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Bob Delvin

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Oral History Interview with Robert Delvin,
in Hansen Student Center, March 1, 2018
Conducted by Meg Miner

Meg Miner: Okay. Good morning. This is March 1st, happy spring! [laughs] Here in the Hansen Student Center with Bob Delvin, and we are here to talk about Minor Myers as president, his influences on our campus and specifically because of your association with the library, I would really love your reflection on how he influenced the library. Umm so, why don't you go ahead and give us your full however you want to introduce yourself and how you fit in to this picture.

Robert Delvin: Okay. I am Robert Delvin. I am the Fine Arts librarian at Illinois Wesleyan. I have been here since 1980. Umm... umm... okay.

Miner: A good long time and a good long time before Minor.

Delvin: Yes.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: But I forget exactly what year he came.

Miner: It was 89.

Delvin: Eighty-nine, okay.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: Alright. So, umm well, obviously he is the person of the university. I had numerous interactions with him. Umm most of them were pleasant, they weren't entirely... [sighs]

Miner: Like I guess I will just ask you to be specific. You can give us – I-I mean I have no – I mean, Bob, I don't have any dog in this fight-

Delvin: Okay.

Miner: I am interested in making a record, right? Because non-

Delvin: Well, okay, alright.

Miner: None of this has been documented-

Delvin: Okay. Well, I'll just-

Miner: Okay?

Delvin: I'll just be blunt about this.

Miner: Please be blunt.

Delvin: Uh after-after he fired Clayton Highum and –

Miner: I don't know how you fire a tenured faculty member?

Delvin: They encouraged him to retire –

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: Put it that way.

Miner: Alright. For sure.

Delvin: Really bluntly, you know.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: He was - uh Clayton umm very respected librarian in the State of Illinois. The person of ILA for many, many years. Umm he was a terrific colleague uh and in every way and a mentor to the people that he worked with, particularly those of us who are-who were young in the profession at the time. And um, so I had a great deal of respect for Clayton, and it's a personal friendship, you know, with him. So, you know, he did not fit into Minor's idea about what a university librarian should be. And uh-

Miner: Can you characterize what that might have been?

Delvin: [Deep breath] Well, he didn't – umm... I think that will come later.

Miner: Okay, okay.

Delvin: And that will come l- [coughs]

Miner: I will let you go talk.

Delvin: But so umm when Clayton was forced out, I happened to get a phone in the middle of the night... from Ellen Myers I mean-no Ellen Hurwitz the provost at the time. Uh about one or two in the morning-

Miner: O-kay.

Delvin: -umm screaming at me about now that Clayton was gone, what was I going to do about it. What was I going to do about it. And after I sort of caught my breath, I said, "What-What the hell are you asking me? You fired the man, you figure it out." And so, and then she-I wanna see you in my office nine o'clock in the morning. And so, I pretty much figured out I was gonna get the axe too because I was-well, I guess I was tenure, I was tenured by that time.

But anyway, so you never know. So, I doubtly went in there and got in there, and she was all peaches and cream. And umm... so, I don't know, we just chit chat about things, and then who should conveniently walk in – Oh, it's Minor! And so, he sits down and closes the door. And he and they have started looked-and I looked at him and okay, this is it. And uh he says "Well, you realize that we are in a sort of transition period here at the library, and we just wondered if you would be interested in being interim university librarian for a while." And I said, "No, I wouldn't be interested in it. I don't think I have that skill set." Umm we just got rid of somebody who had those skill sets, and Clayton Highum was-meant a lot to me as an individual, as a mentor, and I would in no way ever step in. And-Even if I wanted to and had the skills, I wouldn't do it. I-

Miner: Because of your friendship.

Delvin: Yes. And I think it is really inappropriate for you to ask me to do such a thing.

Miner: Mmm. Mmm.

Delvin: And that was the conversation, he was out of there. Okay, we don't need to talk to you anymore about. That was all it.

Miner: Wow.

Delvin: I was dismissed from the office. Never heard anything more about them.

Miner: So there were no repercussions on you?

Delvin: No, there's no repercussions on my part, but it sort of, you know, I wasn't going to play their game-

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: -at the time.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: And-And then – I wasn't the only person that was approached, and but that's for somebody else to talk about. So that resp-that kind of set the tone, but you know, we never had any - I'd say acrimonious... exchanges after that.

Miner: Do you think he did this elsewhere on campus?

Delvin: Oh, I am sure he did.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: Umm and, you know, someone once asked me and said well isn't it great to have a president that is interested in libraries, and interested in-in music, and things that you are

interested in, Bob. And I said, "Well, yes and no." Umm great that he is interested in these things as I think any university president ought to be interested in the library and interested in-in umm uh departments and disciplines that have played a-a major role in the history of the institution. And he better have those interests, you know-you know. But he could also – but god help you and I am like if he was interested in what you are interested in because he was gonna micromanage you in every way that he could.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: You know, to meet his own amps. Whatever his amps happen to be. And... you sort of felt yourself becoming... you know, a tool rather than... in our college. Somebody that he was going to use. And for many of us at the time, that-like let us do what we are trying to do, you know.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: We have the people, the expertise in music or librarianship. Now you tell us how to do what we are trying to do. We don't tell you how to raise money for the university, so don't tell us how to, you know, do our-our-our work. And-and I am sure I am not the only person in the library that felt that way, you know, either, and I certainly know that I am not the only person on the faculty... campus wide who had that feeling or, you know, I am just – I am not alone in that. Umm so, yeah uh that-that was there umm we certainly benefitted a lot and we have a... new, beautiful library. Uh it's one if his dreams to have. Umm but we paid the price for it ever since as a university.

Miner: Yeah. In a number of ways.

Delvin: In a number of ways. And, you know, umm umm I won't see us getting out of that situation that we are in.

Miner: Are you talking specifically about the debt?

Delvin: About the debt.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: Yeah. And umm there are a lot of lib- wonderful libraries in the world who don't look – aren't as beautiful as Ames library who have, you know, equally as good collections or much better, and, you know, sort of a dumpy old, you know, building. So, a building isn't, you know, looks isn't, you know, everything. You ask uh... you are – because if you ask me if I am a book collector, and... I will say a limited, I mean I buy books all the time; books that interest me, interest in my academic, interests in my personal interests. Yeah, and those largely are in-are-are in music, particularly church music and in early American music, the history of the pipe organ, umm books on, you know, architecture uh medieval architecture, umm a lot of bible – a lot of books on theology. Umm these are interests that – academic interests that I have long had. Umm but I say that I am a collector, mmm I a... I am certainly not a collector in the way that he was.

And so, you would then ask like – what do you recall about Miner's collecting interest. Well, I mean there are certain things that we sh-uh we could probably share interests in. I mean obviously he was a collector of books, uh but he collected music, he collected musical instruments. Um he was very interested in 18th century American decorative arts meaning furniture and, you know, various kinds of things like that. Umm he also of course was interested in model trains, which is another interest that I have although I guess I do actually collect some books about model trains. I don't have room to collect model trains, but I have, -

Miner: Mmmm.

Delvin: -you know. Ummm and I suspect, and I am pretty sure that he probably told me this at one point that he got started collecting as a kid, as a teenager or maybe even younger, you know. Umm I still own the first book that I was ever given.

Miner: What's that?

Delvin: It's called Slim Green.

Miner: [laughs] And is it green!

Delvin: It's about a little book, child's book, about the garter snake or green snake-

Miner: Ah-huh, ah.

Delvin: And his, you know, my-you know, my grand-my grandmother gave it to me when I was about seven. So anyway, I –

[Miner laughs]

Delvin: -still have it somewhere. Umm... So, yeah, I mean, you know, we've all develop our interests in our early on in life probably, most of them, ones that are lasting. Umm you ask, what was his motivation for collecting, hell if I know.

