. In a way, it made for really nice interaction because we don't have any kind of—not that managing is adversarial, but we didn't have any of that. We could just do our own thing. But it does make you float a little strangely, like, “I don't have to ever open the door [when the library opens], or sit at a reference desk.” Those things were very different.

[00:12:45](#) **Ann**

Well, it must be odd to come in as a new person right when everyone else is reeling from change. Because, if things are kind of going steadily along, then the focus can be on helping you assimilate [as a new hire]. But if they don't know what you're assimilating to, then... [It] Sounds confusing.

[00:13:08](#) **Sam**

It's a little hard to know. But you don't know the opposite. I knew the opposite a little bit from my role at Stanford. But, it's just...

[00:13:20](#) **Ann**

It was what it was.

[00:13:21](#) **Sam**

It was what it was. Yeah.

© Copyright: Sam Teplitzky and Ann Glusker, under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en>).

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

I was just going to say, moving forward from that, a lot happened with libraries closing, more consolidation, consolidation of divisions. Did those things affect your work as strongly? And one thing I'm actually really interested in is the fact that your position changed so much in 2019. I don't think I had realized how much it had changed because I came right at that time.

[00:13:57](#) **Sam**

I think the thing that led to that would have been before you arrived. It's fine for people to stay somewhere their whole career, but when you've been at more than one place, you know what's you and you know what's the place. That actually is really helpful. So, there were aspects of my role at Berkeley where I was like, "This is sort of a similar thing that I remember before", [from] the time I became a librarian, and what was going on with technology and access to materials. My predecessor at Stanford, who was kept on to train me—which is something we don't do at Berkeley—she had been there 25 years and was beloved, had an amazing reputation. But you can't model yourself after someone who has 25 years of experience who came up in a very different time and way of relating to people. So, people were maybe coming to her from legacy, and they didn't necessarily need those interactions anymore.

So, there I got very little business, very little reference. It was just when a lot of journals had gone online, but we didn't necessarily subscribe to them online. Some were print, some were electronic. It was a big transitional moment. There was a little bit of that at Berkeley as well, with some people still wanting the print just to see it on the shelf, but actually never coming to the library, never asking a question. More like, an emeritus would come and ask, but there just wasn't a lot of engagement or interaction. Having seen it before, it just really bothered me, and made me feel like, "What do they need?" I'm here, they're not... I sort of imagined that people had need, and would seek me out.

[But] that wasn't the culture at all. Particularly physics just isn't that kind of field, and I had astronomy as well, [also] not that kind of field. Anyway, I was casting about for ways to connect with them more and decided to offer this workshop on research workflows. It felt like it was more relevant than [what we used to] do... There had been a legacy of these orientations that were... like, we would have food and then weirdly, a slide presentation, like a weird mix of stuff. I think they were required to attend. There are a lot of physics grad students, so I think they were required to attend. But I was able to get permission from the department to have another session

with them that felt more targeted, and [had] more of this holistic look of, “This is your research workflow, these are the components. And this is where I can fit in.” In physics, grad students are very young, they're straight from undergrad. So they may be 21, 22, 23 [years old]. If they thought of a library at all, maybe they're thinking of... I don't know what they were thinking. Textbooks maybe? Honestly. But starting to change the narrative to say like, “No, I can help with publications, I can help with data.” So, those were the seeds of the Open Science [Open science is about sharing scientific research outputs and processes so they are accessible to all (plos.org)] role that I transitioned to.

[00:17:29](#) **Ann**

How did that transition come about? Like, did you envision the new thing and work collaboratively? I can't even imagine.

[00:17:40](#) **Sam**

I don't remember that... Well, I have to credit Brian [Quigley] with it. I'm trying to remember the series of events. There was some shifting, people left, there was an opportunity to rethink how our assignments were divvied up, our subject assignments. I'm pretty sure it was all him, [recognizing] that I had kind of carved this out, and that it was an interesting opportunity. So I was able to shift and just keep Earth Science, [and] add Open Science. At that point I became the LBNL, the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab Liaison as well, which had been paired with the chemistry librarian before.

[00:18:32](#) **Ann**

How did that shift take off? I feel like it “took off” from outside, but I don't know how it felt.

[00:18:40](#) **Sam**

When did you start?

[00:18:42](#) **Ann**

I started in 2019, [in] February.

[00:18:46](#) **Sam**

Oh, early February, 2019. So, I believe officially I was supposed to make that transition when the new Chemistry and Physics Librarian started, which I want to say was meant to be Thanksgiving-ish. But I decided I would start in August.

[00:19:14](#) **Ann**

Which makes sense, to do it at the point of the start of a semester.

