

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
LIBRARIANS IN THE PANDEMIC

Oral History Interview with

BM:

By IP:

TheirStory Interview

October 18, 2021

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY: LIBRARIANS IN THE PANDEMIC

NARRATOR: BM:
DATE: October 18, 2021
INTERVIEWER: IP:
PLACE: TheirStory

NARRATOR'S PERSONAL DATA

Birthdate: Unknown
Spouse: Husband
Occupation: Librarian

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW

In this interview, Beth Marhanka describes her experiences as the director of the Gelardin New Media Center at Georgetown University's Lauinger Library during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to sharing these experiences, she also shares her background, personal experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, and thoughts about the changing nature of librarianship.

INTERVIEWER'S COMMENTS

There is a background journal entry for this interview deposited at the same time of this transcription. Both narrator and interviewer are librarians.

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INDEX TERMS

Building Operations. Children. Collaboration. COVID-19. COVID-19 Prevention Measures. Faculty. Fears. Federal Libraries. Georgetown University. Georgetown University Library. Graduate School. Higher

Education. Hiking. Illness. Librarians. Librarianship. Library Services. Maker Hub. National Parks. Personal Computers. Reopening. September Eleventh. Remote Work. Shutdown. Stress. Students. Washington, DC. Work Relationships.

LIBRARIANS I THE PANDEMIC

Transcription of Interview with BM: on October 18, 2021, via TheirStory

IP: Initials of India Pasiuk

BM: Initials of Beth Marhanka

00:00:01 **IP:**

Okay, so we are recording. So today is October eighteenth, 2021. This is a recording of an oral history interview between me, India Pasiuk, and Beth Marhanka. Am I pronouncing that correctly?

00:00:16 **BM:**

Yep, that's right.

00:00:17 **IP:**

Perfect. This interview is taking place via the TheirStory program. Beth, do I have permission to record this interview?

00:00:25 **BM:**

Yes, you do.

00:00:26 **IP:**

All right. Thank you. So let's get into it. So can you tell me a little about yourself?

00:00:34 **BM:**

Sure. So, my name is Beth Marhanka. I am the head of the Gelardin New Media Center and the Maker Hub at the Georgetown University Library. I have been at Georgetown for 24 years. I started as a reference librarian and also the web coordinator for the library and then I moved into the role as the head of the New Media Center in 2001.

00:01:01 **IP:**

When did you start working -- What year did you start working at the Georgetown Library?

00:01:06 **BM:**

I started working at Georgetown University Library in January of 1998.

00:01:11 **IP**

Okay. Thank you. So what would you say are the most important things that someone should know about you?

00:01:22 **BM:**

Oh my goodness about me? Well, I love libraries! I have always loved libraries. From the time I was a little kid through high school, through college, I just gravitate to libraries. Even when I'm off, I end up visiting libraries for some reason. We'll be in Maine, or North Carolina, or California, and if I pass a library, it's like, bzzt! I gotta check it out.

00:01:50 **BM:**

I had a -- I was on sabbatical a few years ago. How many years ago now, seven years ago? Yes. And I visited, can't remember how many, about thirty libraries just to see what was going on, mostly in academic. But in public libraries, and it really confirmed for me that this is a really noble profession that I feel -- it's my calling and proud to be, uh, proud to be a professional librarian.

00:02:23 **IP:**

Outside of libraries and visiting libraries, what do you like to do for fun?

00:02:31 **BM:**

Aw, I love to hike and bike, kayak, and read and watch films and movies, and let's see -- I've got two kids. My son is a fourth year at UVA. They, they say, first year through fourth year. So he's a fourth year at UVA. And my daughter is a freshman at James Madison University. So my I guess that's probably my next most important role in my life.

00:03:02 **IP:**

Wonderful. I'm kind of surprised that, uh, I know AU has faculty/staff privileges for their students [children of faculty and staff] to attend the university. How did your both of your children end up in schools in Central Virginia? If I may ask.

00:03:19 **BM:**

Well, we're Virginia residents, and my son did get into Georgetown, but it was going to cost significantly more. So, Georgetown benefits, they pay for 67% of the tuition at Georgetown, which is still significant.

00:03:35 **IP:**

Yeah.

00:03:35 **BM:**

It was going to end up costing about 40,000, you know, out of our pockets to come to Georgetown, but they also contribute to going to other schools.

00:03:46 **IP:**

Oh okay.

00:03:46 **BM:**

And they pay, and I think it's like thirty-seven percent -- I can't remember exactly the percentage, but it's towards anywhere else.

00:03:54 **IP:**

Oh, great.

00:03:54 **BM:**

So it's costing us, Like, I don't know, 14,000 a year to send him to UVA. And since you got into both and they're like -- the ratings are so close -- I think Georgetown is like 24th and UVA's 25th? Yeah, it just makes sense for him to just go to UVA and he loves it! He's been doing great there. And then my daughter wasn't interested in Georgetown, you know -- it's like -- since I've been here through their entire lives, they kind of think of it, I know this sounds crazy, but sort of, as our Community College. It's our local -- yeah, and it's my place, and it's that doesn't have that grand reputation for them. (laughs)

00:04:35 **IP:**

One more of more personal question. What it is -- so you mentioned you like hiking, so what's your favorite place to hike?

00:04:43 **BM:**

Oh wow. Well, in Virginia, I'd say Old Rag. I know that's probably what most people would say because it's a great hike. I love Acadia National Park in Maine. Um, I really got into hiking and Iceland. I was an exchange student there. So there's some really wonderful hiking there and just beautiful scenery. Yeah, I don't know. Oh! The White Mountains are awesome. There's, there's wonderful places to hike. I went hiking in Prince William Forest yesterday, which is, you know, close. It's only half an hour for my house and it was wonderful. So there's great hiking everywhere. I hiked in Japan. Kumano Kodo, the pilgrimage and that was

beautiful too. Yeah. There's great hiking everywhere.

00:05:31 **IP:**

Sounds like you had quite a few Adventures! I also like to hike so I'm like writing these down over here.

00:05:37 **BM:**

Oh really? I could probably about that for a good hour to tell me your favorite hikes.

00:05:44 **IP:**

I will! (laughs) How about at the end of the Interview,? I'll give you my favorites.

00:05:49 **IP:**

All right, so you talked a little bit about how you feel, felt called to libraries from a very early age. What made you decide to start working in libraries? What did when did you decide to make it your profession?

00:06:01 **BM:**

You know, I don't think I ever would have thought to go into libraries when I was younger. I-- I don't know if things were different when I was growing up or maybe just in my family. I'm a first gen college student, and It was more of a, You'll go to college and you'll whatever so succeed, but there was no real (unintelligible).

00:06:25 **BM:**

So, I went to school and did well in school, but not, wasn't, didn't have any kind of focus. I -- you know -- had, I don't know, four different -- moved around to four or five different majors and then ended up with an English Lit major, and then I had minors in philosophy, women's studies, and art. So, very solid Humanities background, and basically prepared to do almost nothing when I graduated (laughs).

00:06:55 **BM:**

So, and I ended up getting a temp job in a federal library and liked it and they said, Hey, maybe you should consider library school, and will pay for it! I thought, that sounds pretty cool. And -- I also, one of my jobs in the library was checking in periodicals. And we would get the Chronicle of Higher Education, and I would, you know, go to the end, they show all the different jobs and at the time I thought, well, maybe I'll be a professor at a university. Maybe I'll teach English, because that was what I had studied. There would be like one job for English professors in the United States and there would be ten jobs, ten library jobs. I thought,

hm, that's interesting. Maybe -- maybe going into libraries would be a safer career move. So it got the library degree, and got, you know, a great job at Georgetown, and just never left because it has -- it has been a wonderful career.

00:07:55 **IP:**

What was the Federal Library? Where, that temp job started?

00:07:58 **BM:**

I started at the Federal Judicial Center. They're located right next to Union Station, and their mission is to educate judges, federal judges and their staff. I was in the library there and, you know, worked with the folks that were teaching the judges and the staff. And I got to do -- it was a really small library, maybe four of us? So I did, you know, check-in. I did legislative histories, shelving. This interlibrary loan in the day when I would go get to go around DC to pick up books. So I would go to like the Justice Department and pick up items there. So I was basically a runner for a part of my time. But I also did I learned how to catalog and do legislative history. So it was very like low level to high level, all over the place. It was good experience.

00:08:51 **IP:**

Where did you go for library school?

00:08:54 **BM:**

I did one class at Catholic and then I realized the price difference between Catholic and Maryland (laughs) and then ended up going to finish up in Maryland.

00:09:03 **IP:**

Thanks. So was that Federal Library job your first job out of college?

