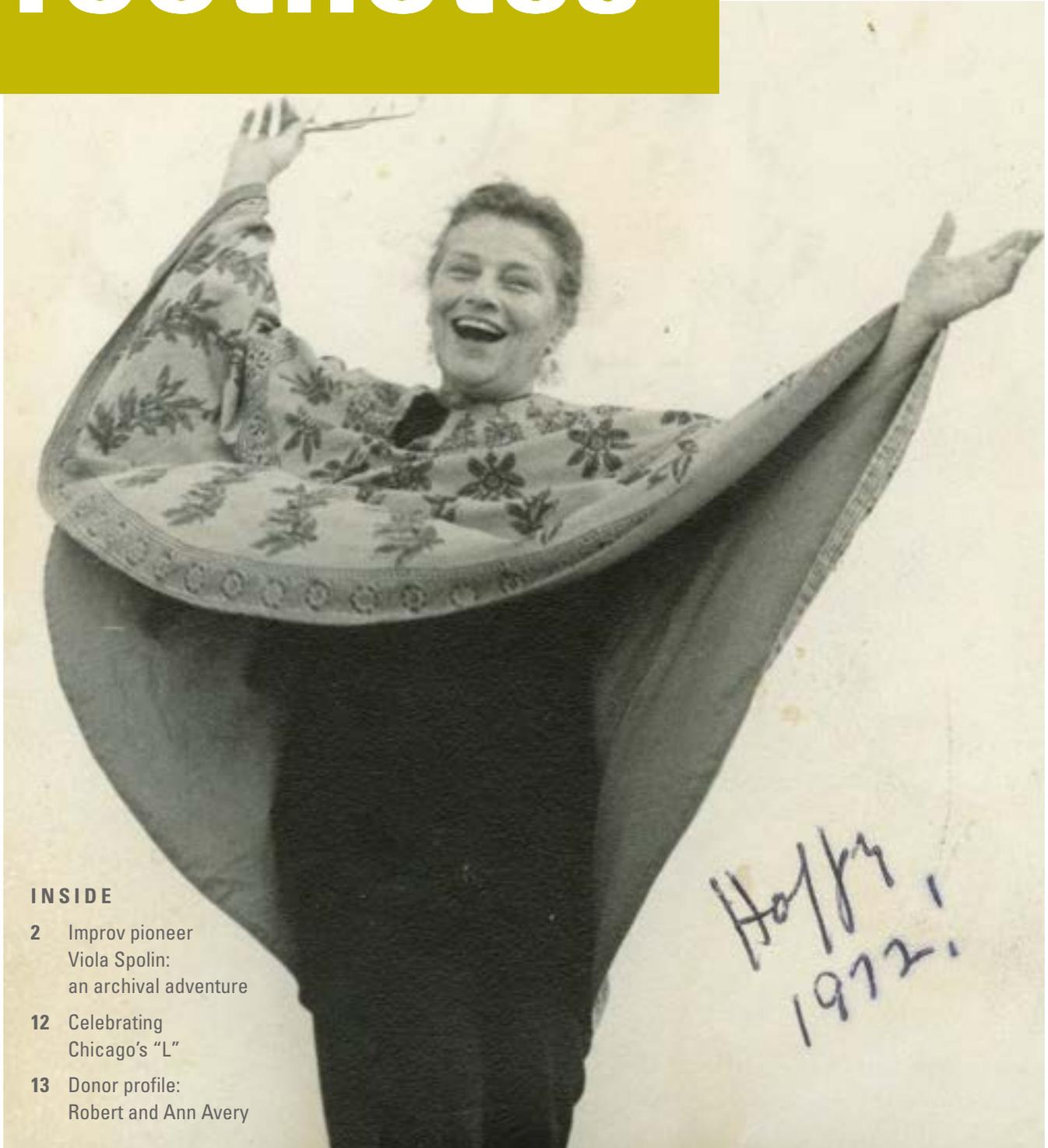


footnotes



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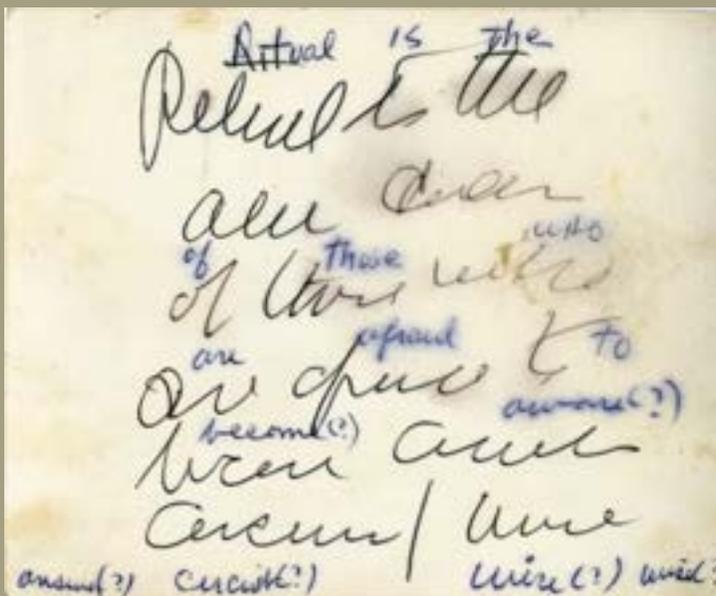
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On the cover Viola Spolin in a 1972 photograph included in the Library's recently acquired Viola Spolin Papers.