[00:19:18](#) **Sam**

I mean, both when I started my Stanford job [and] when I started the librarian part of my Berkeley job, they were all mid-year and that's just a very... in a way it's a nice slow start, but it can be very hard. You don't get those initial attention grabs and stuff. So, I just decided I would just call it in August and just start up. I envisioned this pilot. It was a six part pilot, partially led by grad students, that would attack all of these elements of an open science workflow. We had a classic library, whatever, intro type thing, literature searching and all of that. It was all hosted in GitHub [a proprietary developer platform that allows developers to create, store, manage, and share their code (Wikipedia)], which was meant to sort of be flashy. Like, "I get you. We're in this together. I can run with you."

So, there was that. I collaborated with a colleague to do the data part. I found a grad student to do—I'm trying to remember which part. There was a faculty member who did one part, and a grad student who did another—one was related to using GitHub itself, of demystifying how you do that, and what that looks like, and what's [the] etiquette, and that kind of stuff. More so than the technical, more of the cultural and the etiquette. Kind of going back to what you asked me earlier, helping make grad school more transparent for people. This fed off that workflows workshop I had done before. Then the professor, I think he did more of a Jupyter Notebook [The Jupyter Notebook is the original web application for creating and sharing computational documents. It offers a simple, streamlined, document-centric experience (jupyter.org)], like how lab work is structured. So again, not the science, because it was meant to be sort of topic-agnostic, but more like, "This is what it means when you're asked to do this, and this is how these tools tie together, and this is how you store it." Not really the RCR [Responsible Conduct of Research, a set of training programs required for a range of NIH research projects and researchers] stuff that we do now, because it's not required in that discipline, but hints of that. It was six parts.

[00:22:06](#) **Ann**

Was it required?

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

No, it was like... What do you call it? Voluntold. There was a lot of good chatter about it, but the whole instructor of record issue, and there was a little bit of chatter of, could it be a one unit [class offering], or like, what kind of space could exist for it. So I'll just put a pin in the fact that this was fall 2019. It was great. The last session we ended up sort of unofficially canceling because [of a protest or something happening on campus], I don't remember what the protest was for. It's hard to bring myself back to that time. [But] I ended up being much closer with that cohort of grad students. These were all first years with an invitation for others to attend.

Then I just turned that around, and started presenting about it. I went to this amazing Force 11 [FORCE11 exists at the intersection of research activity and communications, bringing together a diverse group of scholars, publishers, librarians, and technologists who are seeking to transform scholarly communications (force11.org)] conference in Edinburgh, which is still foundational. People I meet now were like, "Oh, my God, you were in Edinburgh. That was amazing." There were a bunch of people I knew from different things, some Berkeley people who were there. It was a very good time. A very strange conference. It was held at a rugby stadium. There were lots of things I recognize now that were very exceptional. It also had more of a European attendance, which for Open Science has become very important. So, a lot of things, really. My piece was a small, 5, 10-minute lightning talk, but that went well. A lot of great people. Because I was so nervous about setting up for my talk right before the sessions—the talks there were working group roundtables—I just thought, I'll go to the one in the same room. I don't want to worry about walking down the hall. I sat down with these people I'd never met. And within that year, we all wrote a paper together. One of the best papers I've ever written. So the meeting was very, very good.

And that was key, because a couple months later—I don't remember when, it was sometime in that fall—[but] by February, the writing was on the wall, and COVID happened. I think if I hadn't jumped the gun and kind of switched over to Open Science, mentally, I wouldn't have... I made a lot of connections that were just invaluable to do things remotely in the next very long time period.

[00:24:10](#) **Ann**

Right. Wow, that was so serendipitous.

[00:24:14](#) **Sam**

It was. And I think in terms of other things at Berkeley, I don't know that I've seen a good example of that for other people. It feels very lucky. It feels like I was very lucky with my supervisor. It feels like a really, I don't know, perfect moment in time. Because you don't see that, especially not having to publicly reapply.

[00:24:43](#) **Ann**

When you say public reapply, you mean for your position?

[00:24:46](#) **Sam**

I mean, for example, [I'm thinking of someone who went for a new librarian position, and] she went through a public [application] process. She could have kept her old job if she didn't get it, but she went through a public process. In a way that's more positive because it allows you to renegotiate your salary at that point.

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

And it gets you some cred, I guess.

[00:25:06](#) **Sam**

Yeah. But it's a huge effort to stay in the same place.

[00:25:11](#) **Ann**

Oh, huge! And some risk, as we have seen in some situations.

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

Yes, definitely. So, in a way, it was lucky. I didn't have to do that, and I was able to shift and really just in time because...

[00:25:27](#) **Ann**

I wonder if that Edinburgh conference had, like, the kind of mist of glory over it because...

[00:25:35](#) **Sam**

Oh, definitely! Because you didn't go to another conference, right?

[00:25:37](#) **Ann**

Yeah. And the conferences now, even the in-person ones, it's harder to get to them, and people are expecting that they'll be virtual as well. I just went to ACRL [Association of College &

Research Libraries, part of the American Library Association] virtually and it was fine. And it was thousands of dollars less, [of money] that I didn't have. Less expensive.

