



3-24-2016

## Anke Voss

Anke Voss

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### Recommended Citation

Voss, Anke and Miner, Meg, "Anke Voss" (2016). *All oral histories*. 133.  
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# Oral History Interview with Anke Voss in the Urbana Free Library on March 24, 2017

Conducted by Meg Miner, Illinois Wesleyan Archivist

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Meg Miner: This is Meg Miner and I am the Archivist at Illinois Wesleyan University. I'm on a sabbatical project here in the Urbana free library on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016 with Anke Voss who will – please introduce yourself and tell us how you are affiliated with Wesleyan.

Anke Voss: Yes. This is Anke Voss. I'm currently the Director of the Champaign County Historical Archives at the Urbana Free Library but I'm the former Archivist and Special Collections librarian at Illinois Wesleyan. It's a position I took in 2000 and then resigned my position in 2005 to take the position here at the Urbana Free Library.

Miner: I thought you started in 1999. That's interesting, so... So it was like a decade after Minor got there. So what do you remember about Minor? What are – I mean, why were you hired? What was going on?

Voss: The archives at that point had ... had not ever had a professionally trained archivist. They had someone on staff in the library who served as the archivist for the university and there was an archives room in the old library in the basement so when I was hired, Ames library had not been built. It was just in the process of being in the final stages of design. And so the archives was on the ground floor at that point had been managed by – and I – fear I can't remember his name

Miner: Bob Murray

Voss: Bob Murray, yes. And you know it was a collection of you know – holdings that one would expect to serve as the core of any university archives or institutional archives so it had you know annual reports, it had minutes, it had yearbooks, it had some photographs, it had you know pieces in parts from different departments and different eras of Illinois Wesleyan. And you know, I would say maybe it was, maybe a couple hundred you know, linear feet of material. That was all in that room and you know, the archivist wasn't on the floor on the basement floor. The archives was accessible by anybody. You essentially had to ask for a key at the reference desk and then if he wasn't there, if you were I guess fulfilled the requirement of being a maybe responsible person which I assume at this point, everyone at Illinois Wesleyan was. You could get the key and go look at the material, but you know I think much of material there was print material like yearbooks and – but there was definitely other nuggets and unique pieces about the history of Illinois Wesleyan also that were stored there and you know, there was general inventory of what there was there. It wasn't that there was no intellectual access to the material but – and there was some organization into groups, racket groups that did exist and yes, and so when I was hired, what actually happened, and you know I was very, very lucky and fortunate when I arrived in Coles County in 1998. In 1999 I taught part-time at Eastern Illinois University and at the University of Illinois so I started teaching the archives course at Eastern in the historical administration program and then at U of I, where now I've taught the course for 10 years as of this fall and I was commuting to Champaign to teach the U of I class and teaching the course at Eastern and at that time I went and poked around the U of I archives to see, you know,

are there any job opportunities here and I also talked to the head of their book and manuscript library who was very good friends with Sue Stroyan.

Miner: Oh!

Voss: And when she said there was really nothing available here, she – without me knowing which was fine, passed my name to Sue Stroyan to say, “You know, there’s this person in town. I think – weren’t you looking for an archivist? You might be interested in meeting her.” And at that point, I’m – the library at Illinois Wesleyan, I believe, was actually opening a search for a business librarian and what they did at that point, they changed the search for an archivist. And called me for phone interview and they – I don’t know how widely they advertised the position, but there were handful of candidates.

Miner: That’s interesting

Voss: And I was hired.

Miner: Was it... Is it the same person now?

Voss: No. no. it was Valerie Stachour’s predecessor.

Miner: ‘Cause I didn’t know her, I only knew Valerie.

Voss: Mm-hmm

Miner: Ooh that’s interesting because I was under the impression that they were actively interested in building the archives program at Illinois Wesleyan so it was an opportunity hire I guess is what we would say.

Voss: Well, I think what I learned, and again, I think I may have learned that during the interview process, maybe even from Minor ‘cause I didn’t meet him during the interview process because Ames library was being built and I think I remember whether it was Sue Stroyan but certainly Miner, talking about he was building this archives pedestal at the top of Ames library, that’s kind of what it seemed like the icing on the cake. This beautiful library and the archives was going to get the sweetest, you know, spot on the top and he did – he explained with great pleasure. I do remember him talk about the alabastro lamps and the mahogany wood and he clearly had a vision of this place at the new library that was gonna be dedicated to special collections that he had, you know. This was his kind of crown jewel in the new library so...

Miner: And they would have broken down cause 2000 ... I mean 1999 is when they broke around.

Voss: Yes. So when I came literally it was like mud pit and they may have been some girder maybe they had started putting in the foundation – I can’t remember exactly when. I think they’d just broken ground and I think they may have taken me for tour to the ground but I definitely

know that Minor – that was important for him, that he knew that was going to be a new library and that now he had somebody that was going to help him lead it or establish it so...

Miner: So what was your sense from him of like the purpose of the library or the archives or all of it together? Did he – was it just all about how beautiful it was gonna be or did he have some other interest in how the archives should be or special collection – was it special collections and archives or was it...

Voss: Both

Miner: Okay

Voss: Mm-hmm... and the collection had some rare books especially the Beat collection was already there when I got there and some of the material of John Wesley Powell. I mean those were kind of what made up the rare book portion and then there were few other gifts that had landed there. I think -so this actually preceded the Ames library. The first year I came, Minor and I think it may have been somebody in poli-sci, I don't know if it was – would have been Terri Renner, I'm not sure but they had applied and were part of the tour of the – what is it -

Miner: The Remington press? The Remington

Voss: The Remington press tour of the founding fathers' books collection that was being circulated basically throughout United States. Illinois Wesleyan was picked to be one of those places. So that was one of my first projects

Miner: Oh my gosh.

Voss: With – as the archivist but also with Minor and that project, however happened when we were still in the – as far as I recall that was the old library

Miner: Sheean. yeah

Voss: That was still Sheean. Sheean library. But with what was great about that, they exhibited the material and we also – I worked with faculty but he was very involved 'cause again this was his – he had the connection to make this happen I think.

Miner: Oh he knew somebody in

Voss: Yes because it was from the – I can't recall now – in Indiana, the rare book – that's where the collection

Miner: Lily?

Voss: Lily. Yes. It's a lily project meaning there's a connection there.

Miner: Okay.

Voss: And I believe those books were actually part of that collection and so – and there was some controversy over this collection coming to Illinois Wesleyan because of the political affiliation. So there were actually some faculty that were not happy that this was happening especially in how – I think part of this exhibit, and you know, it's been a few years so I don't know the exact details but there was some requirements about how these things had to be exhibited. It also – having scholars interpret some of the texts and so there was definitely – and they came. Representatives from the Lily library came in Remington trust. I think that's what – I think the Remington trust endows the Lily collection. I think there's a close connection there. And so they came. So part of so I remember this is what made it controversial and it was interesting cause as the new person on the block, it wasn't like I was gonna have an argument with Minor.

Miner: Right.

