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Interview with John Chidester

Sarah Bush

John Chidester

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Researcher's Name: Sarah Bush

Event: Interview with John Chidester, 10/25/2011, 2:30 p.m

Place: Mount Vernon Public Library, 201 N. Mulberry St. Mount Vernon, OH

Co-workers Present: None

B: Sarah Bush

C: John Chidester

B: Alright, and we're rolling, so tell me who you are.

C: I'm John Chidester, I'm the director of the Public Library of Mount Vernon and Knox County. I've been in this position for 35 and a half years.

B: Are you from, are you from Knox County?

C: I'm not originally from Knox County. I'm from all over Ohio. I was born in Toledo. When I was 3 and a half we moved to Cincinnati, where I went to grade school. When I was just about 12 we moved to Canton, which is in the west side of the state, Hardin County, where I went to high school. Went to college in Tiffin at Heidelberg- what is now Heidelberg University, but was Heidelberg College then- and grad school at Case Western University, where I got my Master's Degree in Library Science.

B: And where did you go-what was your first library job?

C: Ah, my first library job after library school was the Marion Public Library, I was adult services librarian there for a couple years and then I came here, and I've been here ever since.

B: Ok, tell me a little bit about what you do here at the library- what being the director entails.

C: I get to be in charge of everything and tell everybody else what to do (laughs). Those are the simple- there, uh, there was a simple way of describing how the library works that I picked up at a, a workshop at a workshop for library directors a few years back. The presenter said that the library board is responsible, the board's job is to be responsible for every facet of library operations: grounds, personnel, budget, and so forth, and the library director's job is to do the board's job. So I'm in charge of budget, I'm in charge of personnel, I'm in charge of buildings and grounds, I'm in charge of programs, and so forth, but I have a lot of good people that do, that do all the work for me, so I get to take the credit.

B: Um, so, so where in Mount Vernon do you live?

C: Uh, I live on North Braddock Street, which is just off of Pleasant Street, about, uh, I think I mapped it out once, it's not more than three miles from here.

B: Ok, um great. So, tell me a little about your daily routine. So, you, um wake up?

C: It, it varies widely, um, uh, my schedule is all over the calendar. Sometimes I'm working very late at night, sometimes very early in the morning, it just depends on, on what all is going on. Most days I, I come in and I spend a lot of time at my computer and on the phone. A lot of what I do is talking to other people, getting information from them, giving information to them, uh, and depending on, um the, the day of the week, the week of the month, the month of the year, I might be doing a lot of budget work, um, that's a process that runs throughout the year, there's certain time of the year when it's a little more heavily involved and other times of the year when it's mainly a monitoring process. Um, and so it goes with everything else. The program year has its, uh, rhythm, its rise and fall of programs and activities and so forth. Um, personnel is pretty much a year-round

thing, there are no major dates through the year. Buildings and grounds, there's always start up and shut down of building systems, which I fortunately don't have to have anything to do with other than I get to sign off on the, on the costs for, you know, outside contractors who come in to do maintenance and repair and so forth. Um, for, you know, things like the boilers and the chillers and the air handlers, and so forth. And then, just everything like that. So, it's, it's, it's hard to describe it in, a, in just a few sentences. It's a varied schedule and there's a lot of details to it. It's never boring.

B: Do you mind if I close that door?

C: That'd be fine, sure.

B: Um, so tell me- so, apart from home and work, where are some places you like to spend time?

C: Um, I spend a lot of time at those two places (laughs). Uh, I, I spend a fair amount of time at my church, First Congregational, which, um, has been a big part of my life since- my, my dad was a minister, in, what became the UCC, first it was Reformed, then Evangelical and Reformed, then through a series of mergers the United Church of Christ. So, I spend a lot of time at church. I also like to spend time in bookstores and coffee shops and, um, and out, uh out and about as much as I can. I like to go to museums, other libraries in other towns, when I can. I spend as much time as I can up in the area between Vermillion and Sandusky, along the lake, Lake Erie. My family built a cottage, uh, my parents built a cottage there the summer before I was born, and it's still in the family, and so we go up there and spend a lot of time.