[00:25:55](#) **Sam**

You know, that's funny about Edinburgh, because I think that was an ACRL year too. That would have been in the spring. I did—I went to ACRL. And I went to, it's called GSIS [Geoscience Information Society], the Earth Science Librarian Conference. That was in Indianapolis. It was more expensive for me to go to Indianapolis than to go to Edinburgh.

[00:26:21](#) **Ann**

That's crazy!

[00:26:21](#) **Sam**

Granted, I took a terrible flight. I took like...I flew, I had to flap my way.

[00:26:29](#) **Ann**

Wow! [So,] I'm gonna pull back to... You're watching your own connection to how to be a librarian in the sciences—the new Sciences or new [Engineering] and Physical Sciences Division—and making change that seemed to make a lot of sense, and has made sense. What else were you seeing happening around [you]? What other changes stick in your mind as, “Oh, we had to adjust to that, and we had to adjust to that, and this was coming, and that was coming...”?

[00:27:11](#) **Sam**

It's very hard for me to remember. I feel like there are times when things seem so big, and then nothing changes. Like, right around the time I started, we had just gone through one of those strategic planning exercises, and it felt so weighty, and it was like round tables and faculty and [a] big report and then kind of... It was the same. I think some of the stuff that people have gone through just didn't impact me as much—the website stuff and Alma, the changing ILS [Integrated Library System], it just wasn't quite as relevant for me.

[00:27:55](#) **Ann**

I feel like the science divisions [are] a different beast. The ways people use the collections are different.

[00:28:04](#) **Sam**

I don't know if we're ahead of things or it's just a very parallel way of doing the work. We tend to have our identity less connected to topics. I think often if someone's a literature librarian or history or one of those things, where you might feel very passionate, or you might be trained and there's like a kind of close connection to what you study and how you think, when it's physics, it's just not really that way. I think one of the biggest changes was just how we do collecting. Some of that again was happening for us in the sciences anyway, as Berkeley moved to so much shared collecting through CDL [California Digital Library]. And then [with] big packages, we lost a lot of autonomy as selectors. Some of it lightens the load, but some of it just really disconnects you from any of that. The work isn't there and also the publications themselves aren't happening. So, they're either happening in big packages or not at all. So there used to be a lot more talking with vendors and negotiating things, and all of that has been removed.

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

That's so interesting... A lot of the reason I wanted to do this project was, to me there was personal sadness about the move away from liaison librarianship. [In] my job with sociology, it mattered that I was a sociologist. [In] collection work, it was like, "Okay, I feel like I'm really uniquely qualified to sort of say whether we need this or not." Because I lived it. So, to me there's like sadness in like, "Should I become just a research methods librarian and that would be my thing?" For me, "No, the sociology matters!" But [for you] nobody's going to expect you to be a physicist...

[00:30:04](#) **Sam**

I mean, there are people definitely with stronger backgrounds. But I think what happens is, say you had a background in physics or chemistry. Even at a higher graduate level, you're often asked to do... The number of people you cover in the sciences is enormous. So, you might have a humanities department of 10 people and you can really get to know them, [but in the sciences] you're not going to get to know these people, and you're not going to be able to understand the majority of their research. For me, I can understand how they work and what they need, but I can't understand like what they're doing. I have a thing where I go to department talks all the time, and I just like go Zen. All I can do is just exist, and like let things flip by me, and maybe write down some citations. [I can] think about if they have nice graphics on their slides, but I can't follow the research very well at all. Which is a weird way to be a pseudo-expert on these things. There's a lot of imposter syndrome in that, and I think I just have had to set that aside.

[00:31:10](#) **Ann**

Then, what is a consultation like around open science topics?

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

Well, they're pretty rare. It's a lot of outreach that's very awkward, going to departments and trying to drum up conversation. But it's sort of just like any reference consultation. You start to ask people about their work, they want to talk about their work. And then you might say, "Well, how do you save your articles?" And then that's an opening to say, "Well, there's this open tool", or, "It's become common practice to do it this way. What about your data? How big is your data?" You know, maybe the way the [Ithaka] Big Data study went, you can just kind of ask these questions without quite knowing, and then think to yourself, "Okay, those words that person just said, that's something I'll ask RDM [Research Data Management] about." Or you know, file that away. Being conversant and being interested, but not necessarily over-promising.

Because one thing [is] that even though the library has moved a lot more towards support of research workflows and open science and data, we really can't solve a lot of problems. So, it's a lot of just understanding how Berkeley works. Especially with new faculty who are just starting. Maybe they've just come from grad school or postdoc, and they're trying to orient themselves and move their whole operation over. Sometimes, you know, just having a friendly face is enough. But yeah, I don't know, it's mixed success for sure.

[00:32:55](#) **Ann**

So, when you think back to your early days at Berkeley and you think about your job now, I'm interested to know what was exciting and what you connected with then, and what you connect with now. Like the days that felt like, "That was a good day, I got to do cool stuff."

