Interviewee: Lester Olson [O]
Interviewer: Jennifer Juszkiewicz [J]
Transcriber: Elizabeth McGhee Williams
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Transcript

J: This is the interview with Lester Olson. Alright, so our first couple of questions are really about how you got into RSA. So when did you join, and what did you see in the organization when you first got here?

O: Well, I would've joined probably in 1987 or '88. I know my first conference presentation that became part of a proceedings was the talk I did in '88, and it came out in 1989. It was held in Arlington, and Charles Kneupper was still alive. He was a very welcoming and hospitable host for the conference. At the time, I was just starting out as an entry-level assistant professor at the University of Pittsburgh. It was my first job out of graduate school. I was sort of amazed to have gotten the job because it was one of the two or three most desirable jobs that year, and I was a graduate student on a very competitive job market from Wisconsin-Madison with a strong committee and a strong dissertation, but even then the competition for the jobs was really keen. And as an entry-level assistant professor I was feeling my way into the discipline, and I had already belonged for many, many years to the National Communication Association, which for most of my career I've considered my intellectual home, and the regional organizations like ECA.[1] Somehow or another I learned about the RSA conference in Arlington and submitted a paper on political ideology in the nexus of metaphor and narrative. It was accepted. So I went, and when I was talking with Charles Kneupper, he made a point of letting me know that they published selected papers from the conference. And then as now, being published matters a great deal to somebody who is early on in their career, so my ears perked up and I submitted my paper, and he accepted it. So it became a part then later of my tenure dossier and the like. I think what I most remember, though, is the hospitality, the sense of welcome, the sense of recognizing that there was something important about investing in the next generation of scholars. And that's been a part of RSA for as long as I've been a member. It's part of what I very much appreciate about the organization, and I'm struck by how thoroughgoing the mentoring aspect of RSA has been. We still do particular things to make life more possible for graduate students and first-year or entry-level faculty. So on the board—and it's a small board, there are only, I believe, ten elected members, eight of whom are faculty and two are students, and each conference has some kind of set of events for the graduate students. And the topic varies. The graduate students take the lead on it. And while I was on the board, which would have been between 2010 and 2014—so it's much more recent—when I served on the board, one of the topics that they chose to work on was how to prepare your dossier and how to prepare to go out onto the job market. And one of the grad students at Pitt, a young man named Tom Dunn, came back and he was so excited about what he had learned and about how valuable this was. And he immediately made the information he had gotten available to

[1] Eastern Communication Association.

all of the graduate students in the department so that they would be better positioned to go on the job market. And I think the mentoring aspect has, over the years, really grown in some interesting kinds of ways, and not only for the graduate students. Another example that comes to mind that is especially, I think, important to the graduate students and much more recent that I participated in—I'm not recalling the exact year, it would have been around 2011 or '12, I guess—but it's called the research network. So at the conference there's actually a session where students submit papers that are in progress, and those papers are assigned to small working groups led by a more senior scholar who has expertise in the area that the paper is about. What that does is it makes it possible for the graduate students to meet four or five other graduate students whose interests are related in some way to their project, and they actually visit for a sustained period of time about each and every person's paper, and the people who show up are expected to have thought about and read about each other's papers in terms of its strengths and weaknesses and how to take the paper to the next level. So there's mentoring at that level. If you were to look at the program, and I left my copy upstairs, but there are sessions for academic leadership and mentoring on how to be an academic leader, which maybe I should be attending because I'm a department chair these days. There's a session for people at midcareer where—and oftentimes when one becomes an associate professor, careers tend to stall just a bit. So there's a session just on that. There's a session at the institutes sometimes, actually quite regularly, there's a session on women and academic life and how to negotiate the profession. So I think that early tone that Charles Kneupper set really has abided, and it's developed in some ways that make RSA quite a worthwhile place to be. It's informative, it's useful, it helps people at various stages of their career move along, and I think that's one of its real strengths.

[07:04]

J: So you've focused beautifully on the mentorship goal as being one of the early ones that has continued. Are there any other projects or goals that you remember from those early days, or even from later on as you became more involved, that you think characterized RSA specifically in the field of rhetoric or academia?

