**TRANSCRIPT**

**INTERVIEW WITH BECCA LEWIS**

***CONDUCTED BY LOUISE SIDEY***

**THE GLASGOW WOMENS LIBRARY, THE UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE**

**Interview Status: X open to public** \_ confidential \_ anonymous

**Name of interviewee:** Becca Lewis (B.L) (F)

**Date of birth:** -

**Name of interviewer:** Louise Sidey (L.S) (F)

**Name of videographer:** N/A

**Number of sessions:** 1 **Session** (12th March 2021)

**Length of interview:** 53.32

**Place of interview:** Remotely via zoom

**Dates of interview:** March 12th 2021

**Language of interview:** English

**Name of transcriber:** Louise Sidey

**Date of transcription:** 16/03/21

**Software used to read DVD:** VLC Media Player

**Editorial Note:**

The interview was easy to transcribe and all of the recording was audible and clear. Prior to the interview, G.M was given this sample list of questions:

So, to begin can you tell me a bit about your role with GWL?

How did you end up at GWL, what drew you to this specific institution?

Prior to the pandemic what was a normal working day like?

How have you had to adapt?

What is your workspace like?

What has been the biggest challenge?

What other challenges have you encountered whilst at GWL? And how do they compare to now?

Have you been surprised by anything you have enjoyed during this time?

You opened on Tuesday the 1st September on a phased return, what was that like?

What do you miss most about the library?

How have you found the transition onto digital online life?

How do you manage to find a work/ life balance?

Have you still managed to work with the community?

**Interviewee’s Biographical Details/ taken from GWL website:**

Becca Lewis joined GWL in 2019 as the Facilities Management Officer. She oversees the upkeep of its Grade B listed Carnegie Library, co-ordinating building services and maintenance contracts. Becca contributes to the Green Creative Cluster, who work across the organisation to implement the Environmental Policy. She has an MA in Heritage Management from Bath Spa University and has really enjoyed learning about community focused organisations. Becca has worked in libraries, heritage and the arts and loves that GWL is in all these worlds.

**Transcript and Time-Coded Summary**

00:00:00.120 --> 00:00:13.080

Louise Sidey: Okay, so, as I said, yeah okay, so I have you here on the 12th of March 2021 and before we start, I just want to make sure that you're happy to this oral history interviews today, so if we could just get your oral consent.

00:00:13.650 --> 00:00:16.080

Becca Lewis: Yes, I’m happy to do the interview today, thank you.

00:00:16.500 --> 00:00:24.300

Louise Sidey: Good okay so m, if you could just start, and if you want to start by telling me a bit about your role with the Glasgow woman's library?

00:00:25.080 --> 00:00:30.750

Becca Lewis: Yeah, and so my job title is facilities management officer and I joined the library in early summer 2019 and em, so I think the pandemic has changed my role. Well, of course, but like, and so I think I’m responsible for the and the running of the building like making sure that all of the systems that are in the building, like the heating or the alarm systems or the plumbing that are all in working order and that it's a safe environment for us to be in. And then, with the pandemic, that changed with lockdown because there aren’t people it’s usually it's about being able to facilitate many, many people using the building in different ways, and then it has it changed to be sort of more about maintaining the building so like just doing essential checks and and making sure that the essential services are still happening and some repairs and we have been doing eh some sort of renovations as well and. Because colleagues over successful funding applications for instance for the Green work and so that was like secondary glazing and and changing our lights to LED lights and so that happened in this more recent lockdown. So, em, and then, while we were open in the autumn, and what I’m starting to prepare for again now for sort of hopefully reopening.

00:02:21.540 --> 00:02:21.990

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:02:22.710 --> 00:02:25.290

Becca Lewis: In the spring and is sort of helping to manage the space with these new restrictions and and sort of make sure that I’m sort of learning the the different guidance that comes through from museums and libraries and sector about how to. And how to work safely in the pandemic and to sort of implement that in the way that it fits with the way we work and the way that we use the building yeah and yeah so that that's what I was just before we met I was writing lists of stuff yes of moving into that gear again from having been in more of a lockdown maintenance gear and now changing into. What like you haven't got a date for reopening it we may get one on Monday, but we may just get a date in the future that will get a date like it, it can be quite…

00:03:35.790 --> 00:03:36.840

Louise Sidey: -it's kind of ongoing.

00:03:37.740 --> 00:03:39.300

Becca Lewis: Yeah it’s ongoing

00:03:39.390 --> 00:03:41.250

Louise Sidey: Yeah we get teased with a little bit of information.

00:03:41.280 --> 00:03:41.760

Becca Lewis: Yeah.

00:03:43.170 --> 00:03:44.640

Becca Lewis: Okay yeah. I'll start to get ready to ready because we're not ready.

[laughter]

00:03:50.700 --> 00:03:56.760

Louise Sidey: It's that kind of fear of being like going back to normality and then also being like the what was normality?

00:03:56.820 --> 00:03:57.240

Becca Lewis: Yeah, was normality working? These are the big questions of like, yeah, so that’s what I do, that’s a summary.

Louise Sidey: Yeah I know that that it sounds like a big job on your hands like, especially because do you feel that have a lot of the kind of the kind of procedures and things you've put in place for kind of covid that it’s kind of is fallen on you to kind of do that as the facilities manager.

00:04:33.840 --> 00:04:41.280

Becca Lewis: And well no not I mean to put into practice, yes, but they're thinking about it and the and sort of making decisions about it is, is ultimately Sues jurisdiction.

