

Interview length: 50:48

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Interviewer: Javier Garibay

Interviewee: Walter Walker

Transcribed by: Jessica Thorlakson

Javier: My name is Javier Garibay and I use, um, he, him, his pronouns. This interview is taking place on April, 12th 2018. I am one of the American Library Association Emerging Leaders for 2018. My group is working on a project with the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Roundtable of the American Library Association, the GLBTRT, to help celebrate the Round Table's upcoming 50's anniversary in 2020. This work began in 2017 with another group of Emerging Leaders who started to gather GLBTRT historical ephemera and created an archive, which will be shared through the ALA GLBTRT webpage when it is complete. This year we are speaking with individuals who've been involved with the GLBTRT past, as well as present, and collecting their stories to create a digital archive of oral histories. We will also establish a toolkit so people can continue to contribute oral histories in an ongoing basis. Thank you for sharing your stories with us and the ALA community.

Um, so to begin. What is your name, and what pronouns would you like us to use for you?

Walt: Well, um, my name is Walter Walker, though I also often go by the name Cat, which has been my nickname for a long time and my pronouns are he and him.

Javier: K. Uh, could you please tell me about your background and what interested you in librarianship? How long have you been in the profession?

Walt: Hm. Ok well. I've been a librarian for... 28 years, and before I became a librarian I was a library assistant for about...for I guess about four years, and before I decided to go to library school, which I did at UCLA. And before I started working at Cal State, LA's library, as an assistant, I had never thought of working in a library at all [laughs].

Javier: Umhm

Walt: It was just kind of.. an accident that I got a job there because they were looking for someone who had some computer experience, at the time, because they were starting to automate and most of the people working, and this is in the cataloging department that I started working in, and most people there didn't really know anything about computers. And, I had actually gone back to college before that and started taking classes at a community college and then at Cal State, LA, in computer programming. This is after I had already gotten a Bachelor's in Psychology, um, because, you know, at that time a lot of people were learning about computers, so I thought, "oh I'll try that." So I was taking computer programming classes and

then I kind of realized I was running out of money and needed to get a job, and at that time Cal State LA was hiring a Cataloging assistant and they wanted someone who had computer experience, and so I interviewed for the job and I was given the job, even though I had never worked in a library before and didn't really know much of anything about how libraries worked. Except, you know, that I had studied in them during school, you know, college, and that sort of thing. But that was pretty much it. [I] didn't even remember, like, interacting with librarians much at all, like when I was in college or anything.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Um, So I worked in the library and while I was working there, in the Cataloging department, I realized that...that I liked working there and that it was actually a good fit for me, and i got to know some of the librarians who were working there then and they kind of mentored me. You know, like a couple of them, in particular, told me they thought I would make a good librarian and encouraged me to go to library school.

And, at first I was kind of like, "I don't think so," because I was still thinking that I was going to become a computer programmer, rather than a librarian,

Javier: Umhm

Walt: and, but I was finding that I really couldn't get a computer programming job at the time because enough people had gotten computer programming degrees and everything at that time that it was becoming harder, more difficult to find those kind of jobs, than it had been just a few years previously. I was like a little too late. So, I decided, "oh, then I'll, I'm going to become a librarian. What do I have to do to become a librarian?" And they said, "well you have to go to librarian school, get another master's, you know, get a masters" and, I thought, "ok, that sounds good." And actually one of the librarian's who mentored me when I was an assistant at Cal State LA was gay, and, you know, that was one of the things that helped me feel like "oh, this is something I can do too"

Javier: Umhm

Walt: because, you know, he was a librarian and he was out and everything seemed pretty fine for him. Um, that was during a time when, you know, it's like, a lot of professions and things that people were generally very closeted and not out, so, you know, I was always kind of aware of like, well, what could I do where it's not going to be a big deal, me being gay. It's not going to, I wouldn't get, like, discriminated against and that sort of thing. And it seemed like libraries were easier places to be

Javier: Umhm

Walt: openly gay, compared to other places, workplaces. [6:25]

Um, so then I went to library school at UCLA. [I] really enjoyed being there, and while I was at library school at UCLA, that's when I first heard about the GLBT Round Table. And, especially because somebody I got to be friends with there, who was actually a PhD student, at the time, so he was a little older, he was involved in the GLBTRT. And, well, actually it wasn't called that then.. it was..it was the Gay Task Force [laughs].