[00:33:24](#) **Sam**

I don't know that I loved it at the beginning. I think it was a little bit of harsh reality. Like, very happy to be employed. Happy to be in an institution that I knew that was very convenient. Very bummed about the salary. And yeah, I guess some of the really bright lights in the early pieces were departmental staff. It was fairly hard to connect to faculty and students, but the staff in Physics in particular were really kind, really welcoming. And I think it's a combination of the size of that department, and at the time, the funding they had just made them a bit more amenable. They were doing DEI work really early and were happy to have anyone participate. They always included us as part of the department, not as some other thing. Included us in all

the lunches, got us T-shirts, you know, just were really welcoming. And that felt good. It's just impossible to replicate that when you think, "Okay, I'm making the connections here" And then you realize, "I've got these others who won't reply to my email."

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

And what about now?

[00:34:47](#) **Sam**

Now it's just, it's very different now. I feel like now I'm less concerned with some of those other things. The things that I'm working on now are much more about doing open science, and representing Berkeley in broader spaces, and not necessarily getting into the nitty gritty of one-to-one outreach and trying to like build those connections in quite the same way.

[00:35:22](#) **Ann**

I have to say I followed your *Seismica* [a community-driven, Diamond Open Access journal publishing peer-reviewed research in seismology and earthquake science] work with just amazement. To be on the ground level of something like that...

[00:35:34](#) **Sam**

Has been really good. What I realized kind of early on is that a lot of the traditional library associations just didn't really work for me. It wasn't exciting to me to be the incoming chair of the whatever division, or the kind of work they were doing felt a little bit traditional or out of date. And so I've looked for things like working on this journal where it felt like a much better way to be in touch with the discipline, and to also do open science and then reflect that back here. It's a fair amount of time, but it also feels much more applied. And again, people are really respectful and welcoming and there's never that feeling of like, "What's your background? Do you have a PhD?" Where people are very happy to have me there, and are interested in how open science plays out. It might just be a very unique community, because I haven't seen it in other journals. But it's much easier to interact with them than to try to create that at Berkeley.

[00:36:57](#) **Ann**

That makes sense to me.

[00:36:58](#) **Sam**

Does it make sense?

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

It does. I'm on the editorial board of *IASSIST Quarterly* [International Association for Social Science Information Service and Technology], that international social sciences [data] organization. And it's one of the more supportive and functional multi-national groups across institutions and countries that I've ever been part of. But I don't take it for granted by any stretch of the imagination.

[00:37:20](#) **Sam**

And I don't know how things get to be that way, or not that way, but I think the way you use the word functional, it's like, we have our primary job, both in practice and the way we call it that at Berkeley. There's no need to take on extra emotional labor on these groups. I don't want to save the Earth Sciences librarian group. I would rather use my plus time or my contributions to do things, work where people are excited and making healthy contributions, and generally moving forward with things. I think part of working with the journal and other things—I'm chairing this Force11 working group right now—things at Berkeley can move so slowly and then be cyclically terrible. Whereas if you are able to find another initiative that you can be a part of, and you all decide to write a paper and that's going to take six months or 18 months, it's very clear and you do the thing. And then because you aren't together every day, you can say goodbye [Ann laughs]. It's such a nice way. You can package it, and then scaffold on it later if you want to present. But it makes a lot more sense than sitting through a bunch of meetings that make you a bit jaded.

I remember when I was early [in my career] and there are older people, later on [in their careers who] seemed jaded, and I was like, “Oh, come on, this is so interesting to really dive in.” And now I'm like, “I don't want to sit through 14 meetings and then have it not change” or whatever.

[00:39:45](#) **Ann**

So, I'm going to do another jump. Because as we're talking, I keep thinking, to me, some of the choices you're making are kind of the future of academic librarianship. They're collaborative and they're interconnected with the world beyond the university in ways that I think maybe librarianship wasn't so much in the past. I don't know if you see that way... But also, I'm interested, when you think of mentoring new librarians and what advice you have for them, what comes to mind?

[00:40:30](#) **Sam**

I don't think I'm particularly prescient, but I think there is this, like, some of these things have come to sciences sooner. We would have been really depressed if we just didn't accept that. Things are more collaborative. There's just, I don't know, a different way of approaching things.

I don't know what I think, what I say to [the] mentoring I do at Berkeley... [It] is probably a bit different because there's some serious practicalities of what you need to do to advance in Berkeley. Having served on and chaired CAPA [Committee on Appointment, Promotion & Advancement], I feel like I can talk people down. It feels like sometime after I came, and to this moment, there was a stress related to reviews that there wasn't before. I think helping people just dial that back a little bit, and realize what the expectations are and how you can meet that, is probably what I would say to new people. It's not as bad as you think. But also, all the people I've mentored are like, they could mentor me. They're always just amazing. Like, our colleagues are great. They're on their way. It's like, "You don't need [me]." They don't need me.

