



2016

Dan Terkla

Dan Terkla

Meg Miner

Illinois Wesleyan University, mminer@iwu.edu

Recommended Citation

Terkla, Dan and Miner, Meg, "Dan Terkla" (2016). *All oral histories*. 132.
http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/oral_hist/132

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Ames Library, the Andrew W. Mellon Center for Curricular and Faculty Development, the Office of the Provost and the Office of the President. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digital Commons @ IWU by the University Archivist & Special Collections Librarian at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

Portrait of a Collector Interview with Dan Terkla

Transcribed by Kate Browne

The interviewer began recording the conversation when Dan Terkla was sharing insights into book collections he was using for research and so the interviewer makes no formal introduction. Terkla is a Professor of English and joined the faculty in 1995. The interview took place on January 26, 2016 at the Hansen Student Center.

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

Dan Terkla: I was saying I've been reading a lot about—for this book I'm doing—I've been reading a lot about, um, medieval libraries.

Meg Miner: Okay.

Terkla: And patrons. And the ways in which, uh, and, and the process by which they left their books to mostly monastic types or clerical types. Left their books to the houses. That was kind of a tradition.

Miner: Oh, wonderful.

Terkla: And they were, they were—I mean, that's what Minor did. Sometimes they would sell some of them, sometimes they would just donate the whole lot. Mostly they would just donate the lot to the college or the chapel or the cathedral in which they worked.

Miner: That they worked for.

Terkla: Yeah. And so those collections like, maybe like Minor's—I don't know—became really important to people like me because now we can look back and see what, I don't know, Hugh of Lincoln read. What his books were. And how, um, 'cause you know which ones were his, for example, and how those fit into a larger collection at Lincoln Cathedral.

Miner: Hm.

Terkla: Um. 'Cause they, 'cause they often taught in those places, so they would own the books they taught. And then, um, what they taught—like here, affects what the libraries—what books they had made for the various collections. And they had collections of all sorts scattered around, say, the cathedral. They weren't all in one place. They were allowed people—men were allowed access to certain books. And, like, so each guy would get a book a year and they had to sign for it.

Miner: Why were they scattered around?

Terkla: Because they were used for different things. So, the choristers—they choir people had a—they're called analogia had a bookcase by the entrance to the chancel. To the choir. And then there was, uh, a kind of larger reference section.

Miner: Hm.

Terkla: And then there were private books. Like, the dean of the cathedral would have his own books and nobody had access to those.

Miner: Uh huh.

Terkla: Unless he decided to loan you one. So it's interesting knowing that what these guys had was condition—how their condition—how their collections were conditioned by where they were, what they were doing, and in turn when they left how their collection conditioned by what was going on in the place.

Miner: Yeah.

Terkla: So, I don't know, Minor's books we have if we have enough of them to have that effect. But it's a similar situation.

Miner: I was thinking that very thing. So I'm so glad that we're recording that.

Terkla: Oh.

Miner: We started—I hit the record before I even realized where you were going with that. I think that's a great opportunity. Let's dive in and think about that. And I can tell you that we do have about ten percent of what we acquired from the family when he died. So, um—well, part of what I'm doing with this project, right, is sort of intellectually understand even if we can't physically have everything he had to understand what his interests were, what his passions were. Because he stated that he was interested in the 18th century—

Terkla: Right.

Miner: —but he had so much more.

Terkla: Right.

Miner: Right? And why, right? And as far as I know, no body's ever documented that and tried to understand what effect that would have on a place like Illinois Wesleyan. I don't know. That's the idea that I'm starting with and I don't know where I'll end up.

Terkla: Well, he was very interested in the 18th century. I mean, his house—he had the dining room set up like an 18th century dining room. He had flatware—I think from the 18th century and serving bowls and things.

Miner: So even that. Okay

Terkla: Yeah, we—I remember distinctly—we went over there for dinner one night. I can't remember what the function was but somebody was here—a speaker or something. And he had—he or Sodexho, whoever—had done a roast beef with—I can't remember the name of the

sauce. Stacey would remember. But it's an 18th century kind of brown sauce. And the potatoes. And he made a big point of it all being 18th century. And he had this massive carving knife—silver carving knife I think was from the 18th century. And so, um, uh, that toast he used to always do. Fill your—no trenchers—no, chargers. Charge your glasses.

Miner: Okay.

Terkla: Okay. It's a very British—might be 18th century. The OED would tell you what charge—yeah, I think that—he was fully into that. He did. He collected all this other stuff. He had medieval stuff that he—I was crazy about. Yeah. So. He was really generous. He was exceedingly generous. He would let me borrow anything. Um. And take it to class. Take whatever I borrowed to class and pass it around to my students. I mean, I always did the archive things, right? Really valuable book here. You know, one of a kind. Gotta wash your hands. Put your pens away. But he would always—whatever I borrowed he was perfectly happy to pass around to my students and he never—he said I need—he never did anything—said anything like I need that back by Friday. I mean, I kept some things for weeks and weeks. And I'd taken them back to his office, give them to him and, you know, he didn't mind, you know. He had no, um, circulation date. Or whatever. But, um—

Miner: Didn't make you sign a form or anything?

Terkla: No. No, no, no. I remember going to his house—President's house. And when you walked in and turn left, there were bookcases—there might still be. I can't remember. There were bookcases on either side of the window that faced west. Onto Park Street. And right in the first bookcase on the first shelf it was the [La Duna] Dante. The first printed edition edition of Dante's *Commedia*. It's just astounding. It was covered I think it—it was white—I think it was pig skin. Or calf skin. Just a beautiful book. And so he showed it to me not long after he got it. 'Cause every time I'd go over there he'd say, oh, I've got something you should look at. And he would take me into his office back there in the—you know, off the public area.

