

137. Boris Teske: Jump Around

Gavin Kelly

Hey, everybody you're listening to Beyond 1894 this is the official podcast of Louisiana Tech University. My name is Gavin Kelly from the Office of University Communications, and I am joined for this episode by Mr. Boris Teske. He's the College of Liberal Arts liaison librarian, Boris, I think a few people just refer to you as the librarian. I think people who know you for your quote, unquote fanatics in part of Louisiana Tech athletics that just say that's the librarian who's always at the games. But appreciate you making time and appreciate you being here. Oh, thanks for having me so. Boris, are you? Where are you from?

Boris Teske

I'm originally from Ohio. My father late. Father was an English Professor and Associate Dean at Oberlin College. I

Gavin Kelly

mean, well, I guess we'll get into it. But like you ended up here in Little old Rustin from Ohio.

Boris Teske

So well, Ohio, by way of where, with the remains of the family are in, actually out in the Pacific Northwest, Olympia, Washington. He was in 1970 when we moved the founding Dean of Arts and Humanities at that school, their public liberal arts college. I went to college out there at Whitman, a private school, and had a career clear across the country at a variety of different libraries, and have been here at Tech since 2003

Gavin Kelly

did you How was making a career out of library, library science, that sort of thing was, when did you realize that that was the career you wanted to pursue? What point was sort of that switch flip for you?

Boris Teske

Well, I'll be honest with you, it's it wasn't my first career choice. I aspired, maybe to follow in his footsteps or or just some so many of my mentors. Growing up as a college brat, I aspired to be a professor. I did my graduate work in history with that intention at North Carolina back in the 80s, and completed the MA additional coursework, and would have been all but dissertation had I gotten over the hump of the doctoral qualifying exams, and in being unsuccessful with two attempts at that, I found myself matriculating to the excellent library school there just a couple of doors away, also on the Chapel Hill campus. I was so lucky. My former advisor in history was owed a favor by a ranking member in the library school, and he kind of got to cash that in by getting me mid year admission in January of 87 instead of having to wait till the following fall. So yeah, that said maybe disappointed at not getting to profess history, but still to be a faculty member and to pursue academic librarianship. And I had mentors in the library school, the necessary seminars and other coursework to prepare me for that an internship, yet another thesis, and landed my first job in Montana the following year, back in my

when my career, I guess, started in the spring of 1990 so I've been at this for a while, and I've been a tech since oh three. So the majority of my career has been spent here.

Gavin Kelly

Okay, so chart, chart your path, because I'm here in North Carolina, Montana, all

Boris Teske

over the place, sounds like it. So, you know, born and raised Oberlin College, college brat, another college brat at the Evergreen State College went to Whitman College in Walla, Walla, Washington, okay, four years there. That's actually where my interest in college basketball started. Centenary here. Think of centenary, okay, think of a school like Whitman didn't have a proud basketball tradition. We'll talk hoops later, I'm sure. But my classmates, uh, won their conference title for the first time in 36 years in my junior year. That got me starting to watch early, uh, March Madness, which was only just starting to get televised, and catch on back then, who should be the finalists in two years running, in 81 and 82 but North Carolina, I had already committed by the time Michael Jordan hit the shot heard around the world, and it went out that way. Yeah. Then good, nearly seven years, I guess, at Chapel Hill with the history degree matriculating to library science. Yes, I guess I've been at many different types of institutions, Montana, state, my first job, a land grant university that didn't quite work out for me, publish or perish, perished instead, after just a short three years, landed in the University of Wisconsin System at their whitewater campus that is their, shall we say, former. Normal School, kind of like their Northwestern State, very exciting, terrific career prospects there. Learned a lot, lot of opportunities. Spent the whole six years still no pub, still no tenure. Coordinator of instruction in the library of the main library at Temple University in Philadelphia. My one urban university experience that didn't quite work out. The irony there is, even though it wasn't a faculty gig, that's where I finally published something, but that's what allowed me to search yet again and land here with the liberal arts position and some of the most productive years of my career, and indeed, at long last, earning tenure in 2009 Yep.