[00:41:52](#) **Ann**

It is one of the cool things about Berkeley. The colleagues are person for person just mind-blowing.

[00:41:59](#) **Sam**

Yeah. I think the thing I've tried to do, though, is never really do anything alone. Early on, Margaret [Phillips] mentored me and we wrote a paper together. We did this survey of open access, the use of the Open Access Fund at Berkeley. And then we wrote a paper about it. I don't think it would have occurred to me to do that without her. And then I've tried to do that for other people you know, encourage them to submit for a lightning talk or just do it together. You don't need to do it alone, really. There's not like a glory in it. We're sort of liberated from that structure of, like, "We're modeling it. We exist in academia, but we don't have to be first authors, we don't have to get a grant." We don't have to. We can do a lot of work just with our autonomy and some focus. So, I've tried to bring people along to co-present. Even if it's a lightning talk or maybe a poster, just so you're not alone in the doing of it. So they can see, "What is it like to submit the paper? What is it like to be the one who has to reply?" Bonita [Dyess] and I wrote a paper together, [and] another colleague through the Geoscience Information Society [GSIS], we did a poster or two together over the pandemic.

When I was a little like, "What to do [now]?", I brought a few people together and we did this study of—what did we do? how do I describe it?—like a citation analysis of Earth Science

researchers in our own institutions. But it was both workflow and... Like, the results were whatever, [but] it was more about, “Do you all want to learn GitHub? Let's just do it together. We're going to host our stuff on GitHub, we're going to use Jupyter notebooks, we're going to learn a little Python [a computer programming language], we're going to figure out what an API [Application Programming Interface, a set of rules or protocols that enables software applications to communicate with each other (ibm.com)] is.” Because I had this list of things I wanted to do, and I looped them all in, and I got one person who was a bit more tech savvy—he was great. One person who was pretty new, [and] someone who was a little more junior to me. And then the four of us did this whole thing. We were able to each adapt the Jupyter notebook to our own institution. Without knowing a lot of code, once we got the data, we could just edit out the code for our particular spreadsheets, and then we wrote the paper together. No one would have done that alone. It was tough in retrospect. We were all home [during COVID], you know, everyone's... We met like, maybe weekly, maybe every other week, until we got this thing out.

[00:44:56](#) **Ann**

It sounds like it was intentional, but it also gelled, both.

[00:45:03](#) **Sam**

I got really lucky, because I tried to reproduce that vibe again and it didn't quite go as well. So you never know. It's like where you were saying about IASSIST, like sometimes something's really great, you don't really know why. You just kind of want to like be in that space with people.

Another thing like that, over the pandemic we started having like chats among the people who worked at the Earth Sciences Library –staff and librarians, just to connect. And we decided to host these map contests, completely unrelated to our audience, our mission. It was really nice outreach, and it kind of gave us a focus and it was something that felt fun, for one, but also something that everyone could participate in, and everyone had a role, and [a] really manageable little bit of work when the submissions started coming in. But yeah, just a good outreach effort.

[00:46:13](#) **Ann**

You're making me remember something Celia [Emmelhainz] said early on when I first came. She had gotten it from Jeff Loo, which is that everything you do, [do] three things. Three things.

[00:46:24](#) **Sam**

Everyone quotes the Jeff Loo [advice].

© Copyright: Sam Teplitzky and Ann Glusker, under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en>).

[00:46:26](#) **Ann**

I've thought of that so many times, and there are times where I'm like, "Could I eke a third thing out of this?"

[00:46:32](#) **Sam**

Well, it's interesting. [It] wouldn't have occurred to me to approach it that way, but, like, the maps contest, we did three times, but that isn't really what you mean. But we presented on it, we made use of it multiple times.

[00:46:52](#) **Ann**

I can think of three-- I don't know if you did this, but: presented, lightning talk, blog post. Three things!

[00:46:57](#) **Sam**

I think we might have done that. I want to say we had an in-person event later with the maps themselves, and then I don't know that we ever got to this, but we had talked about adding like the sort of naive maps—[they] were [made by] young kids—adding them to the collection. I don't know that we officially did that. But, the three things is very key. He was a master of that. Is a master of that.

[00:47:26](#) **Ann**

Sort of moving a little bit away from all that, when you think of a time, or do you have a particular mode, where you see something coming at you... like before you knew GitHub, how are you gonna approach and address it? I'm hearing you say some of those things you did, like with other people and got up and running, you might not have done it by yourself... But also, things like, even your job change—that sounded very intentional where like, "Okay, this is a big change, how do I want to strategize and make that work as well as possible?" Do you find yourself doing professional development? Do you talk with colleagues? (Helps to have a good supervisor.) But how do you approach change, I guess is the question.

