

## **Objective**

To learn from the narrator how they experienced the COVID-19 pandemic while working in a DC-area university research library. This interview and others in the series will shed light on how the narrator and others in similar positions handled pandemic conditions in their workplaces, and how the narrators view their positions in relation to the library, and academic researchers in their campus community.

## **Central Themes**

1. Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed how librarians and libraries function in university communities?
2. How did libraries and librarians adapt to the changing demands of a pandemic environment?
3. What kinds of relationships did librarians have with members of their campus communities before the pandemic? Did these relationships change due to the pandemic?
4. Has the COVID-19 pandemic caused librarians to re-evaluate their profession, and their role in their campus communities?
5. How did librarians interpret their COVID-19 experiences?

## **Introductory Statements**

Today is October 18, 2021. This is a recording of an oral history interview between India Pasiuk and Beth Marhanka. This interview is taking place via the TheirStory program.

Beth, do I have your permission to record this interview?

## **Questions**

### Introductory

Beth, can you tell me a little about yourself?

What would you say are the most important things to know about you?

How did you come to librarianship or working in libraries?

What inspired you to begin working in libraries?

When did you begin working at the Georgetown University Library?

What was your job title when you first began working here?

How did the library change between when you first began working here and, say, the end of 2019?

What is your job title now?

#### Pre-Pandemic

- Before the COVID-19 pandemic, how would you describe the library's role in the Georgetown University community?
- What was your part within that role?
- Can you walk me through a typical day at work before the pandemic?
- What part of your job did you enjoy the most during this period?
- What part of your job did you find the most difficult?
- How much stress did your job bring to your day-to-day life before the pandemic?
- Did you work remotely before the pandemic?
- How would you characterize your relationships with your library colleagues pre-pandemic?
- Could you describe your interactions with faculty in the university community pre-pandemic?
- How about students?
- Who else in your campus community did you interact with regularly before the pandemic?
- Do any particular challenges or difficulties with these groups stand out in the pre-COVID era?

#### Early Pandemic

- When did you first become aware of COVID-19?
- Before DC shut down, were you concerned about COVID-19's potential impact on your daily life?
- Did you view COVID-19 as a threat or a danger?
- If yes, a danger to who?
- Did your library shut down at the beginning of the pandemic?
- Were you a part of making that decision?

- If not, how was the decision to shut down [or remain open] communicated to you?
- Did you agree with this decision?
- What was your reaction to hearing that the library/university would be closing [or remaining open]?
- Could you describe what you were feeling around this time?
- How long was the period between the announcement that the library would close, and the actual closing?
- Can you tell me about what you did during that time?
- What did you or your unit prioritize in those early days?
- What kinds of decisions did you have to make during the days between the announcement and closing?
- Did you make those decisions in collaboration with anyone?
- What problems did you anticipate with the library's closure [or remaining open]?
- How did you plan on addressing or solving those problems?
- What was your biggest worry or fear during this period?
- What was the atmosphere at the library like during this time?
- How many people outside the library (students, faculty, staff) reached out to you for help during this period?
- What kind of help did they ask for?
- Do you feel you were able to help them?
- At this time, how did you imagine this broader, city-wide shutdown playing out?
- Did you do anything in those early days to personally prepare for the pandemic?

*"Height" of the Pandemic*

- How long did you think you would be working remotely?
- How long did you end up working fully remote while the library was closed?
- When did things, for lack of a better term, "settle down," after the initial shutdown?
- Could you describe your typical work day during your fully remote period?
- Did you enjoy working remotely?
- How much stress did you feel from your work during this period?
- What were the biggest changes for you, personally?
- What change was the easiest for you to adapt to?

- What do you think was the most noticeable change to library services for members of the university community?
- How did community members react to these changes?
- Do you think members of the university community appreciated your work during the pandemic?
- How did they show their appreciation?
- How would you characterize interactions and relationships with students during the height of the pandemic?
- How would you characterize your relationships with your library colleagues during the height of the pandemic?
- How would you characterize interactions and relationships with university faculty during the height of the pandemic?
- What challenges arose during the pandemic that you did not anticipate?
- What did you do in response to those challenges?
- How did your or your unit's priorities change as the pandemic continued?
- How about the library's?
- What did you see as your role in the library's mission during the height of the pandemic?
- Was there anything you were afraid of during this period?
- Did your perception of COVID's potential threats and dangers change during this time?
- Did you or anyone close to you contract COVID-19?
- Did you have any worries or anxieties beyond work?

Transition "Back" to "Normal"

- Did you begin working all or partially on-site? If yes, when?
- Did you have any concerns about working on-site?
- What did you enjoy most about work during this period?
- What are you proud of during this period?
- When did you begin transitioning to fully on-site operations?
- What concerns did you have as you began this process?
- How have on-site operations changed over the course of the pandemic?

"Post" Pandemic and Processing

- What changes or adaptations made during the COVID pandemic are you adopting permanently?
- Do you see any of these changes as beneficial?
- What other COVID changes do you like?
- What COVID changes do you dislike?
- Do you think the library's role on campus changed during or due to the COVID pandemic?
- If so, how did it change?
- How would you describe the library's role in the university community now?
- Have your feelings about your job, or about library work in general, changed due to your pandemic experiences?
- Do you feel your relationships with other groups in the university community changed due to COVID?
- What changes do you see?
- Do you think other groups on campus (students, faculty, staff) are more appreciative of your work now?
- What lessons do you think library workers and librarians can take from COVID?

## **Concluding Questions**

- What was the most important thing you learned during the COVID era?
- Did you have any unexpectedly positive experiences during this time?
- What were they?
- Is there anything I should have asked you today that I did not?

## **Closing Statements**

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. I really appreciate your answers to my questions. Your interview has been incredibly informative for me, and I know it will be a valuable resource for those seeking to understand our profession and your experiences going forward.

Before we wrap up today, I just wanted to make sure we sign this release form. This deed of gift form authorizes me to preserve this recording and a subsequent transcript at the AU Library in partnership with our Humanities Truck. Once I've finished processing the interview, I will provide you with a transcript, and I'll contact you when your interview is available in the archive.