Javier: [laughs]

Walt: It's changed its name... a few times over the years, and, it was Dee Michel and I guess he had been very involved in it a few years previously and was still a member at the time when I knew him, when I talked to him. So, he said, that you know, as a librarian that I should be a member of that, so I kept that in mind.

So, um, when I became a librarian, I first worked at the Huntington library in San Marino, and, um, I joined GL...the Task Force then as a member, but when I was working at the Huntington, they really didn't give any, like, travel support to go to conference and that sort of thing, so I didn't really get involved in the association yet. It wasn't until I became a librarian here at LMU, um, that they did encourage us to go to conferences, and did give us travel support to do that. Umm, and so i decided to take advantage of that, cuz, unlike several of my colleagues at the time, who didn't like to travel, and didn't like to get involved in associations and go to conferences, I thought that sounded like a cool thing to do. So I started going regularly to American Library Association conferences, and of course, when I went to the conferences, there was always Round Table, no, Task Force, and then Round Table events. So I would go to those, and I ended up getting involved with GLBTRT that way, and eventually got on committees, for GLBTRT as well as other ALA, um, committees.
So I think I've gone through

Javier: [laughs]

Walt: like a bit of it.

Javier: Umhm. You did answer, you kind of led into, the following one that I had here of what your involvement in ALA...you did mention that, that you were part of some other committees in ALA as well, right?

Walt: Umhm

Javier: Which other ones have you been involved in?

Walt: Well mostly Cataloging related committees, since, [I was a] Cataloging Librarian.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Um, so I was on..

Javier: what the...

[the lights turned off in the room]

Walt: [laughs]

Javier: That was weird

Walt: Yeah, I was on the...the, ah, Catalog Form and Function Committee. I also remember that committee, and it was through ALACKS [sp?], which is a technical services, um, division. And, I was on that committee as a member, and then the committee changed to being an interest group,

Javier: Umhm

Walt: because, this is like 12 years ago, 13 years ago, they kind of changed a lot of committees to being interest groups. Um, and so after it changed [to an] interest group, then I became the chair. So I was the chair of that for awhile.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: and also things I did before I became the chair of it, that is, I co-chaired a program that we planned that was in Orlando, I think in 2002 or so. So that was kind of interesting doing that. And then, I still staying involved in that group after I was no longer chair, but then I start becoming more involved with, OLAC, which is the Online Audiovisual Catalogers' group. Which, at that time, was like a separate group from it, totally separate from the ALA, but since then it has sort of become more closely affiliated with the ALA

Javier: Umhm

Walt: but it's still like a separate group, but they always meet at ALA. And I ended up becoming a member of the cataloging policy committee of OLAC and then eventually the chair of the Cataloging policy committee. Um, and I was also on several other Task Forces, um, so I did a lot of work with that. And that was mostly, oh, I'd say, five to ten years ago.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Um

Javier: And then, sort of...

Walt: I went back to being more involved with GLBTRT after that. And so I, I started this Resources Committee, um. I was on the ad hoc committee that figured out, that planned for the Resources Committee, and then I became the first chair of the Resources Committee for a couple years, and contributed a bunch of the resources that are now on the GLBTRT website, through the Resources Committee, um. So that was in the last few years, um. And now there's been a couple other chairs of the committee since I was chair.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: [sighs] What else...um, and now I'm on the....now I'm on the Executive Board, as a Director at large. That happened because...um, they, yeah the board, somebody who was on the board, as secretary, resigned, and so they asked for volunteers to be secretary and I said, "well, I can probably do that," so I sent them my resume for that. And they ended up picking someone else to be secretary, so, this all happened last year, so I like "oh, ok, oh well..." And, then within maybe a couple of months after that, I guess somebody else who was a Director at large on the board resigned,

Javier: Umhm

Walt: so the chair contacted me and said "would you be interested in being the Director at large to fill out this term?" And I said "Ook."

Javier: Umhm

Walt: So, they gave that to me instead, so I filled out the term, so i've been a Director at large for less than a year. I think it was last September or so that I started. And they just had elections and I ran for a term, as a two term as Director at large, and I got elected.

