**TRANSCRIPT**

**INTERVIEW WITH GABRIELLE MACBETH**

***CONDUCTED BY LOUISE SIDEY***

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

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

**Name of interviewee:** Gabrielle Macbeth (G.M) (F)

**Date of birth:** -

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

**Name of videographer:** N/A

**Number of sessions:** 1 **Session** (23rd February 2021)

**Length of interview:** 44.43

**Place of interview:** Remotely via zoom

**Dates of interview:** March 9th 2021

**Language of interview:** English

**Name of transcriber:** Louise Sidey

**Date of transcription:** 14/03/21

**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:**

Gabrielle Macbeth joined us as Volunteer Coordinator in 2011. Her role is to ensure that volunteers get as much out of volunteering as they put in and that they are involved in stimulating projects which makes the most out of their interests and motivations for volunteering. Volunteers are encouraged to try new things and broaden their horizons and are offered ongoing support as well as training to equip them with the skills and confidence to get involved in GWL’s wide ranging and varied projects.

Gabrielle loves having the opportunity to find ways for so many talented and enthusiastic women to contribute to GWL’s work and is always looking for ways to involve women from all walks of life who can bring fresh perspectives and experiences to GWL.

**Transcript and Time-Coded Summary**

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Louise Sidey: Okay, so that should be recording now. So I have got you here on the 23rd of February 2021 and just to get eh your oral consent just to begin just to make sure that you're okay with me interviewing you for the purposes of this.

00:00:16.410 --> 00:00:16.800

Yes.

00:00:18.000 --> 00:00:24.600

Louise Sidey: Perfect okay so first of all if you just want to tell me a little bit about your role with the Glasgow women's library.

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Gabrielle Macbeth: Sure em, so I’m the volunteer coordinator that's my job title em which, so the role is to facilitate the involvement of volunteers in, in the organization and and enabling women, trans women and non-binary people who want to get involved to yeah to contribute. I think of my role and like I suppose, making sure that anyone who wants to contribute can do so, em so that even yeah, if a volunteer doesn't have much experience or hasn't been to the library before or you know, whatever I suppose could be a barrier to them getting involved that my role is to minimize that and work with them to find a role that is going to it's going to work for them, but also work for the organization. And so I would yeah I meet, when people apply, I meet with them find out what interest then. And then have a think about what the team needs and tailor a role that that works with volunteers and, and, sometimes want his work directly with another colleague and my role is then just kind of like checking to make sure that's going well em but there's, there's, some roles where- that yeah- that kind of don't fall under a colleague's remit so em, I, and I suppose Ren as well, will be the main point of contact with the day to day tasks. As well as the overall support with volunteering.

00:02:16.290 --> 00:02:16.740

Louise Sidey: Great. Then, so I guess a lot as a lot of it kind of it is just kind of making connections and kind of getting people involved with the library, then.

00:02:25.050 --> 00:02:26.910

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah absolutely em. I think it involves a lot of, quite subtle kind of getting to know people and finding out what motivates them and then. And like all of these kind of constant like checking in it's always you know quite a dynamic situation you know volunteers have got their own stuff going on the organization's got loads of stuff going on and, and yeah keep checking in and make sure that what wanted to doing is what they hope to be doing and it's fun and motivating and rewarding em yeah. So involves quite a lot of like, I think, having an idea of what's happening across the organization as well em. Which is great, for me, because I’m super nosy [laughter] and genuinely like knowing what's happening and so. I don't have much in depth knowledge of anything in the library, but I kind of you know, I have a sense of what's going on with the collections team and what's happening, you know with projects and events and um. But also what's, I suppose, some volunteers are involved in like admin and finance and kind of all the like behind the scenes stuff that glues the organization together.

00:03:42.870 --> 00:03:50.310

Louise Sidey: yeah so it's kind of crazy, in that sense, and I think that you've had to kind of shift all that on to a digital kind of way, because I feel like your role, especially sounds like it is quite hands on. Em and very people facing em as well yeah how have you kind of find that shift really?