B: I can understand that (laughs). So, in the a- so locally, what are some of the coffee shops and bookstores that you like to spend time in?

C: Uh, Sips is one of my favorites. Um, I, as a matter of fact, it's almost the only one I go to. I mean, in the local area. I used to- there was one in Danville, it's gone by a couple of different names over the past few years-it was the Rusty Turkey at one point, uh, it was Lulu's at one point, it was Café 505, I think, diagonally across the street from the Danville Library, which is in the Danville Village Building. And, um, I loved that one whenever I could get out there. It was, it just had a nice atmosphere and there was a restaurant attached to it. They had some pretty distinctive coffee beverages that they had designed- one was called a Blue Devil because the Danville team is the Blue Devils and that was kind of cool. I think it had blueberries in it. So, ah, but, um, yeah, when I'm not here the coffee shops at Barnes and Noble bookstores, when I'm not in Mount Vernon, are my favorites. I like Paragraphs Bookstore, I like the Kenyon Bookstore, um, and I like, I like to hang out just, you know, wherever there are books. So, it could be in my own home with lots of books, or, you know, I even hang out here sometimes.

B: So, you were saying you really liked the atmospheres of the place in Danville. Can you explain a little bit about the atmospheres of those bookstores and coffee shops that you liked?

C: Peaceful, friendly, always some interesting company to spend some time with- interesting conversations. Um, I don't know how else to say it than that.

B: Is it easy to, uh, to meet new people there, to strike up conversations?

C: Very, very frequently I'll meet somebody I know, including people I haven't seen for a long time. So, when you get out and you know, someone you haven't seen for five or ten years all of a sudden you're having a conversation with them. I do meet new people occasionally, too. Yeah, it's easy to strike up conversations and just make new friends.

B: Are there, are there regulars that go to those places that you like?

C: Not, I don't have a regular group that I'm always meeting at any of those places, I never know who I'm going to see. So, um, I don't know, I don't have a regular group that I-

B: Or, do the, do the, do the establishments themselves have regulars, sort of, characters, regulars that are often hanging around?

C: Yeah, there are there are people that you see frequently, and, and mostly I don't know their names, I just recognize someone I've seen many times before in one of those, yeah.

B: Great. That's great. Um. So, as you've been here over, you've been here in the community for quite a while. How has it changed over time, and in terms of people spending out in the community in places like the coffee shops and bookstores?

C: A lot of the coffee shops and bookstores didn't exist when we got here. Um, the community itself for one thing, the number of fast food restaurants has mushroomed, well I don't know about mushroomed, its grown over the years. It seems to sort of mushroom. For a long time there was a Burger Chef, and that was about it. And I think, I don't remember when Long John Silver's came, and then the first McDonald's came, and then it was like, you know, like there was a fast food place opening up every week for a while. For a long time there were not places like Allison's Finer Diner and Ruby Tuesday's, and so forth, it was the Alcove and Mazza's and those were the two major places to eat, um, in town (overheard beeping). And Paragraphs Bookstore didn't exist. Kid's Shelf and Colonial Bookstore, um, started up I think not too long after we first came here, I believe it was in the late seventies if I'm not mistaken. Of course, Kenyon bookstore has been here forever (laughs). And, um, when I first came here a guy by the name of Jack

Finefrock was the director of the Kenyon bookstore, and he was quite a character, I enjoyed him very much. And, uh, used to talk to him a lot, and he did a lot of unconventional things with the bookstore, and I think made it a great place.

B: Do you think- how has, how has the bookstore changed over time, the Kenyon bookstore?

