

Sue Hamilton, UK

Director of the Institute of Archaeology, University College London

On her upbringing: “I had a father who particularly had no sense that gender was a problem. He gave me this second-hand book on Archaeology and he said if I must do this, I might as well aim for the top.”

Mentors: “I do have a strong female mentor, an older academic, who has always provided a good bit of advice and suggested different things. She told me to put myself in for this directorship. I was quite surprised but I decided I would do it and that I’d give it the best try I could. There were three men and myself put forward and here I am.”

On overcoming challenges: “I did make a strategic move in terms of my research and my specialisms. I changed into landscape archaeology, which is a big topic. I noticed that most prominent male archaeologists working in the UK would dig things like hill forts. So I went and worked on the Easter Island. I had no experience working outside Europe. I just did it and I raised very large research funding for it. By that stage I just had the confidence to do it. I tried not to change my personality but I strategically chose the research that I moved into.”

“I think resilience is a very important word and I think it’s important for anybody who has to stay successful and manage. Why am I resilient? If you tried to achieve things on your own and you think, “Well, I’m not going to rely on a partner, I’ve got to do this on my own” you have to become more and more resilient. I was determined that I wouldn’t be considered to have my job, my status or whatever because I had an association with x or y. I wanted to have it ascribed to me. I believed: “I don’t need someone else to do this, I can go and do this”. You need to be determined at the start of your career but the more you do that, the more you build up that resilience.”

Reflections: “I think my trajectory is based on my character but I think it’s also perhaps a gender trajectory.”

Impact: “We’ve done things like representation of women visually. We had loads of portraits of males around the Institute so we’ve started getting portraits of females who have done great contributions to this Institution.”

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