Miner: Okay. [laughs]

Delvin: And some – most days I think he collected just to have it. Did he read what he collected? I haven't a clue. Uh did he know what he was looking at half the time? I don't believe so.

Miner: You mean the value of it?

Delvin: Well, ...like intellectual content of it.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: And I thought this sometimes it was very – at least in the areas of music. Anyway, I thought it was a very dilatat kind of amateurish approach to it. Now use an example... uh he

barged into Larry Campbell, who was the prof-umm head of keyboard department, here one day while Larry was teaching. And he had to have Larry's immediate opinion about why- Minor was having such a difficult time playing this piece of 18th century. I guess it was a Back keyboard piece, suite, movement from a suite or something. Partita, I am not sure what it was. But anyway, umm... and he had to know why he couldn't play this. And so, he plopped down the piano and started trying to play it. He was reading the music in the wrong clefts.

Miner: Hmm.

Delvin: He was trying to play.

Miner: Oh dear. Backwards.

Delvin: You know, he-he playing backwards-

Miner: And-but-

Delvin: And he didn't recognize that he was playing – he couldn't read the music. And, of course this happened in front of the student, which [deep breath] I am sure and uh that Larry sort of corrected him on it, and he was – and Minor didn't like that, and he was out of there.

Miner: But he asked for his opinion.

Delvin: He asked for it. But there was this kind of thing, you know.

Miner: Huh.

Delvin: And umm – so, there probably other people who would have-had similar experiences, but this is one while I was not there. I was certainly heard about it first hand from-from Larry Campbell, and he thought that-he just shook his head: this is [sighs] you know, Minor. You know, that kind of-

Miner: So... it was a-it was piano music?

Delvin: This is a piece of keyboard music-

Miner: Keyboard.

Delvin: 18th century. I'd say keyboard then piano, harpsichord, whatever. There's a – you know-you know, anyway. So,

Miner: Interesting.

Delvin: Yeah, which I thought was just rather, you know, telling.

Miner: It is.

Delvin: You know. Umm but there is this sort of – kind of... I can do anything; I am a I-I am a, you know, renaissance person, I can just jump in there and, you know. And, you know... all of us, you know, the-the longer you study something the more you realize you don't know about what you are talking about.

[Miner laughs]

Delvin: Even if you know a hell a lot about what you are talking about, you realize every time you open your mouth that, you know, unless you prepared script all the time-

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: -maybe and footnoted all your notes and-

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: You know, so you are still you are always at that risk of, you know, of something like that. And umm so, maybe I am a bit hesitant [chuckles] to claim a lot because I am, you know, I realize how much I-I don't know just about everything than I think I know something about.

[Miner laughs]

Delvin: Yeah. And that means there's always room to grow, you know, there's always room to learn more.

Miner: Well, that's kind of what we say we should be doing-

Delvin: That's what we should be doing.

Miner: That's lifelong learning.

Delvin: Yes, that's lifelong learning. Umm and so-but yeah-anyway. So again, I... you know, I am sure he had a passion for these things, and you know, he has background as in-in umm political science; I believe it was, and umm but uh I know he did love music, and uh we were of course both organists. He had played organ. He was interested in fact that I was interested in the- in the organ, and he told me about some experiences he had playing. Umm somewhere during his teenage years whether it was in Indiana or whether it was further east, he had done some church playing. And, you know, that's fine, you know. Umm-

[Phone ding]

Delvin: Umm he never talked to me about he acquire-how he acquired his interests in these things. Umm or if he did, I-I don't remember him, you know, what he said umm. Well, another assertive instance -- that I can speak to personally. Umm one day in the summer, I don't know when it was but summer it was. I happened to be the only faculty member in-in Pressor

Hall that day, and I got a phone call [chuckles] from this uh office of administrator saying... "We got a gift. We have received something down on the-on loading dock, I what you to a look at it." And I needed to know what to do with it--

Miner: This was an advancement person?

Delvin: No, uh this was-this Martha Tyner was the secretary at the time of the office of administrator. And so, she called me and so I went down and here on the loading dock where there is this umm wrapped up harmonium or reed organ or pump organ. Parlor organ, however you want to call it. Umm Victorian piece, umm very, very lovely woodwork. And it had been delivered to the school-the school of music-

Miner: The school of music.

Delvin: Yeah, and she wanted to know what to do with them. You know, the physical plant wanted to know what to do with it and I said, "Well, for first thing and I heck – sort of was half kiddingly said it can go into my office." And so, that's where it ended up.

Miner: Oh gosh.

Delvin: And umm so uh... I've always been interested in harmoniums, pump—you know, pump organs, and I long wished I had one. And so umm I said I was only half kidding when I said take it to my office.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: So, you know, like it was in the next couple days or something, Minor comes charging into my office one time when to see this. And uh the prominence of the instrument had-it had belonged to a member at the time of the board of trustees who was moving from their own home into assisted living, and they didn't have room for it. And it is-it was an instrument that was not a family piece, but something that he had purchased along the way, and they just didn't want to take it with them. So, they thought they would just give it to the school. Well, so that's what I learned to, you know, afterwards – so, anyway –

Miner: But they haven't consulted with anybody about it?

Delvin: Well, I don't know if they had consulted anybody or not. I don't recall. But anyway, it-it showed up. So, it's Saturday, so Minor said well you need to make a recording on this, you know, the complete harmonium works of so and so of somebody.

Miner: Huh.

Delvin: And I kinda chuckled, and I said, "Well, Minor, let me tell you right from the beginning. This is-this is more of something to look at. This is more of a piece of furniture as more valuable as a piece of furniture than it ever has, had or will have as a musical instrument." And so, I played it for him... a bit, and it – oh!

[Miner laughs]

Delvin: I think we probably agreed. So anyway, it just sat there.

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: And umm since people walk into my office and said “Woah! Look at this!” When I- when we moved out of Presser Hall into the Ames library – the music library moved out of Presser Hall into Ames Library. Uh I was sort of perplexed with that; what do we do with this thing? Because school of music wasn’t interest in it-

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: -at all. And so, umm I think it was Minor at the time or maybe it was... well, I try to think if-if Jenna McNew provost by that time. Was she provost in 2001?

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: Okay. Anyway, so she is – well, you know, since you liked it Bob, it’s yours, you know. So, you know, we are having physical plant moving it over to your home, so it’s still there, you know-you know. Now I have to deal-deal [chuckles]

[Miner chuckles]

Delvin: Uh but anyway, so... so again, this is sort of one of those things, if Minor was interested in it, then he was trying to get you to do something-

Miner: Hmm.

Delvin: -with that.

Miner: Hmm.

Delvin: And if for whatever reason it did not seem like a good idea, you were interested in- you weren’t interested in and or it didn’t have some sort of publicity kind of... uh a value, then he lost interest in it.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: And my suspicion is that he was that way with a lot of people, and why I said sometimes they felt they were... being used more than we were being supported.

[Miner: This interview was interrupted. We had to move to a different room. The conversation picks up a short time later.]

Delvin: Oh.

Miner: So, we got kicked out of one room. We will see how long it takes us to get kicked out of this one. So, you were reading a-along my list of questions, so thank you for-for considering them.

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: But we don't have to stick to the list too, so just tell me what you got.

Delvin: Well...

Miner: And-

Delvin: I give you-

Miner: -thank you for interrupting your lunch-

Delvin: You asked about-

Miner: -for this, too. [laughs]

Delvin: Umm... I mean ha- how he acquired his interest. Well-

Miner: Whatever.

Delvin: Whatever.

Miner: How about his collection?

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: Did he-did you talk to him about the 18th century music?

Delvin: No. Well, he showed it to me once, and it was just like this pile of stuff, and... sometimes he would have... for a string quartet, where you would have normally violins one and two, and viola, and violoncello parts. Yeah like, a single... second violin part.

Miner: Mmm.