Miner: Mm hmm.

Terkla: Or just wherever the thing was. He'd take me upstairs and pull things off the shelf and into the basement where he had his oriental rugs and his train set and all of that. 'Cause he had bookshelves in the basement too.

Miner: You wouldn't happen to have any pictures of the basement, would you?

Terkla: No, I didn't take any pictures. It just kinda, not crude, but they were just kinda knocked together—longer bookshelves in his basement. Um. So he—I went over there—we went over there one time for some function. He pulled the Dante off the shelf and told me about it. And I sat there for the whole function—whatever it was—in the corner looking at this book. I didn't talk to anybody the whole time. And then we left. And so every time after that—every single time I go over there. I pulled that book off the shelf and look at it or sit with it. I didn't ignore

everybody after the first time and he let me take it to class. He had a—I can't remember particularly—he had a Mexican Bible that he bought.

Miner: Mm hmm.

Terkla: A little white pigskin covered book. Like, uh, duodecimo sized. Tiny thing. Maybe octavo. I don't know. You know, that size.

Miner: Yep.

Terkla: That's octavo.

Miner: I would say octavo.

Terkla: Um. Um. That he let my students have. This was one of those MinorWatch things. 'Cause I used to always—I would teach early morning, uh, like, 8 o'clock class in Shaw. And I'd—for some reason—ended up teaching a lot on the west side of the building so the windows right by the walk into Holmes.

Miner: Facing the quad.

Terkla: Yeah, facing the quad. So we started—and so we'd be in class before Minor went to work. Maybe, I don't know. He'd show up at, like, 8:15 or whatever.

Miner: Mm hmm.

Terkla: And he'd walk by—and the first time—and I'm at the front of the room and the first time I saw him I said, "you know, wave at the President" or something and everybody turned and waved. And he looked at us. He stopped. And looked at us and got this kind of—I don't know—semi-embarrassed but, um, amused look on his face. And he waved back. And so we started calling it MinorWatch. So every morning when he'd walk by he'd look and we'd wave and he'd wave back.

Miner: That's fantastic.

Terkla: And one morning he had three books, one of which was this Mexican Bible. And, um, we waved at him and got back on with class. And three minutes later or something. He'd gone around—walked around or something and knocked and came around with the books to show me what he bought.

Miner: So these were new purchases?

Terkla: He had been someplace on one of these trips. I don't know where he'd been.

Miner: Yeah.

Terkla: But he bought 'em while he was away. And he was all excited. He wanted to show me. And so we're standing in my classroom and he's showing me these books and kind of talking to the students at the same time. Um. I said something about the Bible for sure but then I don't remember what the other ones was. But those would be really cool because, you know, we've read Genesis. And, you know, it'd be nice. We've read part of the Bible in class. I don't remember like I said, what the other one was. But I said yeah, it'd be cool--I said maybe I can come over and borrow these for class. And he said, here, keep them.

Miner: And he'd just gotten them.

Terkla: Yeah. And he took the third one off, I assume, to his office. President's office. And we did the, you know, same thing. Clean hands, pens away, passed them around. Everybody looked at them. I took them home that night and sat there with them for a while and brought them back, I don't know, a couple days later. I think I might have taken them to class again. And I returned them to his office. Took them back to his office. He had a—he bought, uh, he bought an edition of John Speed's atlas. 18th century. And he bought it without realizing that, um, I'm trying to remember now. It was two volumes, folio sized. He took me into his office at his house to look at it. And, um, he bought it without realizing that somebody either cut all the maps out of it or had taken the maps out somehow. I mean, I don't know if it was that—you know, I can't remember the guys name. The guy that stole all the stuff. All the maps

Miner: There are many.

Terkla: But the guy who was in the early '90s who was the one—that other person the other guy wrote the book about. Anyway. But he was all excited about this and I opened it and I said, Minor, where are the maps? He said, maps? I said, it's an atlas.

Miner: Oh no.

Terkla: But he was a kind of---at least it seemed to me he was a kind of indiscriminate collector. And I know he bought loads of sheet music.

Miner: Yeah.

Terkla: And some of them from what I remember were incomplete. Like if it was a score, it would be just a couple of pieces from the score. So it's like he bought it by the yard or something.

Miner: I was going to say why would he do that?

Terkla: He was a musician, right? So he had that harpsichord and that piano back there in that public room. The kind of solarium or whatever it was.

Miner: In his home, do you mean?

Terkla: Yeah. In the President's house.

Miner: I was never there—

Terkla: Oh.

Miner: —when he was President.

Terkla: Yeah, I was trying to remember if Minor was the one—I think it was Minor who extended that back room into the backyard. And the dining room. That whole wall—exterior wall moved out. And then, um. And Art Killian did that stone patio.

Miner: Yeah. I remember that.

Terkla: I don't know if that was Minor or the Wilsons. I think it was Minor. I think it had something to do with the 18th century dining setup. 'Cause had that massive wooden table in there that appeared. And I don't know if it's the one that's in there now is not an old table. It's a kind of—I don't know—it's not an old table. It's a nice piece of furniture but it's not an antique.

Miner: Hm. Well—

Terkla: So back in that—back in that room. You walk into that house, you turn left, and then you turn right looking toward the back yard. So there's that one room and you go off into the dining room. And if you keep going straight into the back yard there's a kind of solarium.