[00:48:28](#) **Sam**

I think it can be hard at Berkeley, but to the extent possible, letting something go is very key, even if it's not officially, like, you are released from this liaison role. But if there's a way to not do a thing anymore, maybe it's like you used to keep a spreadsheet because you were curious about your questions, or whatever... Like just let a thing go, I think is one important thing that

people don't talk about enough. I am pretty, pretty good at that. I did do some professional development. I've done a bunch of...

I guess there are two foundational things I'll mention. In, I don't remember the years before the pandemic, so maybe like '17, '18, somewhere in there, a few of us in EPS [Engineering and Physical Sciences Division] at the time audited the Data 8 course, which is the first level course for data science [at Berkeley], which was maybe just a few years old at the time. I don't have the dates pre-research, but they had the MOOC [Massive Open Online Course], the distance online open course. The online version. But at the time it was, I want to say it was synchronous. It kind of went along with the semester live. They weren't live lectures, but you [could] just do it in one sitting. It was like week by week it would be uploaded or something. So, we few of us did that together. And it was very hard. But it completely changed my understanding of how to code. And [that] was always a block for me. I had done a bunch of the Carpentries [Library Carpentry is a global community teaching software and data skills to people working in library- and information-related roles (librarycarpentry.github.io)] intro workshops, and I could never quite... [Taking Data 8] opened it up to me so I could see what was possible.

But if you've ever done any of those intro trainings, sometimes you leave and you're enthusiastic and then you're like, "I don't know how to do this in my work." This took it to the next level. So that kind of predates some of the projects I've already talked about. There was that. And then during the pandemic, I think it was [20]21. I took this course through... The acronym is CSCCE. It's the Center for Collaboration and Science Engagement? I always forget what their acronym stands for. I'm going to look it up...

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

You don't have to now if you don't want...

[00:51:04](#) **Sam**

It's right here. Okay. Center for Scientific Collaboration and Community Engagement. They have the most interesting scaffolded, professional development for the intention or the goal.... The audience is people who are community managers of science organizations and projects.

[00:51:21](#) **Ann**

That's so interesting.

[00:51:23](#) **Sam**

© Copyright: Sam Teplitzky and Ann Glusker, under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en>).

You could think like AAAS [American Association for the Advancement of Science] or you know, some of the, maybe professional organizations, but then some of the smaller [ones] like the Michael J. Fox [Parkinson's] Foundation. So foundations, but also projects, things of different scale. It does attract library types, but we're not really the intended audience. It just, it works really, really well. So, they have a whole curriculum now, and a certificate. But I just did one course that was online, and it was a cohort of us for six weeks. It's very, very well scaffolded and you're producing these things that lead to an outcome or a plan.

So what is the Bay Area Open Science Group now was kind of the kernel in that, like, "How do I create an open science community?" And they had lots of really amazing visualizations, and ways of thinking about community building, specifically in a kind of academic science space, of figuring out who your audience is, and who your champions are, what kind of goals are appropriate, what kind of outputs are appropriate, all of those things. But again, really scaffolded. And that's informed how we structure the [Bay Area] Open Science Group. But it has also made me think, whenever I have to be part of some working group or whatever, now that kind of enters my process. But it's funny, it's not the classic library stuff...

[00:53:07](#) **Ann**

I like that too, as advice for people coming in. I do feel like I'm often contacted by people [who] want to become data librarians. I always say, "Get your hands wet, and do some data analysis, and here's some low-barrier entry points." But you know, until you read a code book, it's hard to really get how to read a code book. It's not always received well [laughs].

[00:53:41](#) **Sam**

You know, I think the longer you are in the profession, you see that most people don't have any kind of training in management, or, I don't know, what people would call soft skills, but they're actually very important and learnable. And I think if you're in some kind of management track at Berkeley, there are a lot of resources for you. I haven't had those, but CSCCE was kind of that way. At times when I've thought about leaving and have tried to leverage that, people really, really respect it, but also kind of don't value it, if that makes sense. There's a feeling of like, "Oh, you can pick that up." And it's true you can, but you have to invest as much time in that kind of skill building as in code and programming and software and all of that.

[00:54:41](#) **Ann**

That kind of leads me a little bit into the question of—I'm very interested in your answer to this because of your saying that some of the changes and things like the ILS didn't really impact your work as much as it did some other people—what have you felt that you've been impacted by [related to] your position in the hierarchy, and who is the UL at the time, and some of the management stuff going on?

[00:55:13](#) **Sam**

There's a real benefit to being in a branch or a subject library. You just kind [keep] of out of it a little. And you can stay out of some of that for better or worse... I don't know how to answer that. I'm aware of the things that have happened at Berkeley in the last while, but at the same time, there's a little bit of a long game. There's a realization that, there's some version of this everywhere. It's not like there's some other library where things are amazing. I think sometimes people hold up certain institutions as places you might want to be. And that's probably true, but for the most part, I think everyone's dealing with this or that. Yeah, I'm not really sure how to answer that. I mean, I've definitely made choices of not serving on different groups where I feel like it is not worth my time or, to the extent that we have control over that, I would prefer not to work maybe with certain people. But, it's kind of the benefit to being such a large, large organization that your time comes, where you've got to be the one to chair the thing, that's for sure. But there's also a lot of people, and a lot, a lot of cooks in the kitchen. It's sort of easy to avoid certain things if you want to.