Voss: Minor is who was salivating over this project but there were definitely some faculty, more you know certain political persuasion. This is what I recall is that when people from Remington came to present the books and present this project, the way they presented it, I'm sure the documentation is somewhere but what they spoke but maybe in the student newspaper at Wesleyan, you know, one of their goals for this project was circulating these founding fathers books is to remind America of its founding principles. And it was definitely with a very conservative keeping America pure in some sense.

Miner: Isn't it a federalist society kind of a thing?

Voss: Mm-hmm... so I just remember. There were faculty who were not happy.

Miner: So why do you think Minor wanted to bring it there? Was it because of his own political leaning or was it because of just ...[overlapping]

Voss: I don't know. I wouldn't have ...[overlapping]... I never had, I think if Minor had politics, he kept it very close. I never had him, I never felt like he was preaching anything except preaching being kind of the renaissance man that he was, a lot of everything, and celebrate everything I mean that's how I think of it

Miner: Was it?

Voss: Yeah I mean I think one – well I should finish because I'm gonna lose my train of thought, so I think with this project he was absolutely – these were lots of 1<sup>st</sup> editions so these were very, very valuable books. So he just thought this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for faculties and students to get a hand on their books. And Minor came and gave a lot of the presentations himself so he would – and the opportunity you could have to handle the books and teach the students about it because he knew a lot on the topic. He gave the presentations.

Miner: So I'm just trying to picture how this would work then. So there would be exhibit cases. Were they an exhibit cases and then the classes would come to the library and do a presentation at the...[overlapping]...

Voss: Mm-hmm... and they would take them out

Miner: Okay

Voss: Yes

Miner: So since that was right when you got there, you might not really have a sense of how unique that was but did you get a sense of having that sort of experience for students was different somehow from what had been done before?

Voss: Oh, sure

Miner: Okay

Voss: I definitely – I knew that these were valuable materials. I mean I thought it was always unique and I mean I've worked in small college environments like this before and definitely know what that – some of the projects that happen or initiatives that happen at college campuses sometimes take the whole village, so to speak. Lots of, you know, administratives may get involved, faculty may get involved, students are involved. So this became just kind of list like lovefest taking place at the library and Minor was kind of at the center and he was kind of beaming

Miner: He was happy about

Voss: Oh, yeah. He was very happy. I mean like I said I think – and I would – and I don't have access to the president's office correspondence but I assume this is something he initiated that he was... he knew people at the Remington trust. He probably – he definitely knew people at Lily and so the book connections, I'm sure – and he invited, you know, like I said he made sure all the faculty that were interested or should be interested got invited to have special showing and meet-and-greet-the-books moments and you know, so yeah, he was in his element.

Miner: Yep. I was just kind of curious if that happened in... in... different collections before you came. If you had a sense that this type of event was new in some way, not necessarily just the ...

Voss: I didn't have kind of the institutional knowledge. I mean I knew from the fact, say, that Dan Terkla had been able to purchase kind of the beat collection and I know they had done similar events around that before my time so I – you know – I first knew that there was some money that the university was willing to spend to do kind of special projects and ... that they knew how to do some special projects and that there was an interest.

Miner: I guess what I meant was curious if this happened because of your newly created position.

Voss: No.

Miner: Okay.

Voss: No. no. I think – I mean this project was already before I started and I think he told me – I don't know when it came up in the conversation but it happened pretty soon, he said, "By the way, we have this great thing coming in the fall" whatever it was and you'll be so excited let me tell you about it, so... but ... yeah, so I definitely, you know, he – I think I was very aware of his interest in books and you know his first questions as he used to ask, asked me if I collected anything. And I think Minor was unhappy with me but not in a scolding way when I told him that I actually was not a collector.

Miner: So he asked you the question

Voss: Oh, yeah. That was probably the second question he asked me. And I think he expected a good answer which I hope, you know, hope I gave him. I mean... and I kind of said, I collect for living but no, I don't collect for my own personal fulfillment. It doesn't – it's not part of ...

Miner: ...what you're into

Voss: And so – but I think you know I also knew that he was very interested in the university and it's history. And I knew he was working on a book at that time and I also knew he used the archives for some time to, you know, his research library... and I think within the first year, and I think I probably left you that box or had partially distributed it but he after a year of being there, after the book got published and he was done on the university, he came to my office with the box and said, "These are things that I have pulled from the archives over the years." And I'm like "Oh, no!" and you know just random

Miner: You figured out

Voss: Just the box, but it's actually very, very funny because I guess it's the privilege of being the executive of an organization because after starting here at the Urbana free library when after Fredlich retired, which didn't happen right away, obviously, he kept buying me a similar box...[both laugh]...

Miner: Well, it's interesting the two of them knew each other so...

Voss: Yes, it is. That actually was – and they both of them really, really, well I told Fred about the Minor – they knew but – Fred was hiring me, that was you know, that Minor and I knew each other and had stories about each other made Fred very happy and you know, Minor

Miner: And then you got to tell him Minor did this same thing with Fred (overlapping)



Voss: Yes. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But I knew Minor was interested in books but also knew that he was interested in other pieces of history and documentation and the importance of it, so... any ways you know he... he asked me what I collected and as he did with other faculty around campus, he visited me on a pretty regular basis.

Miner: He would just come in unannounced?

Voss: He would just pop in.

Miner: What would be

Voss: He just wanted to chat. He just wanted to know what's knew in the archives and tell me about something new that he'd acquired or, you know, found and ...

Miner: Did he bring stuff or was he just telling?

Voss: No. I think sometimes he'd bring stuff. But – and you know the way Minor moved when he was sitting – he was like not a person who just rested

Miner: Okay

Voss: And he was a very – he was just an incredibly active mind and translate it to being – I would never call him fidgety. He – everything was very intentional. His movements were intentional but you know he was – always had a purpose. He was on his way to do something. He was not idle. I cannot think of Minor being a person who, you know, sat around, saying, “Oh, I spent the afternoon doing nothing.”

Miner: Yeah.

Voss: That was not in his DNA.

Miner: So he would drop in in Sheean. Where was your office in Sheean?

Voss: In Sheean, a little bit. More when I was in Ames.

Miner: Oh, okay.

Voss: Yeah. In Sheean, he did too. I had a little office right across from the archives.

Miner: Okay, so on the lower level.

Voss: Mm-hmm. Which was nice, because all the librarians were down – most librarians were down there. Technical services was down there and so we got to talk I think. It was hard. It happens at all libraries that get bigger, I mean it's happened at this library where people were all squished together and things – obviously people are happy not being squished together in more but floors are separated, the parkings are separated and it gives us, you know, now that I'm also

an administrator like the job of constantly figuring out a way. Okay how can we keep communicating?

Miner: That's true

Voss: When we're not on the same floor... and, you know, you can't pay 85 staff members to have a meeting every week, you know

Miner: Right

Voss: Or logistically, you couldn't even get everybody to come so how do you keep people connected and that's hard. And that happened moving from Sheean to Ames. That was hard and for me, especially, because I was all the way up

Miner: You were in the icing

Voss: Yeah. Yeah. The icing. It was sweet but you know, so I mean – I hope – the faculty came not as often but people came and visited once I had made more connections and friends. People would stop in but like I said, Minor, and he always came. Like he never, his visits were really just visits, social visits you know.