Above Spolin's notes scrawled on the reverse side of the cover photo. From the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections.

news

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Kaplan fellowship, grant for Hoek

D. J. Hoek, head of the Music Library, has been named the 2010–11 Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities Library Fellow. The fellowship allows him to pursue his interest in the intersections between jazz



D. J. Hoek. *Photo by Jim Ziv.*

and contemporary classical music by investigating the history of Dial Records, which operated from 1946 to 1954. Best remembered for its groundbreaking jazz recordings, especially those by virtuoso sax-

ophonist Charlie “Bird” Parker, Dial also issued an important series of recordings by composers often overlooked by classical record companies, including Béla Bartók, Arnold Schoenberg, Igor Stravinsky, and John Cage.

Hoek has been awarded additional support for his project, titled “From Bird to Cage: The Circumstances and Aesthetic Rationale behind the Dial Library of Contemporary Classics,” in the form of a Faculty Research Grant, which will enable him to visit the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin to examine its archive of materials relating to Dial Records founder Ross Russell. In announcing the research fellowships and grant, Jeff Garrett, associate University librarian for special libraries and director of special collections and archives, said, “They recognize Northwestern University Library staff not only as custodians of the research of others but also as qualified researchers in their own right.”



Sarah M. Pritchard. *Photo by Andrew Campbell.*

Pritchard named dean of libraries

Sarah M. Pritchard has been named dean of libraries, a title she will hold in addition to her endowed title of Charles Deering McCormick University Librarian. The announcement by University Provost Daniel Linzer in January acknowledged historical participation by the University librarian on Northwestern’s Council of Deans and recognized Pritchard’s “strong and thoughtful leadership.” He added that Pritchard has “worked to ensure that the Library provides the types of scholarly resources and access to these resources in ways that support fully the University’s ambitions.”

The honor, Pritchard notes, reflects the stature of the entire Library system “and our important role as partners and practitioners in the research and instructional programs of the University. The Library system has an academic breadth comparable to an entire school, especially with our recent leadership in establishing a new library in Qatar, a facility soon to open in Waukegan, IL, and the inclusion of the University Press in our administration.”

finding VIOLA SPOLIN



Several times a year, big brown cartons full of undigested history arrive in the specialized collections of Northwestern University Library. They come mostly from the attics and basements and closets and filing cabinets and messy desktops of people you may or may not have heard of, and they're here because a curator expects that someday the right researcher will arrive on the doorstep thrilled about discovering their existence.

But preferably not too soon.

Case in point: When postdoctoral researcher Kathryn Farley wanted to travel from Georgia last October to consult the

newly acquired papers of the late improvisational theater trailblazer Viola Spolin, the 50 cartons of letters, notes, manuscripts, old playbills and programs, and other memorabilia had not yet been fully processed for use.

"Most archives arrive in roughly the same shape your own personal papers probably are in at home right now, which is to say, fairly disorganized," says Scott Krafft, curator of the Charles McCormick Library of Special Collections. "In a large and important archive like this, it would be a waste of researchers' time to go through 50 cartons of materials. And they still might miss the thing they were looking for in the

chaos. So we often won't open an archive for use until the processing is complete."

Manuscript librarian Benn Joseph, whose job it was to organize the Spolin papers and create what librarians call the "finding aid," was only about 225 hours into a job that would ultimately require about 300. "Preparing a finding aid," he says, "can be a surprisingly complex and intellectually demanding process." It's a process with rules and guidelines librarians study in library school, but there's also an art to it, of getting to know a subject through the elusive and often incoherent mass of paperwork that has been left behind and shaping it into a

Opposite, clockwise from upper left An early draft of the work that would become Spolin's book *Improvisation for the Theater*; photos of Spolin, ca. 1940s; draft of an early brochure promoting the Second City; Northwestern University memo pads Spolin used to scrawl notes to herself; draft of a poem, ca. 1960s; announcement of Spolin's first Second City workshops. **Below, left** Kathryn Farley appearing on the Chicago television show *Check, Please!* in 2006. *Photo courtesy of Kathryn Farley.* **Below, right** Benn Joseph unpacks a newly arrived box. *Photo by Nina Barrett.*





An early Second City program showing members of the original ensemble.

coherent intellectual resource that isn't actually a biography but perhaps suggests one.

And how well the librarian does this determines whether a busy researcher like Farley—who had only a week to spend in Evanston, though she would like to have spent a month—will find what she's looking for in the archive or not.

The "High Priestess of Improv"

Northwestern University Press published the first edition of Spolin's book *Improvisation for the Theater* in 1963. Hundreds of thousands of copies and three editions later, "It's without a doubt our best-selling book ever," says Henry Carrigan, assistant director of the press. It's also without a doubt the only Northwestern University Press book blurbed by Alan Alda, Valerie Harper, and Rob Reiner, whose endorsement says simply, "Her book is the bible."

The hidden costs of collections

As the work of Benn Joseph on the Viola Spolin archive shows, acquiring an archival collection is more than a one-time transaction. Jeff Garrett, associate University librarian for special libraries and director of special collections and archives, explains that making an archive into a truly usable resource for researchers "demands a large—and ongoing—investment on our part. The kind of careful processing Benn Joseph performed with the Spolin papers took 300 hours. It ensured not only that the collection could be presented coherently, but also that, once the finding aid was posted online, scholars anywhere in the world would be able to tell instantly whether we have anything relevant to their research."