00:04:02.580 --> 00:04:03.810

Gabrielle Macbeth: I’ve been very. I've been very grateful for having this job I think in lockdown that's not actually answering your question at all, but em, been so yeah aw I’m so glad because my job is a lot of face to face stuff and doing that online I’ve been like. You know I spend lots of time talking to people, and I feel really connected to, to our volunteers and like I got pals and I suppose colleagues as well, whose job is very much like on their own in the laptop in their house and

Louise Sidey: Yeah of course

Gabrielle Macbeth:. Although what I’m doing that it does involve face to face contact but sorry, your question was how did I find that shift? Em, I think it's evolved loads within the first like you know, in March, it was like kind of felt like I was stepping into like a kind of crisis emergency mode, I think we all will be feeling this yeah that sense of what the hell is going on and at that point, it was about maintaining contact with volunteers and I was really concerned about how different volunteers would you know deal with it, if people started feeling really isolated or lonely or disconnected or lacking routine, I think. All those things that the volunteering can bring people I wanted to see what we could do to maintain some of that so em, I think the focus was very much on maintaining contact. We phoned volunteers that didn't have like access to Internet and stuff like that we delivered some laptops to volunteer so they could continue to do stuff remotely if they wanted to

Louise Sidey: Oh, that’s amazing

Gabrielle Macbeth: Em I can’t remember what point, but we started doing these kind of online meetups things yeah kind of zoom chat things. And and, I think as things kind of progressed, like for the second lockdown it has been much better and we just presented with a list of ways that they can get involved so some of it's like well, these are the roles that you can do at home if, if you want to be doing some volunteer and stuff, and these are all the kind of social things, and you can just dip into to kind of stay connect to the library and I guess that's the main kind of things. And then I think I’ve also become initially I was like oh I haven't heard from so, and so, and I think I’ve become more chilled about stuff and realizing through finding out from volunteers that actually some volunteers are quite happy just taking a break from it and they fill their lives with other stuff. And that's just dependent on the person, the individual.

00:07:01.590 --> 00:07:07.530

Louise Sidey: Completely yeah, I think it sounds so like your role is so interesting, especially because it kind of shows that these volunteers like they support the library, but also kind of it's a process of you supporting them, as well as very kind of like a two-way kind of friendship and I think that sounds so lovely.

00:07:20.160 --> 00:07:21.000

Gabrielle Macbeth: Mm, oh absolutely. Em yeah I’m always like to volunteers, this is not just about you kind of bringing stuff to the library it's about volunteering being really beneficial to them and I think it's it has blurred boundaries in some ways, that the lockdown and you know, in particular, because the relationship was pretty clear, it was very much I saw volunteers in the library and there was that clear like this is this is when we're this is when the contact happens and then I was phoning people, and I should have blocked my number but didn't so then volunteers have my numbers and I’m getting texted on a Sunday afternoon and and also, I mean I’m at my house all the time, so, and you know it's quite, yeah that's been quite difficult- not difficult that's an exaggeration- but it's changed a bit, and I have had to really think like know what is my role and, and trying to not: slip in to something else kind of reminding myself well I’m you know my role is volunteer coordinator and this is what I’m paid to do I’m not paid to be doing. Other welfare calls or-

Louise Sidey: Yeah

Gabrielle Macbeth: Um but obviously that's easier said than done, and when you care about people you can't be like oh, I’m not gonna do that because it's not my job description.

00:08:46.110 --> 00:08:47.430

Louise Sidey: And yeah, of course.

Gabrielle Macbeth: So

Louise Sidey: I’ve been yeah because I’ve been saying that a lot of the time, because obviously zoom has brought, brought work home and it's meant it’s kind of impossible to delineate between like what is the time to just kind of shut the laptop and I was just been asking like how are you kind of finding that balance and how are you able to like separate your work from your life?

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Gabrielle Macbeth: On the whole I don't struggle with that and I do um I’ve, I stick to my days I’m part time and I’m, you know, trying to do to work on the days that I’m meant to be working in and not letting that slip and I yeah I put my laptop away at the end of the week, and put it into its case and like under the desk and you know, put the diary everything out of the way and just. Yeah try to focus on other things um. I, yeah, I do try it yeah I do find [pause]. I find that yeah in my mind I’m like oh this the day I’m all in this today I’m off and, and we have this shared calendar, where we like, the staff team, can say what those they're working. And I’m like, so you know, I say I work Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, no one's expecting me to do anything on a Friday, from the staff team, so I don't. Yeah I think I find it easy to be like I’m just not working today [laughter] and, and I’ve got other things to do as well em, I suppose that's good and yeah. I think, for me the times when I have done like extra work on the side it's been when I’ve like, like been struggling to find things to do and I’m just I just want to be doing something, so I’ll just do work.

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Gabrielle Macbeth: But, yeah I busy myself.

00:10:41.490 --> 00:10:47.220

Louise Sidey: Oh that's good have you kind of taken up any kind of hobbies or anything during lockdown?

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Gabrielle Macbeth: Em, I don’t think I have. [laughter] I trained um, I trained a while yeah I trained over the summer last summer, I was really lucky like just as lockdown eased, I was able to start training to be a mountain leader and I booked the assessment for October and just be like is this ever going to happen, but it did so, and so I was working up towards that, on my days not at work and then. See yeah, I did the assessment and then we went into like level four, so I couldn't travel, so I haven't really been to any hills, other than like the tiny wee Kilpatrick’s in like months and months, but and yeah I’ve been kind of thinking about starting my business and doing that and putting some kind of energy into that so.