Gavin Kelly

So was there any sort of like outward appeal to the Louisiana Tech job when it came about to the thought of being here, living in rust? I mean, I'm sure there was some history, but, or was it more like my career is taking me here and it's just an opportunity? I'm gonna go a lot

Boris Teske

of the latter. I must say, getting to travel so much both the conferences, to give papers and attend and get keep up with my profession, but a whole lot of job searching all over the country. This was one of the regions that both seemed to appeal to me and where some of the vacancies just happened to turn up. Maybe it was the resonance of the North Carolina degrees that mattered. Just sheer luck of the marketplace. Perhaps I knew that a middle sized school, public university would probably be the best fit for me. I was having the most luck at such places, and so yes, a lot of those things conspired to make this very appealing. And it must have been mutual, because I landed the gig,

Gavin Kelly

yeah, and also it must have been for a good reason, because you're still here. So, you know, you

Boris Teske

know, I felt good enough about things that even a couple of years before going up for tenure, I bought a house that I'm still living in next month, 18 years, longest I've been anywhere.

Gavin Kelly

Okay, very good. Yeah, with all the traveling and moving around that you mentioned early on, it sounds like Rustin has been, by and large, the most stable place

Boris Teske

putting down roots after quite an itinerant of vagabond, there

Gavin Kelly

you go. So you said you started here in 2003 have you has your job mostly been the same since then? How has your have your duties changed? I mean, it may be even a tougher question, how has the university changed, and how has that

Boris Teske

affected your job? The scope on paper, many of the same sorts of things, but maybe some different nuance, maybe some different overarching purpose, I was privileged to be in very early on, in oh five on the library's reorganization, addressing some perceived issues. And the upshot was that's what created our liaison model of trying to be more closely connected to the colleges. I always had wanted to be a subject librarian. I'd been a selector in assigned subject fields. That's not quite the same thing as what's supposed to be the baked in organic organizational culture of working more intimately and collaborating, not just developing a clientele with your college faculty and students, but really a partnership wherever possible. We aspired to that then and in oh seven, when the tech 2020, strategic planning came around, trying to respond to the college's action plans with, and I got to be an architect of that. I had had similar experiences before participating in something like that, but try to shape and direct what we were doing, getting us past a very traditional mold of general reference into something more tuned in to the to the colleges, which to this day, with our ongoing strategic framework, things are a little slower this school around here. We are halfway through a decennial process, and we still don't quite have all of the i's dotted and T's crossed. We'll get there, but yeah, so many of the duties, similar, recognizable. Certainly, the library's changed. We've become a considerably more digital operation. And that's that's fine. I I'm interested in the the curricular work, the research, teaching and learning, and it happens to be ever more published and distributed digitally. So be it, plus we all learned with the pandemic, sometimes we have to zoom. We can't even meet in person. We need technologies to communicate. So just adapting some of those things, in some cases, slow to adapt, always limited with budget, of course, and an. Able to buy the books, be they digital or bound volumes. Other things though, that maybe don't particularly cost, but that we can still do in teaching and in service, I've been privileged to be on a graduate council for all but one of the last 19 years that really should rotate more than it has, but again, we've been shorthanded, sure up until very recently. Now, thank goodness, due to some recent hires, we have our full complement of all five College librarians for the first time in quite a while, IPC, the undergraduate curriculum committee, quite a few of those years as well, a lot of service on Senate, formerly University Senate, now one more year in the on the inaugural Faculty Senate, and no less on executive committee as well. So yeah, contact with the university, excitement

about the present administration. What that may hold for us at the moment, as we speak, at the behest of the provost, the registrar's office is working with the same vendor who is giving us our website, our web platform, modern campus, the what formerly was called curriculum. Now modern campus curriculum platform is designed to automate and streamline the whole new course, proposal, new program, proposal process for years the library has been, maybe not as well treated in that the opportunity to address information resource needs has been overlooked. This new system will allow us to be one of the check boxes that so that you know, many new courses aren't going to have a research component or expect access to library resources, but some may, and the idea is that the college faculty involved, whether it's new course or whole new program or certificate or degree, will consult even before the proposal is formally made with their college librarian and perhaps discover some shortfalls in resources and how to remedy them. And the new platform we're given to understand will document that so all the signatories approving up the chain will be reassured that that there is not a mess that to clean up a problem in their wake, that whether the library is given some funding to buy this, and that whether the college is often maybe need to chip in or it's a shared expense, Looking forward to seeing how that works, and all of that is concomitant with what we've been trying to aspire to with, with liaison for a great many years.