Miner: He'd come and stay for a while?

Voss: Didn't stay for long time but he also didn't like "are you doing your job", "what are you doing today" you know. It was really – he wanted to just kind of – I always felt like he considered me kind of a partner in the endeavor of collecting or of valuing special things and so I think he just – for him that was just treat to like be talking to somebody who understood his language. He did not explain to anybody why something like that would be valuable or important or intrigued him so..

Miner: So when he would tell you these stories, would they be about the content of what he was getting or how he got it or why he got it or was it just

Voss: You know I don't know if I could be so specific. He probably would talk about maybe how he got it, maybe something unique about the particular book. Whether it had certain particular imprint or particular binding or something, you know, he would – he knew that I was not a rare book aficionado. You know, I had taken rare books in library school and certainly had been around – I mean I love rare books but I also realized that to me, it was almost a separate craft and you know, I didn't want to pretend to be – manuscripts and archives I think I understood. And I also valued. I think there's – I appreciate and love rare books. I think the piece about archives and manuscripts that appeals to me more is the story tells about people and I know people that made, you know, whether it's important people or less known people. Just lots of undigested, undiscovered news information about something and history about something where to me what's in books. It's been discovered, it's been digested, although, I'm sure scholars

would tell you, obviously, there's a lot of textual interpretation – interpretation of the printing and the paper that also tells a story

Miner: Yeah

Voss: But I think to me books always to me told stories that was completed, like there was a period already, somehow.

Miner: It was literally stitched, bound, closed, done.

Voss: Mm-hmm... mm-hmm and I – yeah so I – the physical artifact – I can appreciate the beauty and I loved my rare books class and learning about different binding techniques and signature pages and that's all kind of like a little secret. That most people in the world have no idea

Miner: And probably are okay

Voss: Yes. They're fine.

Miner: Do you think Minor was aware on that level of books? I mean how would you describe him as a collector. Could you?

Voss: I think – I mean he definitely showed me. When he was – yes, he definitely understood the makeup of books. I mean I remember like with me – because we didn't really have material in the collection you know that matched, say, the Lily collection so for those material, he definitely told – I mean he told about the text and its importance but he would tell people also about the book itself and showing the late pages and text and the printing and the signature pages and the binding. I mean I think he definitely appreciated beauty in books, you know, but he also, like I said, for him, like, the Remington trust collection – that was one of his, as far as I remember, I mean that was one of his, even though that was not his only specialty, I mean he was very interested in the history of philosophy or political thought so and so to him this was really, you know, just kind of enamored by it and having access to it.

Miner: And that would have been part of probably one of his conversations during presentations as what the authors were, what the dialogue was.

Voss: Yep. Yep. Yeah. And honestly he was very well prepared to have those conversations.

Miner: So were you given a charge for doing specific things for the university archives and special collections or was it come in and figure this out for us.

Voss: Something like that. I think something was also – I mean demand-driven in some sense in terms of just my day and my work there. I mean obviously I think being, first of all, liaison with different departments that took a lot of time. And just preparing for bibliographic inscription and just working with faculty, which I enjoyed and I always tried and it was hard because again the

archives was limited in how I could make a plug for the archives so it wasn't just about books and journals when I was doing bibliographic inscription . So I did have some classes into the archives and would teach them pieces like Dan Terkla always did something for his Beat class and brought students in. And they did a couple projects but there just wasn't that critical mass to have a class of 20 or 15 doing research projects based just on our collection

Miner: Right

Voss: Although in consultation not just with us but maybe with ISU, also with McLean County Museum of History, I know that in the history department some of the students did do projects using the archives and doing the history of archives but I'm not - I think I'll not name names but I also got - and it's not I was not surprised but within the most natural ally in terms of using the archives being the history department, I mean I got a very distinct sense because I thought that was going to be part of my job. You know, got the distinct sense like we don't want our students doing any local history or university history 'cause those aren't necessarily important stories. And I had discussions - I didn't I mean many of these were obviously senior faculties so I wasn't about to have a fight but I certainly tried to make a case for it's not just about writing the most important piece in history it's learning how to interpret primary source material that you can teach with any type of primary source and especially 17-18 years olds who've never stepped into the archives, there are things to teach and get them excited, so I was a little disappointed getting kind of that push back and just not getting enthusiasm for it. and so I did I think like one of the big projects obviously I did for the archives was working with the School of Nursing and putting together their big anniversary event and that was really fun. And they were so appreciative that I was gonna help them tell the history and celebrate and put together an event. I don't remember if you were already there so you know I created these huge life-sized posters of the nurses so when they came in there was basically a hallway of life-size posters of them

Miner: And this was in the Ames library or their...

Voss: No. No. we did it over

Miner: In Stevenson

Voss: Yes

Miner: Okay

Voss: And so we had life-sized posters of them when they were nurses in their - it would have been World War 2 uniforms.

Miner: The one big one, I remember that. Yeah. It was hung on Stevenson for a while

Voss: Right and so that was really fun. That was also a great way to showcase what the kind of stories that archives could tell or the university could tell. I mean I feel that - and I do - I mean I

talk there history professors but also talk to history faculties/folks here at the U of I, or any teachers in the high schools or elementary schools talking about how any community will provide evidence of local, national and world events because we are all connected. So whether it's how did you fear during the great depression, how did World War I World War II affect you, women's liberation, environmental

Miner: Civil rights

Voss: Civil rights – they're all here and so you just have to be willing to just be more inquisitive

Miner: So were you a liaison to the history department as nursing so you had

Voss: Yes. I was ... nursing, all languages, and history.

Miner: Wow.

Voss: Yeah

Miner: And the archives

Voss: And you know it wasn't so much – none of those departments had like humongous budgets. It wasn't like they were buying books and I think most of the faculties didn't think that I was going to be buying books for them. they were gonna tell me what books I was gonna buy for them

Miner: Yes. It's a different model there, for sure.

Voss: Yes, so it wasn't like I had a huge job in terms of collection development. I mean I had some sense of where the strengths were but the strengths wherever they are because we had certain faculty who had interest and we tried to support them and their classes and so that was pretty simple. And in the language, and I think Wesleyan is not much different in terms of even just using Archives especially for undergraduates is when it comes to using books and journals that are off the syllabus, you know, faculty have a syllabus. They have certain things they wanna teach their students and they are not quite ready until they're juniors and seniors to maybe let them go to the library and center down on their own and maybe find to read some topics.