00:05:02.580 --> 00:05:03.060

Becca Lewis: You know. Sue has the ultimate say about it. Yeah and then it's up to me to put it into practice so maybe, but also what we've done particularly last spring and summer we worked across the team with anyone who wants to be part of these, at least have you heard about the peg docs I don't know if that's come up in another conversation so it's really big part of my job is working from the Peg docs, and these are three documents that we created it as a broader team, and which are the guiding principles for the pandemic and reopening- sorry I’ve got a frog in my throat.

00:05:45.450 --> 00:05:45.990

Louise Sidey: Oh no don’t worry.

00:05:47.070 --> 00:05:51.600

Becca Lewis: And, and the risk and opportunities register, which was just about recognizing that this emergency than this challenge has like different risks to, and to what I’d been we've got we've got a general risk register that that we have you know all the time in previous years. And, but this one, we made specifically for risks that were involved with being closed. And and risks and also risks of reopening in and and opportunities software, of course, I’m sure I’m sure you've had other colleagues talk about how their role has changed to digital. And yeah moving to that was like a huge something. So I think it is created a huge opportunity from you know meeting people outside of those who couldn’t visit the library like physically and and that's not something I haven't been directly involved in lots of that digital work and I’ve gone to a few events like which has been nice. Um so yeah I’d say you'd like and then the other third document is the phased return plan which and Sue's just updated and she’s shared a new. And copy of that, based on what we've learned in the last couple of weeks about what the phased return might look like this in 2021 and and that sort of just outlining what sort of broad categories like um. For instance, in the in the first phase of reopening we’ll have quite a limited offer like like people might just come into and to borrow books, but not to sort of sit and work. And it might because I think, I think we found it useful in the autumn of just getting used to the space in this new way is quite important, rather than having a very busy space, and so it wasn't very busy in the Autumn, there were some visitors, but much more of a trickle of visitors. Which I think helped us to feel comfortable in the space.

00:08:14.580 --> 00:08:24.600

Louise Sidey: Well, I think I got the sense, you know with the woman's library like so much of it is about being a safe space so obviously right now more than ever, you have to take into account all these kind of new measures and yeah, how do you kind of adapt to make it still that safe space, considering the pandemic and everything and you were talking about kind of the risks of like the building, you know when you first shut down what kind of where those risks that you were kind of worried about with the library?

00:08:41.760 --> 00:08:47.010

Becca Lewis: Well, I think a big one, I suppose it's off and yeah I think I think it's a good example is like the security of the building like when people are in the building from so nine to five Monday to Friday and in the afternoon on Saturday and there's that presence that physical presence of people and that has yeah that increases the security of the building like and when I think we have and we have I don't know it might have happened anyway, we had had graffiti before, when we were a long time, but we have had graffiti during the lockdown and and there was even an incident which was, and while we've been having reflex we have scaffolding outside of the building. And some young kids got onto the roof and were using, this will go into the archives [laughs] and you know we're using the scaffolding to slide down back around and stuff so I didn't see this but Sue saw it last week.

00:09:51.510 --> 00:09:54.390

Louise Sidey: Oh, my God it's been turned into playground.

[laughter]

Becca Lewis: It’s been taken over.

00:09:59.490 --> 00:10:02.880

Louise Sidey: God yeah because that would never be able to happen if you guys were in the building.

00:10:03.150 --> 00:10:04.470

Becca Lewis: It would be really unlikely.

[laughter]

00:10:08.370 --> 00:10:09.210

Louise Sidey: Wow.

00:10:09.660 --> 00:10:21.570

Becca Lewis: And I think there's something else about this and the maintenance of the building, which I think I’ve really so so before we know to be able to people in the building like. Quite often, Doreen who’s cleaner like especially, she come up to me to say I think that's, I think that things broken or I think there's something funny happened in that corner of the room, or something, and she was just like so good at being observant and those kind of first signs of things can really help you to say oh there's a leak, or you know something's happened that, that needs to be repaired or you know that and to be on top of it, and in the lockdowns I haven't had and sort of colleagues eyes everywhere, so now I’ve got like quite a sort of structured weekly work that I do like looking at everything and just being like the windows store closed, yes, as anything correct no okay you'd like so and it's it's quite a different way of relating to the building, then yeah that's a bit more casual about it when I like when there were so many people.

00:11:21.690 --> 00:11:28.500

Louise Sidey: Yeah because I guess, in that sense you're kind of sharing the job, and you know you've always got other people that are kind of like buzz about and look and yeah that does, I guess, maybe, in a sense, it probably makes you take in the building and just such a different way.

00:11:34.320 --> 00:11:36.180

Becca Lewis: yeah, I think, so I think I think I have. I think I have got a new relationship with building. Definitely especially in that first look down and I really noticed like how lucky I was to be able to come to the space and yeah you know type of space outside of my home that I that I could it be comfortable in and you know that was great and I would quite often bring in a little speaker and listen to music while I was cleaning and checking and things like that so. You know, it was quite the I think. I just can't quite believe it's been a whole year of this and different relations, which is longer than the amount of time, I worked at the library before the pandemic.

00:12:30.120 --> 00:12:32.400

Louise Sidey: Wow yeah, yeah, that's wild. Yeah I guess because you've had like quite a unique like you're saying a unique experience. Because you know, like a lot of the oral histories and the people I was speaking to all the other staff members kind of had that. You know they've only really been in the library in the Autumn kind of period, whereas you’ve been going in throughout the year on your own a lot of the time. And how did you find that generally?