O: Well, I don't know when it came about. I was chatting, actually, last night with some people. I was sitting in the lobby—and one of the things that is lovely about RSA is you can sit in the lobby and see friends because it's a small enough conference still that people show up and you can greet them and see them, and you don't have to plan with great care through some labyrinth to find them. I was chatting last night with some friends about one of the things that I hope does not change about RSA in the future, and I was expressing some curiosity about how it came about because I don't really know. There's a structure to RSA where every other year there's an institute and every other year there's a conference, so it's a biennial conference. I love that about the organization. I think that that combination of alternating the institute and the conference does some really powerful and important work. The institute—which I've actually led a workshop at an institute when it was held at Boulder, Colorado—the institute has two types of sessions. There's something called a seminar, which is a five-day session that

meets for five consecutive days all day, from early in the morning into the afternoon, that is led by at least one scholar but oftentimes a team of scholars, two or three sometimes. And then there are workshops over the weekend that are two-and-a-half day sessions, and I led one of those on pedagogy. So people apply, they submit their materials. There's a fairly high level of participation, mostly by graduate students but some faculty. And what happens is, by thinking together about a selected topic and a body of materials and having those sustained conversations, people leave the institute having had a chance to delve into a topic that they might already be quite knowledgeable about but they want to learn more, or it might be a topic where they're really curious and it's a chance to learn about something that they're not as familiar about. And generally, those sessions culminate in people talking about how they might form groups to develop panels for the conference, so it really produces conference panels that are well-worth attending. They tend to be very substantive, and one of the byproducts of both of those is people form networks where there are mutual interests. You know, as people are carrying on conversations in the seminar or in the workshops, they're identifying folks that have similar interests. The other thing that is sort of special about the way the institute and the conference work together is generally—at least when I was on the board, and I think it's still the case—they tended to give priority to proposals or ideas that had people working across disciplinary or field boundaries. So oftentimes, people out of communication would be working—in rhetoric and communication—would be working with people who were working, say, in rhetoric and English composition, or maybe philosophy or some kind of period studies. And so what that meant was people might not know one of the leaders but they would know the other one, and they would apply and then you would get this mix of people across the kinds of sociologies that they were more familiar with sort of reaching out and learning from and contributing knowledge to folks out of very different sociologies from the ones they were familiar with. So when the conference comes around, you have oftentimes two or three sessions on related topics, and those networks then continue. And part of what I really like about RSA, and I've come to think of RSA as my intellectual home, is that the panels are well-worth attending. They're not thrown together rapidly, and there's also a kind of norm that we tried to establish. Initially, it was that you would not do more than one paper. I think there's been some flexibility on that in that now they're saying perhaps two. But what it means is people really put their energy into that paper, and you don't have this really bloated conference with uneven work because people have overextended themselves by offering too many different kinds of topics to develop well in a reasonable timeframe. My own bias is to actually somehow structure the application process so that you may not have your name on more than two submitted proposals. I'd love to see that happen because one of the unfortunate consequences of having multiple sessions: not only does it affect the quality of the session, it bloats the conference in ways that makes the conference a less attractive place to be. There are other organizations I've belonged to and spoken at where they structure it even more rigidly, like the Organization [of] American Historians. You can only present a paper once every other conference, and on the other year, you can be a respondent or a chair. So they really want people to show some restraint. For many, many years, I've been mentoring our students where I try to impress on them that it's not necessarily a good thing to have a whole lot of conference presentations because when one comes

up for tenure, what can happen is the chair can say, “Would you please cross-reference these with your publications?” And that’s indeed what I experienced when I came up, and fortunately I could do that because it made it possible for me to show that they weren’t just appearances. They were actually presentations that produced abiding work. So it can be a bit double-edged to have four and five conference papers and have only maybe one of them turn up into print. I’m kind of meandering here a bit.

[14:09]