Miner: Which is really unfortunate

Voss: Yeah, and I don't know – I mean that's very much an American model because I do – I know graduate students here even at the abroad school I had students of my students who are like, you know, when I was in school in Italy, there was no such thing as a syllabus. We had topics and we had lectures and then we went out and had to find something to read about it and to learn about it

Miner: Wow

Voss: And we had to spend a lot of time in the library trying to find relevant books and journals and then we'd come back to the class and faculty would say "Well that's not a good perspective and this is why. Go find something else to read." But it just – with the expectations of students being inquiring and locating resources is very, very different, which again, to me, primary sources is almost like an anecdote and therefore so important especially for history students because for history students to think that history comes in a syllabus

Miner: Right, yeah

Voss: And you know, this is what you should. Be doing. No! somebody picked this out for you and there are actually other books out there and maybe the books that your professor picked for you – there are reasons why he or she picked them and maybe you should find something else and get a different perspective. But I also realized I mean the time the way the classes work, they have lots of assignments. They're very busy. Again, it's not encouraged. There's no time.

Miner: No. it's the way we've structured our curriculum

Voss: Yes, right

Miner: To the detriment of curiosity

Voss: and then there's this expectation that they do all kinds of extra-curricular things like clubs and sports and other activities, which are all good but again not giving space for that. But anyways, so again, the person, I won't say their name but in terms of the history faculty, a faculty member actually, when I first met with them, so I met with a different faculty when I became the liaison and it was okay. Some were more interested in me than others and that's fine. But one of them actually handed me a list and said, "you know, students are coming to talk to you about doing research projects for this class or that class. These are the topics. I never wanna read about again 'cause too many students have done papers on this," I was like okay that one way of, you know

Miner: That's some guidance

Voss: Yeah and well some of the, a good number of the people were local, history topics

Miner: Oh, and he didn't wanna hear 'em. Crap.

Voss: Just said, "I've heard enough of this. too many papers on this. students should do something else." I was like, okay fine.

Miner: Well, did you get any push back in developing the archives for the university or did you have a sense of that was part of what you needed to do?

Voss: Well, my, I mean again, there was a new library and the space obviously clearly walking into the library, in the archives, you know, if I was going to be, for example, doing very active

collecting of records from the university, it certainly wasn't gonna be sitting in the archives because there was no room. Now is that totally unsustainable? No. we definitely – you know the archives are intellectually, say, compiled or identified by the archives so the archivist knows what's where. But the customer is not. It's dispersed. And I think I did a little bit and I didn't get I mean I don't know if I made formal... I made – certainly didn't do a university wide proposal to history of the university and what we needed to collect. And I think one of the biggest projects was also when I hired you, I think you know I was – one thing I wanted to do when I started was people didn't really know what the archives is gonna do, why do we have an archivist and they could understand that it'd be a new liaison but the archivist part was kind fo like – and, and what do you do – and so I thought well, create a project that provides an example of what you're gonna create and also would have appealed to a lot of people which I why I decided to digitize the student newspaper 'cause I thought well this would have brought- many people would understand kind of what we do also that is not just about dusty shelves that we use technology and we can distribute content and obviously the newspaper had a long run and there's a lot of history there. And you know, I think especially 'cause I got a grant to do it. I think the university was very happy and very supportive but you know, very supportive, I mean, I know, I mean I think the person that I always remember Minor was supportive. I mean, you know, I think he was always happy when I told him what I was doing.

Miner: That you were going to do something.

Voss: Yeah. I mean I think he never kind of was critical. I don't know, he was like "Oh, that sounds fun. That's great" I mean, and ... Sue was very supportive and Jo Porter always was very supportive in development. I mean, she was my go-to person there and you know I always thought that what was happening was really positive. Again, I mean I think, I certainly didn't accomplish all the things that I wanted to in terms of setting up any types of record management with the university. You know, at first I realized that in terms of the capacity of having staffing or no staffing that I could not do this on my own. It would have to be a project that everyone participated in which is also not heard of. I mean where you meet different departments responsible for creating inventory or helping you schedule records. But again it wasn't a matter of moving things. There was no place to put it.

Miner: Right!

Voss: And... I think the other piece. The only piece that I did bring to the archives – maybe they already – no they already had it at the archives but I was getting new were the minutes of the trustees and I don't think they had any kind of retention, not retention schedule but provisions for access and ... so this was one of the conversations I had when I was talking to the president's office is there was something unwritten. I think it was although the president's office had something in writing that anyone who wants to look at the minutes had to get permission from the president's office and I think what I – I mean this is what I recall that we came up with a closed date where the minutes were actually restricted but after that they could actually be open.

And so that was one of my discussions that I had with – but in terms of like some of the other records in president's office, like no one wanted to give anything up.

Miner: Right

Voss: So which then you know somebody was trying to do history of something at the university. It became then the discretion of the various departments or offices to say I'll give you access or I won't.

Miner: Right

Voss: So

Miner: And we may or may not have what you have

Voss: Right

Miner: Was the president involved in the decision to start getting more deliberate about moving the trustee stuff? okay

Voss: I don't remember. I mean I think he had to give his blessing

Miner: Yeah but you didn't have conversation with him about ...[overlapping]... so the

Voss: Or the secretary of president's office

Miner: Right. So one of the things he did do and that was also affiliated with my starting to work at Wesleyan was the donation of college and university publications.

Voss: Okay

Miner: Had all those – had those been accepted when you got there? 'cause that was the part of money that came from his office for me to organization that collection. It was his collection. So was it something that was in place when you already got there

Voss: You know I recall that we had – we already had a collection of university publications so by scholars at the university, you mean?

Miner: No. no. the collection that Minor had of college and university publications of his own, that was his personal collection he donated.

Voss: Yes

Miner: So had those been donated before you got there and they just had been processed because one of the things that you were hired for was to process those.

Voss: Yes



Miner: Organize those. Do you recall – was that an acquisition that happened after you got there or was it just

Voss: I think so. It came when we moved to Ames because there was no room

Miner: Okay

Voss: At Sheean for that so yes, it came while I was there.

Miner: Did you have any discussions with him about those... the value – why he would have had those kinds of publications?

Voss: Yes. And I want to say that – I don't know what-- if we did anything. I mean I think... I'm trying to recall. Weren't these like annuals from different universities?

Miner: Yeah. They were catalogs and some yearbooks some Macrologies, some alumni kind of

Voss: For different colleges

Miner: For different colleges in the United States, yeah.

Voss: Right

Miner: And I remember the details because I dealt with them but I don't remember – I don't know if you recall ever having conversation of what their significance was to him.

Voss: I don't know why the – I think he was very – I think his interest was because I personally was like I'm not sure these will be – you know I think about the archives serving our community and our students and our faculty and you know he – I mean I think his vision certainly was that we would become a special collections with appeal beyond the university.

Miner: Okay

Voss: And so the idea that – I mean if I recall correctly, people would be interested in studying curriculum especially in terms of teaching liberal arts at different colleges. I personally – I don't know if I told him I would've been super diplomatic about it. I would have said something like well, I'm not so sure if these will have research value or if this would be the best place so I'm not sure.

Miner: And I guess that's really the heart of my question, right? Is what was his sensitivity towards research value versus having something, right?

Voss: He liked having things

Miner: Okay

Voss: It seemed like that. he seemed to like have the price of having something.

Miner: Because the way he described himself as a collector was of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and that collection has got nothing to do with the 18<sup>th</sup> century, so I mean it's sort of one of the odd things out, right? And there are other examples of that so you know for the part of my project where I'm trying to describe him as a collector, it's a puzzlement.