C: Um, it, uh, it, they've change the layout of things quite a bit, and I think there's a, it seems like there's a lot more now there in the way of how would I- commercial merchandise, you know, clothing items, and other things. It used to be not quite so much that way, although there was always a variety of things. Um, it was almost like a small library. People would really just go there and never buy anything, but hang out and read the magazines and the books and then put them back on the shelves. I don't know how Jack felt about that, but I think he actually encouraged it because he liked that kind of atmosphere. And, uh, I think the store did well while he was there.

B: That's great. Um, so how would you- how would you describe Mount Vernon and Knox County in terms of the places it- I guess, trying to project out in the community, community-wide, where do you think a lot of people in Mount Vernon spend their free time?

C: Um, boy I don't really know, I mean some people spend their time here. Some time here. They go to the libraries. Um, a lot of people got out to, to restaurants, coffee shops, and bookstores too. And, uh, well I think probably a fair number of people go out of town to enjoy themselves, go to Columbus for cultural events, although there are plenty of cultural events here. And speaking of Kenyon College and Knox County, um, and I don't know why it's not so much this way, there was a time when my wife and I would very

often go to the plays at Kenyon, uh, or other activities at Kenyon, the lectures and so forth, um, I suppose, and to a certain extent you know life gets really, really busy, and the older you get the less you get out. Um, so there's an element of that. But, um. And I, we would always, whenever we went to see a play or something at Kenyon we would see people that we knew from the Mount Vernon community there. So, there's always been kind of a, an attachment there of sorts.

B: Great. So, sorry. So, um, so now I'm thinking about the library as an important place in the community for people to spend time, as you mentioned people come to the library. So, um, can you explain a little bit the library's role in the community?

C: Um, I, um, my, my goal has always been to make it a multi-faceted resource center for people, you know, for information, of course, personal self-education or to support formal education. So, information, education, and then cultural enrichment, and entertainment, for that matter. Which I look at uh, when you go to library school and get a little bit of information you find out that almost anything can count as information. So, uh, a sitcom on TV is a type of information. Um, you know person throwing a temper tantrum is a kind of information. So everything that we have, whether it's primarily for entertainment purposes or primarily for informational or educational purposes, its all information. And, and the idea is that we spread as much information as far around as we can and um, and try engage the community to get them to engage their own intellect. And to, and to you know to enrich their own intellectual lives.

B: So, who, who tends, uh, who tends to be your most frequent patrons?

C: You know, it's hard to characterize them. I, they, they really cross all of the, the social categories and divisions: old, young, in between, rich, poor, well-educated, not very well-

educated, you never know who's going to walk through the door at any given moment. So, it's quite a mix, it's quite an amalgam. Um, it, I'd even be hard-pressed to say what segment of the, of the, of the local community is the most actively engaged with the library. I, I guess it would, it would tend to be people with, um, more than a high school education, although lots of people with a high school education or less come through the doors, and of course younger people, before they've graduated from high school have less than a high school education. A lot of younger people. A lot of, well, in terms of age range, it just, zero to one hundred and ten, you know. Uh, um, it's hard to say who, what group would be most heavily represented in our in our active users, but, um, it is really pretty much an amalgam.

B: Is there, can you, are there differences between groups based on what they do when they come here? Do the different ages or different, different people do different things when they get to the library?

C: Um, younger people well, let's see, there's a certain segment of the community that's very much into audio/visual materials, especially DVDs, movies, videos, um, now who would that be, though? Teenagers, but, um, actually once again it really does, all across the spectrum, young to old. And of course, we have materials for everybody. Um, it's really, it's actually pretty hard for me to charac- without doing some sort of survey, which we have not done, um, it's hard to say. It, just from, from, from, you know, what we're able to see, what we observe, it's all kinds of people, really, for all kinds of materials. The, the videos are pretty popular, and they've been growing as a percentage of our annual circulation but books still, books in print, and not you know, ebooks are growing, but it'll be a while before they ever take print materials. Um, so printed

materials are still the most, the heaviest part of our circulation, followed fairly closely, more closely by audio/visual materials. Audio books are very, very popular, in all formats. Um, uh, and of course, we do, we have audio books available in a variety of formats, usually on mp3 discs, but also on these little units called playaways, which are just kind of, solid state. You know, there's one book per unit, and they just borrow a unit like they would borrow book and listen to it, then bring it back. Um, so, you know, the variety is quite extensive.

