

Transcript of the Interview with Christina

Interviewer: Himani Nigam

Interviewee: Christina Pipkin

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Place: Online/ Zoom

Himani Nigam: Hi Christina!

Christina Pipkin: Hi Himani!

Himani Nigam: How are you?

Christina Pipkin: I'm good. How are you?

Himani Nigam: Thank you for meeting with me, and you know taking the time to do this interview for our course.

Christina Pipkin: Absolutely my pleasure.

Himani Nigam: I'm excited about working with you.

Christina Pipkin: Yeah.

Himani Nigam: Yes, I'm looking forward to asking you some questions, and you know, getting to know you better and getting some insights onto how you know you do, or how do you deal with informal learning or learning that takes place outside of school.

Christina Pipkin: All right. Let's get to it. I'm excited.

Himani Nigam: Alright. So here we go. My first question is, what is a skill that you have learned outside of traditional education?

Christina Pipkin: Yeah, that's such a great question. One skill that I'm really proud of actually. And I have the opportunity to use more often is photography and videography. And that started back when I was in high school. I had from freshman to senior year. I was a part of journalism club and doing that we had to go to the football games. We had to go to all of the sporting events. We had to make sure that we were capture things in the moment. And so, I really started to appreciate print journalism. I started to appreciate the idea of being able to story tell through a visual platform and visual medium. So, I wanted to do journalism as my major in undergrad. But I wanted to go to Spellman College more than I wanted to do that major and they didn't have any journalism there. So maybe about 8 or 9 years ago, I've had the opportunity to (have) this skill back up. And now even expanded even further than just photography and doing videography. And so ideally, I would love to be a filmmaker. I would love to do educational documentaries and have opportunities to join film festivals and just showcase my work on a grander scale.

Because I do think I'm a great visual storyteller probably, in my opinion, better than a writer. And I know that with our program that's the expectation is to have (write) a book, or you know chapters, but I would love to be able to have some sort of film or documentary at the end of our program as my research, as a way to display that. So, to answer your question, photography, videography, that's definitely a skill that I've had to learn on my own, because I've never had any formal training outside of high school with those things.

Himani Nigam: That is, that is so cool, Christina. Because you know, and we've seen your work firsthand last year for the Summer Institute, you made a whole video for our cohort, which was so cool, and you had such amazing visuals in them that I was super impressed. I was like, you have some skills!

Christina Pipkin: Thank you. Thank you. I get to practice a lot with friends and family mostly, and maybe within the last two? No! Let's see, what's this? 2024? So, like the last 4 years, I've been able to do it more on a professional skill (level) doing videos and photography for organizations and to your point for projects and the things like that. And so, even though I'm not necessarily to the point where I can have this as a strong, passive income, but I think it's coming. I think I can get there. But in the meantime, it's an opportunity for me to practice and get better at this skill.

Himani Nigam: Right. So do your friends and family ask you for free videography or something or taking pictures?

Christina Pipkin: Oh, man, yes and no. So, there's some family members that will. Let's say, for example, we have a birthday party, and they'll just say, "Hey, are you bringing your camera?" That's their way of asking for me to take pictures without asking me to take it. But then, for let's say, if they're trying to do a holiday greeting card, and they want a proper photo shoot, I will. They will pay me for that. I don't usually charge them regular price. I give them, you know, family pricing, but I definitely do photo shoots for families, and they they'll pay me for that.

Himani Nigam: That is so cool! I wish I had those kind of skills, you know. I am still very amateurish with taking pictures. I think my daughter might be better at that than me.

Christina Pipkin: Alright, social (media) has (made) it easy.

Himani Nigam: Oh, yes, social media. Yes. So, what motivated you to learn the skill?

Christina Pipkin: It kind of naturally happened. I knew early when I was in school. I knew I loved it when I was in high school. It was something that almost instantly I knew I wanted to have this as a skill that you know. Eventually I can get better at. But picking it up again. It was being around musicians a lot. So, my spouse is a musician and going to shows, needing some visuals of the show afterwards for social media, for advertisement, for getting additional gigs. So, at first it was out of more of a necessity, right? Because we're on a budget. We wanted to save money, so, having that skill, it inspired me to invest in some more equipment, learn how to use it. What are some of the newer programs and software that are out there for editing and even being able to know what type of programs are the best ones. So out of necessity it became a

passion again. Not necessarily any other thing other than that. I just needed a way to have visuals on demand whenever we needed it.

Himani Nigam: Well, you know you don't need a motivation all the time, you know. Money can be a good motivator.

Christina Pipkin: Money. Oh, man, that's the goal! The goal is to have so many gigs that I can, you know, really focus on that piece of it. I I'm feeling closer. I'm getting closer to it. There's actually an internship that I did last this spring semester. I found out from Dr. Shamburg, and they really enjoyed the videos that created along with Jeff, that's in cohort 10, that they are wanting us to work part time. So that's really exciting to be able to work part time for an organization creating educational videos. I don't know where that leads. So, I'm excited about wherever this adventure takes me.