Delvin: You know, that was all there is and sometimes he did more than that. Sometimes he had full sets but sometimes it's just one part. Okay. Well, umm... [chuckles] I mean musicologists have reconstructed pieces uh and less than that probably. But you know, m-this is music that was published. I mean, you know, it was available in other modern editions and so forth. But it was this 18th century piece of paper that had this-the second viola part umm you know, so-or second violin parts I mean that's, you know -

Miner: So, you are-

Delvin: So, I sometimes- I think it was just to have it or have it as an artifact rather than the intellectual content, you know, of it. And that was important.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: And in some instances that might be true, but I-I don't think in this particular string quartet or whatever it was, you know. But the known publisher, and you know, one could without a great deal of difficulty (as to retain) what it was and find a published edition of it that was available that, you know, usable. So, here's for this-seems like this contradiction between artifact and content.

Miner: Yeah, one has value.

Delvin: One has value.

Miner: And in what situation.

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: So, when he would show you these kinds of things what would be – I mean what's-

Delvin: Well -

Miner: -your sense of why he was even showing it to you?

Delvin: I have no idea.

Miner: Would he come to your office with them?

Delvin: Nah – Nah, well maybe he did once in a while or a couple of times maybe. Most of the time would be if I were over his house for something.

Miner: Oh, okay. So like an event you've-

Delvin: Well, yeah, it's some- [confusing words] - you know, I used to umm... you know, I started-developed a friendship independently of his with Ellen.

Miner: Oh, okay. I didn't know that.

Delvin: And, you know, uh because she taught French and uh this one of my-some of my, you know, my interests in French language study were really, you know, sort of. You know, being defined, and so she pushed me a little bit, you know, on that because that's what she taught. And so-

Miner: Nice!

Delvin: Sometimes I would hear... him, you know, bellowing out something in the basement. You know, playing with trains or doing whatever, and which he never invited me to see which I was kinda resented because I really would have wanted to see his model trains. Umm but yeah, you know, I was upstairs, you know, talking with Ellen about something else. And umm there are other couple instances where she got interested in some artwork around campus, and I got sort of drawn into that.

Miner: Is this the early gold studies?

Delvin: Yeah, the early gold materials and-

Miner: Do you want to talk about that or no?

Delvin: Huh?

Miner: You want to talk about that?

Delvin: Well, she had a real interest in, and so did Mrs. Berta, uh the ex-wife of the m-man who is, you know, from the English department that was fired because of his plagiarism of Somerset Maugham's works and things like that. This was back in Eckley's early days maybe or maybe even before Eckley.

Miner: Oh dear.

Delvin: You know, it was kind of a scandal. Umm but anyway, that was her – I don't whether it's Robert Berta or Frank Berta or something like that - I don't know what his name was. Uh taught in English department. Uh but anyway, that was, you know, that's - but anyway, so both of these women were interested in this collection, and I got myself sorta stuck in the middle between them, and- a place that I did not want to be. So [about to laugh]

Miner: So, she is-

Delvin: Somehow, I got myself out of that situation.

Miner: Oh my god. So was Mrs. Berta a faculty? Was she-

Delvin: No.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: She is just-just – she, you know, someone who lives here in town. You know, that got -- had some sort of interest in artwork. And so, did Ellen Myers have an interest in it. And I am not

exactly sure where it stemmed from. I-If they told me how they developed that interest, I don't recall what it was.

Miner: True, but that was Ellen's not Minor's interest.

Delvin: Yeah, it was Ellen's intru-

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: -interest and not-not Minor's.

Miner: Okay. Well, go ahead.

Delvin: So... so I mean uh there were couple of instance-ins – sometimes like that, and-and others like colloquia, you know, receptions or something where Minor was showing off some of his stuff, and I happen to be there whether, you know, maybe with a group or just individually; I don't recall, but I did see some of these things. And again, like I said he would occasionally bring something into the library umm, you know, to ask me about it... so uh... yeah [laughs] it was sort of-

Miner: Did he ask you like the-the value or something about-

Delvin: Well, no never asking me the value of it.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: I mean just what I thought about if I had an idea what it was. And umm sometimes I could sort of, you know, make a... intelligent guess, you know, but I don't know that I ever... identified something for sure that he was interested in. But you know, I gave him an idea of something that... uh but anyway. So, there were a number of instances like that-that umm umm... I remember one time... I guess it was 1989 umm but that would have been like his first year here?

Miner: Ah-huh. It was- fall of 89 is when he started.

Delvin: Okay. Because it was the bicentennial of the first American Episcopal prayer book published in 1789, and the church that I was playing at; we reconstructed a liturgy based on that prayer book. And umm somehow, Minor and I got talking about this. And he's "Oh I have one!", so he had to show me this prayer book. And umm – so ummm, I actually made it uh some copies of certain pages from it. And umm... he said, "Oh I used to go to the Episcopal church." And I said, "Oh really?" And he said, "Yeah, but they don't use the 1789 prayer book anymore, so I am not interested." You know.

[Miner laughs sarcastically]

Delvin: And... okay. Well, it's not an antiquarian society–

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: -you know? And it's, you know –

Miner: So they had what a revise –

Delvin: Well, then we use - they-they actually by that point, they were using the 1976 prayer book which is what we still essentially use.

Miner: Huh.

Delvin: But anyway, umm I mean – If it didn't have this sort of historic interest, and he didn't like "Oh they use too much incense," and you know, on and on and on and on and, you know, all these were excuses why he wouldn't go to the Episcopal church. You know, because it didn't fit his, you know, ideas about what he liked.

Miner: Hmm.

Delvin: And you know, he's not the only person, you know, feels that way., but you know. So, yeah we-we were not on the same page at all, you know, about any of this kind of thing. So, it was just-

Miner: [mumbling]

Delvin: -when these other interests, you know, at times when, you know... you know, I said sometimes I just thought he-he had this sort of fantasy idea of-of something, you know.

Miner: Hmm.

Delvin: And it was totally, you know, unrealistic.

Miner: So, the idealized over-

Delvin: Uh-Over-

Miner: -the reality.

Delvin: Over the reality.

Miner: So, it wasn't really so much about the utility-

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: -of the objects as it was –

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: -th-when they were created.

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: Do you know – Do you have any kind of sense of why the-the time period would have mattered?

Delvin: Well, you know, I just think-

Miner: Just personal preference.

Delvin: I think it's just personal preference, and I think he had this interest in 19th century Americana which I think it's wonderful!

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: I mean, you know, I love that period of – I-I have a lot of interests in those-

Miner: You do!

Delvin: In those things, too.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: But different – maybe different music than he had but you know, I um... so, we-we shared that sort of interest, but you know, they developed in very different, you know, directions.

Miner: Sure. Okay.

Delvin: You know, I mean I got interest in a – working in – when I was doing my doctoral work, I... I was - this before the bicentennial, and so we really got interested in everybody at my school, University of Michigan. Uh we studied Richard Crawford we were uh working on 18th century New England uh Metrical Solemnly. And umm as an interest I still have, and – but I again it was 18th century American, you know, printed materials, music –

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: You know, music education, umm way of teaching music. Umm and umm to that extent we-when we shared this sort of interest and-

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: You know, and umm he showed me some things that he had and I showed him some things I had, but umm and uh so he was asking me what I had done my other – my master thesis on, and it was 18th century uhh American music, you know.

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: Umm or very early federal period, you know-

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: -after the constitution of convention, and umm up into the early years of the 19th century, and so, he was sort of interested in that. And so, we did share those sorts of interests but mine came out of my studies... you know... formal studies rather than just, you know, sort of uh interest that I'd sort of... you know, developed from having been around and gone out drinking with William Billings in 1775 or something like that.

[Miner laughing]

Delvin: I mean-I mean- it would have – it was a totally different kind of-

Miner: Hmmm.

