The 71st annual meeting of the Midwest Chapter is scheduled for October 11–13, 2012 in Naperville, Illinois, located 28 miles west of Chicago. Your co-hosts for the meeting are Michael Duffy (Northern Illinois University) and Jill King (DePaul University) with a stellar local arrangements committee already planning an enjoyable conference. Accommodations will be offered at the Country Inn & Suites at a rate of $79 per night (single or double rooms, plus tax) with complimentary amenities including a hot breakfast, Wi-Fi throughout the hotel, parking, and local area shuttle transportation. The hotel also features beautiful lobby space for relaxing with friends and colleagues, as well as a lounge bar. Transportation from Chicago's O'Hare or Midway Airports can be arranged with American Taxi or Flag Limo for flat discount rates of $45–55 each way. Naperville is also located on the Metra commuter train line for convenient transportation to Chicago's Union Station.

Meetings and program sessions on Thursday afternoon and Saturday morning will be held at the Country Inn & Suites. Friday's sessions will be held across the street at Northern Illinois University's state-of-the-art conference center. For lunch and dining nearby, you’ll find a variety of restaurants within walking distance and a locally-owned cafe and coffee shop inside the NIU conference center.

Meeting planners are considering a tour and concert demonstration of Naperville’s Millennium Carillon in Moser Tower, a unique 16-story structure with a 72-bell instrument spanning six full octaves. Other local attractions include the award-winning Naperville Public Library, named a “5 Star” Library by Library Journal and ranked #1 Library in its population category by the HAPLR Index; the
Greetings! It seems like it was just yesterday when many of us were gathered in Dallas for the MWMLA meeting there—we had a great turnout and a great conversation! We talked about increasing support for our scholarship program and increasing our chapter membership, among other things. Two MWMLA members in particular had a big part in making Dallas such a great meeting overall. Morris Levy (Northwestern University) served as Program Chair and Laura Gayle Green (University of Missouri-Kansas City) was Assistant Convention Manager. Also, Paul Cary (Baldwin-Wallace College), Paula Hickner (University of Kentucky), and Mark Scharff (Washington University in St. Louis) joined the MLA Board of Directors. Susannah Cleveland (Bowling Green State University) finished her term as a Board Member-at-Large, and Ruthann McTyre (University of Iowa) completed her term as Past-President of MLA.

Though it feels like Dallas was just yesterday, our fall meeting will be here before you know it. Michael Duffy (Northern Illinois University) and Jill King (DePaul University) are the co-chairs for our upcoming chapter meeting in Naperville, IL, to be held October 11–13, 2012. They have secured our hotel and meeting space and are working with Paula Hickner to create an intriguing and informative program. See the Call for Proposals on page 4 and be sure to read more about the meeting in this issue of the Midwest Note-Book.

As you enjoy the continuing spring renewal, think about ways we can grow MWMLA and MLA. Why and how are they important to you? How can we let non-members know of these benefits? What else should MWMLA and/or MLA incorporate to remain relevant and useful as professional organizations?

Cheers,

—Kirstin Dougan, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Member News and Notes

♪ Kirstin Dougan (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) received the Lenore F. Coral IAML Travel Grant to help support her attendance at the 2012 IAML meeting in Montréal, Canada.

♪ Pamela Pagels (Indiana University) received the Kevin Freeman Travel Grant to help support her attendance at the 2012 MLA meeting in Dallas, Texas.

♪ Sheridan Stormes (Butler University) was chief editor/selector for the “Music-General” sub-section of the 2012 edition of *Magazines for Libraries*.

New Members

**Rebecca Richardson**  
Research and Instruction Librarian,  
Murray State University

**Tara Wood**  
Head of Circulation,  
Stickney-Forest View Public Library

**Maddie Dietrich**  
Student, University of Wisconsin-Madison

**Carol Lubkowski**  
Student, Indiana University

**Greg MacAyeal**  
Assistant Head of Music Library,  
Northwestern University

*Welcome to the MLA Midwest Chapter!*

Renewal Reminder

Annual dues are only $12 for regular members and $6 for students and retirees. The membership year runs from 1 October 2011 to 30 September 2012.

To join or renew, visit the Midwest Chapter Website at [http://mlamidwest.org](http://mlamidwest.org).

Click on ‘Membership Info’ for a membership form. Send your completed form with a check payable to Midwest Chapter, MLA to:

Jennifer Matthews, Secretary-Treasurer  
University of Notre Dame  
1224B Hesburgh Library  
Notre Dame, IN 46556

MLA Annual Meeting in Dallas

Over 50 people attended the Midwest Chapter meeting in Dallas on Friday, February 17, 2012. See you at the next MLA Annual Meeting in San Jose!
Do you have research, a new technology in your library, or a special project your library is working on that you would like to share with other like-minded librarians? The program committee for this year’s MLA Midwest Chapter Meeting (Naperville, Illinois, October 11–13, 2012) wants to hear from you! We welcome proposals for individual or panel presentations.