00:09:11 **BM:**

It was. Yes. It was my first job out of college and then after the FJC, I got a job at the Northern Virginia Community College, and their library in Annandale. And that was wonderful, I loved it. I was a technology assistant but I got to do reference work. So I was on the desk, but I also took care of their computers doing desktop stuff, and I created their first website and their first online tutorial.

00:09:35 **IP:**

Oh my gosh, that's amazing!

00:09:36 **BM:**

It was really fun, really amazing experience because when I was in library school, it was like the late. When was that shoot, late 90s, so I guess I there between 95 and 98? No, 97. 95 and 97. And so -- when -- This was the beginnings of web development, so I learned HTML, which gave me like the skill (laughs), a really important skill. So that was what people needed at that time was were websites. So I did web development at NOVA and then that was why they -- that's probably why I got my job at Georgetown.

00:10:16 **IP:**

Okay, so you went direct-- So you went from the Judicial Center to NOVA to Georgetown?

00:10:21 **BM:**

Exactly.

00:10:22 **IP:**

Great. So have you -- are you a DC, local? Have you lived in this area for most of your life, or did you move here at some point?

00:10:31 **BM:**

Yeah, I grew up in this area. I went to Oakton High School, lived in Fairfax from the time I was maybe, I guess four, on and off until now. I was born in Thailand. My dad was doing (unintelligible), but then we came back when I was about a year and a half. And then been in Northern Virginia, for all that time. My mom worked for the federal government. She was at the White House for years, and the Peace Corps, and Arlington County. I'm a DC -- the DC region is my has been my home most of my life.

00:11:10 **IP:**

Wonderful. I may come back and ask you some questions about the broader region later, if that's okay, and how it's changed over time. Just because I personally find that fascinating. But to kind of zero in on the Georgetown Library. What are the biggest changes that you've noticed between when you first began working for Georgetown and say the end of 2019?

00:11:35 **BM:**

Okay, so, pre-pandemic changes? You know, I think they're always (pause) looking to, you know, make the most out of the resources. They're renovating different areas of the library. So when I first started, the AV Department was down on the first floor of the library, and they

renovated the good half of the first floor. And it became the Gelardin New Media Center. And they asked me to be the interim director when they were looking for a director. So that was a big change and just really the focus on the technology and digital media resources for students and faculty. So that was like in the, you know, I guess the early 2000s that was a big change.

00:12:27 **BM:**

Then they renovated, the Booth Family Center for Special Collections. That's been, oh gosh, how many years now? Probably eight years now, so that was you know ten, twelve years later. They really focused on the Booth Center because these were specialized areas that the university really cared about. So, that was another, big change was with the renovation of the, well, the donation from the Booth family and the renovation of that area. So, I say those were two of the big, big changes in the library itself.

00:13:08 **IP:**

Kind of moving into kind of immediately pre-pandemic. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, how would you describe the library's role in the Georgetown University community?

00:13:22 **BM:**

I think it's probably similar to most academic libraries where, you hear it often on the campus, and I really do believe that, I think it's a Gathering Place for -- mostly for students. You know, that need to do work together, that it isn't just specifically, you know, personal recreational, more around academics. So it's the, the place outside of the classroom where people come to either work together, or for reflection, for quiet, to -- just to get things done. And that was -- you know -- either that could be studying, researching, writing papers. And then in the in the New Media Center, it was producing, not just consuming media, but also producing media. So yeah, that is super important. Also for self-initiated learning. I think the libraries, that's what we do, right? We're here for people to learn and grow, and, and on their own with self-initiated, right? It's not just from above, or from a professor saying do this, which we provide those resources too, but it's anything that you want, you can find through the library. So I feel like that's, that's our primary, our primary role.

00:14:53 **IP:**

What would you say is your part within that role?

00:14:58 **BM:**

You know I feel like (pause). So libraries to me were about shared resources. And for -- you know, in the United States, it's been almost two

centuries of mostly sharing books. And that's where, you know, people think of books, but for me, the last few decades, it's, you know, of course books, super important for people to have access to, to print materials and books. And then databases and articles, and primary resources, and all that kind of stuff. But the focus of my career over the last twenty years has been on other shared resources on technology.

00:15:43 **BM:**

So that's meant things like video cameras, iPads, microphones, lighting. The materials that people need that they might not have ready access to. Cameras, photo cameras. We see this all the time where, you know, you need to have really good photos and somebody might not have access to a good photo [camera]. Now, a lot of people have iPhones, wonderful, or Androids, whatever, that have cameras, but maybe you can't get quite great photos or they're not going to have space to create a video. So, having the access to the equipment, to be able to create this digital media that is so important today, it equalizes the playing field. That's what I feel like libraries do best is they give everyone access to the resources they need to succeed. Then that's extended out to even things like virtual reality headsets or, you know, we have access to gaming stations. That may not seem like, it's something that's academic, but it really, it is. They [university students and faculty] are studying game now, and the gaming industry is more lucrative, pulls in more than music and the film industry combined. So, you know, anything in our culture, there are faculty who are studying this and want to make sure that we are understanding, you know, the history and the impact that it's having on our society. So we provide access to gaming consoles and games.

00:17:26 **BM:**

And also with the maker how we opened the maker Hub five years ago set because we saw people wanted access to 3D printers. So we've started -- we got a couple of 3D printers back in, what year would that be 2015 I suppose? Then we opened up the Maker Hub in 2016, and now we have maybe seven 3D printers? A laser cutter, sewing machines, embroidery stations woodworking tools. And again, some people are like, What, in a library? Why? Well, again we go back to, you know, providing equal access to different kinds of resources, so that everybody has that opportunity to create whatever they can imagine.

00:18:17 **IP:**

That's fantastic. Do you have -- like you've mentioned all of these incredible technology pieces that you bought for the New Media Center and the Maker Hub. Do you have like a particular favorite piece of technology that you've acquired over the years?

00:18:34 **BM:**

Well, I think the laser cutter is probably (pause) the most powerful. You know, it's expensive. I think we spent must have been at least twenty. It was between twenty and twenty-two thousand dollars because it's large. The bed is thirty-six inches, I think. And it can cut through, you know, wood plastic, and can etch metal. It can just do amazing things. And it's also one of the favorites of the folks that come in. It's quite impressive what it can produce. So I even though it's not like what I gravitate towards, it is like the, it's like the king of the Maker Hub.

00:19:31 **BM:**

I think the VR stations are also pretty cool. That's been -- you know -- the people get just so excited when you see people for the first time putting on a headset, it's very cool. I love that.

00:19:47 **IP:**

Are Georgetown students surprised that you have all of these resources, all this technology.

00:19:54 **BM:**

Yeah. I think that I think that most people really are as it's become -- you know -- some people if they if they came from schools that had makerspaces, then I think it becomes sort of like, oh, yeah, that's just expected. But if people aren't familiar with makerspaces then they usually are pretty, pretty surprised, because I suppose this sort of -- we're in that middle curve where we were, I don't know if Pioneers, but we were in the in the top in that area. There were some places that have well, much bigger, better, well-funded, but not everybody. He has access to a makerspace. Do you have them at AU now?

00:20:37 **IP:**

Yes, we do. I've seen the one at Georgetown. It is not as expensive as the one at Georgetown, but we have a couple of 3D printers, that's where our poster printer is. We have like a vinyl cutting machine, embroidery stations, a sewing machine, a wood carving machine -- a Carvey. I don't know if you're familiar with those? That's the one in the library. There's a second one in the it's called the Don Myers Technology and Innovation building, which is not affiliated with us, but it's a larger Makerspace.

00:21:09 **BM:**

Oh cool. That's great. Yeah, lots of schools have multiple ones now. That's why we named it the Maker Hub because we wanted it to be -- there are places around campus that have making facilities, but that we would be that connecting point. Because I feel like that's kind of what I do. I've always felt kind of like a matchmaker. Somebody will come to me and say, Hey I'm wanting to do this, and I might not know how to help

them, but I probably know who does. And then again, when we (unintelligible), there was a maker space being developed in the physics department, another one in the bioethics area, another one in Communications, Culture, and Technology. They were talking about creating one of the business school. And actually, the one of the Communications, Culture, and Technology, it's small but it's only for them, it's only for students in that grad program. The art department has like a print shop, but it's only for people taking printmaking classes. Bioethics, it was going to be only for faculty and classes. Physics, it was only for people in the physics department. So that's the whole -- that's the problem with academic departments, is that, that frequently happens. We saw this with film and media studies with their cameras, their cameras were only available to students in that program for the forty students there. Well, what about the other, you know, 10,000, 20,000 people, at the Georgetown campus? How do they get access to this? And that's why I've always felt super important for the library to have these resources. If you're not taking that one class, that you can come to the library and find and get access to the same resources.