[00:56:54](#) **Ann**

I see you. I hear you.

[00:56:59](#) **Sam**

Does that answer... I feel like that doesn't answer your question, but I don't know... I think I also need to completely forget yesterday. In my head, I'm thinking of some things that were, you know, rough over the past couple years. But then I also am like, I don't know.

[00:57:13](#) **Ann**

Well, I mean, my question was, “What was your experience?” And that was your experience. So you did answer the question.

[00:57:18](#) **Sam**

No. I think there were some things that I wish could have been different. I think we had a lot of really great colleagues leave who may have stayed under different scenarios. But, it's probably

© Copyright: Sam Teplitzky and Ann Glusker, under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en>).

the same everywhere. It's very complicated living here. People are facing a whole series of different decisions that, as you get older, are not... It's a conservative profession, it doesn't pay a lot, and what are you gonna do?

[00:57:53](#) **Ann**

So a few sentences ago, it sounded like you said something like, “The times I've thought about leaving.” So, if you are okay with answering, are there times? A lot of times?

[00:58:09](#) **Sam**

No. I've applied for, not a lot of jobs, but I've applied for very targeted roles over the years. But I have pretty specific things that I would look for. And truthfully, they just haven't panned out. I usually get an interview and then don't advance. And increasingly, I think age is a factor, even though I don't feel that old. But also, as badly as we're paid, we're actually paid pretty well in comparison to similar things. And particularly if you start looking at remote work or, you know, organizations that have remote options, it can be really challenging to do that in California. And I think maybe in the end, I'm not enough of a risk taker.

It's very hard to see, even if something's very exciting, if it's contingent or just one or two years, it's very hard... I wish there was a way for us to do things like that, like, take a leave for a year or, be loaned out or something. Yeah, I think that would kind of keep things exciting. Of course, [a] sabbatical, any of that would probably scratch that itch... [But] because it is very hard to hire people—if I left, I either wouldn't be replaced, or it would be a year and change and someone would be doing my job along with their job—you get kind of stuck, and it's hard to find something that's a good fit in terms of family, and money, and time, and I don't know.

[00:59:44](#) **Ann**

It is. Every once in a while, something [a job listing] will come past and I think to myself, “I need the feeling to be as strong as it was when I saw this job at Berkeley, that the job listing was so exciting.” There have been a few jobs that piqued that level of interest. But then when you operationalize what it means, life is more complicated.

[01:00:08](#) **Sam**

Yes.

[01:00:09](#) **Ann**

I'm just looking at my list here. Any comments that you'd like to make about technology changes over time? I feel like that's kind of been a thread through your whole...

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

It's funny looking at your questions. I don't feel that connected to a lot of the obvious changes like digitization or Google. Like, that stuff has kind of washed off me a little bit. I guess right now the equivalent is AI. Right? Like what's that going to do? But I feel like Google was freaky for people too. So I don't know. I enjoy that stuff, so I tend to be a little more positive than concerned, even when some of the practices are concerning.

I think one of the things that I remember when I was starting, people who had been around longer, that feels like a real loss—it feels like librarians used to be much more tech savvy and have programming skills, because that was required to access these databases. You had to have these backend skills and that you were mediating these searches for people. With the changes to things, all of these hosted databases, and then the kind of Google version of them with just a single search box, we lost that skill set and then it's not required of us, which is, I don't know, I think that's a shame.

Because I think now we're kind of coming full circle, and so many of these tools have interesting ways of accessing them that we don't necessarily have the skill set to do, either through an API or some of these data sets that would be kind of interesting for us to do things with, instead of just broker them for people.

[01:02:06](#) **Ann**

That's such an interesting point. I've thought about it a lot recently, about when I was first a medical librarian, and looking at some of the searches that those medical librarians had to construct when every search cost money. So, it had to include everything. [These days], that's what people are doing when they help with systematic reviews and evidence [syntheses].

[01:02:30](#) **Sam**

That's what I was thinking. Systematic reviews.

[01:02:33](#) **Ann**

But it doesn't come naturally. You have to build skills up. We used to have them, and lost them. Interesting. Well, the place that I tend to wrap up is asking, “How you would like your work to be remembered?” But before I ask that, is there anything else that you want to be sure to say, or

that I didn't ask, or that you thought about in advance and thought, “Oh, I bet she'll talk about this”?

[01:03:03](#) **Sam**

No, I feel like I missed a lot, but I'm also not sure what [else] I would want. Do you think I've left some...