Gavin Kelly

It's easy to say that there's something completely okay with kind of just doing your job, but also it sounds like for you, kind of stepping up and being a voice and being a champion of needed change, and speaking on behalf of the library, and having a vision and helping piece together visions from other people and helping things not just stay as good as they are, but get better, has been something that's been important

Boris Teske

to you before. We now have thanks again to the provost office, a Faculty Development Office taking shape. We had something like that a number of years ago here in the tower, I attended some of those meetings. Linda Ramsey ran some of that, for example. And at the time, one of the common readings was the Who Moved My Cheese book. Remember that? One never heard of that. It was meant to sort of Jar loose some folks who were stuck in their ways, resistant to change and so forth. And I always disagreed with that premise. I'm not some passive stander by whose cheese is getting moved. I'm the guy moving the cheese, and I've always been privileged to be right there. I'm not an administrator. Never really aspired to that, but I've been, you know, leaned on and asked to help in a great many of these sorts of initiatives and and my fingerprints are on a number of them. And so, yeah, and previous administration, present administration, those are special experiences and privileges to get to have

Gavin Kelly

very nice, very nice. Well, thanks for sharing some of that work history with us, some of the nature of your job. But yeah, let's talk hoops. Let's get into sports. You can be spotted at more Louisiana Tech athletic events than just basketball. But I think it's obvious where your your biggest passion lies, and that is with basketball. You mentioned finding that early on. And then, of course, North Carolina in the 80s is a heck of a place to be. If you're gonna I got to watch Jordan play, yeah, if you're gonna have a love for bad. Basketball flare up. Talk about, let's go back to the start with that too. Talk about where

that came from. What about those early days of discovering a love for the game? Like, where did that come from?

Boris Teske

Well, again, growing up teenager in western Washington. What happened in 1978 the late Lenny Wilkins recently expired. Slick watts with the Whitehead band. It was the Seattle SuperSonics won an only national title, but long before Oklahoma City, right? So I started to take an interest in the game. At that point, my father had raised me on baseball. I'm a third generation Red Sox fan. It's one of the dreadful things about that last week of October and 86 here, I had my second and last bite at the apple with the history qualifying exams for the doctorate right after the blown saves and Bill buckner's legs. You know, when it rains, it pulls they say, you know, why is it that, you know, I'm a Red Sox fan and I'm a North Carolina fan, and I have to put up with Duke and the Yankees. You know, there

Gavin Kelly

are many other being gray Boris, there are

Boris Teske

many rivalries, but I dare say you have a hard time topping those. So yeah, that's how far back that goes. And at the modest level of watching in like a high school gym, my little college team play, and then to see what life can really be like I was there when the Dean dorm was getting built. It was right behind the graduate dorm. But I never saw a game in there. It was always in in Carmichael never went to see a game at Duke. Went to actually, I got course credits at Duke with a with a seminar over there, and I did go to camera, never to see a game, but I think it was for a concert. But yeah, you see what big time college hoops can be like to this day. I think it was back in the Danny green national championship team that they started to play jump around as one of their warm up tunes, they would turn the lights out and seeing an entire stadium, the whole Dean Dome, just rocking, whole student sections. They were wise enough to put the students in key places in the hall, the wine and cheese crowd, as they used to say, didn't necessarily have the Jack Nicholson court sites. And that's that's when that caught on for me. This is not something in my music repertoire that sure it's now my ringtone.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, it's your anthem, dude. I was gonna say, I think, I think it's kind of become your song

Boris Teske

people in the library where Boris's phone is ringing again. So that's where that comes from. It's all this is how the big time game is done. This just comes naturally. And some folks have asked before in previous interviews, somebody writing for the Tech Talk, even for for the rest and daily leader, where this all started? Let me give you the origin story again. Got here in oh three. It wasn't until oh four that I went to my first game. A couple of colleagues said, you know, we also play women's basketball here. That's nice. I mean, Carolina has a good women's team too. I don't really follow it as closely, but well, okay, if you know, I'll tag along. And what game was it? It was the triple overtime win over Iowa. We're banging on share backs on the con. The concourse. Little did I know that? You know, again, my, my partner in crime up there keeping the the reps honest is my former boss, the emeritus dean of the library, Mike DeCarlo. He just happened to have the, you know, the vacant seats there, so he, he and

Rebecca moved over one and let me have the corner so that I could continue to stand that's a huge part of this.