00:22:51 **IP:**

Yeah, that's fantastic. I've seen your Maker Hub as well and every time I see it, I'm just bowled over. It's an incredible space.

00:23:00 **BM:**

Oh that's good to hear! The highlight of my career is creating that Makerspace.

00:23:06 **IP:**

Well, going into that a little bit. You mentioned that you were asked to kind of be the temporary head when it was first kind of envisioned. Can you tell me how that came about and why you decided to take up that role and move away from reference?

00:23:23 **BM:**

So this is going back, twenty years. Yeah, I loved my job. I was the web coordinator. Loved creating websites, the design aspect, the information. I loved being a reference librarian. Just helping people. Then when they opened up the New Media Center, they needed someone to manage it. And, let's see. How old was I? (pause) Thirty-three, I guess. I didn't really have any like, goals to go into management, so it was kind of hard decision quite honestly, because being a manager, it's a whole 'nother thing. Telling people what to do, right? And it was a hard decision, like whether I was even interested in doing that or not. But I decided to -- well -- because I was involved in technology, I think at that time I was probably the most, maybe, the librarian with the most technology background. Because we had like an IT department, but there were no

librarians there and they were really focused on, you know, either the desktop or supporting the catalog.

00:24:37 **BM:**

So they asked me to -- they had a search and they didn't find anybody to run the New Media Center. And so they said, Hey, do you want to do this on a temporary basis and see how it goes? And so I said okay, yes, I'll do that. So I did it for a couple years and then they offered me the job. And also, I mean it was, you know, you maybe you can identify with this. I'm not like a super ambitious person. I just want a good job and I want to do good work. But I took it, and I'm glad that I did. It was tough, being a manager is not always easy. You have to be the bad guy and I don't like being a bad guy. But it's it was been a really wonderful experience and I've loved supervising folks. I mean, I have no idea how many people -- I mean, certainly and dozens and dozens of staff, and then students, hundreds and hundreds of students. And I love that aspect is working with the student employees. That's that was one of my favorite things.

00:25:37 **IP:**

That's a big part of my job as well. I manage a team of student employees and that is hands-down my favorite part of the job. Just working with them.

00:25:46 **BM:**

Yep. In fact, I met up with a student who she worked for me, all four of her years, and we went biking on Saturday. On the Capital Crescent.

00:25:56 **IP:**

That's wonderful. I love it. I'll occasionally get like Instagram messages from students I've supervised in the past. Just giving me updates, it warms my little heart. (laughs)

00:26:09 **IP:**

So, what year did you, can you remind me, did you start as the head of New Media at Georgetown?

00:26:16 **BM:**

So the New Media Center, they opened the doors on September 11th, 2001 (laughs). Not a great day. I wasn't the head then, but I was still a reference librarian at that point. I remember that day because we didn't have any TVs down there with cable. And everybody was like, wondering what was going on. This is pre cell phone, so you couldn't just find a video on your phone or even on the computer. This was pre having streaming media. So we were all trying to figure out what was going on.

So that was very interesting, but I started -- it was in December of that same year, December 2001.

00:27:03 **IP:**

Thank you. Going back to maybe 2019, can you kind of walk me through your typical day at work? Pre-pandemic, immediately pre-pandemic.

00:27:18 **BM:**

So, in the beginning of 2019, we were in the process of moving our equipment collection out of the New Media Center up to Access Services. Which was a really kind of a big deal for us because the equipment, how many pieces did we even have? I think it was upwards of four hundred and two hundred like major pieces of equipment. Cameras and microphones and Chromebooks and so forth. The dean Harriette Hemmasi [Georgetown University Dean of the Library], had started a year before and really wanted that equipment collection circulating out of Access Services or the circulation desk on the third floor of the library. So we were undergoing that move, that took place in January. So we were in the middle of you know, just going through that transition of, you know, making sure people knew where to go, how to support them. So we were kind of in flux period anyway. And our service desk in the New Media Center closed. So, for many, many years we opened at eight-thirty in the morning closed, at eight o'clock at night. So it was very like, supervising students who were staffing the desk. So we were in a transitional stage anyway. So I would say it was very different, 2018 versus 2019 because of that closing of the of the service desk in the New Media Center.

00:29:03 **BM:**

But it was coming into work every day at eight-thirty in the morning. So all that was still the same. Answering email or people who came by to ask questions, but we were just more directing them to the equipment was checked out upstairs. And then we still -- in the New Media Center we have lots of spaces for digital media production. We have a multimedia classroom where we teach workshops and then it's open outside of workshop time. We have a Large Computing area with PCs. There were -- at one point, there were seventy-five computers there. That had been cut down through the years, and I think it was in 2019, 2018, where we cut the number in half. It's just that's changed through the years. I mean, when we first opened, we would have people standing in line waiting to get a computer. I mean, it was not unusual to have ten people in line, waiting for others to get up. And then that just changed as people had their own laptops. They're still getting used, but not to nearly the extent that they were.

00:30:04 **BM:**

And then also people don't have computers with the space or the RAM to be able to handle a lot of digital media production. So they're still needed, but just not quite to the same extent that they were. Then we also have a production studio and editing facilities, and the VR station and so forth. So we still have spaces to manage, but the transition of the equipment, moving upstairs really has been a big, big change.

00:30:33 **IP:**

Thank you. What part of your job did you enjoy most during this period?

00:30:40 **BM:**

During pre-pandemic?

00:30:42 **IP:**

Yes, pre-pandemic.

00:30:43 **BM:**

That's a good question. I would say, probably thinking about new services. So whether that was, opening up the maker Hub and trying to envision, like what do people need. What are those resources? What are those shared resources that people can use most effectively, whether they know they want it or not. You know what I mean? It's not like people were -- we didn't have dozens of people contacting us saying, We want a laser cutter. I had like, two people who said, It'd be really cool if we had a laser cutter. I was like, if we had a laser cutter, people would come. That's always the way I've thought of it. What is that movie, The Field of Dreams, "If you build it, they would come." That's what I've found to be the case, not a hundred percent of the time, but like with the virtual reality, it wasn't like we were getting dozens of requests. But we built it, and we advertised it, and then people came and were like, This is awesome, thank you for thank you for offering this!

00:31:49 **BM:**

So, I think it was envisioning opportunities. Keeping my ear to the ground and my eyes open, whether it's visiting other libraries, or just seeing what kind of technology or services are being offered. Whether it's other places, and it might be in libraries, but what can libraries offer to folks? What shared resources are going to make a difference?

00:32:17 **IP:**

What part of your job did you find the most difficult?

00:32:24 **BM:**

(Pause) Politics, probably bureaucracy. There's just competing resources and convincing people of things that seem obvious. But that can be hard and I'd say that's just not just libraries it's probably across the board.

00:32:46 **IP:**

So how much stress did your job bring to your day-to-day life before the pandemic?

00:32:52 **BM:**

That's a great question. You know -- I think, I've been working just personally on stress in general because I was busy for a while. I was also the I was the Interim Associate University Librarian for Outreach and Engagement. No, I'm sorry for Access Serv -- For oh my gosh. What was it? What was it called exactly? It was for outreach and engagement, but it included Access Services, Communications, Facilities. So it was a very -- and I was still the head of the New Media Center. So I was supervising twelve staff and all that's underneath them. So there was stress just in constant meetings, and then trying to keep up with, email and other requests are coming in. I mean it was not uncommon for me to be in seven meetings a day, and to have only free time to check email, maybe an hour? So that's stressful, and that I hate seeing something come through and not being able to give it a hundred percent. And that was the one thing I did also find in that job as the AUL [Associate University Librarian], is not having enough time to really do it well. To think through things fully, and not having to just jump to a decision. Because it's just so busy and taking a long time to make a decision, people just wanted to make a decision, like okay, let's just try that! And I would like a little more time to be able to get input from lots of people. And so I find that a little stressful is that I'm more of a perfectionist. So the busyness, I've found that I like to be busy, but not too busy (laughs).

00:34:59 **IP:**

There's, there's a nice balance somewhere in there.

00:35:01 **BM:**

Yeah, exactly.

00:35:04 **IP:**

Did you work remotely at all before the pandemic?

00:35:07 **BM:**

Yeah occasionally, not on a regular basis though. It wasn't like I had one day working remotely. I would frequently during performance evaluation season. I would work remotely so that I could try to just have focus.

Because again, you go in the office and there's always somebody knocking at the door, which is fantastic to have an open door policy, but it's makes it hard when you actually need to get something done on a timeline. On a deadline. So I would say, you know, I probably worked from home once every two months perhaps.

00:35:42 **IP:**

How would you characterize your relationships with your library colleagues pre-pandemic?

