



## Transcript: Lois - did you anticipate an academic career?

At the beginning of your PhD did you envisage an academic career at the end?

No I didn't. I didn't. I thought right well I'm just doing this and am staying on at university for another while, doing a PhD and then I will go and get myself a proper job. 'A proper job in the real world.' So no, I didn't envisage staying on. My father is actually an academic and so I was quite familiar with that in a certain way and I actually for many years had said now that I wasn't going to do that, I wasn't going to be like him but I think the lure was too great, because there are so many attractions to working in academia. I was talking to my husband about this last night, he's also an academic.

But yeah there are – there's a lot of freedom, freedom in all kinds of ways. Flexibility in terms of you know you don't have to clock on and clock off, and you get to choose to a large extent what you teach – there's just so much choice that you don't get in other jobs, I think. Not that I know very much about other jobs, but you can choose your area of research, of course it depends on how your institution is run and how your local part within it is run, but you can sometimes get to choose the balance of what you do. Do you really focus on research or do you focus on teaching, do you balance it 50-50, is it 70-30. So in that sense you can play to your strengths if you're a really good teacher and you want to do a lot of teaching then in some institutions there are the opportunities to do that, although research is still very highly prized. But more and more teaching is becoming more important in what we do.

But if you're more of a researcher then there's lots of scope to go out there, research projects you know, you're really in charge of building your career and taking those opportunities when they arise, whereas the impression I get is that in many other jobs it depends on you being put forward for promotion and maybe the opportunities aren't so much in your own hands to develop.

When you look back now at how your life has fitted together, does it surprise you? If the person that you were at 18 was to look forward to where you are now, would it be surprising?

I would be astounded actually. I had no idea that I would have ended up doing something like this, enjoying something like this, and I like to think being quite successful at it. And I would just have had no idea. I've never really had a sort of career direction you know, I mean everybody I think at school thinks at one point they want to be a teacher, don't they? I mean that's about as far as it went. I've had interests in things like I was interested in maps, I was interested in geography, interested in history, interested in archaeology and I've just pursued those interests and then I think opportunities have arisen as I've been pursuing those, and I think I've usually taken up opportunities and when they seemed right I've usually taken them, which has then kind of led me further down the path, or on a slightly different path. So I think that's kind of how I got where I am today. I would never have envisaged it really.

I wouldn't have envisaged that I would be an academic. I certainly wouldn't have envisaged that I'd be in the sort of life long learning sector, but I'm really glad that I am because I really enjoy my job. It's a constant conflict in my mind, should I work part time because of the children or should I work fulltime, and I keep coming back to 'no I like my job' I'm going to work fulltime. So -