Himani Nigam: Oh, that is, that is very nice, congratulations! And I'm excited to see where that takes you. And then maybe (we) get to see some of your work.

Christina Pipkin: Yes, absolutely. I would love to share it. And the coolest part is that it's with New Jersey Council of Inclusive Education. So, it's right up your alley in regard to New Jersey curriculum and the needs of the students in your state.

Himani Nigam: Oh, yes, right!

Himani Nigam: Alright. My second question is, can you give me an example of a challenging concept or skill that you've mastered on your own?

Christina Pipkin: Yes, so I'm going to pivot from videography and photography and talk about driving. When I was 16 my (car), it wasn't my first car, my 1st new car. My very 1st car was a 1985 Lincoln town car, and I don't know how familiar you are with those, but they're long big cars we used to call her the boat. But after that I got a stick shift, and so I only had one lesson from the dealer that sold it to us. We took a couple of hours practicing and the parking lot, and that was literally the only lesson I had on how to drive a stick shift, and so I had to keep practicing. I had to get comfortable with stalling. I had to get comfortable with accelerating on a freeway. All of the parts of driving a stick shift. I kind of had to figure out by myself. Because I only had, I swear, I feel like it was only like 2 hours of training. But now that's my preference (now). If I could, I would always have one. I don't right now. I have a jeep, but that is one of my dreams to always have a stick shift as one of my vehicles that I have in my garage.

Himani Nigam: Well, I hear you, because when I started driving in India, I too used a (stick shift). In India, still today you get more stick shift than automatic cars. So that's what I started (with), but I drove for a very little time there. Barely any, I would say. So yeah. But I know what you're saying. You know it's not easy using a stick shift, and you know, I don't think I can use it anymore because I did it for such a little time. And now for the last 20 years I've been driving an automatic. So, I don't know if I (can) ever do it?

Christina Pipkin: Well, you know they say it's similar to riding a bike. Right? So even if you haven't rode a bike in a while, as soon as you get on(it) it's just second nature. So, I think I do feel similarly about that, because you do remember the feel of the car, you can feel when it's about to stall, you can feel, you know, that it needs to change to the next gear, so I think you could still do it.

Himani Nigam: I don't know, but maybe I'll try it. You know, when I go to the next time.

Christina Pipkin: Yeah.

Himani Nigam: That that would be some experience. I'll tell you about it.

Christina Pipkin: Please. I was wanting to hear all about it.

Himani Nigam: Alright. (My) next question is that what kind of online resources do you use when you're learning some kind of a new skill?

Christina Pipkin: Yes. So specifically, with photography and videography, YouTube is my go-to. That is YouTube university. I use it all the time. There's so many great videos of people doing the skills that I want to learn, and they're doing it in a way that they're going step by step along with speaking to me, telling me what it is. They're showing me how to do it. And that's how I learn about. You know the type of cameras that are the best right now for the types of shots I want to get. I even use the tutorials that are automatically built into a program. So, for video editing, photography editing. I spent some time going through the tutorials looking at their help videos. Because I feel like that's their best practice. They're trying to show you how the program is intended to be used and how to get the desired outcome that you're looking for. So, I really do rely heavily on YouTube. And then the self-help tutorial videos that are provided through the programs that I use.

Himani Nigam: What would we do without YouTube? I feel it's like there is nothing that you cannot find on YouTube. Like (there's)a video about everything.

Christina Pipkin: Yeah, everything.

Himani Nigam: Sometimes, you know tutorials that comes with apps or different programs, they can be wordy. And they have all this extra information that sometimes you can't understand. So, you even have videos to explain those.

Christina Pipkin: Yeah, agree to your point. You're absolutely right. I remember there was a program that I was using through Adobe like the Adobe suite. They have all sorts of different programs. And there's one where you can kind of do web design. And I'm not interested in it. But I was thinking, it's a part of the app sequence that I have. Let me try it. And their tutorial video was saying things as if I were an advanced web designer and I had no clue. I had no idea and so I ended up going to YouTube. And after hearing it explained on YouTube, I quickly realized that I don't want to even try. Like that's not even the program I even want to attempt. And I think if I hadn't seen it from YouTube that I probably would have tried to stumble through it. And I don't

want to say waste time, but I'm glad that I saw it, and then went to YouTube to get a better understanding of it to decide. Nope, I don't want to try it anymore.

Himani Nigam: Yeah, I hear you, of course. Alright. Now tell me, have you ever engaged in any kind of collaborative learning outside of school? And what do you think? How do you find this experience when you compare to something that you've learned by yourself?

