

Transcript – Shira Buchsbaum, Class of 2019

Narrator: Shira Buchsbaum

Interviewer: Amanda Knox, Pembroke Center Assistant Archivist

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Amanda Knox: Good afternoon. My name is Amanda Knox. I am the Assistant Archivist at the Pembroke Center at Brown University. It is Thursday, May 28, 2020. It is two o'clock in the afternoon, Eastern Standard Time, and I am here today with another interviewee who has reached out to us with an interest in donating an interview about the COVID-19 global pandemic and she can introduce herself to our listeners now.

Shira Buchsbaum: Hi, my name is Shira Buchsbaum. I am a graduate of Brown in the class of 2019 and I worked at the John Hay Library during my time at Brown as a Special Collections Assistant so I feel particularly connected to the special collections materials, manuscripts, and archives at Brown.

AK: Well, thank you so much for joining me today. We have a lot of interesting things that I [1:00] want to touch upon, but before we even get to the pandemic, I'm wondering if you wouldn't mind sharing a little bit of your own personal background like where, where you grew up, what your what kind of education your parents had, if they also went to Brown, and then maybe what interested you in going to Brown, if you're comfortable sharing those things.

SB: So, sure, I grew up in Madison, New Jersey, where I'm currently living, which I'm sure we'll get to later in the interview. Both of my parents are graduates of Brown. My mom was originally the class of '85. We joke that she dropped out and then dropped back in for various reasons and ended up graduating in '87.5. And my dad is a graduate of the class of '88. Despite the fact that they are both Brown graduates, I, they never pushed Brown on me [2:00] in any way, they were quite ambivalent to the college process, I would say. And to their, I think, surprise and joy, I really loved Brown because more so than any other school that I visited it, it felt like home. I was lucky to be able to spend a lot of time on campus visiting both my sister who also

went to Brown, it just gets weirder the more I talk through it, as well as other friends who attended this school. So I was able to see classes in person and spend time with students and I got the sense that Brown was a home that would both challenge and excite me in the four years that I ended up spending there. So that's what really attracted me to spend, to attend college there. And I was very lucky to get in. So it all worked out.

AK: Good. I mean, it certainly sounds like it did. [3:00] Do you remember any of your first memories of your first time on campus as a student? Was that, did that feel different than when you were going to see your sister?

SB: Oh, totally. As a visitor, I never felt like I could get my bearings. I remember one experience when I was 13, for one of my mom's reunions, I felt like I was walking in circles around the campus and as a student, on the flip side, I felt like I had a map of the entire campus in my head. It just felt like everything had plunked into place. And so I remember during my first year orientation, sitting with friends in the hallway of my first year dorm, which is Metcalf Hall. It had been recently renovated and so it was sort of palatial compared to other dorms on campus. And they were asking how to get from place to place and I just sort of narrated the trip to everyone because I sudden, [4:00] I just understood how to get around. That's like one of my earliest memories.

One of my other early memories is sitting in what was then known as Wilson Hall, but is now Friedman hall with my first year – what do we call them? The, so, our unit. That's what it's called, our unit. And seeing a girl drinking from a ceramic mug, she brought the mug with her from our dorm, all the way down to Central Campus just to drink tea during this first year meeting and I thought to myself, that is a brown student in full form. It was, it was a really wonderful moment.

AK: Now, do you have any kind of like snapshot memories of really high points or maybe, if you're comfortable sharing, really low points of your time at Brown? [5:00]

SB: I, yeah, I think a low point that comes to mind is from the beginning of my junior year. I was really strung out, I'd had a really time consuming and stressful summer job, and I came back to

campus really exhausted. I was working for *The Brown Daily Herald* at the time, I had worked for *The Brown Daily Herald* for the first two years of my college experience and I was doing a lot of other leadership. I had a lot of other leadership roles in other activities on campus and I just felt really strung out and I remember walking around the Activities Fair on the Main Green, it was the first year they did on the Main Green which was a great decision because we were no longer in the very stuffy [inaudible] and I remember thinking to myself that I needed to quit everything because I didn't think I, none of it brought me joy anymore. [6:00] And so I left the activities fair and went to my dorm and called my parents and just sort of laid it all out to them thinking that I failed and they were like, "Okay, then quit and start over." So that moment of sort of desperation very easily turned into a moment of transformation, I suppose, with my parents support. And I ended up, I ended up quitting everything, including the *Herald*, as well as a lot of my leadership roles. And I started over with my job at the John Hay which ended up being one of the most transformative experiences of being at Brown. So that low point as, is typical, I think, ended up being a really, it was the catalyst for a really high point, I'd say.