00:12:58.680 --> 00:13:06.210

Becca Lewis: I mean, I yeah, I actually love it like a and oh yeah some colleagues sometimes they do you find it spooky oh.

Louise Sidey: Yeah

00:13:06.600 --> 00:13:09.810

Becca Lewis: Yeah but I literally don’t. I feel really lucky to have an excuse to go to the building I love being there. And feeling that myself. I know that and their colleagues missing it and am so sometimes I’ll like take little snapshots like there was there was when, when we got the new lights and the new windows and things I took a few and I just included a picture of Henry the Hoover. It was things like that there were sort of like. I don’t know, you know sort of mundane but like.

00:13:59.460 --> 00:13:59.910

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:14:02.700 --> 00:14:09.360

Becca Lewis: They make me smile, so I just and the garden Oh, my goodness, I feel like because there's, ah I went, you know there's a really lovely garden, I keep going, wait have you been to the building?

00:14:13.860 --> 00:14:15.660

Louise Sidey: yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:14:17.340 --> 00:14:22.350

Louise Sidey: Luckily, been everyone keeps asking me and I’m like no I been like multiple times so yeah.

00:14:22.560 --> 00:14:23.700

Becca Lewis: Because I love it so much oh. [laughs]

00:14:25.380 --> 00:14:25.740

Louise Sidey: yeah.

00:14:26.160 --> 00:14:29.280

Becca Lewis: The little garden by the lift shaft and you know, it's just been you know it's been a whole year of the seasons and just now it's at photos where I could see daffodils are starting to grow and yeah. I think sort of, try and find the balance of keeping people updated and not showing off too much.

00:14:52.710 --> 00:14:53.430

Louise Sidey: Yeah, I think, as well, like, I think it the first lockdown more than maybe the second and third I definitely understand what you're saying about kind of the Hoover and the daffodils like yeah I felt like these kind of my new like everyday minute, mundane things that we usually didn't really think about they started to have just such great like importance in our lives, like changing sheets, or like making bread or making coffee, they just took on new meaning because that's all we had.

00:15:23.760 --> 00:15:39.240

Becca Lewis: I like that yeah I think it's true yeah because yeah that's maybe that's similar to what I mean about like the maintenance and stuff it's like so much might have just been under the radar before, and it was happening, but, just like in a really casual informal way, yeah and then, when it changed it had to be more self aware of like, have happened like like one of the it's like a humour humorous thing is like, I have to go around and run all of the taps every week.

00:15:55.740 --> 00:15:57.330

Louise Sidey: Oh to check it's working?

00:15:57.660 --> 00:16:03.120

Becca Lewis: No, it is, it is to prevent bacteria build up in the pipes which is usually you just assume that everyone's using all the tabs and there's no bacteria build up if the building is closed for a couple of weeks and you have you have to do it and so where we've been closed for a few months it's like. It takes some time, you know, to go to every tap. Just things like that there's just like a new routine or like even like a new ritual of like. Because then because that's what I built into them like having a look everywhere because I go to each tap.

00:16:36.870 --> 00:16:38.340

Becca Lewis: Yeah so in way.

00:16:39.570 --> 00:16:40.380

Louise Sidey: No, I think.

00:16:40.770 --> 00:16:42.360

Becca Lewis: I feel I can talk too much about these really mundane things.

00:16:44.400 --> 00:16:50.280

Louise Sidey: This is it like you know, this is why we’re doing these oral histories it's like your job is completely changed, and you know, like those taps are now like a road mark for your like roadmap for your entire day. Yeah and he probably not spend too much time your entire life just turning off the taps.

[laughter]

00:17:02.550 --> 00:17:04.860

Louise Sidey: How many taps are there in the women’s library?

00:17:09.330 --> 00:17:13.230

Becca Lewis: Yes, there’s seven toilets the cleaning cupboard three kitchens…

Louise Sidey: That’s a lot of taps

Becca Lewis: That is a lot of taps, eleven, eleven, eleven sets of taps.

00:17:25.980 --> 00:17:37.410

Louise Sidey: Wow and I guess I’m just going back like I didn't even ask you, but I wanted to know like how did you get involved with the women's library, in the first place, like what brought you to the women's library?

00:17:39.060 --> 00:17:39.480

Becca Lewis: Oh that’s eh. Well, I well I had lived in Bristol and for a long time before I applied to the job I was living in Bristol when I applied for the job at the Women’s Library. But I had met and Hannah and Rachel who aren't working at the moment that and they were they were they were at the museum association conference and but maybe I’d heard about him before I think has because I was really excited to meet them. And so I think, from then on, I just kept looking at the vacancies and just because I’ve heard and I would think can I apply for this? Can I apply for that? And then eventually yeah this role came up which and and yeah it really suits me as a quite a patchy experience of different art centres or libraries or and yeah so but, but the the kind of responsibilities that I’ve got here have been similar in lots of different jobs, yeah it was really like I can do this. So yeah. It was I’ve been to Glasgow before but hadn't been to the library before I came for my interview yeah. And luckily I came early because I cried as soon as I walked through the doors. I just felt overwhelmed that, I think, that it was like big proper place.

00:19:14.460 --> 00:19:15.900

Louise Sidey: Yeah a historic building.

00:19:18.030 --> 00:19:19.110

Becca Lewis: Yeah it's like, it’s that famous warm welcome, it was just like it’s real, it’s tangible, there was that was a beautiful exhibition that was just you know it just ticked all the boxes for me just in that welcome wall that is in the foyer which was household objects made from, made life size, like made from white paper and they sort of looked like little models and it was just things like that, that I was like woah.