00:35:50 **BM:**

I think excellent for the most part. I mean there's always a few relationships that you would love to be a little bit better. But in general, I really love working with people and I think the library profession attracts, (pause) if I can stereotype a bit, just good people. Good people in general, want to do have a good impact on the world, and like to help people and are kind. So, that's the thing that I have really loved being back in the office is just seeing people and working together to solve problems. Because I -- that was something I did find stressful working from home by myself. I just like to throw things -- to work on things together, and to have a conversation to make decisions, or talk through issues. Doing that in email, ugh. I think I find that very stressful because then I'll try to make it perfect. Then before you know it there's three paragraphs and I've worked on it for an hour, and you're like, this is such a waste of time! If we just could talk about it for five minutes, we could get this resolved. So I would often write, please just call me!

00:37:12 **IP:**

Well, I'll ask you a little bit more about that later in the interview if that's okay?

00:37:18 **BM:**

Sure.

00:37:19 **IP:**

Could, you describe your interactions and your relationships with faculty and students of pre-pandemic? How would you characterize them?

00:37:28 **BM:**

Oh my gosh. I love our faculty and our students. We have such -- the students are again, they're just really good people, and they're smart, and I love working with Georgetown students. We got a lot of work study students, of course, who work for us. I really enjoyed working with them. Faculty as well. I have for the -- I'm trying to even think of negative

interactions I've had. I had one faculty member who was peeved because we opened late back in, like, what, 2004? But other than that -- I was like --I can't, and he was still great person! But he was like, You opened 10. late! But in general, yeah, I love working with the faculty and students at Georgetown.

00:38:22 **IP:**

I'm glad you had to go all the way back to 2004 to find a negative.

00:38:28 **BM:**

We're just really forgiving, like even when there are problems. Like every day, there's a problem. I had an email this morning about the production studio lights, and the backdrop aren't working. But in general, people will be like, we say, Oh my gosh, we're going to get it fixed! And they say, Oh great, thank you! The problems are pretty, pretty manageable.

00:38:49 **IP:**

That's wonderful. Who else in your campus community did you interact with regularly before the pandemic?

00:38:58 **BM:**

Oh, so I'm lucky. I get to interact with people all over the place. So, Center for Student Engagement. There's folks there that I talked to. The folks in entrepreneurship because of the Maker Hub, we work with them. Communications, Culture, and Technology, which I mentioned the faculty, and the administrators there, because they use the Maker Hub quite a bit. Facilities. So I've run -- I've been the interim head of facilities for a few years. So there's folks in Facilities that I interact with. That's tough, you know. Facilities doesn't get the attention that I think it deserves. [People] just sort of take it for granted. That's tough being, in the middle of -- we don't have control over those issues. So for instance, our elevator has been down for three months, but because it's fifty years old, they have to rebuild the motor, but we don't have control over it. So all it is is like letting people know, we really need this fixed, we really need this fixed. And I'm like, we're getting it, we're trying, we're trying. So this is a lot of that, like, just trying to get things fixed that you don't have control over. But again, our space is so important. I'm kind of going on about that. But yeah, I deal a lot with facilities folks.

00:40:22 **BM:**

The police department on campus, dealing with them. It's all really almost all over campus.

00:40:33 **IP:**

Sounds you interact with a lot of people, that's really fantastic. Not so much siloed in the basement of your library. That's really nice.

00:40:43 **BM:**

Well, that happens too. It's hard not to be siloed, and it takes a lot of effort to try and get out there and meet other people and see how, we can, how we can (unintelligible).

00:40:59 **IP:**

Do any particular challenges or difficulties with any of these groups or just in general stand out to you from the pre-COVID era?

00:41:16 **BM:**

(Pause) So issues, issues with folks outside of the library?

00:41:20 **IP:**

In the library, outside of the library. I guess in the broader Georgetown University Community as well.

00:41:30 **BM:**

I can't think of any outstanding problems necessarily. Like I said, facilities issues. But you know we're all -- there's again competing resources around the entire university, so that that ends up. We lost heat and library in several places. There was a whole heating unit that went out, and our building was built in 1970. So we're hitting that that stage where a lot of work needs to be done. So it's through no one's fault. Well, other than investing resources. We really need a new library, and a lot of that, it's not sexy stuff, heating units, but when you're cold it's really hard to study. (Laughs) And do work and so forth. I mean, it was really cold. We're talking in the fifties, and people were trying to, because it was in the middle of the winter time and the system went down. That's really hard and it's not like they could just replace multimillion-dollar units.

00:42:48 **IP:**

Alright, so now I'm going to ask you some questions. I've kind of divided everything up along a timeline. So I'm going to ask you some questions about kind of like the early days of the pandemic, for lack of a better term.

00:43:00 **BM:**

Sure.

00:43:01 **IP:**

So when did you first become aware of COVID-19?

00:43:03 **BM:**

You know, I can't -- I don't know the exact date, but I must have been, like all of us. We were hearing things maybe February, maybe January, heard a few of, the year 2020. All right. Yeah, 2020. The years now like (waves hands).

00:43:22 **IP:**

Time doesn't exist.

00:43:23 **BM:**

I know, right? (Laughs) We heard all these little things, we would, like what we would hear about, Ebola or something. I would probably put it on those kind of terms where you're like, it is far away, it's nothing that we have to worry about. Except that we started putting up signs of washing your hands. And I think that was my must have been in February? But I think that some of those signs sat on my desk for a couple of days, or maybe even a week, waiting for people to put them up. It wasn't this great urgency. We had also, there were ECOLI. We had an outbreak a few years ago, and it was sort of along those lines like, Yeah, yeah, this is something we need to, yeah we'll keep our eyes on that. So that must have been in about February of 2020. And then it was with everybody else, when everything was shut down. That was what, March thirteenth? That was the day that we, that was our last day on campus.

00:44:23 **IP:**

I'm sorry. My feed froze. Could you repeat the date for me?

00:44:27 **BM:**

Oh, sure. The last day on campus I believe was March 13th. Like most places.

00:44:33 **IP:**

Thank you. You so before DC shut down, kind of in between like the January and March thirteenth, were you concerned about COVID's potential impact on your daily life?

00:44:49 **BM:**

Do you know what? I don't really think I was. I don't think I was. I remember maybe it was two weeks before we shut down, the manager of our Maker Hub was contacted by somebody in the medical center, who well, not a doctor, but an administrator, who asked about making masks, cloth masks. And I remember him sort of joking about it. Like, She thinks

that this is something that's important, give me a break! And now basically that's the major focus is wearing masks. So we knew you know, well, she would have brought it up that long ago, but we didn't really take it seriously. Because it wasn't -- it wasn't something that the CDC [Center for Disease Control] or anybody else was taking seriously. So it's a lot of things in retrospect we're like, oh, that's interesting. But how do you know?

00:45:47 **IP:**

Yeah, but did you perceive it as a threat to you, or a danger to anybody?

00:45:55 **BM:**

Well, I mean, I took it seriously enough that we did, you know, take the initiative to make signs ourselves. Like we weren't told from the university to put up wash your hands signs. Seriously, it's sort of again, very similar to the way I took it, what was the -- H1N1 [2009 Swine Flu epidemic]? I remember it was the H1N1 virus that was a few years previous to that, that was going around campus. So I was sort of treating it along those same lines as, Oh, yeah, we need to put those signs up in the in the bathrooms to have people wash their hands.

00:46:28 **IP:**

I'm glad you guys were able to do that. So did your library shut down at the beginning of the pandemic? I know you mentioned March 13th was the last day on campus.

00:46:38 **BM:**

Yeah. Yeah, everything shut down the whole campus shut down. So that was a huge scramble for everyone, just like trying to figure out the academic continuity. And you know Georgetown for several years had been putting a focus on academic continuity. So even during -- we'd have snow days, the we still, classes were still in session. And we had access to Zoom and, Canvas, and lots of the other tools. But, there was, I would say, you know, a pretty small percentage of the faculty who really took advantage of them. And as we all saw, we were forced to learn how to use them well.

00:47:24 **IP:**

Were you part of making the decision to close the library down? Or were you in conversations with people about shutting the campus down?

00:47:35 **BM:**

(Pause) No, that really came from above. I'm not even sure that the dean, at that point -- I feel like the whole, that was really at the highest level of

the university was to close everything. And then later on, when it was the decision about the library services, I was involved more with the reopening. But that was mostly coming from that highest level of the university. The present's office, the provost.

00:48:08 **IP:**

How was the decision to shut down communicated to you?

00:48:13 **BM:**

I think it was communicated to all of campus. Yeah, it wasn't just the library. It was -- we got -- we were waiting to hear directly from the president's office.