AK: And in my research, preparing for this interview, [7:00] I saw that part of your time at *The Brown Daily Herald* was spent writing specifically about sexual harassment and rape culture on campus. And I'm wondering if you'd be willing to talk about that a little bit, maybe what it was like pursuing those stories and if they taught you anything or revealed anything about campus and campus life?

SB: I, that series took up my entire sophomore year. And there are a lot of parts of writing that's, writing and researching that series that I'm really proud of, because it relied entirely on working with students and staff, administrative members of our community, who are doing really necessary work. And so in every interview I sort of left in awe of all the people who were working tirelessly, tirelessly [8:00] to make our campus a safer place. There are some shortcomings of the series that I don't have to get into necessarily, that were sort of outside of my control, particularly when it came to the title nine element, which I'll sort of set aside for a moment. But one of the things that I learned in writing and researching is that all of that work, amazing work that I mentioned, gets obscured really easily. The students who were working in, in SAFE, in SAFE and the SHARE advocates they, it's, it's not just a, you know, as a hobby or

an activity for them, it's almost a life calling and a lot of the leadership members who I interviewed ended up going on to do that type of prevention education work beyond Brown either at other universities or [9:00] in high schools, or they're looking to work with, you know, high school aged kids, or even younger to try to develop environments that they were trying to cultivate at Brown as well. With that being said, they felt that their work wasn't seen by the administration and wasn't always seen by the student body. And that was incredibly frustrating for them. And then on the flip side, from the administrative perspective, the administration felt that they were sort of tangled up in a lot of the nuances of Title IX and like you know, educate, educational ordinances that come from the Department of Education on the federal level. And so they were, some of the people that I was speaking to there were struggling to recognize the really necessary work that students were doing alongside sort of the, the bonds of law to which they were subjected, and it wasn't as though either side [10:00] is really opposed to one another, you know, they're not, they're not fighting different battles, you know, one could argue that they're fighting the same battle, but they couldn't always see each other. And I think that was really frustrating, especially for students who, who wanted to make strides and gains in making our campus a safer place through sort of broad education and culture change and the administration who was sort of struggling to keep up with that really fantastic vision. And so it was sort of like a mishmash of like administrative and student perspectives. And it, it really just showed me that everyone could do with, with listening to each other a bit more. And that's perhaps not the most articulate way to describe what I gained from it. Honestly, I haven't, I haven't thought [11:00] or talked about this series and in a number of years, because it was a really trying experience to get people to trust me enough to talk about a really sensitive subject. And I was really wrung out by the end of writing the series, like I said, things that I'm proud of, but also things that I know I could have and should have done better. And so I think the short of it is that I tried to do justice to the work that those students were doing and I, I hope I earned their respect from it. But at the end of it, I really found that I wanted to be a part of, or that I wanted to pursue that work in a more actionable way, which was another reason that I left *The Herald*, I didn't feel like I could report on that topic in a, you know, quote unquote, objective way any longer [12:00] because I'd built such valuable relationships with a lot of my sources and I didn't feel like it would be fair for me to, you know, use their, use their commentary in my work any longer because I was, I was biased. They, they changed, I mean, they didn't change my mind, but they gave me a lot more

sort of first hand experiences that made me a no longer biased or unbiased reporter on sexual assault.

AK: And completely switching gears here now to, to maybe a little bit more of a positive, happier topic in your time at Brown, do you want to elaborate on the work that you did at the John Hay Library?