Javier: Yay [laughs] that's great

Walt: Yeah I got a call from ALA headquarters in Chicago yesterday,

Javier: Umhm

Walt: congratulating me on getting elected, because I didn't know yet.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: So I was like "Ohh, ok," because I really didn't know if I'd get it or not. I really felt like...

Javier: Yeah

Walt: Well, probably 50-50 chance because there were six people running for three vacancies. I thought "wellllll ...we'll see"

Javier: Umhm

Walt: And I just saw today, I just saw the vote totals and I came in third, so I just made it.
[laughs]

Javier: [laughs]

Walt: Of the, you know, the three vacancies

Javier: Uh huh

Walt: Unfortunately, I am kind of disappointed though that Peter Hepburn didn't...

Javier: He didn't make it

Walt: He didn't make it.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: He didn't land. He would have been the first openly gay ALA president. And so that would've been a big deal.

Javier: Right

Walt: Oh well.

Javier: Right. Um, what's the most important thing, um, you've learned from being part of the RT?

Walt: [clears throat] What's the most important thing I've learnt, um...hmmmm...I don't know, that, that, there's a lot of, you know, LGBTQ librarians and that we can accomplish a lot working together in an association like ALA. Um, and that we're pretty welcome in ALA.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: And we've, we've kind of progressed a lot over the 20 years or so that I've been involved with the group.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: It's grown. It's gotten a lot bigger. Um, and I think it's, the group is more respected in the association than it was 20 years ago.

Javier: Umhm

[16:06]

Walt: We're kind of not like, a dirty little secret anymore [laughs]. Which is how we were kind of seen when I first got involved, a bit.

Javier: Really? When did you feel like that started changing?

Walt: I'd say... like, in the last... 10-15 years.

Javier: Wow.

Walt: Yes.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Because when I got involved, which was in the '90s

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Um, it was like, the association, the Round Table, which had been a Task Force before, had been around for quite awhile, but within, like, the main part of ALA, it's sort of like, if you said "oh you were part of the... Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the Gay and Lesbian Round Table," people would be like, OH" [laughs] you know?

Javier: Really?

Walt: Yeah it was just...you know

Javier: Umhm

Walt: It just didn't seem very respected. And like the, the, I think that the, uh, the main part of ALA, you know like the council and stuff like that, they sort of never really dealt with LGBT issues at all.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Um, and I think that the LGBT members at the time were probably more afraid of bringing them up too [laughs]

Javier: Right

Walt: But I think that that, in the last several years, it has kind of changed. So that, for one thing, there's a lot of, there's a lot more, LGBT, openly LGBT members, of things like ALA council. And they do bring up LGBT issues and they are more respected and listened to, I think.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Um, it's not perfect. I mean, we still...we still have more battles to be fought and more progress to make

[17:59]

Javier: Right

Walt: I mean, for example, we're still, [clears throat] we still need to make more progress with the gender neutral bathrooms and stuff like that.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: We're a little frustrated I think about that right now. Because it seemed like the association was going to try to do that more, like at the conferences, and now it seems like they're not really do it, [laughs]. So.

Javier: Right. It's not as important of an issue to them

Walt: Riggghht. I mean sometimes, it can, at this point, it can feel like the association is saying like "yeah that's a good idea, and yeah we'll do it," but then they don't actually do it.

Javier: Right.

Walt: You know, that kind of thing?

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Where it's not, they're not denying it, they're not saying they're not going to do stuff, they're just not...

Javier: Umhm

Walt: they don't really think it's a priority, kind of thing.

Javier: Right. Um, are there any other ALA issues that you can think of that are still being faced by the Round Table? 'Cuz you mentioned the gender neutral bathrooms.

Walt: [sighs] Oh yeah, um,...yeah, um, I'd say, just in general trying to... you know, make sure that, that, LGBT, know you, Q, people are, um...still get, you know, service just like everybody else, and that we're all treated equally, both, um, within the organization, you know like LGBTQ librarians and library workers, you know, we don't want to be discriminated against, but also we want our patrons, the people who use our libraries or our services to, um, be served the same way that say, you know, [sigh] heterosexual families with their kids are served.