O: [takes a sip of water] I guess I would like to add one more thing that I’ve been thinking about in connection with this business of the mentoring and the hospitality and also the institute. Because one of my commitments that I put in my short abstract when I ran to serve on the board was to do more to foster lifelong learning, and it was actually a much more provocative proposition than I expected. [laughs] There was some pretty lively engagement about it because I proposed that we open the institute to faculty at all levels to submit. And I thought that that would do a couple of highly desirable things. Instead of experiencing an older scholar as a sort of settled and established thing that’s there to help with the next generation’s learning, you get this notion of people still being curious and wanting to learn even if they are fairly far along in their career, and it would foster some intergenerational relationships where it’s not sort of the expert and the neophyte but people learning together. And there was actually an immediate response from a very dear friend on the board who was opposed to this idea because she wanted it to be for the graduate students. And, you know, a case can be made for that because you only have limited spaces; you want to make sure that graduate students have ample opportunities for the learning. And so in that clash of views—if there were spaces available perhaps we could include some more senior scholars as learners in the institute. Krista Ratcliffe, who was the president, actually weighed in in favor of the proposition, and it had the benefit of actually growing the institute because you had more applicants and you had more sessions. So it grew it, but I think even more importantly, kind of disrupts that stereotyped way of thinking about older persons where people can be learning together. And they might be curious about something where along their way they haven’t had the chance to think about that topic. So after that was approved, I actually participated in both a seminar and a workshop. I participated in the seminar on rhetoric where Bill Keith and Roxanne Mountford were doing the history of rhetoric,[2] and Bill Keith kept thinking about rhetoric as speech and Roxanne Mountford, who I think of as a good friend, was looking at composition. So I applied, and I was admitted, and it was a huge seminar; there was a lot of us around the table learning together. And of course my work is in visual rhetoric, so it turned out I actually wound up joining the conversation in some ways, but also learning a lot because I wasn’t thinking about rhetoric in such discipline-specific kinds of ways with regard to its history as speech or composition. So that was a lot of fun. And then I took the workshop on Queer Activism that one of the faculty, Erin Rand at Syracuse and Jeff Bennett who’s at Vanderbilt now, they were running. And it was enthralling to be able to sit together. And in that session, I’d say about a third to a half of the scholars were more senior. They

[2] I.e., Rhetoric in/between Communication and English, a seminar Keith and Mountford led at the 2013 RSA institute in Lawrence, Kansas.

weren't your typical graduate students. So people were curious; they wanted to learn. A chance to stretch and think, and knew enough to join the conversation but by the same token saw it as an opportunity to keep active and learning and thinking in perhaps some not-so-familiar ways. I would like to see more of that. I would like to see more efforts to have moments where there is intergenerational thinking together about sessions. I'd like to see something like that in the conference, for example. Where people are actively thinking and learning together. There's a sense in which it's likely that the visiting scholar who works from the International Society for the History of Rhetoric, that that's a part of what that does. And so I think there is already something like that, but my hunch is that if people spend some creative energy on that, something worthwhile could emerge. Mentoring's important, but it's also important to think of oneselves as colleagues learning together about particular things rather than that kind of asymmetry that can typify the teacher-student relationship where you have the older and younger person. Does that make sense?

[19:07]

J: It does. What I hear you talking about in a lot of different ways is how RSA brings together rhetoricians of different subdisciplines, of different generations, of different experience levels and tries to create a sort of coherent community.

O: Yes, and I think part of what we're seeing is, like, on the panels, we're increasingly seeing for panel submissions people working across those more discipline- or field-specific sociologies. So you'll have composition folks collaborating with communication folks on topics of mutual interest, and I think that's fairly exciting. It is still the case that you do have panels where, "Well, this is a communication rhetoric-type panel, this is a composition-type rhetoric panel, these folks know one another." And that's a good thing too—it's not like one should necessarily take priority over the other—but getting some of that mixing and sharing and thinking across some of these sociologies is something that I value about the sociology of RSA.

J: You've touched on a couple of different moments throughout where you remember particular meetings or particular things happening in RSA. I just want to give you an opportunity to think back on your time in RSA to maybe one moment that struck you as characteristic of what it meant to be a member of RSA. Is there a particular moment that you are like, "Oh, that's such an RSA moment"?

O: Hmm, hmm, hmm. Well, one that comes immediately to mind I would associate with Krista Ratcliffe, who I thought was just—she was a superb president. I can think of another moment as well when David Zarefsky was president. I think part of what I value about RSA is a conscious effort to make the organization accessible to people who are interested in contributing as leaders. And so one of the things that Krista Ratcliffe did, and it doesn't seem like that big a thing, okay [laughs], until you start thinking about it. But what she did is she had all of the committees, and the various board members who were in charge of whatever, write down the procedures and the process, the how-to of the work of that particular component of RSA. And that doesn't seem like—that's a