SB: Sure, I, my, anyone who knew me at Brown and knows me now knows that I'm sort of an evangelist for library work, and proudly so. [13:00] I worked at the John Hay under Heather Cole, who's a wonderful mentor and librarian. So my work was built around student engagement. So I spent a lot of my time developing a student, or an undergraduate-oriented resource to navigate the special collections at the John Hay Library. It's called Fields of Hay. It's a really terrible pun and I'm very, very proud of it. It basically compiles all the resources that are, that pre-date the hay website so that it's easier for students to navigate how to find materials, how to request them. It highlights student work, it highlights special materials that you may not think the John Hay has. That was an ongoing project that took me about two years to complete mostly because I'm not that savvy with computers. And I had to code a little bit from, from WordPress, which is the blog site that it's nestled [14:00] under. And then a lot of my other work was process, like intake and processing of collections. And I did, I processed an acquisition my senior year, which was a lot of fun because I learned sort of the bare minimum of cataloging. I also did some work in recruiting students to apply for the Library Undergraduate Fellowship, which is a summer program that Heather introduced last summer. And I tried to learn more about how students were using the materials, both so that I could feature them on Fields of Hay, and also to sort of show examples of how the materials could be used for other student work. And most of the time, I just yelled a lot, not in the John Hay, it's very quiet John Hay, but yelled a lot around campus about the importance of using library materials and why archives and special collections can be an incredibly enriching aspect of students' [15:00] academic pursuits at Brown. And most of the time, I just thought about how incredible it is that we have, you know, a million items in that library and in our off campus stacks that students can use. Not just students, faculty, and of course, anyone who wants to sign up on the John Hay website – and like I said, I'm an evangelist – for free, you don't have to, it's an academic teaching library. So that sort of

resource I think, is unparalleled even amongst our sister institutions. And I really wanted to see more students take advantage of it. And I think in, I would hope that in a small way, my yelling got through to some people. I know that, I know of a number of students who at the very least stepped into the John Hay for the first time during their years at Brown because I practically dragged them by their toenails, but it was fun and formative and [16:00] educational and I found that I loved library work more than anything else and so I decided that I wanted to pursue it beyond Brown.

AK: So was this, it sounds like this was kind of the experience that pushed you to pursue library school now?

SB: Oh, absolutely. Yeah. I wanted to be a librarian when I was a kid because I thought that meant I could just read all day, which of course is not what librarians and archivists do. It is to some extent, but not free reading. And Heather's work showed me that there is a professional route in librarianship and curatorship. And so watching her and learning from her as well as the other employees and faculty at the John Hay encouraged me to pursue it, which is what I'm now doing with my, my current [17:00] master's degree and then my next master's degree, which will be in library science.

AK: So, so are you, the your two degrees, are you pursuing those separately or are they happening at the same time?

SB: Yes. So the first degree that I'm doing, what I'm doing right now, is in Book History and that's at the School of Advanced Study in, at the University of London. I am not in London right now, because the pandemic which is also of course, why we're doing this interview, but that degree is sort of a broad basis of the history of the book, starting from the early Middle Ages, Medieval period, to the present. And it's mostly, it like, yeah, it's mostly a broad overview of book manufacturing and production, [18:00] distribution, use, reading practices, sort of everything. It's like a taster course of everything that's related to book history. And just when you think that things couldn't get even more specific, then we have like the world's expert on European finding methods come in and talk to us about how you can trace where a book was

made based off of the binding pattern of like the stitches in the, in the paper, and then you leave class and you're like, wow, that sounds like something I'd want to do. And you realize that it's the most complex niche field in the world. But the program is really incredible in that they've brought in all the experts you can think of and they lecture to us for an hour or two each week. And I've gotten a, a really, I'd say, again, broad understanding of the very many aspects of this field which anyone could spend a life studying. So that's my current degree and then my next degree will be a master's in Library Science, [19:00] which is sort of the vocational practical element of librarianship. And I hope the two together will set me up to enter the field professionally.

AK: And will you pursue the Library Science degree in London as well?

SB: I am planning on returning to the, well, returning, you know, returning theoretically, I'm already in the US, and attending library school here. I haven't decided where yet, but I have a few schools, have a few good programs in mind.

AK: Good, good. What made you decide to start your education in London?

SB: A few reasons. I didn't study abroad while I was at Brown because I really enjoyed Brown and I didn't want to leave. I, book history is a really niche field. There aren't that many programs about it in the US, [20:00] and some of the best ones are in the UK. I also considered the University of Edinburgh which has a comparable program, which is also excellent. But I love London it's probably my favorite city in the world. I have a number of friends there from growing up at sleepaway camp, counselors who come over for the summer. I've made wonderful friends from there and so I wanted to be able to be in closer proximity to them. And I, my mother's family's from Spain. So being in London put me five and a half hours closer to them which was wonderful because I was able to see some of my family while I was still in London, before I came home, of course. So it was a combination of personal, professional, and practical reasons that made me want to go to London for the year, plus or so, 18 months.