Miner: Okay.

Terkla: Um, and that's longer than it used to be. So is the dining room. And I think Minor had that done to accommodate maybe his piano and the harpsichord. 'Cause he had them both in there. And then the longer dining table. But I'm not sure.

Miner: Did he play at any of the events?

Terkla: Mmm hmm. Yeah, he played harpsichord. I heard him. He played harpsichord a few times.

Miner: Yeah?

Terkla: Yeah.

Miner: Why are you laughing?

Terkla: It was hilarious. This Minor, you know, with his goofy half glasses and his—plinking away on this harpsichord. It was hilarious. He did, uh, I guess a duet you'd call it with somebody. I can't remember who it was. A woman. A female faulty member on the piano once when we were in there. I don't remember.

Miner: Yeah. But he did it for events that happened in his house? He would play for people.

Terkla: Yeah, I don't know how often, but I certainly saw him play a couple of time. At events, right? Yeah, it was beautiful.

Miner: Somebody told me that there was a room in the house and it had a fireplace and he had a lot of books in it too. Is that the place you're talking about? His office?

Terkla: No, the fireplace—well, there is a fireplace. There's a fireplace in that common rom. So, again, you walk in and turn left, that room has a fireplace.

Miner: Okay,

Terkla: And then off of it is the President's office. To the north.

Miner: Okay, Okay.

Terkla: That little piece that sticks out to one side. On one side it's the private living room and on the other side is his office. And there's a fireplace in there. In the—not in the office. I don't think there's one in the office. But there's one in the—that public space. In that reception area.

Miner: There's a picture I just came across, oh, I think late last year, um, where there's a white mantelpiece with a kind of a bas relief—

Terkla: Yeah, that's the one in the—have you not been in the President's house?

Miner: I think once.

Terkla: Really?

Miner: Yeah.

Terkla: It's pretty—it's white. I never paid it much attention.

Miner: I'm not sure where it was.

Terkla: And I think it's got a black surround. Or, it's got a black marble inset, maybe.

Miner: This is just—it's all white. It's him and a student with a book open.

Terkla: Yeah, it's probably the same one. And I want to say there's one—a fireplace in the, uh, their private quarters on the other side but I don't remember. I've only been there once.

Miner: Was he here when you got here?

Terkla: Yeah.

Miner: Okay.

Terkla: I came—Stacey and I came in '95.

Miner: '95, okay.

Terkla: I don't know when he started. He'd been here a while.

Miner: '89. '89.

Terkla: Yeah.

Miner: So—did he talk to you about how he acquired things? You said you told him about some book stores that he should—

Terkla: Yeah.

Miner: —go to in England.

Terkla: Yeah, we talked about, um. We did. We talked about bookstores in London. Um. Jarndyce especially, I remember. Jarndyce is right across the street. It's in Great Russell Street right across from the British Museum. Um. And there's a street. I can't remember what it's called. It used to be—they used to have lots and lots of old book shops that sold old books. Not necessary rare books. Just old books. These places you go and out front there'll be a, a kind of a tray full of pages that cut—somebody's cut out of a medieval manuscripts and they're all in the sleeves.

Miner: Sure.

Terkla: You know, like—

Miner: Yep. Like you'd bring out for your humanities class.

Terkla: Yeah. So I know he would—so it's British museum. Great Russell Street. Jarndyce, and then down straight up from the British museum. I can't remember the name of the street but that's where all the used bookshops used to be. And there are a couple more down the road from Jarndyce and he used to go to Charring Cross Road which is famous for its used book shops. I know he'd go there because we would talk about book shops and Charring Cross Road. Foyles is now there. And I don't remember. I think originally the old Foyles is there too. F-O-Y-L-E-S. I know he went to Foyles. They sold new and used and they'd shelve them together. And if I remember correctly the original Foyles, the original building had a rare books room. And I know he went to Blackwell's in Oxford. Um. Which used to have on the top floor an amazing rare books collection. In locked glass cases. So I know he went to those places and I assume he bought books there.

Miner: Yeah. But he never talked about any relationship he had with dealers or?

Terkla: He did, but I don't really remember. I know that he was going to buy the Morris Kelmscott imprint.

Miner: Was he?

Terkla: Yeah, \$3000. No, it was either three or five. It wasn't more than five. I wanna say it was three. Yeah, he stopped me on the quad one day. And he said, well, what do you think about, um, getting the Kelmscott press—the rights to the Kelmscott press and I just said...uh, yeah. And I said, how would we do that that? And he said, well, he met somebody in London.

Miner: Oh my gosh.

Terkla: Um. And it was for sale. The imprint.

Miner: How bizarre.

Terkla: And it was, it was either three or five thousand dollars. That was it.

Miner: That's incredible.

Terkla: It never happened, obviously. But we were talking about the printing press that I think is still on the—in the—wherever we are. Where are we? You know, in the art building.

Miner: In the art building, yeah.

Terkla: The one they cut the wall out to move in. [Spen] and Bob Bray.

Miner: Yep.

Terkla: Can't remember the art guy's name.

Miner: Fred Brian.

Terkla: Yeah. Fred Brian. So he—we were talking about how cool it would be to get that thing going. Have the Morris imprint and then to produce beautiful little books.

Miner: Yeah.

Terkla: But it never happened.

Miner: You have any idea why?

Terkla: No, I don't.

Miner: When would that have been? Shortly after he got here?