much richer thing to do than I think might appear to be the case on first glance. [laughs] Because when you write down the procedures, when you write down the process, when you talk about the constitution of the group or whatever, it makes it possible for the organization's working to be more open and transparent to others. So what it means is that you don't have to know somebody to access those roles and have them mentor you through. What you can do is you can turn to this written-down procedure. It doesn't rule out getting in touch with a previous officeholder who did that work to get some clarification or some suggestions, or a problem arises and not everything can be put into writing, but it really opens it up to help make the organization much more diverse, and across a lot of social differences, not just one or another social difference. So that by having the procedures written down, it creates a much more open and participatory kind of organizational culture, and I thought that was a quintessential RSA moment: that sense of we can make this group more diverse in ways that it doesn't necessarily hit us over the head that we're making this group more diverse. [laughs] It does really consequential, meaningful work along those ways, but it's not an adversarial sort of way of doing that. And some of that work can become adversarial. And sometimes being adversarial is a good thing; I don't mean to undervalue confrontation and being adversarial in some contexts. But that struck me as just a very savvy and quintessentially sort of RSA moment where she was doing profoundly consequential work that didn't seem all that dramatic. It didn't call all that much attention to itself as consequential. Another example that comes to mind for me is when Michael Leff passed away. I had the good fortune to know Michael Leff for many many years. I knew him since 1984 when he was on the faculty at Wisconsin-Madison.[3] He moved from Wisconsin-Madison to Northwestern. He was president of RSA, and he died while he was in office. There were a few ways in which people responded to that that I think are also quintessentially RSA. One was when there was a leadership void—somebody needed to plan the conference—David Zarefsky who had really finished his work as president, and it's a lot of work, he stepped up to assume the responsibilities again with the gratitude of the rest of the leadership. So David Zarefsky actually served two terms as RSA [president], and there is a kind of a spirit of stepping up when you know there's a void and work needs to be done.[4] And David—I really got to know, I didn't know him all that well. I knew him by reputation, by his scholarship. But he runs a mighty fine meeting, and he has his agenda broken down into the number of minutes per topic, and you know it ahead of time, so if you are doing a presentation as a part of a board member, you know you've got 15 minutes to do your report on such and such. And I tell you, we get more done in half a day than some of these organizations get done during daylong meetings, you know? [laughs] Because he really monitors the time, and it doesn't feel rushed. That's the other part of the magic of it, is he was able to move meetings along. So he stepped up in that way. And I guess the other aspect of Michael Leff's passing was when people who wanted to honor him raised funds for the Michael Leff endowed fund, which is used to fund graduate students coming to conference. So there again, you've got, you know, there's a lot of mindfulness about people who are

[3] Upon further reflection, Olson notes that he had known Leff since 1980, which is when Olson began his PhD studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

[4] Olson notes that Jack Selzer also deserves recognition for his extensive service to the organization following Leff's passing.

just starting out. And conference is an outrageously expensive event, so being responsive to that became a way to remember Michael Leff, but it also became a way to honor him by making it more possible for students to be able to afford to attend. So I think those would be a couple of quintessential moments.

[27:33]

J: There have been a few times as we've been talking where you have talked about changes that have happened in RSA over time: how it's expanded, how it's grown, and maybe some policies that you would like to see be cemented that are now not, about how many times you can present. Can you make any predictions about how you think RSA will change looking ahead? Look into your crystal ball?

O: Well, it's hard to know. I have actually thought about that a bit, and I think one of the strengths of the organization is that you have a lot of creative people who are willing to reconsider suppositions and reconsider how things are done. Two examples just during the time I've had a leadership role that stand out as examples of recent changes: One was the *RSQ* special issue, where the organization [is] taking a role in agenda-setting. So instead of just being a passive repository or a passive vehicle, actually trying to shape research agendas. So *RSQ* has a special issue, it's one of the five issues per year, and this has gone on for a while now; it's not been that long, probably about a decade I would guess.[5] What happens is people submit proposals for a special issue. Typically, the competition is quite keen. The year that Arab Lyon and I did one on human rights rhetoric,[6] there were nine other proposals or eight other proposals—it might have been nine including ours—so we really felt honored in being entrusted in doing it. But the special issue has a kind of topical focus. Ours was on human rights rhetoric. You might have them on rhetorics of place and space or, you know, whatever is the competitive one that year. What's exciting about that is there's kind of an agenda-setting function. And then along those lines, more recently, the society has sponsored a book series through Penn State.[7] I think that's a very exciting development too, and Leah Ceccarelli has been doing a really fine job as one of the editors for that. I was invited to apply to be an editor and I applied, and so it was a source of a disappointment for me that I didn't get to do that. But Leah has been doing just a splendid job with it, and so they exercised really great judgment in having her be the editor, and we're seeing wonderful books coming out that, again, there's a kind of an agenda-setting element. I would like to—and now, your question was about the future and I'm talking about the past. [chuckles] But what I would like to see happen, and I was talking about this last night, is in that spirit of agenda-setting, maybe tweak the conference in a particular sort of way. I'm not a real fan of the super sessions, I will own. I do like the idea of sustained period, but what happens is these are marvelous panels and they're all at the same time. So you have to pick one! And I'm like a kid in the candy shop. I want three or four bodies, and generally this is one of those conferences where you already want three of four bodies. But when we have in the same timeslot all of these

