

Cooperstown Graduate Program

Oral History Project 2020

LO = Lili Ott

HD = Hannah Deschenes

[START OF TRACK 1, 0:00]

HD:

Hi, this is Hannah Deschenes. I am interviewing Lili Ott remotely on Zoom. It is Tuesday, November 10th at 6:36 [pm]. This interview is being conducted for the Cooperstown Graduate [Program] oral histories project. Hi Lili, how are you?

LO:

Hi Hannah, good.

HD:

So, Lili, do you have any advice for an emerging museum professional who might be in graduate school now who is going to enter the museum field in the near future?

LO:

Oh, that's a really good question. I think that, although I do know that it's different now than when I went there because that was 50 years ago, but I think the more you can learn and the widest diversification so that you have a variety of skills is really invaluable because your career is going to be long. My career was 45 years, and I did such a variety of things from curatorial to all sorts of PR work and all sorts of education work. So, the more you can learn now, even if you don't think you're going to love that particular thing, the more valuable you're going to find it in your own life and I just think about the areas that develop, like we didn't even really have a development class and fundraising class when I was in Cooperstown because it wasn't as big of a thing. Now every job has some component. If you're working at a private organization, anyway, has some fundraising component. So, diversify, diversify, diversify.

HD:

Lili, do you find that the skills that you learned while you were at the Cooperstown Graduate Program have carried on throughout your entire career?

LO:

Absolutely, absolutely. In a real variety of ways. I learned to do oral interviews just like you are doing, you all are doing. And I'm doing some right now in Maine for the Maine bicentennial using the same exact skills. The technology has changed but the skills are exactly the same. And that's certainly been true in so many areas of education. Just the interaction with people, I think that one of the real strengths at Cooperstown is it's a small enough group that you learn to interact with a number of different types of people. And learning all of those skills at a professional level is so valuable as you go out.

HD:

Okay. Well thank you so much.

LO:

Thank you, Hannah, take care.