Javier: Umhm

[20:04]

Walt: Sometimes in the past it seemed like, you know, the organization, as a whole as just, you know, "well, we're really going to concentrate on serving this group of people and the rest of them" well... yeah, and now we're just kind of saying, well, we want to serve everybody.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Um, and then also one of the issues we're dealing with right now is kind of LGBTQ issues internationally.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Even though we are the American Library Association, it does, we do touch on international issues sometimes

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Um, for example, um, right now there is a, there is a international book fair that happens in...in the United Arab Emirates called Sharjah.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: And that's kind of a controversy right now because it turned out that they had, they were having a library conference in conjunction with this annual book fair that was branded with, as the American Library Association conference at Sharjah [laughs]. And this is a very repressive, anti-gay Country [laughs].

Javier: Umhm

Walt: And, you know, the... we felt that it violates a lot of our, kind of ALA values. And that the American Library Association shouldn't be, it's named shouldn't be associated with this. And so

we...[sigh], you know, it did, did a proposal to, for them to remove the American Library Association name from it, and they are going to, it looks like. But, it still seems that they're very reluctant to do more than that, um. Because the American Library Association still wants to have their, like, economic ties to things like that...

Javier: Umhm

Walt: because they make off of it

Javier: Right.

Walt: So they still want the money, you know. And we're, some of us kind of feel like, "well, maybe the money isn't the most important thing."

Javier: Right

Walt: [aughs] But

Javier: People should be the priority

Walt: Riggght. It's....

Javier: Umhm

Walt: You know. I'm sure this, this kind of issue comes up in a lot of other organizations as well. It's sort of like we're do we do by our values, or do we go by, like, what makes us money.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Then, you know, it isn't like the organization has a lot of money right now [laughs].

Javier: Right.

Walt: That's part of the reason why sometimes they're like "well, yes we believe in... in freedom of information and no censorship" and stuff like that, but....

Javier: Umhm

Walt: But, "if someone who is censoring is giving us money, well, we'll still accept their money" [laughs].

Javier: Yeah that's...not good [laughs].

Walt: Yeah so it's..so you know, and it's...yeah.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: And I think, I find it kind of interesting being on the board and we're talking about these issues and it's like.. Well, you know, I... on the one hand you want to fight for, you know, what you believe in,

Javier: Umhm

Walt: But on the other hand, you realise, well, what can we realistically accomplish?

Javier: Right.

Walt: And what's, like, worth fighting for, or what, you know, how do we pick our battles, and that sort of thing. 'Cuz it, I don't know, also feel that it doesn't do a lot of good to just, you know, try to fight for everything and lose.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: It's better to fight and win.

[23:53]

Javier: Right. That's where strategy comes into play.

Walt: Right, Right.

Javier: Umhm. Wow. Um.

Walt: And I'm sure there'll be other things that come up in the future. There always are.

Javier: Right. Uh, speaking to some of the issues that you've seen, or like that you're seeing as important to the Round Table, in the time that you've been involved, um, how have you seen it change, and how have you personally responded to these changes? And also, I mean, to add onto that, I want know how you've seen the organization respond to um, respond to changes too. Or like , as the Round Table, how has it, how have, you had responded to the changes that you've since, because I know that the name has changed, some of the issues that they've been facing has changed. How..what has your response to some of those things been?

Walt: Hmm..Well I've seen it grow, for one thing, um. More people have gotten involved. It's also gotten, become more diverse.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: which is a good thing as well. I think when, when I first became involved in the Round Table, which was, like, 20 years ago, um, at that time it seemed to be, you know, a lot more... you know, predominately, you know, white gay men.

Javier: Umhmm

Walt: Um, there were very few women involved at the time. There were some, but, and we were always trying really hard to be co-gender, but it always seemed like it was, like, maybe 10-20% women [laughs].