Increasingly, processing requires digitizing all or parts of collections, either to preserve materials from deterioration or to make them accessible to an international audience. "These steps are very expensive," Garrett says. "Sometimes the work has to be done by specially hired project staff with expert knowledge—language skills, specific historical knowledge, musical training, and often, of course, unique technological skills."

Since important new collections are regularly being acquired, older ones continue to expand, and the Library's resources remain limited, it's necessary to prioritize processing and undertake it as funding becomes available. "Donors have a direct impact on how much we're able to achieve," Garrett says. "Funding for many of our highest-priority projects is allocated by the Library Board of Governors from

Referred to in theater circles as the “High Priestess of Improv,” Spolin shaped a generation of comic performers whose careers in turn shaped the entertainment landscape of today. Her influence is the genetic footprint shared by *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*, Blue Man Group and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, traceable backwards through *Saturday Night Live* to the original improv incubator: Chicago’s Second City Theatre. The late Paul Sills, cofounder and early director of the Second City, was Spolin’s son and collaborator. He had grown up with the theater games she had developed to help actors tap into their inner genius by *not acting*. “Were they acting?” went one of her favorite sayings. “Get them to play.”

It was because of Spolin’s long association with Northwestern University Press that her daughter-in-law and sometime-

collaborator Carol Bleackley Sills thought Northwestern might be a good repository for her papers. “Viola Spolin is a new-world person whose inspired teaching of improvisation arose in the North American heartland,” Sills says. “Her own teacher, Northwestern sociology professor Neva Boyd, imparted a belief in group work that Viola transformed into both a method of theater instruction and the art form that she elucidated in her many books, which were all published by Northwestern University Press. Northwestern University’s embrace of these two exponents of contemporary culture, Boyd and Spolin, explains my choice of its Library as repository for Viola Spolin’s archive.”

The choice also made sense because of the prominence of Northwestern’s theater program, says Charlotte Cabbage, the Library’s academic liaison to the theater

faculty. “This is a watershed moment for Chicago theater in the academic community,” she says. “People are just beginning to recognize that there’s a distinct school of improvisational performance that Chicago gave the world and that is equivalent to what’s recognized as the New York school of method acting.” Because scholars can’t reconstruct the story of how improv developed without exploring Spolin’s role, Cabbage says her papers are an enormous attraction for current and potential faculty members and graduate students.

The existence of letters, manuscripts, audio and videotapes, and other personal records is all the more critical to scholars because Spolin herself could be elusive and hard to pin down. Jeffrey Sweet, who interviewed many of the Second City’s founders for his popular oral history *Something Wonderful Right Away*, was not permitted by

annual fund contributions. Donors who feel strongly about supporting this work can also contribute to the Board of Governors Fund for Special Acquisitions, which goes directly to enabling our curators to acquire, process, and digitize important manuscript and archival materials.”

The following list is only a small glimpse of current needs:

Daily Northwestern The University’s daily student paper has chronicled campus news and student life since 1871. University Archives holds a nearly complete set of issues, but much of the paper is now too fragile for use. Though microfilm exists, it too is in extremely poor condition. In order to preserve this critical source on the University’s history, the entire run of original issues must be digitized before they are lost forever.

E. H. Duckworth Photographic Archive Containing more than 5,000 photos documenting Nigerian life in the decades before independence, this archive complements the Winterton Collection of East African Photographs in the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies. The collection, which recently arrived at Northwestern in the original trunks that Duckworth had packed 40 years ago, awaits general processing. It needs to be cataloged, and it contains many fragile items, such as glass-lantern slides and negatives, that will require conservation attention to prevent deterioration.

(continued on page 6)

Spolin to publish the interview he taped with her. “Viola Spolin and I simply could not figure out a mutually agreeable way of representing her in the book,” he writes in the book’s preface.

The tape of the interview still exists, though. Its appearance among the 50 boxes of Spolin papers is one of the many reasons the archive represents a fascinating and historically priceless resource.

The archive

Spolin’s life has all the makings of a fascinating biography, and the scholar who one day produces it will travel down much the same road that Benn Joseph traveled in preparing the collection. Having read through her letters, journals, poetry, and other unpublished writings, he probably knows Viola Spolin more intimately than anyone else alive who never actually met her. But his aims were

very different from a biographer’s. The principles of archival description that guide him dictate that his relationship be with the documents, not with the subject.

“A great finding aid,” Joseph says, “is going to be a complete guide to everything in the collection, assessing its scope and its contents. Maybe a biographer would be interested in looking at every single document, but most researchers aren’t going to want to do that—or even to read the entire finding aid—so the important thing is to make it as easy as possible for them to find what they’re looking for.”

A preliminary assessment, which took about a week, allowed Joseph to decide how to group the materials within the collection based on certain topics or chronological periods. “Because the biography doesn’t exist yet,” he says, “you just have to plunge into the boxes and start reading. It takes a

while before you start to make connections and recognize people’s names and their relationships to each other, and then the biography starts to unfold.”

The trajectory of Spolin’s life suggested how the material could be organized. Born in Chicago in 1906, Spolin studied in the mid-1920s at Chicago’s Hull House Recreational Training School with Neva Boyd, who was using games, drama, and storytelling in the education of inner-city and immigrant children. Spolin would adapt Boyd’s classroom games and much of the philosophy she had learned at Hull House when she worked as a drama supervisor with the WPA Recreation Project from 1939 to 1941. In 1946 she founded a theater company to train young actors in Hollywood.