Delvin: -thing. So, umm... you asked assertive question... here umm... did my interests or did his interests have an effect on you? ... No.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: Our interests that we had in common – I developed on my own or from others – had other mentors. Minor was not a mentor to me in any way. How do you think they affected... IWU? ... Oh I think we sort of... in some ways paid the price for his interests, you know.

Miner: And I would love to hear what you think about that. I mean and that's-that's what it mean about interests, okay? I mean there are-

Delvin: You know, I mean_

Miner: -are different levels-

Delvin: You know, we - and I had – I got sent out on two quests um again while Minor-w-while Clayton was still the university librarian. Umm one umm I got sent up to a college in Michigan that was closing its doors, and my assignment was to pull as many things out of those collections as I thought might possibly fit into Shain library, and lower 'em up in boxes and-and have them shipped down to us.

Miner: Good heavens! What college was that?

Delvin: It was umm called all of that “Nazareth”-

Miner: Oh. Hmm.

Delvin: And in Kalamazoo.

Miner: Wow.

Delvin: It was a catholic school, a girl’s school, and that closed its doors. The Sisters couldn’t support it any longer. The other one similar thing was when-

Miner: But did Minor send you? Or-

Delvin: Well, uh well, Minor and Clayton. And this was during this period where you just try to – and, you know... Yeah, and then another instance when the Cornbelt library system closed down here, I got out there, was set out there to... I don’t know, West Hobby? Where they were, and just go through their, you know, resident collection, and basically, take it all. Whether it was... you know, and most that stuff is really meant for public libraries. This where we got, you know, Rocket the Squirrel, you know?

Miner: Yes, I do know.

Delvin: And some of that stuff-

Miner: I so know.

Delvin: -which is sort of lower in the library.

Miner: It is.

Delvin: And-And someone said [confusing words] did he share thoughts with you about his philosophy about libraries? Well, I always used to say - I think it might be the more one has, the more one gets.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: You know quality-

Miner: So-

Delvin: -out the door.

Miner: Attracting other-

Delvin: Yes.

Miner: What? -

Delvin: You know –

Miner: Money?

Delvin: Y-You will get more collections if you have collections. And so, I used to think of this sort the garage sale... kind of collection development. You just go and buy stuff and get stuff; didn't matter what it was, you just got it, and then-and it-it could be old series catalogs, or it could be coin catalogs, or it could be cookbooks, or it could be Rocky the Squirrel storybooks. Uhh it didn't really matter what it was. And if it didn't fit in an academic undergraduate library, meh I me- yeah it's nice if it does but it's not really important.

Miner: So, the-the criteria, the overwriting criteria, was –

Delvin & Miner [at the same time]: Quantity.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: And not quality.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: Or appropriateness.

Miner: And do you think uh I mean... yeah have a bite of your lunch. I feel terrible for-

Delvin: No, no. Nah.

Miner: - taking too much time of your time here. Umm do you think that that attitude of Minor's because it clearly wasn't anybody in the library, right?

Delvin: No. Uh-umm.

Miner: Nobody in the library agreed to this. Okay. So, I guess my question is what do you think – two parts, what do you think would have happen if somebody had said “No, not gonna do that”? I mean do – I mean that would've-would have been a repeat of...

Delvin: I think it could have been.

Miner: Clayton?

Delvin: Ah-huh.

Miner: And then was anybody else on campus upset about this? Or was it - did anybody even know what was happening to the library? Was this the kind of thing that did happen clandestinely or I mean it's just so – it's unfathomable to me-

Delvin: No, I am sure people knew about that. But... [coughs] you know, on a campus this size, it's hard to keep secrets, you know?

Miner: Right. Yeah.

Delvin: And – And you – you know, Minor talked a good talk. I mean he was very - [chuckles]. He was enthusiastic, you know, if nothing else about his interests and his interests – I mean his desire or passion to make this... umm community, academic community, stand uh-out, you know. You know, whether it was just because his desire, you know, to see if Phi Beta Kappa, you know, chapter on-on the campus or whatever, you know, we had to have a certain collection, mass to get a Phi Beta Kappa chapter, and that was really important to him. That was going to make us like the Wesleyan-

Miner: Mmm. Ah-huh.

Delvin: -or something, you know. I mean that's the all I find good but might not be who we are as an institution or have been. Umm I mean the institution is fine before Minor Myers, you know, came to be the president, that had already been a fine place for decades and decades. Um we probab-you know... and granted it was a regional school. It was a secretarial school uh more or less umm through all that's history, but... but I sort of feel that over the years, we've lost our identity, and being one more really – I mean we are still a very, very fine institution in spite of all the problems that we have. Uh we have a - wonderful students, we have a wonderful faculty, umm and umm yeah, we do, but... I don't sense that we really have an iden-identity anymore. There are lots of schools in the country that's are just as good as us. Umm yeah, and so... I-I don't-I don't know if that... his enthusiasm made us a better institution. And we-

Miner: You don't know that.

Delvin: I do not know that... it did, and I rather suspect it didn't, you know. Um I mean the quality of this school is in the students, and its faculty and not necessarily in the dreams of one administrator.

Miner: What was the identity before Minor that you can-

Delvin: Well, it was, you know, it was – it had – it was a Methodist institution umm that was-had a regional draw uh uh on the students which probably hasn't changed all that much. Chicago, down state, you know, Illinois. After all, it was "Illinois Wesleyan." I mean we had international students, but it was mostly international students in which – from uh parts of the world of our - uhh Methodist missionaries had really been active.

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: And uh but um – but then others in our areas, too. I remember uh a student assistant I had for four years who uh grew up umm in Istanbul. Her father was the head of the uh Turkish uh core of army – army and core – army core of engineers.

Miner: Huh.

Delvin: She grew up uh with homes in Paris and- and- and Constantinople. Her sail boat she kept out on the island, in a Greek island. She had a getaway home in San Diego on the beach. Ummm she had a body guard pretty much all the way through her childhood.

Miner: Good heavens!

Delvin: Uh was educated by French Jesuits in French. Umm and she came to Illinois Wesleyan because her piano teacher had gone to Illinois Wesleyan thirty years before.

Miner: Hmm.

Delvin: Whatever in her piano teacher, you know, Constantinople.

Miner: Huh.

Delvin: Istanbul [laughs]

Miner: Hmm.

Delvin: Right, Istanbul. And yeah, so, who knows how people pick places and-and... a lot of times I have talked to the students over the year, so “Why did you come to Illinois Wesleyan?” Well, one of my teachers did or, you know, my aunt was here one time, and you know, it wasn’t sort of scientific kind of a thing you know, studied all the, you know, catalogs and so forth, and the-and-and the sta- you know, ratings in the US news and world report, you know. Yeah, because some of these times these things didn’t exist, you know.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: There’s tools for picking a school. You picked it because of, you know, uh religious affiliation whether that was Methodist or in my case, Doctrine Form or Roman Catholic or whatever it might be or your-your parents and grandparents and older brother; somebody else sort of influenced you to go there. But, you know... our students said, you know, this was one of the places, particularly to study music up until the ni – after the 1960s and into the mid 70s; this was the place in Illinois other than Northwestern University that they go to study music.

Miner: Huh.

Delvin: And people came from great distance, you know, at the time most considered great distance to study at Illinois Wesleyan University. And – but this is, you know, under, you know, uh-different, you know, circumstances. Umm like, you know, economic circumstances [coughs]

political, cultural circumstances. But that sort of – all of that kind of helped form... you know, an identity, you know to the school.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: And it seems to me now, that we've lost that i-identity. And maybe some – maybe for the reas- good reasons that we lost part of it. But, you know, we certainly seem to have a heck of a time getting alumni support.

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: And, you know that, and we, you know, we are living with those consequences.

Miner: Right.

Delvin: You know. So, I mean, you know, it's - next person you talk to me have a – absolutely a hundred and eighty -

Miner: Oh, of course.