[5] *RSQ* began publishing an annual special issue in 2010.
[6] Arabella Lyon and Olson's special issue, published in 2011, was volume 41.3 of *RSQ*.
[7] I.e., Penn State University Press's RSA Series in Transdisciplinary Rhetoric.

wonderful super sessions, I'm not so keen on that. So if I were looking into my crystal ball and trying to change something, what I would want instead is maybe an embedded topic or a theme that helps set a research agenda or crystallize a research agenda. So, like, some that occurred to me—I was thinking about this last night—I would love to see one on visual argument. There have been a couple, two or three, special issues on visual argument. I've not written directly on that myself; I do have a piece where I talk about topics, a way of thinking about argument in terms of the universal *topoi* back in my 1987 article on Ben Franklin.[8] But I would love to go back and revisit that and maybe contribute to such. But see what other people do, thinking about visual argument. Or maybe something capacious like, you know, metaphor in theory and practice. And just at every timeslot have a panel during the conference, just have one panel, so if people want to follow a particular topic and really have a conversation that is a sustained agenda-setting kind of conversation where for two, two-and-a-half days, you are thinking about rhetorical invention, say, rhetorical invention across the centuries. And you could have people doing stuff on the Greeks and the Middle Ages and the Renaissance treatments. Because they do change a lot. And what would be cool is that people could attend them, and they could attend all of them [laughs] rather than having to make this real hard choice. I still don't know which of the super sessions I will go to this time around. [continues laughs] I'm just not a real—and I mean, I have been on, I think, three or four super sessions. Because I chaired the book award committee; we did one to honor the books. I was on one on human rights rhetoric at one point. And they feel real special to do, and they do important work so I don't mean to—but the problem in my mind is having them all at the same time. Structurally, that part just doesn't work for me, so I think that's one thing. And I would like to see more agenda-setting in terms of the intellectual life of scholars. More of that sort of thing.

[33:34]

J: You've talked [clears throat] a lot about the position of graduate students and junior faculty and how they become mentored into this organization—this is not exactly one of the questions on the list.

O: That's okay.

J: Do you see that changing or growing in the future based on what you see in academia as a chair of a department, as someone who has worked with graduate students a long time? The situation for graduate students has changed in the past fifteen years. Do you see RSA helping graduate students adjust to that new academia?

O: Mmhmm. Well, I think it already in some ways is because it has these sessions before the conference, where they do the mentoring sessions. So I think whether the organization is doing that as effectively as possible is another question. I think the politics around adjuncts, for example, and the overreliance on non-tenure-stream faculty, and one of the things I'm curious about as a chair is to figure out how does one

[8] I.e., "Benjamin Franklin's Pictorial Representations of the British Colonies in America: A Study in Rhetorical Iconology," published in volume 73 of the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*.

counter a kind of economics where you have relatively—pardon the language—disposable labor rather than a real investment of a long and durable character for the next generation of scholars. So I think there's a lot to think about with care there, and that certainly merits some kind of sustained thought. Maybe having a task force. You know, the board could ask a task force to tackle that head on. There are already some movements along those lines if you look at the program for this conference. There is already some work on the notion of what—how to handle the whole situation about the overuse or the dependence on adjuncts. Adjuncts do have a place in terms of unexpected curricular needs or developments, but that's become a site for exploitive labor practices in my opinion.

J: Is there anything else that you think we haven't covered about RSA as an institution—its history, its future, its current state—that you want to share? I know you've brought notes.

[35:57]