In 1948 her son Paul Sills—who had grown up in his mother’s workshops and



John Cage Collection The Music Library’s flagship collection contains correspondence, scrapbooks, manuscripts, and other materials documenting the life, work, and influence of one of the 20th century’s most innovative composers. It also includes manuscripts Cage obtained from other celebrated musical figures for his book *Notations* (1969). The first items in this collection were received in the early 1970s from Cage himself, and he continued to donate materials until his death in 1992. Though some of this enormous and complex collection has been cataloged, other parts remain unprocessed and therefore inaccessible to researchers. Some items are in need of digitization to ensure that a visual record of each artifact is preserved.

From one of eight scrapbooks in the unprocessed portion of the Music Library’s John Cage Collection: Cage, age 5, practices his cursive. *Photo by Nina Barrett.*

Cards from the first edition of *The Theater Game File* (1975), a deck of cards with instructions for Spolin's theater games, which is still available from Northwestern University Press.

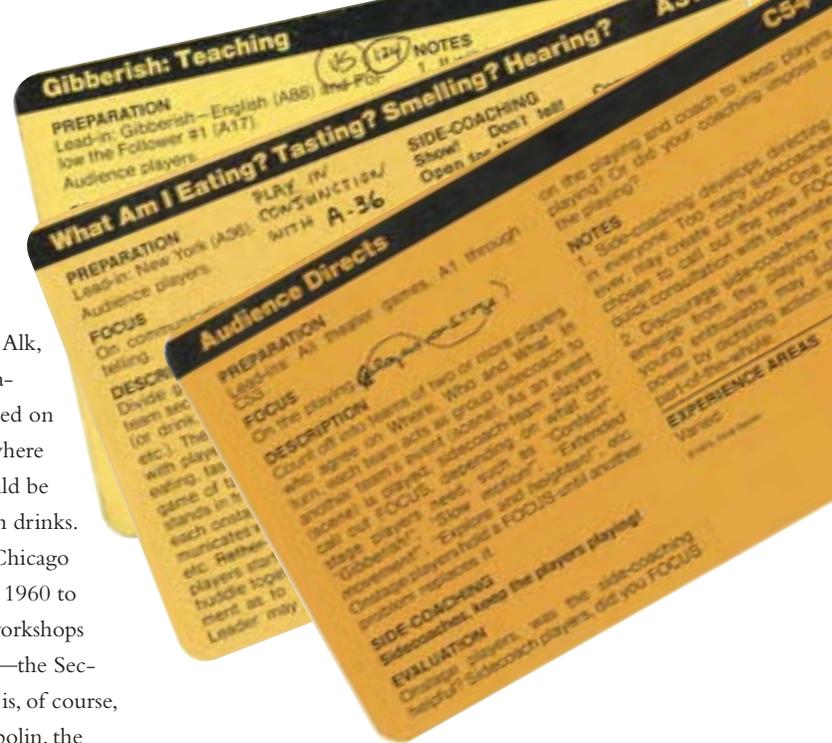
with the theater games she had continued to refine and develop—enrolled in the University of Chicago. There, the group of clever young students he met through his involvement with the University Theater included Mike Nichols, Elaine May, Ed Asner, and Sheldon Patinkin. He also met David Shepherd, a graduate of Harvard and Columbia who had recently arrived in Chicago from the East Coast determined to rejuvenate the style of theater he'd grown up with. "Instead of being about what's happening in the streets of Chicago, it was about love affairs in Nice which took place 50 years ago," said Shepherd of mainstream theater at the time. Together, Sills and Shepherd in 1955 founded the Compass Players, where actors improvised scenarios, generally on topical subjects.

After the Compass Players disbanded in 1959, Sills and his new partners, Bernie

Sahlins and Howard Alk, opened an improvisational theater modeled on a music nightclub, where topical comedy would be served up along with drinks. Spolin returned to Chicago from Los Angeles in 1960 to run improvisation workshops for this new theater—the Second City. Its success is, of course, legendary, and for Spolin, the experience crystallized her games and her theories in a way that allowed her to write *Improvisation for the Theater*.

To organize the Spolin archive, Joseph had to identify materials related to each of the theater companies she was involved with—including Game Theater and Story Theater, two subsequent ventures with Paul

Sills in the 1960s and 1970s. There were materials related to her publications; to her workshops and teaching, including a series of fragile videotapes of her workshops; and multiple revisions of the poems she wrote throughout her life. All of this had to be documented in the finding aid, which, Joseph says, needs to describe the materials



Robert Marcellus Master Classes One of the leading clarinetists of his time and a member of Northwestern's music faculty, the late Robert Marcellus presented master classes that attracted clarinetists from around the world. Stories about those classes remain legendary. Luckily, 130 open-reel tapes of these classes were made, a potentially invaluable resource for today's students. Unfortunately, their condition is deteriorating, and, unless they are digitized, this resource will be lost forever.

Siege and Commune of Paris, 1870–71 In the early 1990s the Library used materials from its internationally recognized Siege and Commune collection to create one of its first collection websites. It is still one of our most heavily used, with more than 400,000 visits annually. Since then, the size of the physical collection, housed in the McCormick Library of

Special Collections, has mushroomed from 1,200 to more than 7,000 items. Both the collection's finding aid and online presence now require extensive updating and revision.