00:19:59.640 --> 00:20:00.300

Louise Sidey: Yeah. I can't believe as well that you came up all the way, so you move from Bristol to Glasgow for the job.

00:20:07.860 --> 00:20:08.100

Becca Lewis: Yeah.

00:20:09.150 --> 00:20:09.900

Louise Sidey: Wow.

00:20:12.780 --> 00:20:13.110

Becca Lewis: And yes. I could cry like this, just like it’s I am very happy to have done it.

00:20:24.300 --> 00:20:26.820

Louise Sidey: Yeah it's like love, at first sight

[laughter]

00:20:33.480 --> 00:20:39.450

Becca Lewis: Yeah it it has been really strange because, like my close friends and family and friends here and colleagues have been wonderful and are definitely friends as well and. It has, I think I have, I think you know when I moved it was really easy to get to train up and down in a weekend and see people really easily and then because it's not the same for a year, yes, it has and but also, I think, and that's really helped me to feel like I am happy to be here, even though, even though those things so.

00:21:18.900 --> 00:21:19.350

Louise Sidey: Yeah. I guess it just kind of is a testament to your love of the job on the library and that sense.

00:21:28.350 --> 00:21:30.540

Becca Lewis: And of the city I just really like it. Even when it's mostly closed, I really like it.

00:21:37.530 --> 00:21:41.820

Louise Sidey: It was good, have you managed to get back to Bristol any points then?

00:21:42.210 --> 00:21:49.830

Becca Lewis: At the know that in the last year, the further south I've gone is the Lake District and I did meet some friends from Bristol bed when that was legal.

00:21:52.470 --> 00:21:53.040

Louise Sidey: God.

00:21:53.520 --> 00:21:54.300

Becca Lewis: yeah which is surreal to think I spent most of my life in the south of England, I know it's been a whole year when I haven't been.

00:22:04.620 --> 00:22:08.880

Louise Sidey: Yeah that is it's probably it's like the longest time you've been away from like home home.

00:22:09.420 --> 00:22:13.800

Becca Lewis: Yeah and I think it's It means that home is here.

00:22:14.520 --> 00:22:21.090

Louise Sidey: Yeah yeah I know I think Glasgow has a special way of doing that to people kind of sucks you in and then you realise you're like I’m not going to leave.

[laughter]

00:22:23.280 --> 00:22:26.340

Becca Lewis: Yeah that's great have you moved to Glasgow then as well?

00:22:26.700 --> 00:22:32.970

Louise Sidey: Yeah I like move and from Edinburgh like six years ago, and then I’ve just refused to move back. And but I am I'm, going to, I'm moving down to London for a couple years to be a teacher so because they don't do Teach First in Glasgow unfortunately in Scotland. They don't support it so I’ve got to go to England for a couple years but I’m going to come back. If you can live in England all those years, I can do two.

[laughter]

00:23:07.980 --> 00:23:12.930

Louise Sidey: So have your friends like before lockdown did or your family did anyone get a chance to see the library?

00:23:12.990 --> 00:23:13.560

Becca Lewis: Yes.

00:23:13.800 --> 00:23:28.770

Becca Lewis: Yeah day yeah and if you did actually yeah it was like a run of weekends of autumn 2019 where you have different friends visit each weekend and then well and also my mom and my friend, Sarah came to the sort of last event the, Linda’s Herland event on the sixth of March 2020 so my Mum and my friend, Sarah were both dancing the night away with everyone there that night so.

00:23:45.150 --> 00:23:55.380

Becca Lewis: And yeah I feel like they know where I’m going and and it's really nice that my colleagues have met them as well, so there is yes, a continuity there.

00:23:56.220 --> 00:24:05.370

Louise Sidey: Yeah yeah because I guess yeah the kind of thing that I’ve been getting through speaking to everyone it's just how much they kind of miss you know the library but also so much the miss everyone and just kind of spending every day together

Becca Lewis: yeah

Louise Sidey: -and it's just nice getting a sense of kind of the community that library brings.

00:24:14.910 --> 00:24:18.300

Louise Sidey: You know it's not the silent space that people associate with libraries.

00:24:18.450 --> 00:24:31.020

Becca Lewis: Oh, like, I think I’ve got one colleague, we keep in touch by email but Donna and me, our work is in sort of different spheres, this year, like how work is with learners online yeah and my work is in the building and but previously, we were sat office each other on our desks and we'd always be like catching each other's eye and having a laugh and stuff so we've had a few like lunchtime zooms together.

00:24:47.790 --> 00:24:50.850

Becca Lewis: Yeah I definitely miss that. That sort of. I mean it's like that's sort of the informal side of it is. And this is really lovely and I remember that on my first week working at the library Dorothy she said you've got friends here, you know it was like. Just she was such a lovely message, she just leaned in and was like, you’ll be alright.

00:25:25.140 --> 00:25:25.770

Louise Sidey: Yeah. That’s so nice, you know. To know that network is that, especially if you've moved, you know so far across the country like it is a big move.

00:25:36.180 --> 00:25:37.620

Becca Lewis: Yeah yeah.

00:25:38.730 --> 00:25:48.840

Louise Sidey: And I guess, so I mean we've kind of already spoke about the fact that you know we've been in lockdown and stuff but what do you think is the kind of biggest challenge that you've kind of faced this year then?