00:11:41.610 --> 00:11:47.100

Louise Sidey: That sounds amazing and is that something you wanted to do for a while, then and you've kind of been working towards it?

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Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah, I am yeah I did some training. I think, two gosh, yeah two years ago now, and then went part time in May with the with the view of just giving myself, been having the time to really dedicate to it, em so yeah.

00:12:05.160 --> 00:12:05.550

Louise Sidey: Wow.

00:12:06.960 --> 00:12:07.650

Gabrielle Macbeth: Hopefully at some point I will be able to go up a mountain again. [laughter]

00:12:11.130 --> 00:12:12.570

Louise Sidey: Rather than just the Campsie’s, but still.

00:12:13.770 --> 00:12:15.570

Gabrielle Macbeth: Exactly, I’ve learned to love the Campsie’s. It’s been good-

00:12:16.380 --> 00:12:18.630

Louise Sidey: I think I think we all have. Em, but yeah so I guess, in that sense you've had kind of like that space from GWL all your able to do both jobs. That’s lovely.

00:12:30.480 --> 00:12:31.860

Gabrielle Macbeth: Um yeah. I am very lucky.

00:12:34.200 --> 00:12:42.420

Louise Sidey: I guess like at the moment, what have you found have been, these kind of biggest, the biggest kind of challenges and just kind of working from home?

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Gabrielle Macbeth: [pause] I think it's feeling. I think communication is as far as communication with a team is, is more difficult, and we have lots of structures in place that mean that we are you know communicating through team meetings. But things that I know would have been picked up because I was overhearing them in the office or someone will just like look over the desk and go oh Gab can I chat to you about this thing for 10 minutes that's not happening.

00:13:20.580 --> 00:13:21.420

Louise Sidey: And yeah.

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Gabrielle Macbeth: These little subtle, it's informational communication. Can lead to misunderstandings or think frustration, so I think that's, for me, that's what is really missing.

00:13:36.630 --> 00:13:37.710

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:13:39.150 --> 00:13:47.010

Gabrielle Macbeth: And with the job you know, a job when I maybe when you're working with, with people, and I think that some of it is quite hard to quantify sometimes. I’ve been talking to Ren about like how you've got to kind of really follow your intuition, when you work with people and sometimes you just get a sense that something isn't quite right and then you can chat to volunteer or touch base and be like it's not working is it just me? And I think it's just these things are really, really subtle and there's been occasions when I, I assume that a colleague was checking with a volunteer regularly and they assumed I was doing it and then actually no one's doing it, whereas that would have totally been picked up has we been in the office environment because I would have seen these people.

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Louise Sidey: Yeah, of course, and just like I guess everyday interactions and connections you kind of just don't even though your job is still so based around that but it's just even kind of I guess the other staff members em I guess I’m how much like what, what is it that you are missing about the library, or what is the thing that you miss most really about the library at this time?

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Gabrielle Macbeth: Um yeah, the just amazing vibe that there is, like all the time, but I think, especially when we've had a big event or like a big project or you know there's just-there's this is wonderful like energy em that comes from being a team that's done something amazing that we're super proud of and, and I think there's still is that, that pride and like [pause] I think real respect for what everyone's doing but it's just not quite the same as being in the same in the same room em…

Louise Sidey: yeah

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Gabrielle Macbeth: I think I just miss the building; I mean the building I miss being surrounded by the books, you know it's this, but the space is really conducive to the sharing of ideas and chats and you just meet. Like incredible people, whereas I think with zoom you can there's a- it's a bit more deliberate isn't that you meet a person who you've invited to a meeting, and whereas this is the serendipity about being in the library that you don't know who’s gonna come in or what random conversation you're going to end up having with a visitor or volunteer or colleague I suppose.

00:16:15.090 --> 00:16:18.360

Louise Sidey: I think that's lovely there is kind of just this place that attracts so many different people from different walks of life it's so great. Have you found that there's been because obviously you're the volunteer kind of coordinator and do you think there's been like an uptake and people at the moment, and like wanting to join and become volunteers, or how have you found it?