Gavin Kelly

Yes, and that was the first, so the first women's basketball game you went to the first lady that was

Boris Teske

where that was, that's where my addiction started, and where I realized that's a terrific vantage point. And Mike, I think, had been there for quite some time. He goes back to the earliest days of the program, and I'm a relative newcomer, I'd like to think I've paid some dues since then. I think so. But that's where that comes from. The freedom of movement. Folks have asked me, How do you get the students more involved? And it's occurred. Sometimes I'd recommend more of it. Pull those seats back from the court side and create a mosh pit. Get letting the students get on their feet the way everyone is at the end of a close game, like at the end, you know, fourth quarter in a football game. And it's organic. That happens exactly that, you know, that dreadful overtime loss that should have never had, right? It was stolen from us. Yeah, whole, whole crowd is on its feet. No one is saying, down in front, why aren't you standing right? You know, and you know everyone is supposed to stand at the tip off in the tack and perhaps not take their seat until the first basket is made. I just, I just declined the take it until half time, so that that's where that comes from, and that wow, that the students, other fans, feed off of that, that the cheerleaders, the Regal blues on the opposite side of the court, it just seems to work. And whatever I can do to help with just the energy level for for fans, especially students, to realize it's okay to cheer, it's okay to offer some constructive criticism to the officials and so forth, the transcript is always clean enough for a fourth grader. Yeah, right. And often there are little Urchins at my feet after watching sometimes, just reminded the last game, a relation of Tommy McClellan's came by and wanted to pick not just for him, but a little selfie with me and Mike, but for Tom's son, Lawson, the he had been such a fan, and still to this day, thinks that Mike and I are how a fan is supposed to behave and emulates that I saw footage of him trying to Do the same thing when he when they all went off to Vandy. That's, that's where some of this comes from in the whys and wherefores. Yeah.

Gavin Kelly

Well, it's safe to say you've seen a lot of tech games over the years, but I think, like I said, I think people, some people, just refer to you as that. That's the librarian that's at every game. And you know, he's the cameras on him. And if you ever want to look for some energy, just look towards him, looking at towards him, look in his direction. And I think also that it wouldn't be a stretch to say that in your quote, unquote, day to day life, that you're maybe quiet and a little bit more reserved, just like naturally. But then that whistle blows. I think, I don't think it's a Jekyll and Hyde situation, but I think you kind of tap into another level there. So let's talk about that.

Boris Teske

Yeah, I thought something like that might present us all. That's an understandable conclusion. It's, it's a, it's a Clark Kent Superman kind of thing. And I get that. But, you know, mild mannered, quiet librarian gets to cut loose at the game, and that's not wrong. But what I would argue is, and here I here, I align with, with Dr Henderson. There's nothing wrong with being a full fledged passionate academic, correct and a passionate fan. I object to the false dichotomy between athletics and academics that you you

can't possibly be a serious student as a jock, or that you can't possibly be a professor who goes to games enthusiastically. No, no. Clearly, my whole life says otherwise. And I would say that, well, when I get to do what little teaching I get to do. I don't have a not a teacher of record. I don't have a grade book, but course instructors will request instruction sessions, like a guest lecture from from the librarians. That's part of part of our work in responding to the course's needs. Sure, individual consultation even better, but to do so with groups, and often we're just lucky to get a single class period and offer instruction that we call the one shot. Well, I pack an awful lot into that. It may not be fashionable to be the sage on the stage anymore, but when you only get that one go at it, then that's how I provide my academic support, and I am shot out of a cannon there, too, and some of it will stick, and some students will follow, and ideally, they'll follow up, and some do, many don't. And I can only hope, as I ask them at the end of each session, did you pick up on something new, the invariably, the unanimously, they they learn something. But yeah, this is no droning, you know, Bueller. Bueller, none of that. So that the tone, the energy, I hope, is still there, there's there's a lot to do, just as there's a lot to do. And not taking any plays off. Yeah, and obs and observing, and, as you say, keeping that energy level up, maybe more in common than the con, the natural, obvious contrast that you're that you're ending at.