Delvin: -degree uh different, you know, attitude, you know, than I do, you know about that. Yeah, I also ask you about – I said, you know, the more one has, the more one gets. Of course, you know, Minor had this idea about a library and – boy! I mean I love the li- [laughs] Ames library, who wouldn't? But, it had to have a classic academic look, and I mean-I mean you have got the, you know, the best view in town. From the archives and special collections and the-

Miner: Oh.

Delvin: You know, and the Minor Myer's reading room, and I mean that's - I mean... that looks like a library! I mean there-there's this that-that look. And like I said, I was just down the other week at University of South DuPont library, and their campus uh [clears throat] not only doesn't have all the hardwood paneling, the Persian rugs everywhere and books everywhere. It has the stain glass gothic windows all around with, you know, portraits, royal portraits of bishops and-

Miner: Huh.

Delvin: -so forth and all the regalia. You know, looking down over their half glasses on-on the students studying, you know.

[Miner laughs]

Delvin: And, you know, yeah and they used to be the vestiges of the old south staring at you all the time-

Miner: Mmm. Ah-huh.

Delvin: -which is sort of disappeared, thank goodness. But, you know, there's umm there's that in our history, you know, to-

Miner: Sure.

Delvin: Yeah. Umm but umm.... it certainly has this look; I mean in Ames library is this post-modern, classical look which is-is beautiful. Yeah. Umm but that was also part of the-the-the appearance had to really be something. Aaand you know, the appearance far outweigh the value of the collection.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: And particularly when we started just getting, you know, truckloads of cast offs from other libraries, you know, just to fill up shelves, you know.

Miner: And was the library involved at all in the decisions-

Delvin: Well, we had to process it.

Miner: But - I know, but to bring them in, I mean was anybody consulted?

Delvin: [chuckles] In my case, no. I mean I just sort of told to get it, you know.

Miner: Were there discussions in faculty or staff meeting? I mean did you have regular faculty or staff meeting?

Delvin: Oh yeah, we had - you know, we had regular f- uh uh librarians meetings. Umm umm... I don't frankly recall us having collections about evaluating this kind of stuff. Umm... you know, and we didn't... sometimes, you know, we got stuff that, you know, so I - that whole range, and I'll take that or that-that-that whole section, I mean this kind of thing, we just got the stuff. And then once we actually started going through it and finding out what it was, you know, somethings we were embarrassed by and they - you know, and if they had mold on it, we still had to keep it, you know, we couldn't-

Miner: Who would check though? Would Minor check?

Delvin: Well, when we - when there was processing this material, people working in tech services refine that it was-

Miner: No, but I mean who would check if you s- if you got rid of something that had mold on it?

Delvin: But we were told that we didn't get rid of anything... you know. If it has mold, you put it in a plastic bag. You know, it had to be counted, you know, we had this number we had to get to. Umm and... uh-uh that's not collection development.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: And-

Miner: What was that number?

Delvin: I don't remember what it was. Half a million or four hundred thousand or what it was, I don't remember.

Miner: And it was all about PBK.

Delvin: Well, that's certainly one of, you know, one of the—the major incentives. They get up to a certain threshold, so that we could have a chapter, you know, on our campus. Umm-

Miner: Well, it wasn't a shared value in the library. It sounds like-

Delvin: It certainly wasn't a shared value.

Miner: What do you think it would have done for the campus- I mean, did it do anything for the campus?

Delvin: Anything for the campus. As far as the collection goes because, you know, as we know - I mean we even still when we-we weed and we weed because we have stuff that hasn't been used for, you know... forever or for decades because it's either inaccurate or it's falling out of favor or something. But at least, you know, I'd like to think that the things that we purchase for the library, you know, have a.... a reasonably, at least a reasonably direct relationship to our mission as a school and our collection development policy.

Miner: Right.

Delvin: I mean we are not looking for material that is, you know, usable - I mean that-that is reflective; if it's not current is least reflective of a period, but which has had some sort of-of-of ve-vetting in-in our purchase if it. Whether through reviews or through our knowledge of disciplines or-or- we have expertise in our-our layouts and areas, and that we just don't wholesale, get stuff.

Miner: Yeah. And you are speaking relationship to the mission of the university-

Delvin: Yeah. Mission and the university and the library, where an undergraduate, you know, liberal arts college or professional, pre-professional programs uh um and the materials that we buy should support those curricula.

Miner: And so, do you think when - I mean because you were here from-for nine years of Clayton's tenure. Do you think uhh and-and he was here from the 70s -

Delvin: He was here in the 70s

Miner: From the 1970s. Yeah.

Delvin: -seventy one or seventy two I think he came.

Miner: So, do you think that the collection as it stood then met the mission – met the requirements of the mission?

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: And then... as... Sue took over and the collection cha- well, I guess I mean the collection really didn't change necessarily because of Sue it would've been because of Minor's influence. Because she-

Delvin: I think largely – yeah.

Miner: She came in after that.

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: So, I am just trying to think because there was uh a no freestanding collection development plan, but I can find farther to 2002 which is the one that was in place when I got here.

Delvin: Uh no, there was something before that.

Miner: Was there?

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: Okay. Yeah, and that's a challenge for –

Delvin: I inherited one from my predecessor.

Miner: But it wasn't library wide, it was...

Delvin: For the sch- for music –

Miner: For the school of music.

Delvin: But I am sure it was part of something-

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: -broader.

Miner: Yeah. I mean there are annual reports that Clayton did-

Delvin: Ah-huh. Yeah.

Miner: That-that sort of...

Delvin: That's mostly numbers, yeah.

Miner: Plan for the-

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: -library. Yeah.

Delvin: Right.

Miner: But not – not something we would call today collection development plan.

Delvin: oh well, yeah may-

Miner: But anyways, your perception is that what the library was purchasing, what the library was doing was to serve the curriculum.

Delvin: Ah-huh.

Miner: And the folks-

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: -of the curriculum. How do you think the umm campus saw this sort of before and after Clayton thing? Did you have discussions with colleagues at that point? I mean because you had always been involved in faculty governance-

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: And-

Delvin: I think we were all sorry to see someone getting the short of a stick. But depending on whether you are tenured - [coughs] tenured or untenured, one's get a little more resonant about what they said, you know.

Miner: Well of course, but –

Delvin: Of course,

Miner: Nobody did any uprising among-

Delvin: No-

Miner: the tenured

Delvin: No-

Miner: -faculty?

Delvin: No one did any uprising. No. Uh-uh. You know. Uh-uh.

Miner: Because that kind of thing happen, and I just don't see it where-where tenured faculty here sort of...

Delvin: Well –

Miner: Pissed off and...

Delvin: [chewing] I know - I mean we-we hear about schools where faculty raised a, you know, a vote of no confidence in the administrator.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: Whether in a department or a school or at the university, you know, level; cabinet, you know. I mean we-you hear about those things happening and how people, you know, get forced out by, you know-you know, the community. Uh and umm... I mean I am sure there are, you know, two sides to every issue.

Miner: True.

Delvin: You know, so depending on where you stand in a particular place and time. Alright. Umm this seems to ha- it's continue to happen in schools around and, you know, particularly when resources become tight-

Miner: Well-

Delvin: - you know.

Miner: That's your change, is the dialogue.

Delvin: Ah-huh.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: Yeah. Yeah.

Miner: But resources where - I mean whether they actually were or were-weren't during Minor's tenure, resources don't seem to have been a huge influence on the decisions and the-

Delvin: Ah-huh.

Miner: The plans that he had for the institution.

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: So, the way that that kind of thing would then... show up in, like daily life, I mean with Minor's - you said he-his enthusiasm wasn't necessarily a good thing for the university, but did he bring that sort of... presence into the library frequently or was it more of a stuff would just show up and - I mean because you weren't really in the library until we moved in to Ames, right?