Javier: hmm. Yeah

[25:53]

Walt: And so that was kind of a frustration at the time. As like, "how do we get more women involved?" Um, and that's changed a lot [laughs] over time

Javier: Umhm

Walt: because now it seems that a lot of the people are women, so it's, that's, it's gotten much better that way. And it's also become more div... ethnically diverse, ethnically and racially, diverse, as well, but I think that's because the profession has.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Ya know. It's like, I think that that kind of mirrors how, you know, the diversity, or lack of diversity, of the librarian profession, so. It's gotten more diverse. I see more diverse people joining the Round Table.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: I think that's a good thing. Um... yeah. And, and I think we've also expanded the issues that we deal with, especially, partly, because we've gotten more diverse people in the Round Table, so we start looking at, at... kind of more intersectional type of issues.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Dealing with, not just dealing with, LGBT, but also LGBT and other things, you know?

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Yeah. And then I think also, the, like, transgender issues very recently have come, have become much more visible. I think that a long time ago, when I was first involved in the Round

Table, I mean I didn't know anybody in the round table who was trans. I didn't, you know, we didn't really talk about trans issues at all.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Because it...like, we just didn't encounter them [laughs], so. That's not the case anymore. In fact, two, two of my friends that are librarians and stuff are both trans. And it's just..you know, I think having...as you get to know people of different, you know, different kinds, it sort of like, it expands your horizons and you get ta', you start... understanding and dealing with their issues more as well.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: So I think that's the way we try, we've been trying to be with, you know, trans issues lately as well. Though I know there's always a lot more progress we can make.

Javier: Umhm. In a previous conversation you had mentioned that, this is kind of reflective of how the name has changed a lot over time too. Right?

Walt: Umhm.

Javier: Um

Walt: Yeah because it was the Gay Task Force, and then I think it was the Gay and Lesbian Task Force, it was like GTF, and then GLTF, and then...and then it changed from a Task Force to a Round Table, which was a big deal. And that happened I think in like 1999? And that was because you have to have a certain number of members to become a round table

Javier: Umhm

Walt: and be approved by the association. And.. before that we didn't really have quite that many members, enough. And, um,... also we weren't sure that the association would approve of us? [laughs] 'Cuz, like I said, it was, you know, it was a little less adverse affected back then, I think. But, we did get, we did get...it kept growing and we reached the threshold with members. I don't remember how many that was. It might have been like 500 or something like that.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: And so we..and they approved it, us becoming a Round Table, so then we became the GL...the Gay and Lesbian Round Table, which was GLRT, and then we added Bisexual. It was GLB...RT. And then we added trans, the T, and was GLBTRT.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: And I know in the last couple of years [laughs] they've been talking about changing the name again.

Javier: To what?

Walt: They don't know. See that's part of the problem, right. And I think we're going to be dealing with it some sore while I'm on the board, but

Javier: Umhm

Walt: About two years ago, maybe even three years ago, you know several members started saying that, you know, they didn't think the name worked anymore and that we should change it. You know, a lot people say "oh we should change it"; they don't really like the name anymore. But then the problem seems to be that we're not sure what to change it to. It's like, a lot of people, there's more people who want to change it

Javier: Umhm

Walt: than agree on what to change it to? And then there's also a segment of the members who don't want to change it at all, think, like, it's fine the way it is, 'cuz "that's the way I know it, so.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: "why don't you leave it alone." But, there's a lot of members that want to change it. But then some of them, some of them want to, like, add more to it.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: And others want to, just like, make it really brief. Like, just give it like one umbrella term.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: And then even with giving it one umbrella term, it's like what do you use? Some people say "why don't we call it the queer round table" and there's other people who're offended by that. It's like "nooo, you can't do that." And, you know, yeah, then some people say "well, why not call it the rainbow round table" and other people are like "I don't like thaaat."

Javier: Right

Walt: So, it's just. And this is a lot of, a lot of LGBTQ organizations have been dealing with this kind of thing,

Javier: Umhm

[32:01]

Walt: in recent years. And, I mean,

Javier: Umhm

Walt: To certain extent, I end up feeling like "I don't care what they call it" [laughs] it's like,

Javier: Right

Walt: it's not that important to me.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: you know?

Javier: Yeah.

[32:13]

Walt: So I'll see, like, the different choices, like "oh we could call it this, or this, or this or this" i'm like, "i don't care."

Javier: [laughs] right. Wow. This, I'll be interested to hear how that conversation turns out. I'm sure it's going to have to be a conversation with everybody, as part of the round table.

