This morning, I was reading the Chicago Tribune over breakfast, and I noticed that the graphic elements in their illustrations had an oddly familiar quality. After a moment, I realized why: the Tribune has begun using symbols that look like the “buttons” one finds on Web pages. Somehow, the thought that one of the world’s great newspapers would choose to ape the riotous, indiscriminate designs of the Internet, instead of the other way around, depressed me. This inspired me to consider the most irritating and appalling aspects of the Internet culture, which I’m going to share with you now through my columnist privileges as chapter chair.

Web Pages: With each passing day, Web pages grow ever more headache-inducing, filled with flashing icons, animated effects, and text that scrolls pointlessly across the screen like a garish Times Square marquee. Plain backgrounds have become passé; now, it’s expected that every Web page will have a hideous background pattern that renders the text nearly illegible. Could you stand to read a book, magazine, or newspaper that was printed this way? Then there are the Web pages consisting entirely of images: if you’ve turned off the images to speed page loading, you see nothing at all. To me, the Web often suggests the graphic-design equivalent of a child banging on a piano keyboard: I constantly see juxtapositions of shapes, colors, and patterns that are done simply because they can be done, and not because they improve or enhance communication.

Online Libraries: I was amused last year when I saw an IBM television commercial which claimed that Indiana University, my alma mater, had digitized its library (not the wondrous Variations Project we’ve all heard about, but the library—presumably all continued on p. 2
eleven floors of the main library, and
maybe all the branch libraries too). I
was stunned, though, when I re-
ceived an IU alumni newsletter in
which this nonsensical advertise-
ment was mentioned proudly. The
digital library is a myth! Not only is
it economically impossible (imagine
trying to scan every page of millions
of volumes), but it would require the
virtual abolition of intellectual prop-
erty laws. This myth has,
unfortu-
nately, created unreasonable expec-
tations in the minds of our clientele:
more than once an NIU student has
expressed disappointment that the
information he or she desires is only
available in a mundane physical
book. Even worse, some library us-
ers simply disdain print resources,
deliberately limiting themselves
only to what is available online.

Internet Addiction: With increasing
frequency, I encounter people who
are simply whiling away their lives
at their computers, wandering aim-
lessly from one Web link to another,
bickering endlessly on Usenet
newsgroups, or chatting with other
people who are doing the same non-
things. Try using Internet Relay Chat
if you want to see net-addiction at its
worst. Initially the concept seems
amazingly liberating: talk to people all
over the world in real time, abolishing
barriers of time, space, and culture! In
reality, what you find are many people
who can’t carry on a conversation, be-
cause they have nothing in their lives
beyond the flashing screen before
them. The only time that IRC users
become animated is when they’re dis-
cussing their computers, or the merits
of various Internet providers or chat
dlent programs.

Librarians and the Internet: For me,
one of the most distressing aspects of
the Internet is that it’s a kind of anti-
library; a vast, chaotic world of undif-
ferentiated information, which must
be navigated using euphemistically-
named “search engines” that are far
cruider than the worst online library
catalog. We have a responsibility to
offer information that is better-orga-
nized and of higher quality than
what the World Wide Web offers; yet
we allow our catalogs to be de-
graded by poorly-conceived retro-
spective conversion projects, pro-
vide clumsy, anti-intuitive OPACs,
and allow administrators to treat
cataloging as a commodity where
source and quality are irrelevant. In
the midst of this, librarians have
embraced the Internet with a level
of technolust that is embarrassing to
behold.

Recently I discovered a wonderful
book called Silicon Snake Oil: Second
Thoughts on the Information Highway,
by Clifford Stoll (New York: Doubleday, 1995). Stoll is no Luddite
technophobe: he’s an authority on
computers of all kinds. In Silicon
Snake Oil, he exposes the empty promises of those who would have us believe that the Internet is the answer to all our information needs. I also recommend The Emperor's Virtual Clothes: The Naked Truth About Internet Culture, by Dinty W. Moore (Chapel Hill: Algonquin, 1995); although Moore doesn’t have Stoll’s awesome technical credentials, his insight into the social and psychological implications of the Internet is remarkable. I encourage everyone to read both these books as an antidote to the Internet hype that pervades our lives.


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Preliminary Information about the Annual Meeting

Leslie Troutman
MLA Midwest Chapter Program Chair
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

MLA Midwest Chapter Annual Meeting
Notre Dame University
31 October through 2 November 1996
“Celebrating the Past...Preserving for the Future”

This fall we will celebrate the Midwest Chapter’s fifty-fifth anniversary. The central theme of our upcoming meeting is the importance of the past and of those who have gone before us in the profession. We will honor their contributions to the many and varied music collections across the midwest.