Christina Pipkin: So, I volunteer a lot. I started volunteering at a very early age. I even was on a volunteering scholarship for undergrad because of the amount of volunteerism that I was a part of, so philanthropy is always a part of me, (it's) ingrained in me. One of the organizations that I regularly get to support in the Houston area is called Diverse Works, and it's an art-based organization. But it's all sorts of art, and it connects me with all different walks of life. You know, people that are really young, that are starting out, people that are older, that are seasoned and really established. And that have art galleries and art showings sculptors, weavers, animators, people that do animation all sorts of different people. But the level of collaboration is so magnificent. I get so much energy and inspiration from them that I enjoy it. I really do enjoy having opportunities to connect and collaborate with other people. So, if I'm thinking about which one would, I prefer. I don't necessarily know if that is even a(n) option for me, because I love them both equally. I love a time that I can problem solved by myself, work through a project, meet a deadline. But then there's something to say about connecting with someone else, to get their perspective, get their ideas. That synergy just makes the program or the product, the project even more fulfilling, because everybody's ideas are now being able to be shown through that finished piece. So, if I had to choose. I think I do like collaborating with other people a lot. I do enjoy that.

Himani Nigam: Wow! This sounds like a great organization. And what is your role in that organization? What do you do?

Christina Pipkin: I'm strictly a volunteer. So, for every event that they have, they might have me support in a different capacity. Sometimes it's the one the person that is actual greeting the people, so checking them in, signing them in. Sometimes it's kind of being their escort. So, walking them around like (a) tour for them. There was this one event that we've done that I participated in recently. It's called the Luck of the Draw, and it's an auction. So, they had, I don't know, over 200 pieces of artwork that artists had given, and then they have an auction, and people get to bid and buy the art. And so, in that particular event, all of the artists were there. So, I got to meet the artists. I got to hear their inspiration and their thoughts behind the work that they did as well as I got to meet the people that were buying the art. Like why piece speak to you. And so (you meet) all sorts of people. You have, you know, educators, you have people that are in corporate America. You have people that are entrepreneurs and just connecting with them. You meet them, and then you get to connect and have other opportunities to do projects and collaborate with them, so I never have the same job when I volunteer with them, but I always get the same kind of enjoyment and experience of meeting new people.

Himani Nigam: That must be such an amazing experience. And I can totally see you doing this. You're such a people person that you know, you probably work better when you're collaborating

with other people. And you know, I feel collaborating with other people gives you a new perspective on things, you know a different way of looking at things too.

Christina Pipkin: Yeah, I definitely agree. Especially because you know, sometimes I feel very hyper focused on education that I don't realize that there's all these other types of jobs and careers around. And just being able to hear about it and (to) hear how people ended up into that field is fascinating to me.

Himani Nigam: Yes, for sure. Alright, I won't take a lot of your time. I have only one last question. So, you know we are all learning all these skills independently. And you know, sometimes it takes up a lot of time. So how do you stay motivated and disciplined when you're learning something on your own?

Christina Pipkin: That is something that I have to put in like I have to intentionally do it. I have to schedule time for it. I'm not as good as I would like to be. With that I have to consider myself care. I'm a lifelong learner, and part of that self-care is learning new things, and if I don't factor in time into my day or to my schedule to learn something new, I'll just keep pushing it off, pushing it off procrastinating. And I found out that I work better when I have a lot going on at one time, because then it's helping me to stay on track. It's helping me to stay organized. It helps me to actually meet the deadlines that I have out for me.

Christina Pipkin: But you know, to answer your question. It can be difficult, you know, as an adult, you have responsibilities, you know. I know you have children and married and have a job. And in school there's so many things that demand our attention that sometimes I have to be intentional to slow down to say, "No, I need time to learn this, I need time to practice this". Give myself that space and schedule that time, and to make sure I don't forget about it.

Himani Nigam: Right! It is hard to find time and to be disciplined. I mean, I would like to be to, you know, be disciplined. But, you know, life happens. You know, adulting like we were talking yesterday. Right? So, there's something that needs your attention. And then you have to leave what you're doing. We don't have the luxury of being in that spot and trying to finish it in one go, you know. I think that's what my most challenging part comes, it's that something happens. You have to leave what you're doing to do something else or something else comes up, which is more important at that point. So, you have to put push things aside and then getting back takes a lot of effort.

Christina Pipkin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Get trying to get back into the groove or get that same momentum back.

Himani Nigam: Right!

Christina Pipkin: Kind of almost as if you're starting all over again right? And you finally get into a groove, and then something distracts you and (you're) like, "Oh, man, I have to get back".

Himani Nigam: Yes, it's like going back and redoing it again, you know it almost feels like that. Yes!

Himani Nigam: Alright, Christina, thank you so much for meeting with me and doing this interview. It's been a pleasure talking to you and getting your perspective on things, and you know I am so looking forward to seeing you in next week for the Summer Institute. And sharing some actual space with you rather than just meeting you online and talking to you on the phone.

Christina Pipkin: I agree. I can't wait. Thank you for this time. These are great questions. We'll get to chat more, and you know, learn more about each other. I'm so fascinated about lots of things that you have as your experiences.

Himani Nigam: Alright! Thank you so much. I'll see you soon. Bye, bye.

Christina Pipkin: Bye.