Terkla: No, it was a while after he'd been here. Long enough that he knew I was interested in old books and we'd talked about books. I mean, he knew that I would be excited because we did—I know we talked about—he and I talked about Morris. We talked about the Kelmscott press. Um. 'Cause I took my students in '99 I did a May term. We did the whole of the UK. 2200 miles in about two and half weeks. And one of the places we went was Kelmscott Manor. Where the press was. And, uh, all the craftsmen—craftspeople—that's where kinda the Morris commune was. One of them. And they had—they have, like, the Kelmscott Chaucer. They

have—so I took my students there in '99 and I took them to Morris' Red House in London in 2003 when I did the London program. And I took the 2013 students to the Red House which is one of the places he built in London which was kind of in the—it was in the outskirts of London. Now it's just kind of a far suburb. But it was, uh—he built it with Burne-Jones and all the artsy craftsy folk and they'd decorate it and they'd go there weekends and build it. And work on it and lots designed it, I think. So anyway, Minor knew I had this interest in the gothic revival.

Miner: And did he have any Kelmscott?

Terkla: No. Not that I know of. The library has that replica of the Kelmscott Chaucer.

Miner: Right. Well, we, we borrowed—oh, right. Yeah, okay.

Terkla: The AMS press, yeah. I haven't done it for a while. I used to take my Chaucer class. Um. So he and I had had those kinds of conversations and so I assume that's why he stopped me and asked me what I thought.

Miner: Interesting.

Terkla: But he was also kind of like a magpie.

Miner: Okay.

Terkla: Right?

Miner: Say more about that.

Terkla: It's just hilarious. He's hilarious. He's really—one of, I think one of his most endearing qualities. He drove people crazy who had to work with him like Carl. 'Cause he'd get these ideas, you know, like, oh, why don't we just buy the Kelmscott press? And say Carl, get the Kelmscott press. But, so I just always assumed it was one of those things.

Miner: Okay.

Terkla: You know, it was a great idea and who knows? Maybe if he even pitched it to the trustees. Maybe they said no, we're not going to pony up five thousand—how are you going to do this? Who's going to put the press back? Practical stuff. I'm not sure Minor was that good on practical stuff.

Miner: That didn't enter into the idea.

Terkla: He was a vision kinda guy.

Miner: How do you think that affected, uh, I don't know, the other people. Like the trustees or the campus or—?

Terkla: Well, I know it drove people in the big house crazy.

Miner: Did it?

Terkla: Oh yeah. Susan Bassegy and Carl. I know that for sure. And I assume some of the trustees who aren't—well, some of the trustees.

Miner: Yeah. Sure. Well, what do you think it had in its larger meaning in, like, to other people who didn't actually have to do the—make it happen?

Terkla: I don't know anybody who didn't love him.

Miner: Yeah.

Terkla: In part because of that. He wasn't—he never seemed to me to be much interested in practicalities or details, but he is the reason we have this physical campus.

Miner: Right.

Terkla: Much of it. It's also—he's also the reason we went so deeply, deeply in debt because of all the bonds he took out to put up the buildings. Um. So there's this, uh, um, ambivalence about him. Um, I'm—I don't think I'll ever forgive him for taking out all those bonds 'cause that's the first thing that sunk us into financial difficulty. And that was, like, I don't know, fifteen years ago. A long time ago. On the other hand, we have CNS, CLA, Ames. Um. But, so, yeah, I mean his vision was, um, um...he was more visionary than practical.

Miner: But nobody stopped him either.

Terkla: No.

Miner: Would there have been any stopping him, do you think? Or was he just that train rolling through?

Terkla: Well, he was. And the place was doing really well. I mean, we were rocking and rolling in the '90s. We hired a load of new faculty. I can't remember. I would say maybe '96, '97.

Miner: Hm. Hm.

Terkla: We hired a boatload of new faculty and were on a roll. We had lots of money. Um. And so the bond problem was—worried a lot of people. Worried me. But, you know, it seemed the financial folk would sort it out and it wouldn't hurt us too much. I don't honestly know how much it hurt us but it did. So I think people who knew him or knew about him had everybody I know had that kind of ambivalence—still has that kind of ambivalent, uh, take on him. Perspective. Now, on the other hand, the longer—you know, the more time passes between his death and today, the more the kind of endearing stuff takes over.

Miner: Yeah.

Terkla: Endearing memories. Because he was just hilarious. You know? Like, his refusal to zip up his gown. Or to wear a cap.

Miner: Oh right.

Terkla: You know? With the rep tie and Princeton tie? Was it Princeton? It was a, you know, rep tie.

Miner: I know he had one from Hobart but I can't imagine he'd continue to wear that.

Terkla: And he had that, you know, the medallions and things. It was—it was—he was an anglophile, right? He dressed at commencement and those kinds of things where we had to get tarted up like, you know, a kind of a wacky Oxford or Cambridge don. Because that's what they do. You know, I mean I was at oxford in the mid-eighties. And peop—students still had to wear gowns to class. Undergraduates. Called subfusc.

Miner: Gosh.

Terkla: And the lectors and the readers—the faculty would come in gowns. They would wear their gowns to work. But it's like English school boys and school girls, right? They have to wear ties and white shirts. And the girls have to wear pleated skirts. But they're always purposefully disheveled. And the Oxford dons and Cambridge dons are the same way. They come in and never have the thing open. They pull it on just before they come to just to come into class. And they didn't have a tie on. And it'd be kind of a crappy knot. And I think Miner affected that. 'Cause he really was an Anglophile.