In keeping with our theme, Friday morning will be devoted to the issue of materials preservation. The Preservation Department in the Notre Dame Library has moved into a building devoted entirely to preservation activities. We will have a tour of this facility, which may include the new deacidification chamber. The Notre Dame Library’s programmatic approach to preservation will be discussed and the music collection, currently undergoing the deacidification and preservation process, will be highlighted.

Friday afternoon will be devoted to the chapter’s history. Jean Geil (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), chair of the chapter’s Ad Hoc Anniversary Steering Committee, will comment on her research into the MLA Archives. Therese Zoski Dickman (Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville) will report on the chapter’s Oral History Project. Interviews were conducted with past chapter officers, heads of large midwest music libraries, and other individuals active in the chapter.

Festivities continue Friday evening with a banquet at the Morris Inn. In addition to good food, there will be some mild (and perhaps wild...) amusements to keep us entertained.

Saturday morning, the Public Services Committee will be sponsoring a session on bibliographic instruction. Moderated by Bonna Boettcher, this session will examine some of the successful music BI programs in the chapter.

The meeting will conclude with the Midwest Chapter version of the Town Meeting held at the national meeting in Seattle this past February. The document that emerged from the MLA Self-Study process commented on the chapters in several places. The Midwest officers would like to continue this dialogue at the chapter level to get your feedback about where we are going. It seems appropriate that as we look back during this anniversary celebration we also look forward and consider the chapter’s future.

Join us in our celebration!
The Ad Hoc Anniversary Steering Committee is Hard at Work!
Jean Geil
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Over the past three years the Ad Hoc Anniversary Steering Committee has been formulating plans for a gala anniversary celebration at the fall meeting in Notre Dame to honor the many individuals who have contributed to Midwest Chapter programs and activities during the chapter’s first half century of existence. We hope that a number of former members of the Midwest Chapter will be able to join us for the weekend. The agenda includes an evening banquet, special entertainment, and one or more program sessions devoted to historical topics; for further information, refer to articles in this issue by Leslie Troutman (program chair) and Therese Zoski Dickman (coordinator of the chapter’s oral history task force).

All chapter members are able to contribute to the success of the upcoming conference in the following ways:

- Notify Steve Sundell (University of Wisconsin-Madison) of retirees or other former members of the chapter who should be invited to attend;
- Contact Allie Goudy (Western Illinois University) if you have access to early photographs, programs, or other documentary material relating to chapter history or to the history of individual midwest music libraries;
- Contact Therese Zoski Dickman (Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville) if you know of individuals who might be willing to be interviewed in conjunction with the chapter’s oral history program, or if you are willing to conduct and/or transcribe taped interviews;
- Encourage retirees and other former chapter members in your area to attend this “homecoming” event by reminding them of the dates (31 October through 2 November 1996), by offering rides, or putting prospective attendees in touch with others who may be willing to share hotel rooms.

See you in October!

Oral History Anniversary Project Well Underway
Therese Zoski Dickman
Oral History Anniversary Project Coordinator
Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville

Music librarians in the Midwest Chapter have been busy contacting other colleagues and recording their recollections on tape in recent months. As of late April, a total of eight oral history interviews had been conducted: Allan P. Britton (by Therese Dickman), Dominique De Lerma (Eunice Schroeder), John Druesedow (Ralph Papakhian), Dena Epstein (Victor Cardell), Rick Jones (Therese Dickman), Marion Korda (Karen Little), Kurtz Myers (Dena Epstein), and Kiyo Suyematsu (Lynne Weber). To date, three of these interviews have been transcribed: Allan P. Britton, Dominique De Lerma, and Kurtz Myers. Thirteen other interviews are anticipated by the end of June. Excerpts from the available oral history interview tapes will be featured in an audio-visual presentation about the history of the Midwest Chapter to be given at the October meeting at Notre Dame.

The interviews focus upon the individuals’ involvement in the MLA Midwest Chapter and their professional experiences in music libraries throughout their careers. Glimpses of the evolving music librarianship profession are gained and will be preserved ultimately in the MLA Archives at the University of Maryland at College Park. The participants in the oral history project, both interviewer and interviewee, are helping to preserve that segment of history which we as chapter members have created and continue to create. May the project serve as a starting point for future use at later anniversary meetings and as inspiration to future generations of music librarians!