00:48:23 **IP:**

Okay. Did you hear rumors before the official communication?

00:48:27 **BM:**

That's a great question. You know, I don't think so. I mean, I feel like it was just three or four days before. And we were all sort of like, Oh my God, right? I think this was really worldwide. Quite honestly, we were all sort of like, Wow, this is unbelievable. Yeah, so I think it was just that that week before the thirteenth, when things really started coming to a head. When Seattle, remember when the nursing home in Seattle, and then it was like, oh my gosh, It's on our shore.

00:49:05 **IP:**

So what was your reaction to hearing that the campus would be closing?

00:49:13 **BM:**

(Pause) You know, I felt like it in a way it was sort of like a snow day. We're like, Oh yay, we'll have a week, a week of working from home kind of thing. I don't think I had any concept that it was going to be that long. Like most people

00:49:31 **IP:**

Could you describe how you were feeling around this time?

00:49:36 **BM:**

Well personally, the stock market was really (pause) losing -- It was going down. So that was kind of scary, because I'm only a few years away from retirement. So to watch like it go down quite a bit was really scary. And to then this just so such -- there's nothing like this had ever happened. Well, of course, the 2008 stock market crash was, was also scary, but I

was younger and didn't have as much money in it. And then also, this is just completely different also, like what is going to happen? So I would say that was that was pretty frightening. And just also, how sick are people going to get? So, yeah, I would say that was pretty stressful all around, both the financial aspect, and the health aspect.

00:50:30 **IP:**

How long was the period between the announcement that the library and the university would be closing and when you actually closed the library?

00:50:42 **BM:**

If I can remember correctly, I think word on maybe the eleventh, the tenth or the eleventh [of March 2020], that we were going to be closing. It was only a few days. Yeah, it was a pretty quick turnaround.

00:50:55 **IP:**

What did you do during those few days?

00:51:02 **BM:**

(Pause) One of the guys who reports to me does a lot of the signage around the library. So we were designing and printing out the social distancing signage. So I remember Friday afternoon on the thirteenth, one of the last things I was doing was running around the library, putting up the signs on tables and gathering up the in the stands to put signs in, make sure they're in the elevators and just everywhere that people could see about social distancing. Making sure the, in the bathrooms, the signs were there about the washing the hands, they were laminated and they were so they would stay. We'd done that before, but it was like, okay, just making sure that all that signage was in place.

00:51:52 **IP:**

So what else did you and your unit kind of prioritize during those days?

00:52:01 **BM:**

(Pause) At that point it really was just (pause) making sure things were either locked up, but I think we weren't sure who was going to be around. I don't even remember. Why are we putting up social distancing signage? I guess we (unintelligible), so I think just trying to keep things safe for anybody who would be around. And just communicating that we were, so that we could be contacted remotely. Because we still were working, we just weren't on site.

00:52:36 **IP:**

How long did the library -- I know you mentioned that you kind of treated it as a snow day at first. How long did the library end up being totally closed?

00:52:47 **BM:**

We were totally closed through fall [2020], and then it started opening to folks who are on campus. I believe that that was January [2021] when some sophomores, no, some seniors and some freshmen. There were like five hundred students that were on campus. You know what actually throughout, there were some students that were still on campus. Just a handful of people were allowed to work in the library. So the Maker Hub manager was there. We had one student that worked in the Maker Hub who, she couldn't go home. I think she had a difficult family life. So some folks stayed on campus. So for those folks, some things were still open. And then staff was still working in Access Services in the library. To get books available to folks to pick up. And they were making, having a pickup like, for a while, they were on the loading dock, and then they moved it to the front of the library. So there was a lot of that, just revisiting, you know, trying to make the most out of what we could with the limited staff that were in the library.

00:54:02 **IP:**

So when did like the curbside pickup for lack of a better term. Do you know, when that started?

00:54:09 **BM:**

That's a great question. I think it, you know, probably took a -- Did it take a couple of weeks or a month or so? I have to go back and ask some of the staff that were there. I don't remember the exact date, but it was it was pretty soon after. As soon as we were allowed to have staff in the library and they split up their time so that they didn't come into contact with each other very much. And it was, it was pretty limited because a lot of people went away. But they did a great job making those materials available.

00:54:45 **IP:**

When were you allowed to have staff back in the library?

00:54:49 **BM:**

Yeah, I believe it was -- I believe it was within a few weeks or a month, but it was only a limited number. It was only Access Services staff and the Maker Hub manager. Our facilities guy was coming in two days a week Yeah, and then the facilities from around campus and housekeeping staff were there throughout, but it was very small number of people.

00:55:23 **IP:**

Kind of going back to those days between the announcement that you would be closing and the actual closing, what kinds of decisions did you have to make during those few days?

00:55:37 **BM:**

Which staff would be would be staying in the library and which ones would be sent home. Oh goodness. yeah, that took a few months. We were moving around furniture, limiting the amount of furniture. And we weren't sure when students were going to be allowed back in, and how long it was going to take us to get the library ready. I guess that was probably a few months later.

00:56:06 **IP:**

Did you make those decisions in collaboration with anybody?

00:56:10 **BM:**

Oh, yeah. Yeah. There was a whole group of folks. We had a reopening task force of the head of Access Services, the Deputy University Librarian, folks from Research Services, Special Collections. It was a it was a library wide group in consultation with you know, GUPD and facilities and the Provost office.

00:56:34 **IP:**

So was this for reopening or the days before the closure?

00:56:38 **BM:**

Yeah, that was more for the reopening for the closure, that's a good question. I wasn't involved in as much with those kinds of decisions. They just I just I think that that all came down from the provost and the president's office, that we're closing. And then Access Services, they were involved with, of course, trying to make sure that people got access to the print materials.

00:57:03 **IP:**

What problems did you anticipate with the libraries closure?

00:57:08 **BM:**

Well, some of the problems that we had were things like in my area and the digital media area, people come in there to do their video and audio editing work and their graphic design work. So they need access to the Adobe Creative Suite programs. And then with all of them home, they didn't have access to it. So the faculty were kind of freaking out. How are

they [the students] going to do their assignments? So we were, we scrambled for a week or so, working with University Information Services, to see if we could get licensing for the students to be able to get the programs on their computers. So that took a while to figure out, like, how many licenses are needed, which classes have the assignments that they can't transition to something else?

00:57:52 **BM:**

So that was a lot of communicating with the faculty. And then University Information Services. So we gathered up all those numbers and they had to go to the college to try to get the funding for that. I think there were a few hundred students that needed access to the programs, and this is pretty costly. So yeah, trying to, get that, get that paid for. That took quite a bit of work. And just organizing who's actually going to need it. That coordination was a lot of work.

00:58:27 **IP:**

What was your biggest worry or your biggest fear? Kind of during this early period? Doesn't have to be about the library it can be about (unintelligible)

00:58:38 **BM:**

When it came to the when it came to the library I was really I was more worried about students. About getting the education that they deserve. They're paying to go to a world-class university, and here we're trying to struggle to get them access to resources at home. It's not the same. They don't have a production studio at home. So we can give them tips about, recording from home, but it's not the same as a production studio, or it's not the same as having access to professional equipment. So that, that was definitely a worry. And figuring out how do we, how can we help them with substitutions? So we did find software for folks that didn't need their, that couldn't run the Creative Suite, we found WeVideo, which is a video program that you can run on, it's a web-based program. And so we got access to that, got some licenses for it. So we were able to find substitutions, but that was definitely a worry, just trying to replicate the same kind of educational opportunities that you have in an online environment.

01:00:06 **IP:**

What was the atmosphere at the library during this time?

01:00:10 **BM:**

Oh my gosh, it was almost dead in there. I went in a few times. I remember-- I went in, oh, -- oh, well, I had to because we were doing, we were making PPE, personal protective equipment, with Maker Hub, 3D

printers. So I was able to get in before they really shut things down. So I could get in with my ID at that time. So I got 3D printers and brought them to students and staff to make the PPE from home. And when we would go in there, I mean, the place was just dead. It was dead. Housekeeping staff were there. Some facilities folks were there, but, you know, it's just so strange to see a ghost. It's like going to a ghost town! You know whole floors were dark. That was really strange.

01:01:14 **IP:**

So how many people outside the library in these early weeks -- students faculty and staff, you talked a little bit about this with the Adobe Creative Suite -- reached out to you for help during this period?

01:01:29 **BM:**

Yeah, we were busy. We were surprisingly busy from home. People think the folks that were working there [at the library] were like, Oh you're just hanging out at home? I was doing full days of answering questions about, the programs, and how we can substitute what they were doing, and trying to create online resources for them. So, yeah, we had a significant number of faculty and students contacting us for help. Especially the faculty at that point because they were again, trying to replicate what they were doing from class, but online.