B: What about computer services? What kind, what kinds of people come in to use the computers and internet?

C: That would, uh, I think would tend to be people a little on the lower part of the economic spectrum, because they can't afford it at home. They can't afford computers, or can't afford the internet connectivity they get here, the broadband. Lots of people looking for jobs or social services, a lot of which they can access online, and they get technical help here when they need it. So, um, but that too is, is quite an amalgam, maybe there's a fairly broad spectrum of people who come and use those things, but I would say probably that does tend to lean a little towards the, uh, the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum.

B: So tell me a little bit about the kinds of programming the library does for all the different age groups.

C: Ah, once again, it covers the, it covers the spectrum. Ah, we have story times and other activities for younger kids, starting with kids two years and under. We have what's called a lap sit program, that's on Wednesday mornings, and um, it's a program for not just the children, but their parents or caregivers. So, and that, we try to encourage from a

very early point in the children's lives the, the interaction of parents and/or caregivers with the children you know, in terms of reading and similar activities. They do songs and little finger plays and stories and rhymes and so forth. And, uh, they try to get kids sort of started on a, on a life of interest in those things, and, you know, get the parents firmly grounded in that as well. Um, there are story times then for kids who are preschool or kindergarten age, um, then there are activity programs for kids in grade school. I have this thing called Wacky Wednesdays, which I think you're familiar with, which is just to, to bring kids in and give them something interesting to do that sort of gives them another connection with the library and very often they'll, they'll have an activity that sends them afterwards into the collection looking for materials about what they've just done. Ah, there's a teen program for kids grades six through twelve, uh, there's an anime club, they have a game club, they try to gear that towards things that the kids are interested in and, interestingly enough the kids who come for these programs are also readers. And so there's an interesting- as a matter of fact, they, recently they came to us and said we, you know, we think you need to sort of spruce up your young adult collection. We don't like the materials in it and we want to make some suggestions. So we said, "Sure, fine, tell us what you want and well be happy to try and get it for you." So, uh. They have a lot of fun with that. There's a teen advisory group, uh, they sort of help to do the teen programming, and they set up the anime club and the game club. Every now and then they have special activities, there's a National Gaming Day when they, they get online and it's like everybody in the world is, or at least everybody in the country is, not everybody, but the kids who are into gaming, get together online and do it all at once. So, they have a lot of fun with that.

B: Cool. Are there book clubs? Both for teens or for adults?

C: Not actually a book club, per se, but the teen advisory group is like a book club. They talk about books and they had some book discussion activities, but it's not a regular thing.

B: So, um, in light of all- you sort of consider the technological changes from print to no-print to staying very strong- I guess we kind of talked about that already. So, the technological developments haven't really changed the role of the library dramatically?

C: No, mostly what they've changed is how we apportion our materials budget. We try to stay up to date and on, as they say, I'll use a cliché here, on the cutting edge of things, um, and, and try to make sure we have what people are looking for because they've seen something new on TV and they want to try it out, we hope to have that here for them when they come in. Um, so, so we try to stay abreast of the information technologies and the new products that, that consumers are interested in. There's, I think there's a, ever since the personal computer first, you know, came on the scene, there's an increasing tendency for people to, uh, want to, and be able to, buy the means of information transfer, communication, and you know, information, knowledge technologies. And, but, they do come to the library for those things too, so we try to stay ahead of the curve in that respect.

B: So, have you faced any budget difficulties?