Walt: They kind of have done it already. They ended it, but it was inconclusive.

Javier: Oh, really

Walt: Yeah. They have, like I guess a couple years ago, they did a survey

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Numbers, and, like I said, it's just like, there wasn't a consensus about anything.

Javier: Right. So it just stays the same

Walt: Well, they, what they did is they said, "well, ok we won't change it yet"

Javier: Umhmmm

Walt: So, we'll have to talk about it some more.

Javier: Right

Walt: Soo I think they just kind of like, let it go for a year or so, but they're planning that, like in the coming year, they're to talk about it again,

Javier: Umhm

Walt: probably do another survey, see if people have changed their minds. You know, that kind of thing.

Javier: Right. Interesting...Has membership in the GLBTRT impacted your views on your career or career trajectory?

Walt: Hm...I don't know [laughs]

Javier: [laughs]

Walt:...has membership... views on my career...career trajectory? Nooo..I mean, I can see how this question might apply more to other people. I mean, I think it depends on your situation

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Like, for example, if I was, if I was working as, like, say as a public librarian in a small town, somewhere, like, rural or in the south or something

Javier: Umhm

Walt: I probably wouldn't want people to know I was a member of the GLBT Round Table [laughs].

Javier: Right

Walt: Or, you know, like keep that, you know, very... low key.

Javier: Umhm

[34:20]

Walt: down low, I guess. but it doesn't, it's never been a factor here. I mean, I've never.. I've never hidden that I was a member of the Round Table. I talked about it, so.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: I've seen sometimes there's been, there's been like, new librarians here that, you know, I'll say, they'll ask me something, like about ALA, and I'll say, you know, I went to, you, GLBT Round Table, this or that, and they're just like "oh" [laughs]

Javier: [laughs] Umhm

Walt: But I kind of thought, you know, I felt confident that my situation here, my position here, that I wasn't afraid of doing that

Javier: Right

Walt: But I could see how somebody in another situation would

Javier: Umhm

Walt: So that's why I don't think it's like affected my career trajectory, or my career. My career has been like here for 22, 20, yeah, years, Um

Javier: Yeah, if I may ask this in a different way, um, like the issues that you say you see being, um, addressed by the Round Table,

Walt: Umhm

Javier: Do you ever think about them in context to sort of what you do here at the library?

Walt: ...[sigh] only a little [laughs].

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Um, I'd say that, I mean, I have. I have done, you know, some things here to try to..to you know, kind of serve our LGBTQ students and users. Um, as well, you know, um. For example, one of the things that I created was the academic subject headings.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: They, which is like a, 'cuz we were reindexing our system, so I..I took it, advantage of that opportunity to create like a special, um, subject index, um, that we called academic subject headings to account for the different, um, academic departments on campus. And, when I did that, I sort of, I decided to add things like..well, because we already had, we really have sort of ethnic studies departments, so I added them for things like African American studies, and Asian-Pacific American studies and, Chicana/Chicano studies, that sort of thing. So even though we don't have [laughs] the.. you know, gay and lesbian studies, or anything like that department, I decided to add that in as well.

Javier: Umhm

Walt:... and I never, like, asked for permission to do that.

Javier: Umhm

[37:34]

Walt: I've just created it that way. And I'm sure I was..if I was, if I hadn't been involved in the Round Table, I wouldn't, I wouldn't of done that.

Javier: Yea

Walt: Soo.. but I just did. I thought, like, well let's see if..well, because I knew that, like, someone might push back and say like "you can't do that," I'd have to take it out.

Javier: Umhm. There was no..

Walt: This doesn't correspond to an academic department, so therefore you can't do it

Javier: Right

Walt: But nobody did that, so.

Javier: Well, that's good.

Walt: it worked ok.