AK: Sure. So when, kind of setting up our transition to talking more about the pandemic, when

did you [21:00] originally move to London?

SB: I moved September 6, 2018, and my program began October 1, I want to say. So I was there for just over a month before my studies started, which was good because it gave me my bearings in a new city, living alone in a new city is daunting, but very fun.

AK: Right. So tell me about the first time that you heard about COVID-19 and Coronavirus. How did you hear about it and what were you thinking?

SB: I, so I, the virus started in January. So January was a difficult month for my family. My mother's mother, my grandmother, passed away two weeks into the month. So you know a lot of people were, at the beginning of 2020 were like, "2020 is going to [22:00] be our year," and like my grandmother broke her hip on January 1 and I was like, no the years going downhill, like there's no coming back. And I was, I was correct. My grandmother passed on January 15 and I flew home for her funeral and our Shiva. And then I flew back again. By the time I got back in London it was January 28 and I had had my head in the sand for a month. So I want to say that I heard tremors through like *The New York Times*, and maybe bbc.com, about this virus in China and from Wuhan when I returned, because I hadn't been paying attention to the news for the entire month. But I remember maybe one or two weeks into February, Michael Bloomberg, who I think was still running for president at the time, all of that is very muddled to me. I can't believe that we were like preoccupied with a presidential campaign.

AK: I know it.

SB: Michael Bloomberg said to [23:00] *The New York Times*, I want to say the first week of February, like it's only a matter of time before this hits New York. And I remember reading that and thinking, yeah, that it's, you know, it's, if it's not already there, it will be within the next few days. And then I thought it's the same here. I'm also in a much, major metropolitan city, it's only a matter of time. So I sort of clocked that, and then nothing happened. And things got bad in Italy by the end of February, and still nothing was happening in London which I registered as really weird, but I just spent a month in mourning and I was incredibly behind on my schoolwork and I

was very behind on everything, my readings, and, and seeing people you know, when you move to new city, you're trying to build friendships and build connections and start building a life for yourself. So I was selfishly, like everyone else, preoccupied with trying to rebuild that [24:00] after disappearing for a month or so. So I didn't really think much of it beyond, you know, it's only a matter of time

AK: So at what point, so you're in the United States now. When did you decide to come back to the states and what, what helped you make that decision?

SB: I was, so the end of February came. My partner who's based in New York City came and visited the first week of March. He arrived and he said, "You know, my parents were kind of worried about me coming over because of Coronavirus." I was like, "Well, you know, nothing really has happened about that, you know, regarding that here yet, so I think we'll be fine." He left March 8, I want to say, and the next day I, people started to panic a little bit in London. You know, that's, I want to say like March 9 was when things started [25:00] being cleared out of grocery stores, toilet paper, because people are, yeah, toilet paper and paper towels and beans and pasta and whatnot. I like mostly do my shopping at a bodega across the street from my apartment and I saw more people in this tiny shop than I ever had before in my life and I kind of looked at the, the cashier who I'm friendly with and I was like, "What are all these people doing here?" She's like, "They're crazy. They're, they're buying toilet paper." At that point, though, I was still thinking to myself, you know, if there's a lockdown, not when there's a lockdown, if there's a lockdown, it'll only be a few weeks. And my flat in London is, it's like a 12 by 12 shoe box. It's not really compatible for long term isolation. And I thought to myself, if it's two weeks can survive. [26:00] Yeah, I can, I have work to do, I can be resourceful. You know, I'm near a lot of parks, London's the greenest city in the world, I will be fine. So I, I stocked up on like, you know, protein bars and peanut butter and the rest of it. And a lot of my, I have a number of friends from Brown who are at LSE and we were sort of encouraging one another like it'll be fine. You know, we, we have the six of us, we're good friends, we'll stick together. A number of my other friends from my Institute and my school in general, who are all expats and internationals, we were all sort of saying the same thing to each other. It's fine. We have each other. It will be okay. This is like on a Wednesday. By Saturday half of those people have

