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•When you arrived at Lake Forest College, did you know you wanted to major in History? If yes, why? If not, what were your plans when you arrived?

No, I was considering studying a combination of Biology and Politics.

•If you did not originally intend to major in History, what changed your mind?

I took a few classes that changed my thinking, including one with Michael Ebner. I always enjoyed social studies and history courses in high school but I did not think of it as a career. I took a Sophomore Seminar with Dan LeMahieu that was the first truly engaging class I had at LFC. The students discussed theories and concepts that we did not have in the sciences, at least not in my first- and second-year science courses.

•What was your area of focus in History?

My main focus was American history, but I took classes in all areas of history. I remember classes in Modern England and Russia as well as all aspects of American History. One of my favorite classes was on American Cities with Michael Ebner. I enjoyed, and still enjoy, learning and understanding social history. While others prefer to study every battle in the Civil War, I would prefer to understand all of the factors that led us to war and what happened to the country after the war.

•Did you write a senior thesis? If so, describe that experience. If not, is there a particular piece of work for a course that you remember as particularly challenging or rewarding?

I worked on an independent project with Steve Rosswurm my senior year that gave me an opportunity to work at the Chicago Historical Society. There my research took me to an interesting time in history. I was able to use a variety of interesting primary sources. I loved digging into the microfilm to read letters and flyers about the women who formed the backbone of the immigrant experience in the Chicago neighborhoods. Jane Addams is the most well-known, but I studied other women, such as Florence Kelley. Ms. Kelley spent time in Chicago in the 1890s and was a critical part of movement for workers' rights. (On a personal note, looking back I find it a bit ironic that my work focused on these women and laborers when George M. Pullman is part of my family tree!) Reading about the strong women who worked outside the home to precipitate real change in the way women were/are viewed in our country was critical to my thinking as an independent woman.

•If you have attended graduate or professional school, talk about how your History major informed the application process and prepared you for your advanced study.

After college, I had plans to attend a graduate program in history. However, financially that was not possible. I ended up moving to Boston with a friend. Soon after the move, I enrolled in Simmons Graduate School of Library and Information Science. I was working full-time for an insurance company but Simmons offered many evening classes. The

program offered an archival and preservation concentration that fit my desire to work with primary source material. However, I quickly found that a good deal of archival work, at least in the early 1990s, focused on preservation with access somewhat of an afterthought.

I completed my degree at Simmons with wonderful research skills. I took a position in the corporate library at the same insurance company. Many of the things we worked on used a combination of the desire to learn that I gained from Lake Forest, the tools I gained working on my historical projects, and the new online researching skills I acquired at Simmons. My BA in History provided me with the skills and interest I needed to create my own career. My work with the Lake Forest faculty, including Dan LeMahieu, Michael Ebner, and Steve Rosswurm, gave me the confidence to try new things, occasionally fail, and in many ways provided me with the love of information. My career path took me from the library at the insurance company to the research arm of a major management consulting organization to my current role at Director of Library Services at a liberal arts college.

• Many of our students worry about getting a job after college, and many are hesitant about traditional Liberal Arts majors (particularly in the Humanities) because they are unsure how they can translate to job skills. What advice do you have for these students? As you have searched for jobs over your career, how have you discussed what skills you bring to future employers, whether in interviews, application letters, or other contexts? Have you found that employers value the skills you acquired in your History major?

I think that the most difficult part of any educational experience is how to explain that experience to someone on a resume or in an interview. If you are a participant in a liberal arts program, the skills you gain may seem difficult to put into words that sell you to an employer. When I think about all of the things I learned in college, how to get a job was not really one of them. Personally, it took me a bit of time to find the right role and the right fit for my talents. Perhaps what took the most time was figuring out what my strengths are and how best to leverage those strengths. My advice is to create a list for yourself: focus on what you gained during your college experience. In my own case, I had to realize that my skills are very people-oriented. I enjoyed history because it is about people. But I also learned how to be a skilled researcher. That is not just something you need in college but in life and it can be useful in any role. My history degree helped me in my first real job, even though it might not seem directly related to insurance. I was promoted almost annually, which I attribute to my ability to learn quickly, solve problems and never lose sight of the forest because of the trees. The ability to comprehend the big picture while focusing on the details is critical to many different careers. I think I gained that skill as a history major at Lake Forest.

• How do the skills and knowledge you acquired in your History major help you in your day-to-day work?

As the Director of Library Services at Kenyon College, I believe there are many skills that I gained during my history classes that are valuable and useful to my daily work. First, working in a college library often feels like I am back at Lake Forest...but my desk is not my favorite study carrel as that did not have wireless access!

Right now some of my work involves supporting digital scholarship projects, something I could only dream about in the 1980s. I spent time working on collaborative projects with my Five Colleges of Ohio colleagues, with the librarians here at Kenyon, and of course with members of the faculty. Being able to talk with the faculty one-on-one is critical to our work together. The open communication I had with similar faculty at Lake Forest helped ease the way for this transition.

Much of my time is spent in problem solving and project management. I manage a team of 18 people and another 50 or so part-time student workers. I know that I gained these skills in college too. I also rely on my research and reference skills a great deal. (Of course, as a librarian, I am required to pull out my footnoting and citation skills on demand too!)

•Is there anything else you would like to add?

I think your college experience should expand your mind beyond the goal of a paycheck. I have a wonderful, valuable, complex position as a library director. I doubt my career path would have been nearly as interesting without my history experience at Lake Forest College.