Presenters should submit an abstract and include: paper title, author's name and a brief biography, institutional affiliation, and audio-visual requirements.

Please submit program proposals to any member of the program committee: Paula Hickner, chair (paula.hickner@uky.edu); Michael Duffy (mduffyiv@niu.edu); Jill King (jking25@depaul.edu).

Program proposals will be accepted through July 15, 2012.

See you in Montreal!

July 22-27, 2012
Centre Mont-Royal
Montréal, Québec, Canada

For more information:
http://iaml.montreal2012.info/
Speaking Our History: H. Stephen Wright
Seventh in a Series in the Midwest Chapter Oral History Project

One of the unique benefits I have reaped from my decade of service at Northern Illinois University has been the opportunity to work with and learn from H. Stephen Wright, who is a true leader in the field of music librarianship. Steve is an accomplished librarian and film music scholar, and he has built an impressive publication record. His level-headed way of approaching problems in librarianship was a good example for me in the early stages of my career.

I am particularly grateful for Steve’s expertise in music cataloging. I was able to tap into his knowledge on many occasions early in my career when I was not prepared for the cataloging challenges I faced. With his help and guidance, I became much more confident in my cataloging abilities. I also appreciate Steve’s advice on scholarly pursuits and service to Northern Illinois University, its libraries, and the music librarianship profession. Finally, I also wish to acknowledge Steve for his help proofreading and editing my publications early in my career.

I approached Steve in 2007, at the suggestion of Therese Dickman and the Midwest Chapter Publications Committee, about conducting an interview for the Chapter oral history project. It is my pleasure to present these excerpts from our interview that took place on October 23, 2007.

Readers of this oral history should keep in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator, and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Music Library Association, Midwest Chapter is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein; these elements are for the reader to judge. The manuscript may be read, quoted, and cited freely. It may not be reproduced in whole or in part by any means, electronic or mechanical, without permission in writing from the Music Library Association, Midwest Chapter.

—Michael Duffy, Northern Illinois University

Michael Duffy: This is an interview with Stephen Wright at the WNIU/WNIJ studio. Today is October 23, 2007, and I am Michael Duffy. Steve, what led you to become a music librarian?

Stephen Wright: Well, I certainly didn’t grow up wanting to be one. I was a conducting student at Indiana University, and this was 1979–1981. I finished my master’s degree in conducting in early 1981, and I quickly discovered that the job market for conductors was really very, very poor—which I expected—but I didn’t think it was going to be quite as bad as what it turned out to be. I could not get a single interview, or even a phone conversation masquerading as an interview, after I got my master’s degree in conducting. I stupidly thought that having a degree from an extremely prestigious institution would be a big boost, but it turned out that it wasn’t the case. After about a year of looking for a conducting job without any success at all, I realized that I was probably going to have to rethink my career choice.
One day I was walking through the hallway in the main music building at IU, and there was a poster on a bulletin board describing a joint program in music and library science offered through the IU School of Library and Information Science. I thought, “Oh, well, that looks kind of interesting.” So I decided to investigate it. Luckily I had a friend at the time, named David Frasier, who was also in library school. He had started about a year before that and we hung out a lot, and he said, “Oh yeah, you know, a library science degree is definitely the way to go.” I made an appointment to talk to the folks over at the library school, and they in turn put me in touch with David Fenske (who was the head of the IU Music Library at the time). I decided after some consideration that yes, I’d like to go to library school and become a music librarian. I wish that this were a more in-depth sort of a process, but I really didn’t do any thinking about libraries and librarians and what they did! At the time, I was so adrift career-wise that pretty much anything sounded good. I remember at one point, David Fenske asked me if I knew anything about MARC tagging, and I had no idea what those words meant. So anyway, it all came down to seeing that poster in the hall. If I hadn’t seen that poster there, I might be doing a completely different job today.

**MD:** How do you define the profession?

**SW:** I don’t really have a very well thought-out intellectual answer to that. The music library profession has always struck me as being identified more with people, with individuals and their interests, than with jobs. You could take a very narrow definition like some people have and say, “the music library profession consists of people who work in music libraries,” but, in fact, many of the people I met in MLA, especially in the Midwest Chapter, never really had those kinds of jobs. Many people that I have known for many years in the Chapter have never had the job title, “music librarian.” They were people who worked in libraries and maybe they had some music responsibilities as part of their job, officially or unofficially. Some didn’t have any official music responsibilities at all, but they were just interested in music. They had a background in it, a degree in it, whatever. So, I would define it recursively and say the music library profession consists of people who identify themselves as music librarians.