O: Let me think. I did bring some notes, and I want to check and see. [pause, papers shuffling] I think there are a couple of other things I would comment on. One is the role of pedagogy in the organization. I think I mentioned that when I participated in one of the institutes, I did a workshop on pedagogy, and it was an experiment of sorts that has more or less disappeared in some basic ways in terms of really centering on teaching. I think I actually had to recruit people to enroll in it when I did it, I rather suspect. It feels like there is an undervaluing of pedagogy. I mean, I'm glad we did it as an experiment. I enjoyed it. I did it because I was committed to doing more with pedagogy, but I'd like to see the organization—I think Roxanne Mountford is of this opinion as well—do more actively in cultivating our work as teachers of rhetoric. A lot of the work that Roxanne and Bill Keith have done is really about the history of that teaching, so I don't want to put too fine a point on it, but a lot of the work on pedagogy such as it is—and I know you looked a little perplexed there. There are sessions about the *history of* or how it was done, but I'm talking about the actual in-the-classroom doing of the teaching experience and the kinds of things you can do to create, say, a supportive and welcoming learning environment. Like, there are exercises one can do on the group constructing ground rules for interactions. If you're going to be doing work on rhetoric that is confrontational or has an agonistic quality, you know, now that we're in the Trump era and we're seeing overt racism, having difficult conversations about how as rhetoricians one can deal with that in a culture where there are still people who are deep in denial about the realities of racism and homophobia and the like, heterosexism and the like, ableism. You know, you name the problem-bias. So as teachers, there are things that rhetoricians could delve into in order to actively create learning environments where public argument or public discussion or direct disagreements could be enlightening and enable us to work across some of the meaningful differences. One of the things that I've tried to do on a couple of occasions in the conference format was I tried to pull together panels that would feature a recent book dealing with particular forms of social differences, where I actively wanted people who did not belong to the groups to be thinking alongside of people who were profoundly, in their bodies, impacted by significant asymmetries of

power, privilege, and resourcefulness. So on one occasion, I did a session honoring—it was the publication of Chuck Morris's book called *Queering Public Address*,[9] and that was a very important book, and what I did was I brought in panelists who do not self-identify as queer in any respect, but I also had panelists who do, and I had them talking on a panel, each giving a position paper to sort of start a conversation. Another example of that would be when Karma Chávez and Cindy Griffin's book called *Standing in the Intersection* came out.[10] It's a book that centers on Kimberlé Crenshaw's work on intersectionality, which you may well be familiar with. It's sort of interesting to me that the same issue of the *Stanford Law Review* also had a piece by Mari Matsuda on asking the other question, which is I think is every bit as important, and there hasn't been all that much uptake of Mari Matsuda's work on asking the other question.[11] But in any event, when the book on intersectionality came out, I did a session on it and once again, I had a number—most of the participants were women of color because intersectionality works particularly well for women of color, but I also had people who were not parts of these communities so we could, again, get conversation across some of the asymmetries. I think RSA could be a space where, both in the research and in the teaching, we actively work to get some of those conversations across significant differences of power, resourcefulness, and privilege so that it becomes a healthier culture more generally. I hope that makes sense, but that's one thing I would add. I guess a second thing I would add is I'm a little concerned about what sometimes seems to me to be enthusiasm about the size of RSA growing. I'm not one of those "bigger is better" sort of people. I kind of like a midsized conference, or a smaller conference, because you can actually find people and chat with them and sit down. You know, I've seen the really large conferences, and they get to a certain point where it becomes highly impersonal. Sometimes, not to be pejorative about it, but it has an almost corporate feel where it's about the power in the larger culture. The concerns about raising funds for the sake of having lots of funds, rather than—you know, one of the organizations actually started charging book exhibitors to display per title of books, and that's not the kind of thing that RSA does because we want people to be able to sit down with acquisitions editors, especially in the earlier stages of their careers because they need to place their books. And it's not necessarily the case that bigger necessarily is necessarily horrible. The MLA,[12] I've spoken at it a couple of times, they have an amazing book exhibit area, and the book exhibitors are there, and you can sit down with acquisitions editors. In fact, you can spend the whole day just going through it. But there's this whole question of how do you [pauses] keep a sensibly proportioned conference and not worry about growing its membership, but instead keeping the quality really high. That can devolve into, "Well, do you want to exclude?" And it's like, "Well, no!" [laughs] But there is a sense of, you know, try to keep it at a size that retains that sense of it being a welcoming, hospitable intellectual community where people can sit

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9 The full title of the collection, edited by Charles E. Morris III and published by the University of South Carolina Press in 2007, is *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Historical Discourse*.

10 Chávez and Griffin's collection *Standing in the Intersection: Feminist Voices, Feminist Practices in Communication Studies* was published by SUNY Press in 2012.

11 Issue 43.6 of the *Stanford Law Review*, published in 1991, includes both Crenshaw's "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color" and Matsuda's "Beside My Sister, Facing the Enemy: Legal Theory out of Coalition."

12 Modern Language Association.

and think together about the ideas that matter to them. And maybe on that note, I should be quiet. I have a feeling we may be running a little over.

[44:24]

J: Nope, we are right on time.

O: Are we? Okay.

J: But I think that is still a wonderful note to end on.

O: Okay. [laughs] Thank you.

J: Thank you so much.