changed their tune and they're like I'm going. DJT, our commander in chief, had said, had at that point [27:00] locked down the borders to foreign nationals and non-permanent residents. A lot of my American friends fled. They were like, I don't want to get stuck here. I, I'm worried he's going to close the borders to us. And I was like, "Are you kidding me? This is the most nationalistic man on the face of the planet. He's not going to close it to American residents, American citizens. That's like against his ethos, but fine, fine. Sure." A lot of my European friends were starting to fly home. One of my friends who is Italian but lives in Dubai, she bolted. She was like, nope. Then I don't want to be locked down here. I want to go home to my family. So that was sort of like the first wave.

And then the following Monday, Tuesday, at that point, my parents were starting to get like a little bit touchy. They were like, "This doesn't seem great. Who are you going to rely on?" You know, we have family and friends, both in London and in Cambridge, but it's, it was too much to ask them to take me in. [28:00] That's a really big ask for an undisclosed period of time. And so they were starting to get really worried about me being alone in my apartment for an extended period of time. They didn't want me to be alone. They didn't think that was sustainable. And they were correct. So in sort of like a 24 hour period, from like Monday to Tuesday, I think that was March 16th and 17th, I went from being sort of the stalwart of any social group I was in saying, like, "It's fine, we'll get through it together, we'll be okay." To my parents, basically saying, you know, "We have no idea how long this is going to last. It will be longer than two weeks. You know, if this is over by June, you can always go back, but if it's not over by June, do you really still want to be there?" And they, my father made the very salient point, which I readily agreed with, that my life in London, [29:00] the life that I started to build for myself in London, was coming to a close regardless of whether I was going to be there to see it or not. And he pointed out, "Would you rather be home with our cat in America or would you prefer to be alone in London?" And that sort of sealed the deal. My cat, I know it sounds really silly, but my cat is very, she's, we call her our geriatric kitty. She's 17. And I didn't, I didn't want to have an uncertainty of when I was going to see her again and sort of, that sort of pushed it over the edge. And so I decided Tuesday, March 17, that I would leave.

I called my school. They were incredibly helpful in navigating the visa requirements so that I wouldn't lose my right to be in the UK because I was returning home due to the pandemic. I called my, the director of my program who was similarly incredibly helpful. [30:00] I can't

overstate how wonderful, wonderfully supportive my school is. It's a small research institution. It's completely dedicated to post graduates and they do a wonderful job of supporting them. And I spent Wednesday packing up and then I left at 6:45am Thursday, March 19. I came home and the next day I turned 23.

AK: Wow. Wow. I almost don't know where to go from there. So, so actually tell me, you're traveling back to the United States. What was that travel like going through airports and trying to get home?

SB: So because I had waited almost a full week after the initial fleeing, I think it's appropriate to call it a fleeing, there's like this awful photo that surfaced maybe that Sunday after DJT shut down [31:00] international flights where people were crowded into Chicago O'Hare and was basically like an open, like aerosol spray of potential contaminants freaking out because they're like, "airports aren't safe." My feeling was that everyone was going to go home and if you just waited half a second, things would start to clear out. So I got to Heathrow and it was basically empty. I got on the plane and I'd say, I don't know, maybe 240 seats, there couldn't have been more than 30 or 40 people, all of them were spread out. And I got to Newark Liberty International Airport and I like had my forehead scanned by a CDC official, I went through an extra layer of security at international, like a border security, [32:00] and that was it. It was the fastest I'd ever entered a country. And I think it's because the initial panic had sort of died down a bit. My parents rightfully point out that unlike all of the other times my ancestors have fled Europe, my paternal grandfather is a Holocaust survivor, my paternal grandmother's parents fled the pogroms in Russia, like they, they had a much rougher entry into the US than me flying over on a United flight that was, you know, waited hand and foot by flight attendants. Like my fleeing of Europe was much more comfortable than my ancestors. And you kind of have to put it in perspective, like I came home and had pizza from my local pizzeria before shutting up in my room for two weeks. So I was, I was really lucky because I waited a little bit longer and things ended up being a lot smoother. The, the run up to deciding to leave was much more anxiety [33:00] inducing, but the actual travel was really, really simple and that was, that was sort of a blessing.