**MD:** Do you consider yourself a librarian, a musicologist, or an information specialist?

**SW:** Oh, that’s an easy one! I always consider myself a librarian. I definitely don’t consider myself a musicologist. One thing that I should mention is that when I entered the field in the early 1980s, it really seemed, at times, to be sort of an offshoot of the musicology field. The first MLA meeting I went to—which was in 1983 in Philadelphia—I felt at times that I had stumbled into a convention of musicologists. There were a lot of guys in tweed jackets with the patches on the elbows, a lot of guys smoking pipes, with gray hair, and they all seemed to be talking about Josquin and Machaut and things like that, and they were very interested in bibliography…”
probably they weren’t old, but they seemed old to me. There were a lot of guys in tweed jackets with the patches on the elbows, a lot of guys smoking pipes, with gray hair, and they all seemed to be talking about Josquin and Machaut and things like that, and they were very interested in bibliography and a lot of people had musicology degrees. I had a conducting degree, so I felt like I was a little out of place. Now the complexion of the field has changed quite a bit since then, and I certainly wouldn’t call it a musicology-dominated field now … it was then. Early on, I dissociated myself from that whole musicology end of things. Information specialist … I am not even sure what that means. No, I never thought of myself that way.

MD: Where do you see the profession going in the future?

SW: I’m not sure where the profession is going. I think the library field in general is undergoing some serious self-assessment right now, and people are flailing about trying to decide where the library profession is going, since many of the things that we used to take for granted as our job have disappeared. We’re no longer answering the sort of routine reference questions that people can get off of an answer from Google. So, I’m not sure that I have a clearly defined vision of where the profession is going.

I certainly think that music librarians will still exist in 10, 20, 30, even 50 years. I don’t think the library profession is going to disappear as some people have suggested, but I think the music librarian of the future will be mainly concerned with organizing large collections of proprietary digital objects and making those accessible. I don’t think the sort of reference functions we’ve had in the past of helping people find things like song lyrics and translations and composer dates—those things that we spent so much time doing in the early part of my career—are going to be significant at all.

MD: How has technology impacted the profession in general and your work in particular?

SW: It’s had huge impact on what I’ve seen as my job over the last twenty years, and for people coming into the profession now. It’s difficult to understand how different our day-to-day work was back in the 1980s, when I started. We spent inordinate amounts of time dealing with physical files, especially the card catalog. Today, in retrospect, it’s mind-boggling how painstaking and time-consuming this kind of job was. We spent unbelievable amounts of time generating cards, getting them ready to file, filing them, checking that filing, going back into the card catalog to fix things that were wrong, to rearrange things that were in the wrong order, to correct headings, to make cross-references, things like that. The card catalog was an enormous time sink.

Oddly enough, when card catalogs first started to disappear, a lot of my colleagues—and to some extent, I’m with that group—were unhappy about it, because the early online catalogs were really shockingly primitive. Yet we were under tremendous pressure from library administrators to get rid of our card catalogs and to put all of our eggs in the online catalog basket. It was very disturbing, because most of the early online catalogs did a very, very poor job of handling large files containing a lot of similar headings, particularly a big file like Beethoven or Mozart…

“I don’t think the library profession is going to disappear as some people have suggested, but I think the music librarian of the future will be mainly concerned with organizing large collections of proprietary digital objects and making those accessible.”
catalog basket. It was very disturbing, because most of the early online catalogs did a very poor job of handling large files containing a lot of similar headings, particularly a big file like Beethoven or Mozart—hundreds or thousands of headings that had to be differentiated. Catalogs couldn’t do that at all back in the ‘80s. You’d put in Mozart, and the system would say, “This search has retrieved too many entries to process.” Very simple search! So a lot of us actually fought to keep our card catalogs as long as possible; we thought they were so much better than anything a computer could do. Now those days seem very far away. Things that would occupy days or weeks of sustained effort can now be accomplished in just a few seconds. I think we’re a lot better off now. It’s hard to believe that we had all this nostalgia for those wonderful cards.

Oh, and another interesting thing about technological changes is for the first half of my career, we didn’t have e-mail. That had a definite impact on the way MLA functioned and the way the Midwest Chapter functioned, because you’d go to conferences and you’d see all these people, and then you’d go home from the conference, and it’s like MLA kind of disappeared for months, and then you’d get a newsletter and you’d think, “Oh yeah, MLA Midwest Chapter!” We weren’t in constant contact the way we are now, and people were much more isolated. That really made chapter meetings and national meetings into a sort of lifeline, because that was the only time that you really got to talk at length with your colleagues and find out what they were doing.

“For the first half of my career, we didn’t have e-mail. … That really made chapter meetings and national meetings into a sort of lifeline, because that was the only time that you really got to talk at length with your colleagues and find out what they were doing.”

MD: You already spoke a little bit about who you worked with in the Publications Committee. I’m wondering, who did you work with as the program chair, or chair-elect, or past chair to get those meetings under way?