Voss: Yeah why he collected that yeah, I wish I had my old emails or ... if I would have had anything, you know, but I recall, I think it was about learning about like liberal arts education

Miner: Sure

Voss: Trends, you know, in teaching and which, yeah, I mean that's all I can

Miner: Did he ever talk to you about a shape for special collections, like what – I mean you sort of – you had a sense that he had a desire for special collections beyond just the Wesleyan campus but that's certainly not in the vision statement of the Ames Library.

Voss: No. no. no.

Miner: Or the university or

Voss: And that wasn't – you know, it wasn't like I had any money to go and buy a lot of things so...

Miner: Do you recall him being involved in any gifts for – of content, of objects for the library or special collections?

Voss: No, I mean I – you know – obviously, one again thinking of my where I put a lot of time into thinking and energy too in terms of more broadly thinking of special collections, I mean the John Wesley Powell Pottery collection wasn't initially part of my job description but when I realized it was in the library and no one had ever taken care of and didn't really know what it was, I mean I feel like I don't know – if – because I didn't really necessarily acquire anything unique and valuable to special collections or to the archives, I think one of the larger discussions I had probably in terms of content is probably working with communications, having conversations with them which weren't necessarily super productive but trying to collaborate and how those images are created, stored and preserved.

Miner: So you're talking about the photograph collection?

Voss: Yep. And working with communications and the fact that we're using, you know, student workers to index them, kind of whatever words students wanted to use and I was like "Whaaaaa" but that kind of went nowhere. I mean I didn't feel like there was a lot of interest or people didn't think that was my job so there was no real sense that I actually would have some responsibility of steering how the university documented itself beyond – in don't know kind of little bits and pieces.

Miner: Sure

Voss: But that may be part of my – I mean I take responsibility for maybe not being forceful or feeling that I – for the things I did do that I – the projects that I did do, and I wasn't there that long that I wasn't quite sure - I don't know if I didn't have the will... I don't know ... you know for example, throwing myself more for example, and again it delegated a lot when I hired but in terms of like the John Wesley Powell collection, I mean that was a big project. And that took a lot of just time, and thinking and resources to get that done but I'm really proud for that

Miner: And you should be

Voss: And for making sure that those exhibit cases were properly prepared for the pottery, I mean that was a lot of project and put also project where I had to always think one step ahead because everybody else was making decisions and when, you know, without consulting 'cause like why call the archivist. You know, I'd say, "no. no. no. you can't put that kind of lighting in that" or "no you can't..." and like "had anybody ever thought about A, B, you know UV protection, you know..." this stuff is kind of valuable or you know and so and I – like I said – the way I kind of probably put a lot of time into that also. First of all, because there was a great opportunity with it being kind of the center piece of the new Ames library. I figured it would be good if we actually had more knowledge about what it was and tell people.

Miner: Was it something that Minor was involved in, too? Not so much.

Voss: Not really. I think he was very interested and he was happy that was being done, especially after it was – I had to bring in somebody to do an appraisal and it was worth like millions so then they started paying attention.

Miner: Yeah but the other – I think the other thing that we have to comment on is it consuming your time was the flood.

Voss: Yes.

Miner: Let's not ....

Voss: Yep.

Miner: Let's not – I mean the reverberations of that echoed for a very long time. They were drafted, I would imagine, into dealing with that at an unexpected time.

Voss: Right. I mean there were a lot of people that helped me – I remember now, it happened during spring break or the summer

Miner: Early, prior 2002? February

Voss: Right.. February I think

Miner: January

Voss: No I think – I can't remember students were on break or just coming back at the beginning of the semester – it was right there... yep... and that, yeah that definitely took – but I mean a lot of it was handled also just at the university level just because it was – or at Sue's level just because you know it really needed intervention ... an external intervention so

Miner: Right

Voss: You know the trucks came from Texas, you know... to freeze dry the books

Miner: Yeah I'm thinking of in not just the physical description but the intellectual planning then part of it too because you created the first disaster...

Voss: Mm-hmm...mm-hmm... yeah... yeah...

Miner: Plan the university had

Voss: Yep. Yep. Yep.

Miner: Yeah so I mean there's the grants that you had to get for doing the pottery, for handling the collections you know for creating these policies and all that. So...

Voss: Right. Not so much about the university archives

Miner: Yeah

Voss: Right I mean I – you know when I think back at Illinois Wesleyan and what I did, you know, I don't think of it much. I mean in terms of the university, I mean I think the work I did on the newspaper, definitely the – in the pottery, yeah, and the disaster plan...[overlapping]...

Miner: ...[overlapping]...collection development policy

Voss: Yeah collection development

Miner: I haven't. I haven't forgotten any of these things so...

Voss: Yeah so it's not so much thinking of the university archives. I think mostly because I think – I don't know if Sue necessarily hired me with that intent

Miner: Okay

Voss: I think, yes, university archives but it made managing the content that we had but you know, really limited, probably to the kind of core of what and I think back of it and I teach this mostly as just a couple of pages but in Bilmar's book on college and university archives, he has just a little – he has a little paragraph about collection development or it has list that basically

says core collection for any university archives, this is what it should contain. And that was kind of what Wesleyan's collection contained

Miner: Yeah

Voss: And in terms of the records of the university, I think, I mean it certainly didn't happen in my time

Miner: Yeah

Voss: In helping to kind of put in place something beyond those historical records. Like I said, the images is one thing I had conversations with communications but again, they were like their own island and they didn't necessarily think of me as someone with expertise or authority to direct them and how they did their job and how they would turn transfer to – things to me. And again the whole digital commons idea was just kind of was just starting so I kind of was leaving just at that point where I think that was a lot. Obviously

Miner: Getting ready to take off

Voss: Yeah

Miner: Did you ever go to the president's house?

Voss: Yeah just – I think a couple of times. I went there – there was like in the beginning of the – when I first was hired at the beginning of the year, he had like a faculty reception in the backyard. It was very – I mean, yeah, it was a very, you know, elegant affair

Miner: Kind of a formal thing?

Voss: Yes!

Miner: Okay

Voss: Mm-hmm...mm-hmm...mm-hmm

Miner: Okay

Voss: And then he had a couple of receptions at his house- I think maybe in the holiday time when he invited all the faculty and maybe students – I can't remember. But maybe just faculty and staff. He had like a reception at Christmas or somewhere where people would go over hor-d'oeuvres and drinks and I think that was an annual affair. and it was always very fun, very jolly and – I mean he was just very – you know he just bounced around. I mean he just kind of you know I was – I mean the one thing I wanted to say just about Minor is in terms of his Minor's interactions with me and I had this conversation I think with somebody else at one point on the faculty... and we just kind of laughed that you know Minor popped in people's offices. I was not the only one that got visits and he would stop people on the quad, if he saw you he would never

ignore you. He'd always say Hi, being nice and friendly. He would do that to students, too. I mean he was always out and about and he was always, he seems like, he seemed like an incredibly genuine person and genuine about not just about his own passions which he had but the passions of others. And he would always listen. He'd always be interested, you know, Tell me about – now rather than just asking about what's your collection but what's your passion, you know, what gets you going. Tell me about what gets you going. And he was always – I mean I always think of him as being – like I said so ...just... inspired by everybody around him, you know, he wasn't just, 'Oh here I am the scholar who has the passion, who does all these things' but he wanted, I think, he wanted us all to feel like we're in a community of scholars and of people with passions like he and so he just always wanted everyone to feel like they had something and he was willing to always – he was willing to listen to that. So I always felt – he never felt, again, he was obviously more of a scholar than me and more well-read than me in the things certainly that he was an expert in and he, I never felt like – even when I heard of him speaking with students, he like never made anyone feel inferior.