AK: That's a really interesting comparison that you made that hadn't really occurred to me. But that's definitely something I'm going to mull over. Now you're in the United States sharing an office with your mom, as we were discussing when we started recording, and you're trying to do these classes virtually. What is this experience like for you?

SB: Yes. So my family, my mom has graciously opened her office to me. Both my parents, my mom works from home and my dad sort of works half from home half from an office the town over, although completely from home now. My sister is teaching fourth grade from our dining room each day. [34:00] So my mom was like, this might be the quietest place for you.

AK: Yeah.

SB: We, I think we're good office mates. We're, I'm pretty quiet. I just type and read all day. I was really lucky in that my formal course meeting hours finished in, in March, right, the week I left, our classes were canceled, because, you know, all of the buildings were being shut down. That was our last week of classes, so I spent the end of March and then the rest of April writing my papers for those courses. The system in England is, is different and I don't know if this applies to all British universities so don't take this as like the word of law, but for me, I basically got an extended Easter break that I was going to have any ways to work on my papers. So it was sort of remote research and writing which was difficult because when you're doing a degree in book history, you ostensibly want access [35:00] to books and I have access to books but they're mostly like my childhood, you know YA novels and not manuscripts or, you know, collections and archives that I would like to have access to. So it was an exercise in figuring out what institutions have available on online, which immediately threw me back to my days at the John Hay where I sort of lamented when we didn't have ready access to certain materials online. So that was sort of an eye opening experience. I turned in my papers in early May, after that long research period, and now I've turned my attention to my dissertation, which is my last assignment for my degree. My school again, has thankfully been very accommodating. So we've had our dissertation deadline pushed back to late October. It's originally meant to be due in September but they pushed it back because of all the [36:00] disruptions. So my summer from here on out will be researching and writing my dissertation. And again, that is a hefty exercise in

figuring out what it is I can write a dissertation in book history about without ready access to books. And so I've been developing that and my advisors are contactable through, you know, Zoom and email and whatnot. But because, by nature of how my course was set up to begin with, I didn't have to endure endless hours of like Zoom University, as I know, a lot of my undergraduate counterparts and even graduate counterparts at other schools have had to, which I think is, again, sort of a stroke of luck because remote learning can be somewhat uninspiring especially when it's sort of foisted upon you without much warning. So I sort of lucked out on that front. [37:00]

AK: A question that is a very broad and completely asking you to speculate. So much has changed in our day to day lives right now. Are there any changes, either one, that you just want to talk about or two, that you think are going to stay with us in a, in a post-pandemic world?

SB: Wow. I really like that, you know, there's been like these memes of people joking like, "nature is healing," like, "the world is returning to what it once was," which is just so funny to me because I, it just proves like how inconsequential humans can be if we choose to be. Like, I don't live in a rural area, I live pretty firmly in the suburbs, but we do [38:00] live very close to rural areas and we've noticed in even in our backyard, how different all of the animals are acting. My mom is a big bird watcher so we have a ton of bird feeders and they are, the finches are going crazy. They talk to each other all of the time. The chipmunks are getting way bolder. They run up to us and run across our back patio all the time. And the bullfrogs, we have a pond behind our house. Usually there are a couple bullfrogs there in the spring, this year, it sounds like they have spawned dozens of bullfrogs, and they are basically in chorus all day long. So, on that front, I hope the quieting of our movements sticks around because I know certainly in our family, we're somewhat outdoorsy people. I hope if my parents ever listen to this, they don't scoff at that. But we like nature, we like green, and I hope, I know [39:00] that we've really come to appreciate how the stillness of human activity in our area has allowed the nature around us to blossom, even more so than usual. I hope other people internalize that as well.