00:25:51.600 --> 00:25:54.000

Becca Lewis: I think it is, yeah I do know. It’s learning this new science of infection and disease that. And yeah you know afer a decade, at least, have been responsible for health and safety and public spaces. That was never my biggest concern you know, like the you know, of course, I was aware of first aid and he had some things like that and I’ve had training in that and but like health and safety before was quite often don't block the fire exit or something quite tangible and quite yes, yeah and quite easy to.I think you know. I think personally it's quite easy to communicate with lots of colleagues people and and you know, and you know people coming in, as well, just like it's quite easy to to be yet to maintain good health and safety and then. With the pandemic it's just like it's nice it's like it's yeah science that I just haven't followed before and right I’m really like having to sort of like remember how to interpret statistics and things like that. Which like I don't suppose I suppose like I could do my job without doing that. But I think because I’m, I sort of I want to be a bit prepared and a bit sort of I just prefer to understand things than to sort of just follow the instructions em, and yeah so that's yeah that's been like quite a steep learning curve.

00:28:07.500 --> 00:28:07.920

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:28:11.010 --> 00:28:17.070

Becca Lewis: You know, and then yet missing people definitely probably it's probably more difficult, but, a bit more obvious.

00:28:21.270 --> 00:28:28.020

Louise Sidey: know I think you know you're a such an important point, but like I think so many people even people that that's not their job to think about health and safety. We all kind of it has brought to the fore the fact that you know, like you started thinking about like surfaces and wash your hands so like obsessively and mask hygiene and things that like you know, like a year ago we weren't, it wasn't even in the forefront of our minds.

00:28:46.170 --> 00:28:53.520

Becca Lewis: When when it when it starts be known that there was a pandemic and that we're going to have to change our behaviour and possibly close I found it really hard to believe.

00:28:57.030 --> 00:28:58.290

Becca Lewis: Yeah I think I think I was. I was, I was just like, but how, how could we close, how could. Then I was just like you know, like we people won't wear masks you know, and this is sort of like imagining other sort of rule changes that I’ve been through I was like people wont do that, and then I remember, I did start to remember when I’ve worked in that sense that in England, when they're smoking ban came in and was like oh it didn't happen like people did stop smoking and doors and. And that that sort of reminded me like behaviour change can happen. And I feel like I had to sort of relate it to like. I remember seeing me having a conversation about how it's, it's, the equivalent to the rules of the road and driving rules of like there is still a risk. But if everyone has the same information and follows the same rules, the risk is brought down. Yeah and it's those kind of like relating it to the things that I already understood that really helped to yeah, to get into the mindset of this new of working around this new threat.

00:30:22.980 --> 00:30:29.610

Louise Sidey: Yeah I feel like that analogy is really good actually when you think even like to carry forward now, you know it's like if you abide by the laws, then you know you're making everyone safer. It’s just like driving a car, following the rules and the highway code.

00:30:38.190 --> 00:30:39.480

Becca Lewis: Yeah and, and you can't control everything and we're still you know there's still risk but it's better to reduce yeah you know yeah it's better to reduce as much as possible and yeah so there's really good there's been really good advice or from there were lots of sort of zoom workshops last year about. And how to take on the science in a public space and things like that so. That really informed us and deciding our procedures and safe capacity and. So safe is a difficult word it's like a lower risk is a lower risk rather than calling it safe.

00:31:29.130 --> 00:31:29.520

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:31:34.170 --> 00:31:42.210

Becca Lewis: And ah and it's all becoming the same now there's like the museums and galleries in Scotland and we've got a network, where you can learn from each other about how people are working to be open again next year.

00:31:49.350 --> 00:31:57.210

Louise Sidey: Yeah oh that's good that there is a network, you know there's like how are we going to you know because it's you've got to have solidarity the direct at this time and thing. You know, think collectively, how are we moving forward, because. You know there's so many institutions that like this is such there's no there isn't a roadmap for how to do this. You know we've never done this before. Yeah and and it's scary.

00:32:12.150 --> 00:32:17.790

Becca Lewis: Yeah and some institutions weren't able to open in the summer or autumn last year, so.

00:32:18.090 --> 00:32:18.420

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:32:18.870 --> 00:32:28.710

Becca Lewis: It's been such a long time, what we do and I think that's a big difference, like some organisations, where all the staff have been furloughed and and, and we we haven't we haven't been-we've like adapted. And I think I think, particularly for them. I mean you know I talked about what what I’ve had to learn, I think, for colleagues who've had to learn all of the new software and working out hosting and presenting and that you know those sort of things in the digital space, I think that's just like a huge, huge amount of learning that they've done and and yet they a couple of events I’ve been to I have been so impressed of like how much lately who feels like it is, I think I think they just an amazing job.

00:33:14.250 --> 00:33:14.700

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:33:15.900 --> 00:33:18.660

Becca Lewis: And it's been really fun because it's all I’ve been able to share more of what the library does with friends across the country like my mum's coming to the open archives next week from my living room in South Winkton.

00:33:32.370 --> 00:33:35.370

Louise Sidey: In some ways I think that is the thing about this time, you know it's like it’s library, you know it's very rooted in Glasgow, but in the sense that you could now be in South Africa, or you could be in…

Becca Lewis: Yeah

Louise Sidey: …Vietnam, if you wanted to be and look at what's in the archives, you can join in, like in so many ways it actually is broadening out the horizons of the library.