Miner: Okay

Voss: You know I mean the way he told about those things

Miner: It wasn't the sage on the stage that he was interested in being

Voss: No. and I think that even thinking about the books and like the ... the Lily book collection, it was – he was felt so passionate about – he just wanted the students to have an opportunity to have the same experience you know and that just made him so happy

Miner: And he was probably passing them around so that everybody could handle them...[overlapping]....

Voss: ...[overlapping]...Oh, yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah. So he just – I always think of him as like he thought he was participating in this greatest endeavor.

Miner: Education?

Voss: Yes! And it's an opportunity for everyone to kind of practice their passion and ... do what they love. And so that's why he just – I always think of him smiling and talking and being excited. You know, he was always excited about his own stuff, about everybody else's stuff, about meeting new people and I don't know he was just – and genuine about it, you know. Like it never felt like he was just doing this for show, you know. And I think the students felt that, too. Some sophomore or freshman working on a project and he treated them I know – he talked to them at least and showed his respect for what they were doing. It could've been anybody. He just – he took interest in people.

Miner: So maybe that's the heart of all of his questions about what you collect and ...

Voss: Mm-hmm... he had a genuine interest in getting to know you and wanting to know about you. And he was – I mean I remember when he in the faculty reception at the beginning of the year, you know, when we had like a dinner for the faculty. All the new faculty get up and introduced and he definitely, he definitely like kind of like my east coast or just my – the institutions that I worked in and then I worked at the Rockefeller archives...

Miner: So he did those introductions

Voss: Yep

Miner: Oh, and he was calling out

Voss: Yep. The faculty

Miner: Those experiences

Voss: Mm-hmm... mm-hmm

Miner: Nice!

Voss: Yeah. And he remembered – I mean it wasn't like I submitted this say this, you know, he said that about the different faculty.

Miner: Interesting

Voss: He would get up and then say, you know, introduce you. So it was very charming.

Miner: When you were in his home, did you ever ... did you pull out books or anything like that over there, or these were just sort of reception where that wasn't necessarily gonna be part of it?

Voss: I don't recall. I mean the only time I actually got to see his kind of the back room of his house is when after he passed.

Miner: And what room was that?

Voss: In the basement. I mean Mona Gartner and I – he/she took me on a tour because we were trying to assess what things should actually come to the archives.

Miner: So talk about that a little bit. Did – you didn't take any pictures, did you? I keep hoping to find somebody who has pictures of the basement 'cause I've heard so many things about it.

Voss: I can totally remember it. I have it in my head. No – because it was very – how can I describe it – I – after he passed – I can't remember if Mona contacted me or I certainly said something to Sue and I said something about you know there are probably really worthy materials in his house, not just books. And I didn't necessarily say that I was interested in his books but I said about his work you know maybe his records of collecting but also records for

that relate to the university, that you know the archives should probably be aware out and might want it transfer over and it was certainly made clear that I was never gonna get the key to the house and be able to go over there and spend the afternoon by myself.

Miner: Made clear to you by whom?

Voss: I mean it was just -

Miner: It was understood

Voss: It was understood

Miner: Okay

Voss: That this was going to be supervised visits. And I did identify – I'm trying to juggle my memory. I mean I think I did identify some material file in cabinets, records or something like that where I – and I can't even recall if any of this material was brought over – well, yes, the material that became the Minor Myers papers, I mean those are things that, and I don't know what else was added, but those are things that when I was over there with Mona, that I kind of said, this, this, this, and this should come.

Miner: So that was your manuscript collection

Voss: Right

Miner: ...Medieval manuscripts

Voss: Right. Right. So and I can't remember if there were things that – right and I didn't think that the books were that was anything that I would have any say over.

Miner: And nobody sought your advice on?

Voss: Mm-mm... and but I was definitely, like I said, and it was – I mean I think it was at Mona's insistence and I don't know the conversations that happened that I was brought in to look at that material

Miner: At the books or at the

Voss: At his house

Miner: At his house - okay

Voss: At the papers

Miner: Okay



Voss: I mean I think she understood and I was friendly with her so I was very positive. I mean she made a call with me or something and said, Would you be interested in looking at the president's – his basement to see if anything is there that you would want for the archives. I think that's the conversation we had and then we just made an appointment and we walked over. And I think that's kind of how informal it was but I really do not recall – I mean you know I recall somehow that the material, the books – first of all I made it pretty clear because I did not want to make any wrong choices that I was not a bibliophile, not gonna be able to go through those books and to identify what things were most valuable and I think maybe I handled some like first editions or something. Maybe I looked at something that were obvious, to off the corner that maybe Minor had marked as this is – he actually kept upstairs. I thought he had – he had his basement but he kept a collection upstairs of his priced things and I think at one point, I can't remember the layout of the house but there was like a library upstairs and I – he did have during those faculty receptions – I don't know if it was each one of them but he brought some things out to show. That was actually a part of the event that he brought out some things to show. But not the basement. The basement was not something people were brought downstairs, it was just upstairs.

Miner: What was it like?

Voss: The basement?

Miner: Yeah. What was your impression of it?

Voss: Oh, my god...[laughs]... there's no room. It was just chuck full. I mean it was – I remember it being organized but being just parts of it organized. I think there were also areas that were just – I mean not books but just stuff, papers, things like that. But it was enormous amount of material so..

Miner: So what is your sense of how the books got dispersed or decisions were made. You said you were not – you didn't put yourself forward as a person who could appraise them. did you have any decision-making in who did?

Voss: I really can't recall.

Miner: Yeah.

Voss: I don't – I have very little – I mean I – I mean it's possible that I had helped identify appraisers in the area or I have some recollection of identifying maybe someone and then maybe I am mixing up stories but someone in Chicago, someone in St. Louis but I really can't recall details. I don't think I had a very significant part.

Miner: So when the collection was removed from the house, who was directing that?

Voss: The books?

Miner: Yeah, who took it out of the house? I mean who said it would take out of the house? ... and auction decision... the ... there is documentation on why the auction took place but not on how it was – who was gonna do it. so like was the library involved at all in choosing the auctioneer or...

Voss: Remind me, where was it held?

Miner: It was in Sheean.

Voss: Yes. Oh, yeah I remember now. I remember that now.

Miner: Yeah 'cause I was right at the end of your time and a lot of things were going on.

Voss: Yes. I certainly remember – and I can't remember the details – I certainly remember that the controversy about it.