Delvin: Well, true, true. Because I was in the Branch library from 1980 to - well, it's just, you know, till 2001 when I moved in for my first two decades here.

Miner: But you would have heard from others.

Delvin: Oh, sure. Yeah, yeah, sure. And in those - i-in my sort of missions to go out and, you know, retrieve stuff with all certainly in that earlier period. And, you know, there - I-I don't know that I ever brought back that much stuff as for the music collection, except maybe some recordings, possibly. Uh certainly not much in the way of uh of printed music they may have been a few pieces, but, you know, not much.

Miner: Mmm.

Delvin: But recordings of music maybe more of - but most of that was-was-is-were monographs and, well, and well, and lot of areas, you know. Some of the areas of which I really didn't know anything about, you know.

Miner: Sure.

Delvin: But, you know, they came kinda along with a [chuckles], you know, a batch, you know, of stuff. You know, bind by the truck load.

Miner: You find that you are weeding a lot of that these days?

Delvin: I am still weeding-

[Miner laughs]

Delvin: Yeah. Still getting rid some of that stuff.

Miner: Heh.

Delvin: So, -

Miner: Huh.

Delvin: Yeah. Umm... I mean how did Minor get rid of his, you know, because... we have one music collection in the library, which he still don't know what to do with, is all the sheet music that Minor collected. This umm 19th century, early 20th century American uh sheet music, mostly of Chicago imprints but not entirely. A lot of it had to do with musical stage. Uh meaning Vaudeville umm music theatre, early music theatre uh – of course it was still largely Vaudeville at the time, but no drama that kind of thing, from the end of the 19th century or early 20th century. Umm, you know, we got – he had this big collection of it which in the last year or so of his life – he had sort of... tried to get Linda Farquharson, from the school of music, interested in, and maybe put in together some performances of some of this repertoire. Uh and this was music that grandma would have on the piano bench at home.

Miner: Sure.

Delvin: You know. Umm... So, that-that-that kind of stuff, you know, that on the market is sold more for the cover art.

Miner: Right.

Delvin: Like old A2 magazines. People want the pictures, and they –

Miner: Right.

Delvin: -don't-don't care about what's in it.

Miner: Right.

Delvin: And we still had this ton of this stuff, and eh- but then she sort of dropped the ball, wasn't interested in-on it, I guess. And so, Minor called me up one day, you know, talked with him within the last, you know, six months of his life probably, and asked if I would take it in the library. W-What was I gonna say?

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: Of course, I'll take it.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: You know. It's, you know, I did a couple of exhibits of some of these pieces that I thought was clever, so I grouped them into themes. You know, uh music about – songs about the prairies, songs – found some things by uh by accident of a uh of-of a Bloomington uh composer publisher, which I saved and I have in my office. Umm I found some on things about... a couple politically incorrect exhibits-

[Minor chuckles]

Delvin: -you know, of things that were very demeaning to, you know- [chuckles] -you know, non-angle, Saxon-looking sorts of people –

Miner: Right.

Delvin: And certainly things that, you know, uh portrayed, you know, women as being sort of the dumb blonde types, you know. And, you know, just the things that you just – you-you have seen them in a-in a group, and then they are kind of-

Miner: Pop culture things.

Delvin: Pop culture kinds of things, but you know, interesting to-to see how at a particular time, how people were uh caricatured-

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: -you know? And umm – yeah, this sort of–and it's sort of interesting and-and it does have that sort of his- value I suppose as far as historical context umm cultural context. Musically is it worth having the collec- it's - they all still sit down a room 45.

Miner: What's interesting that you raise that because umm I thought that that came to us after he died.

Delvin: Uh-uh. Well, he – I was using – and he talked to me about it, umm and that was before he died. It wasn't long within the last year of his life.

Miner: Huh.

Delvin: He was usually trying to get rid of things, you know.

Miner: So, did you-do you-did you get the sense of he was trying to disperse his collection at the end of his life?

Delvin: Well... [chewing]. Yeah, I guess so. I don't know why else he would've called me about it.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: You know, my interests weren't there.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: And I, you know, but - like I said I'm only gonna say to this man who really, you know, I am not gonna wish any- [coughs]

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: ill on anybody –

Miner: Right.

[Delvin clears throat]

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: And if there was – uh it seemed like taking this stuff as a small-a small... thing, you know, and – you know. But he didn't give us all his 18th century stuff-

Miner: Well, I was gonna – that was my-my next question, alright; so, umm-

Delvin: The things that –

Miner: -you know –

Delvin: seems like trying to get rid of now, and –

Miner: If-Well, do you know anything about how the-the whole collection transfer business worked out? Were you involved in that at all?

Delvin: Not-no least. I mean because you are already on the scene by that time.

Miner: I was on the scene. I was uh-

Delvin: And I had no-

Miner: I was charged with organizing the collection. I didn't bring it out of the house.

Delvin: Ah-huh.

Miner: It was taken a Shein because it's the only place that we had.

Delvin: Ah.

Miner: And uh... and it wasn't until, as I recall it about half way through that process that I was told we were gonna auction it.

Delvin: Ah-huh.

Miner: So, there weren't any discussions that you recall about-

Delvin: If there was, I wasn't there for it-

Miner: How this person-yeah.

Delvin: nor part of that, no.

Miner: And so, you weren't a – you weren't consulted about the music-

Delvin: Nope.

Miner: -collection at all?

Delvin: Not in the least.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: huh [swallows]. But, I mean there were some things that would probably have been nice to have in the library. But again, that's not really part of our mission either to be collecting 18th century, you know, first editions of—of music or much-pretty much of anything.

Miner: Right. Yeah, and the-and the thing that you are referring to is the message that I sent you last week-

Delvin: Oh, yeah. Right.

Miner: -about the book dealer, and it was absol- it's absolutely not my intention uh to-to, you know, take an entire collection-

Delvin: No, we do-

Miner: But there's something that, you know, I have-I have to think about what special collection is...

Delvin: No, we do have a few things in the collection that from Minor's, and there are some 18th century a manuscript books which are very, very similar to what I did my – this paper I did in graduate school on 18th century American uh domestic, you know, early federal music which I added to the collection very similar to that same general prominence, umm and some maybe overlap in the material. Some what was the same. And I remember umm Sue Stroyan and umm umm Roger Schneider, who was acting like Provost-

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: -or socio provost...

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: -at the time, and they were looking at these things, which for some reason they were gonna give to us. I don't know why, but what did I know about them so then I start – I showed them my copies of what I had written; very, very similar. And even one of Minor's friends, not remember his name, was another book collector or musicologist or something from somewhere, Eastern University, who was real sort of interested in what I had done as a graduate student was looking over all my stuff and which is - [shudders] he got kinda excited about it. A-

Miner: Who did, the Eastern guy?

Delvin: Huh?

Miner: The East- the guy from Eastern-

Delvin: F-From-

Miner: Guy-

Delvin: Uh from s-

Miner: From Eastern Michigan?

Delvin: I don't know where he was from-

Miner: Oh.

Delvin: But this is where I did the paper.

Miner: Oh. Oh, okay.

Delvin: Yeah, you know-

Miner: Sorry. Okay.

Delvin: But this is the same collection. But it was all [confusing words] a manuscript collection that his – this family, a-a patroon family from New York named Lantzingh, L-A-N-T-Z-I-N-G-H umm collected over a period from about 17- 1780's up through about nine- 1810. As, you know, two or three - couple generations of family members. And umm uh it had all kinds of music in it. They had uh uh part writing exercises. They had keyboard duets. They had songs with component. It had piano duets in it. It had fiddle tunes. It had hymns. Uh it had some anthems umm uh of ri- uh political songs umm or wha- e-early federal umm period uh American, you know, lyrics and-and music. Uh that the music drawn from variety of sources; some of the 18th century British, much of that was 18th ce-century British. Or immigrants uh musicians from Britain that came to the colonies and-and umm before the civil wa-before the uh uh rel-revolution and early, you know, period living mostly in New York and Philadelphia. But

Lantzingh and his family move from New York to Michigan, and actually they changed their name to L-A-N-S-I-N-G as in Lansing Michigan-

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: With the same-same family...