00:33:53.460 --> 00:33:55.710

Becca Lewis: And I think you know like my mom loves it and she's she's sort of through the library sort of through those emails that comes through that's like oh, you might be interested in this em email to the team. And I passed it on to my mom and now she's she's been doing, like writing workshops, there was a little link that was through that way and they're not directly from the library, but then there are other people who are connected to the library who are doing it because then she texts me one day and she's like I just found out that so and so volunteers at the library. And I’m like yeah she volunteers at the library, but I don’t know her very well, how do you know her? [laughs]

00:34:39.210 --> 00:34:41.610

Louise Sidey: That’s great bringing people together too.

00:34:41.970 --> 00:34:42.330

Becca Lewis: Yeah.

00:34:43.920 --> 00:34:48.750

Louise Sidey: And I guess so when the library did open it was like September, the first wasn't it?

Becca Lewis: Yeah

00:34:49.470 --> 00:34:51.720

Louise Sidey: Yeah what, what was it like?

00:34:51.780 --> 00:34:53.130

Becca Lewis: So I actually wasn't there

Louise: Really?

[laughter]

00:34:56.190 --> 00:34:56.520

Becca Lewis: No I wasn't it. Which was quite cheeky.

00:35:00.450 --> 00:35:04.500

Becca Lewis: So I yeah I took it as annual leave that week I think I’m afraid you’d have to ask other colleagues about that.

00:35:11.610 --> 00:35:12.420

Becca Lewis: But yeah, I heard it was really good. I think. I hoped that because we've had a sort of a few probably about four weeks, maybe three or four weeks before that, when lots of us have been in the space, working with the new systems, I just sort of felt like it would be okay em so yeah. Sorry I can’t answer that one. But it was great when I came back I loved it I loved being in front of house and people were so happy to visit, and you know, some people were visiting that had you know, they’d missed us they'd been a regular visitor before and other people who are visiting for the very first time. And it was just that classic lovely thing of chatting to interesting people. Like everyone coming for different reasons.

00:36:13.890 --> 00:36:17.040

Becca Lewis: And then we have that it was really nice exhibition em that people really I think people would have defined it like quite therapeutic seeing the volunteers accounts of lockdown and different things that had been donated to the collection, during that time and people would spend a lot of time looking at stuff and then to come and reflect on it. Yes, I think it was a really lovely thing.

00:36:42.270 --> 00:36:50.550

Louise Sidey: yeah I think it is yeah it's definitely you know when this is past, I think it will be, it will be easier to reflect on it definitely

Becca Lewis: yeah

Louise Sidey: But you know, like even when I set out to do these oral histories I hadn't quite envisioned that we would be in another lockdown. You no yeah I think it has it's been a turbulent year in that sense. It is though, I think, like so many people, you know, from my course at university are so excited to come to the women's library.

00:37:15.570 --> 00:37:16.080

Becca Lewis: Aw great.

00:37:16.590 --> 00:37:17.670

Louise Sidey: I think that's exciting. You know, like having you know, because there’s probably been people in this time even like we're saying from being online that have learned about the library, and now it will bring them to Glasgow.

00:37:26.310 --> 00:37:29.640

Becca Lewis: Yeah, yeah yeah I think that's really true. I think people might have had their first encounter with the library through the online stuff yeah.

00:37:40.080 --> 00:37:40.470

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:37:42.990 --> 00:37:54.090

Louise Sidey: And I guess, and on the converse to kind of we've kind of already spoken about it, I guess, but like is there anything that has kind of surprised you about this time that you've like taken enjoyment from or?

00:37:57.000 --> 00:37:57.900

Becca Lewis: I think there has been yeah [pause].

00:38:07.980 --> 00:38:16.740

Becca Lewis: Well, I mean like I really am surprised by how nice zoom is like I didn't expect to feel as comfortable with people across laptop [laughs] and I am I’m happy about that it's good um. Like the sort of this. I think sort of cheesy things like I am I am content just to walk around my local park and I think you know normally go further and see something new that like yeah, I think again, I guess. Like. There has been really difficult times, and like you know even a few weeks ago, like, I was upset I was really I was really emotional about the idea of the change back to reopening and but then a week later, I took some leave, and then a week later I feel okay again and I feel like. I guess I’m surprised and happy that that I’ve experienced that like even when it's bad it does come back like.

00:39:43.770 --> 00:39:44.130

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:39:48.450 --> 00:39:48.900

Becca Lewis: Yeah.

00:39:52.290 --> 00:39:58.830

Becca Lewis: And, of course, like the changes in the building like that yeah the new lights and stuff later is just awesome. And we're hoping if we get planning permission we'll find out next week, we might be able to make any more changes before we really reopen so.

00:40:09.480 --> 00:40:17.940

Louise Sidey: And it was such, I guess like an opportune time to do the renovations and like you never going to get time like this, for the libraries just closed.

00:40:18.720 --> 00:40:27.540

Becca Lewis: I know that's really true we have scaffolding up in the event space and the main library, at the same time, like that that would be so difficult when the normal program was running.

Louise Sidey: It would be impossible.

[laughs]

Becca Lewis: It would be unsafe [laughs].

00:40:36.090 --> 00:40:36.450

Louise Sidey: No. I definitely understand you, in the sense that I think a lot of people kind of it's like. Obviously everyone's so excited and you know it's looking forward and thinking like normality, so you know it will be lovely but also, at the same time, this has been our lives for a year now and that change again it's just that that another change and it feels quite scary and it feels really big at the moment when it's in front of you.

00:41:00.630 --> 00:41:01.110

Becca Lewis: Yeah.

00:41:04.020 --> 00:41:10.110

Becca Lewis: And I feel like this week we've had a few things with like just breaking it down and be like okay, just yeah I think that helps to be like I had a really good chat with Sue yesterday about like what do we know now what what will we do when we find out the next day just look like a one step at a time.