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Gabrielle Macbeth: It’s been- I think has been less applications recently than we would normally expect. Em, we've not we've not promoted it, I think we so that's that may be, as part of it, and I think people have seen that we were shut. So maybe not wanting to apply. And, and not knowing that actually we've been about we've, we've been recruiting volunteers who are supporting us remotely. So I think, maybe, maybe if they’d known if we if we were, if we put it out there, we are recruiting volunteers and they can support us remotely then we probably would get more applications. And no but it’s hard to tell. But I think we have we've been quite tentative I think as much as we are able to support some volunteers remotely it's not ideal, and especially for the volunteer who used, I mean depending on this, you know depending on their support needs but then we have to be really careful not to, to be able to become support volunteers in a way that. That gives us kind of peace of mind and it's good for them, em I suppose that's one of the other challenges, you know we're talking about not. Not having that communication with the same volunteers, but I can tell if someone comes in and they're like something's not right and I can be is everything Okay, and have that chat was I’m just not picking up that obviously because I’m not seeing volunteers every week so it's an even by email it’s not quite the same.

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Louise Sidey: No it definitely isn't.

00:18:10.860 --> 00:18:22.560

Gabrielle Macbeth: So you know if one of the volunteers become really you know, hasn't been well and, and I didn't I didn't see that coming until she was being hospitalized you know and that was, yeah it kind of just, just happened. Whereas I know I would have picked that up if she'd been coming in every week. [pause] Yes, so that's just kind of about you know, taking care around recruiting volunteers to work remotely yeah.

00:18:46.740 --> 00:19:00.180

Louise Sidey: Yeah and I guess it’s the kind of barrier as well, instead of like and kind of getting to meet you all, and having that kind of initial kind of you know it's a lot harder, I think, joining a team which I guess even kind of Ren has had in some situations. Like being new to the library at this time. But yeah I guess that is a real that's difficult it's difficult to create those bonds at this time.

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Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah absolutely I think a big, big part of what makes volunteering at the library so much fun is feeling part, part of this team and going in and everyone going ‘hi hello, how are you what are you doing’, you know that real sense of being, being part of a team and that's quite difficult to recreate on online I think we've managed to do it really well with volunteers who us because they've already got that background knowledge, but I think if you're new it's a bit more difficult, but, but we have yeah we have repeated about four or five volunteers in the last six months, and they are, they are involved, and they are continuing to continu- to volunteer so something's going well. In fact it might be interesting to speak to someone who has been recruited recently.

00:19:57.600 --> 00:19:59.220

Louise Sidey: Yeah just like.

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Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah from your point of view, in terms of interviewing volunteers.

00:20:03.390 --> 00:20:12.210

Louise Sidey: Yeah definitely and, and because, did you get when the library like reopened in September did you manage to get some of the volunteers in then?

00:20:12.270 --> 00:20:13.950

Gabrielle Macbeth: yeah, em.

00:20:14.100 --> 00:20:14.700

Louise Sidey: That's good.

00:20:14.790 --> 00:20:19.560

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah it was great I think about maybe a dozen volunteers em, came, they started coming back every, every, week. Maybe a bit more actually yeah um. And just yet couldn't wait to kind of get back in. I don’t have a clue anyone if else has mentioned our guiding principles and off our phase return plan?

Louise Sidey: No

Gabrielle Macbeth: You know the guiding principles we, we, pulled together, I think, in July, when we were kind of starting to think about reopening. Em, and they join our values to I guess to kind of set out, set out, our principles in terms of reading the library and acknowledging that volunteers and staff might have different feelings about returning or like on a practical level, might be able to return or might not be able to return and. I think just being really clear that this was that it was up to individuals and that we completely trusted individuals to make the decision that was right for them. Em so, and that was something that was important to me, good about it as like we're not expecting you to come back in September, you know you should only feel it do so if you if you feel really comfortable doing it. And that we would, do everything we could to make sure that those volunteering from home or working from home didn't feel cut off from those who were back in the library and that we were mindful of the different pressures put on different people.

00:22:04.320 --> 00:22:04.680

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:22:07.440 --> 00:22:13.500

Louise Sidey: How did you try and like combat than that, then, did you kind of still do like almost like online meetups and stuff?

00:22:13.530 --> 00:22:15.210

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah, yeah.

00:22:15.270 --> 00:22:22.860

Gabrielle Macbeth: Try to keep that going yeah definitely did keep that going to do a mix of a mix things I did feel that my focus in certainly like August/ September was very much about the practicalities of getting back in the building and I could just sense my attention you know being pulled away from all the digital stuff.

Louise Sidey: yeah.

00:22:40.260 --> 00:22:50.970

Gabrielle Macbeth: And that's a lesson for the for the future, because we're all definitely committed to keep doing digital stuff beyond lockdown beyond the uncovered and but there's something quite natural about when your own head spaces in the building that the kind of rest, yeah is is less in focus. And also it's a capacity thing as well you know, being in the building em, I you know, in a typical week like before It is like 45 or 50 volunteers in every week. Like that's like a lot of my just you know attention and time and, and rightly so, but I know I have a lot less control of my time when I’m in the building compared to when I’m working at home and I’m like I have a meeting at two, and you know nothing's gonna interrupt me and, and like yeah, my time out with meetings it's time that I can crack on with stuff.