01:02:01 **IP:**

Did you feel that you were able to help them?

01:02:06 **BM:**

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, just doing the, the Adobe Creative Suite. We also, librarians and my staff, we worked together to create a lot of online tutorials. And we created libguides for creating multimedia from home, and making sure our libguides translated well, and they didn't like refer people to things that were in the library, but they could refer them to things that they could do from home. So we were very busy, just translating our services from, you know, in in building to home.

01:02:42 **IP:**

So at this time, you're living in the DC area, how did you imagine kind of this broader city and region wide? shut down playing out?

01:02:56 **BM:**

There was no precedent for this. So I think we were just sort of waiting for the numbers to come down and things to get back to normal. I don't think anybody could have ever imagined that this would ever happen. So I think all of us were just sort of going along for the ride and figuring

things out as we went along, and kind of just trying to be good soldiers and do what we're told. Yeah, make the most out the situation. And I had, my kids were home actually. So they were my UVA student. My, son is a fourth year and at the time he was, came home from his sophomore year. So he was studying from here and just disappointed about not being able to go back to school. My daughter was in high school at the time. So spread across the house, trying to, you know, find our space and not interrupt each other, and it was a challenge too. Thankfully my husband could go to work. So that was great because he was so noisy. And having four people trying to work from home is hard!

01:04:03 **IP:**

Did you do anything in those early days to kind of prepare for the pandemic or what you thought might happen?

01:04:14 **BM:**

Oh my gosh. I remember that first day, I think it was on the thirteenth. Going to grocery stores, it was un-be-liev-able. The shelves with food that was gone. It's just you would never imagine that this would ever happen. And the trying to find toilet paper. I mean ridiculous, ridiculousness. I mean, luckily we're mostly vegan in my house, so the kinds of stuff that was still on the shelves, the beans and the tofu and stuff, that's what we eat anyway, so I don't remember any like huge sacrifices. (laughs) But I know it was really hard for a lot of people.

01:04:54 **IP:**

So kind of moving into, not the early days, but kind of the what we now I guess maybe looking back see as the middle of the whole thing. If we can say that we're almost in an end now, I don't know if we can. I'm going to ask you some questions about that time period. So you mentioned that you were treating it as a snow day, you didn't think you would be working remotely for very long. How did that perception of how long you would be remote and the library mostly shut down, how did that change over time for you?

01:05:33 **BM:**

Over the summer we got word that well, we weren't, we weren't sure what was going to happen. Nobody was really sure when we would be reopening. So in July, August of 2020, we thought that students were going to be coming back, or we would be coming back in some way in the fall. So we went into the library and moved a lot of the furniture around, took chairs out, took like three quarters of the chairs out and put them into a back room areas or locked them up. We locked them up, actually. We took a bunch of them in the carrels. So we have these study carrels, study desks and we moved the chairs from a bunch of the carrels into other carrels and stacked them up so they couldn't be used. So people

couldn't get too close together. And then ran locks through them so that people couldn't move the chairs. We put other chairs in the back areas so that, you know, they were all, and we took a took rulers and measured them so that they were all six feet apart. We did that throughout the library and counted the chairs. Counted the distance between them, moved tables around. That was a significant effort. We did all that over the summer, so that we would be prepared to open in the fall of 2020.

01:06:57 **BM:**

And then we didn't open in the fall of 2020. But luckily, we were ready for the spring of 2021 when they did allow more students in the building and that social distancing was important. So yeah, there was a lot of prep to keep spaces safe.

01:07:16 **IP:**

How long did you end up working fully or mostly remote?

01:07:22 **BM:**

Just until we went back. I'm going in three days a week. Well, somewhere around there, but that's -- Over the last six months we tried to figure out which positions needed to be there five days a week. So for instance the Maker Hub manager's there five days a week. But two of my other staff -- And then the facilities manager who also reports to me, he's there five days a week. But my two multimedia specialists, they're only there three days a week, and I'm in three days a week. So it was a position by position evaluation of whether they would could work from home or work in the building. And that took place over months.

01:08:10 **IP:**

When did things kind of get into a routine for you as far as working from home and realizing that you wouldn't be going back to the physical library anytime soon?

01:08:23 **BM:**

Yeah, that's a good question. I mean, I'm a bit of an introvert. So I mean, I hate to say it but I really I liked, in a lot of ways I like working from home. I think I took a good month to get used to it. I'm very fortunate in that I, I've got a single-family home. I live with other people, so I had enough interaction. I can get outside. I live in a neighborhood that's next to a park area, so I could get outside as much as I wanted to. So for me, COVID wasn't too horrible.

01:09:00 **BM:**

I did I did contract COVID in November of 2020, and my whole family did. I was the first one to fall (laughs). It was the week before, the Monday before Thanksgiving. So I got sick, and then my then my kids, my son and my daughter and my husband. So we were out. I was out of commission for about twelve days.

01:09:19 **IP:**

Oh my God.

01:09:21 **BM:**

Yeah. Yeah. And went in to -- for emergency care not -- I didn't have to be admitted or anything, but my chest was, the breathing was really hard. So I just wanted to make sure everything was okay. Got the scan and everything was fine, and my husband same thing, but just like a scare because the heart rate. We would do the blood ox meter and, oh, my gosh, just walking up a couple of steps it would go up to a hundred and ten. I'm a fairly fit person, so it was frightening because it would feel like hiking, at the worst, with the elevation and that's the way it would feel. But walking up three steps would do that.

01:10:02 **IP:**

So, your entire family all got COVID?

01:10:06 **BM:**

My nuclear family. My son, my daughter, my husband, and I.

01:10:10 **IP:**

I'm really sorry that you guys had to go through that. That sounds, it must have been terrifying.

01:10:15 **BM:**

And my husband actually doesn't have his sense of smell back. I don't know if my son, I need to ask him but his was pretty bad too. Mine came back after a few weeks, and my daughter's did too, but both of the guys had a long time. And my husband was just mentioning it yesterday. He still doesn't have his sense of smell back. Or, it's weird, it's awkward. And his sense of taste also is still not right

01:10:43 **IP:**

And it's been -- this was before right before Thanksgiving of 2020?

01:10:47 **BM:**

We're at eleven months. It's weird.

01:10:54 **IP:**

But you so you just went in to be -- You didn't, none of you had to be hospitalized?

01:11:00 **BM:**

No, we didn't have to be hospitalized. We were we really (unintelligible) very well, so it wasn't too bad for us. But it was still, I was pretty sick for twelve days.

01:11:12 **IP:**

Do you want to describe any of the symptoms? Feel free if you would like, if you don't want to that's totally fine.

01:11:18 **BM:**

For me it started with a headache and severe fatigue, and every day was a little different. I say the worst thing was the, never had body aches quite like that before. It was like flu body aches, but ten times worse, Just sitting would be achy in any place that you touched for any amount of time. Thirty seconds, it would be achy all over. Just general fatigue, and like I said the heart rate would just race with almost nothing. And then for a few days the breathing was a little scary too. My husband was out of commission. At Thanksgiving he couldn't even make it, he couldn't make it to the table. He was in bed that entire day. And then he ended up, I ended up taking to him the emergency room that night. Sitting out in the -- couldn't go in with him, so I sat out in the parking lot for like four hours and then my son came and took a shift. That was really strange because the hospitals could only let the patient in. Actually my well this is completely, this is more personal side, but I don't know if anybody has told you about going to hospitals for other reasons. My sister-in-law had my nephew was born in April of 2020, and my brother couldn't go in with her to the hospital. So she delivered on her own and he waited in the he waited in the parking lot for the delivery. So this was just par for the course. My daughter had a procedure and I couldn't go in with her. That was a few months later. So this is pretty, it's strange time. They wouldn't let anybody in unless it was absolutely necessary.

01:13:03 **IP:**

How long -- so you mentioned that you were the first one to kind of start showing symptoms -- How long between when you started shown symptoms -- I guess what I'm trying to ask is, how long was your family kind of down for the count?

01:13:18 **BM:**

I think -- so mine started on Monday afternoon. I think other people started getting sick on Tuesday evening. And then, you know, one of my kids got sick. I think my son started feeling it Tuesday evening. And then my daughter and then my husband, the next day. And we don't know where we got it. We thought my son had brought it home from school, but none of his friends got it. So that was kind of odd. So it probably wasn't him. It might have been me picking up a pizza or going to the grocery store. I went to the library to pick up books. But not in the library, they were all pickups. I did continue to go to the grocery store. We didn't do deliveries of groceries. I always went out, so that was probably I've no idea.

01:14:00 **IP:**

It's hard to know really. It's kind of impossible to figure that out.