SW: When I was chair-elect, the chair was Leslie Troutman. I want to take a moment to say a little bit about Leslie, because she was a hugely important person in the Chapter at the time and certainly a major rising star in the profession. I met Leslie at
one of the very first Chapter meetings I had attended since coming to NIU. At all of these meetings, at some point they would put us all on a bus and take us somewhere, usually to the campus of the university hosting the conference, and on one of these buses I found myself sitting next to this woman from UI Champaign-Urbana. I remember she had this beautiful long, thick black hair. We got to talking—and at the time I felt pretty good about myself, because I had just started at NIU and I was young and fresh and had a lot of new ideas, and I had my own music library at a pretty substantial university and I felt pretty proud of myself. I got to talking to Leslie, and she was talking about what they were doing down at UIUC, all the projects they were involved in, and all the things she was going to do…and I started feeling less and less significant as that conversation went on!

Leslie really blew me away with her acumen and her ambition and her vision of where she was going in the field, and it was no surprise that she became Chapter chair. She guided me through that whole process of becoming a Chapter chair myself, and gave me a lot of fantastic advice. It would have been much tougher without Leslie advising me and telling me what I ought to be doing and what I shouldn’t be doing. So, Leslie was certainly very significant.

MD: In your opinion, what is the role of the Midwest Chapter of MLA?

SW: I’ve always felt that the chapters had a very different role to play than the national organization. There are a lot of people who cannot attend the national meetings. They’re too far away, they’re too expensive. The Chapter meetings were closer, they were more affordable. There are people that I met at Chapter meetings that rarely I ever see at national meetings. It’s a chance to really get to know people who are working in similar situations, who are dealing with the same kinds of problems you are. There is a much greater degree of commonality in among Chapter membership than there is among the national membership. Also, I’ve found that the Chapter meetings allowed you to see a lot of libraries first-hand. That doesn’t happen at national meetings for some reason. I think it's because the scale of the meeting is different. The Chapter meetings are nearly always hosted by universities and often the big chunk of the meeting will happen at a university and in that university’s library, so you get to see the library and the music library. I saw a lot of music libraries first-hand that I wouldn’t have seen if I’d only gone to national meetings. At the national meetings, you’re mostly in a hotel; you might go to a big downtown, urban public library for a reception or something, but you don’t see too many of the actual music libraries at the national meeting. So, it felt more direct, more hands-on, more in touch with the day-to-day realities of what people were doing in their jobs than anything at the national meeting.

MD: Would you tell me about memorable Chapter meetings, either as an officer or a member?

SW: The first Chapter meeting I attended was in the fall of 1985, in Madison, Wisconsin. That really
opened my eyes to the potential of being in a chapter. I mentioned the national MLA meetings at the time and how scholarly they were. When I went to this meeting in Madison, people were talking about very real, practical issues that I could identify with. I remember there was a speaker talking about integrating AACR2 heading changes into the card catalog, and the laborious process of pulling out all the cards that had the heading, “Mozart, Johann Chrysostom Wolfgang Amadeus,” and marking out the “Johann Chrysostom” with magic marker and re-filing all the cards and all the headaches that this caused trying to deal with AACR2 changes. I thought, “Wow, that’s the sort of thing I deal with every day.” It wasn’t these lofty musicological topics you heard at the national meeting.

Some other memorable meetings… We had a meeting in Champaign-Urbana; I believe that was 1989 or ‘90. One thing that I want to emphasize about Chapter meetings is because they tended to be on or near college campuses, they were in areas that had lots of bars. They weren’t downtown like national meetings were. So, at the end of the day, you’d always go out with your colleagues, and go to a bar, and drink. We were also all a lot younger then and could stay out late drinking without too many ill effects—I wouldn’t do that now! But, I remember, we stayed out till ... oh, I would say close to 3 or 4 in the morning, with Ralph [Papakhian] and Sue [Stancu] and Dick Griscom and Karen [Little], and I think Mary Russell and some other people, and we had a really fabulous time. The next day at the morning session, I was supposed to speak about a film music book I was working on. I woke up feeling really awful the next morning. All these other folks that had been out all night hanging out at the bars showed up, too. Nobody slept late; they all got up to come hear me talk about this film music book, and I was so grateful to them ... and we all just felt horrible.

Another meeting I remember was a lovely meeting we had in Lexington, Kentucky, in the mid 1990s—I believe it was [1993] or thereabouts. When I got the registration form, I and a lot of other people were horrified, because in addition to a substantial registration fee, there was a huge fee for an optional trip to a Shaker colony outside of Lexington, which would consume the entire afternoon and evening of a meeting ... and we thought, “What is this? This is a professional meeting. Why are they taking us out to the Shaker colony?” But we all gritted our teeth and paid the fee, and they took us out to this Shaker colony and we had the most wonderful time. We did learn a lot about Shaker music that afternoon, and we had what I think is one of the two biggest meals I’ve ever had in my life. We had an enormous dinner where they brought us plate after plate after plate of Midwestern comfort food. I don’t think any of us ate for days after that. That was a really wonderful meeting!