Miner: Oh my!

Delvin: Uh that were sort of – but anyway, then they were Dutch reform and so, this... this umm collection ended up at Hope College where I was an undergraduate.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: And that's how I-

Miner: That's how you got it, too.

Delvin: -was interested in that. But again, the material between what Minor or this friend or whoever he got these books from – we have in the library two of them I think.

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: Again, very, very similar, i-identical format, and-and-and sort of – they look like they came from the same sort of prototype of repertoire.

Miner: Hmm.

Delvin: Same kind of things. And so, you know, I pointed out to what these were, and I said yeah I mean we should, you know, we should keep these, you know, because at least they were-they were – I was interested in them. And frankly, I went and looked at them once or twice since the time, but, you know, nice if somebody was really paid attention to him. You know uh but – and that's not something we sawn out, and even like I-I said in my memo to you, the-the "Beggar's Opera" collection is something we inherited. We didn't really go out to get it all.

Miner: Was that a Minor thing, too?

Delvin: No, that was before-

Miner: Okay. Yeah-

Delvin: That was before-

Miner: Because I thought that was there.

Delvin: -umm is-uh of-what was this ed- uh [sighs] from the English department.

Miner: Schultz.

Delvin: Admin Schul- Admin?

Miner: William Eben.

Delvin: William Eben-

Miner & Delvin: Schultz.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: That was part of – and he was interested in 18th century British stage –

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: -now which is this certainly typical of. And so, we got things other than just the “Beggar’s Opera”, but it’s nice that we have them, but it’s, you know... it’s-it doesn’t really, you know, we don’t go out looking for that stuff.

Miner: Sure.

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: So, you weren’t really consulted about keeping –

Delvin: Well, I mean they–

Miner: -all that stuff or?

Delvin: They-They kept those two books, so apparently I said enough. They convinced Sue and Roger that we should keep these things. So anyway, they were offered to us, so we took ‘em. Mmm.

Miner: So, the – you thought the family that offered them or the-

Delvin: I don’t know where it came from.

Miner: Yeah, okay.

Delvin: I was just asked my opinion on them and what they were.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: You know, so I told what I – I happened to know what they were!

Miner: Yeah. [laughs] Handy!

Delvin: And I think they were kinda surprised.

Miner: So, what do you think Minor would've thought of the auction? The fact that his collection was auctioned – I mean do you know that it was purchased; the collection was purchased?

Delvin: Did he know that?

Miner: Do *you* know that; that the collection was purchased.

Delvin: The-The-The music material?

Miner: The whole – the-

Delvin: I don't know.

Miner: -the stuff that we auctioned was purchased by the university. Did you-were you aware of that?

Delvin: Oh, yeah. Okay, I guess but it's never-

Miner: Never really, yeah.

Delvin: But then well, we had to get rid of it, right?

Miner: Well, yeah. So, then there was-there was a decision that was made auctioning it.

Delvin: Okay.

Miner: And so, you-you're-

Delvin: I was not part, play tribute to that.

Miner: So, none of that was happening in the library again – so, none of these-these conversations although they affected the library, were happening in the library.

Delvin: They were, yeah. Right, they-they were-

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: -exterior. Maybe-

Miner: That's-

Delvin: -Sue was involved in it, but yeah... I mean, you know, it's, you know, it's better than that. I mean yeah-I mean [laughs sarcastically] you know, I mean it's, she had an idea of collections. I mean she was, you know, she was-she was kind of being told what she had to do, too. Mmm.

Miner: Okay, and that's all I am-I am really, you know-

Delvin: Mmm.

Miner: -getting after here is-

Delvin: Yeah, mmm.

Miner: -because so many things happened, and they are not... stated but they resonate with us today.

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: Umm all of these-all of these issues about weeding and what do we buy-

Delvin: Ah-huh.

Miner: And what don't we buy are very umm sensitive points for every single person in the library today. Even the people who weren't there.

Delvin: And we know that is-that's the way it is across the profession, too.

Miner: Do we? Okay.

Delvin: Well, of course we do. I mean this-

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: -is the thing that we talk about in library meetings, too.

Miner: Okay.

Delvin: You know, [swallows] collection development; how they [chewing sound] do as much more with less resources and-

Miner: Oh, right. Yeah.

Delvin: Where do we-

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: -invest our whether it's technology or legacy collections or internet-inter- electronic access or... digital or – I mean these are all issues that really are, you know, that-that uh [laughs sarcastically] they are very important in what we do.

Miner: Well, and you have a unique perspective because you do have a long view of the changes in the profession, but it sounds like – perhaps the issues haven't changed. It's just that the umm – and the core issues haven't changed.

Delvin: Ah, the core iss- no.

Miner: Would you agree with that?

Delvin: Ah-huh. Right. [eating]

Miner: Just the way that they present themselves perhaps... has changed.

Delvin: I guess I kinda... look back, I guess to the good old days the card catalogue or something.

Miner: Ha!

Delvin: But, I-I still like to hold things in my hand.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: [mumbling] It's me and probably my age, but I mean I love – I mean well, you do too; we like to hold a book. We like to smell a book.

Miner: Right.

Delvin: The feel of it, you know, rub your fingers on the paper and feel, yeah.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: Look at the spine, you know-

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: -and see its-yeah, you know. [laughs]

Miner: Yeah. We are not averse to the tools of our trade.

Delvin: No, uh-uh.

Miner: The-The modern tools, but we find some value in-

Delvin: We find value...

Miner: -in the thing.

Delvin: In the historical record.

Miner: Ah-huh. And certainly, it's something -

Delvin: As an-As an artifact-

Miner: Right.

Delvin: You know, how people treat the artifact - how they have treated their books. Umm in marginalia wa- you know...

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: Things that you find in the books, you know, where people have, you know-

Miner: Stuff things in.

Delvin: Where there's a lock of hair or a leaf or, you know, a comments. You know, where these scratched out certain words, you know, because they didn't like the c- political context of those words, you know. Yeah. Where I read Amen Duffy, you know, and his- yeah - his-his-his monographs on English-

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: -umm history and-and print and this, you know, six-seventeenth - sixteen to seventeenth centuries, you know. And-and yeah, you know, it's fabulous reading, but you know, what those things told us about the culture - I mean about the person that owned, and I mean those are wonderful stuff to have, you know. And for someone who's in history or historical - you know, looking at the historical record, and both in the content and-and in the physical items -

[phone rings]

Delvin: Uh chute. Now, that's - I- [whispers] I gotta get this.

[Miner: So, brief pause to try to catch the phone there]

Miner: Umm... So, [sighs] yeah, the physicality of the book and what a collection is umm what- what it can do for the environment that it's in uh is something that is present i-in my thoughts and my desires about the collection that I cared for Illinois Wesleyan, and I would love it if those collections were used more. I am thinking now what you're saying - what you were saying about, you know, an undergraduate campus and the focus of the collection for the curriculum and the mission. Where do you think special collec- because you and I travel; we travel every

summer to go look at other people's cool stuff and trying get ideas about what we can do, and I brought back a lot of those ideas, but it has been very hard to get traction on this campus for use of the collection. And I have done with quite a bit of work with cataloging in the good graces of the people who were there and-and trying to get our collections better described. But it-it doesn't seem like we get the audience, and I personally would like. So, I mean what – is there a role for special collections on the campus like this?

Delvin: Yes, because I think... as, you know, liberally educated students... should be aware... and have an appreciation, if not a love, for the academic traditions... of the past umm to see the manifestations of something more than just a computer screen.