Miner: Interesting.

Terkla: But it was hilarious. It was great. And he was just way smart. Just this goofy intellectual, you know, who was part of this place but kinda floated above it in some ways.

Miner: Do you collect—

Terkla: No.

Miner: —anything?

Terkla: No. No. No. he always told me that anybody can become a collector. You don't have to spend thousands of dollars. And he's right. He was right.

Miner: Why do you think that was important?

Terkla: What?

Miner: I mean, was he advocating for you to become a collector?

Terkla: Yeah. He couldn't understand why. He came into my office. He visited my office three times. Um. Once, I don't know why he was there. He stuck his head in my office. And I have, I do have—I don't collect, but I do have a few older books. They're nothing—they're basically just pulp. One of 'em is an 18th century orthography manual Stacey got for me.

Miner: Okay. The early days.

Terkla: About spelling. And it's a nice little book. I used to have it in my office. It's at home now. But, um, he came in and he was lookin' at my books and he said I can pull a book off the shelf and tell you when it was printed by the way it smells. I said, yeah right. So I pulled that one off and said here you go. And he literally opened it and stuck his nose all the way in to the fold and he kinda breathed deeply. And then he said I don't know. Something like—and he never looked at the title page. He just opened it, right?

Miner: Yeah, yeah.

Terkla: In the middle sort of. He said something like, I don't know, 1875. And he put it down and he walked out. I opened it and it was something like 1873.

Miner: Holy cow. So he didn't even care if it was right. He just did it and he left.

Terkla: Right. Yeah. That is so cool.

Miner: That is so interesting.

Terkla: Like, yeah, I nailed that.

Miner: Don't bother to tell me. I know.

Terkla: Yeah, and so of course I bothered to tell him the next time I saw him, you know? I said, wow, how did you do that? He says, well...but yeah, he—

Miner: Did he even remember doing it or anything?

Terkla: Oh yeah. Yeah, he did. I think—yeah, we would have liked to have—liked it if I would have started buying books. Because I don't know if anybody else around here did. Bob Bray has some nice books. And he and Bob were really, really close. But I think he would have like to had a group of faculty around who were collectors. I would have liked that. It would have been nice. I just have never done it. I don't have any reason—I just have never done it.

Miner: Do you have a sense of why he thought that would be important? Or fun? Or was it just about something to have in common?

Terkla: Yeah, you a group of like-minded individuals to sit around and have a glass of sherry with and—

Miner: Talk about books.

Terkla: –talk about old books, yeah.

Miner: Did he come into any of your other classes besides the, the 8 o'clock one?

Terkla: No. No. No, and that's just because we saw him.

Miner: You waved—

Terkla: Yeah.

Miner: –all the time. But he loaned you stuff pretty freely and—

Terkla: Completely freely. Anything I wanted.

Miner: Did he buy anything? Oh, go ahead. What were you saying?

Terkla: No, I'd forgotten about this. I asked him—god, what was the class? It must have been Chaucer. My Chaucer class. I don't remember what I asked him for. I emailed him and said, you know, hey Miner, do you have—it might have been something like Caxton or something like that. Do you have a Caxton? Do you have—'cause I always do a thing at the beginning of my class about Chaucer and printing and his relationship with Caxton and all that stuff, right? And, um, it had to be Chaucer. Um. 'Cause there were English books. So, he said, oh I don't remember what he said. I'll look around and then get back to you. And so I got—and I think Susan called me. Susan Bassegy called my office. Miner brought you some books. It was in 206—that conference room in the big house. They're in 206. So I said, cool, I'll come over and look, I don't know, Thursday at 10 o'clock or something. And he brought me a whole box of books. A cardboard box full of I think 18th and 19th century books. And I sat there for hours going through them.

Miner: Hm.

Terkla: I was looking for something in particular for my students. I honestly can't remember what I was. Um. And I found really good stuff. And I do remember culling—you know, taking some out and taking them to class. Or pulling some out and going over to Susan with the whole box, saying you know—or did I take the box? No, I didn't take the box. Um. But I said, I did have to go back. I said, you know, here's—here are the books. Can I come back and look at them again? So, I went back again and I pulled some out. I don't know three, four, five of them. And, um, asked her if it'd be okay if I took 'em. She said yeah, he said you can take whatever you want. So I did. And I took them to class. Went back and he wanted to know when I took them back, he wanted to know—he took me into his office. The President's office. And he wanted to know why I chose the ones I chose and, um, something about the ones I didn't. Not just why didn't you choose them, but something more specific. And I don't remember what it was. But it was this box full of this jumble of, you know, 18th and 19th century hardbacks. Well, obviously hardbacks. Books.

Miner: But you don't remember why you chose what you did?

Terkla: No, I don't. But it had to be Chaucer. Couldn't—'cause I know they were in English.

Miner: Hm.

Terkla: I think one was in Latin and it was some kind of, uh, uh not a Latin grammar but a book used to teach Latin, I think. But the rest were in English so it had to be Chaucer. I think it was probably I was looking for a Caxton or something. I don't know.

Miner: But he never took a story like that and came back from a trip and said, here?

Terkla: No.

Miner: Thought you'd like to have—

Terkla: Wish he would have. I don't know if he ever had any—I don't know if he had—did he have a Caxton? Caxton, Chaucer? Caxton's the first one to publish Chaucer.

Miner: I don't think he did. But I'll look. I'll see. Um. Did he talk to you about libraries at all? Sort of his philosophy of libraries or their role in campus?