01:14:05 **BM:**

Right?

01:14:07 **IP:**

Is there anything else you want to talk about that experience?

01:14:11 **BM:**

No, I think that's it. Yeah, that's um -- In a way, I'm, this is odd to say, and it sounds stupid, but I'm kind of glad I got it. Because at least I know what it was like for me and how scary it was. I just heard of good friend of mines told me her cousin died over the weekend from COVID. Forty-five years old. A twelve and fourteen -- She had kids twelve and fourteen years old, and died from COVID. Forty-five!

01:14:44 **IP:**

This disease does not discriminate.

01:14:48 **BM:**

Yeah. (nods)

01:14:52 **IP:**

Well, shifting back to (laughs)

01:14:55 **BM:**

Yeah (laughs).

01:14:55 **IP:**

Kind of odd to shift back to kind of the library focus, but can you describe your typical work day during the remote period?

01:15:06 **BM:**

Sure. (Pause) So pre-COVID, I would usually leave the house at seven-thirty in the morning. But now after COVID I would try to start working at eight-thirty or nine. And then I would either work -- I'm in a, we've got a few different areas of my house. I set up a little office in the basement. I'm not there now because nobody else is home. But when we were all home this area, my daughter usually had, or my son had. So I was in the basement and we had a folding table, and I got a folding table and put that up as my desk. We try to start work by no later than nine and work until at least five, but it was a little more flexible. So sometimes it would be five, sometimes later, depending on what was going on, and if there were any emergencies. A break at eleven for a few minutes, but it was just a lot of email and Zoom meetings. My job in general I can do like ninety-five percent of my job online between email and the meetings all just moved to Zoom. So honestly, not much changed.

01:16:26 **IP:**

Okay. So how much stress did you feel from work during this period?

01:16:33 **BM:**

That's a good question. I'd say it was really pretty similar to my normal job.

01:16:41 **IP:**

Kind of touched on this a little, but what were the biggest changes for you personally during this time?

01:16:47 **BM:**

Personally? Being with my family all day, right? Not having to commute. Like I said, I really like working with people and just having those, just interactions in the hall. I'm one of those -- I'm and I'm this might, I think my staff think it's a little annoying. They can hear me walking up and be like, hey, I was just thinking of something! And just bring something out of the blue. I'm not one of those people who just waits for the meeting every other week to talk about stuff. It's like we just talked all the time. So that, I like that about being in person. It's just the spontaneous interactions. So I'd say that was the worst thing for me, not being able to just talk.

01:17:38 **IP:**

What was the easiest change for you to adapt to?

01:17:45 **BM:**

Sleeping in (laughs).

01:17:49 **IP:**

(Laughs) I also enjoyed that very much. No commute.

01:17:54 **BM:**

Exactly! Saving at least two hours a day. Probably two and a half hours a day.

01:18:02 **IP:**

What do you think was the most notable change to library services for members of the university community?

01:18:08 **BM:**

Yeah, that's a good question. I think that the not having access to the space was really hard for people, and also not having access to print materials. Right when we -- when we closed, they, we weren't sure what was going on with the budget, so they canceled the whole bunch of book orders. The focus was really on academic continuity, and you know meeting the needs of the faculty and students. And then the focus was on moving to electronic resources. Not getting the print books because people didn't have, wouldn't have access to them. So there was this real focus on moving towards the electronic resources.

01:18:59 **BM:**

Other noticeable changes was trying to make sure people, if they really did need access to print materials, is getting it to them. So Access Services moved to, they were mailing books to folks who are working on capstone projects and theses, which was really pretty cool. I think that was a great resource. They also -- HathiTrust began offering access to digital titles through, it's called the Emergency Temporary Access Services Program. And so our e-resources folks and library IT, they worked to get together the print holdings information from our library catalog and work with HathiTrust to make those resources available. Those were -- a lot of effort was put into that.

01:19:48 **IP:**

How did community members react to these changes?

01:19:52 **BM:**

Oh, I think positively. Everybody was scrambling, so the people who really needed access to things, they would contact the library and e-resources or whoever, Access Services, would do their best to get access to whatever resources were needed. So I think I think everybody was sort of in the same boat with just like, what do we do? And then working together to come up with a solution?

01:20:22 **IP:**

Do you think that members of the university community appreciated your work and the work of your library colleagues during this time?

01:20:32 **BM:**

That's a great question. I think that at the beginning and I feel like library staff weren't so sure that it was appreciated. In fact there was a survey that was put out in January of 2021 and the staff were saying that they were not feeling appreciated. So in response to that, we decided to create a "Kudo Board." And I was in charge of that effort. I'm the chair of a meet-and-greet committee that, well our primary role of the meet-and-greet committee is to create a library buddy for new staff so that they feel welcomed and get help with whatever they need to transition to working for the library. And we created this Kudo board. It's an appreciation board. The original one was a Google doc or folks could put in, comments of like, Hey well Mark did an awesome job working with HathiTrust to make resources available to folks working from home. So that it wasn't just your boss saying, Hey, thank you, that was good work, but making sure that everybody in the library could see. I'm so glad that we've been able to do this. And then we expanded that just last month. We purchased a more professional looking, it's called "Kudo Board." It's a professional product. To make sure that people know that they're appreciated beyond just Hey, thanks for doing that. But so everybody can see this was important and your work made a difference.

01:22:14 **IP:**

That's great. How would you characterize interactions and relationships with students during the height of the pandemic?

01:22:24 **BM:**

You know, quite honestly, my job I definitely had less interaction. Because when I see people it's like running into folks in the Maker Hub. Or occasionally, if there's an email that makes it to my level of, there's a problem and it makes it to me then, that's where I'll see people. Or working with our students staff, but we didn't have our student staff. They were very, very few. I think we had two? So the numbers were down considerably. You know, other folks probably had more interaction with staff, like if they were doing workshops for instance. Yeah, but I

that's what I missed the most.

01:23:11 **IP:**

How about interactions and relationships with your library colleagues. How would you characterize those relationships during this time?

01:23:19 **BM:**

Both still good, still good. I moved to have my staff --

01:23:26 **IP:**

I'm so sorry. I have somebody knocking on my office door.

01:23:29 **BM:**

Go ahead.

01:23:48 **IP:**

I'm so sorry about that. So I'll rephrase the question again. How would you characterize your relationship with your library colleagues during this period?

01:24:01 **IP:**

Good. I really feel like we came together and did our absolute best to make sure we were helping faculty and students, and each other, as much as possible. We had all of our same meetings and actually increased the number of Zoom meetings. I have half our meetings every week, and we'd have our staff meetings every week. Yeah, so it's was good. Looks I did miss just running into people to resolve issues. But in general, I think everything went really pretty well.

01:24:36 **IP:**

How would you characterize interactions and relationships with faculty members during this period?

01:24:42 **BM:**

Yeah, still good, still good. The same, same thing. I think that the faculty were very appreciative of whatever we could do to help them. Yeah, overall very positive.

01:25:01 **IP:**

Great. What challenges arose during the pandemic that you did not anticipate?

01:25:10 **BM:**

Hmm. (Pause) Well, let's see. Just trying to figure out how to reopen, and it was hard to get really clear advice. So in the Maker Hub, for instance. We were trying to figure out how many people can we have in the Maker Hub? And there was nobody who could tell us that. They would say six feet apart, but the manager in there really felt uncomfortable about packing in six feet apart. He wanted to limit the number. So yeah, that that was a little stressful. Just trying to figure out the right answer, because I don't know that anybody has the right answer. And being comfortable with, Look, we're doing our best. That can be hard to not know for sure. Because I don't think, through this whole thing, I'm not sure anybody has the exact knows exactly what's right because it changes all the time. And that's been stressful.

01:26:19 **IP:**

Speaking of change. How did your unit's priorities change over the course of the pandemic?

01:26:26 **BM:**

Yeah, well just moving our instruction online. Which we -- I don't think we had ever done that. And you know what? That was surprisingly successful, we found that teaching software is actually better online. Especially our digital scholarship librarian, who teaches Tableau. When you teaching, when you we can show the software on the screen and show people exactly what's going on, they can see it's so much better than in the classroom. And they could have a lot more students attend. So that worked out really, really well.

01:27:10 **IP:**

How about the library's priorities? How did they change?

01:27:16 **BM:**

Well, a lot of what we provide is access to the space. So when we weren't doing that, and we really did move online, the Research Services, Librarians focused on creating online tutorials, rather than on one-on-one consultations, They still did the one-on-one consultations, but they also updating, libguides, creating online tutorials. So that became much more of a focus. We've gone through years where the online tutorials were important, but they really put an effort into them over the pandemic, especially in the summer of 2020.