Your participation is welcome. If you would like to interview someone as part of this oral history project, please contact Therese Zoski Dickman at (618) 692-2695 or (tdickma@siue.edu). Photographs of former meeting sites, music libraries (any vintage, old or new) or music librarians from the chapter are also welcome. Photographs should be sent to Jean Geil, Ad Hoc Anniversary Committee Chair, and be clearly identified on back.

May 1996 Midwest Note-Book
The Midwest Chapter Enters CyberSpace

Jack Stewart
University of Kentucky

Notwithstanding Steve's ominous pronouncements in this month's "From the Chair . . ." column, the Midwest Chapter's Public Services Committee is pleased to announce the impending creation of the chapter's site on the World Wide Web! The site will be ready 1 July 1996, and its Uniform Resource Locator will be http://www.uky.edu/OtherOrgs/MLAMidwest.

It is anticipated that the site will initially contain:

• Information about the Midwest Chapter;

• Hyperlinks to other MLA chapter sites and the national site;

• An image map of the Midwest Chapter, with hyperlinks to music libraries throughout the given geographic area;

• HTML (plain text) and Adobe Acrobat PDF file format versions of the MLA Midwest Note-Book.

However, the continued success and usefulness of this site will be entirely dependent upon the submissions of MLA Midwest Chapter Members. If you have any ideas regarding our site's content, please send them to Lew Bowling (Public Services Committee Chair), Eunice Schroeder (Public Services Committee Chair-Elect), or Jack Stewart (coordinator for the chapter's Web site).

Watch MLA-L and the September 1996 issue of the Midwest Note-Book for more information about the site.

Administrative Structure of the Midwest Chapter

Officers
Chapter Chair: H. Stephen Wright (Northern Illinois University); Past Chair: Leslie Troutman (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign); Secretary/Treasurer: Robert C. Delvin (Illinois Wesleyan University); Newsletter Editor: Jack Stewart (University of Kentucky).

Ad Hoc Anniversary Steering Committee
Chair: Jean Geil (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign); Bonna Boettcher (Bowling Green State University), Allie Goudy (Western Illinois University), Martin D. Jenkins (Wright State University), Sue Stancu (Indiana University), Steven Sundell (University of Wisconsin—Madison).

Bylaws Committee
Chair: Beth Christensen (St. Olaf College); Allie Goudy (Western Illinois University), Jack Knapp (Oberlin College Conservatory), H. Stephen Wright (Northern Illinois University).

Cataloging Committee
Chair: Mary Huismann (University of Wisconsin—Whitewater); Chair-Elect: Grace Fitzgerald (University of Iowa); Richard Burbank (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Paul Cauthen (University of Cincinnati), Lynn Gullickson (University of Northern Iowa), Ruth Inman (University of Illinois at Chicago), Mark Scharf (Washington University), Anna Sylvester (University of Missouri—Kansas City).

Ad Hoc Handbook Committee
Chair: Allie Goudy (Western Illinois University); Laura Gayle Green (University of Missouri—Kansas City), Sue Stancu (Indiana University).

Membership Committee
Chair: Robert C. Delvin (Illinois Wesleyan University); Kathleen Abromeit (Oberlin College Conservatory), Anita Bealer (Minneapolis Public Library), Keith Eiten (Central College), Sue Stancu (Indiana University).

Nominations Committee
Chair: Martin D. Jenkins (Wright State University); Karen Little (University of Louisville), Judy MacLeod (Southern Illinois University).

Preservation Committee
Chair: Therese Zeoli Dickman (Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville); Anita Bealer (Minneapolis Public Library), Marlena Frackowski (Indiana University), Karen Little (University of Louisville), Steven Sundell (University of Wisconsin—Madison).

Public Services Committee
Chair: Lew Bowling (University of Kentucky); Chair-Elect: Eunice Schroeder (Lawrence University), Kathleen Abromeit (Oberlin Conservatory), Robert Acker (DePaul University), Bonna Boettcher (Bowling Green State University), Holly Borne (Butler University), Beth Christensen (St. Olaf College), Robert C. Delvin (Illinois Wesleyan University), Linda Hartig (University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee), Jack Stewart (University of Kentucky).

Publications Committee
Chair: Kim Armstrong (Illinois State University); Perry Bratcher (Northern Kentucky University), Grace Fitzgerald (University of Iowa), Laura Gayle Green (University of Missouri—Kansas City), Ruth Inman (University of Illinois at Chicago), Patricia Legg (Plint Public Library), Anna Sylvester (University of Missouri—Kansas City).
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