Terkla: Well, yeah. We talked about libraries. We talked about...I was really upset that he...had a kinda moratorium on buying—subscribing to journals.

Miner: Hm.

Terkla: So we—Ames really has nothing—not in my field, never has had in the way of journals. It's because he—he thought our students could go to ISU to use—to look at—to find secondary articles and journals.

Miner: Hm.

Terkla: He saw no reasons of us—for Wesleyan to subscribe to lots of journals. And I think it's because he prefers that we spent the money on books.

Miner: Hm.

Terkla: So we don't—we have a crap journal collection. I mean, even before we got rid of the print journals. Just some disciplines somehow managed to get—like, I'll walk around every now and then—I don't really do it anymore because we don't really have anything. Walk around where the new journals are there by Bob's office and that part of the library. I'd walk around and look and they'd be—I finally got the library to subscribe to *The Chaucer Review*. And we had *Exemplaria*. Those are two medieval journals. And I assumed because my students never really used them even though I told them we have a subscription, uh, I know we don't get *Exemplaria* anymore and I don't think we get *The Chaucer Review*. We talked about that stuff. That really annoyed me. And we talked about his, um, I don't know if you'd call it a theory. Philosophy

about—he was, he was to me, it seemed, he was more interested in volumes—uh, more interested in volumes than he was titles.

Miner: Hm.

Terkla: So if we had four copies of, I don't know, Geoffrey of Monmouth's issue of *Kings of Britain*. That was better than having Jeffery of Monmouth, William of Malmesbury, you know. It was about volumes and books on shelves to fill that building.

Miner: Okay.

Terkla: And that really annoyed me.

Miner: Did you tell him that?

Terkla: Yeah. Well, I don't know if I said that really annoys me.

Miner: Well, sure, but I mean—

Terkla: But I said, you know, what's the logic behind that?

Miner: Yeah. What was it?

Terkla: I don't know.

Miner: Oh man.

Terkla: I don't know.

Miner: That's my Holy Grail, Dan.

Terkla: We talked about that kind of stuff. We talked about journals. We talked about English libraries. I remember talking to him about the Bahrain library more than once. 'Cause I worked in there. I worked there a lot over the years. And, um, it's a quirky English place. Um. Obviously amazing, but—the British museum. I used to work—when the British Library was in the British Museum I had a reader's card to the manuscript room. So I worked in the British Museum. British Library in the British Museum. So we talked about those kinds of libraries—those libraries. We talked about the King's Library which used to be in the British Museum. Which isn't anymore. It's now in the middle of the British Library. And, um, yeah. Talked about Duke Humphrey's library in the Bahrain. Upstairs. The 17th century room with the—where all the manuscripts are. Stained glass windows, wooden plank floor. When Minor was here the books were still chained to the shelves.

Miner: Yeah.

Terkla: They still had, you know, um, book presses. The books were upright, not flat but they—lots of them were still chained to the shelves. Little reading shelves. You had to sit there—

slanted—and read—pull it off and read. So we talked about those kinds of things. He loved that kind of stuff.

Miner: Sure.

Terkla: And Hereford Cathedral, which as this map I work on. Um. Uh, we talked about its chain—has a chain library which they reassembled maybe fifteen years ago.

Miner: Wow.

Terkla: They found the pieces which was a, I think it was—I wanna say a 17th century library. It was in the Lady Chapel with book presses and then book chains—chained books. And I guess at the—well, it wouldn't have been the Reformation. At some point it was dismantled and all the pieces went, you know, somewhere. They had some of them, they didn't have others, and then they discovered the bits in various places around the cathedral and assembled them. And now it's there in a beautiful new library building that was opened in '92 by the Queen. And the big map I work on. They're both in the same building. Books upstairs, map downstairs. So I talked—I was telling him—in fact, I remember we talked about that. I have a friend who works in the cathedral. So Dominic would tell me what they were doing and I would, you know, if I saw Minor I would say hey Minor, just heard they're putting it back together and they're going to move it and there's gonna be a new building.

Miner: Fantastic.

Terkla: Yeah.

Miner: Did he ever go see it?

Terkla: I don't know. I want to say he did. I'm surprised to find how many people say I've been to Hereford and saw the map in 1972. Really? It used to be hanging on one of the piers, one of the pillars in church just hanging there.

Miner: Gosh.

Terkla: Sad. Jeez. So, this friend of mine used to—he went to grammar school in Hereford and he would cut through the church because the cathedral was a shortcut. And he walked by every day from school and never even looked at it. And then they kinda put him in charge of it.

Miner: Had to look then.

Terkla: So we talked about old libraries.

Miner: Yeah?

Terkla: Yeah.

Miner: So you think maybe his moratorium—and I've never heard this before—he had a moratorium on purchasing journals was a ploy to get students to, I don't know, engage with texts on their own and not through—

Terkla: I don't know. I never heard that.

Miner: Okay.

Terkla: I don't know if that's—ever went that far. It was just a matter of space. 'Cause this was the case in Sheehan. I might be overstating this, but I don't think I am. Marcia could tell you.

Miner: Going to talk to all the library folk.

Terkla: I don't think I am. Um. 'Cause we, we've never had a good run of humanities journals. We just haven't.

Miner: Hm.

Terkla: And he told me straight out, you know, they can go to ISU. Well, our students won't even walk to Walgreens.

Miner: Yeah.

Terkla: So, I don't know.

Miner: What do you think he'd make of everything digital and...accessible and?