Transportation Menu Collection This collection was initiated by a 1997 gift of about 300 airline menus to the Transportation Library from the late anthropologist George Foster. Digitized and made available online in 2007, it continues to expand with frequent donations—sometimes arriving hundreds or even thousands at a time—documenting food service on trains and cruise ships as well as airlines. These additions must be added to the collection's finding aid in order to be usable to researchers.

thoroughly enough so that researchers can readily identify their relevance to a particular project without, in effect, scooping the contents of those materials.

“By the time you’re writing those descriptions,” he says, “you’ve developed enough of a relationship with your subject to be thinking, ‘Hey, this letter is going to seem really revealing to her biographer,’ or ‘Gee, I know what I read in that journal entry isn’t really part of the historical narrative about this person yet.’ But you wouldn’t use the finding aid to suggest those things. You leave it to the historians to write the history.”

Past and future

Dan Zellner and Kathryn Farley exemplify the kinds of scholars for whom the Spolin papers promise to be a bonanza. Zellner, a Library multimedia specialist, has long been



Dan Zellner. Photo by Tom O’Connell.

immersed in the world of Chicago improv. As the 2008–09 Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities Library Fellow, he launched an investigation into the future of improv, interviewing artists

and educators in the Chicago improv scene about how new media technologies influence their work. Zellner was thrilled when Carol Sills chose Northwestern for her mother-in-law’s papers. “This is basic theater heritage as well as basic Chicago heritage,” he says. “Chicago-style improvisation has been incredibly influential—and not just on comedy and

theater. Business and psychology and the other social sciences have borrowed its role-playing techniques, and it’s also influential in the theory of human-computer interaction.”

That’s an intersection that Farley also finds compelling. A first cousin of the late Second City and *Saturday Night Live* comedian Chris Farley, she was well aware of the power of improv in entertainment terms. Like Spolin, however, she was more interested in its potential for engaging learners—and especially in bridging the gap between technology and the humanities. While earning her master’s degree (1998) and PhD (2007) in performance studies at Northwestern, she was also taking improv workshops at the Second City, where Spolin’s games are still in use. Her dissertation, on the use of digital media tools in performing arts education at the postsecondary level, explored how the games Spolin had used with the children at Hull House 85 years ago might still be an effective way to introduce technology to theater students today.

At the Georgia Institute of Technology, where she completed her postdoctoral work and currently lectures, Farley approaches the issue from the opposite perspective: introducing creative and intuitive thinking to engineering and science students through improv performance. In her research and writing she continues to explore the concepts of participatory engagement that underlie Spolin’s work but that Spolin herself didn’t extensively articulate. “Her writings are practice based, not theoretical,” Farley says. “Unlike most published authors, she didn’t put 100 percent of her ideas in print, only maybe about 80 percent. I was interested in trying to learn about the germination of those ideas.”

Last fall when Farley learned from Zellner (with whom she had collaborated) that the Spolin archive was going to become available to researchers, she literally couldn’t

wait for it to be cataloged. “Benn Joseph was maybe three-quarters of the way through processing the collection,” she recalls. “But he knew the contents well enough that when I said I was interested in ideologies, he pointed me toward exactly what I was looking for. Because of the interest he took in that material, he can tell you exactly what’s in every single folder.

“This archive is such a gem,” she says. “The fact that I was able to find what I needed in a just week was because of the way Benn organized it. It’s chronological, but it also follows the development of her ideas, and that’s really the missing element in her books. The material in these files lets you see where she started out intellectually, what she wanted to accomplish, and how she got there across a period of years.”

Farley, whose research has been sponsored by institutions including the National Science Foundation, will be able to make use of her discoveries in the work she publishes on participatory engagement—work that will, in turn, continue to influence the evolving relationship between the humanities and the sciences. So even as the Spolin archive establishes a fundamental resource for the scholars who hope to write Chicago improv into theater history, it also provides a link to those scholars who hope to carry Spolin’s educational mission into the future.

If you would like to help support the processing of Northwestern University’s special collections, please contact Alex Herrera, director of development, at 847-467-7129 or aherrera@northwestern.edu.

Tending to the tapes

Though they are still often called “papers,” the materials that constitute the records of a person’s life and work today are rarely limited to pulp. More and more, special archives such as the Spolin collection have a significant multimedia component. Thanks to the 34 videotapes included in that archive, for instance, scholars will be able to watch Spolin in action, conducting the workshops and classes for which she was famous.

With the volume of incoming film, videotape, audiotape, and other multimedia items rising, research libraries face an increasingly urgent challenge. “These media are much more at risk for deterioration than paper,” says Claire Stewart, head of Digital Collections. “An older audiotape can break the first time you try to listen to it, and then the content is going to be lost forever. The longer it isn’t treated in some way, the greater the chance it won’t be usable when a researcher asks for it. Audiovisual material is off the charts as one of the biggest problems among at-risk collections in research libraries.”