01:27:59 **IP:**

What did you see as your role in the library's mission during the height of the pandemic?

01:28:07 **BM:**

Well, since I supervise these facilities it was getting ready for the reopening. Let's see, my role and that, again, I'm I just tried to, I'm someone who works with everyone to try to solve problems. So I just felt like I was part of the team that was providing access to any of the resources that we could. And making sure that the spaces were safe when we reopened.

01:28:49 **IP:**

So, when did you -- I think you already answered this -- But when did you begin working partially or all on site?

01:28:58 **BM:**

We were called back in, for those of us who were working all full-time remotely, it was the middle of August 2021.

01:29:08 **IP:**

Okay. Did you have any concerns about going back to work on site?

01:29:14 **BM:**

Yeah. Some logistical concerns, overall safety a bit, especially making sure that everybody felt safe. Those are definitely some concerns and also just adjusting back to, especially the commute, you know, it takes a lot of time to commute in. But it's all worked out pretty well.

01:29:40 **IP:**

You talked a little bit earlier about kind of how you were involved with the reopening plans. What did you enjoy most about this reopening period?

01:29:54 **BM:**

Let's see. I think it's been exciting to see people back in the library. One of my colleagues commented recently that she's never seen so many people in the library, especially in the beginning of September. She'd never seen so many people in the library before. I was in charge of the new student orientation this year. With creating events for the new students and so forth. She was saying, Oh you did a great job preparing for new student orientation! I was like, you know what I hate to tell ya, I don't think it had anything to do with new student orientation. I think that folks were just so excited to work in some place other than their own rooms. That they wanted to be in the library. So the library has just been

packed. And I know this from my kids too, that they talk about they're in the library all the time at their perspective universities. People just want to, they want to be around other people, even if it's not working with other people, it's just like being around others. And being free and not cooped up, and that's why the library, it's so wonderful to have libraries back.

01:31:03 **IP:**

Yes, we have seen him at an increase in the number of students here as well. So it's been, it's been really nice. having them all back. What are you most proud of during this period?

01:31:13 **BM:**

That we were able to come together and still make sure that people were able to get the resources that they needed. I think that every department really, like I said, just pulled together to make it happen. So that has been that's been really wonderful.

01:31:33 **IP:**

How have on-site operations -- So, I know you've talked a little bit about like the curbside pickup, you had the person in the Maker Hub who was there, throughout the pandemic -- How have on-site operations changed over the course of the pandemic?

01:31:52 **BM:**

Well, I think that we have -- on-site operations. We have a lot of our workshops we're still offering remotely because they worked out so well. Some other things that changed and not allowing non-GU folks in the library. So that's been kind of a hassle. Let's see, what else? We support a lot of the same resources that we were remotely. So we still have access to WeVideo. That's been really good. Was that the question?

01:32:33 **IP:**

What we've been a lot of changes that you've implemented?

01:32:39 **BM:**

Yeah, a lot of access to sanitizer and wipes. I think that's going to be around for a while. I did see after the H1N1, there was this effort during H1N1, and then a year later the disappeared, so let's see. I think it'll probably take a year and then they'll take them away again.

01:32:56 **IP:**

It's all we can do is wait and see.

01:32:58 **BM:**

Right? Exactly.

01:32:59 **IP:**

Which of these changes do you see is beneficial? Are there any changes you see as beneficial?

01:33:07 **BM:**

Yeah! I think that access to the wipes and so forth, that's definitely beneficial. The online access to resources. I think we have been trying to make an effort to keep all of those, the website information. The FAQs, the libguides. Make them as up-to-date as possible for folks that are working remotely, to not have to rely on the in person. So those are those are all good things. Having access to the online resources. We have access to LinkedIn Learning, and our own online tutorials. And that's good for us to make an effort to get the information to folks anytime anywhere. Not have to be restricted to like a nine to five Monday through Friday, because students, that's not their schedule.

01:34:00 **IP:**

Are there any changes brought about by COVID that you dislike?

01:34:12 **BM:**

(Pause) I don't like that we're not open to non-Georgetown people yet. That's too bad. Because that impacts us in the Maker Hub, especially. We have we called the Maker Neighbors, and they're not allowed back in the library yet. So that's kind of a drag, but I think that's that will be coming soon. And I'm not sure I like, I mean, part of me doesn't like having folks working from home. As a manager it's easier to have people in the library. It seems hypocritical, but like we had an issue this morning. There's one guy there, but the other guy isn't there and it's like, ugh. And then we got to wait until tomorrow until he's there, till he can look at it. It's easier for managers for its for their folks to be in the library, quite honestly. But for morale and for just a balanced life, work-life balance, it's nice to be able to work from home if we can.

01:35:12 **IP:**

Do you think the library's role on campus changed during or due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

01:35:23 **BM:**

You know, like I said, I think that there's a good there's more of an appreciation for what we provide. Now we're seeing so many more

people in the library, our spaces are truly valued, and I hope that the higher level administration sees that and we'll put more resources into the library. Our library, it's fifty years old. Some of our furniture is fifty years old in the library. It could use some attention. And so hopefully they value the library more.

01:36:01 **IP:**

Have your feelings about your job or library, work in general changed due to your pandemic experiences?

01:36:10 **BM:**

I think it's reinforced for me the importance of libraries, and just being proud of what we offer. Whether it's the resources and the access to the resources, even that access to the equipment that we provide, to the books, to the space, just has confirmed for me how important having these shared resources and spaces are.

01:36:37 **IP:**

Do you feel your relationships with other groups in the university community changed due to the pandemic?

01:36:46 **BM:**

You know not seeing people, I think it was -- It's so nice to just run into folks. I ran into -- we had a an event for family weekend on Friday, and a faculty member who I hadn't seen in almost two years stopped by and she hugged me like three times during our 10 minute conversation. Because she's just coming in contact with people. It's not like we think of each other every day. Like, of course, I think she's fantastic. But we saw each other and she's like, Oh, we should do this, we should do that! I When you don't see each other, those opportunities don't arise as easily.

01:37:27 **IP:**

What lessons do you think library workers and Librarians can take from COVID?

01:37:36 **BM:**

That our spaces and our resources are important. Yeah, that when they weren't available people missed it. That we shouldn't take ourselves for granted because I don't think people do take us for granted. When they when they were taken away, people were shocked.

01:37:58 **IP:**

Well, I have four more questions for you. Thank you so much for -- I know we've gone a little overtime, of the time I initially gave you.

01:38:07 **IP:**

What was the most important thing that you learned? I guess we're still in the COVID era, but during this time of the pandemic?

01:38:18 **BM:**

Don't take your health for granted. Yeah, I mean even you can do all the right things. You can, like I said, I'm mostly vegan. I exercise. All those are great, but you can get a virus and die tomorrow. So, just like to not take life for granted.

01:38:39 **IP:**

Did Contracting COVID change your outlook on life or anything? Or change how you approach your day-to-day life?

01:38:47 **BM:**

Yeah, absolutely. I mean exactly that. I feel like I take good care of myself, but that's not everything, and anything can happen. So, you know appreciating what you have, being grateful, not taking other people for granted, being kind, treating every day with kinds of appreciation and gratitude. It's important.

01:39:15 **IP:**

Did you have any unexpectedly positive experiences during the pandemic?

01:39:26 **BM:**

I have this -- you've heard of FOMO? Fear of missing out. So I'm one of these people who I'm always looking around, like, oh! We need to go do this, We need to go to that exhibit. We need to do this, this and this, and this. And we couldn't do that, and so I became more introspective, and just quiet and staying around the house. And for a while that was a little bit hard, but in a lot of ways, it was a lot less pressure. It's okay to just read and go for a walk, and just enjoy this. Not be constantly looking out. So in a way that was really good for me. To just settle back and not be always thinking I had to do, do, do do do.

01:40:12 **IP:**

And then finally, is there anything else that you think I should ask you today that I have not asked you?

01:40:18 **BM:**

Oh my goodness. You did a great job, India. You're Wonderful interviewer. These are awesome questions. I can't think of anything, you've been very thorough.

01:40:32 **IP:**

Well, if you do think of anything and you'd like to talk about it further, I'm more than happy to sit down with you again.

01:40:38 **BM:**

Okay, thank you.

01:40:42 **IP:**

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. I really appreciate all the time and all of your answers to my questions. It's going to help me so much and this project that I'm doing and for future researchers who are, may stumble upon this interview in the archives. So I really appreciate it. I will send you the release forms this week to your work address. So I'll send you three copies. All will have my signature. One copy is for you to keep, but if you could sign all three and I'll deposit one with the AU archives and I'll keep one for myself for my records.

END OF INTERVIEW