Another meeting that is particularly prominent is the meeting that we arbitrarily designated as the fiftieth anniversary of the Chapter. I think actually it was the fifty-fifth meeting, but we realized that we had missed the fiftieth meeting, so we had a belated anniversary celebration. I believe this was the year that we met in Notre Dame, Indiana. Jean Geil was the chair of the anniversary committee, and for some reason, she got it into her head that I should write a comedy sketch for the after-banquet entertainment. I said, ‘Yeah, sure, I’ll write something. It’ll be so funny!’ I had no idea what I was going to do.”
but I agreed. I said, “Yeah, sure, I’ll write something. It’ll be so funny!” I had no idea what I was going to do.

After a lot of thought, I decided to do a parody of the famous comedy routine, called “The 2,000-Year-Old Man,” a comedy routine that Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner used to do. The premise of the routine was that Mel Brooks played this revived Stone Age person, and he would talk about how things were back in the Stone Age. Really, he was making observations about the present day, and they were coming out of the mouth of this supposed caveman. I thought, “Well, okay, I’ll just do the same thing with libraries, and do something about the 2,000-year-old music librarian.” Leslie Troutman agreed to play the interviewer and I played the caveman. It was actually a much bigger success than I expected. I thought, “What if nobody laughs at this thing?” You know, music librarians aren’t always the most humorous people, but this was a big success and everybody thought it was really funny. That was really a high point for me in my participation in the Chapter, performing this thing with Leslie. She did a wonderful job playing this very deadpan TV-style interviewer of the music librarian from prehistoric times.

Another meeting that sticks out in my mind for various reasons is the meeting we had a few years back in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The thing I most remember about that meeting is they took us over to the Kalamazoo Public Library, which is one of the most beautiful public libraries I’ve ever been in. It was the only library I’ve ever seen where you couldn’t point to anything and say “that came out of a catalog.” Everything in it, every stick of furniture, every shelf, every wall, every piece of equipment, looked like it had been custom-designed. It was absolutely gorgeous. I’d never been to Kalamazoo before, and we found it to be a really delightful city. That was pretty much characteristic of all the Chapter meetings I’ve [attended]: they were all in really nice places and we all had a wonderful time. I can’t think of a single meeting that was bad or unpleasant or a disappointment. Every one of them was unique and a lot of fun.

MD: Do you have any stories about national MLA meetings that you’d like to share?

SW: My first MLA meeting was a very overwhelming experience, but a lot of fun. That was in Philadelphia, 1983, and it started a tradition which persisted for many years thereafter. I roomed with Ralph Papakhian, Dick Griscom, and Michael Fling. We roomed together at every conference for many years after that, and we called ourselves the “Gang of Four.” In retrospect, it’s hard to believe we did this, but we would all cram into a regular-sized hotel room, and a couple of us would sleep on the floor, usually. Sometimes we would pull the mattresses off the bed and then two people would sleep on box springs and the other two people would sleep on the mattresses on the floor, and divide up the available sheets and blankets among ourselves. Occasionally we would get a rollaway bed, but that didn’t always work out. We’d usually have a problem running out of towels. We were just literally on top of each other all the time. But, as I said, we were all a lot younger then, and maybe more flexible. Now, the thought of

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sharing a room with anybody is almost inconceivable, but we had a lot of fun rooming together and staying up late talking and hanging out and going out drinking every night of the conference.

Ralph went around and introduced me to everyone he could think of at that first conference. As the evening wore on, and we drank more and more wine, he would even start introducing me to people he didn’t even know. I made a huge number of contacts at that first meeting. If I’d been on my own, attending that meeting alone, I don’t think any of that would have happened, and my progress in the profession would have been considerably held back. I remember the hotel was across the street from a hospital and we went over and ate in the hospital cafeteria every day. We also got food from sidewalk vendors. We were all impoverished and didn’t have much travel money, and had to do whatever we could to save money. At subsequent meetings, it was a little easier. Ralph later became executive secretary of MLA, and he would often get his room provided free as a result of his office in the organization. So we’d room with him, and sometimes we’d get the room free too, because the hotel couldn’t be bothered with figuring out how to charge three people and not charge the other person! So they’d say “Okay, no charge.” Then later, Dick Griscom became executive secretary and we got a free room a few times. Anyway, that was great. We had a lot of fun. And of course, we met in a lot of wonderful places.

[Of] the 1984 conference in Austin I have fond memories because my wife went with me to that conference. She’s a graduate of the University of Texas and wanted to go back and visit. We also stayed in a hotel which was really a motel, called the Villa Capri. When you stepped out of your room, you were in the parking lot. I thought that was fantastic, because the rooms were only about forty dollars a night. Olga Buth, who was the music librarian at the University of Texas at the time—I remember her saying, “I got us this great deal, it’s at a place called the Villa Capri.” That meeting later became notorious as the worst venue ever for an MLA conference. I thought it was great!

**MD:** Do you have any other stories that stand out from your involvement with either the Chapter or the national organization?