C: We have, however unlike a lot of other libraries in the state, we were able to pass a sizeable operating levy a couple of years ago in 2009, and that has really saved us from a lot of the turmoil that a lot of Ohio libraries are going through right now. Now, Ohio has been the top of, the number one state for library services for a very long time. And even

in the current economic climate that has continued to be true, but it's harder and harder to maintain the level of services that Ohio citizens have come to pretty much take for granted. In 2009, it was in June, Governor Strickland announced what would have been a 32% cut in library funding, probably not realizing, as most governors and legislators have not- I mean, it's their state and you'd think they would know these things- but most of them don't realize that the majority of libraries get almost all of their funding through the state funding of libraries. It's, it's, Ohio is fairly unique in that respect, that is does direct funding of libraries at the state level, whereas in other places a library's budget is usually part of a city budget or a county budget, um, or they have some other source of funds other than the state, I mean they may get some state aid, but in Ohio the majority of funding has come the state, um, since 1985 when they did a major shift in how they allowed libraries to be funded. And that allowed us to have the best libraries in the country, but it also set a standard for us that people got used to, and when things started to deteriorate, which they actually did not long after 9/11, the state legislature froze library funding for about six years, I believe it was, froze and cut so that over that period of time there was an erosion of library materials and services in this state and it got harder and harder to survive on, and to do what we'd been doing all along on the amount of money that was, was fairly stagnant. While the state budget went up by, I think it was 30%, it was billions of dollars, library budgets were essentially flat, unless they passed levies. Uh, so when the um, when the uh economic crisis hit, of course there were funding cuts all over the place, and, uh, they were going to cut libraries, but this was where the impact of libraries on the general public really became very evident, because as soon as Governor Strickland announced that cut, of course libraries appeal to their own

user bases for support, and there was a huge outpouring of protest from the general public against the governor and the legislature for that, that impeding cut, and he was forced to scale that back to, from 32 percent to 11 percent, which was still a pretty deep cut after having been stagnant for all those years, but, um, it did demonstrate that people really love their libraries and didn't want to seem them get- some libraries would have to come pretty close to closing down altogether, I mean it would have been a pretty ugly scene. There would have been a lot of cutbacks in hours and staff and materials, and there still, there have been anyway, because it's, you know, the economic crisis continues. But a lot of libraries then, not, long after, as a matter of fact the very next general election after that crisis was over, there were more than twice as many libraries on the ballot for levies than ever before in this state, and that continued to be the case, for every general and special, or, uh, primary election since then, and their passage rate has hovered around 80%, which is really very good, I mean, it's about the opposite of school levies; about 20% of those pass and 80% fail, whereas library levies it's been 80% passage and 20% failure. So I think that says something about the way Ohioans feel about their libraries, and it has set a high standard for us to, to uh live up to, but that's the challenge and we enjoy it.

B: Yeah, that's really great. Um, so, similar to the question before: Are there, are there patrons who are kind of regulars here, who are characters?

C: Oh yeah, yeah, very much so.

B: What are some of them like?

C: Uh, a lot of, um, people in the senior citizen category, which I have fallen into myself now, they spend a lot of time here. Uh, they tend to congregate in groups of two or three and, and have long conversations and read newspapers and magazines together and so

forth, uh so it's really kind of a, almost a social club for them. Um, once again, they run the spectrum of personality types. They're very friendly people for the most part, intellectually active, chatty, loquacious, (laughs) and, uh generally fun to be around, and they usually will express their appreciation. We have all kinds- retired military people, you know, veterans, people on disability, people on social security, and you know, people who are working generally are working and not here, but they, they tend to get here when they can. And, uh, they really are a cross section of the community.

B: So it seems like a lot of people come here just to meet, or just to hang out, just to...

C: Oh yeah, mmhmm. And then, there are people too who will make a regular trip to the library every couple of weeks for only maybe a half and hour or so, they know pretty much what they want or they can find it browsing for just a relatively short time. They bring back the books they had, they pick two or three or four more and take those out, and, you know, that can be a kind of a, almost a ritual, certainly a routine for them. And they may not spend a lot of time here, but when they do come it's quality time, and then they take the library home with them, so.

B: So I noticed a lot of the same faces between the two, the two or three Brown Bag Chats that I've been to, so is that a kind of a regular group who comes to those?