00:23:39.960 --> 00:23:45.630

Louise Sidey: Yeah do you think, in that sense, maybe that you felt more productive even like working from home, then you would usually?

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Gabrielle Macbeth: There’s definitely been like, there’s definitely nice, nice things to it. And you're not being, not being interrupted for travel expenses and, and stuff like that and, like, I mean I hate myself for saying this because it's totally my job, and like I want to be available for volunteers and I think it's really important that no one to feel bad for interrupting me so. And yeah this is off the record. [laughter] Yeah, yeah is really nice so just. Just no curveballs or anything that can get in the way.

Louise Sidey: Of course

Gabrielle Macbeth: I don’t know if I’m not more productive it’s just different isn't it because I do think there's, there's value to all those interruptions there's value to all that contact.

00:24:34.560 --> 00:24:40.200

Gabrielle Macbeth: And, and it comes back to what we were saying about communication and checking in with people and knowing how they're doing. And that takes time. And so I think it's important, but I think in the day you're not you don't think I’ve done ‘XXX all of this stuff’ and sometimes I do forget the days can completely evaporate when we're in the building, when I’m like what have I done, when actually I’ve been supporting you know 10 people in different ways.

Louise Sidey: Yeah it's amazing how I think often like how are we going to return to normality, like how am I actually going to be able to fit everything in because, when you say desk you can just kind of maximize that time and is, just like you getting on with things. And then I’m like how did I do this before?

00:25:19.560 --> 00:25:23.490

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah I know I’m going, there are things that I just will not be able to, to do. I can't have the same amount of meetings, as I have at the moment and be and be available for volunteers.

00:25:32.790 --> 00:25:39.000

Louise Sidey: Yeah I guess how do you think like your work, how do you think it's going to change them you're saying it's going to be maybe more digital like? How do you foresee see things changing when we kind of return to a little bit more of normality and then the library opens again?

00:25:52.050 --> 00:25:52.740

Gabrielle Macbeth: I think. Yeah, so I think we've, we've, learned lots about remote volunteering and um and actually that we can involve volunteers who have never been to the library so like I said, these you know, five or six volunteers who have joined the team in the last few months, and, who are engaged em... So I think that's given me confidence that it’s something that we can do, and also shown how beneficial it can be. So, for example, one of on new recruits has multiple disabilities, which means that she you know she can travel, but the reality is that some mornings, she wakes up and she's like you know getting out of bed is an effort so forth, getting dressed getting into the car kind of the library is and yes, is unthinkable. And now she's able to kind of yeah volunteer on a regular basis.

00:26:50.130 --> 00:26:51.660

Louise Sidey: Yeah, that's amazing.

00:26:51.750 --> 00:26:52.470

Gabrielle Macbeth: That is amazing, you’re right.

00:26:53.220 --> 00:26:53.910

Louise Sidey: Yeah and yet, you can have people from anywhere volunteering that sense really, can’t you.

00:27:00.000 --> 00:27:11.280

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah she’s based in the north of England, so I think there's this like our this the kind of the, the possibilities and I think we knew that was benefits, but I think it's just always yeah just be like so focused on like what was happening to spend time thinking about these things so there's loads of learning that we can that we can take you know, take forwards um I think another thing about zoom which is great it's made me think I don't have to drag volunteers in for meetings. They could pop on to zoom. And lot of volunteers are coming from like regular you know for their regular half day whatever, then I might say or do you want to pop in for having you know we are having the team meeting or the meeting and it might not mean that all the volunteers is going to come to those, but I think that's that makes it a lot easier than having to travel half an hour an hour and turn a one hour meeting into like a half day thing. So, I wonder if it will enable us to involve volunteers in, yeah more volunteers in things like that, just because it's gonna make it easier for them to join.

00:28:15.540 --> 00:28:15.900

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:28:16.140 --> 00:28:22.230

Gabrielle Macbeth: Although I’m yet to figure out how you do a zoom when there's like four people in a room and then other people zooming in but that's possible.

00:28:24.930 --> 00:28:26.160

Louise Sidey: Yeah, it probably is [laughter]. We’re still discovering zoom.

00:28:29.760 --> 00:28:32.700

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah I know and zoom in a different context as well.