Miner: About the auction or about ...[overlapping]...

Voss: No just about – right – about it being sold off.

Miner: And that was controversy for ... at what level? I mean at internal level or community level or

Voss: I think among the faculty. I think just people talking about what would be more appropriate

Miner: 'cause there's no discussion in the faculty meetings about it – not in the minutes, any ways

Voss: Yeah

Miner: Yeah

Voss: Interesting

Miner: Yeah... and that's part of what I'm wanting to do is it certainly doesn't come up a lot but there is a lot of misunderstanding about how that happened and you know, he built you people that library. Why couldn't you put all of his stuff there – I mean that kind of thing, you know, so...

Voss: Mm-hmm... mm-hmm... well and I think part of it, too, was that – gosh, you know if I remember I mean I think there was definitely portions of his collections that were very rare material but there was a lot of material that wasn't. I think that's the peace that I remember that you know – and then a lot of the material didn't really meet out collection development policy at the library and there wasn't really anybody at the university that would – you know there was a faculty who was teaching in that area so to add it to the collection, and certainly not making it

rare collection, it would have filled. I think that would have – special collections would have been done, or the idea was – if the was – one of the ideas of the rotunda upstairs – did some of the books end up at the rotunda?

Miner: No.

Voss: But I think that was one of the, you know, something – I mean that was discussed at one point but I think one of the – again one of the issues was – I mean now – some things are coming back a little bit, is that but these books don't meet the collection development policy of the *library*. You know, why would we fill all this space with materials that people weren't gonna be using for some – you know I think that was part of it. part of it was this was a lot – there was a lot of things here but these weren't things that were gonna be of value to our community and again, I think there was a subset of the collection that was monetarily valuable or valuable in terms of, you know, true, rare factor. But there were a lot of things that were collected. Yeah, but I think that was one of the discussions as – that we couldn't administer it as a rare book collection. It was way too big. We didn't have the space. And again, I think the idea of using the rotunda upstairs, that was one issue. It was, first of all, it was going to be a rare book collection that was open.

Miner: Right

Voss: The idea of accessing it on those – on those ladders I mean it was – it was not a ... you couldn't implement it.

Miner: Yeah. If you had to say Minor was x kind of collector, what would you – would you be able to fill in that blank?

Voss: I'm not sure. You know, I'd feel – in terms of book collecting – I'd kind of feel an outsider to that because I'm just an ...[overlapping]...

Miner: Well, but as a collector, right? You are a collector of records, for instance.

Voss: Right. Right. Right.

Miner: So one of the theories that I have been operating on, and you can – you would've been involved in campus politics, faculty governments kinds of things, and understanding of the Minor era, right?

Voss: Mm-hmm...mm-hmm

Miner: So one of the things as I've been talking to people, there's some wonderful stories about – I mean over the years people just dropped Minor stories on me, and so I thought one of the things I could do with this project is to collect some of those stories. And as I have talked to people, it sort of sparked an idea in my head about him as a collector vs him as a personage on campus, right? And so a person who is exuberant, involved, bouncing all over the place with

ideas, and is there a parallel between what he did as a president and how he interacted with people as a president and how he was as a collector because he had a fairly narrow definition of himself as a collector but he expanded on that. His net was a lot bigger than ...[overlapping]

Voss: Well that kind of my sense – know from – I mean I’m trying – may have – he probably did spend a lot of time just looking but he kind of was, right, I mean his collection was kind of in lots of places.

Miner: Yeah. Intellectually and physically

Voss: Right. Right.

Miner: Right.

Voss: So he you know – because again just the way the people thought of him kind of as this renaissance man, like even though, and I think partly what made him probably I feel because he was so interested and I don’t know if I can articulate this so much, you know, he had his specialty in, you know, his training, his scholarly training, but if he could, he would have liked to be everything...[both laugh]... you know I mean I think was so interested in different pieces of intellectual endeavor that I’m sure – and I’m sure he probably drove his collecting buddies or maybe the people that helped him make decisions about what to buy, maybe drove him crazy and again I don’t really know that. Just because he has so many interests so you know I would – that’s what I would’ve guessed, that he probably – I mean even though if he thought of himself as a narrow collector that he had – I know because he had so many interests and he was sort of interested in so many things that yeah .. you know... maybe he had a hard time. ... would have had a hard time focusing or finishing, right? I mean he would have just kept collecting

Miner: Kept collecting and going

Voss: Oh yeah

Miner: And it wasn’t your sense he ever got rid of anything then. Or that wouldn’t have been part of your experience with him?

Voss: No, I don’t – I mean I don’t have that.

Miner: Well, is there other stuff you have – anything you would like to say about Minor or other things you think we should know?

Voss: You know I had – I mean as we were talking about the books, I was just – I mean something came through. I hadn’t – I can’t remember now what it was.

Miner: About the books in his home or his types of books collecting?

Voss: Yeah, I can't – I don't know what it was that I was thinking. I can't remember how significant it was or tangential it was. Yeah, I just – again, I think I probably have more of a sense of him as a presence on campus and a setting a certain tone on campus.

Miner: How would you describe that tone?

Voss: You know of just – you know which probably from administrative point of view, maybe the administration probably thought – wanted to bring in Minor to say, Can you be less of a renaissance man and be more of a president and administrator I'm worried about, like the bottom line. I think Minor first and foremost, considered himself like a scholar and a member of intellectual – a member of the faculty, a member of that part of the university.

Miner: As opposed to an administrator?

Voss: Definitely. I think people – I mean I think of him as that, you know, he carried that as well but I think he enjoyed most being part of that and being identified as that so makes it more sense of him than of being a – and I'm sure he would like to be remembered more as a book collector and as a scholar than as the president of the university.

Miner: Okay

Voss: I mean he would want that as part of his ... the obituary or whatever is on the

Miner: Epitaph

Voss: Epitaph, you know, president is part of that but that would not be the persona that he would describe himself as kind of his purpose in life or his mark

Miner: On the world...

Voss: On the world

Miner: Yeah

Voss: Would be probably as collector or part of – he wanted to inspire students to study and to pursue their passion.

Miner: And you think he succeeded with that?

Voss: Well I think he – I always felt like students – people, yeah especially students. I mean I think you know faculty obviously have other things they want so that alone wasn't enough for them. I mean obviously they wanted him to be on their side and if he was on their side, they were in good shape. I think if he wasn't, probably not.

Miner: Did you ever have a sense that he had problems with some people on campus, like faculty relations or anything like that?

Voss: I think once the fiscal house wasn't as in order. Maybe people thought well maybe he should spend more time looking at the account books than walking around campus being an intellectual and the renaissance man. That's kind of how I think of him. He was not – I mean – he hired – in the administration, he was supposed to do that job and you know, me, the job of the president kind of a figure – in some sense a figurehead of setting a tone on campus of what is important, of why are we here. Why we have a liberal arts college. What's the purpose of a liberal arts college? What do we want these students to be and think about? And I think he inspired people or you know, kind of gave students a sense of it's important to learn how to think and that's why we're here.

Miner: That was his message.