In terms of like human changes, of course, like the big tech companies are all saying, like, work from home until January 2021. Work from home forever. But I do think that will trickle down in other ways as well. I, I, from a library like a librarian, like a librarianship

perspective, I have to wonder, because you can't do librarianship remotely. A really meaningful part of it, from my perspective is the human to human interaction, especially when you think about the populations that libraries are serving. So I, I've sort of been muddling over what librarianship will look like if [40:00] people are reticent to enter spaces, especially those people who are in particular need of like a free Wi Fi connection, or a warm, a warm, dry place to stay where no one's going to bother them, or a place to check out books, and of course, public libraries have been doing wonderful work and making their digital, they're ebooks, available to all of their populations. But I don't know what, I don't know what remote librarianship looks like, just like every, and by extension, what does remote community building look like? What does remote companionship and camaraderie look like because I think all those, those three things are all tied to librarianship, sort of in my idealized version of what libraries are for their communities. And I think that that's a long way of saying I don't know what the long term implications will be, and I can see the benefit of people quieting down their lives, but that's also an incredibly privileged [41:00] perspective to have to, you know, work for some tech company that will let you work from home. I hope to do work in a space that relies on human to human interaction and I, I'm not concerned or are worried because I think people are very resilient and creative and innovative. But I don't want this to sort of signal the, like the crumbling of people's reliance on one another. I don't want this to turn into, I don't want us to become recluses as a result of the pandemic.

AK: So another big question here. If somebody were to listen to this interview tomorrow, what is one thing you want them to know? If they are listening to this interview 50 years from now what is one thing you would want that person to know? [42:00]

SB: Oh, wow, tomorrow. One of the tweets I saw, I'm not on Twitter anymore, but I saw you know, all, all things, all things are everywhere in the internet sphere. A tweet I saw at the beginning of this said something to the order of, "remember, during all of this you turn to art." I wish I knew who tweeted it so I could credit them. But 50 years from now, I have no doubt that the world will face a pandemic like this. I saw some speculative article that was like, this is how we could deal with this 10 years from now if we learn from our mistakes. So 50 years from now, maybe another few pandemics have passed and we've learned how to deal with them better. I

hope whoever is listening knows that we turned to art and the art we turn to was varied. People reread *Harry Potter* novels and the Percy Jackson [43:00] series and they read Jane Austen books. There was a really ridiculous series on Netflix called Tiger King, which I didn't watch, but there was also the rerelease of a series called Avatar The Last Airbender, which is sort of widely considered one of the best shows of all time. And the Internet has been up in arms about that show for days. I will admit that I'm a massive fan of that show so I have to put it in here for the sake of, the sake of the future. And people, people turn to art and other ways. I, my mom is learning how to make masks, but she's been making all of them from the excess textiles that her best friend dies, she's a textile artist. And my sister has learned how to cross stitch and I've gone back to painting. So I hope that they know that we didn't make art because we saw it as an opportunity [44:00] to like become the next great Michelangelo or Claude Monet, but because we needed it for survival. And if someone is listening to this tomorrow, I, Hannah, Gatsby's new Netflix special just dropped. It's called Douglas. I saw her live in October in London. It was the best two hours of my life.

AK: I saw her too in Boston. I absolutely love her.

SB: She's brilliant. She's just inside achingly, side achingly brilliant. And so I, that's my recommendation. My friends always make fun of me because I'm always giving recommendations. So if you want to watch something, watch Hannah Gatsby's Douglas. If you want to listen to something, try Billie Holiday. And if you want to read something, *Big Friendship* by Aminatou Sow and Ann Friedman. It's about keeping friends [45:00] close when they are far apart, and I think it's pretty apt for right now.

AK: Wow, those are amazing and very thoughtful suggestions. That's wonderful. With the last few minutes that we have here, I'd like to leave it open for you to share anything that you were hoping to get into the historical record that I didn't ask you about today.

SB: Oh, gosh, I don't know. I think we've covered a lot of it. I really admire archivists because they think long term in both directions which is a skill that I hoped to have, or rather hope to develop for the next few years as I continue to study librarianship. For the historical record. It's

really hard to think about what you want people to know. I want to say that I already said it. My friends are, are sad. Some of my friends are sad because, you know, they had [46:00] plans to travel places and go scuba diving or take adventures across the world. We're all in our 20s and so things seem really lofty, only to be crushed by like the immovable blockade that is this pandemic. But I just keep saying all of them, we will see each other again and we'll hug each other again, and we'll dance again. And I think that's enough for me.

AK: Well, thank you so, so much for your time this afternoon. This has been really lovely. And I cannot wait to add your interview to the over, I think almost 250 interviews we have in our collection now. So thank you so much for your time today.

SB: My pleasure. I'm happy to be, thrilled and honored to join this small cannon.

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