[01:03:32](#) **Ann**

No, I feel like, as I look through my [printed] questions, and then I have my Sam-specific questions right here... Well, actually, maybe I will stop for one second. The thing that really struck me as I read through your CV [was] the shift in 2019 to open in your title—I know you kept some liaison responsibilities, but the kind of the focus on open science, and we've talked about that. I thought your work with *Seismica* was such a great example and so interesting. But, I also am really interested that as I read through your CV, I see you as a researcher—and that's not true of many of us—but [also] that you weren't just writing papers about a phenomenon from the outside, but that you were actually in it and researching it. Is that something that you feel has been encouraged, has developed over time?

[01:04:45](#) **Sam**

I don't think it's encouraged or discouraged, but I think it's a way I process things. I [give a] shout out to Jeff Loo, that idea of kind of repurposing your work, or having an increasing impact... I feel like that was a word that wasn't there when I started in the profession. But thinking a little more strategically about the work we do, particularly, maybe segueing into legacy [question], the thing I think that I really value in this profession, and in this particular role, is the autonomy we have. If you're dissatisfied, we have workplace dynamics like every place, but a lot of it is like, you can do things, you can kick off a project that doesn't take anyone's time, and is free, and the ability to do that can be quite rewarding.

So, I think a lot of the research that I've tried to do has that element of, it's not bothering anyone, it doesn't really cost anything. It's a nice way to connect to people and to see some on-the-ground truth, or testing of things that we're doing. It's like very imperfect. I think my methods are pretty bad, but I think I've turned out some interesting things. I've got a paper coming out any day about—related to *Seismica*—that I think will be pretty fun. But, I think it sort of scaffolds what I'm doing anyway. Sort of puts an exclamation point on it, and then is a way to show impact, a way to have something to talk about.

Because I'm not a natural... I'm not an extrovert. It's easier for me to go to a conference, present even if it's a lightning talk. Maybe it's longer. But when you present and you've put yourself out there, then people will come to you, and people know a bit more about you, rather than you having to just work a cocktail hour, which is just like very terrible. The research gets in lots of different ways that way. I mean, it's funny because library research isn't necessarily known for being rigorous, which again can benefit us. We can get papers out there. We don't have to worry about the impact factor of our library journals. We can produce interesting things, and make an impact that way.

[01:07:20](#) **Ann**

I've appreciated that. To me it's kind of a mature model if the organization, but especially supervisors and colleagues, [are] like, "You're an adult, you'll organize your time. If you feel like this has professional value and you're doing it, we respect you as a professional enough to say go do it." And not like, "What have you done for me lately?"

[01:07:47](#) **Sam**

Yeah, I mean there's lots of ways to do it. People do it through being the president of an organization or volunteering their time in other ways. I've liked being able to do this, because I feel like it has opened a lot of doors. It's let me travel more than I might have otherwise, and all of that's been really interesting.

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

Well, Sam, how do you feel about... Anything... Any final anything?

[01:08:23](#) **Sam**

No. One of the reasons I agreed to do this is I thought it would be fun for my kids to have something to read about what I do. I think they have a sense of it, and I don't really know what their perspective is, but I think it's a funny thing to be in a kind of feminized profession, which isn't what I would have called for myself, and I think sets a slightly weird example for daughters. But that said, I think they see that I do cool things. Some of it is accessible to them. Like, they understand maps, they have asked for help with Python. And that really warms my heart. And then, they see that I can be around, I have the freedom and flexibility to go to their events. Maybe that's not a huge thing to advertise. It's not important to everyone. But that combination of being near a campus, and showing them what goes on, and, having them be a little more integrated, but also, having a pretty strong work life balance is... it's been a good ride that way.

[01:09:42](#) **Ann**

Glad you took part [in this project]. The other thing I'm kind of hoping is that when all the transcripts get uploaded, which hopefully is the end of the summer, they'll see other people that they probably know through you also represented there. There's just really, really powerful stuff that's coming out. I hope that they see that your world is really rich.

[01:10:11](#) **Sam**

Well, this wasn't the burn it all down that I envisioned, but hopefully it's interesting.

[01:10:18](#) **Ann**

See, now I want to say, “Okay, what, you holding back ‘Burn it all down!’ from me?”

[01:10:23](#) **Sam**

For me. I'm being... I think I'm being a lot more diplomatic than I can be, but I think that's healthy.

[01:10:28](#) **Ann**

I think it is. I will say, and, I won't take it out of the transcript, there's a little more “Burn it all down!” from the people who are retired or near retirement than the ones who are still active. And that's just the nature of the beast.

[01:10:43](#) **Sam**

I'm sure it is. And it's also, we're here on a particular day. A month ago, a month from now could feel different.

[01:10:58](#) **Ann**

Yes. Very glad to be doing this at this time because even in a year I feel like these would be very different... these interviews would be very different. I hope I'm wrong... but...

[01:11:14](#) **Sam**

Yeah, I, I hope so as well.

[01:11:22](#) **Ann**

I think it's time to stop recording. Thank you, Sam.