**SW:** Well, one thing I should mention—which I’m sure other interviewees, if they’ve been Chapter chair, have probably mentioned—is we had this tradition of passing along a corkscrew whenever there was a change of Chapter leadership. The outgoing Chapter chair would hand over this corkscrew to the incoming Chapter chair. It was one of these mechanical corkscrews that has the two wings that come up, that you push down to get the cork out of the bottle ... and I thought that was great because it really symbolized how much more fun we had at the Chapter meetings—particularly in bars at night—as compared to the national meetings.

One thing that I desperately wanted to do when I was Chapter chair—that did not happen—was to have a joint meeting with the Southeast Chapter. We had settled on Cincinnati as the location and we were very excited about that. It was going to be a big meeting between two big, important chapters, and for some reason, it didn’t work out. I was always very sorry that I couldn’t make that big joint chapter meeting happen. It would have been a lot of fun.

**MD:** Do you have anything else you would like to add?
SW: I just want to reiterate that I’m very grateful to be living in the Midwest Chapter. I really believe, and everyone says this, that we’re the best chapter around. One of the things MLA chair-elects have to do is go around and attend chapter meetings. Paula Matthews, who used to be president of MLA, described a lot of chapter meetings where it’s just an afternoon, and a few people come in and they spend the afternoon having a business meeting. She talked at great length once about how astounded she was to go to a Midwest Chapter meeting. The meeting goes on for days, and the program is a stapled, professionally printed book, and there are all these papers and tours and presentations and it really is like a scaled-down version of the national organization, and it’s a lot more fun! I’ve had a lot more fun at Midwest Chapter meetings than I’ve ever had at a national meeting. And, I’ve met some really fantastic people. Another name I want to mention is Allie Goudy, recently retired music librarian at Western Illinois University for many years. Allie and I were both rabble-rousers: cynics, curmudgeons. We had a lot of fun together.

MD: Thank you very much for recording this interview.

SW: Okay. Thank you.
The following sketch was written by H. Stephen Wright as a parody on The 2,000-year-old Man, a comedy skit often performed by Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner. The 2,000-year-old Music Librarian was performed by Steve Wright (2000) and Leslie Troutman (Interviewer) at the MLA Midwest 55th Anniversary Meeting, South Bend, Indiana, on November 1, 1996.

Scene: The stage is bare except for two chairs angled slightly toward each other. The Interviewer is sitting in the left chair, holding a clipboard.

Interviewer: Tonight, we're going to have a visit from a very special guest ... a man from the distant past, who was recently discovered frozen in a glacier and successfully thawed and revived. Much to the amazement of anthropologists, he identified himself as a librarian specializing in music materials. We've invited him here tonight to give us a glimpse into the dawn of our profession. Here he is ... the Two Thousand Year Old Music Librarian!

(The 2000-Year-Old Music Librarian [hereafter referred to as 2000] enters from the right. He is wearing a caveman-type outfit -- a fuzzy animal-skin tunic or something similar -- and has bare feet. He is holding a huge glass of beer in his left hand. He enters in TV-talk-show style, shakes hands with the Interviewer, waves cheerily to the audience, and sits casually in the chair on the right.)

Interviewer: Good evening. How are you doing?

2000: (shrugs) Not too bad. I've been better.

Interviewer: Well, you were frozen in a glacier for two thousand years; I can understand how you wouldn't feel your best.

2000: Oh, no, it's not that. I had steak for dinner. Steak always makes me feel kind of logy.

Interviewer: You look very healthy for someone two thousand years old. I imagine that it was quite a challenge staying well in those distant times.

2000: You have no idea.

Interviewer: What's your secret?

2000: Ten glasses of water a day. That's the key.

Interviewer: Ten glasses?

2000: Ten glasses. Keeps your system flushed out. (Leans toward the Interviewer and speaks conspiratorially) This interview isn't going to last very long, is it? Because I kind of have to, you know, “go.”

Interviewer: No, just a few questions. Can you tell me something about the music of your era? What sort of instruments were used?

2000: Rocks.

Interviewer: Just rocks?


Interviewer: How were these rocks played?

2000: We'd hit them together.
Interviewer: That's all?

2000: “All?” (snorts derisively) You obviously never heard any of the great rock virtuosi. They could produce an astonishing range of sound with two rocks.

Interviewer: Didn't you ever try hitting anything else together?

2000: (Incredulous) Like what?

Interviewer: Well, you could hit piece of wood with a rock.

2000: Oh. (Slightly revolted) Well, I could never really get into that, uh, “avant-garde” stuff. I know that I should really, you know, give it a chance and all that, but jeez ... (makes a “yuk” expression)

Interviewer: So most of your era's music consisted of banging rocks together. That must have simplified your collection development activities.

2000: Oh, yeah, absolutely. When I started my career, there was only one piece of music in the library.

Interviewer: How was this piece notated?

2000: On a rock.

Interviewer: Ah. I should have guessed.