C: It is, yeah. Over a long period of time it'll change, partly because people get old and die; we had a lot of our favorite people who patronized the library for years- decades, really- uh, it's one of those things, you watch time pass, and you watch people come and go. But yeah, the, they tend to be older, retired people because they've got a little more time to come and spend, even for a lunchtime program. The original idea with the Brown Bag Chats was that people within a fairly close distance of the library would be able to

take a lunch hour and bring a brown bag lunch and come and watch a program. And it worked that way at first, pretty well; a lot of people from, uh, what back then was Cooper Industries, and which became Rolls-Royce, um, they would come, a number of those would come to our programs. And from, you know, people who worked in the downtown area would come. That sort of wore out after a while, and, and what was left was the older people who were not quite as rushed at lunchtime. And, um, so that's the way it has been for quite a while now. Every now and then, depending on the subject of the program, we'll have an influx- sometimes school groups, or, um, special interest groups of one sort or another will find a program of ours that they really are interested in, and that increases the attendance and skews the type of people coming towards that demographic. But for the most part it's, yeah, it's older people who have just a general interest in all things cultural and educational and they like what goes on at the library and they like the programs that we have.

B: Mmmhmm. Ok. I guess, could you, do you know, do you know at all what kind of, how people emotionally feel about the library, whether they really feel like it's a special, feel really connected to it?

C: Uh, a lot of people do. A lot of our regulars do. And we like that, we like to try and create an environment where, that fosters that sort of feeling. Um, occasionally somebody doesn't like something about the library, especially if they've, you know, forgotten to bring back a large number of things and they build up a big fine and then their feelings tend to sour. But, uh, for the most part, yeah I think most people's feelings towards the library are fairly affectionate, shall we say, um. They have, they have, memories of, you know, coming here for a long time, memories that go back into their childhood, perhaps.

And there are some people that we've watched grow up, you know that started coming here as children, or as young people, and now middle aged and beyond. So, people do tend to have, people who are really regular library users tend to have a certain attachment to the library that, uh, it runs pretty deep.

B: Who are, who are a lot of the volunteers?

C: Just anybody (laughs). Usually they're older people who have retired and they want to, want to stay active and they want to be around people that they like and that they can relate to, and they want to do something that's useful, and so they'll come and we have different things we ask them to do, and they usually enjoy it, I think.

B: How, how active is the Friends of the Library?

C: It's very active. They have several programs a year, they do a lot of fundraising, they've been doing this book warehouse out on Coffing Road that is just amazing. That's been one of the minor miracles I've witnessed in the last few years, because a lot of us were just plain skeptical that it could be made to work, and yet it has worked spectacularly well. And speaking of volunteers, a lot of people spend a lot of time helping out there, and just having a great time. It's, it's almost like a social club of its own. And they've raised thousands of dollars, and they, they plough all of that back into the library, they buy things for us, and support our programs and so forth. They've helped support New Harmonies, um, just all kinds of things, yeah.

B: Great. How has, how has the library as a social center changed since you've been here?

C: Um, it's, I would say that it's broadened its base. When I first came here, as far as people coming in regularly and spending time here in a social setting, there were a few

women's groups that would do that, early on. Um, but um, but not a whole lot. And of course, the building was much different then; it was smaller, we had one meeting room that was, it was ok, it was useful, but, um, it wasn't as comfortable as the meeting room we have now, the big meeting room. It wasn't carpeted (laughs). And, um, so it was, you know, the library was not exactly conducive to, to social gatherings as much as it became once we did the building project. So I think it's broadened, all kinds of groups use our meetings rooms, not so much social groups as special interest groups- Toastmasters, and, and, um, oh gosh, what are some of- my office manager, Lisa, could tell you what all the groups are that use the rooms. For a while COTC used us for classroom space, when they were, you know, were setting up their presence in downtown Mount Vernon but hadn't gotten their physical plant, uh, arranged on, on South Main Street yet, so they, uh, they did a lot of classes here. That was kind of an interesting situation, it didn't last a long time, a year and a half I think, but it was nice to be of service to them, and I think we probably got some new patrons that way too, that had not been previously used to coming to the library.