Terkla: I know he made a lot of use of—he bought a lot of books online. And I imagine sold books online. I don't really know about Minor as a kinda book dealer. But I'm—I'm pretty sure didn't he sell things too?

Miner: I have never. I'm curious about that too. And I haven't heard anything about that. It's all been about acquisition.

Terkla: Well, I know he bought books online.

Miner: Yeah.

Terkla: Um.

Miner: Well, we've got printouts. I mean, there are printouts of ABE Books and eBay and all that.

Terkla: So I don't know. I mean, I think Minor and I were alike in that we—speaking of him in the present tense, we understand the utility of the digi-verse. I mean, I was on it for an hour before I came here meeting with [Shauna], my student. Getting books.

Miner: Mm hmm.

Terkla: I spend—out of, you know, a five, six day work week, I probably spend 10 hours looking for books. Fifteen. Maybe more. Doing, you know, working on this book. But, um, I can't read newspapers online. We get three newspapers and they come on our porch every morning.

Miner: Mm hmm.

Terkla: Um, I prefer to read books in print. Um. And I think Minor would have been the same way. 'Cause, I mean, the more I, the more I do, the more I conduct research, the more I learn about, um, the history of the book. And the more I value books over 1s and 0s.

Miner: Why? What does that do?

Terkla: Well, I mean, old books—like I did, uh, uh, I probably told you this—last summer I did a hagiography classes in London and I did a we did a course on the history of the book. At the London Rare Book School. And, um, there's no comparison between sitting there with something, uh, reading or trying to read. Something that was made by hand from sheeps. Sheep. Or goats or whatever. Sheep and calves, mostly. There's nothing like sitting there eroding that. No comparison between reading something like. Holding something like that. Smelling something like that. Feeling something like that and reading stuff online. And so, I mean, I don't sit around in my study at home and look at medieval manuscripts. But there's something about having the books that connects me to the whole—to the history of the book. And I prefer to be there rather than on screen. I don't really do much with my computer except work. I don't surf the net. I don't play games. I'm not on Facebook. It's a tool for me.

Miner: Sure.

Terkla: And it's always been that way. Um. Uh. For teaching and for research. I mean, I, you know, buy stuff from Amazon and, you know, we stream videos and all that.

Miner: It's a tool.

Terkla: Yeah. I mean, I don't sit there and oh, it's Saturday afternoon. I think I'll sit and, I don't know, look at the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Miner: For a good time.

Terkla: I just don't do that. I don't know. I can't say. His family would obviously be better to say.

Miner: Sure.

Terkla: But I don't think Minor—I think Minor would have never given up his love for books. And he would have continued—he probably would have, I assume, many more places you can get to for buying rare books online. I'm sure he would have been into that.

Miner: So you were at the auction that we did. No, you didn't go. You knew we auctioned his books though?

Terkla: I did, and for some reason maybe I was away. I don't know. When was it?

Miner: It was September of 2009.

Terkla: I might have been junior—couldn't have been junior leave. No, it was—I don't know. I don't know why I didn't go.

Miner: I only met him once. And, uh, so part of what I'm interested in and talking to people who knew him is to sort of get a sense of what he would have thought about all that.

Terkla: Well, I don't really know the story.

Miner: So—

Terkla: Well, I know it was—no, I don't know the story.

Miner: Well, and that's one of the things that I'm trying to figure out too. Is the University purchased his collection from his family at their request. That's, like, the basic story.

Terkla: The whole thing?

Miner: The collection that they sold to the University part of his collection. I don't believe it was the whole thing.

Terkla: No, I know it wasn't the whole thing because some of the books that he loaned me never showed up in Ames.

Miner: Okay. So we chose then to, um, well, I was chosen to organize the collection and was given the great privilege of organizing the whole thing.

Terkla: The whole thing.

Miner: Right. And about halfway through that I was told we're auctioning it. And I wasn't involved in the decision to do that. I'm looking at, you know, sort of how all of that came about. But, uh, but we kept about ten percent of what was transferred to the University. And we kept in areas that we were already collecting in in archives and special collections. We kept a couple of areas that were new to us. Things like what became known as the Conduct of Life collection. Things like etiquette books and moral instructions to use and that kind of thing.

Terkla: He kept the University catalogs?

Miner: The University catalog collection he donated before he died.

Terkla: Which he had in his garage.

Miner: Which is actually one of the first things that I was hired to deal with.

Terkla: The whole wall.

Miner: Was it really? Well, that explains a lot. I was given 150 boxes to organize when I was first hired.

Terkla: Yeah, there was the south wall of the garage at the President's house.

Miner: God. Well, that was the one time I met him when I was in the basement of Ames working on that collection.

Terkla: Oh. I didn't know that.

Miner: He came in and he said—first thing he asked me was what do you collect?

Terkla: Yeah, he—

Miner: We had, like, ten different things we talked about in five minutes and then he was gone.

Terkla: That's Minor.

Miner: So it's sort of always been curious to me about why was that question important. Why was the act of collecting important? He said he had a focus on the 18th century but he didn't. I mean, he had a ton of stuff that wasn't 18th century. Yeah. And no one's really been able to articulate that. And that's one of the things

Terkla: Why he collected.

Miner: Why he collected what he did. If—most collectors will say they have a focus and that's what they do. And they, they purchase and some of them purchase and sell because they enjoy that part of it. They enjoy finding and, then, you know, finding and letting go. Or donating it to some place as well. One of the things I was curious about is what people who knew him would think about the University auctioning the collection.