Most libraries lack the expertise and financial resources to assess these materials as they are acquired or to preserve them or rescue their contents digitally—or, ideally, both. That’s why Northwestern University Library sought the help of Stefan Elnabli (above), a graduate of New York University’s Moving Image Archiving and Preservation Program (MIAP), who is at the Library on a one-year fellowship funded by the Laura Bush 21st-Century Librarian Program of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). He first evaluates the condition of each tape or film reel and then helps prioritize it for reformatting to preserve its content,



Stefan Elnabli. Photo by Nina Barrett.

off-site cold storage to arrest further degradation, or some other conservation treatment. By evaluating and establishing treatment and reformatting plans, Elnabli is helping the Library to develop a set of best practices for preserving multimedia content—information that will be shared with other institutions.

Besides the videotapes in the Spolin archive, Elnabli is assessing the needs of a number of other Library collections with significant multimedia components:

Northwestern Football Films University Archives houses more than 2,400 film reels of Wildcat football games dating back to 1929. This is one of the most complete collections of football films in the Big Ten; not only does it document an important aspect of the University’s history, for many opposing teams it is the only surviving record of a given game. Historical footage is often requested by other universities, alumni, and the Big Ten Network. In the tradition of all the Northwestern Wildcat teams who’ve risen to challenges in the past, the University is now assembling a team of 11 donors—the Northwestern Game-Savers Team—to fund the rescue of this extraordinary collection. The collection will be named in perpetuity after the 11 donors on the team.

Hans Spanuth Collection A collection relating to this pioneering filmmaker—whose 1911 film version of *Oliver Twist* is said to have been the first feature-length film ever made in the United States—is held by the McCormick Library of Special Collections. Spanuth also

produced a series of “Vod-A-Vil” shorts featuring vaudeville performers that were marketed to cinemas unable to afford live entertainment and were often shown before feature films.

An early television pioneer as well, Spanuth produced the 1940s series *Woman Speaks*, which highlighted the accomplishments of women in many walks of life. The 10 films in this collection include “Vod-A-Vil” shorts and episodes of *Woman Speaks* as well as the short film *Gay Nineties Live Again*, probably made in the 1930s and featuring such turn-of-the-century icons as Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Marie Curie.

Charlotte Moorman Collection Trained as a classical cellist, Moorman found her way into the avant-garde art scene of the 1960s and was associated with the Fluxus movement and artists including Yoko Ono, John Cage, and Nam June Paik. Her performance art shocked the world, challenging both cultural taboos and stereotypes about art (in one work she performed the cello topless and was arrested for indecent exposure; and in another, members of the audience were invited to come onstage and cut the outfit she was wearing into pieces with a pair of scissors). Her archive, currently being processed in the McCormick Library of Special Collections, includes more than 100 audiotapes, film reels, and videotapes, many of them featuring performance footage.

HIDDEN

O F N O R T H W E S T E R N U

The Library is home not only to landmarks of achievement and human greatness but also to might-have-beens, never-weres, and a variety of unusual blind alleys. Herewith, some unfinished business.

What is it? A map that's part of an Environmental Impact Statement concerning the stalled initiative to build a fourth Chicago-area airport near Peotone, Illinois. Thousands of pages of statements dating from 1997 to 2002 and analyzing the project's potential impact on the area's air, water, wildlife, farmland, and archaeological resources are collected in 15 volumes. Media interest in the project was so intense that the morning the final statement arrived, "We were swamped with inquiries about its contents," recalls Transportation Library head Roberto Sarmiento.

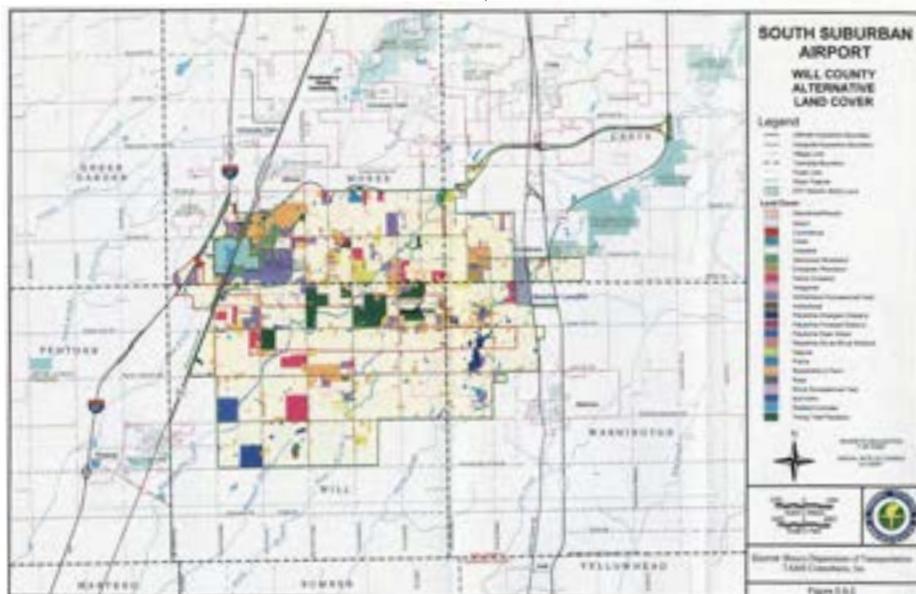
Where is it? The Transportation Library. Collecting nearly all Environmental Impact Statements commissioned by federal authorities on proposed projects nationwide, it now houses the most complete collection available anywhere.



What is it? A 1956 funding proposal from renowned anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits for transforming Northwestern's Program of African Studies (which he had founded just eight years before) into a Program of African and Afroamerican Studies. He saw the study of people of African descent in the Americas as inseparable from the study of populations in Africa, and the map (above) he submitted with his proposal shows that at that time he was actually supervising more graduate fieldwork in the Western hemisphere than in Africa. His request was rejected, and at Northwestern—as

at most other universities—African and African American studies diverged, becoming two separate fields.