Javier: Yeah

Walt: So now, it's like you can search, you know, in the academic subject headings. You can search by, you know, gay and lesbian studies, or you can do it, you know, keyword as well

Javier: Umhm

Walt: And you'll get a lot of the materials that we have-that are classified in gay and lesbian subject areas. And then I've sort of added, and I, just in my cataloging in general, I try to bring out LGBT subject headings whenever I can.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: So. So I think that's, you know. But. And I'm also in the LGBT staff network here at LMU. And.. we've done stuff with, in conjunction with, the LGBT student services as well so,

Javier: Umhm

Walt: that's that connection too. But in most of my work, it's not connected to the Round Table's work

Javier: Umhm

Walt: And most of the round table's work isn't connected to academic libraries or cataloging or anything like that. It's kind of like a lot of their work is connected more to serving people, serving the public, you know

Javier: Umhm

Walt: which is often, and public libraries, which is kind of interesting to me ta, to hear about, tha, those kinds of issues, and deal with those kind of things

Javier: Umhm

Walt: from the round table

Javier: Umhm, yea. That's good that you get that kind of exposure, too, that, through the round table

Walt: Umhm

Javier: you get to hear about what's happening in the greater field, not what's happening in academic libraries

Walt: Right.

Javier: Umhm

[40:01]

Walt: And I'm involved in, I've always been involved in a lot organizations: SOL, [laughs] so

Javier: Umhm

Walt: A lot of gay community organizations, so I, you know, it all kind of fits together, in a way

Javier: Right. I added a question here. I want to hear of any memorable moments you, that you have, or that you remember in your involvement with the Round Table. Any events, anything that was put on by the GLBTRT, um, that really stands out in your mind.

Walt: Hmm...So, what have been involved in with the Round Table that stands out so much for me?

Javier: Yeah

Walt: I'd say, um, oh.. What I've enjoyed the most in my involvement with the Round Table is when I've been on the Stonewall book awards committees

Javier: Umhm

Walt: I've done that twice, for two different stints. And, as well as attending...we used to have, um, Stonewall book awards' breakfast and then eventually changed to brunch. A couple times we changed to dinner, but it was mostly book awards breakfast, and book awards lunch. And it was an annual thing that happened at annual conference. And, you know, for me, especially in the earlier years it was kind of pricey [laughs]

Javier: Umhm

[41:37]

Walt: 'Cuz, you know, it was like, 50 dollars, or whatever, I

Javier: Right

Walt: 20 years ago that was a lot of money but I would still go because I always really enjoyed it

Javier: Umhm

Walt: it was really great, 'cuz you'd have all these authors who would, who were receiving the awards, and they would get up there and speak and tell interesting stories about their books as well as about how much they loved librarians, and about how great we were [laughs]

Javier: [laughs]

Walt: No I always, I always thought it just was a really cool thing that we had, so I think those were. And it's being on awards committees when I was.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: it was very interesting to talk about..

Javier: Yeah

[42:22]

Walt: LBGT books and argue about them with my fellow committee members [laughs]

Javier: Umhm

Walt: 'Cuz we never agreed about [laughs] you know, it's like, it's always like, you know, books I thought were great other people thought were awful or vice-versa

Javier: Umhm

Walt: We managed to work it out and give awards.

Javier: Cool... I, I already asked about this, but maybe you can add more. As the Round Table has grown, how have you perceived the response of those around you in ALA that aren't affiliated with the round table?

Walt: How. Ok. As the Round Table's grown. Oh, well, I think they respect us more. And, you know, there's actually...there's actually several people in the organization who are non-LGBTQ who have joined GLBTRT and sometimes come to our receptions, sometimes even get involved in the organization and the committees and stuff like that.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: You know. It was. It was a really big deal when Ann Simons, who is, you know, she was our chair for ... a few years ago, but she's a past ALA president and, you know, I don't think she's LGBTQ identifying, and it's just like a really strong ally. I was...I was pretty surprised when decided to run for chair of GLBTRT

Javier: Umhm

[44:17]

Walt: Just because she said she believed in what we were doing, so much, and she's still involved. She's now our Round Table counsellor, and I think, you know, her and other people like her that..are kind of a sign that the greater respect that we get within the organization now than we did before. And I think part of it is because we've grown, right, and, we're kind of out there more?

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Buuuut, I think it's more that, it's kind of an example of how our society has changed. You know, because this is also during the time, that, you know, same sex marriage became legal, things like that.

Javier: Right.

Walt: I mean, those are kind of things that, when I was young, we never thought would ever happen

Javier: Umhm

Walt: So, you know, so that's really good. Though at the same time that, you know, we get these kind of, you know, progressive changes, there's also always the threat of, you know, kind of backsliding and ah, losing, losing rights or getting discriminated against again, and that sort of thing.