00:41:26.970 --> 00:41:27.270

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:41:29.340 --> 00:41:29.580

Becca Lewis: Because I think. yeah I guess there’s like, it's the two things that like personally myself and being ready to be in a public space maybe three days a week.

00:41:49.860 --> 00:41:50.160

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:41:50.460 --> 00:41:55.830

Becca Lewis: Maybe one day in the spring, I think that that's like I want it, but that's. It feels quite difficult.

00:41:59.250 --> 00:41:59.700

Louise Sidey: Yeah. Well, especially like you're saying as well that you, you know, a huge portion of what your job is now being has been the role that you've just played the last year, so it is it's going to be a change again and and I definitely empathise because you know I’ve had my whole university masters on screen. Em and it's just it's so different from anything you would have ever expected or.

00:42:27.270 --> 00:42:28.950

Becca Lewis: or chosen

00:42:29.010 --> 00:42:30.390

Louise Sidey: Yeah chosen. And if you'd said, like it what you were saying about you know, having to kind of learn all these new ways like. And if you’d said, like you have to close everything down you're going to do it all on a laptop, no one would have believed you, they say, that's ever going to work.

00:42:46.860 --> 00:42:48.960

Becca Lewis: No yeah I really I didn't believe it.

[laughs]

00:42:50.070 --> 00:42:50.370

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:42:51.210 --> 00:43:01.020

Becca Lewis: I remember, I remember being worried in that first when we first were going about closing just like if we close how we know when to open again. And I was really worried that like, that it would be like em, that it would be sort of vague and not measurable and. But, yeah much the is it vague, like in the summer notes from last year it worked okay.

00:43:36.540 --> 00:43:36.900

Louise Sidey: yeah.

00:43:38.340 --> 00:43:38.490

Becca Lewis: So, hopefully that will happen again now.

00:43:40.470 --> 00:43:41.310

Louise Sidey: I know.

00:43:42.360 --> 00:43:52.920

Louise Sidey: And I guess just yet thinking like forward, what is the thing you're most looking forward to getting back into the library and back into the space when we have un-locked down I guess.

[pause]

00:44:12.660 --> 00:44:13.740

Becca Lewis: Yeah I mean. It's definitely about like the people and yeah I think you know letting before the pandemic like you just meet so many people every day. Like even if you just said hello to them it'd be a whole new person that you might never meet again, or it could be someone who's gonna volunteer at the library for six months, and you just continually meet new people. And I do , I do really like that, I think it's great, and I think it really and especially like. I think, I really like the sort of the priority that's given to giving people space to explore the library and sort of find out about it and, like, whatever their. Whatever reason they might have come through the door in, and I think it's really interesting. And do different from this year.

00:45:25.860 --> 00:45:29.790

Becca Lewis: I really look forward to things being casual and informal again.

00:45:30.390 --> 00:45:31.860

Louise Sidey: Yeah

Becca Lewis: I don’t know when that will be, maybe a little while longer.

00:45:41.520 --> 00:45:48.120

Louise Sidey: Is that a thing of I guess like you know those everyday interactions with even like he knows someone in a shop or just even the way that you operate in a space with a stranger or someone that you don't know that well or even you know you can't even do that outside at the moment. There's always be thinking about the space that you're in space, and you know it's, it's a very different way to live our lives and it kind of goes against I think human nature, because we're, so I think has usually were so tactile or so kind of like the way we behave with people is quite an intimate way. And now you know that's been that's been, well now you can't do that.

00:46:17.970 --> 00:46:25.620

Becca Lewis: Yeah I think I think that's really true that's just really reminded me of how physically last year, like before it got more used to it, like, I was really like sort of frustrated or angry that like what what my normal so answer to the problems that were coming up the pandemic of like people being lonely mental health issues, and you know. And people being worried and you know they you know just like all of those things that were like a problem, and I think my, my natural instinct is to say let's get everyone together, and you know and. And I think. In and that that sort of mixing and those risky things yeah like. Being in this space together it's all part of what and yeah well, why I want to work at the women's library, and I think that was quite a shock that we were going through these collective difficulties together but so separately.

00:47:32.040 --> 00:47:32.430

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:47:32.790 --> 00:47:33.870

Becca Lewis: It was very different from. And I really hope that people have found what they needed in the ways that. You know that have been available. I look forward to, and I know that there's a couple of people who were regular visitors to the library who haven't been able to do online stuff and I really look forward to them coming and sitting and having a chat in the library.

00:47:58.800 --> 00:47:59.640

Louise Sidey: Yeah

Becca Lewis: Yeah.

00:48:01.590 --> 00:48:15.420

Louise Sidey: I think yeah that sentiment even you know, like everyone this year has been you know it's like your own personal battle and it being this kind of virus which affects through contacts it means everyone's had to kind of deal with the individually, but it is kind of a collective thing at the same time it's such a unique experience in that sense, and I…

00:48:19.230 --> 00:48:19.620

Becca Lewis: Yeah

00:48:20.040 --> 00:48:31.890

Louise Sidey: I think a lot of people share that at the library, you know you all been dealing with the same feeling of having to work from home having to be separate, but this is all the same fears and worries everyone's facing yeah.

00:48:33.750 --> 00:48:40.530

Louise Sidey: Yeah and the remedy of usually having to like meet up and be together, I feel that that's what I usually would do like lets get all our friends together and have a meal. And now you can't even do that.