Gavin Kelly

Let me ask you this too, because, I mean, like I said, it goes without saying, but I've said it once, and I'll say it again. You've seen a lot of tech games, that's a lot of years of what happens to every college basketball program of ups and downs, right? And it doesn't matter if we're up by 50 or down by 50. You're giving it your all at your seat in the stands. And my question is like, how do you keep. The downs as energetic as the UPS. How are you? How do you stay committed to the idea of being a giving fan in the moments where maybe it's not so easy to be a giving fan?

Boris Teske

Well, certainly, since the marvelous statue of honoring coach bar, more was was unveiled. I look at that motto, and I've been, I think, practicing it that, you know, leave it on the court. Well, I leave it on the tarmac, and, you know, what's there. I know that I have affected some games outcomes. Oh yes, all those shenanigans of waving off free throws, there have been, and I will keep count of first halves where I might have had something to do with it. There have been some close games, yeah, where, okay, you know, I wasn't on the court, but, and that's the issue, is everybody should be, yeah?

Gavin Kelly

Because imagine what the difference that would make. If you want one person going crazy makes a difference. Imagine the whole arena, right?

Boris Teske

One of my cherished possessions quite some years ago. It's a little card that, to paraphrase, says, if we had 5000 fans like you, we'd have one of the strongest home court advantages in the country, and what an honor to be addressed that way. But yeah, that's what it's after. This isn't some he wasn't hugged enough as a child kind of thing. This isn't about me. This is just sort of, at the very least, I hope it in effect, not gives permission, but, but allows folks courage to, you know, I hope it's contagious, as it has been for me, and especially students who may be, you know, what's the culture here? And I just, you

know, some of this was, this may be more true with the textures a lot of fans beginning to gray, as I have been even quite a few years back, who remembered the glory days, and well, maybe a bit much to ask that energy level from them. So for somebody a little younger to come along and and carry out. But yeah, and getting the student, getting the students to the games at all, and I hope that helped sell some tickets rather than drive people away. No. Mike and I are pretty clear about, you know, we're glad if folks flattered, usually, usually humbled that they should mention us in the same breath. And some of the honors that we've been given, some of the high points, like December 11 of 2011 the Mississippi State game, the textures, I mean, they're they're often honorary coaches. We simultaneously got to be in on the pre game chalk, the walkout of the team, the first time out and a half time presentation of, I don't know, anybody's gotten a trifecta like that. And so my goodness for what little, for what little we do so that, yeah, we've been rewarded hand over fist and and just to be, you know, part of the process and to be able to share in the community, I'm still just amazed that we had one of those pre season events. And I shame on myself, I missed this this year's. I never miss anything if I'm if I'm not at a home game, or because I'm ill or very seldom have a scheduling conflict. I recall one when skip Holtz was still with us. He had just beaten Southern Miss, and there was a, it was supposed to be a dunking contest, and so we Tommy McClellan, skip Holtz, champ, and I got to be the the judges. And to my amazement, you know, and Tommy McClellan is a judge and champ, yeah, champ, and skip Holtz, who's just beaten our arch rival. Yeah, good for him. And Mr. Boris test in the place goes, not, you've got to be kidding me, you know, no, I'm flattered and and that that helps stoke me a little bit. It's, it's become a responsibility, yeah, kind

Gavin Kelly

of an expectation, for better or worse. Well,

Boris Teske

and, you know, let's be careful. Now, I just turned 65 last summer, so a How much longer can I keep up quite the same level I don't want to hurt myself, and again, hoping that others will take up the