00:28:36.750 --> 00:28:48.090

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah I think like volunteers have taken to social media and blogging and the volunteers were doing that, before but there's been more of it, and I think we need to keep doing that were kind of always harping on about how much we want the digital in GWL to represent all the stuff that's happening on the ground and sometimes it is a bit of a mismatch. Like, there’s loads of exciting things happening in the library, but unless you're in the library might not be aware of them.

00:29:10.020 --> 00:29:11.370

Louise Sidey: And trying to get it out there.

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah

00:29:15.480 --> 00:29:18.660

Gabrielle Macbeth: And yeah and I suppose it's also about showcasing just how involved volunteers are on everything that we do, because that might not necessarily be apparent either unless you are a volunteer or in the library. So I see the website is that yeah kind of conduit for that have. You know if we think of the organization as being the multitude of different perspectives and voices at the website should also be there and I think it is but yeah keep keep, making that happen.

00:29:52.470 --> 00:29:52.890

Louise Sidey: yeah. I guess I’m like other kind of roles like said, well, what if you were in the library, what kind of roles with volunteers do if they were kind of a bit more hands on?

00:30:05.790 --> 00:30:08.850

Gabrielle Macbeth: Um front of house is a big thing, so.

00:30:10.440 --> 00:30:10.860

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:30:11.160 --> 00:30:20.790

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah meeting and greeting visitors and showing them around and issuing books or and stuff and yeah there's some really hands on roles which have not been able to recreate during lockdown so and there’s this volunteer who comes in and they will they classify all the books and catalogue them, and so we basically working with the materials and that's the same with the collections volunteers as well, who are getting boxes of archive material from the stores and sorting through it em and, and that yeah there's a volunteer who doesn't, isn't very confident with IT, but she, she labels all the books, so when they go onto the shelves, yeah showing the shelf mark. There’s a volunteer that does data entry, and I think that kind of safety reasons, with not, there’s limited our access to our database remotely. And, but also she's she loves coming in, and she loves the social aspect, and she likes getting on the bus and like it's her Wednesday afternoon, the thing actually doing data entry on her own in her house. It's not going to be. You know her reasons volunteering and not because she really wants to data entry.

00:31:27.780 --> 00:31:29.130

Louise Sidey: Yeah, yeah.

[laughter]

00:31:29.220 --> 00:31:33.360

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah, so what else is really hands on. I’ve forgotten what volunteers do.

00:31:41.730 --> 00:31:45.090

Louise Sidey: [laughter] It’s okay. I mean it's been nearly a year since the normal functioning of things.

Gabrielle Macbeth: I know! I think that's kind of the main his main things like yeah, I think, working with the materials work with the collections is a really big the real biggy in terms of hands-on stuff that's not been able to happen yeah.

00:31:58.080 --> 00:31:59.610

Louise Sidey: And I guess it kind of shows a lot, like the library that's like one way of accessing it for these women but also kind of just provides them with that kind of the social aspect as well, it isn't just about like volunteering for women's library. Obviously it's all about kind of giving to the library, but yeah they're all so I guess we keep getting this kind of theme of getting back there's it's, it’s cyclical and kind of like what you give in your so kind of get back from the library, which is actually really lovely em.

00:32:25.500 --> 00:32:29.070

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah I think it's really important, I mean I don't think any volunteers you know in in any organization just give stuff out of just purely because it out of the kindness of their heart, I mean no disrespect I just think you've got to get something in return, because why else would you give several hours of your week.

00:32:45.660 --> 00:32:46.020

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:32:46.050 --> 00:32:47.730

Gabrielle Macbeth: You know if you’re not enjoying it or getting something from it.

00:32:49.470 --> 00:32:59.340

Louise Sidey: Yeah definitely oh it's so great, em, and I guess yeah so it's just kind of what we've now got then we're looking forward and, hopefully, things will start to ease in the next few months and have you kind of have you been thinking kind of forward about how you guys are going to start shifting that and or is that not really…

00:33:09.810 --> 00:33:10.470

Gabrielle Macbeth: yeah.

00:33:10.620 --> 00:33:11.610

Louise Sidey: -on the agenda yet.

00:33:14.400 --> 00:33:16.740

Gabrielle Macbeth: Um, I think there's no there's no firm plans.