Where is it? The Herskovits Library of African Studies. This proposal, along with other documents from the Herskovits papers, has been cited in various publications and a biographical film about Herskovits and appeared in the 1998 Block Museum exhibit *Living Tradition in Africa and the Americas: The Legacy of Melville J. and Frances S. Herskovits*.





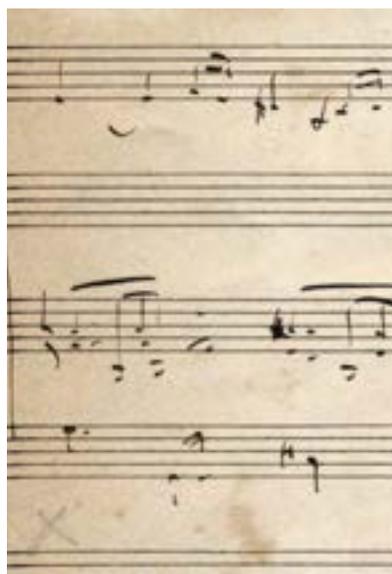
What is it? An article from the October 12, 1958, issue of *The American Weekly* describing architect Frank Lloyd Wright’s vision for a mile-high building that was never built. The design of what is currently the world’s tallest building, Dubai’s Burj Khalifa, was partly inspired by Wright’s plan—though at 2,717 feet, it is approximately half the height of Wright’s proposed tower. Calculating the rentable area of his mile-high building at 13 million square feet, Wright asserted that it would take only 10 such structures to house all the office staff of New York City and 6 for Chicago, allowing these cities to devote urban space to “parks and play areas” instead of “unsightly business sections.” Above the 50th floor, the five-story-high elevators would emerge from the interior and continue their way to the top along the outer shell of the building. They were to have been powered by atomic energy.

Where is it? The article, by Wesley Hartzell, is in the Frank Lloyd Wright Collection in the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections.



What is it? A drawing showing Deering Library as it would have looked had an alternate design by architect James Gamble Rogers been approved by the University. Known in the 1920s for the faux-Gothic buildings he had designed for colleges around the country—including ones on both of Northwestern’s campuses—Rogers had first proposed a Gothic design for the Library. The building committee rejected it, however, for too closely resembling Sterling Memorial Library, which Rogers had just designed for Yale. The second design, in Georgian style (above), “left the Building Committee cold and unresponsive,” according to then University Librarian Theodore Koch. Rogers countered with a third “collegiate Gothic” design heavily influenced by King’s College Chapel at Cambridge, England. That’s the Deering Library that was finally built and that opened to students in 1933.

Where is it? University Archives, along with plans, blueprints, sketches, and other documents relating to Northwestern’s ever-evolving campuses.



What is it? Sketch for an unfinished composition—apparently a song—by Claude Debussy. Comprising 12 measures of music, the manuscript features a simple melody (without text) over an outlined piano accompaniment. Though the manuscript is undated, its style suggests it was composed prior to 1903, the year Debussy began work on one of his most famous works, *La mer*. It’s not clear why Debussy never completed the song, but the manuscript offers insight into his composing process, suggesting what elements he sketched first and what details he filled in later.

Where is it? The Music Library, whose collection of 20th-century music is used by researchers around the world.

The colorful past and bullish future of Chicago's "L"

From its impressive 1892 debut as four wooden cars pulled along by a steam locomotive to its future in an age of tightening budgets, the Chicago "L" was the subject of lectures by author Greg Borzo and Northwestern professor Joseph Schofer at a Board of Governors event last October.

Borzo (Medill '95) documented the "L"'s colorful history in his 2007 book *The Chicago "L"* (Arcadia Publishing). Though not the first urban elevated train system in the United States, the "L" has proved the hardest, surviving its New York predecessor, which debuted in 1867. Borzo attributed its survival to the fact that it did not compete, like streetcars, with automobile traffic on the city's downtown streets but instead literally rose above it.

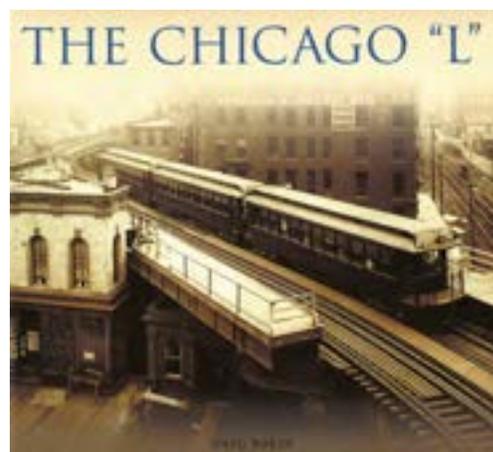
Though you'd never know it from looking at a modern "L" car, it was an elegant way to travel in its heyday. The first "L"

car (now on display at the Chicago History Museum) featured mahogany woodwork, gold-leaf trim, and stained-glass windows. Special funeral cars operated from 1906 to 1934 and carried mourners—along with the caskets of their departed loved ones—to cemeteries on the city's outskirts in virtual traveling funeral parlors, their grief cushioned by plush upholstery and black velvet drapery.