2000: It really simplified public service, let me tell you. Reference interviews were a snap. A guy would come into the cave and say, “I'm looking for a certain piece of music. It's been running through my head for weeks and weeks, driving me insane. I've got to know what it is.” So I'd say, “How does it go?” And the guy would say, “Bam, bam, bam, bam, bam.” So then I'd pick up the rock and say, “Is this it?” And the guy would say “Yes! That's exactly what I was looking for!” Made me look like a freaking genius!

Interviewer: Uh, okay. How many rocks did you eventually have in your collection?

2000: I have no idea ... more than ten.

Interviewer: You mean you didn't know the size of your own collection?

2000: How the hell was I supposed to figure that out?

Interviewer: You could try counting the rocks.

2000: Oh, come on! Look! (He holds up his hands with the fingers splayed out) See?

Interviewer: I don't understand.

2000: Ten fingers! Only ten fingers! We didn't have a system of numerals. I can't count higher than ten.

Interviewer: (Incredulous) You mean to tell me that you never figured out how to count past ten? That's hard to believe.

2000: Look, I'll prove it to you. Name a number higher than ten.

Interviewer: (Thinks for a moment) Eleven.

2000: I have no idea what number that is. See? See?

Interviewer: Have you considered using your toes?

2000: (Confused) Huh?

Interviewer: You have ten toes. You could use them along with your fingers and get all the way up to twenty.

(2000 holds up his feet and looks at his toes, then looks at his fingers. His eyes widen in astonishment)

2000: Oh my GOD!

Interviewer: Could we talk a bit more about your library? What about your circulation policies?

(2000 isn't listening; he's counting his fingers and toes excitedly.)

Interviewer: (Emphatically) Uh, sir? Could we go on with the interview, please?

2000: (Embarrassed, regaining his composure) Oh, sorry. What was your question?

Interviewer: Did you circulate the, uh ... 2000: Rocks?

Interviewer: ... rocks in your collection?

2000: Sure we did. Anybody could come in and
borrow a rock for up to ten days.

**Interviewer:** Ten days? That's a rather odd length of time for a loan period. Why not longer?

**2000:** Did you forget already? We can't count higher than ten.

**Interviewer:** Oh, yeah, of course. Well, what would happen if a borrower kept a rock longer than ten days?

**2000:** That didn't happen.

**Interviewer:** Why not?

**2000:** After ten days had passed, Dave and I would go out and recall the rocks from the borrowers.

**Interviewer:** Dave? Is he one of your staff members?

**2000:** He's a dinosaur.

**Interviewer:** You mean he's really old-fashioned?

**2000:** No, I mean he's a *dinosaur*. A Tyrannosaurus Rex, actually.

**Interviewer:** *(Not really buying this, but playing along)* And what would “Dave” do? Carry the rocks back to your library?

**2000:** He'd eat them.

**Interviewer:** Eat the rocks?

**2000:** No, no, no. *I'd* carry the rocks back. Dave ate the people who borrowed them.

**Interviewer:** You're kidding. The penalty for overdue materials was to be eaten by a dinosaur?

**2000:** Yeah. Kind of cut into our user base at first, but once word got around, overdues really declined.

*(The **Interviewer** shakes her head in disbelief.)*

**2000:** *(Nostalgically)* I have such wonderful memories of those early days ... going out in the early morning to collect overdues ... the morning sun sparkling on the moist grass ... the terrified screams of our users as Dave ate them ...

**Interviewer:** But didn't dinosaurs disappear from the Earth millions of years before humans appeared?

**2000:** *(Annoyed)* Are you telling me my job?

**Interviewer:** All of the information we have today indicates that dinosaurs and humans never coexisted.

**2000:** Oh, I suppose you looked that up somewhere, right? Sheesh. Everybody's a librarian these days. Look, I was *there*.

**Interviewer:** But the fossil record clearly shows ...

**2000:** Fossil record? Who's the librarian here, anyway? Jeez. You sound just like my family! Always belittling my career choice. *(Getting more and more angry)* “Library school?” they'd say. “Why the hell do you need to go to school to become a librarian? Anybody can do that!” I am sick to death of that crap!

**Interviewer:** I'm sorry ...

**2000:** I don't need this shit.

**Interviewer:** Look, I'm sorry. Can we go on with the interview?

**2000:** *(Sullen)* Okay.

**Interviewer:** Look, I'm sorry. Can we go on with the interview?

**2000:** *(Sullen)* Okay.

**Interviewer:** How was your collection organized? Did you have a classification system?

**2000:** Oh, sure, we had a classification system.

**Interviewer:** Based on what? Genre, composer name ...

**2000:** *(Incredulous)* Smell.

**Interviewer:** *(Incredulous)* Smell?

**2000:** Yes, we arranged rocks in piles according to whether or not they had a smell. Rocks with a smell in one pile, rocks with no smell in another pile.

**Interviewer:** *(Skeptically)* And, uh, that was a workable system?

**2000:** Well, to be honest, I always had my doubts
about it. Our circulation stats really dropped after we started using the smell system. For some inexplicable reason, people are reluctant to use rocks that smell.