00:48:43.230 --> 00:48:44.280

Becca Lewis: Let’s have a sleep over, yeah

[laughter]

00:48:46.950 --> 00:48:47.910

Louise Sidey: In the library.

[laughter]

00:48:51.420 --> 00:48:58.170

Becca Lewis: We did joke about that, which is coming up to Christmas, it was like if can't go to our families for Christmas will we just have a sleep over at the library.

00:49:00.720 --> 00:49:02.670

Louise Sidey: That would be amazing the night at the museum.

00:49:03.870 --> 00:49:04.290

Becca Lewis: I think it would be amazing.

00:49:08.100 --> 00:49:08.910

Louise Sidey: That’s so great. Yeah and I guess, there was some some days is have you been having to work from home as well do you do yeah your work yeah?

00:49:17.880 --> 00:49:19.260

Becca Lewis: Yeah and and sometimes, I find that quite strange to sort of especially earlier on. Because I think I am like quite a visual person so. Like yeah I would find it hard yeah to visualise things and then, once I went in the space ah that's that's what I meant, but you know I think a good example, but like that's all from being in the space. Eh so it has all of the sort of reminders and nudges and thing. But I think yeah this week I work from home. This is my third day working from home and it's been good, I like it when there’s lots of zooms, and we've had lots of good meetings this week, so I feel. Like yeah that's that's great.

00:50:20.790 --> 00:50:21.000

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:50:23.940 --> 00:50:28.860

Becca Lewis: Yeah I’ll always do one day a week in the library and then sometimes if more people need access.

00:50:29.580 --> 00:50:39.390

Louise Sidey: Yeah, I think, is, I think you know what you're saying like is sometimes can be quite hard to motivate yourself I think zoom's helped to kind of connect you to that workspace. Yeah and you need them, because otherwise you know you feel like you just sit on your own at your laptop all day.

Becca Lewis: Yeah

00:50:44.970 --> 00:50:53.310

Louise Sidey: Which is very different from like I think the role that you usually play, which is a very kind of active people facing role.

00:50:55.170 --> 00:50:57.840

Becca Lewis: Yeah I’m quite responsive like yeah like. Yeah I could be interrupted like a bunch of times each day of just like oh you noticed or watch think about this so I’m thinking about trying this you know and and I think when I’m working alone em, in my own self working through my own to do list so, which is important and there's lots on it as well you know so it's not like I’m looking for things to do, but I think my usual rhythm is to sort of have those things sort of in the background, whilst people say can you help me and I quite I think I prefer that even though it's you know more disjointed I prefer that sort of social aspects of like oh good can you help me move these chairs, or you know, whatever it might be.

00:51:46.290 --> 00:51:46.740

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:51:49.350 --> 00:52:04.440

Louise Sidey: Yeah is it, I think it is these little things you know that we would not take for granted, but you never really think about them as kind of constituting such a big part of the day, and then now they're gone you like, I have so much more time on my hands.

00:52:05.100 --> 00:52:06.930

Louise Sidey: The same time you're like where is all my time going?

[laughter]

00:52:10.020 --> 00:52:11.370

Becca Lewis: Yeah very much.

00:52:13.620 --> 00:52:15.570

Louise Sidey: Yeah, aw well it's been so lovely speaking to you.

00:52:15.900 --> 00:52:16.740

Becca Lewis: It’s been so nice to meet you.

00:52:16.980 --> 00:52:21.120

Louise Sidey: It was lovely to meet you, You know this is this is exactly what you're saying you know meeting new people is something you just miss.

00:52:23.070 --> 00:52:23.700

Becca Lewis: Yeah, yeah

00:52:24.390 --> 00:52:25.440

Louise Sidey: So it's been so nice to meet you.

00:52:27.180 --> 00:52:29.730

Becca Lewis: Yeah, yeah and so, how long is your placement for?

00:52:30.570 --> 00:52:33.540

Louise Sidey: So it's till the till April, I think. Is my placement, but I'm definitely gonna come in, as in when the library opens I mean to actually see everyone.

00:52:40.050 --> 00:52:42.480

Becca Lewis: Well I look forward to that.

00:52:42.810 --> 00:52:43.380

Louise Sidey: I know, and I’ll be sure to turn on all of the taps.

[laughter]

00:52:48.840 --> 00:52:49.200

Becca Lewis: Star pupil!

00:52:51.810 --> 00:52:53.100

Louise Sidey: All eleven taps.

Becca Lewis: You’ll be like, Becca I can only find ten…

00:52:57.750 --> 00:52:58.860

Louise Sidey: ‘I think she was lying.’

[laughter]

00:53:02.340 --> 00:53:09.150

Louise Sidey: Aw yeah it's been so lovely you've had so many lovely sentiments about the library as well.

00:53:09.270 --> 00:53:11.640

Becca Lewis: It's been lovely to reflect on it so thanks for the opportunity.

00:53:12.210 --> 00:53:19.650

Louise Sidey: Yeah, no thank you and yeah and I’ll send you just the transcripts when I get through to it, so you can have a read over it.

00:53:20.040 --> 00:53:20.940

Becca Lewis: Oh yeah good luck.

00:53:24.150 --> 00:53:25.230

Louise Sidey: Oh I'll get there eventually.

00:53:26.850 --> 00:53:28.650

Louise Sidey: Well, thank you so much, and have a lovely day.

00:53:28.890 --> 00:53:29.520

Becca Lewis: Yeah have a good day, and a lovely weekend.

00:53:31.050 --> 00:53:32.310

Louise Sidey: Yeah thank you no problem.

**-End of Interview-**