B: So, if the library one day were just to disappear, what do you think would happen to, I mean, the people who use it so heavily, and, do you think that there's anything that could ever replace it, or even come close to...

C: Boy, I would have to think about that one for a while. That's, that's, obviously it's very speculative. I think probably most of the people would find some other way, some other outlet for their, um, desire for engagement with other people and their, their intellectual interests. Um, and I imagine, I'm assuming that bookstores would still be around, they'd probably would be more heavily inclined to, to, uh, spend time in

bookstores. Um, or other, other venues where they have the same kind of feeling that they get from the library. Um, a lot of them might stay home and buy books from Amazon or Barnes and Noble online and invite friends over, I don't know, it's hard to say.

B: So, off of that statement, what do you think makes the library unique in this community?

C: Well, it's, um, largely, there's, there's a saying, and I'm trying to remember who said it, that the university of this day is a collection of books. It's kind of, like, it's the people's university. It's something that no one person, except a very, very wealthy person, could have without the collective support, you know, financial support, tax support, and also just the collective activity of, we have a staff of about 66 people and, um, a pretty sizeable building and, of course, branches, um, all of that makes possible something that they, that people individually could not do on their own. That's the uniqueness, I think, of the library- it's a collective, community, social effort. Government supported. Um, its, it's a way that the government, I think, fosters the civilizing influence of the public library. And, so, it's, it's a way of keeping civilization civilized, I hope, and perhaps making it- we try to anyway- make it a little more so, if we can.

B: Great. So this is going back to something you said way at the beginning, but can you tell me a little bit about your church community?

C: Um, it's very close-knit, very open community, and we call it open and affirming because, we, uh, have a number of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered members, and they have said that, um, other churches that were supposed to have been open and affirming were not. And when they've come to our church they have discovered that it's the only one that doesn't say, "you're welcome, but you need to change." In ours, it's

“you’re welcome, and that’s it.” It’s ok to be who and what you are. And it’s a very caring community, very accepting, and very active in terms of trying to, um, you know, they’re active in the, oh heck, the mea- the Hot Meals program- uh, and other things like that. Social justice, social caring and concern activities, Habitat for Humanity, and so forth. Um, our form of mission work is not really prosthelytizing for the religion itself, I mean, as a matter of fact, as far as religious doctrine is concerned I don’t think we have a doctrine per se, theoretically I guess we do, but I couldn’t tell you what it is exactly, other than that it’s approximately Christian. But, it’s, in terms of, in terms of religious belief and religious inquiry it’s open and accepting of all points of view, in that respect as well. So, there’s not a lot of dogma. And, um, there’s, there’s a lot of just openness and caring, and that’s what we take to be the central theme of Christianity.

B: Can you compare really quickly the church and the library as community resources or community spaces?

C: Interesting, very similar in some respects, because they have one of the best church libraries that I’ve ever seen (laughs). Um, and, and, there’s a, there’s the same kind of, uh, reaching out to the community and offering something that’s valuable and that, um, is in both cases a civilizing influence, that tries to raise the level of awareness of people of, of awareness of their whole, their surroundings, of the world they live in, and awareness of the vast breadth and scope of, of, um, humanity, of people’s thoughts and feelings and interests and beliefs and concerns and so forth. I think they’re very similar in that respect, yeah.

B: Ok. Alright. I think that’s a great place to end.

C: Ok.

B: Is there anything else you would like to say?

C: Oh gosh, I think we've covered pretty much all of it.

B: Ok. Alright. Well thank you so much. Um, do you want to just really quickly today's date?

C: Oh, today is the- let me look at the calendar- today is, uh, Tuesday, October 25th, 2011.

B: Ok. Alright. Thank you so much.