Voss: And it's a good thing.

Miner: Yeah

Voss: It's good to have a passion for thinking. And figuring things out on intellectual level and yeah he just had this – I mean I would think if you talk to students – I don't know if you talk to students – you know that they would probably say that he was just interested in what I did and he would - always inspired me to pursue my interests and he wouldn't be the one – their parents might say that And how are we gonna do our living with that. Minor wouldn't be the one asking them back.

Miner: That was

Voss: Yeah if you're having a job...[overlapping]

Miner: Neither here or there

Voss: Yeah

Miner: What do you think he would have thought of the auction? The fact that his collection was auctioned.

Voss: I don't know – I mean who knows – that's between him and the – who he had his last conversations with – if anybody ever told him that was an auction – if he ever

Miner: No. that decision was made well after he was gone, as far as I can tell.

Voss: Right but he never had any say about that?

Miner: 'Cause there are some collectors – and obviously you know sort of donor relations is different from what happened with it but some collectors have joy in discovering and acquiring and dispersing and some collectors are all about the acquisition and not so much about you know

what happens to it, happens to it and they wouldn't really care. And I just didn't – I only met him once so I had no sense of what he was like as a person.

Voss: I don't know. I think that... I think he would have been – I mean obviously if he had been alive, he wouldn't have wanted to get rid of his collection but I think I would think that he thought of books or knowledge as something to be shared and distributed. So I mean at the end if you thought like that others would have gained from it or gained enjoyment from it, he would've been just fine. I mean I don't think he would've – when I think of – again my first experience was – of the collection that was being showcased at the founding fathers again – I think he wanted to – he wanted the books to be not just looked at but to be kind of devoured and used and appreciated so I don't know, that's a hard question.

Miner: I'm asking everybody.

Voss: Yeah

Miner: Yeah. I like that word. Devoured. That's good.

Voss: So I just think – I think he was a generous person. So I think in – I don't know – in that context, I think that if he felt that others would appreciate them as much as he did by auctioning it off, others got to enjoy it, then he would've given his blessing. I think he wouldn't have been happy if they would spend the rest of their time just in basement. I think the fact that they found a use or appreciation somewhere else, I think he would have appreciated more than knowing somebody put all my books on the locking key and they're safe.

Miner: Yeah, and nobody can use them.

Voss: No. no. I don't think – again, in terms of like the founding fathers collection, right? Very valuable books – they were sitting somewhere safe and sound but the decision was that what was more important was to bring them out so people could see them and appreciate them so I think the idea that you know – he probably would have preferred if they probably had stayed at Wesleyan. But I think he would also have been – I don't know – I don't know if he would've been a reasonable man to understand that this – they would be in a better place elsewhere and be have it more properly appreciated and these are the conversations I certainly have with people. Conversations that all collectors or whether archivists have.

Miner: Right.

Voss: When we had collection development policies and I think he would have respected that, that the university would make that decision and ... 'cause he certainly never meddled with what I said or did like for the archives. When I – I mean I think he was very respectful of decisions. When I decided, for example to again I just started small but to tie the collections to environmental studies and he thought that was, you know, he applauded that. He was, you know, he never considering he was the collector on campus, he never – he was just interested in my

ideas. But he never imposed any pressure and I never felt any pressure from him to do anything specific which I thought that was quite, very – what’s the word I’m looking for – gracious of him. You know, to think that somehow that I would feel intimidated. I mean he was not intimidating person

Miner: Okay

Voss: I mean, he was – you felt like you wanted to know him and know what he was all about ‘cause he was just this kind of bubbly thing – bubbling of ideas but he never – I mean I had no recollection of him making me feel like. I’m the collector here and you’re the special collections librarian and how you’re gonna match my...

Miner: Even though he knew you were a manuscript person.

Voss: Mm-hmm ... mm-hmm...

Miner: That’s great.

Voss: But you know I never think of him as being in bullying mean and sense and what word of making – you know who knows what other people had on campus

Miner: Right

Voss: Cause I mean I think he was a forceful person cause he had strong passions and people with strong passions have strong opinions and views and I can imagine that maybe if people –I think the one thing he probably didn’t respect is if people didn’t have any passion. He didn’t know what to do with those people, what to talk about if they didn’t have passion because he didn’t wanna talk about just his passions. He was perfectly happy to talk about yours but he wanted to know what that was and for you to prove that you had one.

Miner: They had something going on

Voss: Yeah and then he was happy. Then he would check you off

Miner: That’s funny

Voss: But that’s probably an important piece so I – like I said, I would think that he had as much as he was a collector, just knowing about how he felt about knowledge and how felt about other people’s knowledge and passion. It wasn’t about him asking for people to be just off him and his passion. He was just as interested in the passions of others. And so I think in terms of his books even though he would have been sad that they weren’t kept together, again because I just I would think that because he was so interested in everybody else and not just himself, that he would have been in a gracious just like he was. I know I think of him in life that he would have said, “well if others can find passions in what my passions were, so be it”



Miner: Maybe that's enough.

Voss: Yeah

Miner: Yeah

Voss: Yeah. And like I said, for, obviously I shared a passion with him in kind of a broader sense. It wasn't about books but about collecting but you know, I just think for president of a college, and I kind of felt again it wasn't just me that he took interest in everybody – junior level, tenured it didn't really matter and that felt like he spread his smiles and kindness kind of to everybody and to students and I think everybody – there was this real sense of community in that way. He was kind of like the shepherd and he just felt, he kind of cared for everybody in some sense or cared for their passions. And so the one thing that in addition to visiting, and he did that to to her faculties too, and this is one of the conversations I had I can't remember who it was. I think in history somebody but if he saw an article or something that was of interest he would write it in note and put it in mail – campus mail. So occasionally I would get something in the mail from him

Miner: That you thought would be interesting

Voss: Mm-hmm... I think he would bring it by or just put them in. and I shared that story with somebody. I think it was "Oh ,yeah, I get things from him all the time, too."

Miner: Were they things you were interested in or

Voss: Yeah yeah yeah I mean something about collecting about archives or something like that but it just, you know, and the fact that he did that for others

Miner: Right that shows that he wasn't just thinking right then about you. He was thinking about you at other times.

Voss: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. He would see things and he not only asked about who you were, what your passions were but he actually put that away and he remembered that.

Miner: That's phenomenal.

Voss: And so he would, you know, read the newspaper in The New Yorker and then think of some faculty in a department that he thought might be interested and he said something. So that was very unique. I mean that was not – nothing – a connection that he had with people that ... and didn't Wilson start when I was still there?

Miner: He did. Yep. 2004.

Voss: So I – obviously I left a year later but I don't think I ever met the man.

Miner: Yeah

Voss: Or he ever met me or had any inkling of who I was or what I did so ... and obviously he had other things on his agenda but still it was just a very different – and you know different person but ... so yeah. Yeah it was fun. I hadn't thought about those years for a long time, s it was nice. Or just him, you know, just kind of a larger than life person on campus I think.

Miner: Yeah. Well, thank you so much for doing this and being a mentor and a role model.

Voss: Oh, thank you.