Gavin Kelly

charge. That's that's a perfect segue I got. I got one more question for you, and you're kind of, we're dancing around it, so I'm going to go ahead and get into it. You mentioned kind of the quote, unquote. Next Generation, and you mentioned kind of being fearless when it comes to being expressive and being a good fan. And you know, it's selfless. It's not about seeing how many times you can get on the video board, but it's about energy and it's about affecting the outcome of the game. I think we're in an era where, maybe for younger people, especially, there is an expected sense of nonchalantness, shall we say, about about most things, how you know, it's kind of, it's only cool to do certain things, if it's ironic, or if you know, if you don't take it too seriously. And I think that, coupled with the digital age of you can watch every sports game everywhere in the world on your phone or whatever, there's attendance problems everywhere. And there's also this sort of having a fear of being perceived a certain way by acting a certain way in public, and worrying Well, if I stand up and hoot and holler and have a good time, what are other people going to think so, even going to the game at all, it's you got to pull that out of some people. And then, once they're there, how do you keep them engaged? How do you help them be good fans? So if you were pitching to somebody, maybe a current student and upcoming students, the quote, unquote, next generation, and you were encouraging them as to why,

not only is that good, but it's relatively easy to do. What would you say to someone who kind of needs that? That talk?

Boris Teske

First of all, it helps to know and love the game, even if you're sitting quietly. Begin by watching it play by play. It's not just some activity going on. Oh, like a lot of the children at a football game, there's busy scurrying around. They aren't following what's happening on the field, and there's some of that goes on in the tack with the little Urchins running around, fine, but follow, follow the game. Follow the plays and read the the energy in the room. When, when does your team need you? These are your classmates. This. This is your school, school pride, perhaps. And when? When is it time to exalt at a terrific play? What is the key moment in the game, when that sixth man or 12th man, your sport that Oh, to read the room that way and to know when. And you know, again, the media guy, you know when, when, leave that club in the bag, you know. And Mike and I are, please don't play Sandstorm in the first quarter, you know, wait for when it may, or pump it up, or whatever those that's ammunition. Keep your powder dry, and you may very well need it. Or if you don't let it, let it ride. This is a laugh. Take it easy. But that's the first step. Is you're a good student in your discipline. How about being a student of the game? And then take that to the All right, then I'm not just sitting watching this passively. I'm faced, and it's happening again this season. I'm going to miss a Duke Carolina game with the broadcast. What do I choose to do? Stay home and watch the rivalry of my own alma mater, or come see the men play? I show up, right? Because I can yell at the TV, but somebody's actually listening. And it may, it may make a difference. So there's that. There's the collective power. Why wait till commencement to be together as a group in the tech How about that for an idea, you know? How about appreciating that as holy ground with each and every game, and especially the ones to man, that's not just the tack, but the Joe and the love shack, similar things there where, okay, the camera comes to me, maybe at that crucial moment, but that's just because I'm predictable and that they know he'll, he'll do this, guarantee. I almost feel like an organ grinder monkey. But that's okay, because it's not about me and my ego. It's, it's about the result and and possibly, and, yeah, there are times, you know, eighth inning, and absolutely, I may have very, very little left, and say, you still get windmill clapping from me. And same thing with, you know, some other clutch moment in a game, so, and that's choreographed well, and that it doesn't stay on me, it needs to move around the room. And you will see that the young man a number of years back with the Hulk Hogan tear away shirt as I keep as I told Mike and others since then, I couldn't have been prouder of him if he were my own son. You know, that's the kind of thing that we're looking we've had some student fans like that. But let's not just, you know, pick this one, that one. Let's. Start to see it as a more collective enterprise, then we get to what that card I cherish says of imagine 5000 people making even even a fraction of as much supportive noise and following the game, knowing the key moments and responding, and it gives a lift to the players. I've been told this anecdotally that it matters to the players, the support, and it has that effect. We know that from all sports, pro and college, that that that matters and privileged to have been any part of it,

Gavin Kelly

yeah? Well, beautifully said, and thanks for taking some time to talk to us about that. Yeah, I think, I mean, you're a staple here. It's going to be the day you have to, for one reason or another, hanging the boots up. It's going to be a sad day. But this episode is going to come out the day before Thanksgiving. We, as a collective, here at Louisiana Tech are thankful for Boris tesk And what he's given to the

institution, from a library standpoint and from an athletic standpoint, to the teams that work hard to earn the energy that that he puts out so Boris, thank you again for making time for us, for being here, for sharing your story. We appreciate it. And Go Dogs and go lady texters,

Boris Teske

I appreciate you all too. Thanks for having me.

Gavin Kelly

Thank you for listening to beyond 1894 please subscribe and rate us wherever you listen to podcasts. For more information about this episode, you can check out our show notes beyond 1894 is produced by Louisiana Tech University's Office of University Communications. You.