Javier: Right.

Walt: Um. So it isn't like, "everything is done," you know? "Everything's gunna be great now," it's like, things are much better, but at the same time we have to kinda...be careful, I guess.

Javier: Umhm. Wow. What sort of personal or professional connections have you made from GLBTRT?

Walt: Oh. I would say that, um... yeeeeeah. Most... most of my other librarian friends I met through GLBTRT. It's like, I mean, because I've been involved in other committees, like cataloging committees and stuff,

Javier: Umhm

Walt: just as much, and probably more so than in GLBTRT committees, but... I don't really consider the people I was on cataloging committees with at ALA like, my friends

Javier: Umm

Walt: I mean, they're oo, they're acquaintances more than friends.

Javier: Right.

Walt: Whereas, the people on GLBTRT, I think because we have more, in common, you know, 'cuz, not, we don't just have being a librarian in common, we also have in common that we're LGBT, so I've actually become friends with them more. Which is part of the reason why I always go to GLBTRT socials and things like that. I always know that there are going to be people I

know there..Yeaah. Though, you know, people come and go, you know. Some people don't make it to conferences. There's people that I used to see at conferences all the time, and now they don't go anymore, sometimes because they don't get funding anymore.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: or they're just kind of, they're getting, you know, older and they don't really want to go to do things like that anymore-- that sort of thing, but then, you know, I meet new people as well. It's like I noticed that when I got involved, when I got on the GLBTRT executive board a few months ago, and, like, the meeting in Denver,

Javier: Umhm

Walt: That was like the first time I had met these people in person.

Javier: Really?

Walt: Yeah, 'cuz it was my first in person meeting with them. And I noticed that most of them are people I didn't know, hadn't met

Javier: Umhm

Walt: ...or much younger than I

Javier: [laughs] Was that exciting to see the, you know, there's such vitality still, like, in, in the Round Table?

Walt: Oh yeah! Oh yeah. Yeah. But it's that sort of, you know, that kind of thing is sort of a bitter sweet thing because on the one hand it's great to see all these new people involved

Javier: Umhm

Walt: But at the same time, I kinda miss the other people, and I'm like "ohhh what happened to all these other people that I used to

Javier: Umhm

Walt: see on the board." Right?

Javier: Right.

Walt: And it's like, and then I also, 'cuz I feel like "oh I don't know these people," you know, and I can feel kind of, I can revert back to kind of being shy that way.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: If I'm like "oh," you know.

Javier: Yeah.

Walt: "I don't know these people," you know, and then I just feel like, "oh, ok, well, I have to just, you know, I just have to kinda put myself out there and try to get to know them, and try to be friends with them and"

Javier: Umhm

[49:00]

Walt: You know. Usually works [laughs]

Javier: Yeah. Cool. Uh, is there

Walt: And as far as professionally, I'd say, I don't think

Javier: [laughs]

Walt: it's really affected me professionally. Except.

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Yeah. Just except that, you know, I've gotten opportunities within the association, within the Round Table, because of getting to know people. You know, it's like, and that's the way it works in ALA and probably most professional associations

Javier: Umhm

Walt: Is... the opportunities come to you through, through, like, networking, through meeting people. So the more people that you meet, the more likely they're going to remember you when they have a committee to fill, or that kind of thing.

Javier: Right

Walt: Um. Because people here at LMU have often asked me over the years "how did you manage to get on positions on committees and things like that. I go to ALA and I don't know anybody, and I don't know how to do it"

Javier: [laughs]

Walt: And I'm like, "well, you have to keep going and meet people"

Javier: Right

Walt: That's kind of how it works.

Javier: Umhm. Is there anything that we didn't talk about that you would like to add?

Walt: No. I think I talked a lot

Javier: [laughs]

Walt: [laughs]

Javier: Ok. So, to conclude. This has been an interview with **Walter Walker** done as part of the oral history project for the 50th anniversary of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table of the American Library Association. This interview took place on **April 12th, 2018**. Um, Walt, thank you so much for sharing your story.

Walt: You're welcome

[50:48]