Interviewer: (mildly sarcastic) I can't imagine why.

2000: (oblivious) Me neither! I just don't get it! (Removes a few small rocks from a pocket of his costume and sniffs one) This doesn't bother me at all ... what do you think?

(He holds rock toward the Interviewer, who recoils in disgust and horror)

Interviewer: (Revolted, but trying to hide it) Uh, it's fine. (Puzzled) It looks kind of small, though.

2000: Small? How's that?

Interviewer: Well, I would have expected the rocks in your collection to be bigger than that.

2000: Oh, this is from the miniature score collection.

Interviewer: I see ... tell me, did you have other types of materials in your library? Periodicals, for example?

2000: Oh, sure. Some rocks were issued periodically.

Interviewer: (Pointing to the other rock that 2000 is holding) What about that rock? Is that a periodical?

2000: (Smiles condescendingly) Uh, no; actually, this one is part of a monographic series.

Interviewer: Uh, I see. Did you have periodical indexes in your library?

2000: Yeah, we had two -- International Index to Rocks, and Rocks Index.

Interviewer: What was the difference between them?

2000: Well, International Index to Rocks was wonderful. It was a joy to use. But ...

Interviewer: But what?

2000: It only indexed three rocks.

Interviewer: Only three? That's ... not very impressive.

2000: No kidding. They did promise to expand that to fifty rocks eventually ... provided you paid for it in advance.

Interviewer: What about Rocks Index?

2000: That indexed twenty rocks ... but it was impossible to use!

Interviewer: Did you have a catalog of some kind for your collection?

2000: Sure; we had a card catalog.

Interviewer: (Surprised) A card catalog?

2000: Well, what the hell else would we have had? We're talking two thousand years ago!

Interviewer: No, I'm just surprised that you had a catalog printed on cards. I didn't realize that your society had discovered papermaking.

2000: Paper? What the hell is that?

Interviewer: But you just said ...

2000: Our cards were made out of rock!

Interviewer: Your cards were printed on rocks?

2000: Not printed, chiseled. Chiseled on really, really, big, flat rocks.

Interviewer: That must have made catalog use a bit awkward.

2000: Awkward? You have no idea! It's an ordeal! Every damn card was the size of a freaking Buick! Boy, we really went through hell when NCR2 came in.

Interviewer: NCR? You mean that company that makes cash registers?

2000: No, no, no. NCR. Neanderthal Cataloging Rules. (Shakes his head ruefully) All those stupid, piddly changes! We had to go through the whole catalog, card by card, and change “Music, 2 Rocks” to “Music, Rocks (2).” Jeez, what a pain that was.

Interviewer: Yes, that sounds very tedious ... how many catalogers did you have at your library?
The 2,000-year-old Music Librarian, continued

2000: Three at first, then later, just one.

Interviewer: Oh, you had a staff cutback?

2000: No, two of them were doing some filing, and got crushed under a pile of catalog cards.

Interviewer: That's terrible! Couldn't you replace them?

2000: (Disgusted) Oh, nooooo. The administration wouldn't let me! They wanted to start outsourcing everything instead.

Interviewer: You had outsourcing two thousand years ago? That's remarkable ... how did it work?

2000: (Skeptically) Well, the idea was that we packed up our rocks and sent them to some cave over on the other side of the big hills. Then, about three moons later, this herd of woolly mammoths would show up with the catalog cards lashed to their backs.

Interviewer: You don't sound very enthusiastic about it.

2000: Oh, hell no! It's the crummiest idea I've ever heard! What do a bunch of Cro-Magnon catalogers know about the needs of Neanderthal library users? They've never even seen our cave! Jeez! (Getting more and more enraged) Those bonehead administrators ... we should have outsourced them instead. First that Total Quality Management shit, now this!

Interviewer: Please, calm down.

2000: (Sullen) Sorry.

Interviewer: Try to relax. Are you enjoying our chapter meeting?

2000: Oh, yeah. This is a lot more fun than the meetings we had. We didn't have beer back then. (Takes a sip from his glass of beer) This stuff is incredible!

Interviewer: You had professional organizations two thousand years ago?

2000: Sure, the Neanderthal Library Association.

Interviewer: Were you active in that group? Did you serve as an officer?

2000: An officer? Give me a break! They're so cliquey. It's monopolized by librarians from private caves in the East.

Interviewer: Uh, we're just about out of time. Do you have any advice for the music librarians of today?

2000: Yes. (To audience) When somebody returns a chamber music set, check to make sure all the rocks are in there. If there's one rock missing, the whole set is worthless. Worthless! You gotta buy a whole new set! So make sure people return all the rocks, and if they don't ... have Dave eat them.

(2000 exits with his glass of beer, waving cheerily to audience.)
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- Peter Szabo (Ohio Wesleyan University), 2014

Terms expire in October of the year indicated.

This version of the administrative structure should reflect changes made at the 2011 chapter meeting. Please report errors and omissions to the editor.