00:33:17.970 --> 00:33:25.740

Gabrielle Macbeth: We will see what is announced this week, they might be a bit more about when libraries will be allowed to reopen. We did a lot of work last summer preparing for this I kind of feel confident that it's kind of just reactivating that. So I mean what I did yeah and kind of July and August was communicated volunteers like this is when we're planning on reopening and. Being really you know getting a sense of who wants to come back and who didn't and again kind of reiterating that, this is entirely your choice. Em, and then kind of getting a sense of what he wants to come back okay, how can they be how can they be involved, because some of the roles that volunteers were doing might not be available depending on em what staff are in so, you know that's the one that had two different impacts and also what we're doing. So volunteers involved with events it's just not going to happen for for a while em. So just yeah rejigging, rejigging all of that. We had, we can, we'll probably do this again, but we had a kind of a couple of briefings sessions as well, so the volunteers could raise any concerns and ask any questions about. Whatever they wanted best with the practicalities of safety, and I think again we've wrangled through a lot of those things now. So my head was really couldn't cope with the kind of, the micro stuff that in planning to come back like how you know what if I use this pen and then, what do I do with it, and I was just like I can't I can't think about every single pen in the library [laughter]. And yeah, I don't know why I think it's just the really personal thing, but it is really. I really, really struggle, I think it was stuff that you've had never had to think about. Like sharing laptops or sharing or suddenly, aw you can't touch that, what are we going to do with that and yeah just yeah. I found it really such a struggle, but it's okay now we've dealt with that. Hopefully, in my work-

Louise Sidey: Yeah

Gabrielle Macbeth: I just found it so exhausting.

00:35:35.490 --> 00:35:39.420

Louise Sidey: No but it is, it changes the way that everyone interacts. Especially if you're either like a tactile person or even just it's just having to be aware, always of people’s safety but also just how, how you're acting and making sure you’re being safe and that just adds another layer to the job and the stress really.

00:35:54.870 --> 00:36:05.280

Gabrielle Macbeth: It is and you're right and it's stuff that yeah otherwise you won't have to think about and but also just was like yeah just like every single question that could have been asked was. If I get an archive box out on the Monday and I use that particular piece of paper like how we make sure that it's quarantined and I don't know. And, also felt like it's fine [laughter] which is not the approach to have, and fortunately I’m not in charge of safety.

00:36:25.740 --> 00:36:27.660

Gabrielle Macbeth: And yeah yeah, yeah I think I think we've kind of it's going to be much easier, this time around. But I’m also you know it's a dynamic situation so it's also like well, I suppose that's where the unknowns are and it’s been like this the whole time like one week one thing and then some new news comes out and a new strains and the vaccine isn't effective or all this new information, so it feels like the goalposts like constantly changing.

00:36:57.270 --> 00:36:58.440

Louise Sidey: Moving, yeah.

00:36:58.500 --> 00:37:05.970

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah um but again I’m confident that having dealt with it for last 12 months, we will be able to do with it, and in the future.

00:37:07.350 --> 00:37:12.150

Louise Sidey: yeah, of course, and I guess like you've been with the library since 2011.

00:37:12.390 --> 00:37:13.620

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah, yeah.

00:37:14.010 --> 00:37:18.690

Louise Sidey: Yeah and you must have seen, I guess, like through that time is just so many changes and, I guess it’s just-

00:37:19.020 --> 00:37:20.160

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah

00:37:20.880 --> 00:37:24.120

Louise Sidey: Another, another struggle that the libraries kind of having to face.

00:37:26.310 --> 00:37:27.840

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah it's true in another thing.

00:37:29.670 --> 00:37:34.770

Gabrielle Macbeth: You look back and go oh that was that was a tough time and then and then, but now you kind of don't think much of it, and I suppose we'll be able to be the same with. With this I’m I’m so I’m just so proud of the library for dealing with the pandemic in the way that it has and em, I mean a network of other volunteer organizers in other heritage arts organizations and some of them have not had any volunteering program for 12 months and because they're not allowed to do zoom calls.

00:38:06.360 --> 00:38:15.150

Gabrielle Macbeth: And you know you just like we're so we're so nimble was such an adaptable organization and we're super creative and innovative and up for trying stuff and, and also, I think our focus on like on I suppose, reflection and learning means that like we think, well let's just try this thing, let's try digital events and, and figure it out and not scared to to grab the proverbial ball em.

Louise Sidey: Yeah

00:38:38.820 --> 00:38:40.290

Gabrielle Macbeth: So yeah I just, I am yeah I think there are other volunteer organizers another organization that must be really frustrated and who have felt quite limited in what they've been able to do. Whereas I feel like actually, and it's been horrific for not for me personally, but you know as for for so many people and it's been difficult, but it's actually been an opportunity to try new things and learn and, and I guess maybe that's you know when we think back about the time I’ve been involved the library and, and time before that, and yet there's been like. You know, difficult times, or tons of really, really busy or you know, whatever but as an organization that learns from that, it's like those challenges have been turned into opportunities. So they don't unlike these awful moments in our history it's like they will kind of be pivotal or opportunities to to kind of grow. In that sense this is another one of these moments of growth and development.