Terkla: I just assumed that we couldn't afford to buy it. I don't know. I have no idea how much it cost. How much it went for. I have no idea.

Miner: Well, it's one of the things I'm going to be documenting. So.

Terkla: I mean, I always heard that the family wanted certain books to keep. Which is cool.

Miner: Sure. Which makes a lot of sense.

Terkla: Yeah. But then I know—I've also heard that Ellen and the university didn't depart on amicable terms. And that the—I always heard that the selling, the auction was part of that tension. I don't know.

Miner: Oh. Interesting. I hadn't heard that.

Terkla: Well, yeah. I don't—I think—I'm trying to remember now. I don't remember anything anymore. Mary. Oh, sorry, Meg.

Miner: Nice. Nice.

Terkla: I do remember, or maybe misremember that, uh, the university wouldn't give the family enough money for the whole collection. I know I heard that.

Miner: Do you remember where?

Terkla: Oh god, no. No, but it had to be, had to be one of my colleagues.

Miner: Well, what do you think Minor would have thought about us not keeping all of these books?

Terkla: Where did, where did the other ninety percent go? It just got sold.

Miner: They were auctioned. They were auctioned in lots.

Terkla: So the family got what they wanted—

Miner: Right. And then they—

Terkla: University got 10% to fill in what they—

Miner: Well, that was a library decision. That was Anke and Anke decided what we were going to be keeping. And then the guideline that I—and I remember discussing this with her. You know, I had already organized into sort of areas, subject areas. Um. And we talked about what would be possible for us to keep and make available for people and would it be possible to keep and make available 12,000 things, you know, that were covering a lot of things. A lot of different subject areas. Or should we just do what were already collecting.

Terkla: Right.

Miner: And there was only one area of the collection that I wish we would have kept that we didn't. And, um, I don't know now why the decision was made not to keep that area. 'Cause I, you know, we talked a lot about what should we keep? And it made total sense to go with what—I mean, it's what librarians do. We have collection development policies.

Terkla: Right.

Miner: We serve our communities based on what those collection development guidelines are and that's how that decision was made. Except from the Conduct of Life was new—a new area for special collections. And it seemed it would be a good thing because the women's studies program was new at the time. And, you know, that sort of thing could be a possible area that students could come and do research on and then we kept his reference collection about books. So book collecting.

Terkla: So family got what it wanted and library folk decided which ten percent to buy based on what the library—

Miner: Everything had already been bought. The University bought the collection outright.

Terkla: And then auctioned to get some of the money back.

Miner: Yeah.

Terkla: Right, right.

Miner: And that's it in a nutshell.

Terkla: Okay.

Miner: I was just curious about what Minor would have thought about everything being broken up like that.

Terkla: Well, I don't know. I never, I never paid a whole lot of attention. This has always bothered me. I never paid a whole lot of attention to the way he shelved his books at home. Um. I know that Dante case had other rare things in it. I was always amazed because they were right in front of the door.

Miner: And a window. You said the cases were around a window.

Terkla: Yeah, there was a bookcase, that big window that looks on to Park Street and another case on the other side. Um. So, I guess—uh, I always assumed that because I never paid much attention, I always assumed that he kinda categorized things in his magpie way. And that, yeah, he was interested in the 18th century primarily. At least that's my impression. But he was almost more interested in just the kind of hunt and acquisition of stuff and that drove him more than focusing on the 18th century because I don't know how much Minor focused on things period. He couldn't stay long on a topic.

Miner: Hm.

Terkla: Um. At least when I talked to him.

Miner: That's great.

Terkla: He bounced all over the place. So I don't know. He didn't have an 18th century core book case. Right? That I know of. And therefore if he didn't have that, I don't know how much he would have been bothered by it being broken up as long as the family got what it wanted.

Miner: Okay.

Terkla: But I don't know what his relationship with his family was like. I know he was—he and Ellen had a kind of tense relationship because of her drinking at times. And he would—it was weird one time. We went over there one time and she was gone drying out somewhere and we went over there for some function Stacey and I. She wasn't drunk but she'd been drinking and he'd said to me—I don't know what he said to me. But it wasn't quite an apology but he was

worried about the way people were going to receive her that night. And she came back and she stayed and she kept drinkin' but I don't know that it was as much of a problem as it was. So I don't really know what Minor and his family relationship was like.

Miner: Yeah Yeah, and that's not, you know, something that I would expect to have an answer to, I guess. I'm certainly going to be talking to them. I've already hoping to see—

Terkla: That's great.

Miner: I'm hoping to see Ellen. I've got a promise from Minor the third to have access to the family, so.

Terkla: Cool. Where are they, Connecticut?

Miner: Minor is in Brooklyn.

Terkla: Where's Ellen now?

Miner: I don't know where she's at.

Terkla: Seems to me she went back to wherever they came from.

Miner: Yeah, I thought she'd gone back to Connecticut.

Terkla: New Hampshire or whatever. Connecticut, right?

Miner: Connecticut.

Terkla: Yeah.

Miner: Well, all right. Just askin'. Are there other things about Minor you want to share, or...?

Terkla: I don't think so.

Miner: It's quite a bit.

Terkla: Yeah, that's—I don't think so.

Miner: Well, I appreciate you taking the time.

Terkla: Yeah, it was great. It was fun.

Miner: Thank you.

Terkla: I miss Minor.

Miner: Yeah?

Terkla: Yeah. It was a hoot.

END TRANSCRIPT