Even without gold trim and mahogany, the "L" has maintained its own iconic glamour, Borzo pointed out, as "Chicago's greatest movie star." Whether telegraphing to the audience that a scene is set in Chicago, supplying a romantic backdrop, or supporting an action hero's gymnastics, the "L" can be seen in a long list of films, including *Spider-man 2*, *The Blues Brothers*, *Risky Business*, *The Fugitive*, and *Code of Silence*.

The "L"'s existence has never been seriously threatened by the lure of an underground system, which, Borzo said, has been considered much too expensive an undertaking except during the years when the Great Depression created an ample supply of cheap manpower. Consequently, only about 10 percent of Chicago Transit Authority tracks run underground. What does threaten the "L"'s survival are the CTA's perpetual budget crises, which have so far contributed to the destruction of eight miles of "L" track and many more route miles. "Every time there's a funding crisis, an obvious thing to do is close down an 'L' line," Borzo said. "The danger is that they'll chip away at it until it becomes just a little tourist attraction."

Schofer addressed that possibility. As a professor of civil and environmental engineering at the Robert R. McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science as well as director of Northwestern's Infrastructure Technology Institute, he has



The cover of Borzo's book shows the "L" at Franklin and Chicago (now the Brown Line) in 1900, just days after it opened. Courtesy of the Chicago Transit Authority.

researched the user, service, and finance aspects of public transportation. He says that research suggests there are exciting opportunities as well as pitfalls on the tracks ahead. While budget cuts and failing infrastructure are realities, the real challenge, he said, "is managing the tension between fixing the old and building the new."

Technological improvements will help the CTA create a better customer experience, providing riders with real-time information about schedules and delays, for example, and developing a fare card that can be used seamlessly on all forms of public transportation, including the "L," buses, and commuter trains.

Meanwhile, Schofer said, market forces are in the "L"'s favor. Whereas young professionals once fled the city for the suburbs (and long commutes), today there is a greener goal: living, working, shopping, and relaxing within range of a walk, a bike ride—or public transportation. "I think this is the beginning for the 'L,'" Schofer concluded, "and not the end."



Joseph Schofer, Roberto Sarmiento, head of the Transportation Library, and Greg Borzo. Photo by Bruce Powell.

Robert and Ann Avery

Robert Avery remembers being in on the ground floor of the information science revolution. After graduating from the Judd A. and Marjorie Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences in 1966, he earned a law degree at Columbia University and joined the law firm Jones, Day, Cockley & Reavis (now Jones Day) in Cleveland. At the time, the Ohio Bar Association was sponsoring the development of the Ohio Bar Automated Research (OBAR), a service that would enable lawyers to search a database of Ohio statutes and case law. The beta system had just gone online when Avery joined the firm. “The service was still so primitive that we initially accessed it on a teletype terminal,” he recalls.

In Cleveland, Avery served on user committees that consulted with OBAR. When he went to the West Coast a few years later to open the firm’s Los Angeles office, Avery arranged for a link to the service—the first OBAR terminal in a law office outside Ohio. It still accessed only Ohio law, but it soon began to expand.

Forty years later the fledgling database has become LexisNexis, now a Reed Elsevier product that claims “access to billions of searchable documents and records from more than 45,000 legal, news, and business sources.”

Avery’s career as a mergers and acquisitions specialist has evolved quite a bit, too. The Ohio firm he joined in 1970 is now an international operation with 2,500 attorneys in 34 cities in 18 countries. It was about 12 years ago, when he transferred to his firm’s Chicago office, that he reconnected with Northwestern as an alumnus, becoming a donor to the Library and then joining its Board of Governors.

With the information science revolution profoundly transforming libraries, he says it’s an interesting time to work on Library fundraising. “Most people don’t realize that the most expensive thing about a book is the shelf it’s sitting on,” he notes. “The book you pay for once, but you pay for that shelf space forever.” The amalgamation of books and journals into electronic

databases reduces the necessity for some physical storage space, but the databases are also expensive—and the costs are less visible to an increasingly off-site user population.

That makes the efforts of the Board of Governors and the Library’s donor community even more important, Avery says. He cites Board-sponsored lectures as an effective means of raising awareness of the Library’s role on campus. “Events like the Chicago ‘L’ talk last fall and the Ravel premiere last spring [cosponsored with the Bienen School of Music] dramatize the Library’s role as an active participant in the University’s intellectual life,” he says.

In addition to their work on behalf of the Library, Avery and his wife, Ann Mitchell Avery, devote a substantial amount of time to the charity they founded four years ago after visiting an orphanage during a trip to Tanzania. With characteristic compassion, energy, and determination, they translated their support for the orphanage into Worldview Education and Care (www.worldvieweducationandcare.com), a nonprofit that supports a community health clinic, funds scholarships and other educational projects, and teaches single mothers the skills to make jewelry, clothing, and other goods so that they can earn a fair wage and support their families.

Although you might catch Avery reading in his spare time, it won’t be on one of those electronic devices that’s going to help us all save bookshelf space at home. Though he may have cheered on the start of the information revolution, he’d still prefer to do his pleasure reading the old-fashioned way. “I’m a person who still really likes to touch a book,” he says. “How do you smell that nice musty smell of an old book—or that wonderful new-ink smell—on a Kindle?”



Robert and Ann Avery in Africa

footnotes

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For more information, call 847-491-7641 or e-mail m-bradley2@northwestern.edu.