00:39:54.030 --> 00:40:00.360

Louise Sidey: Yeah I think that's such a lovely way to think about it, you know, because it is one of these things that the pandemic will be a space and time that is so surreal for all of us will be able to look back on in the library to be like well you know we took control of that and we managed it and we overcame it, it is a really kind of nice sentiment, to think about really.

00:40:11.970 --> 00:40:12.660

Gabrielle Macbeth: Mm

00:40:14.580 --> 00:40:31.920

Louise Sidey: I wonder if it's because the library is so kind of people focused in some ways, that is very much a lot of the things that library does, which is kind of unique from other institutions, is that you are working constantly with people, that brings it kind of that life.

00:40:33.030 --> 00:40:34.860

Louise Sidey: That vitality, even in this time.

00:40:36.240 --> 00:40:43.230

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah I think so um yeah that's a really nice observation. I think, so I suppose we put people, people are like our focus and our priority and and you know our values are about like you know empowering, empowering women and valuing women and so yeah if that's like the focus then the kind of the rest follows. I also think it's, I mean, it must be such a curse to be in a massive organization that's like I don't know what the kind of metaphor of you know the ship. Trying to move the ship around, and whereas we're like a little cute yacht.

[laughter]

00:41:22.410 --> 00:41:23.220

Louise Sidey: Like whipping on the seas.

00:41:25.320 --> 00:41:26.520

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah like kind of not, not burdened by by I think also very top down like decision making, where we you don't have autonomy to decide, and so you know Ren and I could be like right, but then try this new thing and like we do it em.

00:41:43.290 --> 00:41:43.650

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:41:43.860 --> 00:41:45.390

Gabrielle Macbeth: And that's kind of mirrored across the team.

00:41:47.820 --> 00:41:49.470

Louise Sidey: I think that’s amazing, it’s really, really great.

00:41:52.350 --> 00:41:58.380

Gabrielle Macbeth: And I think being creative and I don't count myself as particularly creative some of my colleagues just yeah just, don't know just kind of thing so just like thinking outside the box isn't that creative doesn't necessarily have to mean that you're creating art, but just like having ideas and seeing solutions to problems rather than just seeing the problem.

00:42:14.760 --> 00:42:15.180

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:42:16.860 --> 00:42:24.840

Louise Sidey: So great and I guess, in light of that, what do you think is the thing that you're most looking forward to like returning to the library?

00:42:26.190 --> 00:42:26.490

Gabrielle Macbeth: HUGGING! [laughter] I am quite a huggy, I am quite a huggy person although I am sure not all my colleagues will be doing that. I think sharing, sharing, I mean I think was talking about this like sharing events or sharing moments where we've done something as a team and being together in a physical, physical way, not necessarily hugging yeah but you know, I think, being in the space, that is lovely and it's and I always feel like I’m kind of going to my second home when I you know when I go to the library it's, it's really it's important lots of lots of people in different kind of ways. To being together in that space sharing food, you know sharing yeah sharing tea and cake and having lots of people in like a big events you know, like the such a buzz in the place when you know we've got a big event and there's lots of people and there’s lots of chatter and laughter and um, yeah just feel like it's important and it's valued and it brings people to, it brings people together. Yeah that's what I’m missing about just generally.

00:43:43.770 --> 00:43:44.160

Louise Sidey: Yeah.

00:43:44.220 --> 00:43:45.900

Gabrielle Macbeth: You know, I just want to be with people.

00:43:49.740 --> 00:43:53.070

Louise Sidey: And I guess that's why you probably so good at your role as a volunteer coordinator.

00:43:53.070 --> 00:43:53.670

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah I do like

00:43:53.970 --> 00:43:56.100

Louise Sidey: Because it is just people.

[laughter]

00:43:58.560 --> 00:44:02.100

Gabrielle Macbeth: Yeah I acknowledge that is personal to me, and that not everyone wants to be with tons of people

00:44:04.440 --> 00:44:05.250

Gabrielle Macbeth: But yeah yeah, I certainly do.

00:44:09.360 --> 00:44:12.360

Louise Sidey: Oh well, thank you so much Gabrielle for speaking to me.

00:44:13.410 --> 00:44:14.490

Gabrielle Macbeth: Oh my pleasure, I hope that's useful em.

00:44:14.760 --> 00:44:16.350

Louise Sidey: Oh no it's it. Honestly there's some things you were saying I was like that's amazing.

00:44:21.660 --> 00:44:28.050

Gabrielle Macbeth: Aw that's nice to hear and I’m really looking forward to hearing other yeah colleagues perspectives as well because we’re all different we're all doing different things and, and, all grappling with different stuff as well you know either personally or professionally and yeah.

[Inaudible]

**-End of Interview-**