Miner: Ah-ah.

Delvin: You know, that – I really think - and-and they may not see it on the day they are graduate – I mean many of our students do have that appreciation for what, you know, they have learned and have who-and e-e- an experience. But it's not just about the here and now, what's the quick and first and easiest thing to get that, you know.

Miner: Which is the Goo-

Delvin: Which comes up in the Google s-

Miner: Right.

Delvin: -search.

Miner: Right.

Delvin: Yeah. You know. And we hope, as librarians and we-faculty, that we instill that critical thinking skill, you know, in students. But-but I am always amazed that when, you know, I have seen students up in special collections, and they get to look at, you know, or hold in their hands something that was produced... you know, in the 17th century or in the 15th century or the 14th century, the 13th century, how – ugh that was kind of draw their breath, and you'd show them the book that made out of skin, you know- [chuckles]

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: -that kind of stuff, and they are just sorta, “Ohh, this is spooky!”

Miner: Yep, but people-

Delvin: Yeah-But they gave them - there's this - their eyes light up when-when they see this kind of thing. And-And I think, you know, so I – and I really do think that the special collections... is very, very important in uh in-in-in undergraduate library. So, it's not just about what's practical and will get them a job, but it's – you know, go to trades school, you know, for god's sake, you know. Don't s- you know, I hope that you become a dreamer to a point, you know.

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: I mean that you-you're gonna – if sooner-sooner than later – too soon, you are gonna be faced with the reality of working for uh a corporate entity or whatever, and they don't give a rat's ass, you know, about these – the culture-

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: You know, of-of-of our country and that-and where it comes from.

Miner: Yeah. Or the world.

Delvin: Or the world, yeah.

Miner: Ah.

Delvin: And so, this is the time to relish in that, you know. And, there I-I agree with Minor, you know, and this – I- you know, I-I-I do is-is how – and I am sure far m- uh probably a far more students under his-during his ten year as president were inspired by him than probably a lot of his colleagues, who already had sort of become something like jaded by, you know, education, and by jumping through the loops of academe, and-and doing the kinds of things that you have to do. You know, to... get advancement, keep your job, and you know-

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: Those kinds of things that prove your worth to the a-, you know, academic community, which is pretty thin skinned.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: You know, and uh... and umm. So, I mean-yeah, I-I-I really, you know, this one of the reasons I love to come up the special collections or in the archives and just sit there and-and look at the stuff. You know, and some through pages an-and-and see, you know, its photographs or whether it's, you know, the Wesleyana or the Argus or-to get the idea of what was-what was important, you know, and the plica of the year over the ideas about an event, you know, someone who have been with this Martin Luther King coming to campus or whether it was the first world war or, you know, the-the little film about- during the depression-

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: Which I think it's just wonderful-

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: -little then yet of what, you know. And that's comic in a way, but you know, uh-

Miner: What happened?

Delvin: But you know-

Miner: And it was a creative take-

Delvin: President McPherson was that. He doesn't look like he ever smile and a sense of humor, but you know –

[Miner laughs]

Delvin: You know, he was dead serious.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: You know, about that umm little bit. But you know, I mean those-those are – those are wonderful things to have within-in-in-in-in a college, you know. A-

Miner: Well, because it's something that – I am sorry, go ahead.

Delvin: No, go ahead.

Miner: Because we, you know, every once in a while there are talks about expanding special collections, and I – and when I think of Minor as a collector, and I – and I – not, you know, spend any amount of time with uh the records that I created during the preparation for the auction until this sabbatical, and I think of his focus on numbers for the library and numbers in his own collection. But what he was collecting, was special collections.

Delvin: Well, yes it was.

Miner: And so, but his interest in the library was all about just quantity for raising the profile of the library in the certain circle. So, to me, it's always been a disconnect between his personal interests which, to me, would've indicated a building for special collections or, you know, a floor for special collections versus something that he thought he was doing for the benefit of the university-

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: Presumably –

Delvin: Well, would he live to a ripe age, and retired from here; it's hard to say whether he would have bequeathed his collection, you know-

Miner: True.

Delvin: -to the library or not. You know-You know, I'd like to think that maybe he would have umm as it was, you know, his family... didn't seem to share that kind of... passion.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: Umm and I don't wanna speak badly, you know, of them because this-their dad, th-their husband, I mean you know, umm their family. I mean it's, you know, didn't belong to us, and-

Miner: Right.

Delvin: And he certainly didn't belong to us.

Miner: Right.

Delvin: But, on the same point, you know, of course we didn't belong to him either, you know.

Miner: Right.

Delvin: Umm soooo, it would have been nice to sort of have those things, some of those, umm and then allow us then the discussion to use our knowledge of, our collective knowledge, and that's not just within the library, but within English department, within uh, you know, history department, with all the- whatever other, you know, business, economics to make the decision about what was best for us to enshrine, if that's the word. Uh to promote and collect. You know, and let us have that freedom of doing that, rather than just feeling under pressure just to take it because it was - helped us build numbers. And, you know, I really would like to think that Minor... believed in these collections that he had and their value, intrinsic value, umm and what it was worth, you know, to the... pos- for posterity at least, you know. But, we didn't end up being really the benefi- uh beneficiary of uh of-of-of that.

Miner: Ah-huh.

Delvin: So, umm... yeah, I mean when we felt that we had to - we bought his library, and then we had to decide about trying to get rid of it to recoup our loses on it. You know, that's [sighs] that's kind of self-defeating of a gift, I guess or it wasn't a gift, I mean-

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: Umm that's unfortunate that we found ourselves in that position I guess.

Miner: But nobody w- in the library was consulted about that.

Delvin: No. Not that I am aware of.

Miner: Do-

Delvin: I certainly never was.

Miner: So, do you have any sense of um like people on campus how – I mean they perceive that or?

Delvin: Well, you – I am probably the – I-I don't know. You'd probably have to talk us people like Paul Bush now or to, you know-

Miner: But-

Delvin: -try to fix them, but – and Mike Young or people who have been around for longer than I have or at least as long as I have.

Miner: True.

Delvin: Umm there's nobody in the library really – well, I mean Sue to a point - I mean yeah, I could say not to a point; she was the university librarian. I mean she was the person amongst us that was most involve in all of that.

Miner: Yeah.

Delvin: Yeah. You know, but - you know, I am sure she was conflicted... in it too, you know. I had to say umm... her parting line or what she thought she had to do and probably what she really sort of feels in her heart, you know, umm about it. Yeah. So, umm... yeah I mean, you know, he was a – he was a real piece of work, and like I said, you know, I... you know, we are paying the price for it... in a way, but yeah we certainly uh reap some benefit. You know, I, you know, would – I have never say we didn't reap any benefit. Umm but I-I still think that, you know, if he had never been here, we would still be, you know, a-a-a great... four year, undergraduate, you know, liberal arts university.

Miner: Huh.

Delvin: You know. Umm and because we that - we have a bed rock, you know, to build on.

Miner: Hmm.

Delvin: Yeah. So, at-with that word, I think it's probably the time to end this conversation.

Miner: Alright.

Delvin: But it's—it's turned out to be a real pleasure, you know, being a library's, you know, pretty close to being to heaven.

[laughter]

Delvin: [coughs] Yeah, because you know, that's where the people – of the book, you know.

Miner: Yep.

Delvin: I hope he never get rid of that... uh as a collector.

Miner: Yeah, it would be pretty hard to shake, I think.

Delvin: Oh, I uh-

Miner: It's got-It's got more enduring value than the early part of the digital age. [laughs]

Delvin: Well, it certainly does. Yeah, it certainly does, you know, like how those-

Miner: Think of how-how much we have changed!

Delvin: All those CDs that are just wiping away. Yeah. [chuckles]

Miner: Thank you so much for talking-

Delvin: Yeah.

Miner: -to me, Bob. I appreciate it.